

Zimbabwe Beyond 2000

The Politicization of Land and the Crisis of Government Zimbabwe's Human insecurity Issues

"The regime's version asserts that what has been underway since 2000 is the "*Third Chimurenga*": the final stage of nationalist revolution that will culminate in finally reclaiming Zimbabwe's lost lands..., combating recolonization and completing 'the war against imperialism' wresting economic control from minority white settlers and placing it in the hands of indigenous black Zimbabweans, and establishing a form of authentic African governance"
(Hammar: 2005)

The Politics of Land / Land Politicized

The saliency of the historical memories invoked by Zimbabwe's colonial past has continued to shadow the politics of land ownership. However, the evocative summoning of liberation past has been arranged according to the vision of ZANU-PF; "For Mugabe and ZANU (PF) this has entailed a constant discursive reassembling of diverse regimes of truth and selective traditions... Within this ever-changing kaleidoscope, one finds juxtaposed assertions by Mugabe and his spokesmen of holding free and fair elections and maintaining law and order (despite evidence to the contrary) while portraying liberal democracy as a tool of western imperialism and anathema to Zimbabwe's historically legitimate land revolution (Hammar: 2005). The discursive re-construction of the political landscape has resulted in the aggressive exploitation of immutable sensitivities (International Crisis Group (ICG): 2004) in an attempt to secure the regime from the reactionary dynamics arising from the credibility gap between the redistributive socialist rhetoric and socio-economic malaise.

Following the assumption of political independence in 1980 4,500 large-scale commercial farms were owned by white farmers living on eleven million hectares of land whilst post-transition population density in the "communal areas" increased and over one million families were still forced to eke out an existence on sixteen million hectares of poor quality, drought prone land (Human Rights Watch (HRW): 2002). In contrast to the aspiration of liberation, ZANU-PF conducted a policy which encouraged white settlement to facilitate foreign economic assistance which marginalized equitable land reform from the political agenda. By 1997 the government had only succeeded in resettling the equivalent of 10 percent of arable land and 25 percent of the pre-independence white-owned land (Office of Economic and Cultural Development (OECD): 2002-2003). Post independence disquiet amongst war veterans however was effectively bought off in a package for veterans that included a one-off payment of Z\$50,000 to each veteran, and a Z\$2,000 per month pension for life, however according to HRW (2002), "It was not clear how that state would pay for this commitment. The pledge, however, gave some war veterans an interest in the continued rule of ZANU-PF."

Amidst growing social discontent in 1997 in the context of general economic malaise the government put up 1471 commercial farms (40%) of white-owned land for compulsory purchase which was to be superseded in mid-2000 by the Fast Track Development Programme covering 5 million hectares and 150,000 families (OECD: 2002-2003).

However, following the defeat of the constitutional referendum and the substantive gains of the MDC opposition ZANU-PF revised its position marking a gradual descent into violence initiated by the highly flawed election victory. Against the background of political retrenchment the pace of farm redistribution escalated sharply. By 2002 it was reported that 50,000 to 70,000 had been displaced by political violence and land invasions, the cumulative total numbering 300,000 since 2000 (ICG: 2002). The accelerated and violent acquisition program has had a detrimental effect, including: the severe disruption of production - it was reported that ninety per cent of the 4,500 large-scale farmers had stopped farming or had operations severely disrupted (ICG: Oct. 2002); the failure to address the needs of farm laborers (only 2% are estimated to have been allocated land under the fast-track reform programme, according to OECD statistics 2002-2003); the allocation of inhospitable terrain including land flooded under dams, land already resettled, or land currently under acquisition for industrial purposes (HRW: 2002); and the displacement of individuals under forcible and violent evictions, as one interviewee remarked to HRW (2002), "You are just moving poverty from one location to another." The (re) politicization of land was linked to the consolidation of ZANU-PF's integrity (Chapter 9). HRW (2002) interviews determined that violence against white farm owners, and by implication their workers too, was proportionate to the support given to the opposition party. Indeed the pervasion of the war veteran-ZANU-PF alliance in the distribution selection process led to the conclusion that, "It's not a committee. It's a rally."

Systematic, endemic, and institutionalized violence, repression and disenfranchisement have become pervading features of 'playing the land card.' Indeed, an HRW interview (2005) reported that, "in many of the rural areas they (ZANU PF supporters, youth militia and war veterans) don't have to beat people up anymore, they simply have to maintain a presence." Hammar (2005) argues that the rhetoric of the national war on terror and its restructuring effects "set the scene for a parallel, deadly politics of identity and belonging now at play. This is a politics that attempts to redefine who belongs: to the land, as legitimate sons and daughters of the soil; to the state, as valid and loyal citizens; and to the nation, as either racially, ethnically or politically 'pure' insiders, set against an ever-expanding category of dangerous 'others' now tainting the national body". Re-defining the boundaries of conflict was endorsed by the facilitation of networks of affiliation - particularly through the youth militias as the symbolic veterans of the new liberation wars - that cut across traditional patterns of loyalties, held in place by a system of patronage that promised elite status within the discursive production of the Third Chimurenga (Hammar: 2005). ZANU-PF's self-styled mafia economy (ICG: Oct. 2002) has been increasingly used to fund the security of the regime. ICG (2004) contend that youth training has become an electoral strategy resulting in increased budgetary allocation from Z\$418 million in 2002 to Z\$2 billion in 2003 (US\$70 million and US\$380 million respectively). However, whilst most members are voluntary conscripts, within the context of economic poverty (most are from a low social category) they are increasingly being used as perpetrators of violence (Chapter 20), torture, and destruction of property alongside implementing political projects such as enforcing compliance with the government's price controls (ICG: 2004).

However, ZANU-PF has created the conditions for a potential fissure between the youth militia and the increasing disillusionment amongst the war veterans. The volatile system of rule ZANU-PF has created is also punctuated by a lack of monopoly of control on the instruments of violence (Chapter 9). The ICG (October 2002) considers the military to be a “wild card” in which “the top levels cannot predict what the middle and lower levels will do in a crisis.” The extent to which the ZANU-PF can prevent society from collapsing under the weight of its rhetorical inadequacy is dependent on the extent to which a fractured civil society can remain sufficiently disunited and economically co-opted.

The Crisis of the Governed / the Crisis of Government

The transition to post-colonial society and environmental constraints have contextualized Zimbabwean’s developmental potential (Chapters 3 and 12), however that potential has also been limited by political design. The interpolations between the refashioned liberalist nationalism and socio-economic decline have served to perpetuate centralized management and created a cyclical dynamic that has endorsed the patterns of crisis.

The HIV/AIDS Pandemic

Zimbabwe is one of the countries that is most affected by HIV/AIDS (Chapter 18) with an Ante-Natal Clinic (ANC) prevalence rate of 21.3% (International Monetary Fund (IMF): 2005). Another serious effect has been the legacy of living orphans believed to number 600,000 and estimated to rise to 1.2 million by 2010 which will approximate to 10% of the total population (OECD: 2002-2003). In order to meet the challenge to the health services an AIDS levy was introduced in 2000 followed by the institutionalization of an AIDS council to disperse funds. However, an OECD (2002-2003) report concluded that a lack of clear agenda and effective distribution has constrained the efficacy of the body. The impact of HIV/AIDS on state structures is undermining the ability of the government to meet basic health needs. The constraints on already creaking health structures have been exacerbated by an outward migration flow resulting in the loss of labour from key public and private sector positions, for example, in the health sector 56%, 32% and 92% of doctor, nurse and pharmacist positions are vacant (UN CAP: 2006) The central problem is that that access to services will have a natural ceiling: for health fees to become a substantial source of revenue for the health sector they must be set at a level far beyond the reach of the poorest household (HRW: 2006). Furthermore, there has been concern expressed that whilst HIV/AIDS is in essence a gender neutral disease, its effects are felt in a highly gendered way. HRW (2006) highlighted the inequitable impact on women; limited educational capacity and access to technology or knowledge negated their ability to control their own productivity; women are frequently the caregivers or dependents; social capacity in the familial setting affords little negotiating space with their partners; and finally women’s vulnerability is often compounded by social stigmatization and discrimination.

Economic Difficulties

The farm invasions have had a corrosive effect on Zimbabwe’s growth potential, export losses in the agricultural sector accounting for US\$400,000 leading ICG (Oct. 2002) to conclude that “ZANU-PF economic policies have transformed one of Africa’s most diversified economies into a pre-industrial, peasant-based economy.” The declining economic performance has severely constrained the ability of the government to respond

to the social challenges. Zimbabwe's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted by an estimated 7% in 2005 due to reduced agricultural production, high inflation rates, and chronic and persistent fuel shortages to the extent that in January 2004 the inflation rate reached epidemic proportions totalling 623% although its anticipated projection is estimated to 'stabilise' at 400% by the end of 2005 (UN CAP: 2006). The fiscal deficit is anticipated to rise to 12.6 per cent of the GDP and Foreign Direct Investment was down from US\$4.5 million from US \$436 million (ICG: Oct. 2002). Long-term macro-economic prospects look increasingly constrained by the 'brain drain' and this is liable to deter future investment. The political and economic exodus of 60-70% of the economically most productive group produces dubious prospects for the long-term growth potential (Hammar: 2005). Whilst the government have sought external credit-finance (Chapter 12) the ability to stabilise the economy has been offset by declining production potential and the accumulation of vast external debts. Furthermore, the favour of the international community has been linked to the abusive record of the Zimbabwean regime which deteriorated significantly with the violent eviction of white farmers.

Chronic fuel shortages have been subject to the whims of the international market. Fuel prices in the formal market increased by 733% from January to October 2005, from Z\$3,000 per litre to Z\$22,000 and on the shadow market it was predicted that rises could reach an estimated Z\$130,000 per litre (UN CAP: 2006) Indeed, one Zimbabwean claimed to HRW (2003) that "there were bigger queues in Harare ... for precious supplies of diesel fuel than there were at referendum voting points." Zimbabwe's economic collapse harmed the purchasing power of poor and middle income Zimbabweans in particular because food and fuel inflation climbed faster than overall inflation rates and because wages failed to keep pace with prices (HRW: 2003). Formal unemployment is estimated to reach 80%, constituting a quantitative 20% increase in the figure estimated for 2002 (OECD: 2002-2003). Social decline has also been punctuated by an inequitable distribution of wealth: the richest 20 per cent of the population is in receipt of 60 per cent of the income (OECD: 2002-2003). Indeed, it was remarked that new opportunities for corruption had reached "fever pitch" (ICG: Oct 2002). Asymmetric developmental opportunities have contributed to anticipation that failure to find work in the legal employment sector will increase the prospect of illicit activity and/or increase the incentive to migrate. The dilemma of seeking socio-economic advancement elsewhere is that the threats facing Zimbabwe are not unique to the country but regional constraints that have proved rather to be mutually enforcing as permeable borders serve merely to diffuse the problems across borders.

Urbanization

Demographic changes have resulted in outward migration from the rural areas to urban centres. Whereas the population growth is reported to increase between 1-2% annually, the comparable urban growth rate is 5-6%, and consequently the current urban population is estimated to total 4.5 million of the country's 12 million population (UN CAP : 2006). Urbanization has been accentuated by inequities between rural and urban areas, the poverty indices equal to 48% in rural regions compared to 7.9% in urban areas. It is estimated that over 200,000 children will be affected by the government land resettlement programme accompanied by an increasing rate of drop-outs from school (OECD: 2002-2003: 367). A new dimension was created to the politics of dispossession/repossession with Murambatsvina "Restore Order" operation on 25 May 2005, as part of the government's efforts to rehabilitate the urban poor, force them to move to rural areas, and prevent mass uprisings against the deteriorating political and economic conditions in high

density urban areas (HRW: 2005), based on the political rationale that urban areas were the last 'revolutionary' zone (ICG: Aug. 2005). Dislocation reached epidemic proportions. HRW (2005) claim that "Operation Murambatsvina brought the problem of internal displacement in Zimbabwe to a critical level..." Based on government statistics that 133,000 households were evicted during the removal of 'illegal' housing and business structures, it was estimated by the Secretary General's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Settlement Issues Zimbabwe that 650,000 -700,000 people were directly affected through the loss of shelter and/or livelihoods (UN CAP: 2006). As of July 94,460 housing structures had been destroyed affecting 1,333,534 households at over 52 sites, of the internally displaced 500,000 are believed to be children, 40,000 were arrested for illicit criminal activities and network dislocation from indirect linkages brought the total affected to between 2.1 million and 2.56 million (ICG: Aug. 2005). Given the continued land evictions and the rural/urban polarization the immediate exigencies are not likely to subside.

The Politicization of Food

The annual cereal requirement for human and livestock consumption is 1.8 million metric tonnes (MT) of maize. However the estimated harvest of 600,000 MTs in 2004-2005 produced a serious shortfall requiring that the government import 82,000 MTs of maize from the sub-region to supplement the loss (UN CAP: 2006). However HRW (2003, 2004) have discerned persistent anomalies in the distribution of imported maize reporting that an assessment committee could not account for more than two hundred thousand metric tons of maize, and that after accounting for government and commercial imports and stocks there is still a deficit of 325,000 metric tons.

The politicization of food in Zimbabwe has become a considerable problem - as one Zimbabwean remarked, "ZANU-PF likes droughts. They thrive on droughts because people are eating from their hands" - NGO representatives have discerned ZANU PF party members distributing food near the polling station: "In effect, rural or urban people without ZANU PF party cards are unable to register for or receive GMB maize" (HRW: 2003) which would severely inhibit the urban centre (traditional oppositionist) access to food (HRW: 2004). Food has become a political tool for rewarding party allegiance. Of the 75 percent living below the poverty line, it was reported that deaths from hunger and nutrition were disproportionately limited to urban MDC strongholds (ICG: 2004). Operation Murambatsvina also served to impede peoples ability to access food The overwhelming majority of internally displaced persons interviewed by Human Rights Watch (HRW: 2005) determined an existential need of shelter, food, health services and other forms of assistance. All of them reported having received absolutely no such assistance from the government. Quite simply "They don't want people receiving food assistance out in the open in the urban areas." The politicization of food alongside inadequate access has facilitated the emergence of a shadow trade in grain. In February 2003 HRW (2003), reported that twenty kilograms of maize cost Z\$4000 on the black market, half or three-quarters of a domestic workers monthly wage.

HRW (2003) contends that "today one-half of Zimbabwe's population of nearly 14 million is considered food-insecure, living in a household that is unable to obtain enough food to meet basic needs." Child mortality has doubled from 59 to 123 per 1,000 live births between 1989 and 2004, and the maternal mortality rate has risen from 695 per 100,000 live births in 1999 to more than 1,000 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2002 (UN CAP:

2006). The number of persons considered underweight increased from 14.2% to 16.9%, wasting (an indicator of acute malnutrition) increased in all ten districts, the average increasing from 2.9% to 4.4% with severe malnutrition accounting for 25% of all wasting cases, and 70% of the children admitted for severe malnutrition were also HIV positive (UN CAP: 2006). The general life expectancy forecast for 2000-2005 was 42.9% and poor nutrition amongst those living with HIV/AIDS has restricted their ability to fight secondary infections (OECD: 2002-2003). It is estimated that 36% of the rural population would be considered food insecure – not be able to meet their food requirements of 2100 kilocalories per day and as a result UN CAP (2006) report that some households are engaging in negative coping mechanisms: reduction in meals (62%), expenditure on education (41%), expenditure on health (36%) and expenditure on agricultural inputs (35%).

Following Operation Murambatsvina there has been a perceptible growth in concern over the effect these ‘coping mechanisms’ may have on women constrained by socio-economic conditions: “I am disturbed by the current status of women which has worsened. If a family doesn’t have enough resources, violence will be there and more often it is the woman that suffers. My fear is that the younger girls may go into prostitution to earn a living” (HRW: 2005). One of the central problems therefore is the cyclical dynamic of mutually constitutive factors that serve to reproduce patterns of insecurity. Gender insecurity is argued by Brittain (2002) to encompass five spiraling downward trends that result in the psychosocial dislocation of women in wars: displacement, psycho-social health, HIV/AIDS, economic impoverishment and sexual violence. The conditions inaugurated by Operation Marambatsivina constitute conditions akin to a crisis situation in which dislocation has accentuated women’s social and cultural role and made them more vulnerable to violence. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence of the politicization of women in a violent context in which biological vulnerability is used as a weapon to make psychological gains over the oppositionists (Chapter 5). As Hammar (2005) contends, “in this strange landscape of smoke and mirrors, what has been witnessed is the production of the norm of violence.” ICG (2002) reported that The Zimbabwean Women’s Lawyer Association is collecting evidence to support the case that it argues considered to be the increasing use of rape as a political weapon against women suspected of being opposition Movement for Democratic Peace (MDC) supporters whilst others have reportedly been detained and are subject to sexual abuse in ZANU-PF youth camps.

The 2005 Parliamentary Election

On 31 March 2005 Zimbabweans went to the polls. ZANU-PF secured 78 seats, the opposition MDC secured 41 with President Mugabe’s discretionary power to appoint 30 hand picked members bringing the ZANU-PF total to 108, a two thirds majority. However, the legality of the election has been contested. ICG (2005) concludes that “President Mugabe and ZANU-PF appear to have approached the elections with twin goals: first to ensure that they could control the results, and secondly, to do so in a way sophisticated enough that some international observers could call the exercise clean... Much of the window dressing of a fair contest was permitted but the regime engaged in systematic abuses.” The militarization of the Electoral Commission Act, systematic disenfranchisement – the exclusion of migrant Zimbabweans and young displaced persons - the fashioning of electoral constituency boundaries favorable to ZANU-PF strongholds, the specter of ghost voters, institutionalized violence and harassment, and the lack of transparent legislative oversight and a free and unfettered media has meant

that the election was anything but equal. In light of the persisting anomalies one might reasonably anticipate the most enduring patterns of dispossession and militarization to continue to the nationalist theme of ZANU PF liberalization.

Bibliography

Brittain, Victoria *Women in War Zones: One Key to Africa's Wars of Underdevelopment*, *Crisis States Programme Development Research Centre*: LSE, December 2002

Hammar, A. *Disrupting Democracy? Altering Landscapes of Local Government in Post-2000 Zimbabwe* Discussion paper Number 9 *Crisis States Development Research Centre*: LSE, June 2005

HRW "Zimbabwe Not Eligible: The Politicization of Food in Zimbabwe," October 2003, *Human Rights Watch* Volume 15, Number 17 (A)

HRW "Zimbabwe: Evicted and Forsaken: Internally Displaced Persons in the Aftermath of Operation Murambatsvina" *Human Rights Watch* Volume 17 Number 16 (A) December 2005

The Politics of Food Assistance In Zimbabwe, *Human Rights Watch*, Briefing Paper, August 12, 2004

HRW No Bright Future: Governments Failures, Human Rights Abuses and Squandered Progress in the Fight Against AIDS in Zimbabwe" *Human Rights Watch*, Volume 18 Number 5 (A) July 2006-09-17

Not a Level playing Field: Zimbabwe's Parliamentary Elections in 2005, *Human Rights Watch* Briefing Paper, March 21, 2005

Zimbabwe: fast track Land Reform in Zimbabwe, *Human Rights Watch*, Volume 14 (A) March 2002

Zimbabwe: What Next? *International Crisis Group (ICG)* Africa Report Number 47, 14 June 2002

The Politics of National Liberation and International Division *International Crisis Group (ICG)* Africa Report 52, 17 October 2002

Zimbabwe: Another Election Chance, *International Crisis Group (ICG)*, Africa Report 86, 30 November 2004.

Post-Election Zimbabwe: What Next? *International Crisis Group (ICG)* Africa Report 96 7 June 2005

Zimbabwe's Operation Murambatsvina: The Tipping point? *International Crisis Group (ICG) Africa Report 97*, 17 August 2005

Web Links

International Crisis Group

<http://www.icg.org>

International Monetary Fund

<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2005/cr05360.pdf>

Zimbabwe: 2005 Article IV Consultation - Staff Report; Public Information Notice on the Executive Board Discussion; and Statement by the Authorities of Zimbabwe

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org>

Office of Economic and Cultural development (OECD)

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/55/11978664.pdf>

African economic Outlook : Zimbabwe 2002-2003

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

<http://ochaonline.un.org/cap/webpage.asp?Page=1332>

UN Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) "Zimbabwe 2006"