

**David Harold- Barry (ed), Zimbabwe: The Past is the Future: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis, Weaver Press, Avondale, 2004, pp 274.**

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Zimbabwe is currently undergoing an unprecedented socio-economic and political crisis. For seven years now the government has not been able to find a turnaround strategy to address the crisis bedeviling the country. There is a general shortage of almost all basic necessities, inflation has reached runaway levels (4.500%), foreign exchange is in short supply and there is political polarization around either the ruling ZANU PF party or opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). It is against this background that the book was written .The book discusses the historical context of the crisis that has been afflicting the country since the year 2000.

The book is divided into 15 chapters by different academics and development practitioners. In chapter 1, which sets the tone for the rest of the book, Brian Raftopoulos ably discusses the post-colonial context of the crises confronting Zimbabwe. He looks at the violent history and legacy of the ruling ZANU PF party since the days of the attainment of independence and proceeds to describe how that authoritarianism grew relative to the growth of dissent against the regime. Raftopoulos notes that violence has been used against disloyalty to the state- perceived or real- so that the party remains in power at whatever cost.

In the second chapter Dieter Scholz interrogates whether Robert Mugabe, the President of the country, is a revolutionary or rebel. In order to do this, the writer puts in place working definitions of the two terms. ‘Rebels want to take the place of the rulers they displace, while revolutionaries want to build a new social order’ p23. The writer argues that since ZANU PF has failed to create a new social order but has only recreated the social structures, relationships and needs of the Smith regime that it displaced, Mugabe is therefore a rebel. Mugabe has fitted into

the shoes of Smith who declared that black rule would not be established `in a thousand years`. He says the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) will `never, ever rule this country` p29. The writer also discusses how the black leadership has practiced reverse racism against whites.

Chapter 3 is written by Zimbabwe Liberators Platform. They set out to explain the current difficulties in which the nation finds itself. Like the previous writer, the Zimbabwe Liberators Platform believe that the nationalist leadership was interested in stepping into the shoes of the former oppressors and becoming the new masters, without looking into the needs of wider society. They conclude that: “Political leaders who delivered independence and short-lived economic prosperity have become rogues” p41.

In chapter 4 Duduzile Tafara, a former combatant, seeks to interrogate the education of the freedom fighter during the liberation struggle and what became of the fighter after the struggle. She does this metaphorically. The author describes the scant knowledge of the freedom fighters in the following terms: ‘the hunter knows what he is looking for, but it is the dog that does the actual chasing of the animal until it is caught’ p43. The metaphor is taken further to describe what happened upon attainment of independence. In her view it was akin to the hunter taking `the prey into the house while the dog sat outside waiting for the bones` (Ibid). In short, the author feels that the liberation fighters were betrayed by the leadership.

Alexander Kanengoni dedicated chapter 5 to recounting how land was dispossessed from the Africans in the early years of colonialism and how the masses then repossessed their land. He chronicles the stages and legislations by which land was taken from the Africans before he moves to the attempts by the post-colonial government at reclaiming the land for equitable redistribution. To him, the `long way home`, the title of this chapter, ended with his acquisition of a piece of plot at Nyamanetsa Farm. However, it seems to me that getting the farm is the beginning of yet again another journey- to make farms productive in order to assure food security for all citizens.

In chapter 6 Emmanuel Manzungu focuses on the environmental matters that followed the post-fast-track land reform programme and considers the relationship between the environment and

the livelihoods of the people who lived off the land since 2000. The author put in place a working definition of environment, analysed the physical impacts, socio-economic impacts and cultural impacts of the programme. He maintains that:

*There is a need for correct measures to be applied to reduce the environmental impacts of the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme. If left unchecked, environmental degradation threatens the livelihoods of all Zimbabweans, present and future, and has extra-territorial implications. (p68).*

Chapter 7 is devoted, by Lloyd Sachikonye, to analysing how farm workers fared during and after the land reform programme. He discusses a wide variety of issues that pertain to farm workers such as employment (in)security, HIV/AIDS and health conditions and farm workers' participation in the political process of the country. Sachikonye observes that in the Zimbabwean case farm workers have been marginalized throughout the reform process and therefore for them, 'the struggle continues, even after the land reform and jambanja (violence)' (pp 72-75).

In chapter 8 David Kaulemu analyzes the impact of party politics on the concept of the state. He discusses how political polarization has occurred in Zimbabwe since 2000 and how enthusiasm with political parties has blinded citizens to the need to establish national systems, institutions and cultural practices (p77). According to him, the government is not the state and the party is not the government. He discusses how national state structures have become privatized by individual party members and he also discusses the results of that privatization. He concludes the chapter by proposing that there is need to 'build truly national systems and procedures whose success does not depend on who is in charge and which part is in government' (p86).

Chapter 9 is a welcome departure from the economic and political thrusts of the preceding chapters. Paul Gundani devotes the chapter to unraveling the changes and continuities that are taking place within Zimbabwean culture as a result of HIV/AIDS. He interrogates the challenges and threats brought by the new virus and analyses the changes that have occurred on the cultural landscape as a result of the pandemic. Some of the customs discussed are chigadza mapfihwa (inheritance system), kugara nhaka custom (wife inheritance after the death of a brother), sara pavana custom (finding a guardian for the deceased's children), the gata system (seeking a

diviner after the death of a member) and virginity tests. Gundani found that out that `community leaders will utilize the cultural and moral space that is available in order to come up with local solutions to a given threat`, and that they do this without waiting for guidance from central government (p105). He ably and interestingly showed that as society grapples with the threat it falls back on traditional practices and norms that were used to deal with threats of a similar nature.

Godfrey Kenyans uses chapter 10 to analyse the political economy of Zimbabwe from 1980 to 2003. He discusses why at 1980 the country had a vibrant economy, developments during the period 1980-1990 and the onset of the contemporary crisis which, according to him, has to be located in the country's adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). He then moves on to discuss the various efforts that have been made in the post-ESAP era to deal with the economic challenges besetting the country. He concludes the chapter by proffering tentative solutions that can be applied to deal with the crisis. He writes: ``It is clear that a political settlement between the major political parties is a pre-requisite for the return to normalcy in Zimbabwe---It is therefore necessary to incorporate the hitherto excluded sectors and groups (women, children youths and people living with disabilities) into the mainstream of the economy``(pp145-146).

In chapter 11 Eldred Masunungure discusses the fate of opposition politics in Zimbabwe, which opposition he sees as being broader than organized opposition political parties since it can include all civil associations and labour. He discusses how the colonial and post-colonial governments in Zimbabwe have appropriated the state, that is to say the state has been used (or abused) in the service of the ruling party. Masunungure then discussed the supremacy of the ruling ZANU-PF party over the organs of the state since the days of PF-ZAPU and ZUM up to the emergency of the formidable MDC. He also discusses how the labour movement and civil society have provided resistance against an excessively authoritarian regime. The chapter is concluded with a discussion on the future of opposition politics in Zimbabwe. He posits that the mass discontent will explode with ghastly consequences for everybody if the ruling party continues to be intolerant to voices of dissent.

Chapter 12 is a logical sequel to the previous effort. In the chapter, Geoffrey Feltoe analyzed the implications of the manner in which the land reform programme was carried out on the rule of law and democracy in Zimbabwe. He discussed how the NO vote in the referendum of 2000 radicalised the ruling party into more authoritarianism. He discusses how the party and organs of the state disregarded court judgments and he also discussed the relentless attacks on the judiciary by the war veterans, ministers and other pro-ruling party members of the bench. According to him the rule of law in Zimbabwe has been under severe attack in, and since, 2000. ``A power-hungry regime, that is not prepared to brook political opposition, has brought Zimbabwe to the brink of disaster by casting aside legality and constitutionality``(p221).

A.P. Reeler uses chapter 13 to describe the ZANU-PF government's use of violence against its citizens. He describes violence and torture in the 'protected villages' and during the pungwes in the 1972s, the Gukurahundi violence of the 1980s and the post-1990 and 2000 violence. In his analyses Reeler found out that the ZANU PF government has a long history of violence which it probably learnt from the Rhodesian Front. 'The legacy of liberation war seems very hard to shake off. All significant threats to the party's political power are met with force and violence' (p237). Over the years, the only change that has occurred is that violence has changed from being a weapon of defence to one of offence.

In chapter 14 Fay Chung set out to interrogate the possibilities of political renewal in Zimbabwe. She discusses how ZANU PF was made up of diverse parties, largely PF ZAPU and ZANU PF, and how these parties had diverse groups such as woman, youths, workers, students and professionals. Chung feels that opportunity for renewal lie not with the MDC but with ZANU PF, which she thinks, has some of the most `intelligent and able leaders in Zimbabwe'. "We need a charge--- Those who can provide these answers will now come forward, most of them from within ZANU PF. It would be good if ZANU PF could have sufficient parental pride to enable this process to be fraternal rather than fratricidal" (p247). However, she does not provide a solid basis for discrediting the MDC from spearheading political revival in the country.

The last chapter, chapter 15, entitled 'one country, 'two nations' no dialogue' analyses the divisions that existed (and exist) between the various groups of people in Zimbabwe: between

the Shona and Ndebele, Karanga and Zezuru, and black and white. From Harold-Barry's point of view the most glaring division is racial and these divisions have not augured well for nation building. Harold-Barry posits that a process of rebuilding can occur when the black and white divide is blurred. "It would be an enormous step in that process if people began to listen to each other" (p.260). This is so because one of the major problems confronting the Zimbabwean political landscape is viewing dissent as 'an expression of treachery' (1bid).

The book is therefore a welcome publication in so far as it contributes to an understanding of how the country came to be where it is. It gives the historical analysis of the socio-economic and political challenges in the country in order to facilitate an understanding of the contemporary problems and prospects of re-building the country. It is a must for anyone interested in the political economy of independent Zimbabwe.

**Reviewed by:**

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