

**The resurgence of radical nationalism in
the South Atlantic:
a working paper**

Sam Moyo & Paris Yeros

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1. ON THE CUSP OF HISTORICAL CHANGE

The current economic crisis has raised once again the spectre of delinking from the world economy and the construction of a multipolar world.¹ This crisis has been in the making for three decades, ever since the first general crisis of post-war accumulation and its subsequent financialisation. The signs of persistent crisis were evident throughout the 1980s and 1990s, even as the Washington Consensus set in, and even as new industrial centres flourished. Financial crises continued to sweep across the South and East, throwing ‘developing’ and ‘emerging’ economies into disarray. And the signs mounted as new social and political forces positioned themselves to confront finance capital: a new global Left emerged, in the form of the World Social Forum (WSF), to launch a broad-based popular protest against the decaying order. But the signs were most evident in the erosion of the geopolitical forces which had hitherto sustained the Washington Consensus. The collective imperialism of the West ran aground in the Western Asian region, after the ill-fated US-led invasions, while China, Russia, and India (re)emerged in the East to position themselves as economic and strategic competitors. Furthermore, a series of small states in the South Atlantic – such as Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador – entered a process of radicalisation; despite their small size, these radicalised states have threatened Western geopolitical control over swathes of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa.

We are now on the cusp of historical change. The Washington Consensus has been *de facto* renounced in the West, and moves towards delinking are under way, especially in the South Atlantic. However, delinking is neither automatic, nor a foregone conclusion. The US-led Western alliance will most certainly strike back like a wounded bull, to maintain its dominance over the regions which traditionally it has controlled. The occupations of Western Asia have already shown the lengths to which the alliance is willing to go, but so has the destabilisation campaign that has been waged against the radicalised states in the South Atlantic. Short of direct occupation, destabilisation has been a deadly mix of propaganda war, economic sabotage, support for the ‘democratic opposition’, support for military coups, support for secessionism, support for cross-border military operations, and projection of the ‘war on terror’ to justify pre-emptive aggression.

We here take a closer look at these radical nationalisms and the challenges which they face. For besides being in urgent need of solidarity, their predicament raises universal questions regarding the ways and means of delinking in the course of systemic transition. These radical nationalisms have notable differences between them, but they are essentially similar in that they have re-politicised economics, racial inequalities, regional asymmetries,

¹ We wish to thank Mahmood Mamdani for a careful reading and comments on the first draft, as well as the participants in the seminar on ‘Governance challenges confronting the inter-African system’ held by the Centre for Policy Studies, on 24 June 2008, in Johannesburg. We have also benefited greatly from discussions during the meeting on ‘Transitions to socialism’, held jointly by the Network of Intellectuals and Artists in Defense of Humanity and the World Forum for Alternatives, on 13-19 October 2008, in Caracas.

and North-South relations. In this sense, they are clearly anti-systemic and worthy of solidarity. At the same time, none has obtained the ideological and programmatic clarity necessary to fulfil its ends. Despite their radicalism, they remain essentially populist.

These anti-systemic populisms are everywhere in crisis. External aggression, in the form of destabilisation, is the external factor which strongly conditions their course. It continues to threaten their survival by the constraints it imposes from the outside and also by taking advantage of, and indeed operating through, their internal weaknesses and contradictions. At the same time, regional groupings have offered some degree of protection to these radicalised states; they have been spurred into action by the threat posed by destabilisation to their regional sovereignty regimes. Yet, the protection that has been afforded has not been sufficient to secure the survival of the radicalised states into the future: regional partners have lagged behind ideologically, and regional 'leaders', especially, have failed to rise above the logic of structural dominance. Thus, radicalised states have had to band together in *ad hoc* arrangements based on principled solidarity and to pursue complementary economic exchanges (in the Americas) or collective defence (Southern Africa).

In what follows, we undertake a critical engagement with these radical nationalisms. We endorse the recent analysis published by Emir Sader in *NLR* (2008), and wish to pursue further the novelty of these nationalisms, as well as to extend the field of analysis to Africa, which is experiencing very similar tendencies. Comparative analysis of this type can be revealing and useful on both sides of the Atlantic.

We also emphasise from the outset that the position that we will defend here does not represent a mere 'left wing' of the nationalist resurgence, but an independent Left position that is capable of both unmasking the contradictions of these nationalisms and making the right tactical choices in a polarised situation. Delinking remains our strategic objective (Amin 1990).²

2. THE RESURGENCE OF RADICAL NATIONALISM

2.1 The return of the national question

The resurgence of radical nationalism has local origins in all cases, but two events stand out as having galvanised the national question on the two sides of the South Atlantic: the Zapatata uprising in southern Mexico in 1994, and the war-veteran rebellion in Zimbabwe in 1997. It was through these movements that the national question struck back to reinstate a

² Our difference with two other recent Left positions has been elaborated elsewhere with reference to the Zimbabwe question (Moyo and Yeros 2007b). Briefly, our own position is distinct from left-opportunism, which claims to be 'more democratic' than our own, shuns nationalism, and seeks a 'social contract' with imperialism; and from ultra-leftism, which reinstates the class struggle, but shuns nationalism all the same and prefers a tactical alliance with imperialism in the interest of ideological 'purity'. These two positions, and their so-called 'internationalisms', have formed an odd but enduring alliance in the contemporary conjuncture.

radical agenda: it included radical agrarian reform, economic sovereignty, and the indigenisation/deracialisation of society. These movements succeeded in elevating once again the consciousness of the oppressed above involuted, factional or chauvinistic conflicts, giving hope to those who had all but conceded defeat. And they formed the background to the generalised Left turn of the late 1990s, which gave rise to the World Social Forum (WSF) and the possibility of further radicalisation.

By 2000, the liberation movement in Zimbabwe had been fully re-radicalised: it had already joined Angola and Namibia in 1998 to confront militarily US-backed rebels in the DRC and was moving ahead with radical land reform at home, thereby setting off a classic revolutionary situation (Moyo and Yeros 2007a). The result in this case, as in so many others, was not revolution, but a radicalised state, whose nationalism radiated widely to challenge the neo-colonial pacts that had brought the liberation movements to power, or stabilised them after years of civil war. It also challenged directly the WSF to take a stand.

In South America, which had made its own negotiated transitions to democracy after decades of military rule, the potential sources of further radicalisation were twofold: the unrelenting civil war in Colombia, where the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) continued to battle against a corrupt, oligarchic US-backed regime, and a new series of revolutionary situations (Argentina, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Bolivia), which also radiated widely. The result, once again, was not revolution. In a series of cases, there was a turn to the Centre-Left by means of renewed pacts with international capital. However, in three crucial cases – Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador – the pacts did not hold. They, too, gave way to radicalised states, which proceeded to build ties between them, and with hitherto isolated Cuba, and to open dialogue with the Colombian rebels. A new configuration of forces thus began to evolve in this sub-continent as well.

These four radicalised states – Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador – have become the epicentre of the new economic nationalism in the South Atlantic. They have spearheaded the recuperation of sovereignty and have gone further, giving substance to regional notions of right. In practice, they have promoted direct action, participatory democracy, and the deracialisation of society; they have re-politicised economics by redistributing assets and social services and by reasserting control over natural resources; and they have protected the autonomy and integrity of regions from both external penetration and the logic of structural dominance operating from within.

The challenge to the Washington Consensus has been very direct indeed, for the Washington Consensus offered an emaciated notion of sovereignty, one tailored to the needs of monopoly capital. Its contours may be recalled briefly. First, the Washington Consensus championed a quasi-automatic and atomised national adjustment to the world economy, by means of the standardised package of liberalisation, privatisation, and state repression.

Then, it embraced multi-party elections in response to growing popular protest, but only to the extent that the latter remained consistent with neoliberal adjustment or the broader

geopolitical interests of the West. Third, it promoted a new economic regionalism via the newly-born World Trade Organisation (WTO), in response to proliferating regional initiatives, but, once again, only to the extent that these remained complementary to the neoliberal order and Western geo-strategy. And, finally, it promoted a new security regionalism in the aftermath of the Rwandan debacle, in response to growing calls for autonomous regional institutions to deal with regional problems (where the UN could not be trusted); however, its overriding logic was to fragment the international security system, under the aegis of the UN – and often in line with the interests of regional ‘leaders’ – and abnegate responsibility for the social conflicts generated by unequal development.

Let us take a closer look at these radical nationalisms.

2.1.1 *Anti-systemic populisms*

The new nationalisms are essentially similar in that they have re-politicised economics, racial inequalities, regional asymmetries, and North-South relations. In doing so, they have adopted confrontational tactics which have challenged established forms of domestic representation and external diplomacy. In all cases, their radicalisation emerged out of what may reasonably be called revolutionary situations, characterised by intense socio-political mobilisation and conflict with *progressive potential*, including the tentative emergence of autonomous organs of people’s power, although in no case did there emerge a revolutionary leadership, or did states collapse. In all cases, the revolutionary situation was co-opted by the capitalist state, but the state itself was forced to internalise the new radicalism, which in turn opened the way for protracted social struggle. In three cases, Zimbabwe, Bolivia, and Ecuador, the struggle has been sustained by a predominantly rural social base which has been mobilised on the basis of deeply conflictual agrarian and race relations. In Venezuela, the social base is predominantly urban, with racial politics that are clearly operative, if less cogently articulated. Importantly, these ‘vanguard’ states have been part of a broader accumulation of forces within these regions, forces which have reactivated the agrarian and national questions within their respective states.

Of the four cases, Zimbabwe has been the boldest in intervening in the structure of the economy by implementing a radical land reform without compensation, the first in the post-Cold War era. The radicalisation began gradually through internal and external confrontations, but took firm hold in 2000, after the defeat of the Constitutional Reform proposals of the ruling party in a national referendum. The proposal was an important advance on the neo-colonial constitution established in 1979, by advocating *inter alia* the right to repossess land, but which also sought to maintain an excessive concentration of powers in the executive. The defeat of the proposal had two consequences. First, it took the land struggle from electoral politics to direct action in the countryside. The war veterans spearheaded a mass land occupation movement to pre-empt a further defeat of the ruling party and its land reform agenda, which the opposition opposed. Importantly, the war-veteran rebellion constituted a working class challenge to both the opposition and to the

leadership of the ruling party, whose survival came to depend once again on a mobilised countryside.

Second, as events unfolded, the ruling party adopted the new tactics as its own, which in turn took the struggle from the countryside into the branches of the bureaucracy. This multi-dimensional struggle became the essence of the radicalised state (Moyo and Yeros 2007a). Its immediate objective was to repossess land from white agrarian capital.

Despite internal imperfections, the land reform has been essentially egalitarian, creating a much broader social base for future accumulation (Moyo and Yeros 2005). But the land reform did not end the radicalisation. The conflicts surrounding the land reform, including the intensification of economic isolation and political destabilisation, forced the state into a survival strategy that has gone far beyond the agricultural sector to become one of the most dirigist in the world. A ten-year economic siege has produced what can only be seen as a *war economy*, with extreme shortages of foreign exchange and basic goods and inputs, unrelenting hyperinflation, and extensive loss of productive capacity. The state has responded by intervening across all sectors of the economy to control prices, distribution and credit, to reassert control over export revenues and natural resources, and to impose majority control by indigenous capital over the mining sector.

The ruling party has relied partly on state-owned enterprises to direct the economic recovery, especially in its attempt to diversify trade and investment to the East. But its overall approach - and its basic contradiction - has been to assert national control by promoting private indigenous capital, not collective or state property, while retaining a more remote 'custodianship' of agricultural land and natural resources (Moyo and Yeros, forthcoming). This has been the basic internal source of the decline of the economy, which, together with the inevitable printing of money, has been subjected to speculative behaviour, informalising business activity, and profiteering by capitalists all around. Unable to transcend its vacillating class character, the ruling party has resorted to persecuting 'unpatriotic' capitalists by military-style 'operations' to police prices and the informal economy - as if each capitalist individually were the source of the problem. The absence of direct and popular control of production and investment decisions has hindered the planning capacity of the state, its legitimacy, and its overall ability to withstand destabilisation.

In South America, the radicalisation has not yet confronted an economic siege. This has to do with a series of factors: on the one hand, the windfall gains from oil and gas exports, the build-up of foreign-exchange reserves, and the disentanglement from the conditionalities of the IMF and other creditors; on the other, the policies of fiscal prudence and expropriation with compensation. Indeed, under the buoyant external market conditions, the three South American states have managed to increase public spending consistently without incurring public debts. They have also re-asserted incremental control over natural resources by purchasing majority shares in enterprises - although in no case on terms demanded by foreign capital - and by other means that have generally upheld the 'rule of law'. In these

three cases, it is the political destabilisation campaign that has had more consequences than the economic.

Venezuela is the economic and ideological engine of the project known as 'socialism of the 21st century'. Venezuela's radicalisation effectively began in 2004, after a presidential referendum which reinforced the position of Chavez; but the process had built up through successive social conflicts, even before Chavez was elected to the presidency in 1998. In the first three years, the government set out to 're-found' the state, by convoking a Constituent Assembly to re-write the inherited oligarchic constitution, and it encouraged the formation of the Bolivarian Circles, a movement aiming to organise the poor in neighbourhood associations and involve them in the political process. The constitution did not intend to break the back of the state, but it did advance a new model of 'participatory democracy' which has encompassed a wider range of social, political, and women's rights, and has opened new spaces for popular mobilisation. More recently, new forms of collective property have also been promoted, which, although still marginal, are considered to be the kernel of the transition to socialism. For their part, the Bolivarian Circles have tended to become a corporatist appendage of the executive, but they have also channelled demands upwards and have had a wider conscientisation effect.

The latter became clear in 2002-03, when the executive resolved to assume control of the state-owned enterprise in the oil sector, Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA); until then, PDVSA was operated by a bureaucracy linked by a network to the two-party oligarchic system. The conflict escalated during a ten-week strike led by the employers' federation and the trade unions. In an unprecedented move, lower-rank workers took it upon themselves to assume control of the enterprise and restore production, together with the military. The conscientisation effect was demonstrated again soon after, on the occasion of the US-backed coup, executed by subversive elements within the military: Chavez was brought back to power by a spontaneous popular uprising, which has permanently polarised the country ever since.

The survival of the Chavez government has continued to depend on its ability to redistribute social services in health, education, and housing, which it has done to an unprecedented degree, as well as on its resolve to usher in structural economic changes, which have lagged far behind. Despite the confrontational rhetoric, nationalisations have generally been restricted to purchasing majority shares in companies, such as in telecommunications and electricity, the renegotiation of joint-ventures in oil extraction, and the repossession of oil projects in the Orinoco Oil Belt. In these cases, it is the state that assumes control, which in turn provides bureaucratic leverage over production and investment in these sectors. However, as in Zimbabwe, it does not guarantee popular control and legitimacy into the future, or a different pattern of accumulation. Indeed, the inability to make deeper inroads into the functioning of the capitalist economy has created a new bourgeoisie linked to the state, popularly known as the 'bolibourgeoisie', with its own vested interests in the status quo. Given the nature of these contradictions, as well as the palpable

personification of the 'vanguard' party, it is not clear whether this radicalisation will actually sink collectivist roots into the ground before any changes occur at the top (constitutionally or not).

Bolivia has followed a similar course of nationalisations. Since 2006, the state has renegotiated the terms of foreign investment and the repartition of revenues, and has re-nationalised a whole series of sectors - gas, oil, tin, silver, and telecommunications - again by taking over majority shares, either by purchasing them or other compensatory means. In this case as well, it is the state that assumes control and gains bureaucratic leverage over these sectors, and the same limitations hold. Indeed, ongoing attempts to 'refound' the Bolivian state in the mould of 'participatory democracy', in this case with a strong indigenous base, have shown more starkly both the limits of reformism and the weaknesses of the radicalisation itself. The movement has been limited to exerting control over the bureaucracy, and only unevenly among its branches (the control of the military being questionable), while respecting the constitutionality of private property, most notably in agriculture. This, in turn, continues to form the economic basis of political reaction. White agrarian capital has now retreated to its provincial strongholds, re-asserted white supremacism, launched a separatist campaign, and become the internal fulcrum of external destabilisation. Land reform and broader structural change remain on the agenda, but their fate is now tied up with the course of internal and external contradictions - and, indeed, the state itself. This is a case to which we will return.

Ecuador has generally limited itself to renegotiating the distribution of revenues from oil extraction, and it has gone on to repossess the assets of Occidental, a US oil firm, which violated the terms of its contract; more recently it has pursued similar tactics with Brazilian firms. Over recent years, the radicalisation of Ecuador has been sustained by the persistent mobilisation of a powerful indigenous movement, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE). This came to power in 2000 in an alliance with junior army officers, who deposed a corrupt executive to form a temporary Junta of National Salvation, a council which included the president of CONAIE. Then, under external pressure, they ceded power back to a civilian government, which was again removed by street protests in 2005, until the recent election of the left nationalist government of Rafael Correa. The new government has forged ties with CONAIE, but relations between the two remain uneasy, contingent, and indeterminate. The new government has proceeded to regain overwhelming control over the revenues from the export of oil, but without assuming direct control of foreign enterprises operating in the country. On the other hand, the government has also signalled that it will not renew the US air base in the city of Manta, due to expire in 2009, which is used to intercept drug-trafficking over-flights out of Colombia and, more importantly, to monitor the movements of Colombian rebels. In all, the reaction from the outside has been no less resolute. In March 2008, the Colombian military, with the support of US intelligence, invaded Ecuador's territory and assassinated the FARC's second-in-command; this set off a diplomatic crisis and a stand-off between Colombia, Ecuador and

Venezuela, the latter of which deployed troops to its Colombian border in a show of solidarity with Ecuador.

These certainly are all cases of ‘populism’, but populism is, after all, generic to the capitalist state (Poulantzas 1968), as well as to radical social forces that are not willing or able to break the back of the state. Yet, the new radical populisms are different from the populisms of the past, especially in Latin America. Here, for the first time, populism has overcome the myth of ‘racial harmony’, and has also mobilised the countryside, which, with the exception of Mexico, has never been part of the deal. In Africa, populism has also been the key ideological currency since independence. In this case, it has reached out to the countryside in variable ways, either through fractious ethnic modes of mobilisation or unifying national liberation struggles, mainly in Southern Africa. The ‘exception’ here has been South Africa, where the liberation struggle was led by urbanised social forces – and whose exceptional weakness was its inability to mobilise the countryside effectively. South Africa went on to weave its own elitist populist myth of ‘rainbow nation’.

There is a strong case to be made for the new radical populisms: they are genuinely *nationalist* in orientation, rising above the range of other populisms, be they white-supremacist, colour-blind mestizo, multicolour elitist, ethnic chauvinist, or urban-biased. They are also populisms that are *pan-nationalist* in orientation, seeking regional equality against hierarchy, and regional autonomy against the collective imperialism of the West. And they are *internationalist*, constituting among the most vibrant sources of anti-imperialism in the South Atlantic today. Their internal contradictions and their ideological confusions must be engaged with constructively, not beaten back by a policy of destabilisation.

The critique that is often wielded against these anti-systemic populisms by the dominant currents of the Left revolves around their nationalism, which is deemed to be, by definition, bourgeois and antithetical to internationalism, and/or their divergence from procedural forms of democracy, which are deemed to be sufficient for social and structural change.³ In peripheral capitalist societies that have resolved neither the agrarian nor the national question, nationalism and direct popular action remain necessary, albeit not sufficient, for the democratisation of the economy and society. In these cases, popular uprisings have done (or sought to do) what no procedural democracy has been willing or able to do: deracialise the ‘demos’, redistribute land, and re-assert sovereignty over natural resources. These are historic and profoundly democratic events. That they have not been willing or able to create autonomous and sustainable sources of people’s power is their basic internal weakness.

Another critique that is all too common concerns the violence that is involved in these processes of radicalisation. This requires special treatment.

³ These are the positions we have identified elsewhere as ultra-leftist and left-opportunist respectively (Moyo and Yeros 2007b).

2.1.2 *On violence*

The process of radicalisation has been marked by outbreaks of violence in all cases. Of course, violence precedes the radicalisation of the state; under structural adjustment the state systematically resorted (and continues to resort) to violence against popular forces. But the question tends to be whether the radicalisation of the state is more violent and more dangerous for democracy and human rights, and for this reason should be opposed as a whole. Although the contemporary Left has been deeply perplexed by the issue of violence – as indeed, it should – the dominant position has been to seek psychological salvation in a moralistic condemnation of all forms of violence and defence of an almost divine notion of human rights. In other words, there has been a retreat to the comforts of liberal ideology. Thus, outbreaks of violence have been routinely detached from their context and compared to one another by arbitrary, often duplicitous, methods.

The case that has exercised particular fascination in the West is that of Zimbabwe. This is a radicalised state that has been subjected to a decade-long economic siege and political destabilisation, whose internal contradictions have escalated, perhaps together with those of Bolivia, to the most advanced stage among the four radicalised states. It is very likely that if and when the crisis of delinking deepens in the South American states, the violence there will also increase, to include state violence. We will discuss the general strategy of destabilisation in the next section. Here, we will confine ourselves to an analysis of the violence in Zimbabwe, its internal dynamics, and how it has been interpreted and compared to other outbreaks of violence, especially in Africa. The lessons from Zimbabwe are relevant to South America.

The recent round of violence in Zimbabwe, between March and June 2008, has been typically compared to the concurrent outbreaks of ethnicised violence in Kenya. The magnitude of the violence in Zimbabwe, probably around 100 deaths, is far lower than that of Kenya (above 1 000). Yet, it has repeatedly earned the label of ‘crimes against humanity’ and even ‘genocide’, and elicited calls for further sanctions, including by the dominant currents of the Left. Of course, our point is not sadistically to defend violence or the torture that has also been perpetrated, and which we condemn outright. But we must move from condemnation to resolution, and resolution entails an analysis of the character of the violence, which the ‘Left’ conveniently avoids. Moreover, if resolution is to be *just*, we must be capable of distinguishing violence that defends just cause from violence whose whole purpose is reactionary.

The latter is the case of the ethnicised violence in Kenya. Here, the ethnicisation of politics reflected the intensification of fractional competition within a dependent capitalist class, which saw no other means to compete, and the degeneration of political consciousness among the urban and rural working classes, whose organs of political representation (political parties, trade unions, and peasant associations) had been co-opted into bourgeois and petty-bourgeois politics, or ceded ground to donor-driven NGOs. In this case, violence,

which not unlike Zimbabwe has always revolved around the land question, spiralled into an ethnicised competition for the spoils of structural adjustment (Campbell 2008). This was wholly reactionary violence, including state violence, with no progressive potential.

Zimbabwe has also undergone this type of violence, specifically in the early 1980s. This similarly reflected an involuted, petty-bourgeois accumulation strategy, aggravated in this case by the destabilisation campaign of the apartheid regime in South Africa, which took the death toll into the thousands. Since then, ethnic identity (Shona and Ndebele) has remained an important factor in national life and has been managed through the National Unity Accords of 1987, essentially an elite pact to compete by other means. Indeed, in the 1990s, black aspiring capitalists closed ranks to compete against established white capital over access to land and financial resources, calling upon the state to implement an affirmative action policy for indigenous capitalists. The policy failed, as it was virtually impossible to create a new capitalist class under monopoly capitalism, not least in the course of structural adjustment, privatisations, and de-industrialisation. This failure, in turn, was a key factor in the cross-class nationalist alliance forged at the millennium to break the white-settler monopoly over land.

The crucial point here is that, in the course of radicalisation, ethnic politics moved to the background in Zimbabwe, as radical nationalism turned *not* on ethnic enemies but on settler capitalism and its internal and external backers. The submersion of ethnic politics continues to be the case in the ruling party, despite media and academic analyses which persist with ethnic and sub-ethnic theories, as if these were the fundamental contradiction. The recent splintering of ZANU-PF, by which Simba Makoni sought the presidency as an independent with the support of party stalwart Solomon Mujuru, continued to defy the theory of ethnic/sub-ethnic polarity: both Mujuru and Robert Mugabe are ethnic Shonas-Zezurus. On the other hand, ethnicity did rear its head within the MDC, the party in 'opposition', which in 2006 fractured largely on account of ethnic differences. On the surface, the two factions differed over 'tactics' - the line also maintained by hegemonic opinion - but tactical differences gained ethnic meaning: one faction (led by Morgan Tsvangirai) lost its strong parliamentary position in Mashonaland and advocated extra-parliamentary action; the other faction (of Welshman Ncube) gained a strong parliamentary position in Matabeleland and thus advocated parliamentary politics. When the dilemma was put to the party's national executive council, it voted in favour of Ncube. But political opportunism had no time for ethnic sensitivities: Tsvangirai unilaterally tore up the decision and, with it, the party (Moyo and Yeros 2007a).

The violence of radicalisation has ebbed and flowed, and its character has been changing. At the height of the radicalisation (2000-2003), violence was used in defence of the land reform, specifically in defence of the semi-proletariat and the landless, regardless of ethnic identity. Then, in 2005, as the balance of forces shifted back to the black bourgeoisie, violence was used in defence of the restoration of capitalist order, in a mass eviction campaign to 'clean up' the urban areas (though once again irrespective of ethnic

heritage). The victims were urbanised workers, partly organised by the war veterans, who had occupied urban land alongside the rural land occupations, and continued to pose a threat by holding out the possibility of being mobilised by the opposition (Moyo and Yeros 2007a). This violence was then followed up with a new spate of violence against small 'illegal' miners scattered across the country, many of them displaced from the urban clean-up campaign. This again reflected the class reversals within the liberation movement. The more recent round of election violence has had elements of desperation, which have threatened to set off a confused spiral of reprisals. It continues to reflect the class contradictions within the liberation movement, but now with the added urgency of defending against a destabilisation campaign to influence the outcome of the presidential run-off election. Certainly, such 'regime change' would threaten the gains of radicalisation, specifically the nationalisation of land and the regulation of natural resources – *which are gains of the working class*, despite the contradictions of bourgeois opportunism by some elements from within.

For this reason, the violence associated with the presidential run-off cannot simply be dismissed as unambiguously reactionary, that is, as serving the narrow interests of the black bourgeoisie. But it is also certain that this violence has not ensured the broader interests of the working class, especially the opening of a political space required for the exercise of its democratic rights. The recurrence of violence and military-style, quick-fix operations can only be overcome by sustained political action whose aim would be to re-engage and organise the urban and rural areas on the basis of a working class perspective.

3. DESTABILISATION AND REGIONAL RESPONSES

3.1 The challenge to regionalism

The course of the internal contradictions of these radicalised states would be very different if the external environment were more favourable to their resolution in a progressive way. We must remember that, in peripheral societies, the external relations of states obtain a function which is much more pronounced and determinate than in central states. Economic dependence is much more acute and external political penetration rife. In the case of the radicalised states, these vulnerabilities have been deliberately enhanced by the policy of destabilisation, and they have been shielded only partially by regional integration schemes.

Destabilisation has many means, but in all cases it proceeds by 'naming' its enemy. Since the end of the Cold War, the West has struggled to invent a new discursive framework to distinguish between the 'good' and the 'bad'. The Washington Consensus incorporated 'democracy' and 'human rights' in the 1990s, but this has had its limits, for it has constrained the geopolitical interests of the West, which require friendly governments regardless of their democratic credentials; it has disabled action against the unfriendly, many of whom enjoy democratic legitimacy. Thus, other discourses have been piled on, and

these include the 'war on drugs', the 'axis of evil', 'outposts of tyranny', and ultimately, the 'war on terror'. These have served to qualify and prioritise threats, and even trump 'human rights', in accordance with geopolitical requirements. Together they constitute a bag of tricks to be selected and deployed, or ignored. In the case of Rwanda, for example, they were ignored; instead the genocide was slotted into the 'tribal' category, an apparently ancient and intractable conflict which rendered collective security measures futile. In Latin America, which made a generalised transition to democracy, it was the 'war on drugs' that would continue to justify a militarised foreign policy. In southern Africa, where neither the 'war on drugs' nor the 'war on terror' has any mileage, it is the 'outpost of tyranny' that has been invoked. Since 2001, the 'war on terror' has gained overall priority: it has been extended to North Africa, East Africa, and the Horn, whose focal points are currently Somalia and Sudan. And more recently, there has been an attempt to extend it to South America and to merge it with the 'war on drugs'. But, regardless of the name chosen, the real threat to monopoly capital and Western geo-strategy is delinking and autonomous development.

Delinking was for a long time seen as a viable possibility within national territories, in spite of size. Today, delinking is seen as a larger process which must involve individual states together with regional partners. Indeed, regional integration schemes have the potential to reinforce the positive effects of radicalisation within individual states and/or expand the geographical space for the social and sectoral re-articulation of member states. Although there is no single model for meaningful regionalism, historically it was the federalist idea that guided progressive thinking on the matter. Federalism, however, remains utopian unless a series of preconditions hold: geographical contiguity; ideological convergence; an anti-imperialist and egalitarian ethos; the priority of politics over economics (especially over unequal development); centralised and democratic regional planning; and collective defence.

We submit that federalism remains the principal recipe for delinking. However, other schemes are also possible, especially where geographical contiguity is lacking. In such cases, a convergence on anti-imperialist and egalitarian principles may sustain less institutionalised and more ad hoc forms of solidarity with regard to, for example, the problems of unequal development and defence. To be sure, regional schemes that fall short of these very basic elements leave the door open to the centrifugal forces of unequal development and perpetual destabilisation. By contrast, the 'functionalist' approach to regionalism which, by and large, continues to guide thinking on both sides of the South Atlantic, is inherently incapable of dealing with the disparities and contradictions that peripheral capitalism presents. Indeed, the obstacles that functionalism cannot surmount are the subordinate insertion of these states into the world economy, their asymmetrical development, their resort to intra-regional competition, and the related security dilemma.⁴

⁴ In the case of Western Europe, from which all the wrong 'functionalist' lessons have been drawn, the competition and security dilemma of member states was smothered by the *Pax Americana* of NATO, while the regional economic programme implemented was very different, based on agro-industrial

3.1.1 Latin America and the Caribbean

Typical of both Africa and the Americas is a complex mosaic of regional integration initiatives which tend to overlap and compete through enduring hierarchies. The Americas as a whole are joined together by the OAS (Organization of American States), which since its inception in the twentieth century has been dominated by the United States. Today, among the competing/overlapping schemes are NAFTA North American Free Trade Agreement in the North, the DR-CAFTA (Dominion Republic Central American Free Trade Agreement) which links Central America and the Dominican Republic to the United States, CARICOM (Caribbean Community) in the Caribbean, MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market) in the Southern Cone, the CAN (Controller Area Network) for the Andean region, the more recent UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) which aims to unite the competing South American schemes; and the Venezuela-led ALBA (Bolivarian Alternatives for the Peoples of the Americas).

With the exception of ALBA, all these schemes have had a 'stabilising' effect, given that they are either dominated by the United States or by commercial criteria, thereby preserving the interests of monopoly capital as well as those of regional powers - ie, Brazil in the case of MERCOSUR. In this complex regional dynamic, the interests of the United States and regional powers, especially Brazil, have not been identical: a clear indication of this was the general resistance, including that of Brazil, to the US proposal to extend NAFTA to the whole of the Americas by means of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). But their interests are not antagonistic either. Brazil has consistently reassured international capital of its commitment to regional economic extraversion and has become a conduit for regional economic penetration. At the same time, it has pursued a policy of strategic 'complementarity' with the United States: Brazil eagerly picked up the Caribbean fragment of the post-Rwanda international security system by assuming leadership of a UN mission to Haiti after the United States backed the toppling of the government of Aristide.

Nonetheless, their working relations have been complicated by the emergence of radical nationalism and regional polarisation. Specifically, the FTAA proposal induced a more proactive response by Venezuela. Since 2004, Venezuela has mobilised Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, the Caribbean island of Dominica, and Ecuador, to form what amounts to a 'coalition of anti-imperialists'. Venezuela has also signed up to MERCOSUR and UNASUR, but ALBA has been particularly 'threatening': it has rejected commercial criteria, adopting instead a principle of trade complementarity, eg 'oil for doctors' in the case of Cuba; it has served as an instrument of solidarity against US strategies, not only with regard to the FTAA but also to Plan Colombia; it has challenged the leadership of regional stabilisers, mainly Brazil; and it has fused three geopolitical sub-fields - South America, Central America and the Caribbean - over which Venezuela now directly competes for influence with Brazil and the United States. Venezuela has also led a series of initiatives to establish new regional banks and other institutions, including the ALBA Bank, the ALBA Caribe Fund, Petrocaribe,

integration on a *national* basis, and reinforced by massive injections of economic assistance through the Marshall Plan. None of these conditions holds today in the South.

PetroAndina, PetroSur, Telesur, and the South Bank, the latter of which includes most of South America (including Brazil).⁵ Their purpose is to counter the commercial logic of the established regional banks and multilateral institutions, to manage natural resources (especially oil resources) on a regional basis, and to provide autonomous channels for the dissemination of news and culture (in the case of Telesur).

ALBA has become the pioneer of a new regionalism based on principled solidarity, by means of ad hoc arrangements, in the absence of geographical contiguity (Girvan 2008). Its stated principles are solidarity, complementarity, compensatory financing for the treatment of asymmetries, and differentiated treatment of countries according to their circumstances. Thus far, co-operation has consisted of concessional financing for the relief of energy import bills, for state-owned industries, and for physical and social infrastructure; support for projects in health and education for the poor; and non-reciprocal trading arrangements. Among its most innovative agreements, especially with CARICOM partners in the ambit of Petrocaribe, is to divert 25 per cent of the bill for imports of crude oil from Venezuela to the ALBA Caribe Fund, for the purpose of financing social and economic programmes. In fact, Petrocaribe has now become the largest single source of concessional finance to the Caribbean.⁶ Another innovation is in trade, where ALBA adheres to the principles of special and differentiated treatment, non-reciprocity, and compensated trade, through direct product exchanges, according to the circumstances of member-states.

Suffice it here to focus on one other crucial dimension, the strategic. Over the last decade, the South America region as a whole has been in a military build-up, with a collective increase of 30 per cent in military spending. Part of this is driven by a veritable cold war between the Uribe government in Colombia and Venezuela, the latter of which has intensified military assistance to, and collective defence with, its preferred regional partners. Venezuela has also purchased arms from Russia and maintains friendly relations with Iran.⁷ This military build-up boiled up to a crisis in March 2008, when Colombia invaded Ecuadorian territory, with the assistance of US intelligence. The incursion short-circuited Venezuelan-led negotiations to free hostages held by the FARC, serving the strategy of the Uribe government to fight on against the FARC until the latter's unilateral surrender and to shun any negotiated solution - especially one which would involve Venezuela. Moreover, the incursion served the new US strategy in South America, which is to extend the logic of the

⁵ The South Bank eventually gained the support of Brazil by conceding to two key Brazilian positions: that it would be a bank for regional infrastructural development and not a lender of last resort, the latter being defended by Venezuela; and also to exclude Central America and the Caribbean, where Venezuela holds more sway among such allies as Nicaragua and Cuba. On the other hand, the proposal of smaller states, including Venezuela, that the bank's voting system be based on 'one member, one vote', was a victory for the smaller states. Nonetheless, the lending principles of the Bank remain to be defined, with Venezuela defending more 'political' criteria and Brazil more 'technocratic' (Carvalho et al, forthcoming).

⁶ For example, whereas US Foreign Assistance in 2005-2007 amounted to US\$ 340 million per year, Petrocaribe amounted to US\$ 468 million per year, and is expected to rise to US\$ 1.1 billion in 2008-2010 (Girvan 2008).

⁷ These have naturally attracted much attention. But, contrary to media hype, Venezuela's military expenditures still remain lower than the bigger spenders, Chile, Brazil and Colombia.

'war on terror' to the region and thereby justify 'pre-emptive aggression' on a perpetual basis.

The gravity of this crisis forced South American nations – including Brazil, which recently has also diversified its military co-operation to France, ie away from the US – to look directly into the mirror and recognise that they had something more fundamental in common: a sovereignty regime, conquered historically by struggles against external domination and military dictatorships. Any incorporation of South America into the 'war on terror' would transform the regional regime and override both human rights and territorial sovereignty. In an unprecedented development, the OAS openly resisted US designs, and Uribe was called upon to apologise for the incursion. Yet, the US strategy has not relented, and South America has failed to consolidate a mutual defence pact to deal with the escalation of conflicts. The United States, together with Uribe, ratcheted up accusations of 'support for terrorism' against Chavez and, more ominously, in April 2008, announced the reactivation of the Fourth Fleet. This marine force – which had been created in 1943 to hunt down Nazi submarines in the region and was deactivated in the early stages of the Cold War – will be led by a newly-built aircraft carrier (the *George H.W. Bush*) and will eliminate much of the need for physical bases on the sub-continent. Subsequently, in May 2008, regional heads of state met in Brasilia to discuss UNASUR, including its South American Defence Council. But again, the enduring regional divisions resurfaced. The Uribe government rejected any need for a separate defence mechanism, preferring the status quo of the OAS, given that the latter includes its northern patron. Brazil defended a separate mechanism, but one patented on the UN Security Council, that is, a forum for dialogue and resolutions but not with a mutual defence pact. Venezuela defended a mutual defence pact.

These divisions continue to play out in Bolivia, whose ongoing destabilisation could cause a regional conflagration. The weaknesses of the MAS government have been exploited by the domestic opposition and its US allies. The United States has been funnelling funds to opposition groups via the USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and has appointed Philip Goldberg to its embassy in La Paz, the former head-of-mission to separatist Kosovo; there have been reports also of assistance to militias. In response, Bolivia has signed a mutual defence pact with Venezuela. The latter has provided military assistance and training to a poorly equipped Bolivian military, beyond the various deals for economic assistance and investments in energy – all of which have been crucial to the survival of the Movement for Socialism (MAS) government. The outcome is still indeterminate; it will depend on internal and external developments, including the behaviour of regional neighbours. All of them, except Colombia, have explicitly affirmed their commitment to the territorial integrity of Bolivia and to constitutional means for resolution of the conflict between central government and its provinces. Indeed, civil war in Bolivia would affect everyone profoundly – many already depend on Bolivian gas, including Brazil and Argentina, and the displacement of populations would create a complex international political and humanitarian crisis. Moreover, the appeal of the MAS government transcends borders and inspires the indigenous

ethnic groups (Aimara, Quechua and Guarani) which also straddle Chile, Peru, Argentina and Paraguay, and which could be drawn into the conflict.

Despite all this, regional neighbours have been conducting a 'quiet diplomacy' of a more deafening type, especially Brazil. While publicly defending territorial integrity and constitutionality, and even accepting to renegotiate the terms of existing investments after the nationalisations, Brazil also punished Bolivia by suspending US\$1 billion in investments in energy. Then it passively watched the destabilisation boil up to a crisis, at which point it entered the fray to seek for itself the role of unilateral mediator – rejected by the Bolivian government. The Brazilian strategy continues to adhere to the logic of structural dominance, which in this case appears to be to let the MAS government wear itself down until it concedes to the terms of Brazilian capital and 'protection'.

3.1.2 Africa

Regional dynamics in Africa have similar complexities, although the sheer size of the continent has tended to reduce a direct security spillover from one sub-region to another, with the crucial exception of the Great Lakes region, which has drawn in adjacent sub-regions. Typical of this continent as well is the overlap and competition of regional integration initiatives through hierarchically structured relationships. In this case, the universal organisation, the OAU/AU, has adopted a policy of decentralisation of integration schemes to the sub-regions, with a view to re-integrating them into a continental African Economic Community at a future date. However, this has not created an orderly organisation of integration schemes. Among the most important are ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) in the West, EAC (East African Community) and IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) in the East, SADC (Southern African Development Community) and SACU (Southern African Customs Union) in the South, and COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) in the East and South. More recently, three schemes, EAC, SADC, and COMESA, resolved to harmonise their trade agreements to create a single free trade area. In all, the general thinking all around remains deeply functionalist, despite the recent revival of debates over a federal United States of Africa

In the 1990s, the new geopolitical circumstances led to the recognition that autonomous collective security mechanisms must accompany economic integration initiatives. The regionalisation of the international security system effectively began in Africa, by the Nigerian-led intervention in Liberia and Sierra Leone, under the ECOWAS umbrella. Nigeria went on to spearhead a proposal for continental security, through the CSSDCA (Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation), joined by South Africa, while the latter took responsibility for continental economic initiatives through NEPAD (New Economic Partnership for African Development). In the process, the continental organisation was re-launched as the AU, with a new sovereignty regime; this now goes beyond non-interference to include injunctions against military coups, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The new policy dynamism on integration is very positive, but it has not yet discovered a 'model'

to call its own. The AU's Peace and Security Council is a diluted form of the UN Security Council, with no permanent members or vetoes - itself a response by smaller states to attempts by Nigeria and South Africa to institutionalise their dominance through a UNSC-type (United Nations Security Council) scheme. And NEPAD has foundered on its own contradiction, which was to strike a deal with the West, in terms of which Africa would agree to 'behave' and the West to 'develop it'. Both Nigeria and South Africa have generally played an essentially 'stabilising' role, in their own interests and those of extra-regional powers. As is the case in South America, the interests of these regional powers have been neither identical nor antagonistic with Europe and the United States - nor, we might add, with the newcomer on the block, China.

This is further evident in the revived geopolitical dispute over the continent between China and the West, which has poked holes in the Washington Consensus, and even replaced it in some places with a 'Beijing Consensus'. If the Western alliance had regained exclusive geopolitical influence over the continent after the end of the Cold War, the emergence of China as a major investor and consumer of energy commodities has challenged Western, and especially US, positions. At the same time, the generalised economic and social crisis unfolding on the continent since the 1980s has produced a variety of politico-ideological responses, two of which - political Islam in the North and East and radical nationalism in the South - have interacted with geopolitical competition and significantly altered the correlation of forces. The conflict has particularly affected Eastern Africa as a whole, which has been incorporated into the 'war on terror', to subordinate to its logic Sudan, the Horn, and East Africa. Both China and the United States have penetrated the region with military assistance, to the effect of escalating intra-state and inter-state conflicts. Nonetheless, the United States retains the upper hand, given its superior ability to project military power, to sustain cross-border proxy wars, as in the Horn, and to launch its own aerial bombardments in Somalia. It is notable that neither Nigeria nor South Africa have provided leadership against this systematic penetration, and indeed both maintain military relations of their own with the United States, as well as with China.

The intensification of geopolitical competition is a grave challenge to regional integration, which must be resisted collectively. This includes cases in which geopolitical competition has opened a space for manoeuvre by African states, as in the case of Angola, which has leveraged Chinese aid and investments to free itself from IMF conditionalities. Reliance on inter-imperial rivalries has its limits - however dexterous the manoeuvring might be - and can certainly not be a substitute for home-grown solutions to development, especially if this is to be economically and strategically autonomous. Short-term and localised benefits may easily be overtaken by a continent-wide escalation of inter-imperialist rivalry. The establishment by the United States of a new Africa Command in 2008 - mirroring developments in South America - indicates that ominous clouds are gathering. In this regard, it is to the credit of African states, including Nigeria and South Africa, that they have rejected the installation of new US bases on the continent.

Suffice it here to take a closer look at the dynamics of conflict in East and Southern Africa, so as to illuminate the dynamics of destabilisation and regionalism. East Africa has embarked on a new integration scheme by reviving the East African Community (EAC), which had collapsed in the late 1970s. The region is tied together by commercial and transport networks, whose regional sub-centre is Kenya. The EAC has set for itself a more advanced vision of integration, including a customs union and federation. Yet, the EAC member states lack the ideological requirements for convergence around an anti-imperialist and egalitarian regional project and, typically, have moved slowly on the basis of functionalist logic. The EAC has also overlapped with IGAD and the larger COMESA. These competing and still indeterminate regional schemes have weakened collective defence mechanisms. This became clear in the course of the conflict in Kenya.

Adding to Kenya's internal contradictions was the incorporation of the country into the 'war on terror'. The incumbent government of Mwai Kibaki had collaborated with the US policy of 'renditions', effectively ceding sovereignty over the ways and means of dealing with suspected violators of Kenyan law. The opposition of Raila Odinga seized on this concession to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Muslim community to reverse the policy. This set the stage for destabilisation. In December 2007, when the electoral fraud against Odinga became clear, the United States endorsed the fraudulent election results, thus giving the green light to Kibaki to proceed with the fraud. It later reversed its decision, but the damage was done. Meanwhile, the EAC and the AU remained powerless in the face of this external penetration and aggression. Not only had regional partners failed to withstand the transformation of the regional sovereignty regime, they had also failed to develop the means to intervene and negotiate a home-grown resolution to the crisis.

Once the violence broke out, the negotiations were initiated by none other than the World Bank resident representative, together with leaders of the business community. The negotiations were then handed to the AU Chair, who was not able to see them through. The torch was then passed to Kofi Annan, an ex-officio negotiator, who did see the negotiations through, by means of a tough balancing act which assured all parties and interests that contracts would be honoured and liberal reforms preserved, in accordance with principles sketched out by the World Bank. The fractious Kenyan bourgeoisie was thus able to conciliate, split the pie, and maintain the national and regional *status quo* which is the organic cause of fragmentation and conflict. It is worth noting that, in this case, the resolution of the conflict did not demand 'regime change', ie the removal of Kibaki, despite his obvious electoral fraud and the excessive violence that was perpetrated by the security forces under his command. The discursive twists and turns named the conflict differently: it was not 'just about elections', but about something much 'deeper' which trumped democracy: 'tribal conflict'.

The comparison with Zimbabwe and Southern Africa is telling. Election irregularities and electoral violence have been met with one, and only one, demand: regime change. There are no deeper issues here. Elections, moreover, have been demanded in the midst of a ruthless

destabilisation campaign which has brought out all the tricks: a vociferous propaganda war; the full withdrawal of multi-lateral and bilateral funding, except for 'humanitarian' aid; the deliberate raising of the country's 'risk', to the effect of massive capital flight; the issuing of travel warnings, thus destroying the tourism industry; the blocking of assistance to the country's AIDS programme, despite having the fourth highest infection rate in the world; attempts to introduce GM maize into the country via 'food aid'; suspension from the Commonwealth; repeated attempts to take the country to the UN Security Council; the appointment of British High Commissioner Brian Donnelly, who had previously gained his destabilisation expertise in Yugoslavia; and relentless economic support for the opposition, authorised in the case of the United States by the Zimbabwe Democracy Act, which has funnelled funds through a series of agencies, such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the Zimbabwe Democracy Trust, the Southern African Media Development Fund, and the USAID, including its Office of Transition Initiatives.

These are the economic and political circumstances that have created the war economy and escalated internal conflict. The question must indeed be asked whether the "rule of law" can be upheld in a country that has been fully penetrated and subjected to a ten-year assault of this kind. To be sure, there are countries, such as the United States, that may have the means to withstand such an assault if they were subjected to it, but in a country as dependent as Zimbabwe, the consequences approximate conditions of war. Even so, it is certain that the United States, or any EU country, or China, would have dealt with such a domestic political opposition much more resolutely than the ruling party in Zimbabwe. Indeed, anti-terror or anti-treason laws have already been recklessly invoked. Of course, this generalised confrontational climate does not justify the resort to violence against rural and urban workers and human rights activists in Zimbabwe. The challenge still remains to engage politically the rural and urban working classes in a sustained non-coercive campaign to overcome the polarisation and to articulate a popular resolution to the crisis in their class interests.

That the destabilisation campaign has stopped short of direct military aggression or cross-border proxy operations has to do with the very different circumstances that have prevailed in the region after the defeat of apartheid. The region has managed to implement a mutual defence pact since 2003, after years of wrangling over the structure, mandate and leadership of SADC's Organ for Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS). This is not to say that the region has 'rescued' Zimbabwe from the assault. The policy of 'quiet diplomacy', led by South Africa, has been deeply contradictory. On the one hand, it has provided diplomatic cover for Zimbabwe, given that its radicalism has been difficult to oppose; the land reform, especially, has had wide appeal in the region, and any direct opposition to it would have risked a backlash in domestic arenas. On the other hand, quiet diplomacy has also sought to put Zimbabwe back on the 'normalisation' track, in accordance with the neo-liberal principles that continue to guide regional integration.

Indeed, South Africa has invested its energy in the deepening of liberalism in both the continent and the region. By means of open markets, South Africa has quadrupled its foreign direct investment in the region and tripled its trade surplus since the end of apartheid, both of which have allowed it to avert economic crisis at home. It has even gone on to sign a Free Trade Agreement with the EU, against the will of its regional partners. Not surprisingly, Zimbabwe's radical nationalism has been inherently antagonistic to this logic of structural dominance. The antagonism was present in the OPDS from the beginning, reaching its climax in 1998 when Zimbabwe defied South Africa and mobilised Angola and Namibia to send troops to the DRC and to defend against the US-backed incursions by Rwanda and Uganda. This was a crucial moment of a vanguard anti-imperialist solidarity between these three countries which led to the signing of a mutual defence pact among them, five years before it was extended to South Africa and the rest of SADC.

The correlation of forces currently built up around Zimbabwe is profoundly unstable. Quiet diplomacy has been criticised from all sides, including from the West, which initially had seen 'regime change' potential in it. In 2007, SADC took the courageous step to call for an end to sanctions and for international support for a post-land-reform recovery programme. This was a diplomatic victory for Zimbabwe, but the tables began to turn once again in 2008, when the West managed to split SADC and exert influence over Botswana and Zambia. The virus began to spread further, as domestic politics in South Africa entered a period of uncertainty. President Thabo Mbeki has upheld the policy of quiet diplomacy, but has been weakened by the rise of Jacob Zuma to the leadership of the ANC and subsequently by his removal from the presidency of the Republic. In turn, Zuma has been weakened by his own bouts with litigations, which have obliged him to seek favour with COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) and the SA Communist Party (SACP) both in a tactical alliance with the Zimbabwean 'opposition' and the West.

Nonetheless, South Africa has stuck to silent diplomacy and has even offered support to Zimbabwe for the purchase of agricultural inputs – as opposed to the 'food aid' logic of the West. At the same time, SADC unity continues to prevail over attempts by the UN, AU and other proxies to penetrate the mediation process. Since the power-sharing agreement between the ZANU-PF and the MDC was signed in September 2008, the allocation of ministries has stalled several times and now seems to have crashed. The immediate issue is control of the Home Affairs Ministry and, hence, the security apparatus. However, geopolitical issues loom large: British, US, Australian, Chinese, Russian, Indian, South African, and former Rhodesian corporate interests are all vying for contracts around Zimbabwe's minerals (chrome, coal, platinum, gold, diamonds, and coal), as well as the resources of the rest of the region. The West has extended sanctions to Zimbabwe's state-owned enterprises, which have led the Look East policy, and has pulled the strings on the MDC to reject a compromise over Home Affairs. The West also continues to exploit the divergences within SADC, even raising suspicions about an AFRICOM presence in Botswana, and has also repositioned itself in the DRC, to which SADC has now committed support.

4. A TIME FOR SOLIDARITY

Each one of these radicalised states is now at a critical stage, and their fates are tied together. They are reaching an impasse, or already ceding ground to the ‘civilising’ forces of destabilisation. We must recognise that, however serious their internal contradictions might be, it is these radicalised states – and not their Centre-Left and more powerful neighbours – that have led the struggle for economic sovereignty, racial equity, regional symmetry, and collective autonomy. Indeed, it is these radicalised states that have galvanised a reconfiguration of forces at the regional level, for alliances to be built, and for reviving the ethos of anti-imperialism and egalitarianism. And it is these states that have facilitated protracted social struggle: whether in defence of land reform, racial equity, or new forms of collective property, they have opened a political space to be captured by those movements conscious enough to recognise the historic significance of the agrarian and national questions.

These states have also sought to close political spaces, some of which have even been progressive. We are dealing with capitalist states after all, whose limits are structurally imposed: we are dealing neither with revolutionary states, nor with pliant neo-colonial states. Many among the Left, exasperated by the ‘authoritarianism’ and ‘populism’ of these radical nationalisms, and believing that ‘another world is possible’, have chosen to close ranks with destabilisation in the interest of that other world. We must continue to engage critically with these states, to defend the gains in national sovereignty and regional autonomy, as well as to provide independent and principled analyses of the contradictions and dangers of radical nationalism.

Some among the Left have also sought to differentiate one nationalism from the other and to treat them differently (eg ‘bad’ Mugabe vs. ‘good’ Chavez). Such claims are highly ideological and opportunistic in themselves. For these anti-systemic populisms exhibit the same political tendencies and contradictions. Of course, there are notable differences between them which should not be underestimated: some political forces are more advanced ideologically, articulating visions of a socialist future (Venezuela); others are more advanced in implementing structural changes, even if they have yet to take the next ideological step (Zimbabwe); some are more advanced in their economic solidarity (ALBA); others are more advanced in their collective defence mechanisms (SADC). But these differences should not be taken out of proportion, or out of context, considering also their different geopolitical positions and their different economic circumstances. On the contrary, such differences must serve as the basis for an organised exchange of ideas and transatlantic solidarity among equals.

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