

## 8. Zimbabwe's governance and land reform crises—a postscript

In a bid to disrupt and confuse the work of the people's National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), Mugabe's government set up its own Constitutional Commission of Inquiry to draw up a new constitution in April 1999. The Commission's work was presented to the public as bringing the final break with colonialism. Just months before the 2000 general election, ZANU PF's draft document was put to a referendum and rejected. This represented the first electoral defeat for ZANU PF in 20 years. The proposed constitution would have, among other things, increased executive powers, and so strengthened Mugabe's grip on power and protected his regime from prosecution for any illegalities committed while in office. Kagoro (2004:249) and others read the 'no' vote as a protest against the government itself as well as against its handling of the constitution-making process and the economy.

A second major challenge came when the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), having contested the June 2000 election, broke ZANU PF's exclusive control of the House and brought an effective opposition party into Parliament. Zimbabwe's political landscape had changed forever. Intimidation of rural health workers and teachers in the run-up to the vote led to the closure of schools, clinics and hospitals, and saw political re-education sessions organised by war veterans for white farmers and farm workers—all features reminiscent of the liberation war era. By this time, however, the 1997 war veterans' payout had made for new alignments. Alexander and McGregor (2004:96) point to the merging of some former ZIPRA combatants with their ZANLA counterparts. Putting aside bitter rivalries, they found common cause in the use of unspeakable violence against the political opposition, doing untold damage to the social fabric by destroying property, invading and harassing local councils, state offices, company and public service personnel (McGregor 2002). Former combatants could thus be said to have intimidated and terrorised the communities that supported them during the liberation war and which, in the case of Matabeleland, had also voted overwhelmingly for the MDC. A blanket amnesty announced in October 2000 then pardoned all politically motivated crimes committed for the most part by war veterans, ZANU PF thugs and its youth militia (Eppel 2004:50).

The regime, using its power 'to name, to inscribe, to describe and *essentialise*', proceeded to invoke 'a world of moral relationships' (Werbner 1997:239) in its analysis of these electoral results. Mugabe blamed whites for the 'no' vote in the referendum and harked back to the 'unholy alliance' and 'white conspiracy' evidenced during the 1997 general strike. The MDC, he said, represented continuing imperial and settler influence in Zimbabwean politics.

Opposition supporters, derided in liberation struggle terminology as ‘sell-outs’ who preferred a colonial-style constitution, were tied conceptually to ‘whites’ and other ‘stooges of Western imperialists’ intent on recolonising the county. ‘White’, reflected Paul Nyathi, former ZIPRA commander and MDC MP, had by this time become in Zimbabwe’s ‘distorted political lexicon’ a ‘generic term for evil’.<sup>1</sup> The perpetrators of violence were heralded as patriotic ‘super-citizens’ (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:27), and in the case of war veteran leader and MP Chenjerai Hunzvi, made a national hero after his death in 2001. The victims being in the main opposition sympathisers found themselves branded ‘Western puppets’ and ‘unpatriotic enemies’ and were blamed for their own victimisation. Falling outside the boundaries of citizenship, these newly named internal enemies should not expect protection from the State or to benefit from land redistribution or indigenisation initiatives. A brutal crackdown on the independent press, civic organisations and intimidation of the judiciary had already begun after a local paper published a report of a likely coup in early 1999. Attacks directed towards anyone supporting the opposition intensified towards the 2000 election but did not abate thereafter. Meredith (2007:211–14) catalogues the hundreds of businesses and factories associated with whites, as well as NGOs, embassies and hospitals targeted for invasion, intimidation, humiliation and extortion during the first six months of 2001.

Ranger (2004:218, 234) highlights the centrality and importance to ZANU PF’s electoral campaign of its particular telling of the past. As soon as the election was over, Zimbabwe’s media was restructured and the newly named Department of Information and Publicity was subsumed within the Office of the President. The promulgation of repressive media laws, the deportation of almost all foreign journalists and closure of independent papers in order to stifle criticism and debate then followed (Chuma 2004:133–5). The new department launched a multimedia operation in support of the ruling party, land reform and its anti-colonial version of history. With the State now dominating the electronic media, the general public was ‘saturated’ with television and radio programmes in which ‘Zimbabwe’s history is Mugabe and Mugabe is Zimbabwe’s history’ (Chiumbu 2004:33). ‘New history’ books were introduced in schools, which were themselves to be renamed after national heroes and other figures important to the struggle. A youth militia was created under the guise of the National Youth Service in order to instil patriotism and impart moral education to the young (Chiumbu 2004:219). Its graduates together with the ‘new’ war veterans are given priority in teachers’ training colleges and journalism courses (Chiumbu 2004:34). All of this illustrates that the President and the ZANU PF political elite are prepared to invest heavily in their version of history and suggests they

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1 Paul Nyathi, Director of the Zimbabwe Project Trust and soon to be MDC Member of Parliament, quoted in Alden and Mukumbe (2001:235); ‘Zimbabweans must stop name calling’, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 22 June 1999.

are intent on staying in office regardless of what might be involved (Alden and Makumbe 2001:233). Indeed, some would argue that, given their plundering of the country, it would be very dangerous for them to give up power.<sup>2</sup>

This pattern has been repeated at every election in the past nine years; none could be called free and fair. Excesses condemned earlier as part and parcel of colonial rule have been repeated endlessly, often utilising Rhodesia's notorious *Law and Order Maintenance Act*. A rigged ballot returned Mugabe to the Presidency in 2002. In view of white support for the opposition candidate, Mugabe publicly rescinded his previous policy of reconciliation towards them in a speech later that year (Raftopoulos 2004a:164)—something he had threatened to do on and off since the 1985 general election. Soon afterwards, the European Union, the United States and other Western governments applied 'smart' sanctions to Mugabe and about 90 of his close associates, and an increasingly isolated Zimbabwe left the Commonwealth. Politically inspired intimidation, murder, violence, vote rigging and gerrymandering marred the 2005 and 2008 general elections and saw people pouring out of the country. Nevertheless, the MDC consistently produced a strong showing among workers, professionals, big business and the intelligentsia in urban areas across the country. In the countryside, the party found favour among commercial and better-off small-scale farmers, farm labourers and public servants (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:30). Matabeleland also voted overwhelmingly for this new party despite the populace being threatened with the return of *Gukurahundi* atrocities in every election since the MDC's inception (McGregor 2002:29; Eppel 2004:47). In contrast, ZANU PF took the rural ballot across Mashonaland, relying on partisan chiefs and headmen to deliver the vote (Hammar 2005:14). The MDC found it almost impossible to campaign in that part of the country because of disruption and intimidation by ZANU PF's henchmen.

Would-be MDC voters were discouraged and excluded in various other ways. During 2000, the Registrar-General, Tobaiwa Mudede, in office since 1980, refused to renew many Zimbabwean passports until the holder showed proof of having renounced entitlement to foreign citizenship. Various commentators suggested that this was a move to disenfranchise white and other MDC supporters prior to the 2002 Presidential election.<sup>3</sup> A test case concluded in 2001 found, however, that Zimbabwean law made no such requirement.<sup>4</sup> In disregard of the Supreme Court's judgement, amendments to citizenship legislation came into effect giving six months for citizens-by-registration and all those with a parent or parents born elsewhere to provide documentary evidence of their

2 'Blunt weapons', *The Economist*, 3 February 2001, p. 49.

3 See Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, 13 March 2009; Muzondidya and Alexander, 'The ghost voters, the exiles, the non-citizens: an election of exclusion', *Cape Times*, 31 March 2005. Muzondidya and Alexander estimate a higher figure of more than two million black descendants of foreign labour who have been affected.

4 *Carr vs Registrar General*, (2) ZLR 433, 2000, *Zimbabwe Law Reports*.

having renounced citizenship under the legal provisions of the foreign country or automatically lose their Zimbabwean citizenship. The measure potentially involved somewhere between 20 000 and 30 000 whites, the bulk of the Asian and coloured communities, as well as hundreds of thousands of blacks born in Zimbabwe and carrying local identity cards and passports, but whose parent(s) or grandparents came from neighbouring Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa. These governments indicated to Zimbabwean authorities that they did not have the administrative capacity to comply with the deadline and, furthermore, applicants frequently had no documentation, such as birth certificates or national registration cards, to substantiate claims to a right to citizenship in their countries. Malawian and Zambian officials also pointed out that during the federal era no travel papers were required, as the three participating territories were at the time legally one country. The issue therefore created tension between Harare and other regional governments. Britain also expressed its irritation, saying it took up to six months for the Home Office to process and issue certificates of renunciation. To a lesser extent, the exercise also implicated the Government of India.

Back in Zimbabwe, Justice Adam in the High Court ruled a right to citizenship by descent that had never been activated could not be given up.<sup>5</sup> Renunciation applied only when citizenship had in fact been held. Furthermore, the Law Society noted Zimbabwean statute law did not incorporate in its provisions the requirements of foreign law and therefore renunciation under Zimbabwean law alone entailed complete fulfilment. Taking no heed, the Registrar-General, who is also the overseer of the electoral role, repeatedly and wilfully misinterpreted the citizenship provisions, bringing to court whites and Asians, as well as blacks with unusual sounding names.<sup>6</sup> In view of this, Justice Adam found it necessary to take him—‘a mere public functionary’—to task for having ‘arrogantly and unashamedly arrogated to himself the functions of the legislature and the power of the judiciary’.<sup>7</sup> With the renunciation exercise bogged down in legal challenges and administrative confusion, Zimbabwean passports were being invalidated at points of entry and exit and applications for their renewal refused if certificates of renunciation could not be produced. Some clarity came in November 2002 when the rules governing foreign renunciation were gazetted (Government of Zimbabwe, 22 November 2002). As legal minds had expected, these rules established that renunciation requirements applied only to a

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5 See ‘Judgment in *Morgan Tsvangerai vs Registrar General*’, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, 21 March 2003, p. 2.

6 Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, 28 November 2002; ‘Zimbabwe: whether Zimbabwe recognises dual citizenship, in particular in the case of a person who detains the Zambian citizenship’, *Refworld*, 8 February 2002.

7 Justice Adam quoted by Justice Mungwira in *Todd vs Registrar General of Citizenship and Another* (HC55/2002). See also ‘Mudede ordered not to tamper with voters’ roll’, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 4 January 2002.

Zimbabwean citizen who was in fact presently a citizen of a foreign country. Not deterred, and still refusing direction by Cabinet and the courts, the Registrar-General continued to waste taxpayers' money by bringing many such cases to the courts in Harare and Bulawayo (Zimbabwe Human Rights and Law 2007). Having its rulings repeatedly flouted in this way obviously undermines the role of the judiciary.

Once citizenship is lost, its restoration is a costly and lengthy process. Numerically the largest group affected was the descendants of foreign labour, many of whom were at the time employed as farm workers. The colonial heritage produced arrangements that limited their horizons by anchoring their identity to a location—namely, the country's commercial farms (Rutherford 2003:192). Being 'paired to the farmer', however, marginalised them in the nation at large (Rutherford 2001:234). Falling outside the normal governance structures, their citizenship rights were never clearly defined during the colonial or post-independence eras (Muzondidya 2004:221). As farm and mine workers or urban industrial labourers, this group was also among the least able to access information or contribute resources to the renunciation exercise. Some protection for those whose parents were born within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region was offered in 2003. Where a parent(s) had arrived before 1980 as migrant labour, either as general or farm labour, mine employee or domestic worker, a descendant, having failed through inertia or ignorance to comply with renunciation provisions, could renounce his or her foreign citizenship and thereby confirm Zimbabwean citizenship by signing a prescribed form. As the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (4 August 2005) pointed out, however, without retrospective effect, there was nothing for these people to confirm as they had already lost their Zimbabwean citizenship. As non-citizens, they can neither participate fully in society nor benefit from state initiatives. Many are now stateless, as most countries of the region have no provision for dual citizenship, nor do they grant automatic citizenship to children born abroad to foreign-born parents. Although black and locally born, the descendants of Zimbabwe's migrant labour force are taunted as 'people without rural homes' (Muzondidya 2004:226). Without a claim to a rural home, they remain 'foreigners' or 'aliens', but never indigenes. Furthermore, the 2003 safety net was not all encompassing. The provisions excluded others deriving from SADC countries on the grounds that their forebears moved to Rhodesia for reasons of employment unrelated to labour migration.

## **Land reform: 'fast track' and war veterans**

At independence, Zimbabwe's newly elected government inherited the 'historical burden of race-based inequalities' (Alden and Makumbe 2001:215).

Land ownership in particular had long provided a historical trope for colonial subjugation. While constrained by Lancaster House provisions until 1990, the land issue invariably received attention around elections, only to fall away soon after. Local district studies by Alexander (2006), Moore (2005) and Rutherford (2001), as well as contributions to the 1998 Land Conference referred to in Chapter 6, all illustrate the point that the land question is in reality many questions (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:18–19). This is something reflected in the sheer diversity of Zimbabwe's land and resources conflicts, not all of which can be explained in terms of the colonial legacy (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:21). Nonetheless, in media coverage and political discourse, the focus fell squarely on the country's commercial farming sector where land distribution provided 'visible testimony' of the continuing racial structure of landholding in the country (Alden and Makumbe 2001:224), as well as the government's failure to address this challenge adequately.

By 2000, ZANU PF, faced with growing discontent and the MDC's electoral challenge, needed to win back voters. A sweetener tacked on late in the referendum campaign would have, if ratified, absolved Zimbabwe from paying compensation for white farms, but it failed to turn the vote. Regardless, two months later in April, constitutional amendments were passed permitting the government to expropriate land without paying compensation—that responsibility being handed to the British Government. 'Fast-track' procedures for land alienation and resettlement began soon after. Sachikonye (2003:3) describes this programme 'as being executed between 2000 and 2002 with vigour, considerable violence and chaos'. In November 2001, the President ordered a halt to agricultural work on designated white commercial farms and Section 8 (Preliminary Notices of Compulsory Acquisition) orders came into force in May the next year. By June 2002, the majority of white farms had been listed for redistribution. Farm workers were put on forced leave and owners had three months to vacate their homesteads or be in violation of the law. War veterans set up bases on the commercial farms, from which they, together with the recently formed youth militia and peasants, launched waves of intimidation, violence and in some cases murder, disrupting agricultural work and clearing the farms of their white owners, managers and farm labour. The police refused to intervene, provide protection or lay charges, saying 'it was a political matter'. Judges were threatened and sacked for not toeing the party line and courts had their rulings ignored.

In the light of these events, a former ZIPRA commander Paul Nyathi (2004:74–5) argues that the war veterans have been co-opted to do ZANU PF's dirty work and keep Mugabe in power. The Central Intelligence Organisation and the ruling party directed them and the youth militias, known as the 'new vets' of this third *Chimurenga*, to specific farms (Alexander 2006:186). Veteran leaders also

worked hand in hand with the army. Representatives of these groups clashed, however, over the control of farms. In some instances, the war veterans have been unable to hang on to the property in the face of claims by members of the political and military elite who, together with diplomats, judges and senior civil servants, have moved into the former white homesteads. Disturbed by these events, veterans' groups in Mashonaland and Matabeleland split from the main lobby group, Zimbabwe National Liberators War Veterans' Association. Having gone to war to put an end to an unjust racially ordered system of government and to contribute to the creation of a larger democratic space (Nyathi 2004:63), they distanced themselves from both the land invasions and political violence and spoke up for the rule of law<sup>8</sup> (Hammar 2005:12).

Fast track, along partisan lines and on the basis of immediate occupancy, thus went ahead before compensation for improvements was sorted out and without 'lease, permit or legal documentation or formal process' for the new settlers (Rukuni and Jensen 2003:246–7). Little compensation has been forthcoming to cover land improvements or commercial farm equipment, with the government machinery for administering these matters 'taxed to the limit' (Utete 2003:5). By late 2002, 11.5 million hectares of land had changed hands in the space of two and a half years (Sachikonye 2003:3)—twice the amount under stakeholders' discussion at the 1998 Land Conference. The *Utete Report*, coming out of the Office of the President, asserted that 4.2 million hectares had been offered to 127 192 households who were settled as small subsistence farmers by July 2003. The take-up rates among these 'new settlers' was very good, averaging 97 per cent. A further 7260 beneficiaries were said to have been offered commercial farms of varying sizes. This figure had to be revised downwards to 1672 a few months later.<sup>9</sup> The take-up rate among these 'new farmers' averaged about 66 per cent, suggesting that land not taken up was lying idle<sup>10</sup> (Utete 2003:5). Moreover, the government's one man, one farm policy had not been respected. Multiple farms of prime land appear to have been registered in the names of wives, children and relatives of 178 senior officials. An annex to the *Utete Report* outlining this problem has been withheld from publication. While Mugabe has ordered excess farms be surrendered, compliance is unclear.

Constitutional Amendment (No. 17) of 2005 vests all land acquired under Zimbabwe's 2000 reform programme as state land. In effect, landowners and occupiers lose security of tenure and become tenants at will and therefore beholden to the State. Technically, leases can be cancelled at the government's discretion. All that is required is for a property to be gazetted, followed by a 30-

8 'War veterans attack Hunzvi', *Zimbabwe Independent*, 20 March 1998, p. 1.

9 'Zimbabwe: focus on Utete committee report on agricultural reform', *IRIN*, 6 November 2003.

10 Take-up rates ranged from 42 per cent in Manicaland to 100 per cent in Matabeleland South (Utete 2003:5). Reasons for the low take-up included failure by officials to notify successful applicants, their disappointment at the lack of farm infrastructure, resource constraints and continuing court hearings (Utete 2003:25).

day grace period during which the farmer must leave the farm. The insecurity associated with this form of tenure does little to enhance investment and productivity (Rukuni and Jensen 2003:258). As a form of clientism, however, it allows ZANU PF control and patronage over its new farmers (Kriger 2007:73). After the passage of this amendment, the remaining white farmers were served with eviction notices and enforcement was stepped up. Access to the courts by owners intent on challenging the order was specifically denied<sup>11</sup> and appeals pending in the Administrative Court were struck off the rolls (Kriger 2007:72). Refused a hearing in Zimbabwe, 70-plus farmers whose land was to be expropriated appealed in early 2007 to a SADC Tribunal,<sup>12</sup> of which Zimbabwe is a signatory. The tribunal upheld the farmers' case finding in December 2008 that the Zimbabwean Government had contravened SADC's founding treaty's human rights and property rights provisions.<sup>13</sup> The government, however, ignored the tribunal, increasing the pace of eviction orders during its hearing. The farmers spearheading the appeal were abducted and badly beaten. One was then ordered to surrender his farm, which was earmarked for Nathan Shamurariya, a senior ZANU PF stalwart.<sup>14</sup> Refusing to vacate his property or bow to intimidation, the appellant's homestead and workers' housing were burned to the ground in September 2009.

Farm workers along with white farmers have been the notable losers. Workers and their dependants made up about two million people for whom no contingency plans were made (Sachikonye 2003:13). Sachikonye (2003:3) suggested that less than 5 per cent were offered land. Zimbabweans-by-descent among them could in most cases recover a place in the communal areas. More than one-quarter of this total are, however, descended from migrant labour. As 'puppets of the white man', their interests are set against those of the black majority. Anti-colonial nationalists condemn them for this relationship—for being under the influence of the farmer and sharing his interests—calling it false consciousness (Rutherford 2001:234, 2003:194). Having lost jobs, income, accommodation and access to health and educational services once provided by large-scale commercial farmers, this section of Zimbabwe's population has sunk into chronic poverty. Some remain in the farm compounds where, according to the *Utete Report* (2003:6), their presence creates 'numerous problems' as they try to survive from gold panning, hunting, fishing and other 'criminal activities'. Others depend on casual agricultural or piecemeal work. Not all of Zimbabwe's new

11 Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 4 August 2005, p. 2.

12 The tribunal was created as a peer-review mechanism to ensure the objectives of SADC's founding treaty were upheld by member states.

13 'Zimbabwe: white farmers appeal to SADC', *bilaterals.org*, 12 October 2007; 'SADC tribunal has no legal mandate to nullify member states' laws', *Race and History.com*, 19 July 2008; 'SADC tribunal rules 78 white farmers can keep Zimbabwe land', *newzimbabwe.com*, 28 November 2008.

14 'A brutal toll', *Newsweek*, 30 June 2008.

commercial farmers, however, see fit to pay the minimum wage,<sup>15</sup> claiming that casual farm labour is too expensive (FAO/WFP 2009:10). Other former farm workers attempt to eke out a precarious living as peri-urban squatters in areas targeted in Mugabe's infamous clean-up campaigns (Hammar 2005:2). A number have sought to disentangle themselves and escape their conceptual incarceration by establishing new dependencies and lines of patronage with the ruling party and invading war veterans (Rutherford 2003:210). Hoping for land of their own, they have endeavoured to get back on the politically correct side of patriotic history. While this path offers in all probability a less secure and lucrative relationship than previously existed with the commercial farmer, Rutherford (2008a:73) suggests it could provide farm workers with 'a new form of conditional belonging'.

In short, land reform enabled the ruling party to 'raise its ideological status' and posture as the revolutionary nationalist party (Kriger 2007:74). While taking back land in the name of the aggrieved, however, ownership remains highly skewed (FAO/WFP 2009:7). Sachikonye (2004:14) suggests that much less than half of those who applied for land have become beneficiaries. Female-headed households were sidelined, being allocated only 18 per cent of the small-scale farms and 12 per cent of the commercial farms (Utete 2003:25). On the other hand, the programme saw a massive but inequitable redistribution of wealth to privileged individuals on the basis of political patronage—the rise of a 'new regime of accumulation from above' (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:23). This result, justified using the discourse of anti-colonialism, was also accompanied by the destruction of capital invested in the agricultural and horticultural industries. Although farm infrastructure and implements were to remain on the property, politicians, senior government officials and war veterans had on occasion engaged in asset stripping (Davies 2004:34), confiscating and removing agricultural machinery.

Farms have also proved to be a reward for contributors to the liberation struggle, in addition to ZANU PF loyalists. Mugabe's lectures on the debt owed to the former freedom fighters by all Zimbabweans are legendary. Yet the pitch of ZANU PF's 'patriotic' history is far too high for some. Chiumbu (2004:34) argues that millions of young people born in the 1970s and since independence do not identify with the anti-colonial struggle. In addition, the wish of many raised in the urban areas is for a good job in town—not for them the tedium of life in the rural areas. Other ordinary Zimbabweans are alienated from ex-combatants by recent events—the polarisation between the comrades and the general public, according to Nyathi (2004:75), having never been greater. With Zimbabwe in the process of painful economic reform throughout the 1990s, those suffering from the effects of structural adjustment saw the focus on war

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15 'Zimbabwe: land reform omits farm workers', *IRIN*, 26 July 2009.

veterans as misplaced. The majority of former combatants, who remained poor and ill educated after independence, are perceived to be suffering the hardships and precarious existence typical of many rural dwellers; 'their problems are our problems'. Furthermore, war veterans are today found in all walks of life. While most were recruited from the rural poor, there is now a small but highly educated elite holding senior posts in government and the civil service. They could be said to have found their post-independence rewards (Nyathi 2004:64).

## Food security

At the stakeholders' Land Conference, concerns were raised that land acquisition and resettlement could reduce Zimbabwe's food security, at least in the short term (Government of Zimbabwe 1998a:59). Other ex-settler economies have faced the dilemma of how to proceed with redistribution and poverty reduction without compromising food production (Cousins 2003:266). In Zimbabwe, an ongoing, staggered process was suggested as offering some protection and a good way to move forward; however, the Deputy Minister of Lands and Agriculture and 'patriotic agrarianists' (Rutherford 2008a:3) such as Sam Moyo<sup>16</sup> rejected the idea as 'lacking foresight' or 'vision', intimating that this preoccupation somehow demeaned the historical legacy (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/Zimbabwe Economics Society 1998a:7). While a regional drought in the early years did not help the resettlement programme get off to a good start, recent Food and Agriculture/World Food Programme (FAO/WFP) reports (2008, 2009) indicate that serious food shortages continue to haunt rural and urban areas. The communal farmers' maize yield—once producing the bulk of this staple crop—is one-quarter of what it was 10 years ago, while commercial farms are producing one-tenth of their 1990s' yields (FAO/WFP 2009:7). Wheat, another important crop historically grown under irrigation by large-scale commercial farmers, has fallen by about two-thirds (FAO/WFP 2008:13).

FAO/WFP nominate many reasons for this poor showing. These include the shortage of credit, fuel and draft power as well as the untimely delivery of seeds, fertilisers and chemicals by the government, absenteeism of newly settled farmers, failure to weed, which compromises crop yields, and the deteriorating agricultural infrastructure. In addition, many new commercial farmers cultivate only part of the prime land allocated to them. Some have found diverting tractors to other uses and selling their diesel allocation more lucrative options (FAO/WFP 2009:10).<sup>17</sup> Communal farmers have also suffered from the loss 'of their symbiotic relationship with the former large-scale commercial agricultural sector' and the

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16 See Moyo (1998a:33) and the contribution of the Deputy Minister, Dr Muchena, to Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/Zimbabwe Economics Society, Vol. 2 (1998a:11).

17 See also 'Ripping the heart out of the heartland', *The Economist*, 25 August 2007.

demise of a healthy agro-input industry (FAO/WFP 2008:1). So, while allowing war veterans and the land hungry to move onto farmland for some years now and confiscating land in their name, the government has failed to provide these would-be farmers with sufficient agricultural assistance. Unable to meet their own food needs or produce a surplus, some have moved back to the communal areas (Alexander 2003:112). As a result of these shortcomings, the contribution of agriculture to total exports decreased from 39 per cent in 2000 to 13 per cent in 2007, although some small relative improvement was expected in 2008–09 (FAO/WFP 2009:6). With widespread famine, the country has become a food importer as well as a receiver of humanitarian food aid. Until very recently, there has been a severe scarcity in the marketplace, with shop shelves standing bereft of all food products. Inevitably, Zimbabwe has an unsustainable trade deficit and is dependent on South Africa for electricity, for which it cannot pay. Serious 'knock-on' effects from the country's agricultural revolution are also being felt in the industrial, manufacturing, finance and tourism sectors—the last now all but moribund.

While Zimbabwe's commercial land issue was mired in confusion and controversy, and attacks escalated in some areas, white farmers in other parts of the country, however, received 'offer letters'. Issued by the Ministry of Lands, these specify a farm allocated to beneficiaries on the basis of either a 99-year lease for agricultural land or 25 years for wildlife conservancies. The letters allow the bearer to evict others who might have already occupied the land but they are otherwise 'devoid of any transparent procedure' (Kriger 2007:73). In April 2009, 13 white commercial farmers were offered land in Guruve District, a fertile agricultural region close to Harare. Touring the country to assess agricultural production, Advocate Dinha, Governor of Central Mashonaland, stressed the letters 'were imperative' as most 'new farmers' were 'failing to occupy the farms they were allocated, thereby affecting production'.<sup>18</sup> He urged the white farmers to share their knowledge with other newly resettled farmers, noting that whites had more than a century of commercial farming expertise to draw on. Here Dinha parodies the Rhodesian trade unions' protectionist claim that the white artisan had 'a century of training in his bones' (Phimister 1988:192). Once again white farmers were instructed to integrate and be seen participating in all national events. Two months later, another 40 farmers received lease offers for wildlife conservancies in the southern Masvingo area and were directed to share their expertise by forming consortiums with 'indigenous players' before the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.<sup>19</sup> There have, however, been repeated calls for an independent land audit, to find out whose name is on which parcel of

18 'White farmers get offer letters', *The Herald*, 27 April 2009.

19 'Forty white farmers get offer letters', *The Herald*, 17 June 2009.

land before long leases are locked in. With the government still working out the fine detail,<sup>20</sup> the general public remains wary. The land register, like the voters' roll,<sup>21</sup> is known to have been in disarray for some considerable time.

Only 200 or so large-scale white commercial farms now remain in Zimbabwe (FAO/WFP 2009:8). Some lie idle awaiting court decisions, farmers on others cultivate only a fraction of their former holding and a few have come to 'fragile' agreements with the land occupiers such that profits are shared (Kriger 2007:72). Most farmers have left with their families for the safety of the towns. Where Mugabe had over the years made much political capital out of white rootlessness and lack of commitment, Presidents elsewhere saw something different and set out to actively recruit Zimbabwe's white farmers. Not insignificant numbers have relocated to develop new properties or rehabilitate degraded agricultural land in other parts of Africa—most notably in neighbouring Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi. A Zambian Government official said 'white farmers have shown their commitment to land in Zimbabwe and we feel that Zambia could gain from their professionalism'.<sup>22</sup> Predictably, Mugabe chastised the Zambian President for taking in 'racist colonialists'. With a highly urban population, however, and with only an estimated 10 per cent of its arable land under cultivation, Zambia faces recurrent food shortages. Zimbabwe's former commercial farmers today grow maize, tobacco, coffee, fruit, vegetables and flowers reportedly with good results on land leased from the Zambian Government. Further afield in Nigeria in West Africa, President Obasanjo was also encouraging, saying 'we don't want to take away what is good for Zimbabwe, but we don't want what is good for Africa taken away'.<sup>23</sup> The Governor of Nigeria's Kwara State, Mr Saraki, has pursued Zimbabwe's dispossessed farmers and actively supports them in dealings with the country's bureaucracy. With his help, their farm ventures are also proving a success.<sup>24</sup> Others have emigrated to New World settler societies where, as often as not, they have entered non-farming occupations.

## Economic empowerment

A decade of black economic empowerment (see Chapter 6) produced limited results. Zimbabwe's economy in fact shrank in real terms by 50 per cent between

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20 'Zimbabwe: government working on new land lease format', *The Herald*, 21 July 2009.

21 See Independent MP Margaret Dongo speaking in the run-up to the 2000 election about the operation of the Registrar-General's Office and how particular individuals and parties benefit from the 'shambles' and 'chaos' of the voters' roll (*Parliamentary Debates*, 19 May 1999, cols 5839–48).

22 'Zambia wants farmers to fight famine', *BBC News*, 3 February 2003.

23 'Bad luck continues to stalk Zambia's white farmers, hounded from Zimbabwe', *guardian.co.uk*, 27 February 2006, p. 4.

24 'White farmers bring progress in Nigeria', *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 May 2008, vol. 100, no. 111, pp. 1–4.

1998 and 2008 as businesses closed and the country experienced significant de-industrialisation (FAO/WFP 2009:2, 5). The government never properly implemented policy recommendations, bureaucratic meddling impeded the flow of funds and a lack of transparency clouded the whole indigenisation process (Raftopoulos and Compagnon 2003:23). Some multinationals such as Olivine, a subsidiary of Heinz and producer of the basic staple cooking oil, sold out to the government and left Zimbabwe altogether.<sup>25</sup> Unemployment has been running at about 80 per cent for a number of years. Indeed, Raftopoulos and Compagnon (2003:25) write that Mugabe has been more concerned with promoting cronyism than introducing broad-based economic empowerment. Business opportunities opened up by the indigenisation programme provided the ruling elite with another form of patronage and political reward. The interest of Zimbabwe's new entrepreneurs, also cloaked in the language of indigenisation, lay in harassing white-owned companies and seizing corporate properties for personal gain, rather than in wealth creation through economic growth (Raftopoulos and Compagnon 2003:22–3). The ruling party diverted attention away from these disappointing results with the political slogan 'Land is the economy, the economy is land' in the run-up to the 2000 elections and afterwards with land reform.

The government also proved slow to enact measures needed to stabilise the economy. The local currency, which began to exhibit volatility after Black Friday on 14 November 1997, collapsed. The Zimbabwean dollar officially traded at US\$1 to Z\$30 000 in May 2008, while on the parallel market, US\$1 fetched in the region of Z\$4 million (FAO/WFP 2008:4). Understandably, nobody wanted to touch the local currency, preferring hard currencies or petrol coupons. Barter also became commonplace as hyperinflation reached 56 million per cent in 2008 (FAO/WFP 2009:1). Farm workers hoped to return to the colonial practice of payment in kind (FAO/WFP 2008:9), landlords wanted rents paid in groceries such as sugar and cooking oil if they could be found. New bank notes with values of up to Z\$100 trillion had to be printed, although this denomination was barely enough to buy a loaf of bread. Zimbabwe slashed 12 zeros from the currency in early 2009.<sup>26</sup> Economic indices such as these indicate that the majority of ordinary Zimbabweans are worse rather than better off after indigenisation and land reform, which, at their inception, were discussed in terms of equity and poverty reduction. It appears that by looking back and focusing on the wrongs of the past, Zimbabwe's leaders might have squandered the country's economic wellbeing for the foreseeable future (Davies 2004:40).

25 'Blackening the economy', *The Economist*, 15 September 2007.

26 'A worthless currency', *The Economist*, 19 July 2008; 'Zimbabwe removes 12 zeros from the currency', *CNN.com/world*, 10 July 2009.

Only with the passage of the *Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act* in March 2008 did attention return to other sectors of the economy. The description of an indigene—somewhat hazy in the late 1990s—firmed up as

any person who before 18 April 1980 was disadvantaged by unfair discrimination on the grounds of his or her race, and any descendant of such a person, and any company, association, syndicate or partnership in which such persons hold the controlling interest or are the majority of members. (Government of Zimbabwe, 22 June 2007)

This is indigenisation not so much as the ‘first people’, disenfranchisement or non-dominance (Hodgson 2002), but rather as an act of recognition and bitter memory. Rights derive from opportunities denied before 1980, of life chances forgone due to colonial racial oppression. Concomitantly, post-independence economic hurdles are also attributed to white recalcitrance (Raftopoulos and Compagnon 2003:24).

As part of bio-politics (Worby 2003:59, 72), the State plans to reorder the population in terms of wealth and access to resources. The act directs a minister to transfer the majority share of any public company owned by non-indigenous Zimbabweans to those who qualify as indigenes.<sup>27</sup> The company could be anything from a backyard garage, video shop or factory to a bank or mine. It is, however, widely held that mining—the main export earner in 2009—is the sector of primary interest to the country’s ‘new accumulators’ (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:40). The Chamber of Mines President, Victor Gapare, views these recently introduced government measures as ill timed and unlikely to work in Zimbabwe’s current economic and political climate. The provisions come when the mining sector is operating well below capacity (FAO/WFP 2009:5). Gold production, for instance, peaked in 1999 at 27 tonnes and then fell to 3 tonnes in 2008. Base-metal mines are operating on a ‘care and maintenance basis’ in part due to the global downturn.<sup>28</sup> According to Gapare, fewer than 10 of Zimbabwe’s 88 mines are ‘foreign’-owned, leaving little room for economic empowerment through wealth redistribution or dispossession. Nor have financial institutions the money to advance to those wanting to engage in empowerment deals.<sup>29</sup> Gapare would prefer to see wealth creation through growing the sector. The head of the Chamber of Commerce, Cain Mpofu, and Reserve Bank chief, Gideon Gono, concurred. Importantly, Gono warned that this new law could be derailed and abused by individuals with government contacts. Although the act confers

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27 See interview with the Minister for Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment, Paul Mangwana (‘Foreign firms to fund own take-overs’, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 14 March 2008). The Department of Indigenisation and Empowerment plans to assign a rating for each company in every sector of the economy. Companies will be required to contribute a levy to an economic empowerment fund, the proceeds of which will be used to provide finance for the acquisition of shares, working capital and other forms of finance to indigenes.

28 ‘Experts urge caution on black empowerment in mining’, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 25 June 2009.

29 Ibid.

entitlement on an aggrieved group or collective, in practice, restitution benefits will inevitably accrue to individuals (Davies 2004:39). Gono thus called on the government to ensure well-connected individuals did not 'amass wealth for themselves in a starkly greedy and irresponsible manner'.<sup>30</sup> War veterans have, however, forewarned that they are going to solve the industrial issue in the way they have solved the land issue (Meredith 2007:211). Captains of industry and local economists would rather lessons be learnt from land reform with regard to planning, transparency and good economic management—priorities they share with their counterparts among the white middle class.

Inevitably, Zimbabwe's challenges spilt over to its neighbours as people flocked to leave the country. Few reliable figures are available, but the Central Statistics Office (CSO) suggests 350 000 left in the six years after 2002 (FAO/WFP 2009:4). This figure represents only those who declared their intention to emigrate, rather than going on holiday, and who left legally through recognised exit points. The Reserve Bank points to three million people sending back remittances. Neither figure captures impoverished border jumpers. Huge numbers of them are now living illegally as refugees in South Africa and Botswana. Rutherford (2008b) describes the lot of more than 10 000 employed on corporate permits in the Musina area of South Africa, close to the Zimbabwean border (see also Rutherford and Addison 2007). Many more have headed deeper into the country to Gauteng and Cape Town, where they are not welcome and have been targeted in recent attacks on immigrants. Zimbabwe has also lost its educated and professional classes, who have gone in search of greener and safer pastures in the region or have sought asylum in the United Kingdom. Their right to leave was restricted in 2005 when departure not in the national, public or economic interest of the State was outlawed. Whites, however, are people Mugabe 'would prefer to do without'; he indeed 'would actually be happier if some country were [to] accept them',<sup>31</sup> but none, including Britain, readily acknowledged any obligation towards them. The United Kingdom agreed in 2009, however, to a humanitarian programme to repatriate elderly in need of medical and aged care in the next 18 months.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, there is widespread regional concern regarding the effect of Zimbabwe's disorder on other struggling economies. Yet, with a few notable exceptions, African leaders and organisations have proved unwilling to publicly criticise Mugabe's anti-colonial and anti-imperial stance, which 'strikes a

30 'Zimbabwe's equity law is a recipe for economic disaster', *ZWNEWS*, 10 March 2008.

31 Mugabe speaking on Independence Day 2001 and quoted by Meredith (2007:210). See also Gandhi and Jambaya quoted in Raftopoulos (2004a:164).

32 'Great Britain to remove nationals from Zimbabwe', *Afrik.com*, 18 February 2009; 'Britons repatriated from Zimbabwe', *The Zimbabwe Guardian*, 18 February 2009. The number of those eligible is believed to be between 500 and 1500 people, the latter figure representing half of the white population falling within this age bracket currently living in Zimbabwe.

deep emotional chord' (Eppel 2004:49). Various scholars have extolled the recuperative benefits of anti-colonial nationalism in Africa (Gandhi 1998:112). For others, the term 'post-colonial' does not sit easily with regard to Southern Africa's global positioning (Radhakrishnan 1996:155), in which colonialism's material after-effects are perceived to be ever present. The continuing and unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities associated with international capitalism suggest to many that colonialism is far from over (Parry 1995:93–4; Loomba 1994:308). Phimister (2004:282, 286) correctly observes that the majority of regional leaders are in agreement with Mugabe that Britain and the colonial past are the problems they still share. Most continue to recognise the legitimacy of Zimbabwe's government and Libya has helped out with fuel supplies. Young blacks are attracted by Mugabe's inflammatory rhetoric and are happy to see him lambast the British Government and other Western imperialists. His outbursts provide rich pickings for caricature in the West; but, when fed back to Africa, these add fuel to ever-more racial xenophobia and polarising schismogenesis.

## **The Global Political Agreement and transitional government**

In March 2008, the MDC won the majority of seats in the National Assembly election and Morgan Tsvangirai took the first round of the presidential vote. The MDC could therefore legitimately claim the mandate to form a new government, but Mugabe would not concede. A sham run-off against no opposition put Mugabe back in State House. The MDC then entered into negotiations with ZANU PF in order to set up a power-sharing arrangement and a transitional government. Donor funds began to flow again when they signed a Global Political Agreement in September 2008. The agreement, while reflecting the disparate ideologies held by ZANU PF and the two wings of the MDC, established grounds for discussions towards resolving the challenges confronting the country. The centrality of the land question as well as issues to do with the rule of law, human rights, democracy and governance were all acknowledged as key areas of contest (Kubatana.net, 15 September 2008). Among much else, the parties committed themselves to arrest the fall in living standards, reverse the decline of the economy and restore order in the agricultural sector. While President Mugabe and the MDC came to a power-sharing agreement in February 2009 under which Tsvangirai became Prime Minister as part of a transitional government, early indications suggest that this is not an easy relationship.<sup>33</sup> Six months into its first term, MDC ministerial appointees are still to be sworn in and provincial governor posts allocated, and the key positions of Attorney-General

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33 See 'MDC position paper', *SW Radio Africa*, 19 January 2009.

and Governor of the Reserve Bank are yet to be agreed on. ZANU PF also appears to be deliberately frustrating the implementation of other key issues covered in the Global Political Agreement.

Some relief from Zimbabwe's economic woes came in March 2009 when the government abandoned the Zimbabwean dollar. With the introduction of convertible currencies as legal tender, hyperinflation was brought under control. Packaged food, mostly from South Africa, reappeared in supermarkets for those with sufficient purchasing power. Civil servants began to receive an 'allowance' of US\$100 a month. While not a salary, this enabled a number of them to get back to work. Schools began to reopen. The BBC has been allowed back into the country after an eight-year absence. The country is, however, unlikely to attract significant foreign investment until the government addresses the issues of property rights and law and order. Confidence in social relations has also been a significant casualty of Zimbabwe's governance and food crises. During a trip to the United Kingdom in June 2009, Tsvangirai was asked by BBC reporters how he could work with Mugabe given ZANU PF's intimidation of the MDC and its supporters. In reply, Tsvangirai harked back to the now exhausted sentiments that informed the policy of reconciliation in the 1980s. Tsvangirai's audience, made up of Zimbabwean asylum seekers whom he wanted to return home and rebuild the country, clearly did not believe him and jeered him from the stage. Inevitably, a crisis of this magnitude has brought with it the breakdown of trust between fellow citizens, as well as a loss of faith in the country's social institutions and in the very idea of the nation itself.

## **Patriotic history and minority identity construction**

Importantly, the Global Political Agreement reaffirmed the pre-eminent place in the nation 'of Zimbabwe's gallant sons and daughters' who were sacrificed in the fight against colonialism. Loyalty, patriotism and commitment were once again cited as core values, as well as the liberation struggle being foundational to sovereignty. This 'patriotic' version of history locks in colonialism and sets up a dualism that concedes only two races, two critiques of colonialism, two world views and two mutually exclusive sets of interests—namely, black and white. The party's vision, writes Raftopoulos (2004b:xx), has become trapped in the confines of this categorisation and as a result Zimbabwe's minority groups are offered only a backward-looking approach to identity construction.

ZANU PF's story of national rebirth explains present frustrations and hardships to the populace through a highly selective remembering of the past. In this way, ZANU PF shifts responsibility from itself and garners support for its increasingly

autocratic government (Alden and Makumbe 2001:231). As the undifferentiated scapegoat<sup>34</sup> for ruling-party ineptitude and blamed for blocking black economic empowerment, whites, in league with the British, are demonised as the ‘obstacle to real decolonisation’ (Alexander 2006:185) and are cast on the wrong side in patriotic history. Trying to break out and find a legitimate place for themselves within the nation has been well nigh impossible given the ruling party’s singular version of history, its ‘iron grip’ on the origin story (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:28), in which whites appear only as racists, thieves and oppressors. They must also contend with the co-joining of ‘whites’ with ‘foreigners’ about to be played out in the economic sector. These conceptual linkages both dis-empower and Occidentalise (Muzondidya 2004:225)—processes whites battled against throughout the 1990s. Unable to shed ‘whiteness’, however, this community finds itself a spent force.<sup>35</sup> With Zimbabwe’s rulers obsessed with the past or race and origin (Muzondidya 2004:231), they, as Europeans, have no place in Zimbabwe.

Patriotic history’s racial binaries also concede no middle ground for Zimbabwe’s Asian and coloured communities, who are perceived to be part of the country’s ‘colonial residue’ (Muzondidya 2005:2). The political legacy of the contradictory colonial experience is their ambiguous status as ‘fence-sitters’ and continued identification with white interests. As allies of the whites, they are perceived as outsiders and aliens and on these grounds denied rights, for multi-ethnicity is not a recognised part of Zimbabwe’s nationhood. The Affirmative Action Group harasses Asian businesses and coloureds, who are labelled whites, must endure the ‘extreme resentment of black extremists’ and are told to leave for the United Kingdom (Muzondidya 2004:226–8). In sum, the difficulties faced by Zimbabwe’s subject races can be traced to the inability to move beyond identity construction during the colonial period. This continues to inform post-independence nation building (Raftopoulos 2004b:xvi) and makes any association with ‘whiteness’ polluting.

While I was, anthropologically speaking, ‘in the field’, it was not always clear where decolonisation would lead or what change was ‘producing’ with regard to Zimbabwe’s white community beyond a growing sense of estrangement, of their being disconnected and dislodged from the country they thought of as home. Race and history, however, have returned to Zimbabwe’s identity politics as central and permanent, or, to employ Bonnett’s (1997:177) powerful imagery, as impossible to escape and ‘set outside social change’. Such is the historical burden of colonial-based identities for Europeans, Asians and coloureds who,

34 ‘Why lump together all whites?’, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 12 February 1999, p. 7.

35 The *International Herald Tribune* (21 July 2008) estimated that 20 000 whites remained in the country; other sources said 30 000. Both figures should be treated with caution. Zimbabwe’s CSO has declared the 2007 and 2008 inter-census figures ‘unreliable’, ‘unusable’ and ‘not available’ (FAO/WFP 2008:3, 2009:4).

as Rhodesia's flotsam, together made up in 2002 just 0.7 per cent of Zimbabwe's population. The ruling party underlines the continuing centrality of race and memory in their subject positioning (Raftopoulos 2004b:xx). The plurality of experience and the diversity of memories that make up 'white' in either the colonial or the post-colonial periods are not countenanced. Rather, ZANU PF blocks productive political debate and stifles dialogue by disallowing 'demeaning' questions or critical examination. Without a shared ownership of history—itsself a potentially 'influential agent' of reconciliation (Clark and Reynolds 1994:1)—alternative renderings that could open up other configurations of the national collective are silenced. Thus, ZANU PF's 'iron grip' has done untold damage to civic society more generally through the loss of democratic space in which to talk about the past and the future (Raftopoulos 2004b:xiii). Reproducing crude binaries of race, as well as regional and party affiliations, has served to essentialise difference and entrench antagonisms (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:16), thereby obstructing the capacity to perceive oneself in the other and closing down the fragile third space of communication, negotiation and representation (Bhabha 1990b:211) identified in the preceding chapter.