



## Research Article

Volume-03|Issue-09|2022

## Veterans in Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Implications for Post-Colonial Political Economy in Africa

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## Article History

Received: 04.09.2022

Accepted: 13.09.2022

Published: 20.09.2022

## Citation

Sahi, J., & Chisaka, B. C. (2022). Veterans in Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Implications for Post-Colonial Political Economy in Africa. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(9), 32-42.

**Abstract:** The research focused on the role of War Veterans in Zimbabwe's Land Reform and resulted in a reflection of the long-term implications for Post-Colonial political economy in Africa. The study objectives were (i) 'To determine the character of the influence of war veterans in Zimbabwean Land Question' and (ii) 'To evaluate the tactics and processes used by war veterans to advance Zimbabwe's land Reform'. The study was conducted on the basis of a qualitative research design, and the main motivation was that it is a relatively new perspective without a baseline in a young discourse. Instead of traditional focus on the destructive nature of war veterans' activities, the article looks at the empirical data that supports an important systematic dynamic in post-colonial Africa which warrants an empirical investigation. Data was collected using Interviews and document analysis sampling was purposive and judgmental. The study established that war veterans have a long held fixation with reclaiming lands that were forcibly taken and long standing revolutionary traditions spilled over into the post-colonial state. They used forcible occupation, lobbying, leverage in arms of government (including the security forces), international partnerships, statutory and constitutional instruments to accomplish the land reform. Most importantly, the enduring legacy of the liberation struggle saw them designing land reform to be a continuation of earlier wars of liberation. The researcher recommends that both in Zimbabwe and other countries, leaders and policymakers should take the influence of the war veterans seriously and seek sustained ways of addressing their grievances with a keen understanding of how they can shape Africa's political economy in the post-colonial state.

**Keywords:** Post Colony, Land, Economy and Zimbabwe.

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the unique influence that the liberation war veterans had in the implementation of Zimbabwe's land reform. Africa has a unique history of achieving its independence through a series of liberation wars (Tyner, 1980). Thus the liberation war is an important aspect of the construction and conceptualisation as well as understanding of the post-colonial African state (Bosha, 2013). It therefore means that liberation war veterans play a pivotal role in the entire process of African liberation which extends beyond the attainment of political independence. As key stakeholders in the process, it is important to develop a deep understanding of their character and the various tools which they have employed to achieve their objectives, in this case the land reform. There are many factors that have been studied in relation to attempts at finding lasting solutions for Africa's peace fiasco (Kambudzi, 1995) in the post-colonial African state. However, few studies have focused on how an underestimation of the role of war veterans has actually been a major contributing factor to post-colonial conflicts as the veterans continue to make their demands to the new administrations. Among the most globally referenced acts of liberation parties in the post-colonial era is the issue of the land reform in Zimbabwe. It sent shockwaves across the whole world and attracted a raft of economic sanctions. However, the Zimbabwean economy has survived the global punitive

sanctions and the land reform program has begun to show some positive results by the turn of the new millennium.

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

It was necessary to wage a war of liberation in order to attain self-rule and sovereignty in Zimbabwe, like many other African countries. Thus the liberation struggle was an important and unique aspect of the construction of the social contract in the post-colonial African State. This gave liberation war veterans a very influential role in agenda setting. The different African nations started getting their independence in the 60s and Zimbabwe got its independence on 18 April 1980.

Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front), ZANU PF, won and constituted the first Republic under President Robert Gabriel Mugabe. The land, in all countries was tied closely to the liberation struggle and therefore the post-colonial social contract. Thus, considering that the liberation war heroes still constituted part of the modern day government and security forces, as well as lobby groups outside the government, it explained why the land was both a sensitive social contract as well as economic asset. From the onset, even during the first Chimurenga war, the issue of the land has always been topical among the Zimbabwean people. Hebert Chitepo mentioned and emphasized it at a conference in Australia.

*there is a 07:30 reaction of our forefathers 07:33 back in 1893 and they suddenly 07:36 realized that the men who had come in 07:39 the white faced men were coming 07:41 whom they had not even immediately 07:44 resisted because they didn't think he 07:46 was coming to do anything so terribly 07:48 evil 07:50 was actually trying to rob them of their 07:52 land 07:54 they rose up in rebellion it was called 07:58 the war of Chimurenga. Chimurenga is a 08:01 shona word ...no doubt our old people 08:28 then our grandfathers in 1893 08:30 94 95 96 97 during those wars 08:35 fought gallantly with balls and errors 08:38 as 08:38 if somebody had carefully put one here 08:41 they were 08:41 faced against muskets they were fights 08:44 against maxim 08:45 guns they were defeated (Bembere Digest, 2021 – Video Script).*

The resistance was neutralized for a while but one of the most important statements by Hebert Chitepo pointed out to the fact that the liberation war agenda was only shelved and there was an active plan to renew it.

*08:48 to that day the African people have 08:51 never 08:52 accepted that position quietly 08:55 sometimes without word they have 08:58 continued 08:59 to look upon that land as theirs 09:02 continue to prepare the day for the day 09:05 when they must 09:06 rest it back into their own control (Bembere Digest, 2021 – Video Script).*

Thus after the first defeat during Chimurenga one, the war agenda (with land as a key factor) went underground but was simmering waiting to explode.

The second war of liberation took off in the 1950s and 60s starting with the Chinhoyi seven. The importance of land to the liberation agenda was also emphasized by ZAPU President Joshua Nkomo at the Lancaster House Conference in 1979.

*..progress has been made considerable 00:08 progress has been made 00:10 and as a matter of fact it is carrington 00:12 who has not given 00:13 to the patrol to front definitive 00:16 answers 00:16 on a number of issues the question of 00:19 land 00:20 i mean you know that there's a war in 00:22 Zimbabwe 00:23 the war in the mother is about land and 00:26 this is where we uh 00:30 we find Britain unable to 00:34 to yield to yield to the popular demand 00:37 of our people 00:38 so popular that they had to sacrifice 00:41 their lives 00:42 to get this thing that is land 00:45 is that the principal objection you have 00:47 to the british*

*constitutional proposals 00:49 yes i mean what britain has done 00:52 they have placed land as property 00:58 right and used the bill of rights 01:01 as a bill of privileges 01:05 i'm saying this because land 01:09 is owned by the white minority 01:12 because of their privileged position 01:14 they never bought that land 01:17 they acquired it by force of arms (CTV News, 2020 – Video Script).*

All the way up to 2000 before the successful implementation of the land reform, the economy remained in the hands of the few white minority groups and this was a source of increasing bitterness for the war veterans. Of particular economic importance was the issue of the land which was very sensitive throughout the pre and post liberations eras in Zimbabwe. Unlike many narratives which were generated by ZANU PF and their allies, there was a scholarly account of the impact of the land reform by Professor Teddy Brett from the department of International Development at a conference at London School of Economics (LSE).

*it's seen both 05:23 models in the 1930s and the 1950s you 05:27 had the land grab in which half of 05:31 Zimbabwe was given over to large white 05:33 farmers and the rest of the Zimbabweans 05:37 were pushed onto the smaller plots so 05:39 that set the precedent of the large 05:41 scale versus small-scale model 05:43 (LSE, 2013 – Video Transcript)*

The LSE Professors actually made a direct comparison between the 1930 and 1950s land grab by the settler community in Zimbabwe as being more or less the same with what Zimbabwe was doing. Thus, even during the process of negotiations at the Lancaster House Conference, the issue of the land remained quite topical to the point where it was the most heated element during the discussions leading to independence. At the point of independence however, there was a loss of momentum due to various factors. Chief among them was the request by the ANC to halt the land reform to make way for South African negotiations to end apartheid.

### **1989 ANC Asks For ZANU PF to Halt Land Reform**

According to Thabo Mbeki's memoirs, in the eve of the talks which led South Africa to end apartheid, the ANC sent Nigerian negotiator/mediator Chief Emeka Anyaoku, asked Zimbabwe to delay its compulsory land acquisition in 1990 after the moratorium on willing-buyer-willing-seller ended. This was to ensure that taking land in Zimbabwe would not discourage the Boers in South Africa from negotiating with the ANC. According to Thabo Mbeki, this was

also an illustration that ZANU and the ANC had very good relations, contrary to propaganda that says ZANU PF did not support the ANC and its liberation fighters to achieve independence.

### Resumption of the Land reform in Zimbabwe

After a temporary detour with regard to the issue of the land reform, Zimbabwe's war veterans resumed the demands for land reform. As Zimbabwe embarked on its own journey of land reform, it was a sign of the importance of the land reform to the post-colonial social contract. The Zimbabwean attachment to land by war veterans is also reflected in the experiences of countries like South Africa and Namibia among others. The war liberation heroes were not going to let that case rest until it was fully addressed. This explained the tension between the generations in Zimbabwe and South Africa. A book which stood outstandingly as a major contribution to the impact of war veterans in Zimbabwe is one by Sadomba (2008) which showcased how the war veterans drove the entire land reform agenda, resulting in major shifts in the political economy of the country and the region.

*Zimbabwe's land occupations were a long continuum of land struggles to resolve the colonial legacy of racial resource distribution but as they occurred, the role played by the state, the contested terrain of the civil society, formidable political opposition and imperialist interventions of western powers clouded the identity of the land movement thereby making it difficult to distinguish the moving current and the identity of forces from the wider political conflicts swirling around it (Sadomba 2008:iii)*

Sadomba's account not only showed the role of war veterans but also showcased the manner in which the land agenda had started during the liberation struggle leading to the current dispensation. The land and cults of the land activated in the minds of the fighters during the war thus became an anchoring theme, while their needs remained unmet. It is during this period that the influence of the nationalist leaders, and subsequently of the government, over the land movement can first be discerned (Sadomba 2008:79). Through empirical collection of data, Sadomba (2008) lays out an elaborate series of farm occupation by the war veterans which include on 19 June 1998, Igava Farm; 20 June 1998 to 23 June 1998, Daskop and Homepark farms; 2 November 1998, Orihi (Shiro) and Stockholm farms among many others. The sequence of events showed clearly that as long as the war agenda of the war veterans has not been met, it continues to influence how they think and act in shaping the political economy of post-colonial African states. It is against this background that this study seeks to trace how the

liberation war veterans conceived the agenda of land reform before attainment of independence and pursued it to its logical end in the post-colonial era. These views are also echoed by fellow researchers like Alexander et al., (2000) and (Clapham, 2012) and Southall (2014) among others. Thus, although the war veterans took effective power from the white minority, many other countries like South Africa and Namibia among others did the same thing and still remained with the various economic problems that they had throughout most of their life before and after attainment of independence. It is the land reform and indigenisation processes that the ZANU PF government led by war veterans are known the world over for. Thus the issue of the land reform took a very big section of the various acts of the war veterans which referred to the land reform and black economic empowerment in general.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To determine the character of the influence of war veterans in Zimbabwean Land Question
- To evaluate the tactics and processes used by war veterans to advance Zimbabwe's land Reform

The Anatomy of war veterans' influence on the Zimbabwean Land Reform War veterans appeared to be very influential in many post-colonial African administrations and Zimbabwe was no exception. The land was a very important factor for liberation fighters who went to fight the war against colonialism. It was a matter that had its roots in the disgruntlement among the black people with the manner in which the settler regime grabbed the land from the local black Africans.

*By the Land Apportionment Act of 1931 some 6,000 European farmers (including foreign-owned giants like Anglo-American, Liebig's, Lonrho and Halletts Corporation) were granted exclusive custody of almost half the country's land. Evictions continued. Between 1936 and 1959, 113,000 Africans were forced to quit areas reserved for Europeans ... By 1979 there were 1.6 million hectares of unused land in the commercial farming areas while land famine prevailed in the Reserves, where 675,000 black peasant farmers and their 3 million dependents crowded into 17.6 million exhausted hectares. (Caute, 1983:80.)*

Some historians made sure that they clearly brought out the gravity of the issue of land and how it became a rallying point for the powerful response to the nationalist action of liberation fighters in areas of Matabeleland as an example:

*Focusing on the state as the source of oppression and discrimination, Shangani nationalists went beyond opposition to particular legislation, such as the Land Husbandry Act, or particular official interferences, like contouring. They developed*

*an ideology of their rights, as citizens of an African nation, to land and resources, to dignity and freedom (Alexander et al., 2000:85).*

After the June 1999 results of the referendum, ZANU PF began to turn to talk about “the unfinished business of the liberation era – the land issue – as a crafty way of salvaging popular support in the run up to the general elections of June 2000” (Clapham, 2012). One of the most conspicuous aspects of the Zimbabwean post-colonial liberation approach was that the ZANU PF leadership continued to present the various ‘anti-colonial activities’ like the land reform and indigenization as a continuation of the liberation war agenda in a direct and matter of fact way.

*... Mugabe designated his post-2000 land reforms as the “Third Chimurenga”, claiming historical continuities with the wars of primary resistance against colonialism in the 1890s (the “First Chimurenga”), and the war for liberation of the 1960s and 1970s (the “Second Chimurenga”) (Southall, 2014:88). The promulgation and implementation of the 3rd Chimurenga in Zimbabwe particularly the theme of reclaiming land from settler white commercial farmers had important linkages to the liberation struggle. The whites were considered to be settlers or aliens and restoring land rights to black Zimbabweans (Mugabe 2001; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2006) was considered to be an important aspect of “the fulfilment of the objectives of the liberation struggle” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2006). This was also supported by (Clapham 2012) who noted that Third Chimurenga (Third Revolution) that began in 2000 was propagated by the Mugabe regime as a logical sequel to the first and second revolutions to liberate Zimbabwe from colonial forces and injustices. The opposition MDC was therefore alleged to be a colonial agency employed by former colonial and imperialist powers in order to re-colonise Zimbabwe. (Clapham 2012:5)*

The alignment of the land reform with the trajectory of liberation from the first Chimurenga, the Second Chimurenga and the third Chimurenga created a very coherent sequence that had a strong appeal to the generation which experienced war. This was a deliberate move to align the entire process with the thinking among the war veterans by an incumbent leader, a former liberation fighter. This symbolism implied that the same war of liberation which started in the 1890s and stopped and then continued in the 50s and 60s culminating in national independence in 1980. The implication is that the independence at 1980 left a few of the liberation war commitments hanging and needed to be pursued further in order to attain complete independence. This structure of narrative was especially

effective because “history is at the centre of politics in Zimbabwe far more than in any other southern African country” (Ranger, 2005:242). The ruling party supported land invasions and occupations after February 2000 as a long overdue pursuit of the liberation war goal of regaining the land from the whites, and as central to the third chimurenga. The second chimurenga had been fought for political independence, the third was a struggle for economic justice. “The economy is land, and land is the economy” served as the party’s rallying cry in the parliamentary election campaign. The party praised war veterans for instigating spontaneous land invasions in February 2000 and for serving as the party’s revolutionary conscience. Subsequent land invasions were orchestrated by the party and often led by war veterans (Kriger, 2003:147). As liberation leaders like Robert Mugabe continued to invoke Afro-radicalism and nativism in their efforts at decolonisation talked to the imperatives of economic liberation from the disparities that emerged from neo-colonialism (Osaghae 2005: 1). The land invasions, occupations, and fast-track land resettlement program, like the earlier cooperative movement, provided valuable symbolic support for the party’s revolutionary credentials (Kriger, 2003:140). Thus the ideological behaviour of Robert Mugabe appeared to be signalling the rise of a new wave of African nationalism and a revival of the African national project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:62).

The logical sequence to the alignment of the land reform with earlier wars of liberation was to use actual war tactics in the implementation of the land reform itself. The presentation of politics (notably land reform) as war enabled those opposed to ZANU-PF’s initiatives to be depicted as enemies rather than simply opponents, this implicitly justifying violence against them (Southall, 2014:88).

Subsequently, it is possible that the war mode of the veterans under the third Chimurenga mantra may have had a hypothetical impact on their confrontational behavior. Thus, the pragmatic consensus that was made at the point of independence to facilitate a peaceful transfer proved to have an expiry date and the pressure from the independence war commitments to the land reform continued to build up until the war veterans started pushing for them aggressively again.

### **The Tactics and Processes Used by War Veterans to Advance Zimbabwe’s Land Reform**

In the section above, the alignment of the land reform to previous acts of liberation struggle was more of a subtle and ideological level tactic which was used by the war veterans. However, they went on to implement more concrete tactics which produced tangible results until the land reform was successfully implemented. The following is a narration of the events leading to the land reform, Matinyarare (2021).

**Land Meeting with Liberation War Veterans:**  
*In 1992, the government of Robert Mugabe held a meeting with the war veterans. They had become restless after the post-independence resettlement exercises had not delivered the will of the people with regards to land. After 12 years of taking effective control of the country, they still did not have access to the land due to the stringent Lancaster House Constitution. They now called for compulsory acquisition of land on the terms given by government. They argued that the land was the major grievance for which they went to war (Matinyarare, 2021).*

Phase two of Zimbabwe's Land Reform began in 1992 where after a meeting with War Veterans, Parliament amended the Land Acquisition Act to facilitate compulsory land acquisition. The government target was 5 million hectares to meet a shortfall from the 8.5mil ha target which was required to resettle 161 000 black families.

The white population would be left with 43% of prime land.

#### **Land Commission of Zimbabwe**

After these developments, a Land Commission was set up to:

*Identify land and issue acquisition notices to farmers,  
Determine a fair price for land (no longer a market related price determined by private estate agents),  
Establish the fair compensation for developments on the land,  
Ensure the disbursement of payments in local currency and  
Accelerate the resettlement of landless black"*  
(Matinyarare, 2021)

The land earmarked for compulsory acquisition would also be paid in Zim dollars instead of foreign currency. The pressure from War Veterans outside government forced the government to depart from the willing-buyer-willing-seller principle established through the Lancaster House arrangements.

#### **1997 Blair Government Decision that Hardened War Veterans**

In May of 1997, the Tony Blair administration in the UK rescinded their pledge to pay for land reform and distanced themselves from the commitments of the Conservative government that had drafted the Lancaster House agreement. The UK government made a request to renegotiate the terms of the Lancaster House agreement.

As an act by an incumbent war veteran, in 1997, Mugabe rejected the call for renegotiation of the

terms set out at Lancaster House regarding the land reform.

Mugabe;

*"announced that his government was going to take back the outstanding 5 million hectares of land, without compensation and that land would be redistributed to the youth, students of agriculture and desperate families living in crowded communal lands" (Matinyarare, 2021)*

At this stage, the Europeans were still trying to approach the issue the same way they had at Lancaster House. However, President Mugabe as a ruling war veteran was becoming more resolute in terms of repossessing the land and he was in fact taking a harder line on the matter. At this moment, the perspectives of the war veterans in government and those outside the government converged to create even more intensive momentum.

#### **1998 Land Donor Conference: Haggling with War Veterans in Government Positions**

The global powers realized how serious this issue of the land was and requested a Land Donor Conference to resolve the standoff between the Zimbabwean government and the western donor countries. Once again the outcomes of the donor conference reflected the importance of the land and one can see how the Mugabe administration made up of war veterans resolved it. At the conference, the west persuaded Mugabe to hold off taking 5 million hectares of land, but to instead slow down and phase the land reform based on donations offered by donors. This was a clear departure from the Lancaster House Agreement which had stipulated that Zimbabwe could take land as it saw fit, in line with any new laws it would have enacted for the purpose of land reform after the moratorium. The UN and other private players pledged \$1 billion and proposed a number of programs to ensure sustainable land reform, training and further donations, but none would commit to putting up the money upfront. With none of the funds promised by the British, US and EU at Lancaster forthcoming, the government of Zimbabwe felt this was just another tactic to stall land reform. Up to this point, there were two distinctive influences coming from the war veterans. Firstly, since 1980, the Mugabe government had never completely abandoned the land reforms. However, starting the 1990s we now saw the increasing pressure from the war veterans which were outside government.

Nevertheless, they had a give and take relationship because through the various conferences they made their demands known through party channels and these reforms eventually became amendments to the legislation. Meaning that the two camps of war veterans had a firm grip on how these procedures were shaped and implemented. This would however take a

radical change with the land invasions of the Svosve village led by war veterans outside the government structures.

### **1998 Land Invasions: War Veterans Lead Land Repossession from the Front**

The 1998 land invasion became an important turning point in the influence of war veterans in the shaping of Zimbabwe's political economy. The Zimbabwean people were traditionally farmers and thus land was an important aspect of their livelihoods. Once again land was at the top of the agenda items regarding the causes of the liberation struggle:

*In 1998, desperate, landless people in Svosve and war veterans in other parts of Zimbabwe, fed up of delays in land reform, began spontaneous land occupations (unilateral land sequestration) or ... the Third Chimurenga (which should actually be called the fourth Chimurenga as the first Chimurenga was 1670-1690 in the war between the Portuguese against Mutapa and Changamire Dombo) (Matinyarare, 2021).*

The naming of the land reform as the third Chimurenga was a very important milestone for the influence of the War veterans and therefore the war agenda on the local political economy. Matinyarare argued that it should have been called the fourth Chimurenga but the most important aspect was that it was deliberately designed to be a continuation of the various antecedent liberation struggles that had taken place before. It showed how enduring the liberation agenda was and how the veterans of the liberation struggle were actively shaping the evolution of the political economy. Matinyarare (2021) also cited the UN Development Program initiated talks in Abuja which were meant to resolve the impasse.

*"At these talks, the Zimbabwean government indicated that its target had moved from 5mil hectares to 9mil hectares as the demands for land had increased due to a growing population" (Matinyarare, 2021).*

This shows the sheer determination and influence of the war veterans in the process. Matinyarare went on to cite some very important developments after the 1998 invasion by landless peasants and war veterans. President Mugabe was forced to adopt the position of the war veterans outside government and this saw a new impetus for the land reform. This resulted in the queen rescinding Mugabe's Knighthood. Up to this point, we had a coordinated process between war veterans outside the government and those in government. The two camps of veterans drove the architecture and implementation of the land reform program from two different positions: one camp in government led by Robert Mugabe and his ministers and then another by the war veterans outside government led by the War Veterans Association.

However, in light of the focus of the second objective, it was important to recognize from the onset that the war veterans outside government structures forced the war veterans inside government structures to legitimize the land reform. This was also noted at a seminar in the UK at London School of Economics.

*many of the whites didn't cooperate mostly the poor land was sold to the government and there was very little land for the black war vet the liberation war some of the land that was transferred went to the elites and not to the veterans not to ordinary people so that by the 1990s there was a growing anger there were protests against President Mugabe in the late 1990s there were some speeches about land reform but the liberation war veterans decided it was all talk they believed it was never going to happen so finally the war veterans took their I took action they organised occupations in early 2000 initially the government tried to stop the occupations ministers went out to farms gave speeches saying no give the farms back to the whites go home go home but the occupiers it was too late the occupiers kept the land they stayed the occupations continued and expanded finally the government realized it had no choice so it passed legislation to legalize occupations that have already taken place they called it the fast-track land reform but the veterans had learned their lesson from the colonizers the only way to gain land is to occupy it and to throw off the people who are on that land before but the veterans stressed that they were acting against the ruling elite the key point here is the land occupations was not done by some new it wasn't done by the government there was actually a mass action in opposition to a governing elite (LSE, 2013 – Video Script).*

Thus, although government was facing resistance from the white settlers, they were still willing to go the route of negotiations and it is the war veterans outside government who took matters into their hands and started a process that was never to be reversed.

### **1999-2000 Broad Based Civic Alliance Against Constitution Amendment.**

*In 1999 there was a broad alliance of civil society organisations under the leadership of the ZCTU which leadership eventually formed the MDC. The mobilized a campaign opposing the referendum and this affected the clause which would facilitate appropriation of land*

*without compensation. During the 2000 referendum the civic society campaign appeared to be polarized against ZANU PF rule in general and in their opposition to the referendum rejected the land clause as well. At this point, the two camps of the war veterans took each other's side and converged their position on the land. They thus became a formidable force for the purposes of the land reform (Matinyarare, 2021)*

### **UK Land, Development Compensation Clause Lost**

During the referendum, the clause that gave the responsibility of land reform to the UK was lost and this turned the tables against the pro-land reform teams made up of ZANU PF and the war veterans.

Many believe that the British, US, EU government, CFU (Commercial Farmers Union) and South African farmers, put in vast resources to sponsor MDC, ZCTU and civil society organizations, to stop the amendment of the constitution because they knew that the amendment put the onus of paying for land and improvements on the colonial power.

*This was a precedence that the west could not afford because it would create a new legal precedence that would enjoin colonial powers to compensate their settlers for colonialism, in a manner that would not only impact the Dutch in South Africa but The United States with their American Indian colonies, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and various South American countries that are still occupied by white colonial settlers. (Matinyarare, 2021)*

This analysis by Matinyarare reveals that the issue of the land had a huge implication for the western countries and so Zimbabwe's land reform had to be handled carefully in light of the ripple effects it may have to former colonial countries. The Zimbabweans land reform opened dangerous fissures which could have grave implications for the world financial system. It is against such an analogy that one can understand why the western appears to be very jittery about the land reform.

#### **Zimbabwe Joint Resettlement Initiative**

*The last efforts by the white commercial farmers to halt the land reform came through the Joint Resettlement Initiative. The farmers offered 521 farms which made up around 20% of the total land required by the government. The commercial farmers offered to give the newly resettled farmers a package which included: (i) a hectare of land, (ii) farming support (iii) farming inputs (iv) a revolving loan facility worth Z\$1.3billion meant for capital investment, (v) manpower for advisory services to support newly resettled farmers-three consultants per province (vi) donor*

*funding from overseas and vi) lobbying to achieve global support for the land reform program. The offer appeared to be very similar to the pledges at Lancaster which were not honoured. (Matinyarare, 2021). Government agreed to the proposal but even after signing the Abuja agreement with farmers and donors, the farmers went on to sponsor an opposition party which was opposed to the land reform hoping to eject the war veterans led government from power and halt the land reform. (Matinyarare, 2021)*

At this level, though we have war veterans who are outside government who pushed the government until the government formally took sides with them. This is an important action that was taken by the war veterans and would become a living hallmark of the land reform. Their stance which was very resolute gives credibility to the fact that the land was the most important cause why they went to the war.

### **Advancing the Liberation Agenda against the Grain in an Age of Western Sanctions**

One of the most conspicuous developments during the land reform was that the war veterans went on to implement the issue of the land reform as one of the core elements of the war agenda despite aggressive resistance and punitive actions from the western block. The following is a narration of how the land reform was implemented while fighting head on with the western powers who were implementing sanctions on an incremental basis.

#### **War Vets Tenacity in light of EU Sanctions**

The loss by ZANU PF during the national referendum resulted in two things. On one end, they lost an opportunity to get the UK to pay for white farmers. However, on the other hand, they became aware of the influence of the civic society coalition and they increased their drive for land reform.

*In February 2002, after the EU's overt bias towards the MDC, Mugabe expelled the EU's Head of observers, Pierre Schori, from Zimbabwe, and immediately the EU imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe.*

*This culminated in the blocking of \$128 million of EU aid to Zimbabwe, together with the targeting of individuals, private companies and parastatals that they said were aligned to the Mugabe regime. In March 2002, Mugabe won the Presidential elections and immediately continued with the Fast Track Land Reform Program. (Matinyarare, 2021).*

Thus, this was another victory for the united front of war veterans in and outside government. The global fights continued with US Sanctions.

### **2003 US Executive Order Sanctions: War Vets Remain Defiant**

As the war vets remained defiant on the path to land reform, the international community continued to pile more pressure on Zimbabwe with a hope to halt the land reform program. As a result of failing to dislodge Zanu PF and Mugabe, in 2003, George Bush declared a national emergency against Zimbabwe and then instituted the Executive Order 13288 sanctions to cripple land reform. When that didn't discourage the land reform, in 2005, George Bush declared another national emergency upon Zimbabwe and upgraded his executive order sanctions to EO13391 that increased the targeted special designation nationals to 86 investors, financial institutions, companies, parastatals, farms and those who do business with them. These set of sanctions were designed to punish Zimbabweans adequately to force them to vote out ZANU PF in the 2008 elections, to end the suffering brought by sanctions.

Despite all this pressure, the war veterans were defiant and continued with the implementation of the fast track land reform. This became a nightmare for the international community.

### **ZANU PF Disputed Victory in 2008 Elections: Another Round of Sanctions from the USA**

Once again, the war vets were defiant in light of a new round of punitive actions by the USA. They helped Mugabe win a disputed election and this attracted another round of sanction by the USA.

*On the 29th of March 2008, Zimbabwe conducted harmonized elections in which Morgan Tsvangirai won by 47% of the vote but failed to get the 50% plus one, to be the outright Presidential candidate of Zimbabwe. The parliamentary elections were not in dispute, thus that year June 27, there were run-off elections in which Morgan Tsvangirai lost after pulling out of the elections, five days before the run-off elections. 28th of July 2008, George Bush called a third national emergency upon Zimbabwe and amended the executive order sanctions to EO13469, to target 144 parastatals, government companies, private companies, national government, municipalities, non-governmental and government financial institutions, investors and those who do business with them without license from the US President (Matinyarare, 2021)*

This victory helped ZANU PF and other War veteran's allies to consolidate their gains and regroup while counting their losses.

### **Russian and Chinese Veto of UN Sanctions, GNU and Checkmate**

*As the punitive measures took their toll, eventually the war veterans and ZANU PF*

*gave in to the suggestions for a unity government with the MDC. 13 February 2009, according to Gideon Gono, under the threat of a western invasion, plus the recent veto of UN sanctions by Russia and China; as a solution to the stalemate, ZANU PF and MDC formed a Unity Government and began to work collectively on a new constitution (Matinyarare, 2021).*

The veto by Russia and China was a very delicate moment at the international stage. It showed how complex the land reform had become to an extent that it needed the help of two super powers to douse the flames. Thus the war veterans scored a huge victory at the global level and then went into a reconciliatory mode by accepting the GNU arrangement. This gave them time to strategize.

### **An Overt, Self-Articulated Objective to Control the Political Economy**

AT the very onset, an interesting development occurred which gave a very blunt position on the intentions of the war veterans with regards to the country's political economy. In response to the question "How can you evaluate your efforts towards influencing the political economy? One war veteran remarked:

*Veterans of the liberation struggle have always wanted to control the political economy of the country. The ZANU (PF) led government has always tried to accommodate the wishes of the veterans of the liberation struggle but to no avail. This is why when senior government officials resign or is fired from government they are relegated to the party. They are given senior positions in the party so that their interests can still be pursued and also that they can still contribute towards the political economic landscape of the country. In general veterans of the liberation struggle control and shape the political economy of the country. This is so because it is war veterans led government.*

Thus, it was and had always been their objective to control the political economy of the country. This was also reflected in the war commitments or the war agenda which had been articulated in many sections of this document.

### **Internationalising and Winning the Land Question**

War veterans had managed to fight the issue of the land successfully at both the local and global levels. The international community under the leadership of the western bloc assumed that by the end of the cold war, the world had accepted a free market economy complete with private property rights. This led them to be rather complacent and the activities of the war veterans sent shock waves that forced the international community to enter the debate on the land reform.



*The contemporary land reform programme anchored in the framework of the national struggle was a contentious issue in Zimbabwe. Serious engagement on the agenda of land reform started between 1995 and 1998 and this sent shock waves across the entire world. Col Gwangwaya.*

While the Zimbabwean land reform might appear to be a local squabble between ZANU PF and local opposition parties including the dispossessed farmers, it became apparent that the topic had a lot of dire consequences for the international community. This applied especially to the countries who had built their fortunes using colonial tactics like the UK. This made the issue a truly international struggle. Faced with a dire need for UK support in the Gulf War and also with their own fears of compensating indigenous populations whom they dispossessed of their land, the USA entered the land reform dispute by enacting the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA) in 2001. As noted by Matinyarare (2021) the referendum was a nervous period for western powers and they sought to eliminate the clauses that compelled them to compensate colonies.

*With all the momentum garnered in urban areas for the referendum, MDC narrowly lost the 2000 parliamentary elections with 56 seats to ZANU PF's 60 seats. 2001, US ZDERA sanctions were imposed to stop what was now dubbed the Fast Track Land Reform Program and to push out Mugabe in the 2002 Presidential elections as MDC had failed to win elections to stop the land reform. Thus, by teaming up with the MDC and other donor countries in preventing the Draft constitution, the international community was waging a proxy war against the war veterans. They were eager to protect their interest and prevent an elaborate compensation process which had the real possibility of bankrupting them. The west had a vested interest in pushing for the white farmer compensation clause into the Zimbabwean constitution because Zimbabwe's law was forming international legal custom on native restitution that would have ramifications on international legal custom going forward. This made the land question a truly international phenomenon. In 2002, despite losing the referendum to change the constitution, which would have forced the British to pay for land and developments, ZANU PF used its parliamentary majority to amend the Land Acquisition Act. In that amendment, it removed the proposed constitutional amendment clause that Britain would have to pay for land and added a compromise clause that the Zimbabwean government would not pay for land but would compensate for improvements on the land in*

*line with the 1992 Land Acquisition Act Amendment. (Matinyarare, 2021)*

Thus after losing in the first round through the rejection of the draft constitution, the war veterans pulled another victory by using the majority in Parliament to amend the constitution and address the challenge of compensation for land.

The bold stand taken by Robert Mugabe, a war veteran was well acknowledged among war veterans both in Zimbabwe and other parts of the African continent who had experienced colonialism. This was reflected in a script by the SABC 3 anchors who noted that:

*Robert Mugabe of all of the heads of 02:38 state perhaps was the most charismatic 02:41 the one who is famously able to stand at 02:45 the United Nations and take on mighty 02:49 Britain take on the mighty us and as the 02:53 Africans would see him as the guy 02:56 who put these Western powers in their 02:58 place (SABC, 2017 – Video Script)*

Thus, the bellicose behaviour of President Mugabe may have been portrayed in a bad light in mainstream media, but it became evident at the point of death that although they were quiet, many Africans admired him. His influence therefore ran deep into the culture that was being brewed in African liberation organisations.

### **Combining Confrontation and Legislation in fighting Neo Colonialism**

The war veterans both those in government and those outside government structures applied the strategy of combining both brute confrontation and legislation to win the land dispute. The first wave of confrontation was done by the war veterans outside government who started with forceful occupation of land. At this stage they were fighting on two fronts: (i) against the settler farmers who they violently kicked out and (ii) against the government of Zimbabwe who did not sanction the land occupations. After forcing the government to adopt land reform as a formal national policy, the war veterans inside government then started the legislative processes supported by the liberation war veterans outside the government structures.

Both President Mugabe and Vice President Joshua Nkomo supported the land reform program. At this stage, it was now an agenda driven by war veterans in government positions starting with the President and his Vice. This quickly and systematically became national policy because in the Zimbabwean setup, since independence, the resolutions which were passed in the Politburo were the ones which were then introduced to Cabinet and Parliament. Thus the ZANU PF Politburo or the ZANU PF structures in general because of the fact that the party had never lost a majority since

independence were an important instrument used by war veterans in government to address the land as a constituent element of the liberation war agenda.

### **Cross Cutting Consensus on Irreversibility of Land Reform**

The war veterans managed to establish cross cutting consensus on the issue of the irreversibility of the land reform. When the land reform started, not only was the government against it, but so was the farmers unions and the opposition members of parliament. However after a while, all stakeholders accepted that the land reform was irreversible. The following is a script from an LSE conference.

*...the 2008 global 35:04 political agreement between the MDC and 35:07 ZANU PF which led to the unity 35:11 government which is now engines in 35:13 bobbly talks of the irreversibility of 35:16 the land reform their million people 35:19 working that line now there&#39;s no going 35:21 Back 35:23 Charles Tufts who is here 35:25 um issued has issued several statements 35:30 recently which accept the 35:31 irreversibility of the land reform in an 35:3 interview with the Zimbabwean last week 35:36 he said what we should do a Zimbabwean 35:38 is to forget the past and forge the way 35:42 forward.*

Thus, the sheer determination of the war veterans resulted in the forceful implementation of the war commitment on the issue of the land. While in the first few years of its inception the MDC did not put much emphasis on the liberation struggle, due to the unshaken position taken by war veterans, the MDC started to recognize the liberation struggle in its own manifestos. In the 2013 MDC election manifest it was openly stated: "Over three decades ago, we engaged in a liberation struggle and were successful" MDC Manifesto 2013: i). Morgan Tsvangirai also went on to declare that they supported the new constitution which was also supported by ZANU PF. This showed a convergence towards commonly held positions regarding national interest;

*You will recall that one of our founding objectives was to change the Lancaster House Constitution and replace it with a new, people-driven and democratic constitution. This year marked a historic moment when the people of Zimbabwe overwhelmingly voted for a new constitution. As the Chairperson of the National Constitutional Assembly at its formation, I am humbled by the achievement of this landmark moment in our nation's history (MDC Manifesto 2013:ii)*

The constitution which was commonly accepted by ZANU PF and MDC contained all the elements of the liberation war commitments of agenda. Thus it was clear that there was a broader spectrum of Zimbabweans who acknowledged the importance of the liberation agenda whether they were war veterans or not.

## **CONCLUSION**

Zimbabwe's land reform had been successfully implemented and concluded. There were still some grey areas which might still require further refinement into the future. However, what was clear was that the liberation war veterans had played a pivotal role in the planning and implementation of the entire process over several decades. The various acts of the settler community which enraged the local populations continued to linger in the collective memory of the black Africans and when the revolution took a military turn, the liberation war fighters became the primary custodians of the aspirations of the people. Through a mixture of ideological tools, acts of legislation, international cooperation and physical takeover, they had managed to drive the agenda successfully to the point where it had become an irreversible process. Unlike the different narratives that painted it as a disorderly, sporadic and violent process, Zimbabwe's land reform showed that the war veterans had been very calculating and tenacious using both peaceful and violent tactics until they dislodged a stronghold that was over a hundred years old. Many scholars had not focused on the capacity of the war veterans to drive the nature and implementation of liberation war veterans and this study has been an eye opener as to just how much influence the veterans of the liberation war had been during Zimbabwe's land reform. Both academics and policy makers as well as people in government would be very naïve to underestimate the influence of the liberation war veterans in driving African economic agendas. Zimbabwe's experience was important to learn from because South Africa and Namibia had started to echo the same issues around land reform and in both cases war veterans were at the forefront of the agenda.

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