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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper assesses the evolution of Zimbabwe's crisis and the challenges of normalisation in the short term. It first assesses the broad nature of the crisis and the strategies used to address it. Next it discusses the key issues and challenges facing Zimbabwe, including the international dimension of the Zimbabwe problem. The paper then briefly discusses trends towards normalisation and offers conclusions.

2. ZIMBABWE'S CRISIS DISCOURSE AND CONFLICT GENERATING STRATEGIES

The Zimbabwe crisis has tended to be oversimplified, given its complex domestic, political and economic dimensions and the external influence dimension. Imbalanced representation of the genesis, scope and intensity of the crisis and the tendency to over-emphasise its explanation on the basis of a contested biographic approach (focusing on President Mugabe), has had the effect of limiting the capacity of the key 'actors' to resolve substantive differences and adopt constructive strategies to resolve it. Critical actors now fail to give up their preferred 'excessive' confrontational mode, although their current assessments of the reality on the ground - which indicate critical political and economic problems - increasingly differ from the extremist populist discourses found in polarised media and advocacy representations. The focus on confrontational strategies domestically and on punitive external 'interventions' to resolve the crisis, is gradually losing credibility at home and abroad, given its conflict generating effects.

The discourse and advocacy on the Zimbabwean crisis, which in the mainstream discourse has become focused on selected governance and human rights questions, needs to be re-examined in terms of the political (the moral and philosophical) basis, and the material incentives it provides to key actors in the Zimbabwean conflict situation. The question to ask is to what extent is existing domestic practice in advocating governance reforms, and state responses to this, as well as external interventions, grounded in the consistent application of principle and policy? Related to this, is the question of to what extent all the actors have contributed to generating both a reality and a perception of crisis, and in so doing escalated the conflict in general. The importance of balancing perceptions with reality cannot be overstated. Efforts to avoid the 'Chalabi factor' in a misinforming analysis of the conflict and the 'reform' agenda, and the influences of the 'CNN factor'¹ on clouding the Zimbabwean reality, need to be based on rigorous and systematic analysis of the crisis and the way in which political positions have become entrenched.

¹ African Commission Report. 'Our common interest: Report of the Commission for Africa.' March 2005.

Balanced understanding of the real origins and triggers of the crisis and polarisation, suggest that Zimbabwe has been thrust into an escalating conflict generation process since 1996. This was based on structural (economic and institutional) divides and distortions, which the independence settlement and the subsequent approach to political transformation and development, failed to redress. The conflict in Zimbabwe has been based on the socio-economic and political effects of a range of issues including land, race, wealth, and power differences. These remain unresolved, and the institutional framework to resolve them has also collapsed, leading to the adoption of confrontational strategies across the divide.

The particularisation of the Zimbabwe problem around the core issues that have been selectively identified by the conflicting parties (especially narrow notions of governance and land), has tended to distract dialogue over the simmering complex conflict situation. This misdirects actors from seeking holistic solutions which go beyond the procedural or governance issues and narrow human rights concerns which have been emphasised since 2000 (eg constitutional and electoral reform), and land reform, around which polarisation has been entrenched since 1999.

The understatement of the key development and socio-economic policy issues which generate conflict and social problems and affect state governance capacities, underlies the failure to explain the substantive basis of elections-based cycles of aggressive confrontation. Interventions purportedly aimed at resolving the crisis have, instead, entrenched the conflict situation.

The direction of political strategies used to resolve governance, policy and political difference varies between confrontation and polarisation to consensus. The strategies which have escalated Zimbabwe's domestic conflict range from various forms of confrontation including violent conflict (excluding armed struggle), low-intensity conflicts based on some form of intimidation and the violation of a range of social and human rights. These include:

- hard-line tactics such as physical violence;
- verbal confrontational politics such as hate speech;
- litigation;
- resource grabbing;
- formal economic disengagement from policy processes and informal sector activity;
- speculative economic behaviour;
- propaganda peddling;
- campaigning for the isolation of Zimbabwe; and
- the exclusion of selected actors from various types of spaces.

The Zimbabwe conflict generation process also includes a critical international dimension. In this respect negative and confrontational international relations between the Zimbabwe state and the 'international community' (working directly or through local and foreign press, civil society and private sector agents), have reached an impasse. This impasse results from differences over a range of issues such as sovereignty, structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), trade, the restoration of land versus governance and human rights.

Conflict-inducing external interventions are reflected in the imbalance in external support (moral and material) to the two domestic sides of the conflict, with a tendency to support the confrontational strategies of one side. These interventions include negative or punitive strategies of political isolation, economic sanctions, the uneven building of local civil society capacities, a focus on oppositional capacity, and the demonisation of Zimbabwe, even where positive processes unfold. These external interventions thus drive both domestic conflict and negative international relations.

The recognition of the pervasiveness of conflict-generating behaviour across the divide and how this skews the perceptions and realities of the crisis, suggests the need to rethink the nature of the crisis. There is need for a comprehensive analysis and synthesis, over time, of the key political, economic and social developments in relation to domestic and external relations, in order to understand their unfolding in terms of political alignments, political and social activism, advocacy and the nature of engagement of the actors on these key issues.

Indeed, assessing Zimbabwe's crisis and the trends towards normalisation, requires a dynamic and contextual analysis of the multi-faceted aspects of each issue which has been defined as part of the crisis. The analysis must use valid methodologies, verified information and balanced comment. Instead, contested and weak empirical information has been used in various accounts of the crisis to describe the incidence of isolated problems. There is a lack of adequate definition of the scope and forms of such problems and changing aspects such as their breadth, intensity, frequency and timing. Given the fact that the contextual analysis of the crisis issues is limited, much of the crisis discourse fails to explain the causes of the crisis and thus how to redress them adequately. There is also a tendency to miss the interrelatedness of key problems in an evolving conflict situation.

This suggests that the empirical and conceptual basis of the crisis discourse is unable to explain the direction of the conflict situation, especially when these processes are or have changed over time. This limits our interpretation of whether the trends provide better scope for resolution and what forms of interventions would be useful currently.

Moreover, the changing context of the crisis, particularly in terms of the political situation, (eg electoral conflict, the waning of the land reform contestations, the shift towards the mobilisation of private sector actors around economic policy and the changing regional consensus on the South African Development Community (SADC) electoral regime) are not adequately treated by most crisis discourses. Indeed, contextual analysis of the

shifting economic situation (the changing resource scarcities, social stress in Zimbabwe, emerging elite struggles over business opportunities, resource and economic incentives, the changing availability of aid or grants for politics or advocacy and the effects on its 'protest industry') requires a more rigorous conceptualisation of the crisis and assessment of the prospects for normalisation.

3. THE ZIMBABWE CRISIS AND CONFLICT SITUATION REVISITED

The origins of Zimbabwe's crisis of political polarisation and conflict can be found in the effects of the adoption of a strategy (and its contestation), from 1996, to restructure the national, political and economic management framework. This emerged through increased state intervention in the economy and the land issue in 1997 and led to the reconstitution of state relations with key social formations (various classes and interests with varied identities and forms of organization, including those based on race, ethnicity, nationality, and generations, etc), following the failure of the neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) adopted in 1990. The specific issues over which this restructuring and reform process has been contested include the economy, the land question and 'governance', with issues such as state-civil society relations, human rights and the maintenance of law and security. The external dimension of Zimbabwe's crisis has thus been a critical factor.

Whereas the Zimbabwe conflict needs to be considered against the longer-term historical conflict and the inadequate resolution that emerged from Lancaster House, our focus here is on the recent resurgence of conflict based on both the historical and contemporary dimensions of differences and conflict. There is a need to understand the conflict evolution cycle.² The conflict cycle starts with the precipitation of the economic conflict over the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) into a political rupture between 1996 and 1999. It then 'exploded' between 2000 and 2002 over two elections and struggles over land repossession. Then gradual political reform within the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led to piecemeal, stop-start dialogue, resulting in the incremental 'dissipation' of the violent conflict between 2003 and 2005. This culminated in the relatively non-violent election of March 2005. The economy remained constrained and international engagement was non-existent.

These conflict issues are contested both in terms of domestic interests and international relations and disengagement. Thus, the current domestic contestation and conflict also reflects the competing objectives and strategies in state and society for Zimbabwe's re-integration into the global economy (eg between SAP-type and heterodox economic policy) and political order (at the United Nations, other multilateral organisations, the

² Baregu M. 'Economic and Military Security.' Baregu Mwesiga, Landsberg Christopher (eds). *From Cape to Congo: Southern Africa's Evolving Security Challenges*. A project of the International Peace Academy. Boulder, London & USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003: 19-30.

commonwealth, the G8 etc). This contest is situated within the context of fledging efforts at creating linkages by the global south, as is exemplified in Zimbabwe's nascent 'look East' policy and other SADC initiatives.

This Zimbabwe crisis unfolds through the polarisation of two broad social and political interests and/or 'movements': the ruling ZANU-PF party and the opposition MDC. It is mediated through struggles and conflicts over control of the state apparatus, the political process and policy making that use contradictory and competing frameworks of reformism and radical change. The society is polarised sharply between these competing forces. On the one hand, those who support largely rural peasants and aspiring indigenous agrarian and other capital interests are aligned through ZANU-PF to various liberation movement associations. These include war veterans, ex-detainees and mujibas. On the other hand, there are the forces mobilised by the MDC, which include trade unions, largely urban non-government organisations (NGOs), urban working class and unemployed people, and sections of the urban middle classes. The MDC has received material and ideological support from key Western nations such as the USA, the UK and the EU.

The broad based interrelated issues, such as the economy, land and politics, which confront Zimbabwe have tended to be reduced by the 'opposition' forces to a problem of 'governance' that is defined in the narrow liberal democratic sense, with the support of the Western international community. It has been theorised as a problem of the 'failed' or 'fragile' state - a situation that requires special donor coordination.³

The social forces behind the ruling party have opposed this narrow conception of 'governance' and argued that Zimbabwe's political and economic problems arise from its distorted and unequal economic structures and perverse social distribution. The distribution problems cited include grievances over the validity of existing land property rights, the uneven power relations and influences based on race and class which have been accumulated from historical privileges of access to capital, infrastructure and social capital. They question the appropriateness of key state institutions, such as those aspects of the 'rule of law' which protect unequal and unjust land property rights in a situation where there is a rigid legal framework and inappropriate market mechanisms to address these phenomena. They argue that the liberal democratic nature of the parliamentary and judicial systems has also failed to reverse historical injustices and level the social, economic and political playing fields.

However, these latter issues can also be conceptualised as a more broadly defined 'governance' problem. This includes the unresolved national question, the limitations of the existing neo-colonial structures of the economy, the legacy of existing historical and racial imbalances and contestation, historically grounded contestations of land property rights and various social injustices which arise from these factors.

³ USAID. 'Fragile States Strategy.' US Agency for International Development. January 2005.

3.1 The 'crisis' of international legitimacy, economic policy and global integration

The Zimbabwe crisis entails contestation over the sovereign right of the Zimbabwean state and its domestic civil society to make choices of strategy and procedure in economic policy (ie over neo-liberalism as opposed to state intervention), on land reform (ie over pure market based land transfers vs state and popular land expropriation), and to institute political reforms (the constitutional process, electoral rules, regulation of civil society) in a form and pace which relates to local specificities. This is in contrast to international ('Western') interventions, based upon 'universal' values, policies and strategies of political and economic management. The crisis has its genesis in both substantive and procedural issues.

Zimbabwe's economic isolation through, for instance, the closure of 'Western' concessional loans and private credit, commodity market restrictions and other individually targeted sanctions, and political isolation through the exclusion from some multi-lateral fora, the Zimbabwe crisis became focused on the problems of re-engagement with or re-integration into the international community. This has raised the debate about the 'legitimacy' of the Zimbabwean state in the international family, pitting African diplomacy against Western interventions in Zimbabwe.

Since 1997, the radical approach to land reform and a heterodox approach to economic policy management based upon a sovereign or 'go it alone' approach without international support, have prevailed in Zimbabwe, with critical negative economic and social effects. Yet the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) of 1990 to 1995 did trigger major economic dislocations, particularly in the urban areas.

The restructuring of land property relations and the adoption of heterodox economic strategies has led to new distribution questions over land rights and economic capacity. Because of continued economic decline and social stress, these strategies have led to significant urban 'protest' and have emphasised the divide in social benefits between the rural and urban populations. These facts, having been played out on the ground, have highlighted the importance of recognising structural change in Zimbabwe by domestic and external actors. It has also shifted oppositional advocacy towards a preoccupation with human rights and electoral reform advocacy as key issues in defining Zimbabwe's international legitimacy.

The domestic crisis over Zimbabwe's external isolation, fuelled by confrontational strategies on both sides of the divide, led to critical reactions by the Zimbabwean state, including the expansion of its regulation of civil society and political parties. This has led - since 2002 - to legal restrictions on the media, NGOs and public assembly in general, foreign

financing of civil society and the increased use of force (such as arrest and 'torture'), highlighting a 'crisis' of state-civil society relations, expressed in the degradation of key civic and political (human) rights, in the face of expanding 'condemnation' from civil society and the 'West'. These conflict generating phenomena, alongside high levels of political party violence (especially during 2000 and 2002 elections), and sustained negative propaganda in media and advocacy statements on both sides of the divide, have polarised the crisis and fuelled questions about the legitimacy of the state at home and abroad.

Yet, to what extent is Zimbabwe unique in Africa and the SADC on the broad questions which have generated the international dimension of the crisis? The status of its governance and human rights practices, its economic policy, performance and the attendant socio-economic conditions (all of which define the external dimensions of the problem) need to be contextualised. Zimbabwe stands out as being unique in its responses to the internal and external dimensions of the crisis. Another unique feature of the situation is the nature and intensity of the external responses and interventions that have been brought to bear on Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is unique compared to most of the rest of Africa because it decolonised late in 1980, had an extensive rural armed struggle, and had historical specificities around the land and racial dimensions of its national question. Zimbabwe suffered a period of destabilisation from apartheid South Africa during its earlier transition, thus extending the period of high level security and military mobilisation. This aspect, combined with the internal armed conflict in Matabeleland, delayed the resolution of its various national questions. According to the ruling ZANU-PF, the tactical delays in various reforms were prescribed by South African destabilisation.

The recent growth of civil society, especially governance NGOs, and state defiance of the neo-liberal rules of the political and economic game, also differentiates Zimbabwe. Embroiled in a soft but deep conflict situation, which has been given excessive attention and 'punishment' by the 'West', the state represents a unique context in post-liberation politics. Zimbabwe was also late in adjusting, having only adopted ESAP in 1990 and then experiencing its negative socio-economic effects (common in Africa) by the mid-1990's, in the post-cold war external environment.

However, it is structurally and politically not unique compared to Namibia and South Africa, except that it had an earlier start on post-independence nation building. Its model of 'negotiated settlement' and gradual economic political 'transformation', within a neo-liberal framework, is fairly similar to these two. It has, however, had a longer period within which to show the difficulties of the settlement model, with less resources (per capita and in state revenues) to address the socio-economic aspirations of the excluded majority, leading to the implosive experience arising from these 'failures'.

However the potential impact of Zimbabwe's land question, race relations and international relations and their replication and/or contagion in South Africa and Namibia are

high. Moreover, the desire to avoid this pattern of reform in these two countries has had a significant influence on current politics in South Africa and the UK, given that both have large material interests in Zimbabwe, and the UK has significant investments in South Africa. Similarly, the extensive investments and mineral resource interests of the West in the three former settler countries, brings a unique material interest to the international relations of the West in Zimbabwe and its neighbours. The kith and kin issue in all these countries has been highlighted in this context. This has led to the mobilisation of extensive regional and international 'resistance' and or 'opposition' to the Zimbabwean state.

Thus, the evolution of Zimbabwean politics, especially the evolution of state and civil society organs and their relationships, has experienced relatively unique pressures in terms of the external dimensions of political struggle and international (economic) relations. The nature of international sanctions applied against which, it is alleged, are conditioned by short-term 'regime' change issues, brings Zimbabwe to the cutting edge of uni-polar interventionism in Africa. The country has become a testing ground of the western hegemonic influences that now pit the regional power, South Africa, against the USA and its ally, the UK,⁴ over the unique forms of external intervention in Zimbabwe. Yet the principles enunciated by the Africa Commission (2005) which call for balancing the assessment of the African 'problem', if applied to Zimbabwe, would require different interventions than those effected on it.

A key challenge facing the country, therefore, is how to manage the emerging coordination of external strategies and interventions in 'small' (African) states, including those with a significant material and social historical link to the West, and those where contemporary material and political interests interface with critical interests of the West. Indeed Zimbabwe has been classified as a 'fragile state', and an 'outpost of tyranny' which represents an 'unusual threat' to USA's foreign policy. According to American policy such states require concerted international attention:

Events of the last few years have tragically brought home the reality that situations unfolding on the other side of the world - governments collapsing, criminal and terrorist networks, humanitarian crises, and grinding poverty - can have global ramifications. Weak states tend to be the vector for these destabilising forces, manifesting the dark side of globalisation, and pose a very difficult kind of national security challenge.⁵

This requires 'development and poverty' to be a "third pillar" of foreign policy - on a par with defence and diplomacy.⁶

⁴ Crisis Coalition in Zimbabwe. 'Things Fall Apart: the 2005 elections in Zimbabwe. A report produced by Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. February 2005.

⁵ USAID.

⁶ US, National Security Strategy (NSS); 2002.

“Countries that lack the ability or will to provide basic services or protection...” cannot be ignored, and a coordinated and strategic approach to address the core issues of poverty and underdevelopment, is proposed. The strategy entails four aspects:

...better monitoring and analysis, priorities responding to the realities on the ground, programs focused on the sources of fragility, and streamlined operational procedures to support rapid and effective response. Achieving success in fragile states requires a clear understanding of the problems which, in turn, points to priorities-such as stability, security, reform, and institutional capacity and programs more closely targeted on the causes of the fragility rather than the symptoms.⁷

The strategy’s goal is to guide and “... reverse decline in fragile states and advancing their recovery to a stage where transformational development progress is possible”.⁸

The policies argues that better coordination and close partnerships - both within the USA government and with other donors and international organisations - to address the challenges facing fragile states, require support for committed local actors to address the sources of fragility. The emphasis given to ‘governance’ tends to override the development question. This emphasis also understates the historical dimensions of underdevelopment and the effects of poverty and conflict on governance and development. Thus:

Research indicates that the instability associated with fragile states is the product of ineffective and illegitimate governance. Effectiveness refers to the capability of the government to work with society to assure the provision of order and public goods and services. Legitimacy refers to the perception by important segments of society that the government is exercising state power in ways that are reasonably fair and in the interests of the nation as a whole. Where both effectiveness and legitimacy are weak, conflict or state failure is likely to result.⁹

This strategy is focused on “...anticipating and ameliorating economic instability, food security, and violent conflict, all of which are usually symptoms of the failure of governance in fragile states...”¹⁰. The root causes of underdevelopment and poverty are either relegated secondary importance, or not emphasised at all (eg the trade regime and debt).

⁷ bid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ USAID

¹⁰ USAID

The policy argues that the following are integral to economic recovery:

- physical security for the movement of people and commerce;
- a sufficiently acceptable form of national government (including a working relationship between civilian and military leadership);
- agreement on a process that will result in the adoption of a constitution; and
- a certain level of economic predictability (including a central banking authority, government agencies able to collect and distribute revenue, macroeconomic stability and clear rights to property).

Yet in the Zimbabwe case, less international emphasis has been placed on support to the economy and the redistribution of land rights as a means of recovery. The strengthening of state institutions as opposed to the support given to non-state sections is also not emphasised. These narrow notions of governance have guided the withholding of the legitimacy of the state. These contradictions of policy constitute a major aspect of the international relations crisis facing Zimbabwe.

3.2 The domestic crisis of governance revisited

3.2.1 State-civil society relations, state capacity and elections

The political contestations over the interrelated conflicts of land, the economy and 'governance' (including the significant influences on these by external intervention) has tended since 2000 to be focused on multi-party electoral competition - especially electoral rules, administrative practices and election violence. In 2004, these practices were considerably, but not yet completely, reformed following the issue of guidelines by SADC. In the 2005 parliamentary elections ZANU-PF retained power, albeit under different political conditions: ZANU-PF won a two-thirds majority in an election characterised by reduced conflicts over land and limited violence. However these elections were deemed 'rigged' by the MDC and the west.

Economic conditions, while slightly more stable, remain inadequate, with high levels of inflation, volatile foreign currency rates and shortages, partial food security and shortages of some goods. Growth continues to be restricted by international disapproval of the land reform process, persistent droughts and the closure of 'Western' financing (eg direct foreign investment and limited foreign aid), including finance for humanitarian purposes such as HIV-AIDS.

This situation does not offer prospects for the immediate improvement of economic performance. Thus the 'governance' problem in reality increasingly reflects concerns over

development. However, the nature of the 'governance' problem remains influenced by vocal NGOs who continue to characterise it as electoral 'politics'.

Properly defined, the 'governance' question entails:

- reforming key state institutions such as the constitution, the judiciary and the electoral machinery;
- the maintenance of key human rights (political, civic, social, economic and cultural);
- strengthening sovereign policy-making and implementation capacity, including the capacity to ensure public participation in policy-making;

It also entails reforming the practices of political parties including their:

- maturation from violent to non-violent strategies of interaction;
- intra-party democracy (eg their constitutions, succession processes, consultative processes and the selection of leadership and parliamentary candidates); and
- capacity to substantively engage with policies (as opposed only to or alongside the mobilisation of 'direct action').

Furthermore, correcting the 'governance' problem entails the building of credible, independent and institutionalised civil society capacities (especially in the NGO, community-based organisation ((CBO)) and informal sectors) capable of mediating the maintenance of a variety of social, economic and political rights and supporting the delivery of some of the means required to gain such rights. This means the balancing of various types of actions, including protest, technical and legal advice, policy formation activities in collaboration with various state organisations and the direct supply of services on an equitable non-partisan basis.

The governance reform discourse and interventions have, however, tended to overwhelmingly focus on state institutions such as the constitution, elections, presidential succession, aspects of human rights, the judiciary, land property rights and media and public order laws. Less attention has been paid to the wider aspects of state governance institutions such as sovereign policy making and the capacity of the state to deliver economic and social rights. International trade, debt, aid and global governance imbalances have also been neglected and not much attention has been paid to the need for appropriate governance reforms in political parties and civil society.

Indeed, the agenda for governance reform has been polarised in the way in which the issues of concern have been prioritised and the balance of resources allocated to address

these issues. There has also been a failure to interrelate the effects of political, economic and land reforms. The tendency has been for the actors to selectively pursue single issues on the different sides of Zimbabwe's polarised divide. The selective treatment of the key issues of governance and their dissociation from social, economic, and land issues, has restricted perceptions of how their treatment might promote conflict management.

Thus, since the failure between 1999 and 2000 to agree on a new constitution and related electoral and human rights legal reforms, the governance reform process has been embroiled in confrontations over land, electoral competition, economic regulation, political and economic security and media issues, against the backdrop of an escalating conflict situation.

3.2.2 The human rights focus in the 'governance' crisis

The human rights discourse increasingly became the most critical issue of the crisis discourse between 2000 and 2002, when the land- and elections-related conflicts were at their worst. This discourse has sustained a central role around media issues, food access and freedom of association between 2003 and 2005. Numerous publications have detailed these human rights problems and we need not repeat them here.

The key questions that limits the human rights discourse remains its 'politicisation' within the electoral competition framework. The discourse fails to impartially explain the identified violations, especially the political motivations of the actors and the institutional and policy issues which underlie them. There is also no critical analysis of the uses to which the human rights advocacy activities have been put in the current conflict.

Thus a key challenge is to provide a sound basis for separating the principles of human rights advocacy from the interests of party politics. And in the interest of consistent global application, there is a need to evaluate critically the standards of assessment and interventions proposed. Within the context of Zimbabwe's recent history and compared to other key regional countries, inequitable assessments and 'punishments' are self evident. This raises questions about the effects of the current tactics of human rights advocacy in fuelling or dissipating the Zimbabwe crisis and conflict, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of external interventions to address the crisis. The human rights challenge is to minimise the conflict and crisis and generate a constructive broad-based governance transition. Can current human rights advocacy resolve the conflict fairly and peacefully and do the interventions favour the ascendance of one or the other of the political formations in the conflict?

Moreover, the failure of the current narrowly-based human rights discourses to address the fundamental roots of the crisis - including sustained poor racial relations and the structural and historical circumstances underlying the unequal wealth and power relations in

the society - has restricted their impartiality and capacity to redress the Zimbabwe-specific conflict. This failure to underscore the inadequacies in the independence settlement, economic restructuring, the racial reconciliation strategies, the legacy of embitterment over race-class based power and income differentials and the polarised socio-political alignments this has effected, underlies the current contestation over the 'narrowness' of the human rights issues placed at the centre of the crisis discourse.

Indeed, the rights discourse has hardly been adroit in recognising, for instance, the negative mobilisation of ethnic differences in the Zimbabwean body politic, including within the state, political parties and civil society. In particular, the re-mobilisation of the putative Ndebele-Shona problem, focusing on the violent 1980's dissident conflict and regional or provincial resource allocation, has been negatively pursued in the rights discourse. This pattern is exhibited in the current electoral divide and tends to be fuelled by regional politics and advocacy approaches. For instance, the food security issue has been fuelled by both sides of the political party and NGO divide based upon limited empirical grounds, especially as it relates to Matabeleland, a minority ethnic region.

There has been a re-mobilisation of elites in opposed alignments between active liberation movement forces and purportedly 'cosmopolitan' forces, around conflicts over accumulation, land and political power. These alignments, which have been occurring on a generational basis between young urban groups, educated professionals and capital, have also been under-examined in the human rights discourses. Thus, the role of markets and uneven policy influence in the exclusion from politics and the economy of various working and peasant classes (within a predominantly monopolistic domestic and external 'corporate' sector) is absent in the rights discourses. The conflicts this has generated in a situation of reduced state resource allocation and the pressures on 'patronage' systems (especially those which emerged during the economic liberalisation in the face of growing and broadened social expectations) and the heightened elite struggles this elicited, has not been adequately addressed by the dominant governance and rights discourses.

The structural cracks generated by neo-liberal policies such as the extreme discrepancies in rural-urban incomes and wealth, and the pressures on public resource allocation, as well as the poor rural civil society infrastructure for public policy influence, have also been understated in the social rights discourses. Thus, the human rights discourses, by neglecting the effects of neo-liberal policy interventions on social conflict and state capacity to alleviate economic stress and sustain viable institutions, have selectively focussed primarily on the interests of the middle class. The continued grievances over land, livestock, and other expropriations during colonial times, and the external resource flow imbalances (including grievances over external influences on policy, politics and 'sovereignty') have also received limited acknowledgment in the rights discourses. Such discourses have, instead, tended to defend existing property relations, the market, restricted economic regulation and perpetuate political polarisation.

3.3 The land question, the economy and politics

Much has been stated about the land crisis in Zimbabwe, especially its radicalisation from 'orderly' market based principles to the extensive expropriation of land from 1997 and the land occupations in 1998, 2000 and 2001.¹¹ These processes reflected a failure of negotiated land transfers and international support for land reform, as well as the exclusion of significant sections of the white farming community and farm workers from the process. The violent conflicts related to this subsided and the fate of new and old land owners became clearer by 2003/2004, as did the process of bringing these actions in line with the law.

The key outstanding challenges of the land crisis remain the completion of legal transfers in the administrative courts, the speeding up of compensation payments, the accommodation of more of the excluded and the improvement of land use and the livelihoods of settlers. The input supply constraints of the economy, persistent droughts and economic isolation have limited the pace of agricultural and industrial recovery, hence the food insecurity and shortages-driven inflationary trends. Domestic and international engagement on these issues has been sidelined by the focus on governance issues.

4. THE NORMALISATION CHALLENGES AND ZIMBABWE'S TRIPLE TRANSITIONAL REFORMS

4.1 Institutional processes of normalisation

The notion of normalisation is a relative, analytical concept intended to explain the direction and degree of change in the conflictual relationships and differences over key contested political, economic and social issues between significant domestic and inter-state actors.

Softer tactics of civil advocacy for reform are to be found in the form of parliamentary debate, scientific analysis of policies for negotiated reform, various forms of dialogue and engagement which seek consensus of ideas and generate normalisation. Normalisation reflects consensual rather than confrontational strategies.

The normalisation process cannot be discerned simply from or explained by certain behavioural tendencies by individual or organisational leaders (such as in the state, political

¹¹ Moyo S. 'Neo-liberalisation of the land question in southern Africa.' Landsberg Chris, Mackay Shaun (eds). *Southern Africa Post-Apartheid? The Search for Democratic Governance*. Cape Town: Logo Print, 2004: 166-192.

Moyo S, Matondi PB. 'The Politics of Land Reform in Zimbabwe.' Baregu Mwesiga, Landsberg Christopher (eds). *Cape to Congo: Southern Africa's Evolving Security Challenges*. A project of the International Peace Academy. Boulder, London & USA: Lynne Rienner publisher, 2003: 73-95.

parties, NGOs, etc) but also from the public reactions to (and influences over) the changing material and social conditions in the economy and domestic and external political activities.

Normalisation reflects the search for a broad convergence of thinking over policy, law and implementation practice, the search for the strategies and tactics to resolve key differences (particularly the reduction of violent confrontation associated with political conflict and partisan strategies for reform) and the accommodation of opponents and opposing views. In so doing, normalisation reflects the search for stable regime restoration and increased state capacity for consensual political and policy reforms, through dialogue between the state, private sector and civil society actors, using non-confrontational strategies and representative public participation.

Zimbabwe has witnessed a phased, albeit slow, course of addressing key aspects of its internal crisis since 2003, suggesting the gradual normalisation of politics, economic policy processes, state-civil society and international relations. In a move away from the overtly violent conflicts of 1998 and 2002, new and erratic experimental processes of piecemeal dialogue by the opposed domestic forces, supported by key SADC forces, have questioned existing norms and practices which underlie the crisis and the various confrontational domestic strategies and external interventions. They have also questioned state responses aimed at addressing the main contested issues of economic policy, governance politics, human rights and sovereign international relations within the current uni-polar global order. Zimbabwe has gradually veered towards normalisation and convergence between the opposed domestic political and civil society gladiators, although an impasse remains with the international community.

In Zimbabwe normalisation should also entail the de-escalation of conflictual and unproductive engagements between the state and various international actors in terms of bi-lateral and multi-lateral trade, financial aid, and informational (media, intelligence and advocacy) relations. This relationship with international actors should be based upon constructive external interventions aimed at reducing socio-economic stress and political conflict, including:

- positive tactics which promote and materially support internally negotiated reforms
- balanced information dissemination on key developments
- the expansion of economic relations (trade, investment, etc)
- improved aid (in terms of scope, scale and methods of delivery)
- a reduction of material incentives provided to domestic actors for confrontational politics and advocacy in general.

Constructive external engagement and support for the normalisation process entails increasing commitments by the actors to create space for and confidence in the use of

positive conflict resolution strategies such as diplomacy, inter-state dialogue and a more balanced 'carrots and sticks' approach in their support for the local actors in the conflict.

Normalisation however faces critical internal and external resistance, given the entrenchment of some 'conflict entrepreneurs' on both sides of the divide. These include those who seek a rapid, radical and comprehensive overhaul of the existing political power structure, leadership and policy process and those in power bent on suppressing dissent. While residual efforts to maintain the crisis conditions and confrontational politics on various sides of the divide remain a threat to normalisation, deliberate efforts by major regional actors are required to support the achievement of a negotiated resolution of the outstanding differences of the political parties and civil society. The nature of this entails the accommodation of the 'losers' based on correcting critical policy 'mistakes' made in the reform of the governance process, in broadening access to land and the economy, and in supporting the recovery of a broad range of socio-economic victims of the crisis, in the immediate term.

4.2 The normalisation issues: a triple transition

Normalisation has tended to move around a triple transition of issues - land reform, the economy and governance. Each of these issues entails specific policy and political elements as shown in the chart below. The patterns and sequences of normalisation have proceeded according to the internal capacity to control the factors involved.

4.2.1 Land reform policy

The radical land reform process ensued between 2000 and 2001 amidst wide-based land and electoral conflicts. These processes were only contained by late 2002 after the presidential elections, when the political risk was lower, the challenge in the normalisation of the land question then shifted towards resolving internal land disputes (among the various beneficiaries and potential land seekers). This was done through political mediation processes within ZANU-PF and policy pronouncements based upon two land reviews,¹² which structured the coordination of government land allocation and acquisition processes in an ordered manner.

¹² Utete Charles MB. Presidential Land Review Committee (PLRC) Report. Volumes I and II: Main Report to his Excellency the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, August 2003.

The Report presented its findings on the findings on the Implementation of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, 2000-2002".

Buka. A Preliminary Audit Report of Land Reform Programme, 2002.

Table 1-1: Overview of Zimbabwe's conflict evolution (1996-2010)

	1996-1999	2000-2002	2003-2005	2006-2010
I. Domestic Politics				
1. Political party activism	Incipient	Confrontation	Negative	Normal
2. Trade Union activism	Mass based	Mass action	Disengaged	Normal
3. NGO human rights activism	Normal	Protest	Protest	Normal
4. Land reclamation movements	Incipient	Occupation	Subsided	Stable
5. Media	Open	Confrontation	Confrontation	Open
6. Elections practice	Calm	Violent	Calm	Normal
7. Constitutional reforms	Open	One-sided	Gradual	Full scale
II. Economic developments				
1. Economic strategy	Fluid	Dirigiste	Heterodoxy	Normal
2. Formality/informality	Informality	Informalised	Influx	Normal
3. Social conditions (wages, services)	Decline	Deteriorated	Dire	Stabilising
4. Resource scarcity	Minor	Extreme	Scare	Stabilising
5. Markets operation	Robust	Underground	Fragile	Extended
6. Corruption	Growth	Extreme	In flux	Normal
III. International Relations				
• Aid/credit	Declining	Closure	Closure	Normal
• Trade relations	Normal	Deteriorating	Widening	Widening
• Investment	Narrowing	Low	Opening up	Normal
• Diplomatic policies/relations	Normal	Narrow	Opening	Normal
• Media relations	Normal	Negative	Relaxing	Normal

This normalisation process has been led by resolving first the land conflicts on the ground and then addressing inconsistencies in policy implementation.¹³ This was followed by legal reform processes such as speeding up court confirmations and lease provision. Even here normalisation entailed managing internal power differences in government and dialogue with sections of the former white farming community. The effort has shifted towards specific negotiations and preparations to accommodate some of the excluded (eg accommodating potential MDC beneficiaries, offering willing white farmers smaller sized farms, speeding up compensations for acquired farm infrastructure, accommodating the land rights of Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPA) farms,¹⁴ and resolving the farm workers' land rights). The challenge remains the pursuance of external financing for the compensation and resettlement process in a situation where the protagonists have entrenched positions (each blaming the other) and there is the distraction of the state-external dispute tending almost exclusively towards the narrow governance issues.

Normalisation actions commenced in October 2002 through the Buka review¹⁵ and in mid-2003 became coordinated through the Utete Review.¹⁶ The implementation of the land

¹³ Utete

¹⁴ Foreign citizens' farms protected by bi-lateral (government to government) agreements.

¹⁵ Buka

¹⁶ Utete

reform corrections during 2004, by the Ministry of Land, faced critical political management challenges, including over the succession issue.¹⁷ Internal (ZANU-PF) resistance to the 'corrections', the slow response by former white farmers to negotiation as well as the political risks that the electoral campaign brought for normalisation (such as charges of land reform 'reversal'), tended to slow down the 'correction' process. It was expected at the time of writing that the period after the elections and preceding the cropping season, (April-June), would be the least risky period for decisive 'corrections' and that this would thus speed up these normalisation activities. These actions would in turn result in improved land use during the 2005/2006 season thus widening improvements in the economic policy normalisation process. An improved economic environment is critical to the normalisation and stabilisation of the land question in general.

4.2.2 Economic Policy

The second track of normalisation - focusing on economic policy and external engagement - was initiated in late 2003, with the introduction of centralised coordination of economic policy in the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ). The process entailed harsh measures to contain inflation and speculative and underground activities of the financial sector, regulation of foreign currency externalisation issues and corruption and the gradual formalisation of foreign currency generation. This was accomplished by a heterodox set of economic policy measures, including tight monetary policies and efforts to subsidise local production, provide investment incentives and subsidise key low wage goods (electricity, transport, fuel, the maize staple etc). This normalisation process suggests a gradual liberalisation of macroeconomic policy (in particular, the move away from blanket price controls), reflecting the critical shortages of forex and external finance. Much of this entails normalisation of government-private sector relations through dialogue and advisory inputs, based on a tacit consensus over a phased process of economic liberalisation and international engagement. Significantly, repaying some of the external loans (such as from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)) and increased policy dialogue with Breton Woods Institutions initiated the normalisation of international engagement, although these institutions remain dissatisfied with the pace of liberalisation.

Moreover, the political signals for outright re-engagement have not been issued by either the west or the Zimbabwean state, given that the challenge of resolving the outstanding differences over governance issues remains. Recent economic lapses, inflation and shortages of key goods also heightened with an intervention by the Government of Zimbabwe to establish economic order and state authority over social and economic actors, leading to negative social effects. This undermines normalisation.

¹⁷ Two to three streams of ZANU-PF politicians seek to gain its leadership when the current leadership retires. Radicalism around land issues has tended to be one of the succession campaigning, while moderates seek to normalise.

4.2.3 Governance Reforms

The third and more complex and intractable arena of normalisation is governance reform. Between 2000 and 2005 governance reforms had become stagnant since the failure to agree on the 1999/2000 draft constitution. Governance problems, in the narrow sense, regressed around issues of media, security and public association, between 2002 and 2004. Reform on electoral issues only moved towards partial liberalisation during mid-2004. Similarly, confrontational and violent strategies by political parties escalated from 2000 through to 2003, only to gradually recede during 2004 and to dramatically decline in the parliamentary elections of 2005.

Although gradual and at times imperceptible, governance normalisation processes ensued from early 2004. This included addressing corruption in a limited manner, initiation of private sector and other stakeholder dialogues and wider governance reforms in the land and economic policy sectors. Thus, the outstanding governance reforms include:

- the need for a new constitution;
- the further refinement of electoral law and institutions;
- the liberalisation of media and security laws;
- the regulation of political parties and civil society; and
- completing the land and economic policy challenges.

These appeared more possible in the post-2005 election period, given the ZANU-PF majority (despite its contestation) but will require a constructive political dialogue environment. This was to be determined by the attitude and strategies of the state, the main opposition party, key NGOs and the international community. Negative domestic and international comment on the March 2005 results, given the allegations by the MDC of 'rigging', have temporarily hardened attitudes, and dampened the normalisation process.

However the execution of Operation Restore Order (which commenced on 18 May 2005), - coming as it did hot upon the heels of the west's condemnation of the March elections, threats of mass action by the broad front, the sudden disappearance in April of goods from formal shops, and private and informal sector price escalations - dampened the normalisation process. Yet paradoxically, the government intended the operation to address political problems of lawlessness, crime, illegal land occupations, as well as economic challenges such as corruption, black markets and the wider informalisation of markets and urban services. Many people lost homes, livelihoods, social capital and the subsequent reconstruction operation (Garikai) faces challenges of adequate restitution and coverage. Local and international condemnation has re-ignited confrontational advocacy strategies and dampened dialogue. Positively, a United Nations' assessment of the operation provides many

avenues for national, regional and international re-engagement. This could re-energise normalisation.

5. CONCLUSION

There are many challenges in the normalisation of both domestic and external relations and practices. These include the need to promote longer-term benefits such as political stability, security and development rather than to remain hinged on the immediate election problems and selective punitive justice issues. There is need to shift towards the development of sustainable institutions for improving governance, political practices, economic policy, judicial management and social capital. Attention should be paid also to preventing future conflict by promoting balances in the social distribution of wealth, resources and opportunities among various social strata, whether these are defined by race, class gender, ethnicity, region or other social phenomena. Improved public participation in wider policy making processes is vital in order to balance the voices of the wider civil society sectors and to improve their capacities to engage effectively across the triple transitional issues.

Efforts which can strengthen the policies and institutions that sustain stability and peace, rather than those that promote polarising tactics (such as negative advocacy, punitive justice and short term political and personalised victories) will be critical to the normalisation process. Improved methods of coordinating positive policy dialogue and advocacy, balanced resources allocation and mutual recognition of grievances and the place of various actors, need to be developed. Focus is needed for improving the critical social and development conditions of the majority, using consistent principles rather than promoting the competing material and social interests of political parties and NGO elites in order to resolve the crisis and ensure normalisation.

The risks of the occasional regression in the normalisation process, some of which when adequately managed could be short-lived in the wider framework, need to be tackled resolutely by leaders in all sectors and at various levels.