

# Zimbabwe's Triple Crisis: Primitive Accumulation, Nation-State Formation and Democratization in the Age of Neo-Liberal Globalization

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**Abstract:** This paper utilizes classical and 'modernization' theoretical perspectives on primitive accumulation, nation-state formation and democratization to analyze the 'conjunctural' aspects of the current Zimbabwean crisis. Taking a structural perspective on the long-term factors, the paper provides the context to the violence-ridden and economically devastating current crisis of land reform, elections, succession, and class-stalemate. It also develops an analysis of 'medium' term factors such as years of structural adjustment. Written just after, and taking into account the March 2002 Presidential elections, the paper concludes that strengthening democracy is essential for the resolution of structural socio-economic problems—even though such an assertion may appear to be a 'voluntarist' solution to a structural problem.

*"The Land is the Economy and the Economy is the Land" <sup>1</sup>*

*"This is no ordinary plebiscite ...it is...a crucial defining moment which will determine the direction this nation will take in terms of its sovereignty." <sup>2</sup>*

*"I can't believe we are fighting again for the right to vote." <sup>3</sup>*

The above quotes signify three perspectives on what might be called the 2000-2002 Zimbabwean election. <sup>4</sup> They bring together the conjunctural 'events' of the 'long election' (which in itself contains elements of succession crisis within the ruling party), the land invasions, and the struggles involving 'sovereignty' around them. They reflect the long term crises of transition—those of 'primitive accumulation,' nation-state formation, and democratization—faced by all 'developing' societies (or societies 'becoming capitalist,' however unevenly and haltingly so). This merger of transitions in the *longue dure and les vnements* (or structure and agency) are combined on the terrain of the 'middle term' contextual arena—that of more than a decade of debilitating structural adjustment programs, the specific modalities of

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a world (dis)order emerging out of the bipolar Cold War, and the (re)emergence of political opposition and an active civil society in Zimbabwe.<sup>5</sup> Thus Zimbabwe's state-society complex is facing a condensation and high-lighting of three elements of long-simmering crises and transformation in the context of a collapsed time frame in which two crisis-ridden 'moments' (the middle and the short term) are stacked on top of the structural/historical dimension.<sup>6</sup> This paper specifies the content and the form— the contour of the conjuncture and the terrain – of Zimbabwe's 'organic crisis.'

The structural or *longue dure* elements of this triple crisis consist of:

a) Primitive accumulation, which encompasses the alteration of pre-capitalist ('communal' and/or feudal) agrarian relations of production to capitalist ones, and the formation of a capitalist class. As Marx is often quoted, capitalism emerges from its preceding modes of production with 'blood dripping from every pore.'

The process of primary accumulation is by no means 'natural' or spontaneous: state force and many other 'non-market' modalities are necessary.<sup>7</sup> In the 'third world' it may never emerge and thus the blood usually flows more slowly; but the emergence of 'war-torn Africa' suggests a permanently stalemated process of violence in some regions.<sup>8</sup> At other moments, the process speeds up in a very uneven and contradictory way – also probably with violence. The process is always quite unique in spite of its structural base. Many of its variations can be attributed to the historically specific ways in which a combination of externally 'imposed' and internally developing capitalist social formations 'articulated' with pre-existing modes of production. One may say that primitive accumulation always has 'twists in its tail' and the ideological perspectives accompanying and contesting it will add many twists to its tale.

In Zimbabwe and other African settler-colonial societies, primitive accumulation has identifiable and comparable characteristics—race and the agrarian question. Capitalist agriculture has been dominated by white settlers who carried out their process of primitive accumulation by forcibly taking 'native' land and denying African farmers not merely commercial opportunities, but also a chance to become capitalist land owners.<sup>9</sup>

b) Nation-state construction, which involves the creation of a national 'community' and territorial space accepted by other regional and international 'sovereigns.' This involves both the struggle to create 'imagined communities' out of regionally, ethnically and racially dispersed 'communities' and the metaphorical and real battles for state managers to maintain relative autonomy and gain power *vis vis* their near and far neighbors and non-state— but very powerful— actors in the global political economy.<sup>10</sup>

The state managers involved are intricately related to and often part of the bourgeoisie emerging in the process of primitive accumulation. They have complicated alliances with myriad international classes, groups, and agencies. They often condemn their objective allies: hence the many contradictions of 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric from those on the periphery of global capitalism who, on close analysis, collude with their ostensible enemies.

Further complicating the process, especially in Africa, is the legacy of the arbitrarily constructed borders within which 'national' identities are forged. This process obviously has 'local' and 'international' dimensions. In Zimbabwe, the near genocide in Matabeleland in the 1980s could be seen as part of the former, while involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1997 (especially 1998), combined with a renewed anti-imperialist rhetoric, brings in the latter aspects.

c) Democratization, is a process through which power and participation are gradually won by more and more social groups, and (ideally) come to be exercised in mutually agreeable modes of representation and conflict resolution. As Rita Abrahamsen's *Disciplining Democracy* makes clear in the Zambian case, the currently dominant modality of 'democracy' is liberal, and its restrictive purchase does not come near to solving the problems of socio-economic disparity and its own idiosyncrasies encourage 'thin' forms of participation.<sup>11</sup> Socio-political analysts may tend to dismiss 'democratization' as a 'superstructural' phenomenon, but this essay contends that in the universal structural-historical sense, as well as its manifestations in the contemporary 'third world,' it has as much impact on transformational processes as primitive accumulation and nation-state formation.

The historical development of powerful working classes often has a strong relationship with 'democracy,' and *vice versa*.<sup>12</sup> The strongest 'democratic' societies thus also have high levels of 'social' democracy. This form of democracy, which combines a universalistic discourse of first-order civil rights with separate judiciary and parliaments, has historically provided a powerful purchase against the authoritarian emerging bourgeoisies common to peripheral social formations undergoing the trials of primitive accumulation and nation-state formation.<sup>13</sup>

Democratization trajectories often lead to violence as opposition is repressed and fights back. Opposition forces also make counterintuitive alliances with international forces and ideologies. One only has to think of the transformation of working class based opposition movements, born in struggles against the travails of structural adjustment in Africa, into political parties espousing neo-liberal ideas. Such realities mean that the issues of sovereignty and primitive accumulation are intricately tied up with 'democratization,' and that one must move on the terrain of the middle level and 'events' to unravel their connections.

This paper will proceed to combine the structural elements of Zimbabwe's crisis with its middle and immediate levels. At an abstract level they can be represented graphically. At the level of narrative these categories can be explicated by expounding upon the quotations at the beginning of the paper.

longue dure	Primitive accumulation, Nation-state formation, Democratisation
Moyen dure	Neo-liberalism, Post-Cold War disorder, Rise of opposition (ZCTU, NCA, MDC)
Les vnements	Land invasions, sovereignty: 'new liberation' & DRC war, election & succession

The components of the crisis are intertwined: an economic crisis is aggravated and catalyzed by more political spheres. That is why the crisis is organic. Its integral nature is revealed if the quotes are unraveled.

#### PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION AND LAND: WHAT KIND OF ECONOMIES?

'The land is the economy and the economy is the land' was the main campaign slogan for ZANU (PF) in the parliamentary elections of June 2000. It appeared to celebrate a renewed 'land reform' process coincidental with the post-February constitutional referendum invasions of between 1,000 and 1,600 large scale commercial farms (LSCFs). This was hailed by ruling party propagandists and its supporters as the beginning of the end of a racially skewed agrarian system.<sup>14</sup>

By mid-2001 ZANU (PF) claimed to have taken over 3,500 farms on over 3.5 million acres, with 105,000 people resettled in its 'fast-track' land reform process (on the other hand, the Commercial Farmers' Union claimed only 35,000 people had been resettled).<sup>15</sup> Immediately after the 2002 election more commercial farms were invaded. Whether or not the new settlers are the deserving poor, 'war veterans', or the urban unemployed temporarily installed and subsidized by the state and the army as part of a vast intimidation strategy, the fact that the land issue is currently resonant among the people suggests that its historical roots need investigation.<sup>16</sup>

The notion of primitive accumulation at least reminds one that a society where half of the population (i.e., over six million people) live in very poor, only partially marketized 'communal land,' while half of its land is 'capitalist' and owned by just over 4,000 people, is prone to conflict.

A potential problem with using the 'primitive accumulation' framework is that it could seem to accentuate a strict piding line between 'capitalist' and 'non-capitalist' forms of tenure, much as the more orthodox discourse speaks of a 'dual sector' in agriculture and even a stark pide between urban and rural dwellers. Thus one too easily finds clearly demarcated chart-like representations of the land issue in Zimbabwe, like the following, to indicate land pisions before 2000:

- 4,400 LSCF farmers on 11.2 million hectares, averaging over 2,000 hectares each;
- 1 million families or 6.5 million people on 16 million hectares of land in the communal areas (CA);
- 10,000 small scale commercial farmers (mainly black) on 1.2 million hectares;
- 70,000 black resettlement families with 3.5 million hectares; and
- A state farming sector of about 0.5 million hectares.

In contrast, but still remaining within the 'dual sector' discourse (albeit with the 'state' incorporated more definitely, in a clear ideological gesture), the Commercial Farmers' Union's (CFU) statistics suggest a different picture in late 2001:

- 39.6 million hectares of land in total, with 33 million reserved for agriculture and the rest for 'national parks, forests and urban settlement';
- The state owns 22 million hectares out of the 33 million, meaning that it owns sixty-seven per cent of all agricultural land – including communal lands;
- Commercial farmland comprises 11.2 million hectares of which union members had 8.56 million hectares before the current acquisition program;
- The 8.3 million hectares claimed by the state for 'fast-tracking' is over 95% of the 8.56 million hectares previously owned by CFU members;
- CFU membership is less than 3,555 in comparison to 4,500 before September 2001;
- CFU members owned only 20.7% of Zimbabwe's best farmland, contrary to ZANU(PF)'s assertion of seventy per cent;
- There were 7,132 farms listed by September 2001 with '2,335 errors and duplications on the lists of acquisition;'
- 495 were since delisted, while 4,593 were still subject to listing and further action.<sup>17</sup>

A 'black and white' view of these abstractions tends to cluster the patterns into 'capitalist' or 'non-capitalist.' Closer studies, however, indicate a high degree of differentiation and a multitude of 'ownership' and control patterns in the CAs. As Blair Rutherford's finely textured study of farm workers reveals, many of these 'rural proletarians' all but own *misha* in the supposedly 'communal' areas (and many of them are not exactly sure whether or not they paid a 'chief,' a kraal-head or a ZANU (PF) official for it) and many of them employ wage laborers. To further complicate the bifurcated discourse, he found that a significant number in his survey of CA 'owners' were actually born outside Zimbabwe.<sup>18</sup>

As Beacon Mbiba notes, even in the minority-rule era, 'there was (is) a 20-30 per cent core group "owning land" (but without freehold title)' in addition to the very small, but more famous, owners of land in the Native Purchase Areas (the 10,000 small scale commercial farmers on 1.2 million hectares noted above).<sup>19</sup> Other writers note that in the CAs, title is 'invested' in the resident but is in fact a mix of customary and 'state defined tenure.' Farmers usually inherit 2 hectares of land, 0.5 hectares of which are homestead sites that can be sold due to the infrastructure on them — or, as Rutherford puts it, according the 'labor' put into them. Grazing and woodlands are 'communal.' Although the state has *de jure* ownership of the land, the authority for land transfer is most often a kraal-head or a 'chief,' but the rise of Village Development Councils (VIDCOs) has sometimes placed a ZANU (PF) member in new positions of responsibility.<sup>20</sup>

In post-1980 resettled areas, resettlement officers are supposed to handle issues of land transfer and even expel farmers if they do not maintain good farming practice or other standards of 'good behavior.'<sup>21</sup> On LSCFs it should be noted that many of the paternalistic patterns of domination and control — but also of 'obligation' in many cases — between owners and workers, such as reduced farm-shop prices and extensive credit arrangements, are more akin to 'feudalism' than to strictly defined bourgeois-worker relations.

In the post-2000 invaded areas, there is considerable debate about 'who owns what.' In some cases certificates are given to people who are able to negotiate for them with the appropriate 'war veteran' but in most cases the 'settlers' have a most indeterminate form of

tenure.<sup>22</sup> According to one source, some invaded farms are pided up into sections under the control of war vets who then bring in 'settlers' from their own parts of the country. The war vet in charge of each group receives intermittent payments from the army or the WVA headquarters, which he may or may not distribute to his wards. On one farm, the senior war vet did not receive payment for months. The white farmer then hired him as a security guard.<sup>23</sup>

The existence of varieties of land tenure by no means invalidates the concept of primitive accumulation since this transformation is a protracted process, taking years and involving *political* struggle as well as much state intervention.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps Arrighi's 'classical' text on Zimbabwean political economy also signposts the same phenomenon: he chronicled the 'semi-proletarian' status of Africans in the Rhodesian social formation many years ago.<sup>25</sup> As Mark Duffield warns us about the *moyens dure*, current efforts to 'liberalize' the world economy are leading to 'non-liberal' (indeed war-dominated) modes of production in its 'hinterlands.'<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, the question to ask is whether or not current land restructuring efforts in Zimbabwe lead to the fulfillment of the whole primitive accumulation process in that country. That is, do they lead to an urban proletarianization of rural dwellers as well as the commodification of agrarian social relations? The answer is, no.

For this transformation to take place, industrialization is needed to accompany a process of agrarian restructuring. If not, the process of capitalist differentiation will go in one of two directions. It will either take a long process of 'spontaneous' transfer of agricultural surplus product into urban-industrial 'sectors', with the peasants losing out in the struggle for agrarian accumulation to working class positions in the cities. Alternatively, it could lead to a semi-subsistence stalemate, and the 'urban-rural' gap, blurred in interminable survival strategies, will remain more or less permanent.<sup>27</sup>

Current debates in Zimbabwe highlight the different interests involved in this transformation. One 'bourgeois' approach (aside from the *white* bourgeoisie!) to the current efforts at land reform is clear enough. It calls for the state to legalize the privatization of the new settlements as soon as possible. The Affirmative Action Group (AAG)—one of the original lobby groups representing what the emergent black bourgeoisie—has called for the state to 'issue title deeds to thousands of resettled farmers to enable them to fully develop their properties, saying that it is 'pointless' for the government to continue with the 'fast-track' reform without the "necessary documentation to prove one's claim to the piece of land."<sup>28</sup> In response, the 'government' was reported as having approached financial institutions to provide guaranteed housing loans (no mention was made about credit for farming inputs).<sup>29</sup>

However, a conference in March 2002 of the Indigenous Business Development Centre (IBDC), a competing 'economic empowerment' organization, avoided AAG's clarity on tenure.<sup>30</sup> Its vice-president, an insurance executive, said that the conference's theme 'Economic Empowerment is Land' was to create awareness among its members about the implications of land reform for their success or lack thereof. He criticized foreign sanctions, and linking them to ideas of the *dependencia* approach, he argued that Zimbabwe's raw materials are being exported to Western countries only to be refined and then imported at exorbitant prices. He therefore proposed a total indigenization of the country.

The president of the Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union (ICFU) was more cautious in his praise for fast track land reform, suggesting its goals should be sustainable food production

at a cost affordable to the general populace, that private and public sectors ensure farmers produce adequate raw materials for local industries and sufficient volumes of exportable goods. However, he too was vague about land tenure. It took until the end of the conference for one executive to declare that long leases should be given to the farmers so that they could be used as security for loans from financial institutions.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, even the emerging accumulating class seems to be disconcerted by the current conjuncture. They see problems with the present policies, but also wish to continue their good relations with the party-state apparatus that has muddied the waters.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the already entrenched party-state bourgeoisie has ensured that in the new dispensation they will be allocated at least ten per cent of the new lands.<sup>33</sup>

Presenting the 'traditional' point of view on agrarian social relations, an appointed member of parliament, Chief Jonathan Mangwende, said in October 2001 that the land resettlement program was not decongesting the overpopulated rural areas because the chiefs were not being given their due recognition in the process. He claimed that the names of people for the resettlement program should come from the chiefs, but this had not happened. He pointed out that one of the clauses in the constitutional drafts, circulated by ZANU (PF) in its late 1999 efforts, advised that chiefs should be in charge of all resettlement.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps ZANU (PF)'s pre-2002 election promises to hire new secretaries for traditional authorities and to equip them with e-mail was enough to re-convince them to support the ruling party.

As the previous words on the relationship between land and industrialization have suggested, discussion of 'primitive accumulation' cannot end with agrarian relations alone. It must also focus on the formation of a 'bourgeoisie' in its agrarian, 'comprador,' financial, and industrial forms. It needs to take into account its relationship with the state and classes of a similar ilk at the international level.

One must also ask how structural adjustment programs, that have stripped Zimbabwe's once healthy education system, have made fertile ground for the armed force's head to build a private primary school.<sup>35</sup> The war vets, too, must be considered as an 'interest group' — with hierarchical gradations and corruption patterns potentially leading to class differentiation — with a special relationship to the state that has turned into an avenue for accumulation as well as purely 'political' power.<sup>36</sup> In general, it would appear that a bourgeoisie which might have been on the road to a productive and industrially-based accumulation in the early to mid-1980s has been turned by neo-liberal policies and authoritarianism into one based on financial speculation, war economies, and the plundering of historically alienated agricultural spaces, but it will take much more investigation to determine its exact contours.

One can conclude this section on 'primitive accumulation' with the following proposition. It appears that the racial structural flaw in the process of primitive accumulation (the *longue dure*), while possibly on the way to gradual amelioration with the 1980s reforms, came to a halt with a combination of externally imposed structural adjustment programs and donor disenchantment. This transformed the internal ruling group, which forgot its liberation war rhetoric, and instead dropped the alliances and ideological affinities adopted during that struggle.<sup>37</sup> This *moyen dure* process came to a halt and turned into a 'crisis of events' when the economic consequences of neo-liberalism (for example, debt and de-industrialization) and the rise of strong opposition (partially created by them) led to a faltering of ZANU (PF) leadership's

alliance with the 'war veterans.'<sup>38</sup> This alliance was sealed in August 1997 when the veterans' were awarded a lump sum of Z\$50,000 and monthly pensions of Z \$2,000, with promises to resurrect land reform (twenty per cent of which would go to members of the WVLA).<sup>39</sup> The cost was in the range of Z\$4.5 billion.

When added to many more billions siphoned out of parastatal corporations in the preceding few years, the fiscal strain led to 'Black Friday' in October 1997, when the Zimbabwean dollar lost seventy-five per cent of its value.<sup>40</sup> From there on, event piled upon event to add chaos to the conjuncture. Over 1,400 farms were slated for acquisition but were soon delisted. The Kabila regime was supported against the 'rebels', the Rwandans and the Ugandans. Promises of donor money for the new land reform program were reneged upon. What was then only an oppositional social movement formalized into the MDC.

The failure of the February 2000 constitutional referendum pushed Robert Mugabe (and perhaps a group of *mafikizolo*, or 'those who came yesterday,' aspirants to ZANU(PF)'s leadership) even further into alliance with the 'war vets' and some peasants who were sporadically invading LSCFs.<sup>41</sup> But such chronicles or events fail to differentiate their structural and historical roots. Another lens through which they can be viewed is the way Zimbabwe's rulers have responded to the many challenges to their sovereignty.

#### NATION-STATE FORMATION: SOVEREIGNTY AND COMMUNITY LOST AND REGAINED?

On the issue of state-building and sovereignty, the 'land is the economy' discourse is intricately related to the Zimbabwean ruling group's ostensible desire to free itself from a neo-colonial relationship to white farmers, Britain, and 'western imperialism' in general (while also wishing to avail itself of its avenues to conspicuous consumption).<sup>42</sup> The support of regional and third world leaders can also be garnered in this fashion. The chess-board of international relations is a component part of ZANU (PF)'s tactics and strategies. Thus, the rhetoric against whites in Zimbabwe and Tony Blair and his "gang of gay gangsters" can be understood as a discursive effort to rebuild a fading hegemonic project, using the international backdrop.

Recourse to the faade of state sovereignty through patriotism and 'traditional' values is nothing new, of course, but it takes on almost hysterical tones in an age where 'globalization' has changed the language of 'progressive alternatives' to neo-liberalism well beyond the boundaries that it has irrevocably altered.<sup>43</sup> Those who challenge the reconstruction of this discourse are referred to as 'puppets' and 'enemies of the people' mobilizing armies on the borders of a re-sanctified territory.<sup>44</sup>

The formation of a cohesive nation-state is one of the historical tasks of 'modernity' as defined by classical political and sociological theory, and it is not granted without violence and dastardliness.<sup>45</sup> The question — posed by both *dependencia* and conservative theorists — is whether or not it can be constructed in the 'third world'.<sup>46</sup>

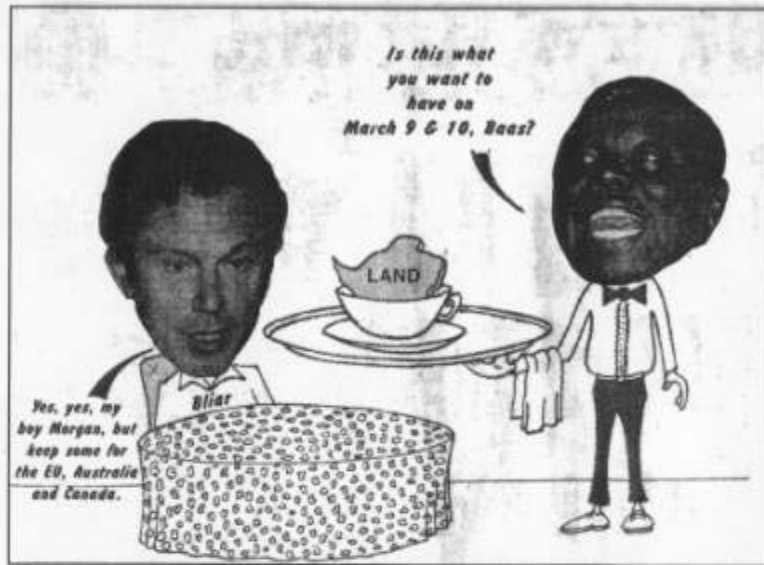
Contemporary structuralist accounts tend to say that for Africa, if the process of nation-state formation was progressing during the sixties and seventies, it was halted with the advent of structural adjustment policies.<sup>47</sup> If Zimbabwe is an example of a *failed* structural adjustment project — and even the *failed* efforts of global democratizers in their NGO and state-led forms —



we may be witnessing the revival of an authoritarian populist anti-imperialism in tandem with a regional imperialism. This is manifested in the Zimbabwean involvement in the DRC (itself a nation-state in an awkward process of construction) in competition with Uganda and Rwanda. Libyan 'support' in the form of oil for Zimbabwe swapped for real estate, is another example of 'mini-imperialisms' in the fray.

Thus we arrive at the *Herald's* quote on the dawn of the election, defined as: "a crucial defining moment which will determine the direction which this nation will take in terms of its sovereignty." These words bring the whole election down to a battle against 'recolonization' by 'the west' – especially by the former colonial power. The United Kingdom is said to be pulling the strings of its puppet, the MDC. An example of this discourse is a ZANU (PF) newspaper advertisement consisting of a cartoon portraying 'Tsvangison' dressed as a tea-boy serving Tony 'Bliar' (sic) a map of Zimbabwe in a cup. The tea-boy asks Blair, "Is this what you want to have on March 9 & 10, Baas?" Blair responds, "Yes, yes, my boy Morgan, but keep some for the EU, Australia and Canada." Under the cartoon are the bold, upper case phrases:

# TSVANGISON AND HIS SELLOUTS THINK ZIMBABWE IS TEA



- DON'T LET HIM SELL YOUR BIRTHRIGHT
- DON'T LET HIM SELL YOUR HERITAGE
- DON'T LET HIM SELL YOUR SOUL
- DON'T LET HIM SELL YOUR COUNTRY
- DON'T LET HIM SELL YOUR LAND

**ZIMBABWE WILL NEVER BE A COLONY AGAIN!**

**ON MARCH 9 AND 10 VOTE FOR THE PEOPLE: VOTE FOR MATURITY, EXPERIENCE AND WISDOM**



**ZANU PF**



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Another example of a sovereignty discourse aimed at Zimbabweans can be found in the party/state run *The People's Voice*, which started as a rural mouthpiece for ZANU (PF) in the early 1980s. In an edition full of the president's portraits and wishes for a happy 78th birthday paid for by various parastatals, a two-page article by the secretary for administration of ZANU (PF) Harare province, runs through the anti-imperialist trope. "Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and his life-long fight against British imperial perfidy," starts off with:

Britain, the country that perfected the art of imperial domination into a science is engaged in a do or die tussle with Cde Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe. It has been hurling whatever weapon it can lay its hands on as it tries to remove him from power. It is armed with a sinister arsenal that it has amassed from its years of over-lordship of other countries, many of them much bigger than Zimbabwe. It also has a veritable phalanx of kith and kin allies in former dominions, a shared lingua franca with America, the only world power that remains as well as the close racial affinities of Germanic northern Europe.

The target of all this imperial froth and venom is Cde Robert Mugabe, a ferociously intellectual African with unbending pride and unshakable belief that the Black race shall once again have its encounter with destiny as it overcomes the blight of slavery and the violent alienation of colonialism.<sup>48</sup>

This discourse is different from the liberation war days of *Zanu News*. Then, Scandinavians and anti-apartheid solidarity groups across 'Germanic northern Europe' and other western spaces gave considerable support to ZANU (PF) keeping its rhetoric on an even keel. This 2002 version, however, is much more 'communitarian' in its racial language, while at the same time melding the individual leader with the destiny of the nation-state.

The article goes on to praise the president for single-handedly stabilizing a "mortally threatened" Mozambique, being "the stalwart of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa until its eventual demise" (thus forgetting the antagonism between newly independent Zimbabwe and the ANC, such that even Thabo Mbeki was a guest of Chikurubi prison), and for "helping preserve the sovereignty of the pivotal Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the process thwart[ing] a misguided British attempt to encircle Zimbabwe." Mugabe is credited with building a modern African nation – an "anvil upon which British imperialism has painfully knocked its head" – "to a level that is yet to be attained by any African country" (and this for a nation that has only three million, the article says). It is hard to know how many Zimbabweans were convinced by this rhetoric. Placed against a history of 'ethnic cleansing' in the mid-1980s in Matabeleland, the wounds of which are still open, it seems inadequate to the task of nation-building.

Judging by the actions of regional states and people in the aftermath of the Abuja agreement, it has some international and continental purchase, however – including with the president of South Africa.<sup>49</sup> Strains of pan-Africanist discourse on the Zimbabwean situation have also spread to the USA. A group of 'concerned Howard University students' submitted an article to the *Herald* declaring their solidarity with "the very popular Pan-Africanist Cde Mugabe and his party" fighting "western countries who are worried about maintaining white supremacy ... giv[ing] funding to an oppositional leader", and calling for a massive campaign in the USA to end the sanctions.<sup>50</sup>

Aside from the discourse on sovereignty and Pan-Africanism, the spending on the international sovereignty-boosting DRC exercise has had a more substantial impact. The Zimbabwean state, military, and financial complex has gambled heavily and time alone will tell if the shares in the DRC's mines will bear much revenue. In the meantime, 10,000 to 13,000 troops demand upkeep. While the economy bears the costs, some of the generals and their kin who own transport and textile companies, are the immediate beneficiaries. It may be of importance to note that the first 'sanction' on Zimbabwe was IMF's refusal to continue operations when it detected improper accounting on war expenditure.

It is likely that as the DRC war festers, the 'warlordism' accompanying that process may infect Zimbabwe too. Increased militia style attacks on farms and MDC supporters suggest this possibility. Nation-building may be confused with exclusionary violence.<sup>51</sup> As the literature on war-torn Africa suggests, the combination of structural adjustment ravaged political economies and authoritarian politicians is potent. Whether democratization processes are a counter-tendency is an open question.

#### DEMOCRATIZATION: WHAT IS THE FIGHT FOR?

On the 'democratization' stage, many observers see the 'land question' as but an election winning ploy for ZANU (PF). Those who are implementing it, however, operate at another level. For them, the language of land rights challenges that of civil society and the opposition. First order rights are seen as the preserve of the bourgeoisie, while substantive social rights, of which land is the most basic, is made out to be the legacy of the liberation war.

If one took the ZANU (PF) discourse seriously, the 'long election' was about countering the empty western and liberal rhetoric of 'freedom to sleep under a bridge or in the Carleton Hotel' with socio-economic freedom in the form of land to the tiller and price controls for the urban consumer. It is ironic then, that the man who in the mid-1970s challenged Mugabe and the ZANU 'old guard' from the left (and for so doing was placed in Mozambican jails for three years) was articulating the classic language of bourgeois liberalism. "Here we are, twenty-two years later, still fighting for the right to vote. The whole country fought for this in the bush, and we still have not got it".<sup>52</sup> Most objective observers contend that voters were kept away from their Harare area polling stations and others added to the rural rolls in the last few weeks of registration, that intimidation accounted for a lot of the absentees, and around a million Zimbabweans living outside the country were disallowed from the polls. If these people had voted for the MDC, the 420,000 or so votes separating the 'winners' from the 'losers' would be accounted for and the election could indeed be seen as 'stolen.' But just as importantly for Wilfred Mhanda and the other members of the Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform, one of the key goals of the liberation war – democracy – was still-born two decades after an ostensible victory for 'majority rule.'

Conservative historians of the *longue dure* might contend that such goals in the 'third world' are premature. As Samora Machel condemned young Marxists for being 'ultra-leftist, Trotskyist and infantile', in the 1970s, so might a structuralist today caution patience on the democratic front. After all, if Zimbabwe is barely approaching a feudal mode of political rule — in which problems of leadership succession have society-wide consequences — or if an absolutist

state is needed to manage an unevenly articulated transition to modernity, is it not too early for too much democracy?<sup>53</sup>

Is not the *Herald's* editorial correct to note that "while our democracy is in its infancy the people...have demonstrated maturity" – except for the 'spoilers' funded by the west, who are in any case planning a civil war if their expectations are not met.<sup>54</sup> Should not 'the west' and its Zimbabwean civil society clones be patient (perhaps in the meantime accepting a government of national unity, imposed from above – and also outside – so that a form of lite pacting could ease the transition to democracy along)?

If such discourse had any purchase at all it could be taken up by ZANU (PF), but its language also accepts the modalities of 'western' democracy: it is simply hypocritical about this in its claims that challenges to its rule emanate from the imperialists.<sup>55</sup> All sides to the debate agree that all adult Zimbabwean citizens should have the right to choose their rulers – the minimum condition of liberal democracy. However, there is an argument – and it was put forth by the Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform as civil society groups and the MDC hammered out their approach to the election – that by accepting participation in an election that was flawed from the beginning (because it did not meet the SADC minimal condition of an independent electoral commission), the MDC fated itself to failure. It would have been better to refuse to participate in elections that did not meet the minimal conditions of *African* neighbors. Consistent with this line is the argument that the results of the 2002 presidential election should be declared null and void. New ones should be called that will meet basic regional standards. Finding the *international* support for such demands will be extremely difficult – as will finding the stamina in civil society.

Nevertheless, such expansionary perspectives on democracy forestall efforts of lite pacting and slow down grass-roots political participation. In the end, democratic pressure on all aspects of the state and economy is the only way to raise incomes which could trigger the virtuous circle of consumptive and productive increases necessary to kick-start social formations out of the triple impasse of primitive accumulation, nation-state formation, and further democratization. Rather than being epiphenomenal to the first two historical-sociological prerequisites to 'modernity', democracy may be fundamental to it.

## Conclusion

This paper has attempted to analyze the current Zimbabwean crisis with a three-fold conceptual apparatus. It contends that Zimbabwe's 'organic crisis' consists of a combination of problems rooted in long-term transitions of primitive accumulation, nation-state formation, and democratization which have 'erupted' in the context of 'middle-term' processes and policies such as structural adjustment, the effect of post-Cold War globalization in Africa, and the rise of opposition politics. The 'short-term' conjuncture includes land invasions, violent elections, and severe economic problems. Democratization might appear, intuitively, to be the least important part of this troika, but if pursued diligently and carefully may well be the key to Zimbabwe's turn-around. Most Zimbabweans appear to believe this proposition, but have been prevented by force and fraud from participating in its testing. They may have to resort to more force of their own in order to participate in this most basic of experiments.

**Notes:**

1. ZANU(PF) election slogan, June 2000. In March 2002 there were variations on the theme such as 'People First. Our land is our prosperity,' 'Work the Land, Reap Prosperity, Build the Nation,' and 'What Would You Vote For? Plots to Kill ... or Plots to Till. On March 9 and 10 Vote for Your Land, Vote for President R.G. Mugabe.'
2. 'Comment: D-Day for Zimbabwe,' *The Herald*, (Harare) March 9, 2002, p. 1.
3. Wilfred Mhanda, aka Dznishe Machingura, founding member and director, Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform, March 10, 2002. For aspects of Mhanda's biography and his relationship to ZANU(PF)'s history see my "Democracy, Violence and Identity in the Zimbabwean War of National Liberation: Reflections from the Realms of Dissent," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 29, 3, (December 1995), pp. 375-402; R.W. Johnson, 'How Mugabe Came to Power,' *London Review of Books*, 22 February 2001, pp. 26-27 and my letter in response, *LRB*, 23, 7 (April 5, 2001), p. 6; also 'The Alchemy of Robert Mugabe's Alliances,' *Africa Insight*, (Pretoria) 30, 1 (May 2000), pp. 28-32.
4. This long election could be split into three phases: the first was the constitutional referendum of February 2000, narrowly lost by ZANU(PF); the second was the June 2000 parliamentary election and the third was the March 2002 presidential election. The last two components of the 'long election' – considered by some to be a referendum on Robert Mugabe's rule – were narrowly won by the ruling party in the context of much intimidation, violence, and manipulation. The 2002 election results saw over 1,609,000 votes for Mugabe and 1,230,000 for his main opponent, Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change: The editor of the *Zimbabwe Independent* estimates that almost 350,000 of Harare's 800,000 voters were denied voting rights, and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network says that 400,000 rural people were added to a secret voter's roll. (*Mail and Guardian*, March 15-21, 2002, pp. 2, 15). For details on the violence up to the 2002 election see the first few pages of my 'Zimbabwe: Twists on the Tale of Primitive Accumulation,' in Malinda S. Smith, ed. *Globalizing Africa*, Trenton: Africa World Press, forthcoming; for figures on the 2000 election see my 'Democracy is Coming to Zimbabwe,' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 36, 1 (March 2001), p. 163.
5. The use of these categories comes from Fernand Braudel. They are used to some effect in Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. London: Longmans, (1989) 1993.
6. The phrase 'state-society complex' is a key component of Robert Cox's theoretical apparatus. See his *Production, Power and World Order: Social Forces and the Making of History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, and *Problems in World Order*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
7. Micheal Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
8. Claudia von Werlhof, "'Globalization" and the "Permanent" Process of "Primitive Accumulation": The Example of the MAI, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment,'

- Journal of World Systems Research, 6, 3 (Fall-Winter 2000), pp. 718-47, <http://colorado.edu/jwsr>; Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*, London: Zed Books, 2001; William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998.
9. I have explored these issues briefly in "Is the Land the Economy and the Economy the Land? Primitive Accumulation in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 19, 2 (July 2001), pp. 253-266 and David Moore, 'Neoliberal Globalisation and the Triple Crisis of "Modernisation" in Africa: Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Africa,' *Third World Quarterly*, 22, 6 (December 2001), pp. 909-930. Along with the issues of nation-state formation and democratisation, they are inspired by a reading of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, analysed with an African perspective in my 'Africa: The Black Hole at the Middle of Empire?' *Rethinking Marxism*, 13, 3/4 (Winter 2002).
  10. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983.
  11. Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa* London: Zed Books, 2000.
  12. Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Elaine Stephens & John Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
  13. Michael Mann, "The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic Cleansing," *New Left Review*, 235 (May-June 1999), pp. 18-45, for an argument suggesting that the best defense against genocidal forms of modernization is a combination of liberal political systems and ideologies with strong working classes.
  14. The 'opposition' private newspaper *The Daily News* (June 21, 2000) reported 1,631 large scale commercial farms invaded between February and June, while the Commercial Farmers Union (also part of the 'opposition' in the eyes of the ruling party, but usually conservative in its estimates of recently resettled land) reported 1,060 (quoted from the *Financial Gazette*, June 15, 2000, in Jocelyn Alexander, 'Settling an Unsettled Land: "Squatters," Veterans and the State in Zimbabwe,' paper at seminar on 'Rethinking Land, State and Citizenship through the Zimbabwe Crisis,' Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen, September 4-5, 2001, p. 20.)
  15. Basildon Peta, 'New land grab to put 300,000 jobs on the line,' *Financial Gazette*, (Harare), July 5, 2001; F. Masiokwadzo, '35,000 people "extraneous" in land crisis,' *Zimbabwe Independent*, 3 August 2001. In early 2000 there were about 4,400 LSCFs.
  16. I use quotation marks around the term 'war vet' because, as the Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform (ZLP) and many other observers and participants repeat, many of the members' of the War Veterans' Association (WVA) claims to their status are suspect.
  17. Forward Maisokwadzo, '95% commercial farms listed,' *Zimbabwe Independent*, September 28, 2001. The CFU said it 'could not quantify the number of farms fast-tracked, but said 900 farms have been occupied.' However, Maisokwadzo writes, 'CFU leaders have recently privately said 2,700 farms have been seized under fast-track.'
  18. Blair Rutherford, *Working on the Margins: Black Workers, White Farmers in Postcolonial Zimbabwe*, Harare: Weaver, 2001, pp. 201-230. The issue of citizenship

should be referred to the section on 'democracy:' suffice for now to mention that in 2000 Robert Mugabe stated that 'those without totems' should not be considered Zimbabwean, by whom he meant 'foreign' farmworkers and an undifferentiated mass of urban residents.

19. Beacon Mbiba, 'Communal Land Rights in Zimbabwe as State Sanction and Social Control: A Narrative,' *Africa*, 71, (October 2001), pp. 429-430.
20. Rutherford, *Working ...*, 2001; Michael O'Flaherty, 'Communal Tenure in Zimbabwe: pergent Models of Collective Land Holding in the Communal Areas,' *Africa*, 68, 4 (December 1998) pp. 537-57; Allison Goebel, "'Then It's Clear Who Owns the Trees': Common Property and Private Control in the Social Forest in a Zimbabwean Resettlement Area,' *Rural Sociology*, 64, 4 (December 1999), pp. 624-40.
21. Susie Jacobs, 'The Effects of Land Reform on Gender Relations in Zimbabwe,' T.A.S. Bowyer-Bower and Colin Stoneman, eds. *Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Constraints and Prospects*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, p. 184.
22. For the most inclusive account of the invasions, see J. Alexander, 'Settling ...' My 'Democracy ...,' 'Is the Land ...?' and 'Zimbabwe: Twists ...' also deal to some extent with the invasions. Interview, Charles Pfukwa, Harare, March 12, 2002. Mr. Pfukwa stated that on a resettled farm near Chipinge 34 out of 100 at a meeting to discuss these issues had completed 'the legal niceties,' but then stated that the authority for the A1 settlements was 'still being formed.'
23. Anonymous interview, Harare March 7, 2002.
24. Perelman, *The Invention ...*, 2000.
25. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Political Economy of Rhodesia*, The Hague: Mouton, 1967, and chapters in Arrighi and John S. Saul, *Essays in the Political Economy of Africa*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973.
26. Duffield, *Global Governance ...*, 2001.
27. Jens A. Andersson, 'Reinterpreting the Rural-Urban Connection: Migration Practices and Socio-Cultural Dispositions of Buhera Workers in Harare,' *Africa*, 71, 1 (January 2001), pp. 82-112.
28. Brian Raftopoulos, 'Fighting for Control: The Indigenization Debate in Zimbabwe,' *Southern Africa Report*, (Toronto) 11, 4 (December 1996).
29. 'Group calls on State to Issue Title Deeds,' *The Herald*, (Harare), June 19, 2001.
30. 'Land Reform gets Backing: Major Conference set for Sunday,' *The Herald*, March 1, 2002, p. 6.
31. Caiphaz Chimhete, *Mirror*, (Harare), 'Land Reform: Agriculture Revenue Set to Double,' March 8-14, 2002, pp. B1-2. The text revealed that this doubling would be dependent on its execution in a 'professional manner' and proper inputs and financial resources.
32. This researcher is not sure what proportion of the emerging bourgeoisie is aligned with the Movement for Democratic Reform (MDC), although apparently the owners of the Kingdom Bank are committed MDC backers.
33. Baffour Ankomah, 'Righting Colonial Wrongs,' *Sunday Mail*, March 10, 2002, pp. 113-14, quotes Minister of Home Affairs John Nkomo (formerly of ZAPU) saying that 'less than ten per cent' of the recent land acquisitions have gone to well-established members of



- the black elite. There is a special facility in the program for 'indigenous large scale commercial farms' called the Commercial Farmers' Settlement Scheme. Recall that in 1997 the Development Trust of Zimbabwe, headed by Joshua Nkomo, owned 319,929 hectares – second only to the Anglo-American Corporation's 474,200. Sam Moyo, *The Land Acquisition Process in Zimbabwe (1997/8)*, Harare: United Nations Development Programme Resource Centre, 1998, pp. 30-31. Moyo also noted in 1998 that the 1997 listings exhibited 'exclusive tendencies [and] ... corrupt practices in land allocation schemes benefiting elites in the name of black capitalist development' (p. 35).
34. 'Chief Attacks Land Reforms,' *Daily News*, October 24, 2001.
  35. R.W. Johnson, 'Zimbabwe Inc.' *Focus* (Johannesburg), 19 (2000). Also, participant observation by author of election queues near Warren Park, Harare, March 10, 2002.
  36. Norma Kriger, 'Zimbabwe's War Veterans and the Ruling Party: Continuities in Political Dynamics,' *Politique Africaine*, 81, (March 2001), translated as 'Les Veterans et le Parti au Pouvoir: Une Cooperation Conflictuelle dans la Longue Dure;' R. Mukundu, 'Hunzvi, Mhlanga named in \$45m Zexcom scam,' *Zimbabwe Independent Online*, October 27, 2000. <[www.mweb.co.zw/zimin](http://www.mweb.co.zw/zimin)> accessed November 1, 2000.
  37. Lionel Cliffe, 'The Politics of Land Reform in Zimbabwe,' T.A.S. Bowyer-Bower and Colin Stoneman, eds. *Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Constraints and Prospects*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, pp.42-3; Bill Kinsey, 'Land Reform, Growth and Equity: Emerging Evidence from Zimbabwe's Resettlement Programme,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25, 2 (March 1999), pp. 173, 177-9; Sam Moyo, 'The Political Economy of Land Acquisition and Redistribution in Zimbabwe: 1990-1999,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 1 (2000); see also my 'Zimbabwe; Twists...'
  38. Patrick Bond and Masinba Manyana, *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Struggle for Social Justice*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002.
  39. The 'event' which marked the agreement to pay the pensions is said by some observers to have been a war veterans' raid on State House, during which the Presidential Guard failed to fire. Well before that, however, the 'war vets' were expressing their discontent. One observer stated that at a 'heroes day' event earlier that year they beat drums throughout Mugabe's speech.
  40. Peter Alexander, 'Zimbabwean Workers, the MDC & the 2000 Election,' *Review of African Political Economy*, 85 (September 2000), p. 388. Official conversion rates to the American dollar in September 1997 were approximately ZWD 12.12 to 1 \$US, making these figures approximately US\$ 278 per month and a lump sum of \$4,165, for a total of approximately US\$380 million. However, the 75 per cent plunge decreased those values significantly. By February 21, 2002 the official exchange rate was ZWD 53.22 to the US dollar – but the parallel market ranged from 300 to 350.
  41. Anonymous interview, March 2002. J. Alexander, 'Settling ...,' pp. 14-16.
  42. It should be added that the ruling class rhetoric of racism is not too deeply felt: the Rautenbachs and Bredenkamps of the formerly Rhodesian bourgeoisie are well-entrenched accomplices of ZANU(PF) incorporated.

43. See Mark T. Berger's 'The Rise and Demise of National Development and the Origins of Post-Cold War Capitalism,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 30, 2 (Spring 2001), pp. 211-234 and 'The Nation-State and the Challenge of Global Capitalism,' *Third World Quarterly*, 22, 6 (December 2001), pp. 889-908.
44. Members of the ruling party went so far as to enlist an Israeli 'political consultant' based in Montreal and an Australian journalist to frame Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in a plot to assassinate Robert Mugabe. This has resulted in treason charges against MDC leaders: Vincent Kahiya, 'Menashe a master of "dirty tricks",' *Zimbabwe Independent*, February 15, 2002; Peta Thorneycroft, 'Tricks, lies and videotapes,' *Mail and Guardian*, February 15-21, 2002, p. 11. Lest we forget that this politics is not new, many years ago John Day entitled a book on the rise of ZANU(PF) and company *International Nationalism: The Extra-Territorial Relations of Southern Rhodesian Nationalists*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967.
45. Charles Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,' Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, & Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
46. Robert Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
47. Reno, Warlord ...1998; Duffield, *Global Governance ...*, 2001.
48. Chris Mutsvangwa, Secretary for administration, ZANU PF Harare Province, 'Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and his life-long fight against British imperial perfidy,' *The People's Voice*, 24 February – 2nd March 2002, pp. 15-16.
49. In September 2001 the Zimbabwean delegation to Abuja declared it would stop violence on farms in return for British promises to resume dialogue on aid for resettlement. SADC was supposed to monitor the situation but let the 'campaign' continue. See also John Battersby, 'Angry Mbeki Lashes Out at "White Supremacy",' *The Sunday Independent*, March 10, 2002, p. 1.
50. Concerned Howard University, US, Students, 'Land Ruthlessly Taken from Indigenous People: Africans Forced to Move to Areas with Poor Soil,' *Herald*, March 11 2002, p. 8. See also Gerald Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun: The United States and the War Against Zimbabwe, 1965-1980*, Durham and Harare: University of North Carolina Press and SAPES Trust, 2001, p. 285, for an approving commentary on the tumultuous Harlem reception to Robert Mugabe's October 2000 address. However, a poll conducted by the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples of 217 people saw 65.9% agree that the 2002 Zimbabwean election was not free and fair: [www.naacp.org/polls/results.php](http://www.naacp.org/polls/results.php), thus indicating the Howard University students may not be representative of African Americans.
51. ZANU(PF) Organising Secretary and Manicaland supreme Didymus Mutasa has been quoted as saying that Zimbabwe would be better off with only 6 million people – 'with our own people who support the liberation struggle.' Christina Lamb, 'Thugs who rape in the name of Mugabe,' *Sunday Times (Johannesburg)*, 1 September 2002, noted in Roger Southall, 'Democracy in Southern Africa: Moving Beyond a Difficult Legacy,' forthcoming in *Review of African Political Economy*. In light of many accusations that

food aid is denied to MDC supporters, and even Ndebele people, such statements approach the status of 'genocidal.'

52. In fact, the anomaly is not so great between the 1970s and 2000 discourse: the radical challengers to Mugabe in the middle of the liberation war had a clear sense that the 'national democratic revolution' they were fighting for should emphasise 'democratic.'
53. An intriguing article entitled 'The Zvimba Dynasty,' *The People's Voice*, 24 February-2 March 2002, appears to confirm rumors about this village's – whose men surround the president's office – claim to the Mugabe dynasty. A photograph of Grace Mugabe – who, rumors state, was strategically placed in the president's office in order to begin such a dynasty – in a large kitchen is captioned thus: 'Behind every successful man there is a woman. First Lady Cde Grace Mugabe gets ready to prepare a meal for her beloved husband, Cde R.G. Mugabe.'
54. Comment, 'A Clear Message to the World,' *The Herald*, March 11, 2002, p. 8.
55. 'MDC to get \$10,2 million UK funding,' *Herald*, October 28, 2001; Herbert Zharare, 'USAID Buys War Vets to De-campaign Mugabe,' *Zimbabwe Mirror*, 8-14 March 2002.

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