

of the 1990s. In the section on politics of durability, Dorman goes into great detail on both the formation of organizations that enabled ZANU-PF to hold on to power and the emergence of new organizations that would eventually challenge that durability. Dorman's analysis argues that urban professionals did not begin their activism in the late post-1999 era, as suggested by most scholars, but rather that trade unions and other civil organizations formed in response to demands by ordinary citizens immediately after independence.

In writing about the Zimbabwean economic crisis, scholars often point to the 1997 war veterans' payouts as the critical point that sparked the country's economic woes. Dorman gives important context to the challenges faced by war veterans and the formation of organizations that advocated against corruption. This historical context is particularly important as more time passes since independence and the liberation struggle. Dorman goes into greater detail on the issues that resulted in the prevailing toxic relationship between war veterans and the government. ZANU-PF's push for land reform was not motivated by the need to provide for war veterans; instead, the party recognized that its position of power in both urban and rural constituencies had weakened. And thus land reform is about the politics of party durability. From 1980 until the mid-1990s, the major democratic institutions, such as courts and civil society, operated with relative freedom, but as ZANU-PF sensed that it was losing control, its nationalistic politics became more extreme and violent. Finally, scholars of African feminism will appreciate Dorman's in-depth exploration of the central role that women such as Margret Dongo continue to play in shaping Zimbabwe's contemporary politics.

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Charles Laurie, *The Land Reform Deception: political opportunism in Zimbabwe's land seizure era*. New York NY: Oxford University Press (hb US\$105/£75 – 978 0 19 939829 4; pb US\$36.95/£26.49 – 978 0 19 068052 7). 2016, 398 pp.

In *The Land Reform Deception*, Charles Laurie debates the impact and authenticity of the Zimbabwean land seizures that took place between 2000 and 2008. Laurie argues that Mugabe was a reluctant champion of the seizures, that his hand was forced by the war veterans (Chapter 2), and that he had to respond to the emergence and rising support for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (Chapter 3). In this respect, Laurie argues that rhetoric around the redress of historical land imbalances was a deceptive red herring, which the ruling party (ZANU-PF) was forced to embrace on a scale it had not anticipated.

Laurie concludes that the Mugabe government did not premeditate Zimbabwe's land seizures, and initially allowed them on only a small scale (five farms per district) to placate the wishes of the liberation war veterans, before eventually capitulating to them. According to Laurie, ZANU-PF's intentions had been: to disrupt the MDC's organization in rural areas; to sanction farmers and their workers, signalling the consequences of supporting the opposition (p. 284); and to make the international community aware of the consequences of not financing land reform. Laurie argues that Mugabe foresaw the debilitating economic effects of disorganized land reform on a large scale and initially opposed the seizures, but

had to jump on board to politicize the process after losing control of the limited land grabs meant to placate the war veterans.

The book supports these core arguments through analysis based on 111 interviews, secondary literature, and former white farmer survey evidence. Laurie adds to this already strong evidence base an impressive mapping of 21,491 observations relating to the preponderance of violence across Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2008. The result is a detailed analysis of motivating factors, including land demands from liberation war veterans, which, the book argues, were not a major concern among even rural Zimbabweans. The book outlines the central role of mobilized war veterans in the land seizures, showing how they were able to 'stand up to the president' on the strength of support from other war veterans located in the state's security sectors (Chapter 2). Also, Laurie argues that war veterans could drag a reluctant Mugabe along because they constituted a critical component of ZANU-PF's traditional rural support base, and were the custodians of ZANU-PF's and Mugabe's claim to legitimacy.

Laurie also exposes the extent, type, spread and logics behind the deployment of violence and coercion during the land seizure period. He finds that, while aggression was prevalent, the tipping point was often not the result of acute violence. The decision made by white farmers to abandon farms, despite emotional and financial ties, Laurie argues, was the cumulative effect of intimidation (*jambanja*), which caused chronic vulnerability (Chapters 6 and 7), and financial calculations informed by this vulnerability (Chapter 8).

The book outlines the effects of bonds of fear (from violence) and the seizures (in general) on two levels. Firstly, it analyses the local and personal political economies of white farmers (loss of investment and property), of farm workers (loss of work and often shelter), and of rural livelihoods (disruption of value chains). Secondly, it looks at the macro-level, showing how the seizures exacerbated the economic crisis of the 2000s, leading to a downturn in agricultural production and GDP, and also to a transition from professional commercial farming to agricultural patronage.

Laurie's primary thesis – that ZANU-PF operated first and foremost in its own interests and railroaded the economy towards this end – is not new in the literature on Zimbabwe's land reform, state and electoral politics post-2000. Nonetheless, Laurie, through his mixed-methods approach, brings to bear on these arguments rich empirical evidence on an impressive – possibly unprecedented – scale in the literature on the contentious politics of land reform in Zimbabwe. The book is a thick analytic description of Zimbabwe's land reform. Its downside is that, despite the enormous volume of evidence, the narrative is seldom theoretically grounded. Laurie argues that no model informed the seizures; therefore the seizures were happenstance based on contingent factors. This limits the book's explanatory power to this one case – Zimbabwe – which, he argues correctly, should not be lauded as a model for other case study countries.

Other challenges stem from the book's holistic national outlook; while giving the reader a good overview, this is likely to subsume significant variation at the local level, which has been revealed by other in-depth work focusing on smaller sub-national units. Also, the use of national aggregate economic indicators for the period from 2000 to 2008 does not sufficiently support the argument that Zimbabwe's economic downturn was caused solely by land seizures, as the downturn had begun before the seizures. The slump in agro-production could also be a natural corollary of such shocks and fundamental transitions in land ownership, with the real effects becoming visible only after a much longer time than the book covers.

However, the book adds empirical value to extant literature on Zimbabwe's land reform, and places politics back at the centre, at a time when other scholars

are focusing on production levels, new class formation, and the changed social base. Its unravelling of the relations and co-dependencies between ZANU-PF and war veterans, and how these have assisted ZANU-PF's hold on power, makes the book a useful resource for readers grappling with Zimbabwe's politics today – especially given ongoing antagonisms within ZANU-PF, which are testing ties between ZANU-PF, Mugabe and war veterans, who, once again, are 'standing up to the president'.

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Blair Rutherford, *Farm Labor Struggles in Zimbabwe: the ground of politics*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press (hb US\$85 – 978 0 253 02399 5; pb US\$35 – 978 0 253 02403 9). 2016, vii + 278 pp.

Since 2000, Zimbabwean historiography has been dominated by works on the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). However, the majority of these works have fallen into two broad categories; those who view the land reform as a success and those who view it as an ill-conceived and violent land dispossession. What has been lacking in this historiography are ethnographically well-grounded studies that transcend these dichotomies. This book does exactly that. Rutherford builds on his years of research on farm labour to provide a *longue durée* perspective on everyday struggles of farm labour from the 1990s to the post-2000 period. Using ethnographic data collected from Upfumi, a horticultural farm east of Harare, Rutherford is able to weave a rich and compelling narrative on the experiences of farmworkers, especially in the aftermath of Zimbabwe's FTLRP.

The focus of the book is on how farmworkers dealt with the 'precarious livelihoods they forged out in the new agrarian landscape that has emerged in Zimbabwe since the massive, and often chaotic, land redistribution exercise that began in 2000' (p. 1). The book also examines the processes through which 'the practices and power relations of electoral politics became entangled in the configuration of livelihoods and social projects of an extraordinary farm labor struggle' (p. ix). Rutherford critiques the dominant narratives used to understand agrarian struggles in postcolonial Zimbabwe which dichotomize between those 'for' and those 'against' the land reform. This framing, as he argues, misses the actual 'ground of politics'. Rutherford goes beyond the two analytical lenses that look at politics as either oppressive or liberating to look at the place of politics in struggles for farmworkers' rights and agrarian livelihoods.

Rutherford deploys gender as an analytical lens to weave a story of farmworkers' struggles. He examines gendered relations on farms and how female farmworkers at Upfumi were subjected to various forms of gendered intimidation (p. 41). These experiences informed female farmworkers' willingness and desire to be involved in farm struggles. Rutherford's work articulates the agency of women who have often been viewed as mere victims. The key narrative in the book is the story of how a group composed largely of women workers was able to engage in a labour struggle for a very long period until victory was won. The book demonstrates that 'farm workers do not lack a form of agency but they just have a very different set of possibilities and perils operating through the changing concatenation of social relations, dependencies and power relations' (p. 253). Rutherford also uses the concept of belonging to make sense of the everyday lives of