Title
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Journal
Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 9(1)

ISSN
0041-5715

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Publication Date
1979

DOI
10.5070/F791017342

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF IMPERIALISM AND DEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

by

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> *Often, it is easy to cloud the fact that colonialism which balkanized Africa also deliberately insured the dependency of vast regions of the continent on those few areas with large white settlements. Nowhere else are the problems inherent in such a situation more manifest than in the Southern African region.*[1]

When the diplomacy of "detente" was first unveiled in Southern Africa towards the end of 1974, observers were quick to characterize that development as merely the latest of many attempts by South Africa to expand its political, military and economic influence and domination throughout the region. A closer examination of the many patterns of this diplomacy reveals, however, that this is more than just a continuation of the thrust of South African expansionism initially characterized by the 'outward' movement of the late 1960s and the 'dialogue' of the early 1970s.[2] The multiplicity of the state and non-state actors ranging from the southern tip of the subcontinent to the Equator and from the Indian Ocean in the East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West, as well as the active participation of the dominant world powers and even middle-ranking ones, bears testimony to the wide diversity of the interests of the principal actors and the heavy stakes involved. The complex picture emerging suggests that a fascinating diplomatic and military game of chess (or perhaps *chicken*) is underway, one which is not only totally unique in the turbulent history of decolonization in the subregion but also exceedingly difficult to predict the final outcome as well as the long-term implications of that outcome. The complex nature of the issues that are at the core of this multinational diplomatic exercise also suggests the need for an analytical framework that goes well beyond merely providing an explanation of both a most conventional process in regional decolonization and an accommodation of the competing as well as conflicting positions of the principal regional actors.

Not long ago a distinguished observer of the continental African scene argued that contemporary political develop-

ments in Africa could be explained by either of two approaches, depending on the particular persuasion of the individual observer: a theory of *decolonization* and all that it entails, or a theory of *dependency* explaining the contemporary character of the post-colonial state in Africa.[3] These theoretical explanations, which focus on the twin concepts of continuity and change, represent two parallel schools of thought which, in recent years, have predominated in the analysis of the international politics of the so-called "new states" of the "grey areas" of the international system. In this context, then, it has been postulated that to some scholars, the successor of colonialism is neocolonialism and dependency; for others, what is going on in these societies is a transient phase involving gradual disengagement and the multilateralization of ties to the metropolitan nations.

An elaboration of decolonization theory posits that

> *Euro-African (and other) North-South relationships are caught up in an evolutionary process, as various forms of bilateral, metropolitan influences are replaced with multilateral relations. In the process, political independence is only the 'first' step, and the 'last' step of complete independence is probably not attainable in an increasingly interdependent world...each layer of colonial influence is supported by the others, and as each is removed, it uncovers and exposes the next underlying one, rendering it not only vulnerable but also untenable. Thus, there is a natural progression to the removal of colonial influence: its speed can be varied by policy and effort, but the direction and evolution are inherent in the process and become extremely difficult to reverse.*[4]

In short, the process of political decolonization focuses on the achievement of autonomous development within a broad framework of continuing dependence and underdevelopment. Dependency theory, on the other hand, postulates that the recovery of political independence tends to both mask and distort the reality of continuing dependence on global and regional economic structures and the constraining impact which external political and economic structures have on the achievement of genuine political independence and autonomous economic development. Basically, the theory is that the

> *metropolitan countries block African development by co-opting African leaders into an international social structure that serves the world capitalist economy. By training and conditioning the upper layer of African society into Western habits of consumption, reading, vacation, style, and other European values, the dominant politico-economic system removes the need for direct intervention and indirect colonial rule; the more the new elites 'develop,' the more their expectations rise, the more they become programmed to look North, to think Western, and to alienate themselves from their national society, which is locked into its underdevelopment. Since mass development is such a monumental task in the best conditions, and since it is even more difficult against the wishes of the dominant capitalists, these alienated, Westernized elites are motivated to repress the spread of development in their society and thus to maintain themselves in power as a political class. The end result is that national development is impossible: foreign predominance is maintained by the co-opted elites, a neocolonial pact as firm as its colonial predecessor was in its time.*[5]

The two approaches are not, of course, mutually exclusive. In many respects, they represent two sides of the same coin and the weight assigned to each very much depends on one's perception and interpretation of reality. In particular, the decolonization approach draws heavily on dependency theory in analyzing how certain post-colonial relationships have actually operated. But the differences should not be ignored either: for its part, dependency takes a much narrower view of the process of political decolonization and economic disengagement by maintaining that a vicious circle operates and produces both continuities and discontinuities which are a reflection of altering patterns of dependence (e.g. from predominantly bilateral forms of colonial dependence to multilateral post-colonial ones). On the other hand, the decolonization process is assumed to have its own internal logic,"wherein each step creates pressures for the next and reduces the possibilities of counteraction by retreating post-colonial forces."[6]

A more realistic analytical approach would accept both

theories as valid explanations of continuing decolonization within a framework of dependence and underdevelopment in Africa. No clear contradiction or logical inconsistency is readily apparent in adopting such a perspective. Indeed, multilaterization of forms and patterns of dependence is a common feature of both the post-colonial state in Africa and those others which are still going through the painful motions of a retarded process of decolonization.

This essay attempts very modestly to shed some light on the political economy of neo-colonialism in Southern Africa, with particular reference to the liberation of Zimbabwe and the implications for the region. The thrust of the analysis is on the multinational diplomacy, in which the African actors appear to be active collaborators, aiming at the entrenchment of dependence and underdevelopment in Southern Africa via a process of proliferating the number of neo-colonial states in the region. This issue appears to be the central aspect of the constantly changing coalition formations (among both the Zimbabwean political factions and the independent African states supporting them as well as their outside allies), and the intense diplomatic double-dealings which have been underway for the past several years in that part of the African continent. More importantly, it seeks to explain the long-term implications of "solutions" promoting intensified regional 'interdependence' in an area historically characterized by lopsided dependent relationships extending beyond the regional environment itself into the global arena.

DETENTE AND SOUTH AFRICAN SUBIMPERIALSIM

The diplomatic initiatives formally unveiled in October, 1974 were largely instigated by South Africa with the active support of its Western allies and have formed the core element of what has invariably been described as a policy of "detente" or "deluge,"[7] which purportedly aims at easing tensions and establishing a lasting understanding among the Southern African states. South Africa was quick to realize that with the collapse of the most important leg of the triple "unholy" alliance with Rhodesia and Portugal, indefinite white control of the area was no longer possible militarily, nor indeed was it feasible politically, unless of course such strategically located states as newly independent Angola and Mozambique could be reduced to the dependent status of client states on the pattern of Malawi, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. But even more important was the rapid realization that the new situation did not signal imminent disaster but actually opened up new opportunities; it is this new element in the regional balance of power which has been a focal point in South Africa's

recent diplomatic strategy. Indeed, over the past decade South African government and business circles have been trying to promote, with little tangible results, the idea of a Southern African economic community. Not too long ago, the Johannesburg *Financial Mail*, the "enlightened" and "progressive" businessman's paper, wrote that:

> *Rhodesia and Zambia need Beira and Lourenço Marques if their mineral wealth is to be sold to best advantage to a resource-hungry world; South Africa needs men from Malawi and Mozambique if it is to unlock its gold from the tight grip of quartzite; that metal in turn can help pay for the capital goods Samora Machel will need if he is to make his newly freed peoples prosperous as well as socialist; and Zambian mine workers need the more competitive equipment and greater know-how of the white Africans of the South if their copper is to be extracted at the lowest cost and their living standards secured.*[8]

What one is confronted with here is the basic fact that over the past 20 years or so, the South African economy has been transformed from being essentially a colonial one to the position whereby South Africa is now very much a coloniser. The country's wealth originally consisted of raw materials (primarily gold and diamonds) and foodstuffs. But over time, profits from these have been reinvested in all forms of manufacturing industry, creating new capital which--in the absence of an expanding domestic market owing to starvation wage policies, themselves the producers of the largest portion of that wealth--is now seeking new outlets. Massive investment by transnational corporations in an ocean of massive underdevelopment. The search for regional markets has thus become crucial in order to sustain the pace of this overdevelopment. The area being colonized is the rest of Southern and Central Africa, and the pattern of domination is increasingly similar to that which has long existed between the United States and South America. This is the situation that has invariably been described as the development of underdevelopment in Southern Africa or the 'South Africanization' of the subregion, with a very real prospect of extending this to most of sub-Saharan Africa.[9]

The rationale for the economic links is of course the notion of regional "inter-dependence" or "co-prosperity" and the expected "benefits" are (not difficult to detect) economic

hegemony and vastly increased profits for South Africa. The other less privileged states in the region are expected to benefit from the "spill-over" effects of South Africa's over-development and that country's rapid ascendance to the status of a subimperial power capable of playing the role of hand-maiden in promoting global imperialist interests.[10] The justification for inter-dependence is quite simply that the penetration of the economies of South Africa's neighbours is already very extensive:

> *...roughly half of Rhodesian industry is South African-owned; in Mozambique, South African firms hold large mineral concessions in Tete and a substantial stake in manufacturing and property elsewhere. It is the same in Angola--mining concessions, shares in manufacturing, transport and banking.*[11]

One is inclined to raise the question why South Africa has apparently reconciled itself to the prospect of black majority rule in all the surrounding countries--even to the extent of helping it to come about more quickly. The immediate answer is that if South Africa can retain or even extend its economic clutches on these countries, their aspirations towards genuine political independence can be curtailed, and progress being made towards the establishment of egalitarian societies through socialist ideology can be arrested. Similarly, the legitimate struggle of black South Africans towards freedom and the establishment of a nonracial society can also be contained for an indefinite period. This is what "detente" is largely all about. By attempting to achieve a *modus vivendi* with Angola, Mozambique and Zambia, and by seeking a "non-violent" constitutional settlement in Zimbabwe, South Africa hopes to safeguard its economic and military power and to enhance its political prestige in Africa as well as in its relations with Western governments. Moreover, it should also be recognized that Western capitalism has a heavy stake in South Africa and therefore has an equal, if not greater, interest in the success of these developments. If the various difficulties (which tend to be seen as temporary) can be resolved "peacefully," the whole region would be ripe for very fruitful exploitation. It cannot be denied, then, that detente in its various manifestations is essentially a policy of deceit, precisely because its overall objective is the creation of a regional international order founded on neocolonial interracial relationships.

Both the South African government and business community have long entertained an inspiring "vision" of a future characterized by economic "co-prosperity" and political "co-

security" for all the Southern African states, the apparent assumption (an incorrect one, though) being that South Africa's neighbours envy its immense wealth and prosperity and, as a result, harbour very hostile feelings towards it because they are less well-off.

However, it is also increasingly recognized and accepted that this exciting future is likely to remain very much a cherished dream unless another ingredient is added, and one that appears to lie at the root of the whole issue of regional economic co-operation. This is said to be:

> *the lack of internal economic detente between South Africans themselves; the massive inequalities and race barriers that prevent a proper sharing of the abundant riches of this land. Until there is a more equitable sharing--and this touches our entire social fabric, from job and educational opportunities to political rights--our credentials for Southern African leadership will always be suspect. And... (the) exciting dream, alas, may remain just a dream.*[12]

This opinion is undoubtedly shared by some of the potential partners in this proposed joint venture. Indeed, while visiting the United States in May 1975, Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda, who has always been temperamentally inclined to negotiate settlements, reportedly said: "If Mr. Vorster should change from the policy of apartheid into a genuine non-racialistic society, I would be the first to co-operate with him."[13] The essence of the matter, however, is that acceptance of South African leadership--a necessary change in traditional African policy towards South Africa--presupposes the existence, or possibly the creation, of a community of interests among the parties involved. Indeed, the wide acceptance of the principle of regional economic (and indirectly political) co-operation, the substantial modification of South Africa's race policy, and a revision of independent Africa's attitude--in the sense of accepting South Africa as an independent country rather than treating it as essentially a colonial state--would appear to constitute the necessary preconditions for the transformation of conflict and confrontation into accomodation and co-operation as the future *modus operandi* between and among states in Southern Africa. Most of the "10 countries" have long been tied to the South African economic labyrinth, and independent Africa made a major concession, a regrettable one perhaps, in the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto which recognized South Africa's independent

status; this erroneous position was reaffirmed in the April 1975 Dar es Salaam Declaration on Southern Africa.[14] From the African perspective, then, the onus is upon the South African government to demonstrate its genuine commitment to detente if it is to enhance its claim to a leadership role. That is precisely what South Africa has been trying to do since the early 1970s.

A number of pertinent questions must be raised at this point. Can a genuine community of interests be created through such an expedient arrangement? Can economic co-operation reduce or erode completely the friction that has always centered on the cardinal issue of political emancipation for the black majority in South Africa? Unless these questions can be answered satisfactorily, the prospects for mutually beneficial regional economic co-operation are very limited and the whole detente exercise may very well be meaningless, if not actually futile, in the long run. Yet, it may be a long time before some of these questions can be answered at all.

The validity of the theory of political independence and economic interdependence as a basis for co-existence between states is accepted almost wholesale among a large section of the white population in South Africa and little meaningful attempts are ever made to scrutinize the elements of this dichotomy to uncover the possible existence of serious contradictions or to discover the extent to which such prognostications are a delusion. Yet, the theory as such is not internally consistent--in fact, it has a built-in contradiction, particularly in its application to the domestic scene as distinguished from the external sector.

The initial argument being advanced here is that detente is no more than "cosmetic politics," for such a posture at the foreign policy level is really a cover for regional imperialism and neo-colonialism. Similarly, any notion of domestic detente can only be an attempt to legitimize the insidious internal colonialism practised by the white minority against the black majority. It is crystal clear that the South African regime has no interest whatsoever, either in a pronounced or a putative form, in abdicating its position of economic privilege and surrendering political power to, or even sharing it with, the black majority. It is just not in the nature of things that a privileged minority will give up power voluntarily; it can only do so under extreme conditions of coercion. The South African government has made it amply clear that it will not, under any circumstances, give up supreme authority; what it is doing, instead, is to implement, forcefully, a policy aiming at the deliberate *tribalization* of the black population while continuing to foster, on a parallel basis, which

would enable them to retain control over the ethnically divided blacks individually grouped into nominally independent states with little prospects of genuine economic viability or even territorial consolidation. The stage-managed "independence" of the Transkei in October 1976 and that of Bophuthatswana in December 1977 fits into that grand scheme of promoting neo-colonial dependence and underdevelopment. And through regional detente, independent African nations are being persuaded by way of economic bribery and threats of sanctions to accept this carefully controlled reorganization of the internal structure of the South African state. The South African government both believes and hopes that its economic power and military preponderance in the subcontinent will ultimately prove to be too strong for the neighbouring states to continue to offer resistance to the opportunities which detente appears to promise to all of them.

WESTERN IMPERIALISM AND DETENTE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

By shoring up the present South African government militarily, economically and diplomatically, and by encouraging peaceful evolution and co-existence in Southern Africa, the major Western powers have shown decisively that they have no stomach for genuine independence anywhere else in the area. In recent years, the broad policy position of the Western powers regarding an accomodation between South Africa and other independent African states has been built around the once secret National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM 39) produced in late 1969 for the American government and recommended to former President Richard M. Nixon in February 1970 by former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger for adoption as official United States policy towards Southern Africa.[15] This policy, which has since been modified to accomodate the recent changes in the region, centered on the use of economic bribes to encourage policies of "moderation" and accomodation on the part of independent African states, diplomatic support for the remaining white regimes and in particular the South African one, including vetoing toughly worded Afro-Asian resolutions against South Africa at the United Nations, particularly those related to the sensitive issues of arms sale and economic sanctions and encouraging some "modifications" in the colonial and racist policies pursued by those minority regimes.

This policy has already been seen in operation in recent times. For example, it was the unprecedented triple-veto cast in November 1974 by the three Western permanent members of the Security Council which saved South Africa from being ousted from the United Nations. Since then, similar actions have been taken at various times to drive the point home.

Indeed, Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" in Southern Africa in the latter part of 1976 and the more subtle pronouncements and movements in Africa by emissaries of the Carter Administration have been aimed at gaining acceptance of modified versions of this basic policy. And to show its gratitude to its foremost supporters, the South African government has repeatedly promised to introduce "major changes" in its apartheid policies.[16] It is not entirely unlikely also that some of the African states which from time to time have appeared to be positively in favour of detente may have actually received or been promised substantial economic rewards for helping to promote Western interests, whether or not these are also their own national interests.[17]

While it is undoubtedly true that the "Kissinger Formula" with regard to Zimbabwe has since been overtaken by events and, for the moment, detente is faltering, almost all the major participants agree that its success or failure is dependent upon not whether, but how, the decolonization of Zimbabwe is brought about and, even more significantly, what type of government will inherit the mantle of power. A "leftist" regime would probably sound the death knell to that movement; on the other hand, a "moderate" one or some other combination, may offer the opportunity for actively reviving the spirit, if not the actual substance, of detente.

Apart from its purely political aspects, the American policy clearly envisages, as stated already, the use of economic instruments in the form of foreign aid and greater investments in seeking to entice those states with shaky and therefore vulnerable economic foundations into accepting a rapprochement as a less costly alternative to continuing confrontation. The ultimate purpose remains one of both perpetuating a state of dependence and indebtedness to South Africa (and through it to the Western nations) and to enable these states to span the bridge of friendship and co-operation for that racist regime to cross and meet the rest of Africa. The economic argument has been laboured upon the South African Prime Minister and the country's "big business" establishment to emphasize the value of detente. Indeed, the existence since the 1960s of a special "foreign aid" fund (not to be confused with the controversial Economic Development Bank for Southern Africa established in 1972) operated by the South African Department of Foreign Affairs and clearly preserved for any interested African state, has been no secret at all. The size of the fund has grown each year,[18] stimulated in part by the apparent widening of the circle of independent states interested in tapping South African resources in order to diversify their sources of external assistance. The South African government has stressed over and over that it would like to contribute

to the rapid economic development of other, "less fortunate" African states, and especially those located in Southern Africa. Thus, it is up to these states to take advantage of what South Africa is able to offer, all in the spirit of regional co-operation for collective and accelerated development.

It seems rather obvious that if detente is to be regarded as having temporarily succeeded in achieving the minimal objectives of halting the drift towards general confrontation throughout the region and creating conditions for attempting to resolve the root causes of conflict on an itemized basis, then principal credit must go to the United States and not to South Africa. The fact of the matter is that quite apart from advancing its own national interests, which however do not diverge from but actually converge upon the broad Western political, economic and military interests, South Africa had become the main instrument through which the imperialist objectives of the Western countries are being pursued in Southern Africa and the African hinterland under the pretext of promoting regional accommodation. If the scheme represents a concerted attempt to lure the African states into a trap and persuade them to abandon the objectives of genuine liberation, then it may well become impossible for some of them to spit out the bait once they have already swallowed it. The apparent belief that South Africa genuinely wishes to play a positive role in settling the region's long-standing problems rather than having the primary interest of securing its own future using the African states and actively supported by the full diplomatic weight of the Western powers, could well turn out to be disastrous diplomatic miscalculation on the part of some of those independent states which have demonstrated a readiness to go along with this policy in the belief that it will advance African goals.

ZIMBABWE, DETENTE AND THE STRATEGY OF DECEPTION

It is precisely because so much is at stake in Zimbabwe politically and economically, and strategically in a regional context, that the outcome of that conflict situation is now very much a question of both educated and not-so-educated guesswork. Two immediate considerations are, however, clearly discernible from the constantly shifting patterns of alignments and realignments. First, it is clear enough that if a "peaceful" resolution of the problem eludes those who are striving for one, the larger issue of a regional reconciliation will be in serious trouble. Indeed, all hopes may be dashed permanently. The pace towards a military confrontation over the future of South Africa is likely to be enhanced by the emergence of

a militantly leftist regime in Zimbabwe. Secondly, it is equally clear that despite all the appearances of serious differences in the approaches pursued by the Anglo-American governments and the present South African and Rhodesian regimes, they are all working towards the realization of a common objective, namely the installation of an administration that protects and promotes rather than undermines the established community of interests within the country and, equally important, contributes decisively to the preservation of a regional order which emphasizes neo-colonial dependence and underdevelopment.

Thus, the emergence of a moderate regime in Zimbabwe is crucial to the success of political detente, because only a regime that does not threaten to "rock the boat" could advance the competing but convergent political and economic objectives of the "external," imperialist forces and, one might add, those of the African neo-colonies in the region. On the other hand, a radical regime assuming power in that country would strengthen the positions of other Marxist-inclined regimes such as the ones now in control of Mozambique and Angola, thereby encouraging more open resistance to the apartheid regime of South Africa (quite apart from opening up a new and potentially more volatile front for the South African Liberation Movement). Furthermore, it could become one more dangerous example likely to pose a threat to or compromise the continued existence of a moderate leadership in a country such as Zambia which South Africa views as being strategically important in its calculations regarding the political and economic goals of regional detente. Thus, a respectable group of moderate regimes in the area would have a strong restraining influence on potentially hostile ones, such as the avowedly Marxist Angolan and Mozambican governments. To be more realistic, however, what is being looked for is a conservative regime that pays only lip service to liberation but because of dependence on South Africa economically (and, potentially, militarily as well) and on other neighbouring neo-colonial states for political and diplomatic support, at least during its initial years in power, would be unwilling to adopt radical economic and political policies for fear of risking its own survival. An acceptable alternative would be a coalition government (reminiscent of the unsuccessful Angolan precedent) which, because of its weak foundation, would for a considerable length of time be preoccupied more with the essentially domestic issue of making the marriage of convenience workable and much less with regional matters.[19]

Since September 1976, when the Smith regime capitulated to Henry Kissinger's "strong arm" tactics and conceded the principle of African majority rule in Zimbabwe, one principle concern has been central to the various proposals put forward as the basis for either the "external settlement" stage-managed

by the British and American governments or the "internal solution" spear-headed by Ian Smith. This has been the delicate matter of working out and marketing a formula which, while stripping the white community of both visible and effective political power, would guarantee its privileged economic position, thereby perpetuating the existence of an island of affluence in a vast ocean of poverty and underdevelopment. This, of course, is the well-trodden transitional path from classical colonial dependence to the emergence of the post-independence neo-colonial state in Africa.

Western encouragement of and active support for regional accomodation and the constitutional road to the decolonization of Zimbabwe thus rests primarily on geo-political and economic considerations; other considerations, such as the strategic concerns mentioned earlier, are of *secondary* importance and serve to reinforce the primary motivating force. Surely, it is obvious that if the Western powers together with the minority regimes did not visualize any tangible benefits accruing to them from a shift away from combat to negotiations, they would not support, encourage or even accept such developments. Indeed there is every reason to believe that they would maintain their long-standing opposition to violent solutions. For, it goes without saying that any liberation strategies that attract support from the target countries themselves and their principal supporters in the West cannot have as their real aim the establishment of genuinely independent states.

If there is anything that most of independent Africa has learned the hard way after the initial excitement over the recovery of independence had passed, it is the painful realization that political change alone does not alter inherited patterns of dependent economic relationships. Underlying the contemporary issue of political control in Africa is the larger and more complex problem of economic sovereignty.[20] Formal constitutional independence in Africa has not been accompanied by economic independence or autonomy; most African states remain victims of the international capitalist strait-jacket. More important, however, is the fact that moderate, "reasonable" regimes have never been known to indulge in policies aimed at an equitable redistribution of national wealth; neither do they champion the cause for a socio-economic revolution. Indeed, their principal source of strength derives from active collaboration with foreign economic interests. In the Southern African context, the existing interdependent pattern of economic relationships is fertile ground for the proliferation of moderate regimes. The Western powers and South Africa have learned their lessons well in recent years and they also realize only too well that any further delay in the detente exercise will increase the likelihood of more radical regimes com-

ing to power. Support by neighbouring independent states for détente and relatively peaceful decolonization is similarly governed by their own national interests, but it should be noted in passing that neo-colonies almost always support neo-colonial solutions.[21]

LINKAGES BETWEEN NATIONALIST STRUGGLE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEO-COLONIALISM

The formula that is being worked out for Zimbabwe is a continuation of neo-colonial arrangements established almost throughout the continent on the eve of independence.[22] The co-existence between nominal political independence and economic dependence is undoubtedly one of the most profound contradictions characterizing the post-colonial state in Africa. It goes without saying that those who control the economic empire are also in a position to control the political aspirations of the managers of the political kingdom and, furthermore, are able to introduce new forms of dependency. In short, dependency blunts economic nationalism which in turn renders militant political ideology both impotent and rhetorical.

Towards the end of his post-independence administration in Ghana, the late Kwame Nkrumah accurately described neo-colonialism as a condition whereby a state possesses all the outward trappings of international sovereignty, but in reality its economy--and, consequently, its political policies--are controlled by external capitalist forces working in close collaboration with internal elites, especially those in control of the state apparatus. But what Nkrumah did not say (for rather obvious reasons), is that the development of neo-colonialism as a more viable alternative to classical colonialism is closely linked to the deeply-rooted *colonial mind* of contemporary African political elites, a mentality--most noticeable among the "founding fathers"--moulded by complex forces including the impact of formal colonial education (or, more appropriately, *miseducation*) and political socialization processes that took place before as well as during the struggle for independence (e.g. the mellowing influences of long periods of incarceration in colonial jails). When the struggle for freedom began in earnest after World War II and intensified in the 1950s, a neo-colonial solution was seen by the embattled colonial powers as the answer to the growth of nationalist demands in Africa. Although the policy may not have been so consciously designed, neo-colonialism became a credible alternative to continuing imperial control as a result of some flaws noticeable in the thrust of African nationalist political thought:

a) African nationalist leaders tended to emphasize what they

conceived to be the strategic need to capture the political kingdom. The change in the strategy of the European imperial powers, from formal political control to entrenching economic domination, seemed not to worry the emergent African elites. In fact, the colonial powers never intended to leave Africa at all; what they did, with apparent African collaboration, was to give a facial up-lift to the tarnished image of colonization by placing Africans in positions of power while continuing to keep them on a leash: thus, outsiders played the tune to which the Africans danced merrily (albeit with muted grumbles).

b) Having formally captured political power, the new African leaders spent several years consolidating their weak domestic power bases while paying lip-service to the inherited problems of underdevelopment and dependency. Meanwhile, external forces used this breathing space to consolidate their already entrenched economic position, a powerful position from which they could not be easily dislodged. It can also be argued that the two sides needed each other, albeit for very different reasons: that 'muted dependence' created a pact or marriage of convenience as firm as direct colonial control itself.

c) At the formal constitutional negotiations for the transfer of power, the overriding desire displayed by African leaders to assume political power at whatever cost left unattended the various new relationships that were worked out by the 'departing' colonial powers aimed at either perpetuating or strengthening the dependency positions of these successor elites. Where the situation being inherited was fully recognized by the African leaders, it was apparently either believed or simply assumed (wrongly as events were later to demonstrate) that the control mechanisms could be tampered with and eliminated fairly easily, e.g. remaining in the franc or sterling currency zones, agreements providing for subsidies to balance national budgets as well as those aimed at encouraging economic investments (under politically safe climates) and setting up 'partnerships' in economic ventures with foreign governments and private enterprise, defense pacts allowing the retention of military bases and foreign troops within the independent states, etc.

d) African nationalist leaders responded encouragingly to Western attempts at creating privileged elites that would take over political power, and whose ultimate survival, because of their "embourgeoisement," depended on active collaboration with external forces, e.g. large secret accounts were established for some in foreign banks as 'security' or 'insurance' in case leaders were toppled from power before they

had salted away enough funds to live comfortably thereafter; in the majority of cases locals were recruited and co-opted into the exclusive network of foreign enterprises as board-room directors with no real power; yet in others the new leaders accepted economic donations (i.e. bribes) as token gestures indicating support for (i.e. approval of) the policies they were pursuing.

e) The supposedly novel idea of state involvement in the local operations of multinational corporations was warmly received by these MNC's and their home governments once the implications were realized: such developments eliminated entrepreneurial as well as political risks, while profits continued to flow out in the form of royalties, fees for 'technical services' (such as consultancy and provision of managerial skills), use of patents and brand names, and through guaranteed sales and servicing of equipment. Indeed, some corporations offered to be partially nationalized, realizing that they would never go bankrupt once the local government was in partnership with them--nor would they have to worry about trade union strikes, since this would be seen as a challenge to the local government (which by repressing its own workers would be protecting those corporations!).

Admittedly, an analysis of this kind amounts to a frontal attack and an indictment of the "pioneer" generation of African leadership for its partial responsibility in creating conditions leading to the development of neo-colonialism in the continent. However, one cannot overlook the fact that there are more than enough illustrative examples to justify the adoption of such a position. The argument being advanced here is that nationalist perceptions of what decolonization meant and the consequences to flow from that process have been responsible, at least in part, for the entrenchment of international capitalism which has reinforced the almost total dependency position of the continent.

ZIMBABWE NATIONALIST LEADERSHIP AND THE DRIFT TO ANOTHER NEO-COLONIAL STATE

It is the considered opinion of this writer that much unwarranted emphasis has been placed on the "personality outlooks" and the "ideological orientations" of the top names within the bitterly divided nationalist leadership in Zimbabwe; such actions have been motivated in part by the natural human inclination to predict as accurately as possible who is or are likely to inherit power and whether the new regime would be either "militant" or "moderate." Yet one must question, in light of the foregoing analysis, the degree of resolution which

the current leaders might display in promoting the kind of liberation and revolution which would represent a significant departure from the contemporary performance of other post-colonial leaderships in the region and, indeed, beyond. It is perfectly in order to submit the view that thus far one has not found anything in the track records of the "Big Four" that shows convincingly that any one of them has the potential of becoming a genuinely revolutionary leader in the sense of being both able (psychologically) and willing (emotionally) to commit oneself to the execution of policies deliberately designed to initiate or lead to profound changes in the existing political, economic and social structures in Zimbabwe. In their own different ways these individuals have exhibited some of the qualities characteristic of so many other African leaders before them who have proceeded to perform admirably as "benevolent dictators" once in office: susceptibility to both external and internal manipulation; uncertainty or haziness about the directions they would move in following accession to power; acute sensitivity to and heavy-handedness in dealing with critics and opponents; ideological militancy or moderation measured by proximity to or alienation from the centers of effective decision-making that could pave the way for getting into power; and some very obvious tendencies towards imperial styles of the presidency within their respective movements.[23] From another perspective, each leader has demonstrated a readiness to make very far-reaching compromises in the style of negotiation in order to maximise the chances of getting into power. The Anglo-American proposals for a settlement,[24] which differ only in a cosmetic sense from Smith's own "internal sclution," read very much like the Kenyan Constitution which for its part was modelled on the Southern Rhodesia Constitution of 1961.[25] These constitutional proposals are acceptable in principle to all the parties involved in the Zimbabwean diplomatic exercise; their intended purpose of mortgaging the country to international capitalism is so readily apparent; and yet they are the basis upon which all the Zimbabwean leaders have agreed to negotiate. If there were any real or significant differences among these leaders, it is unlikely that each and all of them would be supported so actively by the British and, much less, the American governments. Clearly, the implication is that it does not really matter as to which one gets into power, because they are likely to behave in pretty much the same manner anyway. The point here is that the short history of the post-colonial state in Africa amply shows that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the pre-independence militant rhetoric often characterized by "fire-eating" declarations quickly gave way to 'pragmatism' or *realpolitik* once leaders were in power and began to enjoy the feeling of being powerful. Zimbabwe's leaders show no signs of being influenced by the war of national liberation which has been going on for more than a decade and which some

of them claim to be prosecuting. All previous attempts to create an alternative leadership from within the guerrilla ranks have been systematically destroyed, often with the collaboration of the governments of host states: there is little doubt that the eclipse of the old-guard leaders who are too rooted into the politics of constitutional reform as the traditional route to State House, would represent a most significant revolutionary achievement in itself.

The strategic significance of Zimbabwe for the pursuit of detente, the perpetuation of dependence, and the development of underdevelopment in Southern Africa, is basically two-fold: first, Zimbabwe's economy is the second most sophisticated after South Africa's, and secondly, the country lies, geographically, along a path that spans a bridge with South Africa, Zambia and Kenya, all of which now occupy subimperial positions in their respective subregions. An economic link-up of these four states would represent a double-edged sword with South Africa as the base, Zimbabwe and Zambia the sharp blades, and Kenya the piercing end. The long-term economic and political implications for "unco-operative" states located on either side of the "blades" are enormous: there is also little doubt that a grand scheme such as this one, which if carried out would have a tremendous impact throughout the region extending northwards to the Equator, looms very high in the calculations of South Africa, the Western powers and the global corporations that help to promote interdependence and accommodation in Southern Africa.

It is appropriate to conclude this analysis of the political economy of dependence and underdevelopment in Southern Africa by alluding to an apparent catch in the neo-colonial formula now being worked out for the future state of Zimbabwe, one that for the time being remains a matter of both speculation and conjecture. For if Zimbabwe is guided gingerly along the path of neo-colonial dependence and "lumpen" development which has been experimented with so successfully elsewhere in Africa, it may not be long before a similar type of arrangement is put forward as a credible solution to the more troublesome South African problem. After all, neo-colonial solutions to historical problems left behind as the glaringly embarrassing by-products and legacies of European imperialism and colonialism in Africa thrive best under conditions in which the issue of racism is subordinated to the overriding corporate and geo-political interests of international imperialism and capitalism. There is nothing imaginable that would prevent the established African nationalist leadership in South Africa from opting for a neo-colonial compromise as a viable alternative option to permanent exclusion from political and economic power. Admittedly, a far more complex deal would have to be worked out to satisfy the most basic demands of African nationalism there.

Apartheid obviously makes the South African situation both less flexible and less amenable to an internal transformation that does not destroy the essence of the existing structures. Nevertheless, the Zimbabwean neo-colonial experiment may provide insights into how a seemingly rigid internal colonial model could be redesigned in order to safeguard the more important residual interests of the capitalist-dominated global power structure. Because of South Africa's own external dependency, in spite of attempts to reduce it, its interests will always remain subordinate to those of the dominant systems in the existing global stratification of power and wealth. The observation being made here is that the contradiction of vicious racism and internal colonialism in South Africa tends to undermine and even jeopardize the long-term interests of proponents of a system of informal empire based on economic (and hence political) rather than direct colonial control of dependent client states. Thus, it is plausible to argue that the indefinite survival of white political power in South Africa is not in the best interests of the capitalist power centers of the contemporary international order. If anything, a neo-colonial regime in South Africa that would recognize the reality of where power lies in the global jungle of world politics would deserve and even expect to attract active external support. Therefore, in the long run it can be submitted that the proliferation of neo-colonial states in Southern Africa does not augur well for South Africa's continued existence as a white-ruled state; if anything, this accelerating development may spell doom for apartheid and minority rule. It is conceivable, then, that the Zimbabwean arrangement could turn out to be the Achilles heel in resolving the South African quagmire. It is not entirely unlikely that such thinking, far-fetched and unrealistic as it may appear currently, may be a central consideration in the contrived calculations of power by the forces, both on the African continent and outside, now seeking to enlist Zimbabwe among the growing collection of neo-colonial, sub-imperial states in Africa.

Footnotes

1. Southern Africa: Dilemma of Dependency, *Afriscope* (Lagos, April 1976), p. 8.

2. Mugomba, Agrippah T., "The Rise and Fall of 'Pax Suid-Afrika': a Historical Analysis of South Africa's Black Foreign Policy," *Kenya Historical Review* 3, 1 (1975): 127-145 and *The Foreign Policy of Despair: Africa and the Sale of Arms to South Africa* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1977): 190-238; J.E. Spence, "Detente in

Southern Africa: An Interim Judgment," *International Affairs* 53, 1 (January 1977): 1-16; Colin Legum, " Southern Africa: How the Search for Peaceful Change Failed," *Africa Contemporary Record, Vol 8, 1975-1976* (London: Rex Collings, 1976): A39-57.

3. Zartman, I. William, "Europe and Africa: Decolonization or Dependency?," *Foreign Affairs* 54, 2 (January 1976): 325-343; I. William Zartman, "Africa," in James N. Rosenau, Kenneth W. Thompson and Gavin Boyd, *World Politics: An Introduction* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), especially p. 583.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

7. Shaw, Timothy M., "Southern Africa: Detente or Deluge?," *Year Book of World Affairs* 32 (forthcoming).

8. For the broader background to the movement towards detente, see Colin Legum, "Southern Africa: the Secret Diplomacy of Detente," *Africa Contemporary Record, Vol. 7, 1974-1975* (London: Rex Collings, 1975); A3-15; J.E. Spence, "Southern Africa's Uncertain Future: Adjusting to a New Balance of Power," *The Round Table* 258 (April 1975): 159-165; *Africa* 41 (January 1975): 29-31 and 42 (February 1975) : 10-12; David Hirschman, "Southern Africa: Detente?," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, 1 (March 1976): 107-126; Nathan Shamuyarira, "A Revolutionary Situation in Southern Africa," *African Review* 4, 2 (1975): 159-179; O. Geyser, "Detente in Southern Africa," *African Affairs* 75, 299 (April 1975): 182-207; Gwendolen Carter and Patrick O'Meara, *Southern Africa in Crisis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 10-13.

9. Mugomba, Agrippah T., "The Rise and Fall of 'Pax Suid-Afrika,'" *op. cit.*, p. 138; J.A. Lombard, J.J. Stadler and P.J. Van der Merwe, *The Concept of Economic Co-operation in Southern Africa* (Pretoria: Econoburo Ltd., 1968); G.M.E. Leistner, "Economic Co-operation in Southern Africa," *Africa Institute Bulletin* 8, 3 (1975): 85-89; Timothy M. Shaw and Agrippah T. Mugomba, "The Political Economy of Regional Detente: Zambia and Southern Africa," *Journal of African Studies* 4, 4 (Winter 1977): 392-413.

10. For some conflicting views about the nature and content of South African subimperialism, see Kenneth W. Grundy, "Intermediary Power and Global Dependency: the Case of South

Africa," *International Studies Quarterly* 20, 4 (December 1976): 553-580; Timothy M. Shaw, "International Stratification in Africa: Subimperialism in Southern and Eastern Africa," *Journal of Southern African Affairs* 2, 2 (April 1977): 145-165; and Yash Tandon, "The Role of Transnational Corporations and Future Trends in Southern Africa," *Ibid.* 2, 4 (October 1977): 391-401.

11. *Guerrilheiro* (London) 21 (July-August 1974), p. 8; Julian Burgess, *Interdependence in Southern Africa.* Special Report No. 32 (London: The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, July 1976): 4-16; Michael T. Kaufman, "South Africa Still Holds the Vital Purse Strings," *New York Times*, November 20, 1977; David Ottaway, "Southern Africa: History, Money the Odd Couple," *The Washington Post*, December 16, 1977.

12. *The Star*, April 16, 1975.

13. *Ibid.*, May 10, 1975.

14. *Tanzania Daily News*, April 12, 1975.

15. Kissinger's Secret Paper, *Africa* 40 (December 1974), pp. 22-24; Tad Szulc, "Why are we in Johannesburg?," *Esquire* October 1974), pp. 48-58, 66 and 91; Colin Legum, "Southern Africa: the Politics of Detente," *Year Book of World Affairs* 30 (1976): 14-29; "South Africa, Imperialism and 'Detente,'" *Daily News*, April 3, 1975; Edgar Lockwood, "National Security Study Memorandum 39 and the Future of United States Policy Toward Southern Africa," *Issue* 4, 3 (Fall 1974): 63-75; William Manning, "'Tar Baby': Why the U.S. backs South Africa's White Regime," *African Development* (February 1975), pp. 21-23; Anthony Lake, *The Tar Baby Option* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Mohammed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen, *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa* (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1976).

16. See the speeches made in October and November 1974 by Prime Minister John Vorster and the then South African Ambassador to the United Nations and now Foreign Minister R.F. Botha, in *South African Scope* (December 1974): 1-11 and *Southern Africa Record* 1 (March 1975): 1-31 and 37-51. The South African regime has indeed introduced many such "changes," especially in the area of international sport; "offensive" terms like "Bantu" and even "apartheid" itself have been dropped in favour of, respectively, "black" and "pluralism." But no substantive changes in policy have been introduced nor are they likely to be.

and 176; and Michael Bratton, "Structural Transformation in Zimbabwe: Comparative Notes from the Neo-colonization of Kenya," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 15, 4 (December 1977): 591-611.

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