

# Political Economy of the Crisis in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

*Conventional western social science scholars hold the view that the current crisis in Zimbabwe is but the consequence of misgovernance by President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF led government. This paper debunks this viewpoint and considers it a short-circuit analysis of the complex nature of Zimbabwe's crisis. Instead, the political economy approach is adopted which is considered more far-reaching, holistic, historic, dialectic, and more empirically-scientific-based. The critical analysis of the crisis reveals that the key to the current socio-economic and political impasse in Zimbabwe lies in the nature of the social organization of production and the class character of both colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe's social system which are strongly tied to the land issue. To this end, the paper confirms that Zimbabwe's economy, polity and social relations are organized in a manner that many Zimbabweans are at the fringe of the social structure. The main argument of this paper is that social organization of production in Zimbabwe is such that does not guarantee ordinary Zimbabweans access to land to produce their basic material needs, and to participate in making decision about how this major means of production is organized for production, distribution and consumption. This paper concludes by noting that the way out of the current crisis in Zimbabwe lies in a radical overhauling of the feeble social organization of production while not undermining the importance of a congenial political milieu in Zimbabwe.*

**Key words:** *Zimbabwe, political economy, social organization, land, crisis, capitalist system*

## Introduction

For some time now, Zimbabwe has been enmeshed in turmoil. Politically, economically and socially, Zimbabwe is facing intense conflict and crisis. The Wikipedia online Encyclopedia, The Times (2008), Mail and Guardian among other documents report that the economy has nosedived, with inflation running at two million percent, and it suffices to say that current inflation vault compares only to post-Second World War era in Germany. There have been persistent shortages of hard currency, fiat currency, fuel, medicine and food (see CIA, Factbook 2009; <http://en.wikipedia.org/economy>; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/Africa>). The body polity is in a complete state of bewilderment, and the social value of the people in despair and chaos. Thus, Zimbabwe, once an African model modern state, is ostensibly on the path to the precipice and perdition.

The current conflict and crisis in Zimbabwe cannot be fully grasped without understanding the substructure, or rather, the economic foundation which the social structure of colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe is built upon. Not to tow this path would amount to a partial understanding of the problem and a misplaced policy action towards resolving it. Certainly, the

crisis in Zimbabwe is no more or less than a reflection of the crisis which naturally is a characteristic of the world capitalist system. Simply put, the conflict and crisis which engulf the landscape of Zimbabwe are symptomatic of the general crises and conflicts in Africa which are particularly historically-determined within the context of the global capitalist system.

Arising from this understanding, therefore, a further critical look into the current socio-political and economic impasse in Zimbabwe suggests the fact that the conflict and crisis in Zimbabwe go beyond Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party. Even though Mugabe apparently now symbolizes, and almost personifies the conflict, it is germane to point out that like most other African countries, Zimbabwe, by her brutal experiences of colonialism, was wantonly designed for internal violence, conflict and crisis. Zimbabwe remains one country among a few in Africa whose independence was achieved with strong-arm struggles and revolution, imbued with strong class ideology. Huizer (1999) explains that most of the leaders of Zimbabwe Nationalist Liberation Army (ZANLA) were Marxists by ideological orientation. By the time Zimbabwe got its independence in 1980, it was apparent that an open conflict would surely result among the social classes emerging in the post-colonial Zimbabwe. These classes are the local *bourgeoisie*, who were mainly the white settlers, the African *bourgeoisie*, the working class and the peasantry. Makamure (1987:72) clearly observed that Zimbabwe was one of the few countries in Africa where there was an open class struggle.

In the immediate years following her independence, it is as if all seemed well with Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political engineering. According to Makamure (1987), Zimbabwe had a well-developed and elaborate western structures and institutions. It was indeed regarded as the breadbasket of Africa. It was exporting food to all other countries around the globe, and was certainly seen as a beacon of hope for the much talked about and sought for development in Africa. There was also a vibrant political environment buoyed by a class of radical intelligentsia and semi-revolutionary working class as well as the peasantry. However, observers knew that it was just a matter of time before the contradictions inherent in Zimbabwe's postcolonial economic system would erupt. Moreover, the leadership of post-independent Zimbabwe acted slowly and lately too in taking giant stride in an attempt to redress the vexing imbalances of this bequeathed economic system. Added to this was the ostensible self-perpetuating agenda of ZANU-PF leader and President of the country, Robert Mugabe, and the deepening global crisis in the world capitalist system. The resultant effect is the regrettable slip of Zimbabwe into its present socio-political and economic quagmire and quandary, occasioned by exasperation, frustration and desperation of millions of Zimbabweans, who continue to find their lack of access to land and general abysmal poverty remaining unchanged for three decades since gaining independence.

This paper attempts a critical review of the path to the present woes of Zimbabwe. In doing so, it underscores the political and economic dynamics as well as the class character of both colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe, to provide the fulcrum for a far promising understanding of Zimbabwe's current state of socio-economic and political inescapism. Therefore, this paper adopts the political economy perspective. The beauty of this perspective to the current crisis in Zimbabwe lies in the fact that it helps, by means of dialectical thinking and methodological analysis, to understand not only the crisis as it is, but how it came to be what it is, and to articulate its persistence overtime. Once the

material constraints peculiar to Zimbabwean society is understood, how it produces goods to meet its material needs, how these goods are distributed, and the emerging social relations, then we would gain understanding of the laws, the religion, the political system and indeed, the mode of thought and the resultant deep-rooted crisis in Zimbabwe. Thus, the approach provides a more in-depth understanding of the social phenomena of the conflict and crisis in Zimbabwe.

Besides its encompassing holism and historicity, the political economy approach also debunks the consensus ideology of the Western social sciences, predicated on a monolithic approach to issue of complex nature such as the current crisis in Zimbabwe. One clear demonstration of this western-backed approach to the crisis in Zimbabwe is the remark of the International Crisis Group (see [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org), 2002) that Zimbabwe crisis of governance is the primary cause of its economic tailspin, food emergency and by implication, all other problems in the country. The political economy approach instead prefers contradictions as the vehicle of change and progress in transitional societies such as Zimbabwe (see also Ake, 1981:5-6). Truth to fact is that it is the contradictions in the western industrial capitalist system that led to the colonization of Zimbabwe alongside other African countries. The same contradictions of the colonial economy led to the struggle for political independence, and the same contradictions have continued to shape the general course of social events. These include the rate and nature of development, political instability, class struggles, religious bickering, ethnic and tribal cleavages and the general crisis, conflict, violence, youth restiveness, etc across much of Zimbabwe's landscape and African societies (see Ake, 1981; Mac-Ogonor, 2002; Akani, 2002). With the help of this approach, this paper illuminates the nature of the crisis, makes a prognosis and proffers suggestions on the way forward.

### **The Social Structure of Production and Class Character in Zimbabwe**

Of significance in the current conflict and crisis in Zimbabwe is the understanding of the economic foundation of Zimbabwe's society. The occupation of native Zimbabwe's land by the British imperialist in 1890 led to the incorporation of Zimbabwean society into the world capitalist system. The brute and speed with which native Zimbabwe was transformed into a capitalist society was because it was uniquely earmarked, alongside with other societies in the region (Namibia, South Africa, and to an extent, Zambia and Botswana), as a settler colony. Makamure (1978: 71) reported that by 1923, the wave of capitalist revolution had swayed over the landscape of Zimbabwe, and that by 1960s, a strong colonial capitalist system, with all its inherent contradictions, were already established in the country. Zimbabwe's capitalist system and indeed, all other countries in the Southern African region, was built on cheap labour of the Africans which was pontifically secured by the system of officially proclaimed economic, political, social and racial discriminations. In this region, this kind of officially-invoked policy momentarily acquired the notoriety and sobriquet of apartheid policy.

As both a mode and system of production, western industrial capitalist system distorted not only native Zimbabwe's social structure of production which was predicated mainly on land, but it also significantly altered its indigenous political system, social values and cosmology. The working dynamics and contradictions which are the characterization of the western

capitalist system have been dealt with in great lengths by many radical scholars such as Karl Marx (1970), Samir Amin (1974); Cabral Amilcar (1969), Walter Rodney (1972), etc. Ake (1981), Eteng (1994) and Mac-Ogonor (2002) had lucidly described how this new western Europe-foisted-social-structure of production disoriented, disarticulated and disorganized the indigenous African's productive forces and their social relations of production. According to these authors, colonial economies were incoherently developed as they generally lacked linkages, complementarity and reciprocity which are expected of an economy operating in a state of equilibrium. Adhering strictly to the logic of western industrial capitalist system of minimum and parsimonious input for maximum output, the colonial state which emerged to take charge and direct the economic, political and the social affairs of the metropolitan capitalists in the colonies had to invest where and only when possible. Developments were, thus, concentrated on the sectors that were most desirable to sustain the economic interest of the colonial state and its metropolitan economic partners (see Ake, 1981). Examples of these development investments can be found in infrastructures such as roads, railways, sea ports and airports, water resources, banking, electrical powers, and administrative structures, etc.

With respect to Zimbabwe which is our primary focus here, the colonial economy was designed and structured both as a source and means of producing regular raw materials needed to service the metropolitan industries. At the same time, Zimbabwe's society was seen by the British colonial power as capable to provide the complimentary market for its ever-growing and surplus manufactured products which first, the near-saturated home economy could no longer absorb, and second, within an expanding cut-throat western competitive capitalism. The resultant effect was that Zimbabwe, like all other colonies were poorly, dependently and lopsidedly developed to the disadvantage of the indigenous people. The penetration of capitalism (pseudo though) into Zimbabwe also immediately and inevitably created different social classes whose interests were but parallel and conflicting. These were the local white *bourgeoisie*, the African *petit bourgeoisie*, the working class and the peasantry. Saved by the brief periods of political struggle when the *petit bourgeoisie*, working class and the peasantry joined forces to fight the colonialists, the Zimbabwe's *petit bourgeoisie* significantly served their economic and political interests and those of their metropolitan *bourgeoisie*. These privileged compradors as it were, acted as landlords, contract brokers, exporters and importers, local consultants, agents and sub-agents, directors and managers for and on behalf of these foreign companies (see Akani, 2002; Eteng, 1994:206, Ake, 1981; Makamure, 1978: 72).

Even after independence, the *petit bourgeoisie* in Zimbabwe, like its counterparts in the continent, were less interested in any radical moves that could change the status quo and usher in a more equitable, egalitarian society predicated on the principle of social justice. Indeed, the political class, as these new breed of African social class were referred to, dexterously employed their state powers as *state bureaucrats* to consolidate their privileged positions, and also reinforce the interest of their metropolitan lordships whose capitals they wholeheartedly depended on for survival and further accumulation of private wealth. Eteng's graphic illustration on the role of the state bureaucrats in perpetuating and consolidating the interest of the imperialist states and their agencies is both instructive and illustrative:

*... It is they who, as representatives of state or government, evolve plans of national development, negotiate loans, contracts and consultancies with foreign institutions and government, and are also instrumental in the determination of policies favourable to the operation of erstwhile foreign interests in Africa (1994:206).*

So, not even the tough-talks of some of the leaders of post-African independent states, such as Robert Mugabe's, passed beyond mere political rhetoric.

Of interest is the fact that notwithstanding the fury and fierceness with which the western industrial capitalist social structure penetrated Zimbabwe's political economy, it left some odd vestiges of the traditional economy system. There still abound, in both colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe's social structure, both the primitive mode of production and the simple commodity mode of production even as the economy parades features which significantly reflect the influence of capitalism. Makamure (1987) explained that the Zimbabwean's state played a marginal role in the running of the economy, controlling only 10% of the economy. As he stated *inter alia*,

*...At the time of writing, about 80% of the economy of Zimbabwe is foreign controlled and the state sector is only about 10%, located in the service sector of the economy and therefore subordinated to and subsidizing capitalism.*

Makamure (1987: 71)

Ake (1978:62) also, for instance, rightly notes that this capitalistic mode of production left a mass pool of peasants in Africa, whose apparent social relations to capital appeared to be subtle and nuanced, but in real sense, was similar to the typical labour-capital relations in well-developed industrial capitalist systems which are that of exploitation, subordination, domination, antagonism and struggle. This unfortunate development further deepened the distortion and contradictions in both colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe's political economy. Some of the apparent manifestations of this distortion and contradiction in Zimbabwe include, but by no means, limited to the following:

- i. The family—immediate or extended—remains the basic unit for the organization of production in Zimbabwe;
- ii. Land remains the most singular and essential means of production in Zimbabwe;
- iii. Communal land ownership is still well entrenched in Zimbabwe but somehow usually privately “exploited”, subject to certain obligations;
- iv. Most Zimbabweans are no more than farm-wage labourers working for both foreign and local farmers.

So, from this foregoing analysis, even though colonialism brought about significant level of development in Zimbabwe, thus at one time qualified as one Africa's most highly developed formal economies, it is clear that Zimbabwe's economy, like all other colonized economies, did not develop in a manner needed to address or redress the specific and immediate needs of this colony. Structural development was simply haphazard, and the economy was no less than pseudo and dependent in terms technology, trade, finance, security and policies, incapable of autocentric growth (see also Ake, 1981). There was also the inevitable ingrain of social contradictions which not only changed the

native Zimbabwe's way of life, but also created perennial strains that have continued to exacerbate the enfeebled political environment of the Zimbabwe's society. In the main, the ruthless penetration of the western industrial capitalist system into Zimbabwe's territorial land beside rapaciously exploiting Zimbabweans, also alienated, enslaved, estranged, marginalized, and turned millions of Zimbabweans into a state of hopelessness, haplessness and a mere commodity to be bought and disposed off at the whims and caprices of the colonial-metropolitan *bourgeoisies*. This remained so even near three decades that Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain, with no conscious effort made to challenge the capitalist mode of production by the new elites. As Parenti (1999:208), the erudite American leftist scholar, rightly explained, capitalism needs the poor and creates poverty, intentionally through policy and organically through crisis. Yet capitalism is also directly and indirectly threatened by the poor. Zimbabwe's capitalist system created surplus landless and peasantry population, needs them, and yet is facing the threat of political, aesthetic, or cultural disruption from the these population.

### **Britain, the International Bodies and the Land Matter, and Crisis in Zimbabwe**

Many radical scholars have alluded to the fact that what African countries got from their erstwhile colonial gladiators was not truly independence but nominal independence (Ake, 1978, 1981; Amin 1972; Onimode, 1978; Fashola and Ihonvbere, 1986). By this, they meant that rather than being freed to decide their fates and take their destinies in their own hands, the former colonies are still under the grips of their colonial masters. This is the idea behind the emergence of popular and often quoted concepts in the unconventional western social sciences such as neo-colonialism and imperialism (see Ake, 1978; Eteng, 1981, Wilmot, 1981, Rodney, 1972). In sum, what these scholars have alluded to is the fact that at independence, Africa's socio-economic structure and polity were characterized by over-bloated and weak structures, dependency, disarticulated and incoherent development policy framework. Indeed, newly crowned independent African countries were no more or less quasi-independent states, built and nurtured to continue to play the role of subservience to their colonial masters. The particular antics of the imperial British coloniser in this regard cannot be overemphasized.

According to Makamure (1987:71), in Zimbabwe, national independence did not in any way challenge the already established social structure that was built on the platform of the capitalist mode of production. Makamure thus noted that the explicit participation of the imperialists, especially Britain in the making of the constitution for Zimbabwe was a clear indication that capitalism in this society, consciously tied to land ownership, was being preserved and not challenged. In constructing constitution for the new Zimbabwe, under the famous Lancaster House Agreement, the imperialists forced the ZANU-PF leaders to agree that the constitution and aggressive land reform would not take place for the next ten years. The reasoning of Britain and her allies was that such a period was sufficient enough to make the emerging African bourgeois class disinterested in any kind of social transformation. In this manner, Britain and the imperialists ensured that their interests, and those of their local representatives, were dutifully protected.

What was even more, the Lancaster agreement included a creation of counterpart fund that would enable the Zimbabwean state take a gradual but

sustainable land reform programme. This counterpart fund was to be greatly financed by Britain to be assisted by other international bodies and donor agencies. It may be reasoned that partly due to world economic recession which began in early 1980s, the mounting huge debts owed to Western creditors and Britain's hidden agenda (see also International Crisis Group on Zimbabwe, 2000; www. Africsource.com, 2008), there was a renege on this great agreement. At the same time, Mugabe's regime, new as it was, remained less threatened by both internal and external forces so that embarking on serious land redistribution and restitution was relegated to the background in Zimbabwe's policy issues. By the politics of subtle maneuvering, Zimbabwe's land redistribution policy was subtly shifted to IMF and World Bank—two institutions that are tenaciously linked to market liberalization. Riad El-Ghonemy (1999:1) explained that this market liberalization, also known as structural adjustment programme, requires as part of their conditionalities, that adjusting governments do not regulate the working of the market, including the land market.

The spiral effects of this shift in land tenure policy in Zimbabwe, from that of Redistributive Land Reform (RLR) to Land Market Reform (LMR), were remarkable. Poor and landless Zimbabweans—who account for a large proportion of the rural people and urban people—could not afford the market-driven prices of land. This *laissez-faire* economic policy, including land policy, also led to cuts in government spending in health, education, security, or public investment in rural road construction and irrigation expansion. This further made it difficult for these classes of Zimbabweans to afford these human necessities which resulted from the conversion of these essential public services to marketable commodities.

Aside from this overt non-commitment on the part of Britain to the land redistribution policy, it also with her allies, undertook subtle action to undermine the Zimbabweans' efforts in establishing an equitable society based on social justice (see Makamure, 1987:73). For instance, Britain and her allies were determined to influence the class consciousness of Zimbabwean working class and to undermine the camaraderie of this vital social class which was well subsumed on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. This was done through financing trade union education, utilizing the good offices of the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU), Afro-American Labour Centre and the Fredrick Ebert Stiftung in Germany. Makamure (1987:73-74) reported that there was also direct bribing and wooing of trade union leaders into the western capitalist system and a declaration of war on the person of President Robert Mugabe who was formerly Prime Minister. Morgan Tsvangarai, the leader of the opposition Movement for Democracy (MDC) party, who emerged from the crucibles of trade and labour unionism in Zimbabwe may have been one of the beneficiaries of this subtle and grand style policy of the imperialist Britain, the western countries and U.S.

Imperialist Britain and her allies, especially U.S, continued to live under the old, self-opinionated notion of colonial masters. As a result, they have continued to treat and to relate with her erstwhile colonies in a supra-subordinate manner. It is in this light that both Britain and U.S continue to be in the forefront of an orchestrated economic sanction against Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF-led government. Their trump cards have been to continue to engage in the trope of good governance, transparency, independent judiciary and rule of law, reforms of kinds, etc. But all the while the main motive is the

protection and preservation of their economic interests in these erstwhile colonies. In the recent concluded 2008 G8 Summit in Japan, Britain and U.S, supported by other G8 members except Russia, pledged to push for the UN-backed economic sanction against the Robert Mugabe-led government. There is no doubt that Mugabe and his ZANU-PF are strongly averse to this continuous and favoured patron-clientele posture of U.S. and the western countries particularly Britain. To him and his party, it amounts to an affront and assault which demeans and undermines the dignity of Zimbabwe's leaders and the sovereignty of Zimbabwe's society. International Crisis Group ([www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org), 2004) quoted the former Foreign Secretary of UK, Robin Cook as saying that no further talk would be held with Mugabe on the land reform until he meets her set up conditions, that of eschewing violence and a promise that it would benefit the real landless rural and ordinary Zimbabweans. While Britain, U.S and the western countries have continued to openly criticize Mugabe and his ZANU-PF led government, they have continued to show their unalloyed support and sympathy to the opposition MDC led by Tsvangirai, thus fuelling the speculation that Tsvangirai and his MDC party were no more than an extension of the British, Americans and Europeans' attempt to re-establish direct and form control over Zimbabwe.

### **Robert Mugabe, ZANU-PF and Zimbabwe's Crisis**

As the current crisis in Zimbabwe is inextricably intertwined in both economic and political variables, there is a strong reason to apportion part of the blame to Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF led government. Although a national hero, Mugabe was far less than a revolutionary, accepting Marxism-Leninism only theoretically. Mugabe's leadership and the ruling ZANU-PF party were geared towards preserving the bourgeois rights and providing an opportunity for people from the ranks of the liberation struggle to emerge as aspiring capitalists. The International Crisis Group ([www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org), 2004) explained that despite redistributive socialist rhetoric, Mugabe did little to assemble credible land reform policy.

Mugabe's slow and ineffectual land redistributive policy was becoming a source of frustration to the large pool of landless Zimbabweans, many who participated actively in the battle for independence so that they can reclaim their lands. There were increasing economic miseries. The International Monetary Fund reported in the IRIN 23 December, 2003 that between 1999 and 2003, the economy of Zimbabwe contracted by 40%.

By the mid 1990s, Robert Mugabe's grip to power was also being challenged, thus compounding his difficulties. For his political hang-on and survival, Mugabe exploited the genuine sensitivities of the land issue and so diverted attention from his misgovernance which was increasingly becoming apparent. With government-backed land grabs from commercial farmers, who have been the backbones of Zimbabwe's foreign earnings, there was a backlash with thousands of black farmers out of job and a loss of their means of livelihood. There was also a concomitant decline in food production for local demand. Increased misery, frustration and hopelessness set in among millions of Zimbabweans thus further contributing to the overheated socio-political climate of Zimbabwe's society.

The increasing restiveness among Zimbabweans and the diminishing popularity of Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF led government who were now being perceived as a social class that has distanced itself from the cause of

the Zimbabweans, meant that he had to employ intimidation, harassment and violence in gaining political supremacy against the opposition Movement for Democracy (MDC) party, and his arch rival, Morgan Tsavangarai and supporters who were now proving formidable in Zimbabwe's political economy. Following his loss of the Referendum in early part of 2000, Mugabe resorted to a harsher and draconic style of leadership. Mugabe thus momentarily abandoned the politics of carrot for politics of sticks. More constitutional amendments that bore the mark of high-handedness were hurriedly passed through the ZANU-PF controlled parliament.

As the government-backed land invasions were on, Robert Mugabe also suffered another political shame when he failed to have his way in the February 2000 constitutional referendum. What followed was that the Mugabe and his ZANU-PF government rushed a constitutional amendment that freed her from the responsibility of compensating any owner of land acquired for reform. It also intensified her political violence against the official MDC opposition party which was well positioned to gain advantage in the parliamentary election slated for later that year (see International Crisis Group, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org), 2004). Since then, Mugabe has continued to add to the superheated political climate in Zimbabwe. Both the election of 2002 and the recent one of 2008 were marred by series of horrendous political violence. Pictures of Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the opposition MDC party and his teeming supporters, badly brutalized, glean the air to the utter consternation of the international community and lovers of democracy across the globe.

Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party have also been accused as justified by his actions of mounting assaults on the judiciary. Apart from flouting court's rulings, it has engaged in intimidation, harassment and threats on the life of members of the bench. When in November 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that the government fast-track on land was illegal and non-procedural, the next month the ZANU-PF-directed-mob barged into the Supreme Court to disrupt further proceedings on fast-track land seizures (see International Crisis Group, 2004). In addition, government pressured other independent-minded members of the bench to step aside while it replaced them with ZANU-PF sympathetic judges, enlarging the previous 5-member Supreme Court judges to 8-member benchers.

### **The Way Forward for Zimbabwe**

The good thing about Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political woes is that it has not escalated into a full blown armed conflict. The current impasse in Zimbabwe can be resolved by means of a political dialogue, as indeed both the leaders of ZANU-PF and MDC have agreed to shift ground (see also [www.africasource](http://www.africasource), 2008). It is clear that the achievement is only but partial, however. Since the fundamental root of the Zimbabwe's crisis lies in the country's colonial and post-colonial social structure, there should be no pretence confronting the contradictions and challenges which this structure posits to the well-being of the Zimbabwean's people. Otherwise the present relative political tranquility achieved between the ZANU-PF and opposition MDC would sooner than later fizzle out. The main political and economic gladiators at the centre of the crisis should also come alive, remain committed, and eschew all personal interests for the sake of Zimbabweans. In the main, the surest way forward for Zimbabwe is the approach which confronts both the current economic and political deficiencies of Zimbabwean society. Both

Zimbabwe and the international community, particularly African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADEC), have a significant role to play in this regard.

Economically, Zimbabweans have to reassert themselves. They have to restructure their national resources, raise their technical level so as to give them the capacity to make things for themselves, manufacture their own local needs, to at least, attain the ability to survive as a people (see also Makamure, 1987 and International Crisis Group, 2004). To this end, Zimbabwe's leaders and Zimbabwean people have to be committed to a radical overhauling of the bequeathed colonial social structures which do not guarantee equal access to the nation's resources but which only engender false promises. Fundamental in this regard is the most vital and sensitive of these resources—land.

As has been stated earlier in this paper, access to land redistribution in post-independence Zimbabwe remains the centripetal and centrifugal social force behind the current crisis in Zimbabwe regardless of the manipulation of the sensitivity of the land issue by Mugabe and his ZANU-PF-led government. To ordinary Zimbabweans, land is not only seen as an economic factor, it is both an embodiment and symptomatic of the people's cosmology, identity and a bond to their ancestors (see Huizer, 1999:34-35). Committed and sustainable land redistribution policy, therefore, holds a key to a genuine search for the solutions to the problem. Equitable access to land by many Zimbabweans' rural and urban poor, peasants and landless means that these social classes of people can, at least, ordinarily be in control of their destinies. This would have afforded the millions of landless and poor Zimbabweans an answer to their social and economic needs. This calls for a reverse from the currently favoured Land Reform Market (LMR) policy to the Redistributive Land Reform (RLR) policy. The former is predicated on the price-market law of demand-supply principle; it is often subsumed in stringent IMF-World Bank conditionalities, while the latter is based on the logic of equitable access to land based on needs and social justice. As Riad El-Ghoney (1999: 3) remarked, "Redistributive Land Reform is often a manifestation of a political will and a strong demonstration of commitment by the country's leadership to rapidly reduce rural poverty and the vast inequalities in rural wealth and opportunities".

To achieve the expected radical transformation in land redistribution, Britain, U.S and the western world must be willing and committed to free the fund necessary to achieve this. According to leading opinions on Zimbabwe's current intractable socio-economic and political problems, Britain and other donors have dragged their foot in committing the pledged finance that would have enabled the leaderships of Zimbabwe to seriously engage in a genuine, peaceful and orderly land redistribution exercise. The role of U.K, the erstwhile colonial master of Zimbabwe, is particularly of importance in this regard.

Politically, what is of common knowledge is the fact that Zimbabwe is in comatose and despair. Albeit, the established fact is that the economy, i.e. the substructure, is the determinant of all other aspects of social life, especially the polity, the state of affairs of the latter is well acknowledged as key to a sustainable development and economic growth. Without undermining the role and place of the economy of Zimbabwe, resolving the political impasse holds the key to ensuring that an environment of equanimity and tranquility congenial for socio-economic development is enthroned in Zimbabwe. To this end, the on-going progressive Thabo Mbeki-led peace talk and mediation

between the Robert Mugabe-ZANU-PF party and Morgan Tsvangarai MDC party is a welcome development.

The political crisis in Zimbabwe is almost and invariably Mugabe-ZANU-PF and Tsvangarai-MDC personified. Indeed, the two are the *personae dramatis* in the whole crisis and conflict in Zimbabwe. There are currently two extreme positions which these two main political enigmas have taken. Finding a meeting ground between these two positions is the beginning of a political wisdom to the political problems in Zimbabwe. On one side of the extreme positions is the one championed by Mugabe ZANU-PF which holds that it shall not live to see Morgan Tsvangarai and his MDC party take the mantle of leadership of Zimbabwe. The other extreme position is championed by Morgan Tsvangarai who insists that he be first and foremost recognized as the true winner of the March 2008 both parliamentary and presidential election. After recently signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ZANU-PF and MDC on agenda for peace talk, talks have begun, and are on-going in earnest towards creating a power-sharing government of national unity modeled on the one that ended the post-election violence in Kenya. What is called for at this stage is the support of the international bodies such as the Commonwealth, United Nations, European Union and other key actors such as U.K and U.S in the Zimbabwe's affairs. Against this backdrop, individuals, groups and countries that talk tough, thereby overheating the charged political climate in Zimbabwe, need to scale down. For instance, the report of the AFP on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2008 and credited to Kenya's Prime Minister Raila Odinga demanding that Mugabe release all political prisoners and to host teleconferences is in the view of this author compulsive in nature, may aggravate matter and need not arise now.

### **Conclusion**

Contributing to the debate on current socio-economic and political woes in Zimbabwe, a school of thought dominated by western and U.S interests stresses and indeed holds the view that the crisis is more of a politically (poor governance) motivated crisis. This narrow and obscure viewpoint further suggests that economic factors, and especially the issue of land in Zimbabwe, is only if at all, a tangential contribution to the intractable and inexorable crisis. Thus Zimbabwe's leaders (in Mugabe-ZANU-PF personified) and to an extent the Zimbabweans people, must bear full responsibility for the hydra-headed crisis that afflicted the once great nation. In the main, the motive of this conventional western school of thought is to discourage any attempt to explain the crisis in Zimbabwe from a point of view of dialectical thinking.

To the extent that the leadership in Zimbabwe has been caught up by the virus of western industrial capitalist system, well subsumed in an egoistic personal accumulation of wealth, and has thus abandoned the path of an indigenously-rooted development strategy, the foregoing parochial and conservative observation is ostensibly true. However, as this paper has demonstrated, the present structures and processes, and indeed crisis in Zimbabwe, must be seen as decisively historical; as the consequence of the new imperialistic agenda of U.K, Western world and U.S. The entrenchment of neocolonialism and pseudo monopoly capitalism in Zimbabwe, as much as in all countries of the African continent, has been massively aided by the native *bourgeoisie* whose major economic interests are not only discernible but who

are also commandant of the state and its apparatuses. This is the bottom line of the political economy framework favoured in this paper.

The foregoing analysis has serious implications for halting the current crisis in Zimbabwe. One, the crisis has three primary fault lines: economy, politics and [in]justice. The colonial masters created a structure of production, distribution and consumption in Zimbabwe that was disarticulated, incoherent and which left many Zimbabweans uninformed. The resulting politics was also elitist—excluding the mass of the Zimbabwean majority who put their lives on line during the liberation struggle. Colonialism also created a sense of injustice and identity crisis on the part of the majority of Zimbabweans. So to honestly understand the current crisis in Zimbabwe: grab of lands, face-off between Mugabe and Tsvangirai, and the general social chaos, we need to transcend beyond the narrow interest-group-based-model to a more holistic social class analysis. Two, and consequent upon the preceding observation, it immediately points to the fact that the search for the solutions to the problems is indeed overwhelming, but not insurmountable. This is in part due to the social structure of Zimbabwe which is presently tenaciously tied to the European-American industrial capitalist system and the massive support it enjoys from Zimbabwean's powerful but comprador counterparts.

Three, within the favoured radical transformation of the existing social structures of production, land remains the key and demands urgency. Since land goes beyond a mere economic factor to the issue of cosmology, identity, power, etc to ordinary Zimbabweans, there would be no mistake in engaging in an aggressive but orderly redistribution of land to millions of rural peasants and landless Zimbabweans. Effective redistribution of land has the added advantage in the fact that it will beside the economic empowerment, also help to heal the festering wound of injustices and soothe the psyche of millions of Zimbabweans that were forcibly dispossessed of their ancestral lands.

Four, the key to the solution of the Zimbabweans' crisis requires that all relevant partners to the crisis adopt an honest approach and play its part impartially. Thus Britain, the rest of European Union and U.S, which are at the centre of the crisis, have the onerous responsibility to reexamine their strategies in line with the reality of an independent and sovereign Zimbabwe. They must develop the knowledge-based consciousness regarding the predicament and yearnings of millions of Zimbabweans.

Fifth, and all-the-more-important, Zimbabweans holds the ace to finding a lasting solution to their current crisis. Again, this requires commonly developing the knowledge-based consciousness of their common predicament, their enemies and the way forward. This would require reinventing the revolutionary zeal of Zimbabweans' liberation fighters that was rooted in scientific socialism. Luckily for Zimbabwe, in this regard is the fact that the peasantry as Makamure (1987:72) noted, is highly politicized—having been the object of socialist teaching during the liberation war. Patrick Wilmot, the erudite Marxist sociologist, explained that when the nation becomes personified in individuals or groups that are antinational, national consciousness must defend the nation against Emperors, Life Presidents and Field Marshals who brutalize and negate the nation (1994:182). So if Mugabe and his class of Zimbabwe's elite have lost direction and consciousness, and have thus deviated, then, the peasantry has the national duty to fill in the gap.

Finally, the lesson to be drawn from the current socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe is that there is no alternative to Zimbabwe coming

out its present socio-economic and political doldrums. The key, however, lies in honestly appreciating the fundamental deficits of the convulsed social structure of production, distribution and consumption, and taking bold steps to radically overhaul them. Zimbabweans' leaders can be tactical by combining diplomacy but remaining focused and committed to the course of empowering many Zimbabweans economically and politically. Zimbabwe's fate lies squarely in the hands of the Zimbabweans. This is the fact of history. Zimbabwe that fails, or that continues to postpone addressing the land issue which is critical in this restructuring or reforms, as it were, is surely only succeeding in nurturing a potential crisis, the explosion which will come with a catastrophic consequences. For as it is common in all capitalist system, not even the chanting of all the shibboleths of modern democracy could stop the frustrated, alienated, marginalized and pauperized Zimbabwean people from starting the second war of national liberation.

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