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## LAND RESETTLEMENT AND ELITE MONOPOLY IN PERI- URBAN HARARE: THE COLONIAL LEGACY OF LAND OWNERSHIP IN POST-COLONIAL ZIMBABWE, 2000-2019

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### ABSTRACT

*The article argues that the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic-Front (ZANU-PF) government's Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in Zimbabwe, termed The Third Chimurenga, was characterised by stratification which alienated the poor and the marginalised in Harare from accessing prime peri-urban land. It uses the case of peri-urban Harare to unpack dynamics around the allocation of farmland during the post-colonial FTLRP since 2000. The article argues that class-based land segregation in the post-colonial era replaced racially based land segregation that was dominant in colonial Zimbabwe. The article posits that instead of land being distributed to deserving poor peasants, farmers and the vulnerable, land barons emerged from the ruling elite, business tycoons and war veterans who allocated to themselves land and multiple farms in an approach that typified the colonial land distribution process. The article further argues that land re-distribution must be examined because the post-2000 land redistribution methodologies exhibited both elite monopoly over peri-urban centres and other renowned centres of mineral production and the absence of institutional regulatory mechanisms on the politically powerful. It adopts an empirical analysis of peri-urban land redistribution modalities with a particular bias on spotting elite beneficiaries and the consequent emergence of land barons. The central argument is that in order to put Zimbabwe's economy back on track and move towards a developmental approach, objective conditions for land reform are necessary as opposed to a political approach to land reform. The article uses*

*qualitative methods of data collection, as well as field observations and employs historical analysis of both secondary and primary documents relating to land issues in Harare.*

**Keywords:** *Third Chimurenga, Fast-Track Land Reform, peri-urban, colonial legacy, land reform, elite monopoly, Mugabe, resettlement, legacy, land barons*

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This study focuses on the outcome of land resettlement in Harare's peri-urban areas as part of Zimbabwe's FTLRP, also known as The Third Chimurenga,<sup>1</sup> of the 2000s. It argues that the process gave leverage to the rise of land barons at the expense of the intended beneficiaries of the programme. Few historically marginalised Blacks at the inception of the land reform programme in the early 1980s were resettled on farmland peripheral to urban centres which provided farming support infrastructure and markets for agro-based products. The resettlement model adopted in the 1980s targeted the poor as the main beneficiaries. However, after the passing of the 1991 Land Acquisition Bill which sought to expedite the repossession of formerly white-owned land for redistribution to the landless Black majority by government, the government's focus also turned to the middle class as the main beneficiaries. These would benefit from the Model A2 schemes that differed remarkably from the Model A1 scheme in the following manner. The A1 Model targeted landless and poor families, providing land use permits on small plots for residence cropping and common grazing, while the A2 scheme targeted new commercial farmers, providing larger individual plots on long-term leases to beneficiaries supposedly with farming skills and/or resources.<sup>2</sup>

Land redistribution models envisaged by the Zimbabwe government after independence in 1980 were: Model A and its variants (that is, accelerated schemes, A1 and A2), Irrigation Model, Model B (Collective Cooperative), Model C (with Co-estate and Out-grower components), Model D and related three tier Scheme (for livestock development), Communal area re-organisation, Commercial Farmer Settlement Scheme, and Peri-Urban settlement model.<sup>3</sup> The peri-urban settlement model document was

1 Third Chimurenga is the local name that was given to the strife which resulted in appropriation of white commercial farmland and the fast-track land reform. It is a term created to proffer a sense of historical importance and connectivity to earlier struggles against colonial rule.

2 S Moyo *et al.*, "Fast Track Land Reform baseline survey in Zimbabwe: Trends and tendencies, 2005/06", *African Institute for Agrarian Studies* (AIAS), 2013, p. 21.

3 Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, *National land policy framework paper* (Harare: Government of Zimbabwe Printers, 1999).

designed to manage peri-urban areas as zones of transition that maximise the amusement of positive elements of both town and country.<sup>4</sup>

After the withdrawal of the British's commitment to continue funding the resettlement programme in 1998 and the popular verdict in the 2000 Referendum against the draft constitution proposed by the government, the so-called Third Chimurenga began in 2001. It was arguably not a rational programme, but rather, a politically driven national initiative to attack those whom the ruling party judged to support the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and to bolster Robert Gabriel Mugabe's chances of winning the Presidential election in 2002. The Third Chimurenga was seen by the ruling ZANU-PF party government as the last and decisive phase of the anti-colonial struggle whose logical conclusion required unilateralism in the forceful transfer of land from Whites to Africans. In this context, we refer to ZANU-PF as a party government because of its Marxist vanguardist philosophy of governance in which the party is supreme all the way and in which the government derives its mandate to make decisions from, and is answerable to, the party. The Government's programme was considered to be inconsistent with the 1998 Harare Conference and Abuja 2001 principles which proposed fair, just and sustainable land reform, in the interest of all the people of Zimbabwe.<sup>5</sup> The ruling party adopted as its slogan "Land is the economy and the economy is land" during the 2000 plebiscites<sup>6</sup> in an effort to regain its plummeting political hegemony. As argued by Dennis Masaka, the slogan trivialised the need to maintain and increase productivity on the farms as resettled farmers were severely ill-equipped financially, materially, and in terms of requisite farming knowledge, thereby making a mockery of the once revered farming sector.<sup>7</sup> ZANU-PF was defeated in the referendum that was calculated to give it the political support it had lost as a result of the formation of the MDC in 1999.

The Third Chimurenga, emotive as it was made to become by the Government of Zimbabwe, involved the forced removal of white farmers not only from land adjacent to towns and cities in a spontaneous demonstration

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4 Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, *Inception phase framework plan 1999-2000: An implementation plan of the Land Reform and Resettlement Programme Phase 2* (Harare: Government of Zimbabwe Printers, 1998).

5 Foreign Affairs Committee Publications, House of Commons, minutes of evidence, session 2002-03, 20 May 2003, available online at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmfaffi/339/3032501.htm>, accessed 10 September 2021.

6 W Wolmer, *From wilderness vision to farm invasions: Conservation and development in Zimbabwe's Southeast lowveld* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2007).

7 D Masaka, "Zimbabwe's land contestations and her politico-economic crises: a philosophical dialogue", *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 13 (1), 2011, p. 342.

which had the backing of Government,<sup>8</sup> but also from prime land that was strategic for African agriculture both for subsistence and commercial purposes. Given the level of White resistance to relinquishing land to new African occupants and the lack of serious commitment by the British government to speedily address the land question that almost rocked the Lancaster House Settlement in 1979, this article argues that it was imperative for the government to resettle the Black Zimbabweans without British money as the fulfilment of liberation war promises to peasants in the countryside. From this empirical study, it emerged that White-owned farms adjacent to urban areas and situated on the most fertile Highveld were reserved for the political ruling elite. The intended beneficiaries who required the land to sustain their livelihood did not benefit from land reform. The post-colonial land resettlement programme is a resemblance to colonial land resettlement to some measurable degree. While colonial resettlement was based on racial differences, post-colonial land reform was based on political and class stratification that are predicated politically on patron-client relationships.

The history of land dispossession and alienation among Blacks is as old as colonialism which came in 1890. After colonising Zimbabwe, Cecil John Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSAC) immediately put up measures and laws to dispossess Africans of their land. Productive arable land particularly that in the rich highveld was expropriated from Africans and given to the new White settlers. Important pieces of legislation incorporated the 1894 Matabeleland Order in Council, the 1898 Southern Rhodesia Order in Council, and the seminal state case of 1918 in which the British Privy Council held that Africans had no title to land and that the land belonged to the British Crown.<sup>9</sup> From the end of the BSAC rule in 1923 when the colony acquired a self-government status, to the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 which heralded White minority political independence, more legislation on land was enacted. These statutes include the Land Apportionment Act (1930), the Consolidated Land Apportionment Act (1941), the Native Land Husbandry Act (1951), the Land Tenure Act (1969), the Land Tenure Amendment Act (1977) and the Tribal Trust Lands Act (1979). Particularly because of land dispossession, the struggle for liberation that started in earnest in the 1960s was underpinned by the land question. Inherently, the land matter would be topical in the post-independence years. Joshua Nkomo, representing the Patriotic Front, wanted the issue of land discussed and resolved at the 1979 Lancaster House Conference in London. Nkomo

8 F Chitsike, "A Critical analysis of the land reform programme in Zimbabwe", Paper presented at the 2nd FIG Regional Conference, Marrakech, Morocco, 2-5 December, 2003, p. 9.

9 M Nyandoro, "Land and agrarian policy in colonial Zimbabwe: Re-ordering of African society and development in Sanyati, 1950-1966", *Historia* 64 (1), 2019, pp. 111-139.

questioned the future of the people's land.<sup>10</sup> On the contrary, the Lancaster House Constitution preserved White economic supremacy and left them in full control of their farms, much to the detriment of the Black poor. As Francis Gonese puts it, the Lancaster House Constitution imposed conditions that effectively limited the new state's latitude and decision-making in implementing a land reform programme of its own designs.<sup>11</sup> According to Tapiwa Mabaye, in a bid to protect its subjects, Britain included a "willing-seller, willing-buyer" clause in the Constitution, to last for ten years beginning in 1980, and which allowed the government to acquire land for redistribution only from sellers who were willing to sell.<sup>12</sup> The inclusion of the "willing-seller willing-buyer" clause in the hurriedly drafted Lancaster House Constitution was tantamount to galvanising White farmers' resistance to surrendering land for sale to the Government. Consequentially, the revolution's success after the 1980 general elections rested precariously on a false footing of an idealised racial unity in the name of reconciliation because the issue of Black landlessness could not be wished away.<sup>13</sup> For Britain, the hope was that these rather noble intentions would allow Britain to move Zimbabwe's land issue away from colonial history, into a realm where the discourse of a problem within the context of capitalist globalism would take centre stage.<sup>14</sup> Given British Prime Minister Margret Thatcher's strong capitalist values, the final agreement embedded concrete protection of the rights of the rich landowners who were white farmers. Because of this background of high land inequality between Blacks and Whites, Zimbabwe's land resettlement in general and the Fast Track Land Reform, in particular, have attracted much scholarly literature.

A number of works have been advanced on land resettlement themes, including the nature of the reform, social and economic impacts, and the outcome.<sup>15</sup> Generally, successful land reform requires a change in government legislation to allow for all or part of the large-scale estates or

10 P Carrington, *Southern Rhodesia: Report of the constitutional conference* (London: HMSO, 1979).

11 FT Gonese, "An analysis of the resettlement programme: Public policy: Progress and prospects in the policy of land redistribution", 1990, available online at [https://minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/1793/22045/2/90\\_zimbook.pdf.txt](https://minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/1793/22045/2/90_zimbook.pdf.txt), accessed 17 March 2022.

12 TM Mabaye, "Ethics of development in a global environment: Land reform in Zimbabwe: An examination of past and present policy, shortcomings and successes and recommendations for improvement", *EDGE* 1, 2005, p. 5.

13 A Rwodzi, "Reconciliation: A false start in Zimbabwe? (1980-1990)", *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 7(1), 2020, p. 16.

14 N Sibanda, *British party politics and foreign policy: The case of Zimbabwe* (DPhil, University of Huddersfield, 2012), p. 132.

15 See: J Alexander ed., *Zimbabwe's unfinished business: Rethinking land, state and nation in the context of crisis* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2003), p. 85 ; S Moyo and P Yeros, *Reclaiming the land: the resurgence of rural movements in Africa and Latin America* (London: Zed Books 2005).

farms to be converted into cooperative farms or subdivisions of the farm into small-scale or medium-sized landholdings.<sup>16</sup> These land reforms have taken place in situations where there were great social, economic and political inequalities and disparities in income and power in agriculture.<sup>17</sup> According to James Putzel, the three basic approaches to land reform in most countries where it occurred are conservative, liberal and revolutionary or radical reforms.<sup>18</sup> Colonial rule in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, created two rigid social class structures characterised by land ownership in the hands of a few white settlers, a constitutional arrangement that was accompanied by very insecure African tenancy and landlessness.

Zimbabwe's land reform has political undertones stemming from the liberation war when the promise of land reform to benefit those Africans deprived by many years of colonialism was effectively used and popularised to gain peasants' support. Saad Gandalla laments how in Egypt in 1947 the capital to buy five acres of land was equivalent to an agricultural worker's wages for 60 years.<sup>19</sup> Maurice Meisser also describes how peasant support in the Chinese Communist Revolution that ended in victory in 1949 was also premised on the promise of land.<sup>20</sup> In Europe, the Italian land reform was primarily concerned with taking land from the large estates (*latifondi*) and redistributing it among the peasants.<sup>21</sup> In the same vein, Zimbabwe's land reform, because of the vested White economic and political interests, was portrayed in Western circles as land grabbing to paint a picture that classified the Zimbabwean government as violating property rights as enshrined in the constitution. Yet similar successful revolutions that had occurred earlier than that in Zimbabwe, such as those in Egypt, China and Italy, indeed, impelled incoming governments to confiscate land which they allocated to the landless as a means to correct land distribution injustices of the past as a matter of priority.

The term land redistribution as opposed to agrarian reform is more appropriate when discussing the Zimbabwe case. Since land reform was a political motive to address colonial imbalances in land ownership, it was not intended to maximise the productivity of under-utilised or unutilised agricultural land. As would become evidently clear, the land reform plunged the country into starvation because of inadequate or non-existent agricultural support

16 M Pacione, *Rural geography* (London: Harper and Row Limited, 1984).

17 Pacione, *Rural geography*.

18 J Putzel, *A captive land: The politics of agrarian reform in the Philippines* (London: CIIR, 1992).

19 S Gandalla, *Land reform in relation to social development in Egypt* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1964).

20 M Meisser, *Mao's China: A History of the people's republic* (London: The Free Press, 1997).

21 R King, *Land reform: The Italian experience* (London: Bell, 1973).

measures. Agrarian reform, on the contrary, takes into cognisance, matters to do with land reform including other institutions such as credit, cooperatives, marketing, taxation, labour legislation, price supports, settlement schemes and extension services among others.<sup>22</sup> Zimbabwe did not have all these in place for the land programme it envisaged to warrant the description of “agrarian reform”. Graham Kinloch notes the rise of a ruling indigenous bourgeoisie in the place of colonial elites and posits that by 1990, most of the land that had been taken from Whites had been allocated to government officials, senior civil servants, ministers and members of parliament.<sup>23</sup> Inevitably, the West was disgusted when pictures and stories of the violence against Zimbabwean white farmers at the hands of war veterans and landless black peasants were broadcast across the world in the year 2000.<sup>24</sup>

Under Zimbabwe’s land redistribution programme, those people without land were encouraged to apply for it through a number of state-sponsored land purchase schemes and beneficiaries included farm workers, the urban and rural poor, farm tenants, as well as emerging black commercial farmers.<sup>25</sup> For this to happen, amendments to the 1992 Land Acquisition Act were made in the form of Amendment Act 5 of 2000 and the introduction of the Land Acquisition Act 15 of 2000. Therefore, from the perspective of the indigenous people, the land reform in Zimbabwe sought to address the inequitable land distribution as inherited upon independence in 1980. It dealt decisively with the insecure land tenure and unsustainable and sub-optimal use of land in communal areas and large-scale commercial farms respectively.<sup>26</sup>

Party politics is central in the discussion of land resettlement in Zimbabwe. Davison Muchadenyika shows how the ZANU-PF party used peri-urban land as a form of patronage to bolster its waning support in urban areas.<sup>27</sup> Despite Muchadenyika’s analysis, this study considers resettlement around Harare as an ongoing dynamic that must regularly be assessed in view of the government of Zimbabwe’s new alliance with dispossessed white farmers after the proclamation of the Second Republic in 2018.

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22 King, *Land Reform: The Italian experience*.

23 GC Kinloch, “Racial attitudes in the post-colonial situation: The case of Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Black Studies* 27, 1987, pp. 820-824.

24 D Munemo, *The search for peace, reconciliation and unity in Zimbabwe: From the 1978 Internal settlement to the 2008 Global Political Agreement* (DPhil, University of South Africa, 2016), p. 47.

25 N Marongwe, *Conflicts over land and other natural resources in Zimbabwe* (Harare: ZERO Publications, 2002); See also, CM Mukora, *The resettlement of collective farming cooperatives*, Paper presented to NARDCC, 1984.

26 Government of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, *National Land Policy Framework paper*, 1999.

27 D Muchadenyika, “Land for housing: A political resource-refractions from Zimbabwe’s urban areas”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41(6), 2015, pp 1-20.

While Muchadenyika discusses how ZANU PF used the FTLR to gain urban votes, our study of resettlement in peri-urban farms discusses how a powerful oligarchy used party politics to acquire land in Harare's peri-urban areas. Although politics is central to the dominance of the elite group in peri-urban land resettlement, our article discusses other variables at play, such as corruption and class stratification. Most of these peri-urban farms were acquired by the government during the FLTR and became state land. The state land has been abused by the ruling ZANU-PF party which became a major player in deciding the beneficiaries. Other scholars, too, link land resettlement in Zimbabwe with party politics. Brian Raftopolous, Ngonidzashé Marongwe and Patience Mutopo discuss the influence of party politics in agrarian land allocation.<sup>28</sup> However, these scholars only focused on agrarian land and our study on Harare focused on peri-urban prime land.

Chiweshe carried out studies on resettlement-related corruption. He argues that land resettlement in Zimbabwe was characterised by corruption and that most of it is a result of politics and power dynamics.<sup>29</sup> His work selectively targets instances of land-related corruption in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Although party politics is a major factor in corruption, our study of resettlement in peri-urban Harare takes into consideration other players in land related-corruption such as private land developers and business people. It problematises how peri-urban farmland that was expected to intensify production with a bias towards horticulture, market gardening or crop farming was converted into residential plots for the sprawling urban population. Terence Muzorewa and Mark Nyandoro analyse the transition from growth point-led development to liberal and market-based land disbursement where private land developers were given the right to parcel out land.<sup>30</sup> They argue that private land developers do not serve the public interests as they are merely after profit. Hence, some private land developers, together with local

28 B Raftopoulos, "The crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998-2008". In: B Raftopoulos and A Mlambo (eds.), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009); N Marongwe, "Who was allocated fast track land, and what did they do with it? Selection of A2 farmers in Goromonzi district, Zimbabwe and its impact on agricultural production", *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (5), 2011, pp. 1069-1092. See also, P Mutopo, "Corruption and land reform programmes in Zimbabwe". In: T Murisa (ed.), *An analysis of transparency and accountability in land sector governance in Zimbabwe* (Harare: Transparency International Zimbabwe, 2013).

29 M Chiweshe, "Analysis of land-related corruption in Zimbabwe", *Africa Insight* 46 (4), 2017, p. 112.

30 M Nyandoro and TT Muzorewa, "Transition from growth point policy to liberal urban development in Zimbabwe: The emergence of Ruwa town, 1980-1991", *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa* 13 (1), 2017, pp. 1-10.; See also, TT Muzorewa, "Public and private-led urban development in post-colonial Zimbabwe: A comparative study in Ruwa town", *Urban Forum Journal* 31 (2), 2020, pp. 197-213.



authorities, engage in corrupt land disbursement in the peri-urban areas such as Ruwa and Southlea Park in southern Harare.

This article used the qualitative approach to derive research data. It relied on interviews with key Harare City Council executive members, Urban Development students at the Midlands State University in Zimbabwe, MDC-led council officials, and Ministry of Local Government representatives sampled purposively to capture the views of the city and its beneficiaries of the land reform. In all instances, participants declared their anonymity for security reasons since the research area is not only a “moving object” but still sensitive in Zimbabwe and involves issues to do with corruption, hence the Government’s land audit in 2018 to deal with multiple farm ownership and land underutilisation. This empirical study also relied on anonymous students on attachment based at the Harare City Council near Mbare Musika and a councillor pursuing a degree programme who supplied us with council minutes and relevant records of Southlea Park and Hopley Farm. The politicisation of peri-urban land distribution was examined to show how racial land division was reminiscent of colonial segregation, this time, with Blacks as perpetrators. The article proceeded to discuss the efficacy of patronage and clientelist politics in peri-urban land reallocation in Harare. It further explored the emergence of partisan private land developers and the mushrooming of business cartels and concluded that the new social relations of production around Harare between isolated white farmers who are still in possession of land and the new land barons have remained basically antagonistic.

## 2. POLITICISATION OF PERI-URBAN LAND DISTRIBUTION

It is alleged that the FTLRP only benefited a few cronies,<sup>31</sup> reducing the fast-track struggles for land to an elite affair dominated by ZANU-PF.<sup>32</sup> Nkomo, in his study of land speculation in Kwekwe in the 1940s, examined the conflict between speculators and municipalities over urban land spaces and found out that once government bodies indicated an interest in a piece of land, landowners would increase the price sharply, or speculators would buy the land specifically for resale to public institutions.<sup>33</sup> Such people are herein referred to as land barons. They received traction after the land reform

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31 T Scarnecchia, Response to lessons of Zimbabwe, December 2008, available on-line at <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v31/n01/letters.html>, accessed 3 January 2022.

32 P Zamchiya, “A synopsis of land and agrarian change in Chipinge district, Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (5), 2011, pp. 1093-1122.

33 L Nkomo, “Councils, councilors and profiteers: Urban land speculation and contestations in Southern Rhodesia in the 1940s”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 46 (6), 2020, pp. 1163-1181.

programme of 2000 which was characterised by politically motivated land occupations when considerable state land could be sold for as little as US\$1 per square metre.<sup>34</sup> Those with the ability to buy land quickly and effortlessly re-sold the land at a profit and this development led to the emergence of land barons who used their political muscles nationwide to acquire the state land.<sup>35</sup> A Commission of Inquiry into the matter of sale of state land in and around urban areas since 2005 led by Justice Tendai Uchena was appointed by President Mnangagwa on 1 February 2018 to look into the matter of sale of state land in and around urban areas since 2005.<sup>36</sup> It identified land barons as usually politically-connected, powerful, self-proclaimed illegal state land “authorities” and those who illegally sold state land in and around urban areas without accounting for the proceeds.<sup>37</sup> The Commission found out that the identification and occupation of farms in and around urban areas throughout Zimbabwe was a complex process. It involved farm invasions by desperate home-seekers and war veterans, land allocations to partisan co-operatives, trusts and land developers by the Ministry of Local Government, creation of new urban settlements by aspiring or sitting Members of Parliament (MPs) in a bid to mobilise political support, abuse of political office in the allocation and appropriation of urban state land and use of names of the top ruling party leadership to exert undue influence on government institutions and processes.<sup>38</sup> There is, to date, limited empirical analysis that focuses on spotting the “elite” beneficiaries of the most fertile farmland peripheral to Harare.

Unequal access to land ought to be viewed as the real challenge to orderly settlement in Harare’s sprawling settlements. Beneficiaries, many of whom were state bureaucrats, war veterans of the Second Chimurenga, as well as participants of the Third Chimurenga that began in 2000, theoretically became ZANU-PF appendages by qualification of land ownership. This was despite the fact that their class status and rank in such institutions remained rather low and problematic. On the other hand, many private sector executives who benefited, although not readily identified as elite beneficiaries, did so

34 T Majogo, *The emerging era of land barons, challenges for land governance and development control: A case study of Southlea Park* (BA, Midlands State University, 2017), p. 2.

35 Majogo, *The emerging era of land barons, challenges for land governance and development control*, p. 2.

36 Government of Zimbabwe, “The commission of inquiry into the matter of sale of state land in and around urban areas since 2005”, 9 December 2019, p. 8.

37 Government of Zimbabwe, “The commission of inquiry into the matter of sale of state land in and around urban areas since 2005”, p. 8.

38 Government of Zimbabwe, “The commission of inquiry into the matter of sale of state land in and around urban areas since 2005”, p. 8.

because they were tagged as ZANU-PF members. Amidst the confusion were land barons who connived with MDC-led urban local councils to defraud desperate home-seekers by allocating them land on wetlands and other areas earmarked for other development purposes.<sup>39</sup>

Although former president Mugabe dispelled any relationship with Phillip Chiyangwa, a business tycoon, beyond sharing the same *Gushungo* totem, the politics of neopatrimonialism played well into the hands of those who were politically connected to those at the top of the hierarchy of power. Chiyangwa, nephew to Mugabe, allegedly owns many expensive properties, including Southlea Park in Harare South. He boasted at one time that if one wanted to become rich, he should join ZANU-PF.<sup>40</sup> As a demonstration of his wealth, he bought expensive suits for all members of Parliament across the political divide after the 2000 Parliamentary elections.<sup>41</sup> According to Alexander Rusero, a Mugabe philosophy of Black owning property and seizing farms also contributed to the current urbanisation as politically connected individuals could easily access state land and become land developers.<sup>42</sup>

It is interesting to note that these land developers formed several party-affiliated cooperatives that would also be allocated land for further distribution to the desperate land seekers ostensibly to cajole some urban constituencies such as Harare South. Under the circumstances of the erosion of political power in urban areas, partisan interests underpinned the emergence of ZANU-PF land barons and ruling party committees acting as territorial authorities on the city's edge.<sup>43</sup> Sesil Zvidzayi, the MDC Alliance Secretary for Local Government, argued that ZANU-PF deliberately created these urban settlements "parcelled" by land barons to reduce MDC urban vote dynamics, regain lost urban seats, for example, Harare South, and reduce MDC influence.<sup>44</sup> Manase Chiweshe postulates that in order to legitimise their existence, ZANU-PF housing cooperatives under land barons masqueraded using the names of dominant politicians and even past liberation heroes such

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39 "Billionaire Phillip Chiyangwa reveals the only one way to become wealthy in Zimbabwe", *Gambakwe*, 15 June 2021.

40 M Meredith, "Mugabe's misrule: And how it will hold Zimbabwe back", *Foreign Affairs* 97(2), 2018, p. 134.

41 Meredith, "Mugabe's misrule: And how it will hold Zimbabwe back", p. 134.

42 A Rusero, "Zimbabwe's illegal urban settlements: A blessing or curse for government", *The Africa report*, 1 April 2021.

43 J McGregor and K Chatiza, "Geographies of urban dominance: The politics of Harare's periphery, Effective state and inclusive development (ESID)", *The University of Manchester, Working Paper 162*, 2020, p. 4.

44 Rusero, *Zimbabwe's illegal urban settlements*, 2021.

as Mbuya Nehanda Housing Cooperative, Gushungo Housing Cooperative, and Teurai Ropa Housing Cooperative.<sup>45</sup>

Competing land claims between black elites and the genuinely landless people on one hand and foreign and white capitalists on the other led to the politicisation of the land reform programme. It increasingly became difficult to characterise the land redistribution programme as a political or an economic issue. Joseph Msika, the then Second Vice President of Zimbabwe from 1999 to 2009, admitted that there was chaos in implementing the land reform programme resulting in the destruction of Zimbabwe's agricultural sector.<sup>46</sup> This was after the realisation that former white farms peripheral to Harare that had been popularly known for their high agricultural productivity had stopped producing due to invasion by settlers with government support. As if to confirm the chaotic land redistribution programme and in reaction to the opposition MDC that insisted on a technocratic land reform process administered by an independent land commission, the then Minister of Land and Agriculture, Joseph Made, reiterated, "the land issue is more serious than institutions: what is needed now is land, not a land commission".<sup>47</sup> Again, the MDC wanted an alternative process of land reform that would result in land to the people not land to politicians.<sup>48</sup> Charles Chavhunduka argues that land patronage has been used as a means for legitimating fledgling state rule while undermining the tenure security of the poor and emphasises that any policy to support the poor in post-crisis Zimbabwe has to prioritise land as a social and economic asset rather than as a political instrument of the state.<sup>49</sup> Alex Weingrod's definition of patronage is still relevant in explaining land re-distribution irregularities that border on patrimonial politics in peri-urban Harare. He regards patronage as various ways in which party politicians distribute national resources and available opportunities in exchange for political support.<sup>50</sup> This view is also supported by Jocelyn Alexander who postulates that peri-urban farms that were acquired by the government through the FTLRP enabled ZANU-PF to run an extensive urban patronage system.<sup>51</sup>

45 Majogo, The emerging era of land barons, challenges for land governance and development control: A case study of Southlea Park, 2017, p. 3.

46 *The Independent*, 20 July 2007.

47 BM Tendi, How intellectuals made history in Zimbabwe (PhD, Africa Research Institute, 2010).

48 Tendi, How intellectuals made history in Zimbabwe, p. 9.

49 C Chavhunduka, "Land patronage and static urban boundaries in Zimbabwe: Implications for land tenure security", *African Journal of Land Policy and Geospatial Sciences*, Special Issue, 2018, p. 107.

50 A Weingrod, "Patrons, patronage, and political parties", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10 (4), 1968, p. 377.

51 J Alexander, "'Squatters': Veterans and the state in Zimbabwe". In: A Hammar *et al.* (ed.), *Zimbabwe's unfinished business: Rethinking land, state and nation in the context of crisis* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2003), p. 85.

In point of fact, war veterans, government executives aligned to the ZANU-PF party and war collaborators, masterminded the Third Chimurenga as a continuation of the Second Chimurenga that had ended in 1979 after the Lancaster House Negotiations in London. Former white-owned farms peripheral to Harare stood out distinctly to be the most sought-after pieces of land for various reasons. Executioners of the continuing land struggle hailed from Harare, most of whom were political *gurus*. Acquiring immovable properties around Harare conferred some economic and political status on ZANU-PF disciples and guaranteed them arbitrary authority and power over the Harare City Council, the legal and constitutional entity to deal with urban and peri-urban land spaces. More importantly, politicians were interested in being associated with the success of the land struggle, whatever the methodologies deployed to acquire the land. The situation was further compounded by the “regime change” politics during the 2000s. The United States Congress enacted the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) in 2001, preventing Zimbabwe from accessing international lines of credit following the violence and human rights abuses that accompanied the land redistribution process.<sup>52</sup> In effect, these were sanctions calculated to effect a change of leadership and restore the rule of law, democracy and orderly land redistribution modalities from the point of view of white land victims and their relatives. Louis Masuko, a war veteran and scholar who participated in the land occupations, argues that the land occupation movement was a top-down movement conceived and directed by a beleaguered state.<sup>53</sup> According to Martin Meredith, during the FTLRP 71 farms, some in the Harare hinterland, were allocated to members of parliament, senior civil servants and members of the security forces, and influential friends.<sup>54</sup>

Diverse social groups, especially during the FRLRP were lumped together into the category of elites, despite their social differentiation in terms of labour relations, assets, access to finance and varied positions in the political hierarchy and economy.<sup>55</sup> Such elites are all deemed to have used political connections and/or corruption to gain access to vast expanses of land to become land barons.<sup>56</sup> This has resulted in the sprawling of settlements on the fringes of urban areas, especially around Harare. The whole exercise

52 Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act, 22 USC 2151, Public Law 107-99, 21 December 2001, 107th Congress, 115 STAT. 963

53 L Masuko, “War veterans and the re-emergence of housing cooperative”. In: S Moyo *et al.* (eds.). *Contested terrain: Land reform and civil society in contemporary Zimbabwe* (Pietermaritzburg: S Publishers, 2008).

54 Meredith, “Mugabe’s misrule: And how it will hold Zimbabwe back”, p. 134.

55 Moyo *et al.*, “Fast Track Land Reform baseline survey in Zimbabwe”, p. 15.

56 Moyo *et al.*, “Fast Track Land Reform baseline survey in Zimbabwe”, p. 16.

in the allocation of residential and industrial plots is marred by political considerations as land barons seek to profiteer from the land they acquired through patrimonial connections. The haphazard nature of the allocation of plots is further fuelled by the mushrooming of so-called cooperatives, both legitimate and bogus, but most of which are registered with the Harare City Council's Urban Development Corporation (UDCORP). These cooperatives operate in league with the land barons in settling desperate urbanites either on undesignated land or on wetlands. This has seriously disturbed the ecosystem with negative consequences such as the eruption of cholera and other sewer-related conditions.

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes that the FTLRP was premised on a doctrine of permanent nationalist struggle against imperialism and colonialism such that it came to be viewed as a doctrine that placed war as the epicentre of nationhood in Zimbabwe.<sup>57</sup> The land reform that began in 2000 when the British had broken their promise to fund the national land redistribution programme resulted in the Third Chimurenga.<sup>58</sup> This preceding view is also supported by Blessing-Miles Tendi who argues that nationalist public intellectuals such as Tafataona Mahoso, Claude Mararike, Vimbai Chivaura, Sheunesu Mpeperekwi, and Godfrey Chikowore cited the land grievance as the main reason for their alignment with ZANU-PF.<sup>59</sup> It was, indeed, for this reason, that they were allocated time on national television and even during prime time news to propagate and promulgate patriotic history which clearly justified land seizures, eulogised Mugabe, generated a steady flow of conspiracy theories that demonised the western countries and internal so-called "sell-outs" in order to create a state of panic and war-time vigilance because the enemy was deemed to be working hard to destroy the achievements of the revolution.<sup>60</sup>

Under circumstances of regime change, and in a bid to prove that the government had powers vested in it to order the restoration of land to the indigenous Black people, only those with much political influence could challenge white farm owners with land peripheral to Harare. Worse still, the governing party allowed that to happen as a clear demonstration of its power. When finally, the dust settled, patrimonial connections established between the elite and government remained, and the land acquired had already been registered in their names. The case of Hopley Farm in the Harare South

57 SG Ndlovu, *The construction and decline of Chimurenga monologue in Zimbabwe: A study in resilience of ideology and limits of alternatives* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute 2011), p.15.

58 C Tarwireyi, *Should I stay or should I go? Zimbabwe's white writing 1980-2011* (PhD, Stellenbosch, 2014), p. 16.

59 Tendi How intellectuals made history in Zimbabwe, p. 2.

60 Tendi How intellectuals made history in Zimbabwe, p. 2.

constituency reveals this dynamic. Hopley Farm has about 7 500 houses, locally called residential plots or stands, each measuring between 100 square meters (1 076 square feet) and 300 square meters (3 229 square feet).<sup>61</sup> In May 2005, the Zimbabwe government launched Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Restore Order) which was a large-scale national campaign to clear illegal houses and structures from its cities, among other changes.<sup>62</sup> A counterargument for Operation Murambatsvina was from human rights activists who argued that it was a covert operation targeting voters who had shown a preference for the opposition MDC party.<sup>63</sup> As postulated by the United Nations (UN) Special Envoy and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT to Zimbabwe in 2005, Anna Tibaijuka, in her report to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Anan, the Government of Zimbabwe had to stop massive home and market demolitions, pay reparations to the victims and punish those who carried out the evictions of some 700 000 people with indifference to human suffering.<sup>64</sup> She further argued that this government operation breached both national and international human rights law provisions guiding evictions, thereby precipitating a humanitarian crisis. It is our contention that the crisis that the UN Envoy alluded to as emanating from the forced evictions and market closures, particularly in Harare, engendered poor urban communities susceptible to economic and political manipulation by the powerful ruling elite and their surrogates. The government and the Ministry of Local Government might have been sincere in undertaking Operation Murambatsvina, but selfish individuals within the rank and file of the ruling ZANU-PF party highjacked the programme to cajole those poor urbanites desperate for shelter and make them objects of political and economic manipulation by promising them lives full of hope and purpose under party-aligned housing cooperatives.

It was under this context that the government created Hopley Farm as an alternative settlement to accommodate some of those who were affected by the operation. Therefore, Hopley as a residential settlement predates the FTLRP and is laden with a history of evictions and demolitions linked back to Porta Farm in 1992.<sup>65</sup> Ownership of Hopley is problematic for so many reasons. Firstly, it is made up of council land that was allocated by the City of Harare, and beneficiaries and cooperatives provided road, water and

61 "Zimbabwe officials are trying to fix this settlement, but the problems run deep", *Global Press Journal*, May 2018, available online at <https://globalpressjournal.com/africa/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-officials-trying-fix-settlement-problems-run-deep/>, accessed 28 July 2022.

62 R Matamanda, "Living in an emerging settlement: The story of Hopley farm settlement, Harare Zimbabwe", *Urban Forum* 31, 2020, p. 476.

63 E Benyera and C Nyere, "An exploration of the impact of Zimbabwe's 2005 Operation Murambatsvina on women and children", *Gender & Behaviour* 12 (1), 2015, p. 652.

64 *New York Times*, 25 July 2005.

65 Matamanda, "Living in an emerging settlement", p. 478.

sanitation infrastructure for themselves. Secondly, there is the area allocated by the government after Operation Murambatsvina. Thirdly, there is an informal settlement where people settled willingly, the majority of whom were beneficiaries who obtained the plots through ZANU-PF when the relocation programme intensively became politicised, and the council lost its legitimacy in this settlement.<sup>66</sup>

Many ZANU-PF stalwarts were considered thieves, corrupt and unscrupulous for the lack of transparency in peri-urban land re-distribution.<sup>67</sup> This made people view the land redistribution programme as a strategy by the party leaders to grab land for themselves and not for those who were genuinely in need of it.<sup>68</sup> Not surprisingly, the mechanisms of this patronage system manifested in different forms. One of the most prominent strategies was the allocation of peri-urban farms to housing cooperatives attached to, or controlled by, ZANU-PF politicians with a view to creating urban constituencies that would be loyal to ZANU-PF.<sup>69</sup> Given the politics surrounding urban governance during that time, it was politically and electorally significant to contain the dominance of urban and peri-urban spaces. Peri-urban farmland confiscated by ZANU-PF politicians from White farmers became government land which could not be surrendered to MDC-dominated urban councils.<sup>70</sup> Instead, the government-controlled peri-urban areas depended on parallel and constitutionally illegal structures like militia groups, housing cooperatives, war veterans, and land barons who would parcel out the land, if they so wished, to desperate land and home seekers in return for party loyalty.

### 3. PATRONAGE POLITICS IN PERI-URBAN LAND IN HARARE

Peri-urban land was not only used for self-aggrandisement and speculation but as a form of patronisation. The British and White settlers in Zimbabwe accused the ZANU-PF government of being corrupt and disregarding the rule of law.<sup>71</sup> This is a classic case of what Maldonado-Torres refers to as “forgetfulness of coloniality”<sup>72</sup>, where modernity masterminded

66 Matamanda, “Living in an emerging settlement”, p. 478.

67 A Kamete, “In defence of national sovereignty: Urban governance and democracy in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21 (2), 2003, p. 194.

68 Kamete, “In defence of national sovereignty”, p. 195.

69 Chavhunduka, “Land patronage and static urban boundaries in Zimbabwe”, p. 112.

70 Muchadenyika, “Land for housing: A political resource – reflections from Zimbabwe’s urban areas”, pp. 1219-1238.

71 M Adelman, “Quiet diplomacy: the reasons behind Mbeki’s Zimbabwe policy”, *Africa Spectrum* 39 (2), 2004, pp. 249-276.

72 N Maldonado-Torres, “The typology of being and the geopolitics of knowledge: Modernity, empire, coloniality”, *City* 8 (1), 2004, pp. 1-33.



by the ruling elite tends to create land problems for the subaltern without immediate solutions regarding its landlessness. Urban constituencies were merged with peri-urban constituencies creating a support base for ZANU-PF. In an interview on 15 June 2018, a senior planning officer at the Ministry of Local Government revealed that some ZANU-PF supporters were illegally settled at Solomio Farm in Ruwa, which is one of Harare's satellite towns.<sup>73</sup> The same happened in Caledonia Farm located in the eastern part of Harare. Ruwa Town was politically dominated by the MDC and the decision to illegally settle ZANU-PF supporters there was meant to create a support base for the ruling party in the town. According to the planning officer, Solomio Farm fell in the agriculture zone and was meant to produce raw agricultural commodities to feed the Ruwa market. However, the farm was turned into a residential settlement without any development of offsite infrastructure and servicing of the residential plots. Dabuka Farm in Ruwa's hinterland was also turned into a ZANU-PF supporters' settlement. One had to be a ZANU-PF card holder and belong to a ZANU-PF-oriented cooperative to benefit from these types of settlements.

The relationship between land barons and party politics must be put into context. Many land barons were regarded as "untouchable".<sup>74</sup> This conviction stemmed from the fact that they were ruling party fanatics who, therefore, operated with impunity. The Ministry of Local Government could not prosecute the Caledonia Farm baron, Nelson Mandizvidza, who made three million United States dollars through his positions as chairperson of the Union of Cooperatives and chairman of Caledonia and Eastview Development Consortium.<sup>75</sup> One of the researchers had the opportunity during the research process, to attend two cooperative meetings in Eastview, where cooperative members could be identified by their housing cooperative cards printed with the words "Stop it" at the bottom. This suggested that members were ZANU-PF followers aligned to the then First Lady Grace Mugabe who used these words to rebuke ZANU-PF bigwigs who had fallen out of favour with Mugabe during campaign rallies at the height of ZANU-PF factional politics between the old guard and the new generation between 2015 and 2017. Therefore, powers owned by land barons inevitably rested on, party political standing, as well as on their capacity to mobilise grassroots support and votes.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, barons and ZANU-PF party structures continued for a very long time to act as *de facto* authorities with powers to own and parcel out

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73 Interview: Author with Ministry of Local Government official, Marondera, 15 June 2018.

74 Interview: Author with Ministry of Local Government official, Marondera, 15 June 2018.

75 McGregor and Chatiza, "Geographies of urban dominance", p. 15.

76 McGregor and Chatiza, "Geographies of urban dominance", p. 15.

land for housing to urban home seekers, thereby appropriating some of the functions of urban local government authorities.

In Harare East, during the FTLRP, near Arcturus Mine, a whole settlement was named Bobo “Bob”<sup>77</sup> after Robert Mugabe who was the president and leader of ZANU-PF. Only members of ZANU-PF were settled at Bobo, creating a support base for the party in Harare East. Some corrupt dealer-developers, housing cooperatives and land barons linked to the ruling ZANU-PF party and financiers usually operated in conflict with legal provisions and in ways that undermined local authorities.<sup>78</sup> Official reports in Caledonia showed that all the 23 000 plots were designated to desperate home seekers by cooperatives and land barons with government backing and support from ruling party elites, while only 30 per cent were on land with formally approved land-use plans.<sup>79</sup> *Ad hoc* and piecemeal planning characterised all the peri-urban settlements which were reserved for ZANU-PF supporters. There was no urban offsite infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water supply and sewerage reticulation systems. Under normal circumstances, the planning legislation, in terms of the Urban Councils Act of 1997, does not allow residents to settle in an area without developed offsite infrastructure.<sup>80</sup> However, in ZANU-PF-controlled peri-urban settlements, people were allowed to settle without any form of offsite facilities. The ruling party broke all planning laws, and no authority would dare question them. From this discussion, it would appear that the institution of cooperatives under the control of land barons practically became one of the parallel structures not only for the dispensation of patronage but also for rivalling opposition MDC urban councils that had the constitutional mandate to provide land to low-income urbanites.

Consortiums and cooperatives were created to manage the distribution of this peri-urban land and ensure that only party members benefited. The establishment of consortiums with management committees to run their affairs was indicative of the predatory politics of the elite in peri-urban land redistribution methodologies. Hopley Farm in Southern Harare came under Hopley Tariro Cooperative Union (HTCU) whose major task was to subdivide the former farm into residential plots of 200, 300 and 400 square

77 The name “Bob” was a pseudonym given to the former President of Zimbabwe, Robert Gabriel Mugabe. The word was derived from the draft game and was used in political circles to show that he was an astute statesman who always scored in every undertaking, especially against the former coloniser, Britain, and its kith and kin in Zimbabwe who were opposed to the land reform programme.

78 Government of Zimbabwe, Policy Document on cooperatives, 1999.

79 Government of Zimbabwe, Policy Document on cooperatives, 2015.

80 TT Muzorewa, The role of private land developers in urban development in Zimbabwe: The case of Ruwa town, 1980-2015 (PhD, Midlands State University, Gweru, 2017).

metres respectively. Allocation of these plots was provisional according to the consortium, and the plots would remain the property of members of cooperatives until the issuance of title deeds.<sup>81</sup> To water down the growing political influence that the opposition MDC was mustering in urban areas throughout the country, Hopley Farm was chosen as a haven for desperate ZANU-PF supporters who did not have decent accommodation. The Harare South Constituency fell to ZANU-PF in all elections since 2000. The then Member of Parliament (MP) for Harare South in 2006, Hubert Nyanhongo, was included in the consortium's management which was made up of 39 cooperatives.<sup>82</sup> The signing of the provisional allocation list by individual members of the consortium was the result of political pressure.

From the ongoing discussion, it would appear that people were settled in Hopley Farm with the promise that they were going to get plots. The Harare South parliamentary seat fell to ZANU-PF because ZANU-PF used the "plot allocation strategy" to lure voters without assurance that these desperate people would legally own the plots. There were delays in regularising the plots because of complicated procedures that deterred the process. For example, the consortium had to approach the district office for regularisation of plots, secure agreements of sale from the Harare City Council, as well as get certificates of compliance occupation and then sign the agreement of sale.<sup>83</sup> At the same time, an interview with a city official on 3 June 2021 confirmed that the management committee was advised to maintain good relations with the Harare South MP and the Governor.<sup>84</sup> This, from a political perspective, shows that the desperate urban poor became beholden to ZANU-PF elites in return for permission to have temporary shelters at Hopley. Those occupants suspected of belonging to the opposition MDC were victimised. An example of this victimisation is the case of Mr X (pseudonym) who bought a stand from Africa Homes Development Trust in 2011 with the knowledge of the chairman but later got threatened by the Councillor, Mr Y (pseudonym) ahead of the 2013 harmonised elections.<sup>85</sup>

Land barons in Chitungwiza caused serious ecological imbalances as victims were allocated wetlands to construct their houses in areas combining Braemer Farm and Lot 2 of Longlands Farm. A Commission of Inquiry into the sale of State land that was set up by President Mnangagwa and chaired

81 Harare City Council Repository, Hopley Housing Consortium General meeting minutes, Harare South, 9 December 2006.

82 Harare City Council Repository, Hopley Housing Consortium General meeting minutes.

83 Harare City Council Repository, Hopley Housing Consortium General meeting minutes.

84 Interview, Author with City Councillor, (Anon), Harare, 23 September 2019. RE: Allocation of land in Southlea Park.

85 Harare City Council Repository, Affidavit, Hopley Housing Consortium, Harare South, 17 April 2013.

by Justice Tendai Uchena recommended that the illegal occupants who were allocated plots by land barons be evicted to allow for proper and legitimate settlement of stand owners with valid offer letters.<sup>86</sup> The same commission identified 16 politicians and cooperative executives as the land barons who should have been prosecuted.<sup>87</sup> Since then, no arrests or follow-ups have been made. This suggests that even if the commission submitted the names of culprits to the Executive that established it, their identities as people aligned with the ruling party could have been hidden indefinitely. The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) was established in 2005 in terms of Chapter 13, Part 1 of the pre-2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe to deal with the growing cases of corruption in the country.<sup>88</sup> This commission, as part of its mandate, was there to prosecute incriminated land barons and all individuals or groups of people with stakes in the peri-urban land allocation scam, but instead, the state seemed to be buying time and would likely take meaningful action after the 30 July 2018 elections<sup>89</sup> for fear of soiling some of the implicated ruling party election candidates. As Muchadenyika noted, “the [ruling ZANU-PF] party became a major player in deciding who had access to land for housing through aligned cooperatives and land barons”.<sup>90</sup>

#### 4. PARTISAN PRIVATE LAND DEVELOPERS AND BUSINESS CARTELS

It is important at this stage to draw a connection between the party and private land developers in peri-urban Harare. This article critiques the notion of “private developers” to refer to political heavyweights of national stature such as Solomon Mujuru and Phillip Chiyangwa, among others. The so-called “private land-developing businesses” also took advantage of, or capitalised on, chaos and corruption in the land resettlement process to acquire land for urban development. For example, Pinnacle Properties owned by Phillip Chiyangwa, a business tycoon, acquired land around Harare. These properties are another example of patrimonialism and represent predatory politics predicated on political correctness and connectedness. This must be understood in the context of the renegeing of the British government to pay land for redistribution and the vague promises in post-independence Zimbabwe

86 “Illegal land deals: Barons in trouble”, *The Herald*, 10 August 2020.

87 “Illegal land deals: Barons in trouble”, *The Herald*, 10 August 2020.

88 Government of Zimbabwe, Constitution of Zimbabwe, Chapter 13, Part 1 (Harare: Government Printers).

89 Zimbabwe lawyers and Law firms, available online at <https://bit.ly/3MqShlq>, accessed 28 July 2022.

90 Muchadenyika, “Land for housing: A political resource, 2015”.

which became a time bomb that is likely and ready to explode anytime.<sup>91</sup> Yet, this scapegoating by the politicians and their cronies technically gave them the latitude to seize land that they would further re-distribute to the marginalised and desperate urban poor, both for political rewards and profit.

In Ruwa, a prominent Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) commander during the armed struggle and after independence, Solomon Mujuru, acquired Inverungus Farm through the land resettlement programme and used the land for residential land business. Mujuru partnered with J and H Enterprises in developing the land into residential and industrial plots which they sold for profit.<sup>92</sup> J and H Enterprises later sold the land development project to Damofalls Land Developers which finished off the development project. Inverungus Farm was turned into a medium-density residential suburb named Damofalls Park. Residential plots in Damofalls Park were bought by the middle working class who would afford more than US\$10 per square metre.<sup>93</sup> The poor who were meant to benefit from the land resettlement programme could not afford the fee charged by private land developers for the plots. More peri-urban farmland in Harare and its satellite towns such as Norton and Ruwa were sold to private businesses which developed residential plots and sold them at a premium fee. Only the elite afforded to buy plots from private land developers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Zimbabwe is one of the first African countries to implement a full-scale radical land resettlement policy dating back to 2001. Land reform and redistribution in Zimbabwe were delayed for 10 years in line with the terms set by the Lancaster House Constitution of 1979 with regard to property rights. Therefore, the piecemeal programmes of land resettlement that began with the expiry of the Lancaster Constitution property clause in 1990 resettled some of the black peasants who deserved land. As 2000 approached and coincided with a new thrust for Black land redistribution called the Third Chimurenga, the spirit of the revolution was re-ignited, and the land narrative became a rallying point for all land occupations countrywide. It was particularly important at that time for the government to acknowledge the effort of the Zimbabwean war veterans of the liberation struggle by providing them with land. This article explored this dimension and argued that honouring war veterans of the armed

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91 V Shubin, "Zimbabwe: Myth and realities", *Africa Review* 41, 2012, pp. 65-81.

92 Muzorewa, "The role of private land developers in urban development in Zimbabwe", 2017, p. 60.

93 Muzorewa, "The role of private land developers in urban development in Zimbabwe", p. 60.

struggle resulted in land acquisitions in peri-urban Harare by war veterans and ZANU-PF elites and apologists.

The formation of the MDC in 1999 in Harare and the inclusion of former white Rhodesians in its rank and file, galvanized the ZANU-PF government into sanctifying unofficial land occupations characterised by the “rule of men” rather than the “rule of law.” Many white farm owners were discriminately dispossessed leaving the new black land occupants with no resources, let alone the technical agricultural skills, as proud owners of this prime land. This had an enduring negative impact on agricultural production, especially around urban areas as Zimbabwe moved away in its rankings from the food basket status within the Southern African Development Conference (SADC) to a basket case.<sup>94</sup> The colonial setup was such that farms adjacent to urban areas would be fully supported with agricultural inputs so that they produced enough food not only for the urbanites but also for the entire nation. The aggressiveness with which white land dispossession occurred in peri-urban areas as land, under conditions of war, fell into the hands of war veterans, politicians, parliamentarians and their relatives, resulted in a precipitate flight of white farming skills due to their loss of land. For many years as a result of this development, Zimbabwe had to rely on food handouts from international sympathisers and donor organisations due to persistent food shortage.

Land redistribution programmes that diminish agricultural productivity, create numerous uncertainties over land rights, ownership and administration and lead to a national economic collapse at a national level are difficult to justify wherever they have been carried out. In Zimbabwe, there are numerous resonances between the ongoing Zimbabwean land struggles and the colonial land allocation strategies and their intentions. The land re-distribution programme that the government of Zimbabwe embarked upon in earnest after the 2000 referendum has left the country grappling with unresolved post-colonial national questions that relate to land in peri-urban areas. One of the challenges that bedeviled the FTLRP was that it was circumscribed by ideological and partisan motives. For reasons raised earlier on, land beneficiaries in peri-urban areas, who in most instances, had to temporarily co-exist with white landowners, were compelled to forge new social relations of production, involving “strangers” from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds, urban and former Large-Scale Commercial Farming areas. The new politically inspired peri-urban land allocation approach proffered glaring yet very uneven prospects for accumulation and social reproduction. Benefits from this new elite culture of accumulation gravitated into the hands of a

94 “From bread basket to basket beg”, *Weekly*, 20 October 2016.

few individuals who were either politically connected or had unquestionable revolutionary backgrounds that entitled them to better peri-urban land.

In the peri-urban areas of Harare, the administrative hub in the country, political imperatives have provided the major direction in programme implementation. The government led by ZANU-PF has played a central role in policy design and land identification and acquisition. Unfortunately, Zimbabwe has just addressed one component which is land resettlement. Currently, there are uncertainties about the much hyped about land audit to determine the number of farms each beneficiary has. An objective audit is required to identify multiple farm owners who should relinquish all but one farm each. Multi-farm ownership has caused perennial challenges, especially in circumstances where the rich landowning class of black elites uses its economic power to manipulate national initiatives due to undue political interference. Some land barons use pseudonyms on their properties to evade justice and to make it even more difficult to challenge the ownership of such properties by their relatives. Given the global coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, the urban slums that characterise the outskirts of Harare could be a potential source of health hazards as unplanned and haphazard settlements continue to proliferate. The speculative tendencies of the Black elite resemble colonial egocentric attitudes and tend to soil a worthwhile national programme of land redistribution with a focus on the poor in urban communities.