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Working Paper no.78

**STATE FAILURE AND SUCCESS IN
UGANDA AND ZIMBABWE:
THE LOGIC OF POLITICAL DECAY AND
RECONSTRUCTION IN AFRICA**

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February 2006

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Crisis States Programme
Working papers series no.1

ISSN 1740-5807 (print)
ISSN 1740-5815 (on-line)

Development
DESTIN
Studies Institute



Crisis States Research Centre

State Failure and Success in Uganda and Zimbabwe: The Logic of Political Decay and Reconstruction in Africa¹

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Abstract

This article uses an interdisciplinary approach to the post-colonial history of Uganda and Zimbabwe and shows that the way in which regimes responded to contradictory political and economic demands explain the processes that led to state failure or consolidation. It provides a review of the claims of the competing theories used to explain these processes, and shows that they all explain some, but not all, of the critical changes that occurred. The outcome of interventionist or neo-liberal policies depended on contextual circumstances, and produced changes in the social, economic and political capital in each country that will determine the success or failure of future policies.

In Africa, as in so much of the world, only more so, the clocks go backward as well as forward.²

Most African states acquired democratic constitutions at independence, but soon fell prey to oligarchical rulers or military dictators. Corruption, mismanagement and disruptive conflict produced growing poverty, inequality and economic decline, and dependence on the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) for financial support and policy guidance. The generalised nature of the resulting political, economic and social crisis means that it must stem from deep-seated structural and societal factors rather than the personalities of particular leaders or short-term economic conditions. Radical theorists attributed it to unfavourable external factors and ‘neo-colonialism’;³ mainstream theorists to domestic political and policy mismanagement, and over-extended national states. These explanations were once offered as alternatives, but both factors have clearly been involved. The world community does sustain “quasi-states in Africa” that cannot “meet the criteria for legitimate statehood”, but only survive by accessing “external resources to make good the deficiencies in their own rule”;⁴ while the performance of countries like South Korea and Malaysia shows that it is possible

¹ This paper is based on fieldwork carried out in Uganda since the 1960s, and in Zimbabwe since 2002. The Department for International Development has funded most of it, to whom I owe a major debt. My current work on problems of political crisis and breakdown has been part of a collective enterprise in the Development Studies Institute at the London School of Economics, managed by the DFID-funded Crisis States Research Centre (CSRC). I owe a great debt of gratitude to my LSE colleagues, and especially to James Putzel, Director of the CSRC. I also have a particular debt to Sven Schwarsensky of the Frederik Ebert Foundation in Zimbabwe for his intellectual and logistical support for my research.

² David Landes, *The wealth and poverty of nations: why some are so rich and some so poor*, London: Abacus, 1998, p.507.

³ Freund, Bill, *The making of contemporary Africa: the development of African society since 1800*, 2nd ed., London: Zed Books, 1998.

⁴ C. Clapham, *Africa and the international system: the politics of state survival*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp.15 & 21.

for effective regimes to generate successful capitalist development programmes in late developing countries.

This paper addresses the problem of state failure by summarising the most influential current theoretical explanations, and then makes selective use of their insights to examine the processes leading to state failure and success in Uganda and Zimbabwe.⁵

Explaining Political Disorder and State Failure in Africa

Treating the African crisis as a function of state failure turns it into a problem for political science, but in the 1960s Huntington argued that the discipline had yet to provide “models of corrupt or degenerating societies highlighting the decay of political organization and the increasing dominance of disruptive social forces”.⁶ Instead it treated the state as “an organisation for enabling the mass of men to realise social good on the largest possible scale”,⁷ which depended on the existence of stable democratic processes and rational bureaucratic systems that hardly existed in Africa.

Theories of political *development* emerged in the 1950s and 1960s to explain transitions from colonialism to democracy, but they used functionalist models that failed to anticipate or explain the problems of political disorder and decay that were already evident in 1968. A series of alternative explanations have subsequently emerged to address the problem – dependency theory at the end of the 1960s, and neo-liberalism and neo-patrimonialism in the 1980s. They provided important but partial insights into the failed state problem, so I will outline their basic assumptions then use them to build a more comprehensive approach.

From Dependency Theory to Neo-Liberalism

In the late 1960s neo-Marxist dependency theorists were attributing the crisis to the *capitalist* nature of third world states, claiming that this incorporated them into an exploitative imperialistic international system that perpetuated economic dependency and political decay.⁸ They called on ‘subordinate classes’ to capture state power and use it to control the economy and ‘delink’ from the global capitalist system. However, they did not recognise the weakness of the political and social movements needed to initiate this enterprise, or that of the state apparatuses required to implement it. Successful corporatist strategies designed to strengthen, not weaken, capitalist development were adopted in East Asia,⁹ but political and institutional

⁵ This paper is part of a long-term policy review I am conducting of both countries. On Uganda, see E. A. Brett, ‘The political economy of General Amin’, *IDS Bulletin*, 7:1 (1975), pp.15-22; *Providing for the rural poor: Institutional decay and transformation in Uganda*, Kampala: Fountain Press, 1993; ‘Neutralising the use of force in Uganda: the role of the military in politics,’ *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33:1 (1995), pp.129-152; ‘Rebuilding war-damaged communities in Uganda,’ in T. Allen (ed.), *In search of cool ground: war, flight and homecoming in Northeast Africa*, London: James Currey, 1996; ‘Responses to poverty in Uganda: structures, policies and prospects,’ *Journal of International Affairs*, 52:1 (1998), pp.313-338; and on Zimbabwe, see E. A. Brett, ‘From corporatism to liberalisation in Zimbabwe: economic policy regimes and political crisis, 1980-97,’ *International Political Science Review*, 26:1 (2005), pp.91-106.

⁶ Samuel Huntington, *Political order in changing societies*, New Haven: Yale, 1968, p.86.

⁷ Harold Laski, *A grammar of politics*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1938, p.25.

⁸ See, for example, S. Amin, *Unequal development*, Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976; W. Rodney, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, London: Bogle-L’Overture, 1973; C. Thomas, *Dependence and transformation*, New York: Monthly Review, 1974; and C. Ake, *A political economy of Africa*, London: Longmans, 1981.

⁹ A. Amsden, *Asia’s next giant: South Korea and late industrialization*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989; R. Wade, *Governing the market: economic theory and the role of government in East Asian*

weaknesses, reinforced by poorly designed aid programmes,¹⁰ led to disastrous results in Africa. ‘Left wing’ countries performed worse than ‘right wing’ ones,¹¹ but generalised economic crises at the end of the 1970s discredited all statist policy regimes and the dependency theories that had at least formally been used to justify these policies.

Neo-liberal theorists used these failures to turn dependency theory on its head, attributing this economic, and by implication political, crisis to the *interventionist* nature of the post-colonial state and its corresponding tendency to misallocate resources and subsidise inefficiency. This critique existed as a “dissenting view” in the 1960s,¹² but moved centre stage after the World Bank’s Berg Report attributed Africa’s “inferior performance in economic growth and poverty reduction” to “inappropriate state dominated policies” that overloaded governments, distorted economic incentives, and generated unproductive monopoly rents.¹³ This led to the universalisation of market based reforms through structural adjustment programmes managed by economists from the IFIs.

These advisors “collectively misrecognised” the implications and effects of their interventions because they saw their role as technical rather than political, and focussed on the nature of policy regimes rather than the factors related to the capture and use of state power.¹⁴ They therefore failed to recognise the fact that the shift to market-based policies involved major shifts in the allocation and exercise of state power,¹⁵ but were soon confronted by the fact that the governments they relied on to implement their policies “mostly refused to countenance real institutional reform”, and often “simply deceived [the IFIs], promising measures that they then failed to undertake or soon reversed”.¹⁶ By the early 1990s the IFIs acknowledged that “bad governments” had turned many states into the “source of man-made economic decline”.¹⁷ As donors ruled they could not challenge the authority of incumbent regimes, so they began to demand free elections to challenge the autonomy of regressive regimes, and ‘new forms of public management’ based on privatisation, sub-contracting and surrogate markets to improve the quality of public service delivery systems.

Unfortunately these reforms also failed because they ignored the impact of ‘politics’ on state performance. Rulers and officials can only follow technical advice when they can reconcile them with their need to respond to the demands of the groups on which their support depends.

industrialization, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990; Athul Kohli, *State-directed development: political power and industrialization in the global periphery*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

¹⁰ This judgement rests on fieldwork in Uganda in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and on David Burch, *Overseas aid and the transfer of technology: the political economy of agricultural mechanisation in the Third World*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1987.

¹¹ Ralph Austen, *African economic history: internal development and external dependency*, London: James Currey, 1987.

¹² Peter Bauer, *Dissent on development*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972.

¹³ World Bank, *Accelerated development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Washington: World Bank, 1981, p.3. See also Deepak Lal, *The poverty of development economics*, London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1984; R. Bates, *Markets and states in tropical Africa: the political basis of agricultural policies*, Berkeley: California University Press, 1981.

¹⁴ Bordieu provides us with numerous examples of situations where “collective misrecognitions ... are both the precondition and the product of the functioning of the field” (Pierre Bordieu, *The logic of practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, p.68). For an influential intervention, see Lal (1984). The most influential political analysis was Bates (1981).

¹⁵ For a critical review of the development of their ideas, see Ben Fine *et al.*, *Development policy in the 21st century: beyond the post-Washington consensus*, London: Routledge, 2001.

¹⁶ Nicolas Van de Walle, *African economies and the politics of permanent crisis, 1979-1999*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.158.

¹⁷ Douglass North, *Structure and change in economic history*, New York: Norton, 1981, p.20.

Democracy increases the range of often contradictory demands to which they have to respond, and cannot *guarantee* good government because elections can be manipulated, intensify partisan conflict and reinforce populist demands, while opposition parties that win power may be as incompetent and venal as their predecessors. Hence political failures are not determined by the formal institutional rules that govern the exercise of state power, but by the social, cultural and economic factors that determine the interactions between rulers and citizens. However state sovereignty makes it hard for donors to ask “why African politicians are so little interested in building capable states, or why business people or voters are still so disinclined to punish leaders for poor performance”, as Booth showed in relation to the recent Africa Commission Report.¹⁸ Political scientists are now developing theories of neo-patrimonialism, and economists are developing theories of rents and primary accumulation to explain these processes.

Neo-Patrimonialism and Primary Accumulation

We can only account for state failure in Africa by identifying the contextual factors that are involved in processes of institutional transformation rather than system maintenance. First, political and economic markets depend on the existence of communities composed of fully informed and autonomous individuals, but people can only acquire the appropriate “aptitudes and dispositions” and “self-knowledge and ... identities”¹⁹ when they are already incorporated into the practices that only liberal institutions make possible. Slaves, serfs, ‘comrades’ in command economies, or colonised ‘subjects’ who tried to practice possessive individualism were quickly and painfully shown the error of their ways.²⁰ Second, running the complex state apparatuses, political parties, pressure groups, media organisations, and educational and research institutions that sustain democracy is costly, and depends on the productivity of the economic system that has to finance them. Hence viable democracies are not just a function of appropriate rule systems, but of the existence of these historically contingent and contextual factors. These institutions do work in advanced societies where the necessary social, political, and economic capital exists, but the attempt to create them in societies attempting to *develop* new institutions generates fundamental social conflict and structural weaknesses. It is these attempts that give rise to the problems now being addressed through theories of patrimonialism and primary accumulation.

Neo-patrimonialism exists where elites can use clientelistic value systems to sustain their political support, and occurs where dispositions associated with traditional and/or statist institutions survive and co-exist with liberal values. The result is likely to be institutional failures because:

the new rules clash with old and still prevalent institutions unless the reformers know how to solve the conflict and are able to do so. Necessary tools for removing dysfunctional institutional elements (including social norms) are

¹⁸ David Booth, ‘The Africa Commission Report: what about the politics?’ *Development Policy Review*, 23:4 (2005), p.494. An important African literature exists that does provide a critique of the behaviour of African regimes, and of the challenges involved in building democratic systems. See, for example, Claude Ake, ‘Rethinking African democracy, in Diamond and Plattner (ed.), *The global resurgence of democracy*, 2nd ed., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000; R. Mukandala (ed.), *African public administration*, Harare: AAPS Books, 2000.

¹⁹ M. Douglas, *How institutions think*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986, p.112. The analysis here is heavily indebted to Bourdieu (1992).

²⁰ M. Mamdani, *Citizen and subject: Continental Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

sometimes unavailable, or when they are available, the reformers, with their incomplete models sometimes may not know how deep to dig until the new institutions take root.²¹

Classical modernisation theorists described this co-existence of traditional and modern institutions as ‘dualism’, but it could more accurately be referred to as ‘multiplicity’ given the coexistence of statist and liberal as well as ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ practices and value systems in late developing countries.²²

Institutional multiplicity sustains communal rather than individualistic loyalties and norms, and personalistic obligations. These constantly subvert the basic principles of good governance, leading to dysfunctional states governed by perverse incentives and pre-modern values.²³ These states depend on:

the giving and granting of favours, in an endless series of dyadic exchanges that go from the village level to the highest reaches of the central state. Under this general rubric of clientelism can be placed a wide variety of practices involving the giving and receiving of favors, *almost invariably based on corruption*. Clientelism can be associated with corruption simply because the former relies on privileged access to public resources and some kind of conflict of interest.²⁴

This neo-patrimonial model can be used to explain many of the destructive processes that generate political decay in Africa, its most pessimistic version, using it to model African politics as no more than a process in which competing interests rationally “instrumentalize the resources which they command within a general political economy disorder”.²⁵

Patrimonialism explains many of the cultural factors that cause state failure, but not the nature of the incentives that drive the economic processes that it engenders. It exists in pre-capitalist states where state power is used to transfer assets from one set of owners to another, a process described (and condemned) by liberal theorists as ‘rent’ extraction. However this idea does not adequately address the complex structural implications of these transfers in societies where a *new* capitalist class is still in the process of formation. Marx first identified the political consequences of this start-up problem when he showed that the *initial* emergence of capitalism must involve what he called “primitive accumulation”.²⁶ His analysis has now been extended by Khan, who shows how state power has been used to create “new property rights, and often entirely new economic classes ... [through a] process of seizure or transfer of assets” that must go on until private firms are strong enough to finance themselves out of

²¹ T. Eggertsson, *Imperfect institutions; possibilities and limits of reform*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005, p.30. He also notes that “even when the demand for new institutions comes from below, there is no guarantee that the proposals are backed by a workable knowledge of the relevant social technologies” (p.208).

²² I am indebted to James Putzel and colleagues at the LSE Crisis States Research Centre for clarification of this point.

²³ Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa works: disorder as political instrument*, Oxford: James Currey, 1999, pp.155-161. See also J.-F. Bayart, *et al.*, *The criminalisation of the state in Africa*, Oxford: James Currey, 1998; J.-F. Bayart, *The state in Africa: the politics of the belly*, London: Longman, 1993.

²⁴ Van de Walle (2000), p.51, emphasis added. See also T. Callaghy, *The state-society struggle: Zaire in comparative perspective*, New York: Colombia University Press, 1984; R. Joseph, *Democracy and prebendal politics in Nigeria*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987; G. Hyden, ‘The governance challenge in Africa’, in Hyden *et al.*, *African perspectives on governance*, Trenton NJ.: Africa World Press, 2000.

²⁵ Chabal & Daloz (1999), p.xix.

²⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital: A critical analysis of capitalist production*, Vol. I, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1974 [1867], Part 8.

profits.²⁷ These processes are intensely competitive, so the adversarial conflicts that they generate also explain political disorder because the zero sum conflicts they generate usually generate “political turmoil”,²⁸ and “wastage and theft”.²⁹

Combining the idea of primary accumulation with neo-patrimonialism provides us with convincing explanations for state failure in Africa. Here competing elites capture state power using divisive tribal or sectarian identities to build clientelistic support networks, and use that power to extract the resources they need to maintain their support and build capitalist enterprises. Free elections, merit-based bureaucracy and competitive markets are impossible in such environments because:

on the one hand, public service remains personalized by way of clientelism and nepotism; on the other, access to the public institutions of the state is seen as the main means of personal enrichment – even if the fruits of such labour are thereafter to be redistributed or even reinvested.³⁰

Chabal and Daloz then argue that there is no reason to expect these destructive processes to end because they serve the interests of the political and economic elites who control state power. Hence:

there is every chance that the elites will use the reforms currently ushered in by the so-called transitions to democracy in order to secure both renewed legitimacy and access to the new assets which the apparent liberalisation of the continent’s economies makes available.³¹

I will use these pessimistic insights to explain the political catastrophes experienced in Uganda and Zimbabwe, but we will also show that patrimonialism and primary accumulation have not always generated destructive effects. As Khan shows, “ugly as they are”, they also helped to create “the first few generations of capitalists”,³² and facilitated subsequent transitions to democratic capitalism in the west, Japan and East Asia. These states did not rest on consent but on “coercive exploitation” imposed by self-seeking political entrepreneurs who were only subsequently forced to extend democratic rights to their citizens by “popular resistance”.³³ I have also found that we need a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between the exercise of state power and the *creation* of capitalist economies than is found in mainstream liberal or patrimonial theory.³⁴ I will explore some of the theoretical implications of this need in the next section, and its contextual implications in the one that follows.

²⁷ M. Khan, ‘Rents, efficiency and growth,’ in M. Khan and J. Sundaram, *Rents, rent-seeking and economic development: theory and evidence in Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.25.

²⁸ Khan (2000), p.38.

²⁹ Khan (2000), p.25.

³⁰ Chabal & Daloz (1999), p.9.

³¹ Chabal & Daloz (1999), p.16.

³² Khan (2000), p.25.

³³ C. Tilly, ‘War making and state making as organized crime’, in P- Evans, *Bringing the state back in*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp.169-170.

³⁴ Olson’s “stationary bandit” theory is highly relevant, especially to the Ugandan case (Mancur Olson, ‘The new institutional economics: the collective choice approach to economic development’, in Christopher Clague (ed.), *Institutions and economic development: growth and governance in less-developed and post-socialist countries*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

The Political Economy of State Failure in Africa

States have three distinct but interdependent roles. First, they make and enforce general social rules and maintain social unity by sustaining institutions that allow conflicting social interests to be expressed and managed. These ‘political’ activities involve the identification and aggregation of interests, the negotiation of compromises between competing social demands, and the maintenance of support for the state as a collective system. Second, states also produce public goods by creating an administrative apparatus that supplies private agents with essential services, but also competes with them for the resources that it needs. Third, they provide the regulatory framework that governs the terms on which private and public enterprises relate to each other, generate livelihoods and provide the taxes required to finance the state apparatus.³⁵ Political scientists generally focus on these ‘political’ and administrative problems, and economists on those related to the production of goods and services, but state capacity actually depends on the government’s ability to maintain a symbiotic relationship between its political, administrative and economic roles.

The political and administrative apparatuses of the state only exist to service private agents, and can only survive as corporate structures when private producers are willing and able to pay taxes, obey their rules, and recognise their legitimacy. Political compliance will then depend on equitable access to state services and livelihoods; administrative capacity on the integrity of the regime and its ability to tax; and productivity on the quality of the protection, regulation and infrastructure provided by the state. The state has to maintain the boundaries between, and the viability of, each of its constitutive parts by allowing the agents in each a high degree of relative autonomy. Politicians must be able to enforce the rules without being captured by particular economic or bureaucratic interests; and citizens must be able to organise autonomous political movements. Officials must be able to use their professional judgement to deliver services in accordance with impersonal rules and free from ‘political interference’ or corrupt payments; and private firms must be guided by market, and not political, controls, and be strong enough to generate the surpluses needed to reproduce themselves and finance the state.³⁶

These are demanding conditions that have only recently been met in developed countries where possessive individualism and strong capitalist economies emerged before competitive democracy was permitted. Yet attempts to create autonomous states in most of Africa occurred before these conditions had been met,³⁷ producing the antagonistic political and economic conflicts associated with neo-patrimonialism and primary accumulation that have always accompanied transitions to democracy and industrialisation.³⁸ This argument has two key implications. First, that disruptive political change in Africa is not primarily due to its failure to use ideal typical liberal or social democratic institutions, but to the underlying social and economic factors that determine their operation as ‘actually existing’ social systems. Second, that understanding the structural consequences demands an interdisciplinary analysis

³⁵ This analysis is strongly influenced by D. Rueschmeyer & P. Evans, ‘The state and economic transformation: towards an analysis of the conditions underlying successful intervention’, in Evans *et al.* (1985), esp. pp.47-48; and Peter Evans, *Embedded autonomy: states and industrial transformation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

³⁶ Almond’s classic introduction to *The politics of the developing areas* (Princeton: Princeton New Jersey, 1960) provides a classical exposition of the role of boundary maintenance; N. Poulantzas, *Political power and social classes*, London: New Left Books, 1973, provides a Marxist interpretation; and Rueschmeyer & Evans (1985) demonstrate the need for the relative autonomy of the state.

³⁷ South Africa is the exception that proves this rule. Here full-scale democracy only emerged after capitalist industrialisation.

³⁸ This problem is not confined to Africa as the link between the depression and Nazism in Germany shows.

that recognises the symbiotic nature of the relationships between the political, administrative and economic variables involved.³⁹

I will show that none of the paradigms outlined earlier meets these conditions. Dependency theorists ignored the social problems that gave rise to state failure, while liberals ignored the destructive impact of free competition on economic and political stability in states with only embryonic capitalist economies. Neo-patrimonialists recognised that political disorder is created by weak states and weak economies, but they ignored the possibility that the structural changes generated by these processes may, in some circumstances, produce progressive as well as regressive results. Politics in Africa has generally operated on authoritarian and corrupt principles that have produced destructive short-term results,⁴⁰ but the resulting changes, as Khan argues, need not only produce waste and decay, but “can be positive or negative” depending on whether the transfers involved go to those able to make “the transition to productive capitalism”, and on “the configuration of political forces which determines the structure of the transfers to political intermediaries and their factions”.⁴¹

An undifferentiated concept of ‘political disorder’ does not help us to understand the dynamic structural consequences of neo-patrimonial politics and the way that they constantly alter the ability of regimes to control their environments and retain power. Authoritarian regimes cannot simply eliminate opponents and steal resources with impunity, because their need to maintain viable and interdependent political, administrative and economic processes imposes constraints on their actions that they ignore at their peril. Their need to satisfy contradictory demands can force them into socially destructive decisions, but these will lead to a growing loss of control, whether over supporters who have lost their assets, officials who do not work because they are no longer paid, or bankrupted firms that can no longer deliver taxes or provide jobs. The specific nature of these constraints is influenced by institutional structure – democratic regimes have to respond to a wider range of demands than dictatorships, but they have decisive effects in even the most traditional or authoritarian societies, as can be seen in the case studies that follow.

Kohli’s study of successful and unsuccessful developmental transitions has made a major contribution to the development of a more comprehensive theory that recognises the effects of these interactions. He shows that “cohesive capitalist” states like South Korea can promote development, while “neo-patrimonial states” like Nigeria do not. The former was based on a “repressive and authoritarian” politics supported by nationalist “ideological mobilization”, and generated rapid economic growth by maintaining “a close alliance with producer or capitalist groups”, and “tight control over labor”.⁴² The latter, whether operating as a dictatorship or “nominal democracy”, was based on “personalistic leaders unconstrained by norms or institutions, and bureaucracies of poor quality”, officeholders who treated “public resources as their personal patrimony”, and where “state-led development ... often resulted in disaster”.⁴³

³⁹ I have dealt with these issues at greater length in E. A. Brett, *Reconstructing development theory*, Houndsworth: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming.

⁴⁰ For more balanced assessments of the African situation than those provided by ‘predatory state’ theorists see G. Hawthorn, ‘Sub-Saharan Africa’, in D. Held (ed.), *Prospects for Democracy, North, South, East and West*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993; N. Chazan, *Politics and society in contemporary Africa*, London: Macmillan, 1988; Richard Sandbrook, *Closing the circle: democratisation and development in Africa*, London: Zed Books, 2000.

⁴¹ Khan (2000), p.39.

⁴² Kohli (2004), p.10.

⁴³ Kohli (2004), pp.9-10.

This approach identifies the factors that contributed to state failure or success and helps to transcend crude notions of criminality and disorder. The co-existence of neo-patrimonial politics and formal liberal rules, associated with the demand for political transfers to support primary accumulation in highly competitive environments, generates political, administrative and economic stresses that are transferred from one sector to the others, but also produce structural changes in the way they operate. Several East Asian states have now been able to manage the resulting challenges successfully, but most African states have not. I will now use this more comprehensive approach to analyse the processes that generated major breakdowns in two African states and identify the ambiguous nature of their long-term structural consequences.

State Failure and Success in Uganda and Zimbabwe

Uganda

1. From Democracy and Corporatism to Military Dictatorship (1961-1971)

In 1961, the new Uganda People's Congress (UPC) government led by Milton Obote confronted complex political and economic challenges. It had to build its own support and unify a fragmented society divided by strong tribal, religious and racial antagonisms and wide economic disparities. The north was poorer than the south, Asians and Europeans controlled the state and private sector, and Protestants had been favoured over Catholics and Muslims. It was constrained by a constitutional framework based on universal suffrage and strong local governments in which Buganda and three other traditional kingdoms in the south had been given semi-federal status in order to alleviate these communal conflicts. It had also inherited a colonial economic system with a small and monopolistic formal sector, a weak industrial base and tight state controls. It therefore had to generate enough growth to benefit the mass of the population, and eliminate racist monopolies by creating an African administrative and economic bourgeoisie in a society where capitalist ownership had been virtually confined to expatriates, and most of the local population worked as relatively well endowed small farmers.⁴⁴

These conflicts had divided the nationalist movement, so the first Parliament was split between three parties: the mainly protestant and northern based UPC; the Catholic Democratic Party (DP); and the traditionalistic *Kabaka Yekka* (KY), supported by the Baganda, the largest and most prosperous tribe in the country. The UPC was the largest party but had no majority, so Obote was forced into a coalition with KY, recognised the authority of the Buganda Parliament, and accepted the *Kabaka*, or King, as non-executive President. Obote subsequently used his patronage to persuade opposition members to cross the floor and built a majority, but was threatened by a mainly southern coalition in 1965 that organised a vote of no-confidence over allegations of corruption in the army. He responded by arresting five members of his cabinet, cancelling elections, revoking the powers of local governments and kingdoms and used the exclusively northern army, led by Idi Amin, to invade the *Kabaka's* palace and the Baganda Parliament.⁴⁵ A unitary presidential constitution was unilaterally introduced in 1967, and elections scheduled for 1971. He attempted to regain popular support

⁴⁴ E. A. Brett, *Colonialism and underdevelopment in East Africa: the politics of economic change*, London: Heinemann, 1973; M. Mamdani, *Politics and class formation in Uganda*, London: Heinemann, 1976.

⁴⁵ G. Ibingira, *The forging of an African nation*, New York, Viking, 1973; E. Mutesa, *The desecration of my kingdom*, London: Constable, 1967.

over the next four years and was about to replace Amin before the elections, but Amin pre-empted his decision and seized power in a military coup.

Political conflict was initially associated with a widely accepted corporatist and nationalistic economic programme managed by national and external policy advisers who accepted the need to bring Africans into the administrative and business elite, plan the economy, protect local industry, extend state enterprise and build a capitalist farming sector. Favourable world conditions and generous aid brought modest gains in service provision, and per-capita growth of about 1 percent over the decade.⁴⁶ However, the isolation and dominance of the expatriate business and administrative class, and the need to buy the support of key politicians and officials, led to economically damaging and politically divisive asset transfers.

Experienced expatriate civil servants were retired and replaced by inexperienced Africans; cotton and coffee processing was transferred to African cooperatives; currency and credit controls, and business licensing, were used to favour African firms; well connected elites were allocated large estates; heavily protected parastatals were established to produce consumer goods; and the army grew tenfold; aid grew but was often used to support inefficient state projects based on inappropriate capital intensive technology. Unfortunately many state industries were badly run, cooperative and marketing board monopolies were used to transfer value from farmers to officials,⁴⁷ big estates were left idle, foreign investment declined and the foreign exchange and taxes generated by commodity exports were not used to increase the productivity of the farmers who produced them but to expand the civil service and army, and to subsidise loss-making state projects. This process did not reduce traditional enmities since southerners believed that northern districts were receiving a disproportionate share of new investments, while northerners could see that most growth continued to occur in the south.⁴⁸ The return to democracy accelerated primary accumulation at the end of the 1960s when banking and insurance companies were nationalised and tighter controls imposed on agricultural markets and foreign trade in a 'move to the left'. This expanded opportunities for patronage, but reduced economic efficiency and alienated the donor community.

2. The Military Dictatorship (1971-1979)

The political conflicts, repression and economic exactions of the Obote period intensified communal enmities, weakened bureaucratic and economic efficiency and alienated foreign donors. Amin was apparently supported by the west and by communities that had been alienated by Obote's attack on traditional authorities, but his political and economic policies had also intensified communal conflicts and weakened the capacity of the state and economy. Amin eliminated all remaining civic rights, but he recognised the need to win the support of key groups if he was to retain power. He appointed a broad-based and mainly civilian cabinet, released all political prisoners, reversed some of Obote's partial nationalisations,⁴⁹ and later used his Muslim background to get support from the Arab world.

⁴⁶ Data from Uganda: Second and Third Five Year Plans; Background to the Budget, 1970-71; Statistical Abstract, 1971. For a more detailed review of this period see Brett, (1975 & 1995). For general political histories see S. Karugire, *The roots of instability in Uganda*, Kampala: New Vision, 1988; T. V. Sathyamurthy, *The political development of Uganda, 1900-86*, Aldershot: Gower Publishing, 1991; and Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda since independence: a story of unfulfilled hopes*, Kampala: Fountain Press, 1992.

⁴⁷ E. A. Brett, 'Cooperatives and development in Uganda', in R. Apthorpe (ed.), *Rural Cooperatives and Planned Change in Africa*, Geneva: UNRISD, 1970.

⁴⁸ These observations are based on interviews and personal observation between 1964 and 1967, and 1972 and 1974.

⁴⁹ Interview 1974 with General Moses Ali, former Minister in the Amin Cabinet.

However, his military role under Obote alienated him from southern communities, while his attack on Obote alienated the northern tribes that had supported the UPC. There were battles in the Army between Acholi and Langi regiments loyal to Obote, and his own supporters from West Nile.⁵⁰ Officials thought to be loyal to Obote were executed – like the Chief Justice and Vice Chancellor of Makerere University. Many others fled and set up opposition groups in Kenya and Tanzania where they built guerrilla armies. They were replaced by increasingly incompetent loyalists, so political and administrative capacity plummeted as did the support base of the regime, which was eventually confined to the Muslim minority and minority tribes in West Nile. In 1972, Amin made a desperate attempt to buy support by expelling virtually the whole of the Asian community and transferring their businesses to Africans with a devastating loss of business and professional skills, private international credit flows, and donor support.

This trapped the society in a vicious circle. Falling revenues and foreign exchange undermined services, this undermined economic capacity and further reduced taxes and foreign exchange. Most of the population was reduced to destitution, intensifying elite competition and political repression. The formal economy was soon replaced by an untaxed informal or ‘*magendo*’ economy,⁵¹ and the government virtually ceased to govern. By 1979 Amin had lost the support of the army and eliminated its competent officers, so he was easily defeated when he invaded Tanzania to distract attention from these conflicts.⁵²

3. From Invasion to Civil War (1979-1985)

Representatives of the exile groups and rebel forces that had accompanied the Tanzanian army formed an interim parliament in 1979, drafted a new constitution and organised national elections in December 1980. The old political parties and enmities reappeared, intensified by the Darwinian struggle for survival created by the economic failures of the military regime. Obote and the UPC were returned to power, although most people believed that the results were fraudulent. He re-established patronage politics, marginalised opposition groups, and excluded southerners from the army. Endemic corruption continued, despite donor support and adherence to a Structural Adjustment Programme. A small rebel group, formed by Yoweri Museveni in Tanzania, went into the bush, and set up the National Resistance Army and Movement (NRA/M). They had popular support in southern districts alienated by the excesses of the first Obote period, the “theft” of the election, the “northernisation” of the state apparatus and army, the collapse of state services and endemic corruption. The NRA/M won the war and took power in January 1986.⁵³

⁵⁰ In an interview President Idi Amin told me that his key problem was “disunity in the army” (1973).

⁵¹ Kate Meagher, ‘The hidden economy: informal and parallel trade in north-eastern Uganda’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 47 (1990).

⁵² For accounts of the period see Brett (1975); Horace Campbell, *The commandist state in Uganda*, PhD, Sussex University, 1979; Stephen G. Bunker, ‘Peasant responses to a dependent state: Uganda’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 19:2 (1985), pp.371-386; A. Omara-Otuunu, *Politics and the military in Uganda, 1890-1989*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987.

⁵³ Interviews with Major-Generals Salim Saleh, Maruru and Tumwine, who had been members of the guerrilla groups, and subsequently became senior officers in the new Ugandan army. See Brett (1995) and Yoweri Museveni, *What is Uganda’s problem?* Kampala, 1992.

4. Liberalisation and Political Reconstruction (1986-2006)

Museveni became President and began a successful programme of political and economic reconstruction. His regime was supported by the southern and West Nile communities that had been alienated by the UPC, and he also included former UPC and Democratic leaders in a 'broad-based' cabinet. A slow process of constitutional reform began. A democratic local government system was set up in 1987, an indirectly elected parliament in 1989, a constitutional assembly elected in 1995, and a new parliament was elected and Museveni returned to the presidency with an overwhelming majority in 1996. Political parties were allowed to exist but not to campaign in these elections. Rebel groups, led by politicians and soldiers from the Obote period, began a new civil war in 1987, but all but the millenarian Lord's Resistance Army were persuaded to make peace and many of them were incorporated into local and national political structures.⁵⁴ Museveni and the NRM won the following elections in 2001.

In 1986, roads were impassable, most factories had closed, the bureaucracy hardly functioned, taxes were not collected, and the currency was virtually worthless. The NRM originally wanted to introduce a corporatist economic programme, but had to liberalise to obtain donor support. Generous aid and a genuine desire to rebuild the country led to an immediate resumption of growth. The regime resisted many demands from the international donor community until 1991, but then accepted fiscal discipline, a market-determined exchange rate, the liberalisation of crop processing and marketing, and a reduction in licensing controls, the return of confiscated Asian properties, and active encouragement of domestic and foreign capitalist investment. Infrastructure was rebuilt and there has been about 7 percent growth since 1986.⁵⁵

The political victory of the NRM has therefore produced a shift from a vicious to a virtuous circle in Uganda. Economic growth has increased political support for the regime, and political stability has encouraged investment and donor support. This shows that it is possible for African states to move from failure to success, although these gains are not secure. State capacity is still weak and donor dependent; the Lords Resistance Army continues to devastate many northern communities and alienate them further from the government;⁵⁶ and while the 1996 elections were 'free and fair', this was less true in 2001, and seems to be unlikely in 2006, given the arrest of the main opposition contender on what seemed to be flimsy charges at the end of 2005, and the subsequent tensions even after his release. Corruption is growing and political conflict intensifying, so it is possible that many of the gains of the previous twenty years could be dissipated.

Zimbabwe

1. From Corporatism to Liberalisation (1980-1997)

The Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU-PF), led by Robert Mugabe, inherited a successful but repressive 'cohesive capitalist state' in 1980 from a white government that had enforced its control through racially exclusive institutions that denied Africans most political and economic rights. White capitalists monopolised most of the best

⁵⁴ Brett (1995 & 1996); T. Allen, *Trial Justice: the International Criminal Court and the Lord's Resistance Army*, London: Zed Books, 2006.

⁵⁵ Brett (1993 & 1998); P. Langseth, *et al.*, *Uganda: Landmarks in rebuilding a nation*, Kampala: Fountain Press, 1995.

⁵⁶ Allen (2006).

land and all large commercial, industrial and financial companies. Growth had averaged 6-7 percent, accompanied by rapid industrialisation, for ten years from the imposition of sanctions in 1965 until the war in the late 1970s, creating the most sophisticated economy on the continent after South Africa.

The new democratic government had to incorporate an African population made up of two major tribes, most of who lived on mainly subsistence communal farms, but also included a semi-proletarianised rural and urban working class. It managed to sustain a viable balance between political compliance, administrative capacity and economic growth from 1980 to the late 1990s because ZANU-PF established itself as the primary representative of the political interests of the African population. It also renounced its 'left' Marxist ideology to persuade key officials and most of the capitalist class to remain and provide the skills and capital on which economic productivity depended. It was therefore able to retain majority support, neutralise its potential opponents, maintain administrative capacity and deliver high quality services, and expand its tax base until the late 1990s. It first used corporatist, then liberal, economic policies, but the stresses that they generated eventually threatened this consensus and led to populist policies that cut output and produced a series of vicious circles that turned Zimbabwe from a relatively successful state to a crisis state in serious danger of collapse.⁵⁷

ZANU-PF emerged from the civil war as a centralised party that operated on Leninist organisational principles, and gave precedence to decisions taken by its Politburo and Central Committee over those taken in cabinet. It represented the majority Shona tribe and was opposed by the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU), which represented the minority Ndebele tribe and remained in opposition until 1988. Hostility between the two intensified in the early 1980s, until plans for unconstitutional action in Matabeleland in 1987 were violently suppressed by the army, with many thousands of deaths. ZAPU then entered into an agreement with ZANU-PF and was incorporated into the ruling party and government.

Although the new regime recognised the property rights of the dominant white capitalist class, it also strengthened its own authority by reinforcing the corporatist state controls it had inherited over the activities of public enterprises, prices, labour conditions, credit, imports, markets and foreign exchange. The programme was well managed, and produced more than 4 percent growth over the decade and growing revenues.⁵⁸ There was virtually no growth in formal employment, but existing workers were guaranteed job security and reasonable wages and the majority of the African population remained in the crowded communal farming areas, but received better services, access to markets, food security funded out of growing revenue and a small redistribution of commercial lands.⁵⁹ This growth in public sector employment and services consolidated the political support for the regime, producing a *de facto* one-party state until the end of the 1990s.

However, this corporatist strategy was becoming increasingly economically unsustainable because import substitution had suppressed exports and led to a shortage of foreign exchange, and state spending to a fiscal deficit, while credit rationing, and controls over foreign and new

⁵⁷ For a more detailed analysis of the political economy of the pre-crisis period see Brett (2005).

⁵⁸ See John Robertson, 'The economy: a sectoral overview', in Simon Baynam (ed.), *Zimbabwe in transition*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1992; C. Stoneman & L. Cliffe, *Zimbabwe: politics, economic and society*, London: Pinter, 1989.

⁵⁹ Lionel Cliffe, 'The politics of land reform in Zimbabwe,' in T. A. S. Bowyer-Bower and Colin Stoneman (eds), *Land reform in Zimbabwe: constraints and prospects*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000; D. Weiner, 'Land and agricultural development', in C. Stoneman (ed.), *Zimbabwe's prospects: issues of race, class, state, and capital in Southern Africa*, London: Macmillan, 1988.

domestic investment had repressed formal sector jobs and produced a rapid increase in unemployment.⁶⁰ These problems led to a well-managed shift from corporatism to a market-based regime in the form of an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) that was negotiated with representatives of the major business associations, and managed by the technocrats in the Ministry of Finance with active support from the IFIs. This policy shift was carried out in an exemplary way, and bore no resemblance to the ‘politics of disorder’ that was to begin a decade later.⁶¹

ESAP had very mixed short-term economic results – drought, deteriorating terms of trade, errors of sequencing, and a failure to control the fiscal deficit, produced lower growth rates, higher unemployment and declining access to social services.⁶² Had it been possible for the government to deal with these problems in a more systematic way, the eventual result would probably have been faster long-term capitalist development as evidenced by a rapid growth in output and exports in 1995 and 1996, when the first ESAP programme ended.⁶³ However, the technocrats behind the programme ignored its disruptive social, and therefore political, effects, with devastating consequences.

ESAP involved major resource transfers from the urban to the rural sector and reduced job security and conditions of employment. Tariff reductions and high interest rates led to widespread closures in high cost industry, demands for fiscal restraint led to cuts in social provision and threatened jobs and labour conditions in the civil service. Many of these problems could have been avoided with greater policy flexibility and donor support, but this did not occur. The result was a significant growth in civic associations opposed to the changes, trade union resistance, unrest in the civil service and a decline in political support for ZANU-PF.⁶⁴ The government responded to these political threats by adopting populist policies designed to buy political support from the key constituencies whose support they had lost.

2. From Liberalisation to Breakdown (1997-2002)

By 1997 the combined effects of corporatism and liberalisation had produced serious unemployment that could not be absorbed on the land because of over-crowding in the

⁶⁰ At the end of 1990, Mugabe acknowledged these problems, saying “Employment creation has averaged a mere 10,000 jobs per annum over the 10 years of independence, far short of the planned target of 144,000 per annum. Investment levels fell in real terms from 15.5% of GDP in 1980 to 10.7% in 1989” (Cited in Jeffrey Herbst, *State politics in Zimbabwe*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, p.58).

⁶¹ Herbst (1992); Tor Skalmes, *The politics of economic reform in Zimbabwe: continuity and change in development*, London: Macmillan, 1995.

⁶² For details see Patrick Bond & Masimba Manyanya, *Zimbabwe’s plunge: exhausted nationalism, neoliberalism and the search for social justice*, London: Merlin Press, 2002; Kwesi Botchwey *et al.*, *From a group of independent persons appointed to conduct and evaluation of certain aspects of the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility*, Washington DC: IMF, 1998; Brett (2005); P. Carmody, *Tearing the social fabric: neo-liberalism, de-industrialisation, and the crisis of governance in Zimbabwe*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001; J. W. Gunning & R. Oostendorp, *Industrial change in Africa: Zimbabwean firms under structural adjustment*, London: Palgrave, 2002; C. Jenkins & J. Knight, *The economic decline of Zimbabwe: neither growth nor equity*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002; Clever Mumbengegwi (ed.), *Macroeconomic and structural adjustment policies in Zimbabwe*, London: Macmillan, Palgrave, 2002; P. Robinson, ‘Macroeconomic performance under structural adjustment: and essay in latrogenic effects’, in Mumbengegwi (2002); World Bank, *Performance Audit Report: Zimbabwe: Structural Adjustment Programme (loan 3434-Zim and Credit 2331-Zim)*, Report No. 14751, Washington: World Bank, 1995.

⁶³ This was the view of two leading capitalists who were active at the time – Jonathan Oppenheimer of Anglo American and Strive Masiyiwa of ECONET WIIRELESS. (Interviews, 2003)

⁶⁴ For a critical review of these developments and the relevant literature, see Brett (2005).

communal areas. This produced a threatening demonstration from civil war veterans in August 1997, and a large payout that destabilised the budget. The government then announced their intention to transfer white-owned farms to Africans in 1998, and invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo with even further growth in budget deficits and in opportunities for primary accumulation by army officers and key politicians.⁶⁵ Currency controls led to overvaluation and suppressed exports, budget deficits to inflation, while the efficiency of the parastatals was eroded as they were increasingly used to reward elite supporters. All of this worsened the economic crisis and intensified the political opposition originally generated by ESAP.

The critical civic and economic organisations intensified their opposition and came together to form the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 that won the political support of most urban voters and those in the former ZAPU areas. This new alliance demonstrated its power when it defeated the government in the constitutional referendum in 2000, and in subsequent parliamentary and presidential elections that the MDC would probably have won but for electoral manipulation.⁶⁶ These political threats then intensified the use of state power to transfer resources as the government appealed to anti-colonial nationalism to justify the forcible expropriation of most commercial farms that it redistributed to small-scale settlers and key members of the political and bureaucratic elite. The following five years were marked by hyper-inflation, a collapse in the value of the currency and personal and corporate savings, widespread bankruptcies, an end of the tourist industry, plummeting exports and food production, and the withdrawal of donor support to the government. Output and exports declined by more than 50 percent between 2001 and 2005, generating an interlocking food, fuel, fiscal and foreign exchange crises.⁶⁷

3. Managing Political Disorder and Economic Breakdown

The regime has managed this destructive process with skill and ruthlessness. Formal democratic elections have continued, and it has made skilful use of an anti-colonial and nationalist rhetoric to maintain political support in its rural heartland and more especially in the region where African rulers have been very reluctant to criticise the regime.⁶⁸ But it has also suppressed opposition newspapers, and used organised violence in rural constituencies to intimidate opposition supporters, manipulated the vote, used the chieftaincy to pressure local voters into supporting ZANU-PF, and the state's maize-marketing monopoly to threaten rural voters' access to food.⁶⁹ The MDC has dealt with this pressure with considerable skill and restraint, but been discredited by its inability to win elections. In 2005, the regime won a two-thirds majority in Parliament and introduced a new Senate. The MDC has now suffered a major split over its decision not to contest these elections, and its ability to operate as a viable political force was open question to question by the end of 2005. In May, the regime mounted 'Operation *Murambatsvina*' (or 'Drive out Rubbish') to destroy most urban informal settlements and markets because it saw the urban poor as a source of political opposition and

⁶⁵ H. Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe*, Cape Town: Philip, 2003.

⁶⁶ See especially B. Raftopolous, 'Current politics in Zimbabwe: confronting the crisis', and the other articles in D. Harld-Barry, *Zimbabwe: the past is the future*, Harare, Weaver Press, 2004; see also A. Hammar *et al.*, *Zimbabwe's unfinished business: rethinking land, state, and nation in the context of crisis*, Harare, Weaver Press, 2002.

⁶⁷ For recent information see IMF, 'Zimbabwe: 2005 Article IV consultation – staff report', *Report 04/10/2005 Country Report 05/359*, Washington DC: IMF, 2005.

⁶⁸ See T. Ranger, 'Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and history of the nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30(2) 2004, pp. 215-234.

⁶⁹ NCA, 'The 2005 Parliamentary Election. Flawed, Unfree and Unfair', Harare: NCA, 2005.

economic non-compliance causing some 700,000 people to lose “either their homes, their sources of livelihood or both”.⁷⁰ This destructive process has provided the small group of crony businessmen, army officers and senior officials who support ZANU-PF with enough rewards to retain their support and give them a vested interest in the continuation of the politics of disorder, in the terms of Chabal and Daloz.⁷¹ Threats of reprisals and devastating poverty have made it impossible for the MDC to mobilise mass demonstrations capable of destabilising the regime, while the physical and political situation in Zimbabwe rules out a civil war of the kind that brought the NRM to power in Uganda in 1986.

However, the regime’s ability to maintain its control is being constantly eroded by economic failures that tighten budget and foreign exchange constraints and erode its capacity to deliver services and control dissent. Urban and rural food deficits are growing, while supplies of food and fuel to the army and police are dwindling. Formerly productive commercial land has been reduced to subsistence production, and crony capitalists are being bankrupted by the economic meltdown. A new governor of the Reserve Bank has been attempting to restore economic discipline since 2003. He made some partial reforms that reduced inflation prior to the 2005 election. He is attempting to negotiate a rapprochement with the IFIs, but his efforts are constantly undermined by powerful people in the regime who are benefiting from the predatory processes that drive the current policy programme. The result has been growing conflict within ZANU-PF, and increasing signs that they will ultimately be forced to come to terms with the IFIs and adopt real economic reforms, as the NRM had to do in 1987.⁷² These internal conflicts will intensify with the campaign to elect a successor to Mugabe before the 2008 elections. Disaffected groups from ZANU-PF are considering the creation of a ‘third force’ in association with the political notables that have recently broken from the MDC, while local observers claim that senior army officers are becoming increasingly restless.

This crisis has produced a vicious circle that is remarkably similar to the one that occurred in Uganda in the 1970s. It has undermined administrative and economic capacity and political support for a regime that has transformed itself from one of the most successful to one of the most unsuccessful in Africa. This has generated opposition movements that are actively trying to transform the situation from within, and eroded their ability to resist the policy demands of the international community. We cannot say when or how these processes will work themselves out, but we also cannot rule out a major transformation of political, administrative and economic relationships comparable to the one that occurred in Uganda after 1986.

Conclusions: Social Conflict, Primary Accumulation and Political Change in Africa

I will now conclude by using the theoretical explanations outlined in the opening sections to explain why similar policy programmes produced successful outcomes under one set of circumstances and disastrous ones under another, and briefly summarise the theoretical and policy implications of the evidence that has been presented.

At independence the new governments needed to buy political support by transferring resources from immigrant to African communities, but had to retain immigrant capital and

⁷⁰ United Nations, *Report of the fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe to assess the scope and impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy...Mrs Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka*, United Nations, 2005.

⁷¹ Chabal & Daloz (1999).

⁷² For the most recent attempts to understand the current crisis, see A. Hammar, *Zimbabwe’s unfinished business: rethinking the land, state and nation in the context of crisis*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2003; and D. Harold-Barry, *Zimbabwe: the past is the future*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2004.

skills in order to sustain state services and economic growth. They initially managed this contradiction by allowing most immigrant businesses to continue, while Africanising the civil service and using state controls to limit businesses' freedom to operate. The pressure to make these transfers depended on the political stability of each regime. It was initially greater in Uganda because of higher levels of social and political fragmentation, but it also overwhelmed Zimbabwe during the post-ESAP. The transfers involved were always economically damaging, and eventually led to disastrous expropriations in both countries, unlike Korea where the military regime could strengthen the existing capitalist and administrative class and retain foreign support from the Japanese state and business community.⁷³ Hence poor performance was not simply due to 'state intervention' but to the nature of the political context in which it occurred. To explain these failures we have to distinguish between the different effects of these policies on the new African elites and on the subordinate classes.

Both regimes were run by elites that had been excluded from the capitalist class by foreigners, and planned to use state power to take over the civil service and parastatals, and use redistributive taxation to provide services to the poor. Most new officials had been well trained and quickly adopted the standards of their predecessors,⁷⁴ and improved service provision during their early years. But the regimes also discouraged African entrepreneurship in the early days,⁷⁵ and they used an allocation process that was clientelistic and intensely competitive. It produced many losers who attributed their failure to political or tribal factors, intensifying communal conflicts and delegitimising the state.

These processes also increased inefficiency since assets went to those with the best political connections, rather than economic skills, and enterprises were sheltered from effective regulation or market competition. Unproductive civil and military spending increased, as did debt incurred through uneconomic donor projects. These conflicts and distortions were kept under control during the early years, and many transfers occurred through legitimate economic programmes or in informal and hidden ways. But economic decline intensified political and economic competition and eventually led to the expropriation of Asian and white enterprises, intensifying 'disorder' but also creating a new black bourgeoisie.

These economic costs also reduced popular political support by increasing inequality and poverty. Most investments went to elite projects, with little being done to upgrade the productivity of most small farmers or develop small-businesses.⁷⁶ There were only minor improvements in services in Uganda, and greater improvements in Zimbabwe where some farmers in the communal areas also benefited, but rapid population growth reduced per-capita incomes; and the failure to expand small businesses and formal sector jobs produced a dual economy with a small labour aristocracy in the towns, and a majority locked into iron-age technology in the rural areas and survivalist activities in the towns. These failures eventually

⁷³ Kohli (2004).

⁷⁴ Information on Zimbabwe from Eddie Cross, and on Uganda from fieldwork and contacts with former students.

⁷⁵ This was especially true in 'socialist' Zimbabwe. See Volker Wild, *Profit not for profit's sake: history and business culture of African entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Baobab Books, 1997; Sheila Nicholas, 'The state and the development of African capitalism in Zimbabwe', in Colin Leys and Bruce Berman (eds), *African capitalism in African development*, Boulder: Lynne Reiner, 1994; interviews 2003 with Strive Masivawa, CEO ECONET Wireless, and Jonathan Openheimer, CEO Anglo American Harare.

⁷⁶ GEMINI, 'Changes in the small-scale enterprise sector from 1991 to 1993: results of a second nationwide survey in Zimbabwe', *GEMINI Technical Report 71* (1994).

enabled the NRA to operate in its 'liberated zones' during the civil war in Uganda,⁷⁷ and produced the dissatisfaction that destabilised the policy process in Zimbabwe.

Neo-liberal critiques of these processes of primary accumulation are therefore fully justified, but the political costs of ignoring African demands would also have been high. The seriousness of the attempts by both governments to balance demands for redistribution and the need to sustain investment during the early years contradicted the predictions of the predatory state theorists, but these demands were so incompatible that their actions inadvertently intensified the original stresses and reduced their ability to control the overall situation. Africanisation reduced bureaucratic capacity; restricting expatriate businesses reduced output, jobs, taxes and foreign exchange; clientelism intensified traditional antagonisms and reduced political support. Each stratagem bought short-term support, but undermined the ability to maintain the symbiotic relationship between political, administrative and economic processes described earlier. Early failures then created vicious circles that forced the regimes to adopt increasingly counter-productive solutions that intensified rather than ameliorated the original conflicts and produced devastating meltdowns. What are the theoretical and practical conclusions that can be drawn from these experiences?

First, they both confirm and negate the claims of all of the competing paradigms outlined earlier when looking at different historical periods. Corporatism did produce growth in output and services in Uganda in the early 1960s and especially in Zimbabwe in the 1980s, while liberalisation increased inequality and led to de-industrialisation in Zimbabwe in the 1980s, as dependency theorists predicted. However, growth under corporatist strategies was unsustainable in both countries, and market-based strategies did succeed in Uganda after 1986 with foreign support, as neo-liberals predicted. Periods of responsible and successful development disprove many neo-patrimonial claims, but subsequent periods of cumulative breakdown and disorder confirm them; and elections have not guaranteed good governance because they have intensified conflict, encouraged unsustainable populist policies, and were manipulated by regimes.

Second, it demonstrates that the viability of particular policy regimes will depend on the nature of the historical processes that have produced the political, social and economic contexts where they are applied. Corporatism worked well in Zimbabwe in the 1980s, but very badly when it was re-introduced in the late 1990s because of the intensification of political conflict and erosion of state capacity that had occurred in the preceding years. Liberalisation produced ambiguous economic results and political instability in Zimbabwe where the state had been providing stable growth, job security and pro-poor services; and liberalisation led to falling output, increased unemployment and spending cuts. It increased growth and political stability in Uganda because the state in the immediately preceding period had been providing virtually no services, using torture and violence to retain power, and only benefited a tiny group of politicians, officials and officers.

Third, they suggest that 'a general political economy disorder' is not inevitable or irreversible in Africa, but a response to contradictory and contingent demands imposed on particular regimes that can be changed through appropriate policies and external support. The NRM would have been unable to escape the vicious circles that had defeated its predecessors had it not incorporated many opponents and modified its policies to obtain the foreign support that

⁷⁷ Interview Lt. Colonel Serwanga Lwanga, NRA.

sustained the reconstruction process. Liberalisation would not have destabilised Zimbabwe in the way that it did had the regime been given more external support.

Fourth, any policy process generates dynamic changes in the relationships between political, administrative, social and economic variables, and therefore in their tendency to produce successes or failures. For example, state capacity in both countries by the end of 2005 was so weak that earlier corporatist successes could not be replicated. Primary accumulation has eliminated foreign economic domination and produced a new politically influential African bourgeoisie. Some of them still have a vested interest in clientelism, but others are recognising that good governance is essential to their long-term survival. State failure gave the IFIs a critical policy-making role in Uganda in 1986, and would do so in Zimbabwe should the regime accept conditionality in order to overcome its multiple economic crises. In Uganda, political repression under Amin and Obote II produced new political movements and a general recognition of the need for fundamental social transformation. In Zimbabwe, the crisis of the 1990s produced the new movements that not only destabilised the political system, but still represent the best hope for the future.

This suggests that we need to avoid one-sided theoretical prescriptions and unduly optimistic or pessimistic predictions if we are to support the efforts being made by Africans to build new futures. This paper has demonstrated that the prescriptions of 'western theories' have played a crucial but ambiguous role in producing both successes and failures, and that long-term structural changes are constantly altering the relationship between political, social and economic variables, and therefore the nature of the institutional reforms required to generate sustainable development. Progressive reforms are actively resisted by groups that have a vested interest in clientelism, but are also being actively promoted by others who are making heroic efforts to implement them. Deep-seated structural weaknesses ensure that these struggles will not produce a rapid transition to liberal democratic capitalism for many years, but the past twenty years in Uganda suggest that their efforts, and those of their foreign supporters, could eventually succeed in making poverty history.

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- We will examine the effects of international interventions promoting democratic reform, human rights and market competition on the 'conflict management capacity' and production and distributional systems of existing polities.
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- We will examine what kinds of formal and informal institutional arrangements poor communities have constructed to deal with economic survival and local order.



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