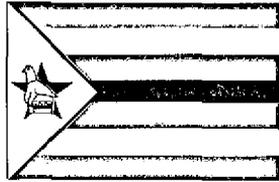


Country Reports

Zimbabwe at the Crossroads



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Zimbabwe at the Crossroads

Martin Pabst

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Introduction and summary

Zimbabwe witnessed an unprecedented wave of violence between the referendum in February 2000 and the parliamentary elections in June that same year. During that period, so-called war veterans invaded 1,637 white farms and harassed farmers, farm workers and opposition supporters. More than 30 people, including five white farmers, were killed; many more beaten up and intimidated. Although the High Court declared the occupations illegal and ordered the police to remove the invaders, President Mugabe prevented the police from acting against what he perceived as a legitimate political demonstration. Violent acts were also committed in urban areas, although on a smaller scale. The parliamentary election was narrowly won by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (Zanu–PF), but the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) managed to take almost half of the constituencies in spite of massive intimidation.

The amount of violence decreased after the election. But the situation has remained tense. The Zanu–PF government and its auxiliaries are harassing national and international companies, NGOs, judges, journalists and opposition politicians. 'War veterans' and party militants continue to control substantial parts of rural Zimbabwe. 'Fast-track resettlement', now amounting to the confiscation of more than 3,000 white farms, has started in the commercial farming areas. With agricultural production decreasing, and support services, suppliers and customers being adversely affected by the loss of export earnings, there are increasing shortages of foreign exchange and imported goods. These in turn will lead to soaring inflation rates, mass unemployment and food shortages.

In order to set recent events in Zimbabwe in a historical context, a brief chronology of events between 1890 and 2001 is supplied.

A brief chronology	
1890	The British South Africa Company (BSAC) takes possession of Mashona- and Manicaland, followed by Matabeleland in 1893
1895	Crown Colony of Southern Rhodesia established under administration by BSAC
1896/97	Matabele and Shona rebellion
1923	Self-government granted to Southern Rhodesia
11 November 1965	Unilateral independence of Rhodesia declared by the Rhodesian Front minority government
1966-79	Guerrilla war conducted by liberation movements based in Zambia and Mozambique
September-December 1979	Constitutional Conference in Lancaster House, London. Compromise constitution grants 20 reserved seats for whites in the House of Assembly and protects private land ownership from confiscation for an interim period lasting until 1990
February 1980	Parliamentary elections monitored by the UK; Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) takes 57 of 80 seats reserved for blacks
April 1980	Zimbabwe is granted independence
1983-87	Military campaign against alleged dissidents in Matabeleland
1987	Executive presidency established by constitutional change. Reserved seats for whites eliminated by two-thirds majority
1989	Merger of Zanu-PF with Nkomo's Patriotic Front
1990	Constitutional guarantee of private land ownership expires
March 1990	Zanu-PF wins 117 out of 120 parliamentary seats
September 1990	Adoption of an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)
March 1992	Land Acquisition Bill passed which facilitates land confiscation without compensation
April 1995	Zanu-PF wins 118 out of 120 parliamentary seats
March 1996	President Mugabe re-elected by 92.7%, with only 31.7% of Zimbabweans taking part
September 1997	1772 farms (4,6 million hectares) are identified for confiscation

A brief chronology (continued)	
9 December 1997	Nation-wide general strike against proposed increases in taxes and duties
January 1998	Urban food riots crushed by police and army
August 1998	Zimbabwean troops sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo
September 1998	International Donors' Conference on Land Reform and Resettlement in Harare supports the acquisition of 102 offered farms within two years, with the ultimate aim of acquiring one million hectares for resettlement. Final agreement with the government fails
November 1998	Confiscation of a first tranche of 841 designated farms starts, but is successfully challenged in the courts because of incorrect procedures
September 1999	Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) founded
12-13 February 2000	Rejection of the government's constitutional proposals in a referendum (54% 'No' votes)
26-27 February 2000	Start of country-wide farm invasions by 'war veterans', leaving more than 1,600 farms occupied and more than 30 people killed by the end of June
24-25 June 2000	Narrow Zanu-PF win in the parliamentary elections (Zanu-PF: 62 seats; MDC: 57 seats; and Zanu-Ndonga: 1 seat)
August 2000	The number of farms to be confiscated is extended to more than 3,000
1 November 2000	Supreme Court confirms previous rulings that farm seizures have been illegal
February 2001	Government exerts pressure on white and Asian Supreme Court judges to resign prematurely
April 2001	Intimidation and blackmail of companies, businesses, NGOs and embassies by 'war veterans' State President Mugabe announces that he will stand for re-election The High Court nullifies parliamentary election results in three constituencies taken by Zanu-PF because of intimidation
Source: Pabst M, <i>Simbabwe</i> , Beck'sche Reihe Länder No.878. Munich: CH Beck, 1999.	

With the exception of the brutal campaign it waged in Matabeleland in the mid-1980s, newly independent Zimbabwe was a stable and non-violent country. It could rely on a diversified industry and a well-developed infrastructure, and agriculture was performing well. This allowed the Zanu–PF government to present itself as successful. Generous development aid from Western countries enabled the government to develop social services and infrastructure projects in previously neglected or war-affected rural areas. Former enemies worked together in a relaxed atmosphere.

Since 1989, however, the ruling Zanu–PF has been steadily losing legitimacy and popular support. There are various reasons for this change.

- Zimbabwe was affected by the general reduction of development aid for Third World countries after the end of the Cold War. The scarcity of funds has limited the government's resources for patronage, which is widely applied in rural areas.
- Third World countries like Zimbabwe lost strategic importance after the end of the Cold War. Therefore, the government's room for manoeuvre has been reduced.
- The government was not prepared to plan for the effects of globalisation. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) which had been negotiated in 2000 with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund was delayed, because the government was unwilling to privatise inefficient parastatal companies.
- After political change had brought about democratic government in South Africa, Zimbabwe lost its leading role in the politics and economics of the region. Robert Mugabe was replaced by Nelson Mandela as Southern Africa's elder statesman.
- Mugabe's rhetorical reliance on enemies like 'apartheid South Africa' and his dependence on instruments of mobilisation like the liberation war gradually started losing their impact.
- The growing corruption of the ruling elite began to have a negative effect on the economy.
- A period of serious drought affected the country very badly in the early 1990s.

Growing discontent in urban areas

In April 1989, former Minister Edgard Tekere formed the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), the first real challenge to Zanu–PF since it came to power. The ruling Zanu–PF once more relied on a strategy of intimidation, co-optation and propaganda. By the time of the 1995 parliamentary elections, ZUM was no longer a competitor. But discontent in urban centres was growing because of the deterioration in living conditions and a widening gap between the ruling elite and the underprivileged masses. Only 31.7 % of Zimbabweans voted in the 1996 presidential elections, in which Robert Mugabe was the only candidate.

In 1997 another government scandal was exposed when it was discovered that the war veterans' pension fund had been plundered by the government. For the first time the government had alienated a core support group. Led by the ambitious chairman of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), Chenjerai Hitler Hunzvi, furious war veterans trashed Zanu–PF offices and heckled during the president's speeches. The crisis was solved when in September 1997 President Mugabe, without consulting his cabinet, granted the war veterans a generous compensation package comprising roughly Z\$4 billion.¹

This decision had far-reaching consequences. It destroyed hope for constructive economic and political reforms, because there were insufficient resources available in the Treasury for this compensation package. Furthermore, by giving in to Hunzvi's demands, the president sanctioned blackmail. He sacrificed state assets to group demands and struck an alliance with a man who had, in the meantime, himself been accused of siphoning money from the war veterans' funds.²

The opposition from all quarters proved strong enough to prevent the government from raising taxes and duties in order to finance this

¹ 'New champion for the opposition', *New African* (London), December 1997.

² In 1998 Hunzvi was accused of having stolen Z\$400,000 from ZNLWVA funds as well as having wastefully spent Z\$2.7 million. Because of the current crisis, the court case was postponed. Nkobi E, 'Tiefe Krise in Simbabwe', *Afrika-Post* (Bonn), June/July 2000, pp.6-9).

compensation package. On 9 December 1997 the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) organised a nation-wide general strike, which was supported by one-third of the population. Even some Zanu-PF MPs refused to support the government on this issue. The Minister of Finance was forced to abandon most of the tax increases. The government found itself faced by political defeat and economic impasse.

When in January 1998 the government raised the prices of basic commodities, the urban poor started rioting and plundering. For the first time the government had to bring in the army to control what in earlier times had constituted its core support base, the Shona population. At least nine people were killed, many more wounded, and more than 2,300 arrested.

In August 1998 President Mugabe tried to regain the initiative by sending troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to support the Kinshasa government against rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda. About 11,000–12,000 Zimbabwean soldiers, amounting to one-third of the army, were fighting in the DRC at the time of writing.

But Zimbabwe's ailing economy is not profiting from the protracted war in the DRC. In 1999 the government assessed the total war costs at only US\$3 million. However, in August 2000, the new Finance Minister, Dr Simba Makoni, admitted that the costs of the war amounted to US\$200 million. Foreign analysts place the actual figure even higher.³ The war has also proven unpopular with the Zimbabwean population. Hundreds of Zimbabwean soldiers may have been killed since 1998.

Opposition to the government showed its strength on 12–13 February 2000, when 53.7% of the country's voters rejected the government's draft constitution. Whereas the constitutional reform movement had campaigned for the inclusion of democratic rights and the limitation of presidential powers, the provisions of the government's draft constitution strengthened authoritarian powers. Had the constitution been adopted, it would have given the president the right to summarily dissolve Parliament. Mugabe would have been allowed to stand for president for another two terms, since the limitation

³ 'Brisante Benzinpreiserhöhung in Simbabwe', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Zurich), 2/3 September 2000.

clause would not be retroactive. Furthermore, the constitution would have rendered the government and military officials immune from prosecution for any illegal acts committed while in office. Even the government's hand-picked *Constitutional Commission* had originally proposed to introduce an executive prime ministry, with the presidency becoming a ceremonial office; in the final version, however, most executive powers remained with the president. A clause empowering the government to seize land without compensation was added, too.⁴

The 'No' vote in the referendum also demonstrated growing support for the opposition movement. Morgan Tsvangirai and fellow opposition politicians had launched the *Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)* only five months before. Morgan Tsvangirai, Secretary-General of ZCTU, had won respect among the voting public for his brave attacks on government politics. He filled the vacuum which had been left by weak opposition parties, and his trade union background as well as good relations with churches and civil society enabled him to campaign on a nationwide basis. The MDC was growing fast, especially in urban areas. For the first time in Zimbabwean history, a party commanded considerable support from all population groups. Not only Shonas, like Morgan Tsvangirai, but also well-known Matabeles like Gibson Sibanda and widely-respected whites like David Coltart were working together in the new party.

Politicisation of the land question

Facing defeat in the 2000 parliamentary elections, President Mugabe stuck to the land question, although in the referendum campaign it had failed to mobilise voters for Zanu-PF in sufficient numbers. 'Racist' whites were made responsible for the referendum result and called 'enemies' of the people. Black MDC politicians were denounced as 'puppets' of the whites and Great Britain. On 26-27 February 2000 'war veterans' started occupying farms in all parts of the country.

⁴ Chifunde R, 'Constitutional reform process in Zimbabwe—Reflection & analysis', *The Human Rights Observer* (Lusaka), 2, 2000. <http://www.afronet.org.za/theobserver>; Slaughter B & SNolan, 'Zimbabwe: Referendum defeat for Mugabe shakes Zanu-PF government', *World Socialist Web Site*, 22 February 2000. www.wsws.org

Although most Zimbabweans agree that there is a need for land reform (up to 4,500 commercial farmers, most of them white Zimbabweans, still control around 11 million hectares of land), the government had not committed itself to constructive land reform during the preceding 20 years. Only some 70,000 families were resettled on 3.5 million hectares within the first two decades after independence. Most of them did not receive sufficient logistical support from the government. A number of the farms which had been bought by the government on the open market were not given to peasants, but leased to ministers or government protégées for rents well below the average. The government was not willing to embark on a transparent and economically viable land redistribution process, which is regarded as a precondition for support by the international donor community. Great Britain, Zimbabwe's former colonial power, and other donors, therefore, stopped their funding of resettlement projects in the nineties.

Manipulation of the land issue for election purposes became evident when in April 2000 all laws which prevented the nationalisation of land without compensation were repealed. Although there was no longer any need for irregular occupations, the president requested the invaders to stay. The battle was for power, not for land.

There is no doubt that farm occupations were carried out with the support of the state and the ruling party. This nationwide campaign, involving thousands of people, would not have been possible without logistical help. Zanu-PF admitted that they had granted Z\$20 million to the ZNLWVA for its support of the electoral campaign. The invaders were provided with transport, fuel, money, food and tents. Individual invaders are said to have been given cash payments of Z\$50 each. Air-Marshal Perence Shiri allegedly masterminded the operation, together with the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO).⁵ Fifteen years ago Shiri was responsible for the massacres

⁵ 'Massacre general in charge of raids', *Sunday Times* (London), 1 May 2000; 'Government deploys army to direct farm invasions', *Zimbabwe Independent* (Harare), 20 April 2000. Farmers have documented the registration numbers of many government vehicles which were used to transport invaders. Individual Zanu-PF politicians allegedly supported the invaders. In the Glendale/Concession districts of Mashonaland Central, the farm owned by the Minister of Information, Chen Chimutengwende, was reported to serve as a base for the invaders. CIO officers and

carried out by the Fifth Brigade in Matabeleland. As a civilian, he is managing formerly white-owned farms.

The strategy behind farm occupations consists of the following elements.

- Racial hatred is mobilised in order to label the MDC a white, colonialist party and to divert public attention away from government failures.
- The occupations give prominence to the land question, which was chosen as the prime election topic. This is why Zanu-PF has adopted the slogan 'the land is the economy, the economy is the land'.
- Action against white farmers serves as a means to mobilise popular black support in neighbouring countries. In this way fellow African governments are prevented from interfering in Zimbabwean domestic politics.
- The spirit of the liberation war is revived, in order both to mobilise and intimidate the rural black population.
- White farmers are discouraged or even physically prevented from providing the MDC with finance and infrastructure (petrol, transport, communication), which are prerequisites for campaigning in rural areas.
- Black farm workers are put under firm control. Most of the 350,000 farm workers sympathise with the MDC, because many of them are trade union members. Furthermore, they are afraid of losing their income, because work stoppages on occupied farms have caused the owners to retrench workers. Farm labourers are also unable to profit from government resettlement schemes, since they are regarded as opposition supporters and/or foreigners.
- Occupied farms serve as logistical bases for the intimidation of opposition supporters, middle-class blacks and people living in neighbouring communal areas.
- The use of an irregular force does not compromise the government directly. Furthermore, it enables the government to create a situation of lawlessness which could be exploited by the declaration of a state of emergency.

Zanu-PF strategy may also harmonise with individual ambitions. At the Bindura/Shamva border, for example, half a dozen prominent Zanu-PF

individual army officers were said to have been seen assisting invasions.

politicians own land adjoining occupied farms: Elliot Manyika, governor of Mashonaland Central; the late Border Gezi, former Minister of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation; Solomon Mujuru (*alias* Rex Nhongo), former Army Commander; Nicholas Goche, MP and head of CIO; Willard Chiwewe, Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs; and Webster Bupera, mayor of Bindura.

Background and conduct of the invaders

According to the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), the total number of invaders on 31 May 2000 amounted to 14,496.⁶ The core are people from neighbouring communal lands or from urban high-density areas. Many of them are too young to have seen a war. Young members of Zanu-PF are taking part in occupations in considerable numbers.⁷ A limited number of real war veterans serve as leaders and organisers. It is reported, however, that many ZNLWVA members are not willing to take part in occupations or have left the association, which in 1997 boasted a membership of up to 70,000. Dissidents founded the Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform (ZLP), which supports the end of occupations and a restoration of law and order.⁸ Because of a shortage of manpower and logistical support, there is only a token presence or no presence on some of the occupied farms. However, they are visited by the invaders.

Although the campaign was organised in a professional way, there is no common pattern of occupation. Some farmers have managed to co-exist with the invaders; others receive regular death threats and are besieged in their houses. Some farmers have had to abandon their property completely. The invaders have been recruited from different areas and social backgrounds. There are political and non-political, informed and uninformed, idealistic and

⁶ 'Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU)', *Report on Invasion Impact Survey*, 7 July 2000. www.samara.co.zw/cfu/report7july.htm

⁷ 'War vets—Third Force with unbridled powers?', *The Daily News* (Harare), 6 June 2000. In many places it is common practice for Zanu-PF and ZNLWVA offices to be situated next door to each other.

⁸ 'Ex-fighters dismiss threat of civil war', *The Daily News* (Harare), 21 June 2000.

criminal, disciplined and ill-disciplined invaders. It also seems that regional leaders follow their own agendas.

A CFU survey, dating from 7 July 2000, found that 411 (or 27%) of the total invasions recorded were violent or hostile.⁹ Mashonaland East (39%) and Mashonaland Central (38%) had the highest proportion of occupied farms, while Mashonaland Central (40%) and Mashonaland West (32%) had the highest proportion of violent or hostile occupations. It seems that occupations in farming areas like Centenary, where the liberation war was most fiercely contested, are more violent or hostile than in other parts of the country. Those farms are often situated close to communal areas.

About 92% of the 7,220 human rights violations which were reported in the survey affected farm workers; 8% affected the farmers directly. The invaders warned the white community not to engage in opposition politics. Also for the invaders, the killing of farmers served as a symbolic humiliation of the white boss in front of his black workers. However, only the first killings of white farmers, like the abduction, torture and murder of Macheke farmer David Stevens on 15 April, seem to have been planned. Subsequent farm murders, as well as the rape of two white women on a Harare farm, probably had a criminal rather than a political motive. Making martyrs of the whites would have acted against the interests of the government, because actions against them tend to produce worldwide media coverage.

Violence and intimidation soon focused on the farm workers and their families. They were forced to attend *pungwes* (re-education sessions), similar to those that had been used by ZANLA guerrillas during the liberation war. Farm workers became victims of beatings, searches, abductions, rapes, death threats and killings. Foremen and their families were the primary targets, because they were perceived to be influential with the workers.

⁹ *Report on Invasion Impact Survey, op. cit.*

Reaction of the farmers

Some farmers felt tempted to defend their farms, assisted by their workers. On a farm east of Harare the farm workers battled for hours with 300 invaders, and finally chased them away. The CFU, however, urged its members to remain passive. They offered stress seminars, in which strategies of de-escalation are practised. The reason is that farmers and farm workers may initially succeed in defending a farm, but in the long run they do not have a chance because they are living in isolated areas and the invaders enjoy tacit government support. Furthermore, the invaders command more manpower, at least for a specific operation. It is also not possible for the farmers to hire professional guards, since no Zimbabwean security company would dare to take up such a politically sensitive contract.

The murder of Nyamandhlovu farmer Martin Olds on 18 April 2000 served as an example of the vulnerability of the rural white community. Olds had a shoot-out with about 100 invaders, which lasted for half a day. He was armed with hunting rifles, shot guns and pistols, whereas in this case the invaders were equipped with automatic guns. Finally his house was set alight. The wounded farmer was forced to creep out and was instantly killed. Apart from setting up road barricades, the local police did not interfere.

White people fighting in defence of their farms would now be battling against both guerillas and security forces. Also, armed conflict between farmers and invaders would revive the liberation war and foster a climate of racial polarisation that would benefit only the government. Neither presents a realistic response. Change in Zimbabwe will only be brought about by a strong opposition consisting of both blacks and whites.

Although there are indications that some farmers are abandoning their properties and emigrating, a small minority of farmers openly support the MDC. The majority may sympathise with the opposition, but prefer to remain passive, because they do not want to annoy the government. Political passivity was what led to the isolation of the white community in the past, and strengthened the power of Zanu-PF. The current crisis could mark a time when the whites are forced to participate, and become real citizens of Zimbabwe.

The effects of violence on the election results

The arrival of international election observers at the beginning of June 2000 had a calming and stabilising effect on the pre-election tensions in Zimbabwe, although their activities were limited as much as possible by the government. Only a few murders were reported in the remaining pre-election period. In some parts of the country, opposition parties were able to compete for the first time. Visible human rights violations became rare. Farm invaders kept a low profile. However, violence and intimidation were exercised in a more subtle way. *Pungwes* were held during the night, when the observers' mobility was restricted. Physical intimidation was replaced by psychological intimidation. Areas likely to produce results that did not favour Zanu-PF were threatened with collective punishment. Only 4,000 local observers, who had been trained by Zimbabwean NGOs, were accredited; 20,000 were refused accreditation.¹⁰

Zanu-PF narrowly won the 24–25 June 2000 elections. It took 62 seats, the MDC 57, and Zanu-Ndonga 1 seat. Thirty additional members of parliament are directly or indirectly appointed by the president. Zanu-PF's support base was mainly restricted to the Masvingo and Mashonaland heartland, whereas the MDC won Harare, Bulawayo, Matabeleland and half of Manicaland.

An exit poll commissioned by the Helen Suzman Foundation found that 12% of those interviewed admitted that they had not voted for the party they really wanted, in order to avoid further trouble or violence. Forty percent of those approached refused to be interviewed.¹¹ A previous opinion poll commissioned by the Helen Suzman Foundation in February had found that only 36% of those interviewed said they wanted Zanu-PF to go on running the country. Sixty three percent said they thought it was 'time for a change'. Thirty five percent said they wanted to see President Mugabe continue in office, but 65% said they would like him to step down.¹²

¹⁰ Cornwell R, *Zimbabwe: 90 Days after the elections*. Institute for Security Studies, ISS Paper 46, October 2000.

¹¹ Helen Suzman Foundation, *Zimbabwe's Hard Road to Democracy: Report of an exit poll during the election of June 24/25, 2000*, Harare/Johannesburg July 2000. www.hsf.org.za

¹² Helen Suzman Foundation, *Political Opinion in Zimbabwe 2000*. www.hsf.org.za

Shortly before the announcement of the election results, the interim statement by Pierre Schori, head of the European Union Election Observation Mission, the largest international mission in Zimbabwe, condemned the 'high levels of violence, intimidation and coercion' during the pre-election period as well as 'serious defects in the electoral process, particularly in regard to the voters' roll and the lack of transparency of the electoral authorities.' Even though the conduct of the poll itself was judged to be 'highly positive', Zanu-PF leaders were said to have 'contributed significantly to the climate of fear so evident during the election campaign'. Whereas MDC supporters had also been engaged in violence and intimidation, the degree of their responsibility had been far less. The elections were not declared free and fair.¹³

The MDC is contesting the validity of 36 of the seats Zanu-PF won in the June 2000 poll. In April 2001 the High Court confirmed the Southern Zvishavane and Shurugwi results, but nullified the Buhera North, Mutoko South and Hurungwe East results because of widespread intimidation. Zanu-PF speakers announced their intention of appealing against the judgement in the Supreme Court. The remaining cases will be heard soon.

Ongoing intimidation after the elections

Many Zimbabweans expected the occupations to stop after the elections, since Zanu-PF had attained its aim. President Mugabe showed restraint when he included renowned technocrats, including the Minister of Finance, Dr Simba Makoni, and the Minister of Industry and International trade, Dr Nkosana Moyo,¹⁴ in his new cabinet, but denied Hunzvi a post. Farmers were hoping that large-scale land nationalisation would once more be cancelled, and

¹³ Pierre Schori, Head of EU Election Observation Mission, *Interim Statement*, 26 June 2000. In Mashonaland Central EU observers came to the conclusion that the scale of violence and intimidation throughout the whole election process was so high that free and fair elections were not possible. The fact that this campaign of violence and intimidation was orchestrated by government sources, thereby undermining both democracy and the rule of law, would, additionally, mean that the elections observed could not be described as democratic.

¹⁴ Dr Nkosana Moyo resigned in May 2001 after he had criticised the harassment of foreign companies.

normal life be restored. However, the invaders did not leave; additional farms were occupied; and new human rights violations were committed. President Mugabe made the point clear when he said in front of black peasants: 'The war vets will stay on the farms until we resettle them.'¹⁵

Indirect economic pressure was exerted upon the owners to give up farming. The focus shifted from intimidation to large-scale sabotage. Fences were pulled down, grazing pastures burnt, irrigation systems destroyed. Cattle were abducted and killed; planting was prevented. Some farmers were not able to finance the 2001 crop, since they no longer had access to the requisite collateral to secure loans.

The land crisis was aggravated when, in August 2000, President Mugabe announced the government's intention of extending the confiscation programme from some 800 to more than 3,000 farms. (This amounts to roughly two-thirds of the commercial farms.) He also employed the army in the resettlement process.¹⁶ The first round of land seizures started. The government now plans to redistribute some five million hectares to 150,000 families within a few years. Between 14 July 2000 and mid-April 2001 some 60,000 families were resettled on 2.4 million hectares. This figure amounts to nearly the total number of families resettled between 1980 and 2000. Even a November 2000 Supreme Court ruling, which declared these confiscations illegal, did not stop the 'fast-track resettlement programme'. Presidential spokesman George Charamba commented on the verdict with the words: 'We're not going to let that law get in the way of us fulfilling our historical destiny as Zimbabweans.'¹⁷

President Mugabe sticks to his key instrument of propaganda, and invokes a crude form of agro-socialism: 'Our roots are in the soil, and not in the

¹⁵ 'Mugabe denies farm truce', *BBC News, World, Africa*, 3 August 2000. news.bbc.co

¹⁶ 'Mugabe mobilises army for huge farm invasions', *The Guardian* (London), 2 August 2000.

¹⁷ 'Focus on threats to the judiciary', *Integrated Regional Information Networks/IRIN*. UN: Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Efforts, 29 January 2001. <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN>

factories'.¹⁸ Both the referendum and the parliamentary election have, however, demonstrated that the land issue has failed to mobilise people in considerable numbers. It was fear and intimidation which secured the narrow Zanu–PF victory in some heavily contested rural constituencies.¹⁹ The fast-track resettlement programme will therefore not end the mission of the 'war veterans'—at least not before the presidential election scheduled for 2002. On 28 September 2000 the Minister of Defence, Moven Mahachi, announced that the 'war veterans' were to constitute a reserve force under his Ministry.²⁰ This move is interpreted by the opposition as a further step towards converting the invaders into presidential auxiliaries. They may be equipped with 21,000 AK 47s the government bought in April 2000.²¹

In December 2000 the independent weekly *Financial Gazette* alleged that Zanu–PF was forming a crack unit for intimidation. Air-force head Perence Shiri was expected to take charge of this unit, which would comprise 'war veterans' and army officials. Other key players in the unit are said to be Chenjerai Hitler Hunzvi and Joseph Chinotimba, the self-styled commander of the illegal farm invasions.²²

The campaign preceding the Bikita West by-election in January 2001 was characterised by a high level of violence, leaving one Zanu–PF supporter and one MDC member dead. The Zanu–PF candidate managed to regain the constituency by mobilising the rural population, which had stayed away in large numbers from the June 2000 election.

¹⁸ 'Mugabe denies farm truce', *BBC News, World, Africa*, 3 August 2000. news.bbc.co

¹⁹ In September/October 2000 a national opinion poll commissioned by the Helen Suzman Foundation found that 78% opposed the plans to take over white farms. Only 6% believed that land was the most important issue. Helen Suzman Foundation, *Political Opinion and the Crisis of Zimbabwe*. www.hsf.org.za

²⁰ 'War vets for reserve force', *The Daily News* (Harare), 29 September 2000.

²¹ 'Mugabe flies in Kalashnikovs to arm farm veterans', *The Times* (London), 7 May 2000. It is unclear whether these weapons have already been handed out. During the election campaign the majority of invaders did not have guns at their disposal.

²² 'Zimbabwe: Zanu–PF allegedly forms "crack-unit" for intimidation', *Financial Gazette* (Harare), 21 December 2000.

There are, however, indications that unofficial farm invasions and official resettlement proceedings are coming into conflict with each other. From the beginning Hunzvi denied the government's right to organise resettlement: only the ZNLWVA could be responsible.²³ Dissatisfied war veterans are assuming administrative powers: in July 2000 invaders forced the provincial administrator of Matabeleland South, Angelous Dube, out of her office, because they did not feel that they were profiting sufficiently from the resettlement programme. Two months later Governor Stephen Nkomo was prevented from reinstating Dube in her position.²⁴ Similar tensions were reported from Manicaland.²⁵ Even President Mugabe himself had to be rescued from a rowdy mob of 'war veterans' by his elite military guard, after the Minister of Home Affairs, John Nkomo, had ordered a police crackdown on occupied farms around Harare in August 2000.²⁶ The creation of a reserve force consisting of 'war veterans' may serve as a means to improve control over them.

With the presidential election approaching and economic conditions worsening, the government is tightening its grip on judges, journalists and opposition politicians. In January/February 2001 the Minister of Justice, Patrick Chinamasa, entered into bilateral talks with members of the Supreme Court, and called on them to resign prematurely. Chief Justice Anthony Gubbay complied after having been told that the government could not guarantee his safety. Two other Supreme Court judges turned down requests to take early

²³ 'Mugabe shuns head of squatter movement', *The Times* (London), 17 July 2000.

²⁴ 'Governor Nkomo forced to reverse decision on Dube', *The Daily News* (Harare), 27 September 2000.

²⁵ 'War veterans vow to resist farm evictions', *The Daily News* (Harare), 28 September 2000.

²⁶ 'Guards rescue Mugabe from veterans mob', *The Telegraph* (London), 25 August 2000. Hunzvi may also blackmail the President by threatening to disclose the President's involvement in illegal activities. In reverse President Mugabe could blackmail Hunzvi, against whom charges of fraud have been filed. Court proceedings are pending.

retirement.²⁷ 'War veterans' stormed the Supreme Court and threatened non-black judges. In February 2001 two foreign journalists were expelled from Zimbabwe at short notice; one of them had been threatened at his house by an unidentified gang. The month before, the printing press of *The Daily News*, an independent newspaper, was bombed by unknown perpetrators. Morgan Tsvangirai and fellow MDC politicians were charged with inciting sabotage, terrorism or public violence. This means that Tsvangirai will not be able to stand as the MDC's candidate for president, and could even face life imprisonment should he be found guilty of an offence, a legal condition which dates back to the Rhodesian law-book.

Intimidation reached a new peak in April 2001, when 'war veterans' started harassing and blackmailing hundreds of companies as well as NGOs, both national and international. They even uttered threats against foreign embassies. The government refused safety guarantees for envoys who were thought to be involved in Zimbabwean party politics. With the presidential election approaching, the focus of intimidation has shifted to the urban strongholds of the opposition.

Zanu-PF: Caught in the dilemma of succession

After the referendum defeat in February 2000, Mugabe and his Politburo had a humiliating showdown with the 180-member Central Committee, which was urgently demanding change. Although President Mugabe's leadership was endorsed at the Zanu-PF congress in December 2000, discontent within the party is growing. There is no such thing as a reform wing at this point, but there are members who are becoming afraid of losing the 2002 presidential election should the present leadership remain in power. Moreover, Central Committee members, parliamentarians and members of the party's youth wing feel sidelined by the president and his hand-picked circle. In September 2000 Zanu-PF Secretary for Administration, Didymus Mutasa, conceded that

²⁷ 'Focus on threats to the judiciary', *Integrated Regional Information Networks/IRIN*. UN: Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Efforts, 29 January 2001. <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN>

there were 'people within Zanu-PF who do not like Mugabe anymore',²⁸ referring particularly to young party members.

Some incidents illustrate tensions within the Zanu-PF government. When President Mugabe visited Cuba in April 2000, Vice President Joseph Mzika ordered the farm invaders to leave. His decision was overturned when the president returned. On 21 August the Minister of the Interior, John Nkomo, ordered the police to destroy buildings erected by farm invaders around Harare. Two days later the government stopped police action and expressed regret.²⁹ On 18-19 September 2,000 police, dressed in full riot gear, again dismantled shacks on occupied farms around Harare.³⁰

It must be taken into account that Zanu-PF is not a homogeneous party, but rather a coalition along tribal lines. The Shona people consist of six sub-tribes: Karanga, Zezuru, Korekore, Manica, Rozwi and Ndau. In addition there are the Matabele and Kalanga, who live in south-west Zimbabwe. With President Mugabe belonging to the Zezuru sub-tribe, this faction enjoyed dominance for a long period, keeping the Karanga in second, and the Manica in third place. The Karanga faction has gained ground during the last five years, although it is weakened by infighting at provincial level. Farm occupations have probably been organised by a Karanga-dominated group behind the president, including influential Chief Cabinet Secretary, Charles Utete, and the Parliamentary Speaker and former Minister of Justice, Emerson Mnangagwa.

On 17 April 2001 President Mugabe ended all speculation when he announced on television that he would seek re-election. But, with the government's unpopularity growing, he may come under pressure either to step down, or to agree to a constitutional change that confers executive powers on a prime minister and leaves a ceremonial presidency to him.

The succession debate was intensified by speculations on the health of the

²⁸ 'Mugabe won't go, says Mutasa', *The Daily News* (Harare), 29 September 2000.

²⁹ 'War vets attack Minister Nkomo', *The Daily News* (Harare), 24 August 2000.

³⁰ 'Police evict veterans from white owned farms', *Panafrikan News Agency*, 19 September 2000.

president. After a heavy fall in Malaysia in December 2000, he went on leave for the whole of January. Even before, there had been rumours that the president had suffered a minor stroke.³¹ MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai suggested that President Mugabe might retire soon, paving the way for Emmerson Mnangagwa to contest an early presidential election in 2001.³² Another possible candidate from the president's inner circle is Dr Sydney Sekeramayi, Minister of Mines and Energy and former Minister of State Security. His chances are, however, limited by the fact that he belongs to the Zezuru faction, which has lost influence.

Another candidate with presidential ambitions is veteran politician Dr Eddison Zvobgo. A long-time rival of Emmerson Mnangagwa within the Karanga faction, Dr Zvobgo has lost his Ministry without Portfolio and has openly distanced himself from the president. He commands additional support from the Matabele faction, although he is not strong enough politically to stand much chance in the presidential race itself. Already 66 years old, Dr Zvobgo might try to position himself as a compromise candidate, acceptable to doves and hawks alike.

Representative of the younger party generation is 50-year-old Dr Simba Makoni. A national opinion poll commissioned by the Helen Suzman Foundation found that if a presidential poll had been held in October 2000, Tsvangirai would have come first with 41%, followed by President Mugabe with 15%, and Dr Makoni third with 8%.³³ With his international standing, Dr Makoni might be able to restore confidence in Zimbabwe.

The forthcoming end of the Mugabe era will lead to a struggle for power between rival factions and politicians, as the secretary for administration, Didymus Mutasa, concedes: 'From the moment Mugabe goes, there will be chaos, maybe within Zanu-PF.'³⁴ The outcome of this power struggle will depend on the alliances struck.

³¹ Cornwell R, *op. cit.*

³² 'Mugabe out by July', *The Daily News* (Harare), 21 February 2001.

³³ Helen Suzman Foundation, *Political Opinion and the Crisis in Zimbabwe*, *op. cit.*

³⁴ 'Mugabe won't go, says Mutasa', *The Daily News* (Harare), 29 September 2000.

Zimbabwe's declining economy

Zimbabwe: Socio-economic indicators	
Area	390,580 km ²
Population (July 2000 est.)	11.34m
Estimated adult HIV prevalence (age 15 and over) (1999 est.)	25.08%
UN Human Development Report 2000 (Index ranking of 174 states: 1 = most developed)	130
GDP: purchasing power parity (1999 est.)	\$26.5b
GDP: real growth rate (1999 est.)	0%
GDP: per capita purchasing power parity (1999 est.)	\$2,400
GDP: Composition by sector (1997 est.)	
Agriculture	28%
Industry	32%
Services	40%
Population below poverty line (1999 est.)	60%
Household income or consumption by percentage share (1990)	
Lowest 10%	1.8%
Highest 10%	46.9%
Inflation rate (consumer prices) (1999 est.)	59%
Labour force (1997 est.)	5m
Labour force by occupation (1996 est.)	
Agriculture	66%
Services	24%
Industry	10%
Unemployment rate (1999 est.)	50%
Budget (financial year 96/97 est.):	
Revenues	\$2.5b
Expenditures (including capital expenditures of \$279 million)	\$2.9b
Industries: mining (coal, gold, copper, nickel, tin, clay, numerous metallic and non-metallic ores), steel, wood products, cement, chemicals, fertiliser, clothing and footwear, foodstuffs, beverages	n/a
Electricity production (1998)	6.97b kWh
Electricity production by source	
Fossil fuel	78.19%
Hydro	21.81%

Zimbabwe: Socio-economic indicators (continued)	
Electricity consumption (1998)	8.403b kWh
Electricity (1998):	
Exports	0 kWh
Imports	1.921b kWh
Agriculture exports (corn, cotton, tobacco, wheat, coffee, sugar cane, peanuts, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs) (f.o.b., 1999 est.)	\$2b
Commodities exports (1997 est.):	
Tobacco	23%
Gold	14%
Ferroalloys	7%
Cotton	6%
Export partners (1997 est.):	
South Africa	12%
UK	11%
Germany	8%
Japan	6%
US	6%
Imports (f.o.b., 1998 est.)	\$2b
Commodities imports (1997 est.):	
Machinery and transport equipment	39%
Other manufactures	18%
Chemicals	15%
Fuels	10%
Import partners (1997 est.):	
South Africa	37%
UK	7%
US	6%
Japan	6%
Germany	5%
Debt: external (1998)	\$5b
Economic aid: recipient (1995)	\$437.6m
Military spending (% of GDP) (financial year 1999/2000)	3.1%
f.o.b.	Free on board
Sources:	CIA, <i>The World Fact Book 2000</i> , http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook UNAIDS, http://www.unaids.org/

Zimbabwe's economy has been steadily declining since the early nineties.³⁵ Neither the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP; 1991–95) nor the subsequent Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST; 1996–2000) have met their goals.

From 1998 onwards, the decline accelerated dramatically. Several factors have contributed to this development:

- widespread corruption and nepotism;
- poor macro-economic decisions;
- insufficient public expenditure cuts;
- a delayed and non-transparent privatisation programme;
- a steep rise in HIV/Aids rates, leading to a soaring medical budget;
- excessive grants of pensions and compensations to war veterans, amounting to 5% of the budget (September 1997);
- involvement in the Congo War at a cost of at least \$100 million a year, if not more (from August 1998 until March 2001); and
- countrywide farm invasions, which not only disrupt agricultural production, but also undermine international confidence.

Inflation rose from an annual rate of 32% (1998) to 61% (October 2000). GDP growth plummeted from +8.5% (1996) to -5% (2000). The budget deficit rose from 4.5% of GDP (1999) to 18% of GDP (2000), instead of being reduced to 3.5% of GDP, as envisaged by the government. Living conditions deteriorated dramatically. In 2000 around 60% of the people were unemployed; 120,000 jobs (7%) were lost in that year alone. Bread was three times as expensive in 2000 as in 1998. Many Zimbabweans cannot afford three meals a day any more. A shortage of foreign currency prevents farmers and companies from importing key products. Furthermore, it creates a crippling shortage of energy and fuel. Many businesses and factories are therefore working only two to three days a week.

³⁵ 'Mugabes politik ruiniert Simbabwe', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 29 December 2000; Robertson's Economic Information Services, 'Zimbabwe's Economic Situation and Prospects', December 2000 http://www.mweb.co.zw/hub/news/robertsons_economic/economicprospects.php; 'Zimbabwe: Unprecedented crisis says think-tank', *Integrated Regional Information Networks/IRIN*. UN: Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Efforts, 10 January 2001. <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN>

Zimbabwe's business community has been badly hit by poor fiscal decisions. The Zimbabwe dollar was held at a fixed rate from January 1999 to August 2000. This kept US dollar-based foreign earnings almost constant, while domestic production costs rose by more than 100%. With inflation amounting to 56.8% on average, the decision not to devalue left even efficient export industries less profitable or non-profitable. Private business therefore put its weight behind the MDC, which supports the IMF Structural Adjustment Programme. (It must, however, be taken into account that the MDC is a coalition of divergent interests, bound together by the common desire to vote Zanu-PF out of office. Any MDC government will face a clash between middle-class and private business interests favouring swift economic reforms on the one side, and its trade-union wing advocating a slower approach on the other side.)

The government seems to have undertaken the war in the DRC for primarily economic gain. The ruling Zanu-PF is not only a political party; it also commands a vast business empire. Two directors of the party-owned company Zidco Holdings, Emerson Mnangagwa and Sidney Sekeramayi, are intimate associates of Robert Mugabe. Mnangagwa played a key role in securing Zimbabwe's financial interests in the DRC. Zidco Holdings subsidiaries have opened businesses in the DRC. The parastatal, Zimbabwe Defence Industries, is selling arms and equipment to the DRC troops. Furthermore, Mnangagwa has brokered business deals in the DRC which favour other members of the ruling elite such as the head of the Zimbabwean army, General Vitalis Zvinvashe, and his company Zvinvashe Transport.³⁶ In May 2000 it was revealed that the DRC Minister of Mines had ordered the parastatal Minière de Bakwanga to cede profitable diamond concessions to a joint venture including Osleg, a company which is regarded as the economic wing of the Zimbabwean Army. General Zvinvashe and his brother are Osleg directors.³⁷

Because the government failed to end the Congo campaign and to meet

³⁶ 'Inside Zimbabwe Inc.', *Focus* 19. Helen Suzman Foundation, September 2000, www.hsf.org.za

³⁷ 'Diamond company to pay Zimbabwe for role in Congo', *Zimbabwe Independent* (Harare), 9 June 2000.

budgetary goals, the IMF suspended funding in November 1999. All major international banks followed suit. Since May 2000 Zimbabwe has not been able to repay its debts. Classified as having 'non-accrual status', the country is barred from obtaining international credit. The government has had to resort to expensive domestic loans and printing more money, thereby increasing inflation. International development aid has been cut down considerably. In February 2001 the European Union threatened to end its multimillion dollar aid package because of Zimbabwe's bad governance.³⁸

Farm invasions have already affected agricultural production negatively, but losses will be much higher in 2001, because farmers on occupied farms were prevented from planting—either directly by 'war veterans' or indirectly by the denial of bank loans. Tobacco sales, which normally earn one-third of Zimbabwe's foreign exchange, are expected to fall considerably. Wheat harvests will be down by 30%; similar losses are expected in the maize sector. Zimbabwe will therefore have to import staple foodstuffs if it wants to avoid a repetition of the 1998 food riots.

Commercial farmers employ some 335,000 workers with about one million dependants. Forty three thousand farm workers were reported jobless in Mashonaland Central province alone in February 2001, after the first round of land seizures.³⁹ Farm invasions and fast-track resettlement will not only create mass rural unemployment, but will also destroy local markets. All sectors linked with commercial farming are affected: banks, insurance companies, commodity brokers, manufacturers of farming tools and consumer goods, retail traders and agro-processing industries.

Most experts agree that the fast-track resettlement programme is a road to disaster, because even when the government seizes land without compensation, it will not have the necessary resources for resettlement. This is illustrated by a historical comparison. It is true that small-scale farmers

³⁸ 'Zimbabwe: Threat to cut aid on the cards', *Integrated Regional Information Networks/IRIN*. UN: Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Efforts, 22 February 2001. <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN>

³⁹ '43,000 left jobless in Mashonaland Central', *The Daily News* (Harare), 26 January 2001.

managed to become successful cash-crop exporters in independent Kenya. But there were 720,000 hectares of formerly white farmland redistributed to 65,000 African families over a period of 15 years (1962–77).⁴⁰ In comparison, the Zimbabwean government plans to redistribute 5 million hectares to 150,000 families within a few years. Whereas Kenyan land reform was financed by substantial British and World Bank funds, Zimbabwean donors have committed themselves only to supporting the seizure of 200–300 farms (up to one million hectares).⁴¹ Moreover, they are not prepared to grant any assistance to Zimbabwe until a viable resettlement concept has been presented and the rule of law restored. In addition, Zimbabwe's fast-track resettlement programme promises only basic infrastructure like roads and water-holes in its first stage. New settlers will have no money to invest; and they will receive no loans from the banks.

With commercial agriculture accounting for at least 10% of GDP and contributing more than 35% of total exports, Professor Tony Hawkins of the Department of Business Studies at the University of Zimbabwe predicts a 30% decline in real GDP over a period of two to three years, should land continue to be resettled in such a way.⁴²

Exporters were relieved by the decision of the new Minister of Finance, Dr Simba Makoni, to permit the Zimbabwean dollar to weaken. He also worked out a comprehensive recovery programme.

Today's economic situation is, however, worse than it was half a year ago. The budget deficit had risen to 23% of GDP in December 2000. Two months later the government had to order the country's commercial banks to sell all foreign currency to the central bank or the state-owned national oil company.⁴³

⁴⁰ Pabst M, *Kenia*, Beck'sche Reihe Länder Nr. 885. Munich: CH Beck Publishers, 2001, p.161.

⁴¹ 'Donors set new terms', *Zimbabwe Independent* (Harare), 10 November 2000.

⁴² Hawkins T, 'On the road to economic ruin', *Focus 19*. Published by Helen Suzman Foundation, September 2000. www.hsf.org.za

⁴³ 'Zimbabwe scrambles for hard currency', *Integrated Regional Information Networks/IRIN*. UN: Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Efforts, 12 February 2001. <http://www.reliefweb.int/IRIN>

Ongoing farm invasions and human rights violations are isolating Zimbabwe from the international community. It cannot look to any source of development assistance or budget support any longer. As previously mentioned, the drop in agricultural production causes a loss in export earnings, which in turn has a negative impact on support services, suppliers and customers. These factors, coupled with shortages of imported goods and the unavailability of foreign exchange, may lead to inflation rates of 200% or more. These are likely to be accompanied by dramatic food shortages and soaring unemployment rates. This seems a recipe for large-scale social unrest and violence.

Intervention from outside?

The more intransigent the Zimbabwean government, the more isolated the country has become. Donors and trading partners in Western Europe and North America have frozen bilateral relations and scaled down their aid programmes. But their instruments to enforce change are limited. Great Britain, Zimbabwe's second largest trading partner, must act with restraint because its position is weakened by the colonial legacy. British pressure is perceived by the Zimbabwean government as proof of 'British neo-colonialism' and 'imperialism'. Even MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai has asked the British Foreign Office not to interfere too harshly.

On the other hand Robert Mugabe can count on France. In March 2001 President Jacques Chirac granted him a red carpet reception in Paris. Chirac has opposed EU sanctions against Zimbabwe, possibly because France and Belgium pursue similar interests in the Congo. Moreover, the Zimbabwean government is able to rely on ongoing support from African and Asian countries like South Africa, Kenya, Malaysia and Kuwait.

South Africa, Zimbabwe's most important trading partner, guarantees vital energy supplies. The state-owned South African electricity and oil companies, Eskom and Sasol, are supplying Zimbabwe on credit, although the country is already heavily indebted. Eskom even cut electricity prices to Zimbabwe by

25% in December 2000.⁴⁴ History is repeating itself: three decades ago, apartheid South Africa guaranteed landlocked Rhodesia's economic lifeline. South Africa still enjoys a key geostrategic position *vis-à-vis* Zimbabwe. If she cuts off her supply and communication lines, the Zimbabwean economy will collapse within a short period. Robert Mugabe would face the same situation as Ian Smith, who was forced into negotiations with black liberation movements when John Vorster threatened to close the borders in 1976.

Most ANC leaders support Robert Mugabe. ANC Secretary-General Kgalema Motlanthe, for example, praised Zanu-PF's land policy as a highly commendable initiative, which should be emulated by other countries in the region.⁴⁵ The South African Parliamentary Observer Group, which was dominated by its ANC component, considered the June 2000 election free and fair. A parliamentary motion by ANC MP Pallo Jordan, condemning the brutality and thuggery accompanying Zimbabwe's election campaign, was withdrawn. Only a few ANC members like Jordan dared to criticise Mugabe's policy. One of these was elder statesman Nelson Mandela. He denounced liberation leaders who 'despise the people who put them in power and want to stay in power forever. They want to die in power because they have committed crimes'.⁴⁶ Although Mandela did not name Mugabe personally, it was evident to whom he was referring.

In striking contrast to his predecessor, President Thabo Mbeki sticks to ANC mainstream policy. He has repeatedly criticised Britain's stance on Zimbabwe and supported Mugabe's land policy, although he announced that South Africa would not follow the same course. Mbeki also offered his services as a mediator. Speaking to the international community, he promised to end farm invasions in Zimbabwe; speaking to Robert Mugabe, he promised to lobby for financial support to fund a comprehensive resettlement scheme. But Mugabe was playing for time, as was demonstrated when the Victoria Falls summit (21 April 2000) failed. In the end Mugabe always reneged on his promises, and

⁴⁴ Johnson RW, 'South Africa's support for Mugabe', *Focus 21*, published by Helen Suzman Foundation, March 2001. www.hsf.org.za

⁴⁵ 'Historic Joburg meeting resolves to tackle neo-colonialism head on', *The Sunday Mail* (Harare), 4 June 2000.

⁴⁶ Johnson RW, *op. cit.*

left Mbeki with empty hands. Although his strategy of 'quiet diplomacy' has become increasingly unconvincing, Mbeki has steadfastly refused to employ economic pressure.

Mbeki argues that South Africa would be flooded by hundreds of thousands of refugees should South Africa cut off supply lines. But if South Africa continues to support Zimbabwe, disaster may only be postponed, and the refugees come flooding in all the same. It seems much more likely that Mbeki is anxious not to make unpopular decisions. He does not want to be made responsible for undermining a fellow African government founded on a former liberation movement. Mbeki himself has repeatedly played the race card against domestic opposition parties.

The South African government's policy towards Zimbabwe has been heavily criticised by the domestic opposition, the business sector and human rights groups. President Mbeki stands accused of sacrificing the fundamental principles of his self-declared African Renaissance for the sake of domestic populism. Apart from the heavy costs to South Africa of supporting the Zimbabwean regime, there are indirect economic consequences. Mbeki's critics are afraid that Zimbabwean lawlessness and South African passivity will undermine international investor confidence in the region. The South African rand/US dollar exchange rate fell by almost 25% during the year 2000.⁴⁷

With criticism of the South African response increasing, the following months will show whether a change of policy is on the cards. In February 2001 Mbeki expressed his concern and urged the Zimbabwean leadership to refocus its attention on stabilising the country.⁴⁸ There are indications that the ANC is rethinking its position towards Zimbabwe: for instance, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai had his first top-level meeting with ANC officials in February 2001.

When Zimbabwe-based South African companies were harassed by so-called war veterans in April, the South African government summoned the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ "'Concerned" Mbeki appeals to Mugabe', *Sunday Independent* (Johannesburg), 24 February 2001.

Zimbabwean High Commissioner in Pretoria and lodged a protest. Within the tri-partite ANC alliance, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) is the most outspoken critic of the ANC's current position. Secretary-General Zwelinzima Vavi strongly attacked Mbeki's 'soft diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe, which he called a failure.⁴⁹ Cosatu has had good relations with ZCTU and its former secretary-general, Morgan Tsvangirai, for many years.

Factors of destabilisation

President Mugabe's land policy may have disastrous consequences, not only for Zimbabwe, but also for the stability of the whole region.

- Zimbabwe may be faced with escalating violence between opposition supporters and government forces. When on 30 September 2000 MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai announced nationwide mass action to force President Mugabe to step down, Nathan Shamuyarira, Zanu-PF's Publicity and Information Secretary, commented that the government would answer violence with violence: 'The violence is going to be like that witnessed during the pre-election period. Government has the capacity and the will to protect Zimbabwean citizens.'⁵⁰ Mugabe's Zanu-PF came to power by means of a guerrilla war: it does not seem prepared to renounce power easily.
- Even if President Mugabe was willing to compromise, he could lose control of his auxiliaries, who are becoming more and more impatient. The monopoly of state power may be threatened.
- Invaders may split into different factions, led by regional warlords. In advance of the June 2000 election, battles took place between different factions.⁵¹ It is evident that Hunzvi does not have full control of his people on the ground. For example, invaders have been occupying a safari area

⁴⁹ 'Cosatu chides govt for soft Zim stance', *Daily Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), 21 February 2001. <http://www.mg.co.za>

⁵⁰ 'Mass action to unseat Mugabe', *The Daily News* (Harare), 2 October 2000.

⁵¹ In Mashonaland Central, invaders originating from Glendale clashed with invaders coming from Harare. Regional leaders were trying to extend their radius of action. In other cases organisational failures were responsible for clashes between different groups of invaders.

in the Save region, ignoring orders by both the government and Hunzvi to leave. Also, Hunzvi's position as chairman of ZNLWVA is disputed: in August 2000, ZNLWVA Secretary-General Andy Mhlanga tried to oust Hunzvi, but Hunzvi managed to retain his office.

- Since most invaders in Matabeleland are Shona, their presence may cause clashes with the local Matabele population. In the June 2000 elections Zanu–PF suffered humiliating defeats in most Matabeleland constituencies.
- Conflicts between invaders and unpaid or retrenched farm workers may increase. There are signs of growing farm worker militancy, manifested in clashes with invaders and demonstrations at Zanu–PF offices. On 15 September 2000, hundreds of rampaging farm workers destroyed dwellings built by 'war veterans' on a Beatrice farm, and chased the invaders away.⁵²
- Invaders may form criminal gangs. The general climate of lawlessness has already resulted in a sharp increase in criminal acts in rural areas. In some cases, invaders are responsible; in other cases, common criminals take advantage of the situation. It is difficult for the police to distinguish between 'legitimate lawlessness' and 'illegitimate lawlessness'. Above all, policemen are not motivated to carry out their duties, because they have been sidelined by the government.
- With economic conditions worsening, the rural and urban poor may follow the example set by the invaders and resort to violence themselves. The January 1998 riots demonstrated the potential for mob violence.
- Lawlessness, social violence and racial hatred may spread from Zimbabwe to Namibia and South Africa. President Mugabe has repeatedly called on neighbouring countries to follow Zimbabwe's example. In May 2000, for example, Mugabe visited Namibia. Flanked by Namibian President Sam Nujoma and Prime Minister Hage Geingob at a rally in Ondangwa, he urged landless Namibians to forcibly reclaim their land.⁵³

⁵² 'Farm workers destroy war veterans dwellings', *The Daily News* (Harare), 18 September 2000.

⁵³ 'Mugabe urges Namibians to seize land', *Daily Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), 26 May 2000. <http://www.mg.co.za>

Factors of stabilisation

Though the situation is serious, there are some factors which could contribute to a restoration of stability.

- If Zimbabwean security forces were allowed to act, they would be able to restore order. They are efficient and well-trained, whereas the invaders are badly organised and ill-disciplined. Most of them do not yet have guns at their disposal, and have not undergone a proper military training. There are signs of growing impatience in the police and army at the present state of lawlessness. It must also be taken into account that there are MDC supporters in the security forces as well.⁵⁴ Whereas police officers are regarded as opportunistic, the army is perceived as being more neutral, although top officers are profiting from the invasions. Another factor is the growing unpopularity of the Congo war. The *Financial Gazette* alleged that after military setbacks in December 2000, up to 300 soldiers had to be court-martialled for refusing to be sent to fight in the DRC.⁵⁵ It was also reported that for three months the government had failed to pay subsistence allowances to troops fighting in the DRC.⁵⁶ After the murder of Laurent Kabila in February 2001, the implementation of the Lusaka Peace Accord seems, however, more promising. Although a *coup d'état* seems improbable, the army may put pressure on the president to change his policy or to step down.
- The battle for succession within Zanu-PF could result in a split of the ruling party or the rise to power of a reformist group. Either scenario would allow for the formation of a coalition government with the MDC, which would restore stability and win back international confidence. For the sake of stability, it may become necessary to grant immunity from prosecution to Robert Mugabe and the old guard for illegal acts committed while in office.
- With a GDP growth of -5% in 2000, a budget deficit standing at 18% of the

⁵⁴ During the election campaign it was reported that a truckload of soldiers passing by waved the open palm and shouted the MDC slogan 'Chinja Maitiro!' at a MDC rally in Harare. 'MDC draws up recovery plan', *The Daily News* (Harare), 7 June 2000.

⁵⁵ '300 troops court-martialled', *The Financial Gazette* (Harare), 10 January 2001.

⁵⁶ 'Army failing to pay troops', *Zimbabwe Standard* (Harare), 5 November 2000.

GDP and an inflation rate amounting to 61% in October 2000,⁵⁷ the government is unlikely to survive long. Although the MDC will not be able to enforce change by mass action alone, combined pressure from inside and outside could force the government to make concessions. South Africa is the key player outside Zimbabwe. If President Mbeki is willing to take up the challenge and use his influence in a skilful way, a regional catastrophe that is likely to have serious repercussions on South Africa will be avoided.

It is noteworthy that Robin Renwick, former head of the Rhodesia Department in the Foreign Office and distinguished British Ambassador to South Africa from 1987 to 1991, has urged the international community to put pressure on the Zimbabwean government.⁵⁸ Zimbabwe is too important to Southern Africa's stability to be allowed to sink into chaos and anarchy.

Appendix

Zimbabwe-South Africa trade flows				
	1997	1998	1999	2000*
SA imports	1350	1123,7	1210,9	1035
SA exports	5825	5311	5174,2	4028
* This figure only includes trade in the first 10 months of 2000. Source: SA Department of Trade and Industry				

⁵⁷ 'Simbabwe ohne Kurswechsel chancenlos', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Zurich), 12 January 2001.

⁵⁸ Renwick R, 'Rest of the world must show the red card too' (Commentary), *The Times* (London), 28 June 2000.

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Acronyms

Aids	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CFU	Commercial Farmers Union
Cosatu	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
Zanu-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
Zimprest	Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation
ZLP	Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform
ZNLWVA	Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

About the author

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