

Framing the Relations between the Leader and the Led in the Struggle for Democracy in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACTS

Since independence, the process to transform Zimbabwe into a mature democracy with its citizens actively participating in sociopolitical activities has been hampered by the way state-citizen relations have been defined. The relationship between the people and their leaders in Zimbabwe has evolved in a context in which the political elites have maintained and reinforced the “citizen/subject vs leader/chief” as well as an “us vs them” dichotomy. This has been supported by several historical and cultural factors. First, the colonial system stressed that black Africans did not have automatic citizenship, placing them in a semi-feudal arrangement as subjects of the traditional leadership (*mambo/nkosi*) and by extension as subjects of the state. This frame of thinking has been maintained in independent Zimbabwe to the detriment of active citizenship and has curtailed the full realization of agency and citizenry among the population. Second, Zimbabwe can be considered a high-power distance society and this paper argues that the hierarchical structuring of social relations, for example in the family unit, further facilitates a lopsided relationship between the leaders and the citizens. Since independence, the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) elites have maintained and reinforced the position of Zimbabwe’s citizenry as subjects rather than rights-claiming citizens. They have also appropriated the civic space by asserting that they are “the people” and speak on behalf of the people of Zimbabwe. In the same manner, the various opposition leaders have usually gained prominence through their charisma rather than by taking up genuine tangible ideas and policy positions that would empower citizens and facilitate the development of agency among its electorate.

Seit der Unabhängigkeit wurde der Prozess der Transformation Simbabwes in eine reife Demokratie, in der die Bürger:innen aktiv am gesellschaftspolitischen Geschehen teilnehmen, durch

die Art und Weise, wie die Beziehungen zwischen Staat und Bürger:innen definiert wurden, behindert. Die Beziehung zwischen dem Volk und ihren Anführern in Simbabwe hat sich in einem Kontext entwickelt, in dem die politischen Eliten die Dichotomie „Bürger/Subjekt gegen Anführer/„Chief“ sowie „wir gegen sie“ aufrechterhalten und verstärkt haben. Dies wurde durch mehrere historische und kulturelle Faktoren begünstigt. Erstens betonte das koloniale System, dass Afrikaner:innen keine automatische Staatsbürgerschaft besaßen, und stellte sie in ein halbfeudales Arrangement als Untertanen der traditionellen Führung (*mambo/nkosi*) und damit auch als Untertanen des Staates. Diese Denkweise hat sich im unabhängigen Simbabwe zum Nachteil der aktiven Staatsbürgerschaft erhalten und hat die volle Entfaltung der Handlungsfähigkeit und des Bürgersinns in der Bevölkerung behindert. Zweitens kann Simbabwe als eine Gesellschaft mit großer Machtdistanz (*high power distance society*) betrachtet werden, und in diesem Beitrag wird argumentiert, dass die hierarchische Strukturierung der sozialen Beziehungen, z. B. in der Familie, ein einseitiges Verhältnis zwischen den politischen Anführern und den Bürger:innen weiter begünstigt. Seit der Unabhängigkeit haben die Eliten der Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) die Position der Bürger:innen Simbawwes als Untertanen und nicht als aktive Bürger:innen, die Rechte einfordern, aufrechterhalten und verstärkt. Sie haben sich auch den bürgerlichen Raum angeeignet, indem sie behaupteten, sie seien „das Volk“ und sprächen im Namen des Volkes von Simbabwe. Ebenso sind die verschiedenen Oppositionsführer in der Regel eher durch ihr Charisma bekannt geworden als durch das Aufgreifen echter, konkreter Ideen und politischer Positionen, die die Bürger:innen stärken und die Entwicklung von Handlungskompetenz bei den Wähler:innen fördern würden.

1. Introduction

The relationship between the people and their leaders in Zimbabwe has evolved in a context in which the political elites have maintained and reinforced the “citizen/subject vs leader/chief” as well as an “us vs them” dichotomy. In this article, I argue that the current framing of the state-citizen relationship is rooted in several historical and cultural elements. On the historical front, the colonial system stressed that black Africans did not have automatic citizenship, placing them in a semi-feudal arrangement as subjects of the traditional leadership (*mambo/nkosi*¹) and, by extension, as subjects of the state. On the cultural side, there was an adulterated and distorted understanding of pre-colonial sociocultural practices, where the chief was considered to “own” both people and land – making the people part of the property of the traditional leaders.² This strongly influenced how people related to their rulers. This frame of thinking has been maintained in independent Zimbabwe to the detriment of active citizenship and has curtailed the full realization of agency and citizenry among the population.

1 *Mambo* is the Shona word for king and *nkosi* is the Ndebele word for king.

2 A. Cheater, The Ideology of “Communal” Land Tenure in Zimbabwe: Mythogenesis Enacted?, in: Journal of the International African Institute 60 (1990) 2, pp. 188–206.

The notion of *shefu*³ (chief) is taken over by nationalist leaders, assigning themselves the role of the liberators and saviours, thereby creating an atmosphere where the citizens feel that they are beholden to the nationalist elites. Forty years into independence, this state-citizen relationship has not been democratized nor is there a visible intention to do so in the near future.

This paper discusses how citizenship in Zimbabwe has to a large extent remained locked in one sphere (its legal definition) and not been applied to the civic and political life. The paper conceptualizes Zimbabwe as a high-power distance society in which social hierarchies are entrenched in its sociopolitical culture.

While culture is dynamic and Zimbabwe does not have *one* hegemonic culture but a diversity of cultures, there are arguably some common cultural traits that lend themselves to the notion of a high power distance society. This is evident when one looks at a set of relationships. For instance, there is the Shona concept of *vakuru havanyepi*, which loosely translates as “elders do not lie”. This is connected to the respect and deference to age, which some interpret as the idea that elders should not be questioned. *Vakuru havanyepi*, which appears in many different variations,⁴ expresses a generally shared understanding of respect for seniority that has been used by the ruling elite⁵. Moreover, the paper will look at how this subservient relationship has been reinforced through economic and governance policy tools, such as the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. The analysis will dissect the discursive employment of tradition and culture to keep Zimbabwean citizens in a state of primitive loyalty and fear. The ensuing argument is not to say that Zimbabweans as a people are bereft of agency and are not conscious political actors. It is rather an attempt to describe how the underlying state-citizen relations have a bearing on how the leader and the led interact and perceive their respective role in the democratization of the country.

2. Citizenship as a Product of Social and Political Constructs

Glørstad argues that citizenship should be defined as both a practice and a social process in which citizens and social groups are directly involved. They demand, grow, and lose rights.⁶ This reinforces the general understanding of citizenship as an individual's status

3 *Shefu* is used in everyday language among the Shona, mostly to refer to the leaders in the early days of independence. It was mostly used in reference to politicians, cabinet members, and the prime minister. Veit-Wild notes that the term is derived from the Portuguese version of “chief”. F. Veit-Wild, “Zimbolicious” – The Creative Potential of Linguistic Innovation: The Case of Shona-English in Zimbabwe, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35 (2009) 3, p. 696. For example, the Shona proverb *murumo wevakuru hauwirepasi* translates to “one should take heed of the words/and or advice of elders as their words will most certainly come true”.

4 *Vakuru havanyepi* is a common Shona phrase which loosely translates to “elders do not lie”. This imbues a sense of infallibility arising from age, leaving no room to question or challenge adults.

5 N. Booty, Respect your elders: Why cultural norms benefit Mugabe, in: BBC, 19 November 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42024658> (accessed 7 July 2023).

6 V. Glørstad, *Citizens' Stories – or Theatre as Performing Citizenship in Zimbabwe*. Trends in Twenty-First-Century African Theatre and Performance, Amsterdam 2011, pp. 243–261.

as a member of a state and outlines how specific rights and responsibilities are allocated to the individual.⁷ Glørstad makes the argument that beyond one's identity as a citizen of a given political geographical space, a citizen has to be conscious of one's rights and obligations and be in a position to make a claim to the state.⁸

While this may indeed be true in some instances, a more nuanced analysis of the post-independence condition in developing countries such as Zimbabwe would reveal that citizenship beyond its legal definition is not a given. How the relationship between the citizens and the state is defined in practice determines the extent to which citizens are aware of their role, can exercise agency, and propel the demand side of social accountability. This relationship also determines the extent to which authorities are motivated to be responsive to the citizenry – the supply side of social accountability. This paper argues that citizenship is a negotiated space and is in a continual state of negotiation between the citizens and those in power. An important point to note is that the power holders have to recognize the claim-making citizens and, at the same time, that the citizens also have to be conscious of their ability to make claims to their leadership.

African citizens in most post-colonial independent countries engage with the state from a position of disempowerment. First, African citizens are disempowered by a history that did not prepare them for such an engagement. Second, in countries where nationalists waged wars of liberation, citizens have been deliberately put in a position where they feel beholden to their liberators to whom they should pay homage.

In colonial Africa, citizenship was, as Mahmood Mamdani puts it “a privilege of the civilised”,⁹ with the colonial state determining who is civilized and, in the process, othering the African. Pre-independence Zimbabwe was no different in this regard. This notion of having to qualify to be a citizen can be traced back to the works of Aristotle and the ancient republic. Citizenry, according to Aristotle, is to be understood in the context of his time. Citizenship was not automatic by birth – rather one had to fulfil certain “virtues” to be considered as a citizen.¹⁰ Indeed, when dealing with the question of citizenship in colonial Africa, the need to qualify what it meant (and to whom it was applied) became central in terms of how to deal with the rights of the indigenous people. Tied to the notion of citizenship were rights and obligations that could not be accorded to the “native” African equally. Cecil John Rhodes is reported to have reiterated “equal rights for all civilized men”.¹¹ The African was thus confined to a second-class citizen who makes no claim to the colonial state.

The settler colonial governance system emphasized separate development between the racial groups it defined and structured the relationship between these groups according to a

7 E. F. Isin and B. S. Turner (eds.), *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, London 2002, p. 340.

8 Glørstad, *Citizens' Stories*, pp. 243–261.

9 M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton 1996, p. 17.

10 J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ideal of Citizenship Since the Classical Times*, in: S. Gershon (ed.), *The Citizenship Debates*, Minneapolis 1998, pp. 31–42.

11 M. O. West, *Equal Rights for all Civilised Men*, in: *International Review of Social History* 37 (1992) 3, pp. 376–397, p. 377.

master-servant logic. This logic was institutionalized, with black Africans occupying the role of servant.¹² The Rhodesian government crafted a series of laws that were designed to deny Africans citizenship and to strip them of their identity and dignity in the process. Black Africans could not freely and actively participate in economic and social activities. The African's position as second-class citizens was institutionalized through laws that governed political activities, such as the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act (1914)¹³ and the country's electoral laws,¹⁴ which created a dual voters roll system separating whites and Africans. Economic participation and access to land were governed by the notorious Land Apportionment Act (1930),¹⁵ Land Husbandry Act (1951),¹⁶ Land Tenure Act (1965),¹⁷ and Industrial Conciliation Acts (1934, 1959, 1964),¹⁸ among a litany of legislation that restricted the realization of full citizenship for Africans. Africans had to fulfil prescribed requirements to even enjoy basic rights, such as voting, or to engage in everyday activities, such as drinking certain types of alcoholic beverages.¹⁹ The bureaucracy became the face of the settler colonial system, with the government being a remote master with no relationship to black Africans. According to Mamdani, such subjugation was necessary for the colonial settlers to exert control and "rein in" the indigenous people.²⁰ To do this effectively meant stripping the indigenous people of their rights and voice while relegating them to the status of second-class citizens. The colonial government co-opted traditional leaders for their own ends.²¹ What might have appeared as a form of decentralization or pockets of self-rule was in reality a calculated design for effective control and the limiting of participation and spaces for black Africans. Representation was extremely limited at best and non-existent at worst. The physical, legal, social, and economic distance between the people and their leaders in

12 M. S. Mngomezulu, *Citizenship in colonial Africa: An overview of British and French repertoires* in: *Journal of Political Inquiry* (2015), pp. 4–11.

13 The law allowed the colonial settler governments to treat different classes of subjects under British rule differently. Subsequent laws such as Southern Rhodesia citizenship and British Nationality Act (1949) discriminated against Africans, disallowing them to be citizens enjoying the same rights as the colonial settlers. See B Manby, *Report On Citizenship Law: Zimbabwe*. Country Report 2019/01, Global Citizenship Observatory (GLOBALCIT) Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

14 The Constitution of Rhodesia (1969) section 18 and the Electoral Act No. 56 (1969) laws fortified the dual franchise system, which had two voters roll, namely A and B. The voters roll A had requirements that only white Rhodesians could meet while the B roll accommodated the Africans. See also A Lemon *Electoral Machinery and Voting Patterns in Rhodesia, 1962–1977*, in: *African Affairs*, October 77 (1978) 309, pp. 511–530.

15 Southern Rhodesia, *Land Apportionment Act* (1930).

16 Southern Rhodesia, *Native Land Husbandry Act* (1951).

17 Rhodesia *Land Tenure Act* (1965).

18 Southern Rhodesia, *Industrial Conciliation Act* (1934); the *Industrial Conciliation Act No. 29* (1959), section 29; and the *Industrial Conciliation Act No. 76* (1964) restricted the types of employment that the Africans could take up.

19 Southern Rhodesia, *The Liquor Act* (1953), section 82 (1).

20 Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, pp. 20–21.

21 However, not all traditional leaders blindly did the bidding of the colonial masters. There are traditional leaders who became the face of resistance against colonial rule in Zimbabwe, such as Chief Reikai Tangwena, who resisted the colonial rule, especially the Land Apportionment Act. See D. S. Moore, *The Crucible of Cultural Politics: Reworking "Development" in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands*, in: *American Ethnologist* 26 (1999) 3, pp. 654–689.

colonial times was created by stripping the African population of any participation in civic and political spaces. Mamdani captures it as follows:

*The African colonial experience came to be [...]. Organized differently in rural areas from urban ones, [...] it contained a duality: two forms of power under a single hegemonic authority. Urban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, rural power of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, customary power pledged to enforce tradition [...]. To victims of racism the vocabulary of rights rang hollow, a lullaby for perpetuating racial privilege. Their demands were formulated in the language of nationalism and social justice.*²²

According to Mamdani, the Africans in settler colonies became disconnected from the language of rights, and this also became visible in the anti-colonial struggle in many African countries. The struggle for independence was framed as anti-colonial and anti-white nationalism, often only paying lip service to democracy and citizen participation. A concomitant civic awakening and consciousness were usually not emphasized. Kemp-ton Makamure observes that there was no history of democratic struggle among the citizenry, even during colonial times. He puts it as follows:

*There is no tradition of internal democratic struggle. All talk about democracy is still largely theoretical [...]. The only strong feelings capable of being evoked are the anti-white and anti-colonial feelings. However, such feelings do not lead to a general democratic understanding [...]. ZANU–PF has used those feelings of the people for backward, if not reactionary causes.*²³

Coming from colonial history, it was not certain that the shift in rulership from the colonial government to independent African-led governments would automatically allow the citizens to acquire a voice in Zimbabwe.²⁴ Jonathan Moyo decries what he terms the “guerilla psychology” that the ruling party continued with into post-independence Zimbabwe, creating a sense of subservience on the part of the general population. He argues that this psychology is antithetical to the development of civil society, entrapping the citizens in fear. Moyo states that

*Guerrilla psychology opposed the basic tenets of tolerance of individual values and identities in the military training camps and in the operational areas [...]. In other words, it opposed the formation of civil society. This psychology continued after independence.*²⁵

22 Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, p. 19.

23 K. Makamure, *The Struggle for Democracy and Democratisation in: I. Mandaza and L. Sachikonye (eds.), The One Party State and Democracy: Southern Africa Political Economy Series (SAPES) Trust, Harare 1991* pp. 110.

24 *Ibid.*

25 J. N. Moyo, *Civil Society in Zimbabwe*, in: *Zambezia* 20 (1993) 1, p. 13.

3. Crafting the Relationship between the Leader and the Led in Post-independence Zimbabwe

After the onset of independence in 1980, power was increasingly consolidated in the ZANU–PF²⁶ government and subsequently in the hands of the president. The Constitutional Amendment Number 1 (1987), which created the executive presidency, was the most obvious manifestation of this intention, giving the president wide-ranging powers.²⁷ This set in motion the establishment of a political system that was dominated by a president who exercised his executive powers in pursuit of retaining a hold on both government and citizens. The passing of the amendment also illustrates the extent to which the leadership within ZANU–PF had disempowered their own members and whipped them to toe the party line.²⁸

Moreover, frontline service providers, such as teachers, nurses, and agriculture extension officers, became deified and thus unaccountable to ordinary citizens.²⁹ This created power asymmetries that have continued to hamper the ability of citizens to demand accountability from service providers at the local level in post-independence Zimbabwe. Makamure makes a distinction between a citizen who repeats slogans and a claim-making citizen in Zimbabwe.³⁰ The political environment that followed post-independence was overwhelmingly dominated by narratives from the ruling party with the aid of the state media. The citizens were not left with much space for critical debate as the media outlets – which could have provided a critical framing of political issues as well as information to the citizenry – seemed to have become part of the elite. The drive by ZANU–PF for a one-party state is a case in point. Makamure notes the absence of vibrant debate on the matter in the media and attributes this to a “highly malleable and obedient journalistic fraternity”.³¹

There is an ongoing debate on whether the citizen-as-subject conception was enforced by the colonial government without making use of Zimbabwe’s traditional governance structure. Some scholars argue that the institutional set-up of pre-colonial states allowed for a certain level of checks and balances regarding chiefs’ power.³² The king was at the top of the political ladder, and there were channels for conveying messages from the sub-

26 Ibid.

27 F. Arbab, *Impact of Mugabe’s Policies on the Prospects for Democracy in Zimbabwe*, in: *Strategic Studies* 26 (2006) 1, p. 150.

28 In a conversation I held in 2018 during a field research visit on education sector reforms with one former ZANU–PF member of parliament (1985–1990), she mentioned that a few parliamentarians from ZANU–PF were appalled by Amendment 1 (1987), but when she asked if they would vote together with her against the amendment, their response was that they cannot go against the wishes of the party leadership.

29 R. Chikohomero, *Education in Service of Patronage? An Analysis of the Collision Between Learning-oriented Reforms and a Cohesive and Coherent Education Bureaucracy System in Zimbabwe*, in: *Master’s Dissertation Series Number 10* (2020), pp. 1–49.

30 Makamure, *The Struggle for Democracy and Democratisation*, pp. 103–121.

31 Ibid., p. 110.

32 I. Taylor, *Pre-colonial political systems and colonialism*, in: *African Politics: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198806578.003.0002> (accessed 7 July 2023).

jects to the king. The use of the traditional court (*Dare/Inkundla*)³³ to deliberate on issue of national importance was a common practice in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. However, scholars such as Munamato Chemhuru challenge this idea by stating that traditional societies did not uphold liberal principles of democracy at the expense of the whole community.³⁴ Hence, the majority were always regarded as the subjects of the ruling class and had no power to question the authorities. The idea of questioning the authorities in Zimbabwe was thus also an alien concept for the traditional governance system.

4. A High Power Distance Society Creates more Allegiance than Citizenship

While Zimbabwean cultural practices are heterogeneous, they often exhibit paternalistic and patriarchal elements.³⁵ In many households, social control in the family is exercised/mediated via one's relationship with elder siblings, parents, and any other senior family members. From the author's own experiences, who grew up in the early 1980s in Zimbabwe, a few things were emphasized during childhood: that elders are always correct, a child does not speak when elders are speaking, and the questioning of decisions made by adults would be silenced and perhaps include beating. In a way, such modes of conduct closed the space for young people to voice their concerns and participate in household or community/village decision-making. In many public schools throughout the country, conversation in a class was unidirectional, where the teacher exclusively asked the questions, and the pupils responded. Critical engagement and critical thinking in most public schools were not prioritised. In fact, education in Zimbabwe, before new curriculum was introduced in 2013, focused more on rote learning instead of encouraging discovery and thinking. This did not create an environment conducive for active citizens to understand that policy-makers should be held accountable to the citizens.

While the country does not have one homogenous culture, elements of a high power distance culture that undergird patriarchal structures is dominant in most of the cultures found in Zimbabwe.³⁶ According to Geert Hofstede, high power distance refers to societies that are hierarchical and differentiate between their members in regard to the power they hold.³⁷ The hierarchy is accepted as a given, and the power holders are perceived as superior.³⁸ This paper argues that this approach to power and hierarchies in Zimbabwe

33 *Dare* in Shona or *Inkundla* in Ndebele refers to the king's court, where matters were deliberated on by the king and members of the king's council.

34 M. Chemhuru, Democracy and the Paradox of Zimbabwe: Lessons from the Traditional Systems of Governance, in: *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 3 (2010) 10, pp. 180–191.

35 J. L. Parpart, Gender Patriarchy and Development in Africa: The Zimbabwe Case. Working Paper 254 (1996), pp. 145–165.

36 Cf. G. Hofstede, *Culture's consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*, Beverly Hills 1980, p. 621; Cheater, *The Ideology of "Communal" Land Tenure*.

37 G. Hofstede, *Culture's consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*, Beverly Hills, 1980, p. 621.

38 Z. Aycan, *Paternalism: Towards Conceptual Refinement and Operationalization* in: K. S. Yang, K. K. Hwang, and U.

is further rooted in societies where cultural hierarchies and patriarchal values are established by office holders that are ascribed a paternal role in society. Michael A. Daniels and Gary J. Greguras argue that “power distance refers to the degree to which individuals, groups, or societies accept inequalities (e.g., inequalities in power, status and wealth) as unavoidable, legitimate, or functional”.³⁹

The authority of the father is almost absolute in Zimbabwean traditional households. While avenues for tempering abuse and some level of consultations exist, one is generally not accepted to question or challenge this authority. Dynamics differ in the case of female-led households, where there is no male figure. However, such a male-dominated structure overall acts as a basis for arranging the governing architecture in a manner that makes it difficult to question the authority of the executive and the party. The power distance culture defines the context within which Zimbabwean politics and governance takes place, framing the interactions between the state and its citizens in the political sphere. The extent to which ordinary citizens can confidently and freely question and demand accountability from their leaders in government is limited by how they interpret this relationship.

Power distance culture is not a preserve of the political institutions alone. It pervades and dominates many aspects of daily life, encompassing interactions between a teacher and students in the classroom and between a teacher and a student’s parents,⁴⁰ between a lactating mother and a nurse at the clinic,⁴¹ or between a religious leader and his congregation. Such power differentials are usually palpable.

Speaking to members of the ZANU–PF Women’s League, the then–secretary of the league and cabinet minister in post-independence Zimbabwe, Joyce Mujuru, was reported to have said,

*in African custom the father was the head of a house. If anything went wrong, a child would not complain to the father, but would seek the other ways of doing so [...]. You will never get a child telling his father to step down because he has failed to run the affairs of the house.*⁴²

Moyo notes the following about this speech: “To suggest that the presidency of a nation is metaphorically equivalent to *fatherhood* in a family and the citizens are equivalent to *children* is a dangerous form of paternalism.”⁴³ This best encapsulates how the high

Kim (eds.), *Scientific Advances in Indigenous Psychologies: Empirical, Philosophical and Cultural Contributions*, London 2006, pp. 445–466.

39 M. A. Daniels and G. J. Greguras, *Exploring the Nature of Power Distance: Implications for Micro- and Macro-Level Theories, Processes, and Outcomes*, in: *Journal of Management* 40 (2014) 5, pp. 1202–1229.

40 Chikohomero, *Education in Service of Patronage?*

41 Z. Nyathi-Jokomo et al., ‘If nurses were in our shoes would they breastfeed their own babies?’ A qualitative inquiry on challenges faced by breastfeeding mothers on the PMTCT programme in a rural community in Zimbabwe. *BMC Pregnancy Childhood* 2019, 19 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6543664/> (accessed 18 April 2023).

42 J. Moyo, *The Dialectics of National Unity and Democracy in Zimbabwe*, in: Mandaza and Sachikonye (eds.), *The One Party State and Democracy*, p. 85.

43 Ibid. (emphasis added).

power distance culture is understood and exercised. The leadership assigns itself the role of the parent, who guides and knows what is best for the children, that is to say the people. In the same vein, the children offer unquestioning respect to the leadership and are expected to believe that the leadership will always act in their best interest. This is further buttressed by the ageist notion, which demands that the elders cannot be questioned. There are many praise songs extolling the late president Robert G. Mugabe as “our” father. In 2010, it was revealed through leaked government communication that one of the cabinet ministers in Mugabe’s government signed off all his written communication to the president as “Your ever obedient son”.⁴⁴ Moyo argues that the problem with Zimbabweans is that

*many Africans feel so deeply about obligations to kinsman and elders that they are readily well disposed to ignore and undermine the need for an impersonal system of formal organization.*⁴⁵

Notably, this particular understanding of the relationship between the leader and the led seems to cut across the political divide. Nelson Chamisa, the leader of the popular opposition party, the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), has on a number of occasions referred to himself as a “father” to members of his party and supporters.⁴⁶ Chamisa even doubles down on the authority he claims to have over his supporters by also emphasizing his religious pastoral role. While the labels of both the father and the pastor imply a person who protects, provides, and exercises leadership and pastoral care, they also carry the connotation of absolute authority in a context where fatherhood is synonymous with infallibility.

The social and cultural belief systems impact on the nature of relations between the post-independence ruling elites and the institutions of state. The cultural constructs of hierarchy, order, and respect have been used in many instances to whip citizens into submission. The practice is pervasive across Zimbabwe’s historical episodes, not only in the post-independence context.⁴⁷ Fay Chung observes that cultural hierarchy and loyalty permeate the public and private sectors in Zimbabwe. Writing about the post-independence state, the author declares that the traditional concepts of rulers and subjects hold much sway over the population. This is visible in the widely held view that the ruling party is the chief of the people, which are considered subordinates.⁴⁸ Ordinary party members and the general population strongly believe that loyalty to the party was the vehicle through which opportunities and resources could be realized in post-independence

44 Nehanda Radio, Minister Mpofu is Mugabe’s ‘ever obedient son’ 10 November 2010 <https://nehandaradio.com/2010/11/12/minister-mpofu-is-mugabe’s-ever-obedient-son/> (accessed 10 July 2023).

45 J. N. Moyo, *The Politics of Administration: Understanding Bureaucracy in Africa*, Harare 1992, p. 84.

46 While addressing questions that relate to the incarcerated Job Sikhala, Chamisa said “I am the leader, I am the father, you must take care of your children.” Available on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itInJ8-pxW8>.

47 Chikohomero, *Education in Service of Patronage?*

48 F. Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe*, Stockholm 2006, p. 268.

Zimbabwe.⁴⁹ Michael Bratton and Eldred Masunungure concur with this view. The authors note that in the post-independence period

*the rapid growth of the civil service [...] was led by the mass appointment of schoolteachers [...], who, in return, granted political loyalty to the ruling party that had created so many attractive job opportunities.*⁵⁰

This created a fraternity of civil servants who felt indebted and beholden to the party, eager to comply with the political establishment.⁵¹ Moreover, the political establishment felt entitled to that loyalty. The reference to the then–prime minister as “the father”⁵² further consolidated the power asymmetries between the leaders and the citizens. Makumbe argues that the ruling elite cunningly used tradition and a distortion of cultural loyalty concepts in the public service to control and exert influence on the bureaucracy in Zimbabwe.⁵³ ZANU–PF exhibited a penchant for a command-and-control approach to state institutions, especially the civil service. This was further obscured by the conflation of the political party and the state. This blurring of lines, which was actively encouraged by the party and its leadership, left a civil service bereft of professionalism. It created a public service that was more obedient to individuals than rule-bound and, consequently, susceptible to patronage.

Before independence, the civil service was assumed to be rule-bound and operating on the basis of meritocracy, albeit mediated by race. Moyo states that the colonial institutions, and by extension the bureaucracy including village-level extension workers and teachers, “were notoriously not accountable to the general public”.⁵⁴ In post-independence Zimbabwe, the bureaucratic culture included loyalty to the ruling party as the core value. This eventually provided room for civil service capture and a fertile ground for a patronage system with ZANU–PF at the centre. The result was the gradual weakening of the bureaucracy to a point of paralysis.⁵⁵

49 Ibid.

50 M. Bratton and A. Masunungure, *The Anatomy of Political Predation: Leaders, Elites and Coalitions in Zimbabwe, 1980–2010*, Development Leadership Program, University of York, Paper No. 9 (2011), p. 14.

51 F. Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe*, Stockholm 2006, p. 273.

52 After independence in 1980, many popular songs referred to the Prime Minister and subsequent President Mugabe as ‘father’. One such was “VaMugabe ndibaba”, which means “Mr Mugabe is our father”. This leads to difficulties when challenging the president or the executive, either in a professional setting or sociopolitical setting.

53 J. Makumbe, ‘The 1990 Zimbabwe Elections: Implications for Democracy’; in: Mandaza and Sachikonye (eds.), *The One Party State and Democracy*, pp. 179–188.

54 Moyo, *Civil Society in Zimbabwe*, p. 10.

55 George Charamba, the former permanent secretary in the Ministry of Information (2000–2017) had this to say about the state of the bureaucracy: “The Zimbabwean bureaucracy was bereft of intellectuals, bereft to levels of anaemia. That all it produced was staid at best, thoughtless at worst.” G. Charamba, *Manheru: Adieu and hello Zimbabwe!* in: *The Herald*, 24 June 2017, <https://www.herald.co.zw/manheru-adieu-and-hello-zimbabwe/> (accessed 22 November 2023).

The ZANU–PF government used coercion, a manipulated interpretation of culture, and cadre deployment to maintain control over key state institutions and the citizenry.⁵⁶ During the 1980s, the party swiftly moved in to assert its control over state institutions by appointing party loyalists and ex-combatants to senior positions, both in central and local governments. Bratton and Masunungure note that, “predatory tendencies were evident from the outset within the ruling party”.⁵⁷

The distance between government and the citizens, a hallmark of the colonial state, was thus retained in post-independence Zimbabwe. Upon independence, the new government inherited a bureaucracy that the then ZANU (later renamed ZANU–PF) maintained and perfected for its own purpose. To reinforce the distance between citizens and office bearers at all levels, Moyo argues that the ZANU–PF government adulterated traditional value systems in order to enforce unquestioning obedience to the party and government.⁵⁸ Moyo argues that one belief (however mistaken) that runs deep in the consciousness of many African nationalists is that African traditional values demand a system of governance that has one chief and one clan bound together by consensus politics.⁵⁹ In other words, having to follow the leader without question was naturalized in Zimbabwe, even if this worked against the best interests of its citizens.

This approach is not particular to ZANU–PF. Scholars have noted that many post-independence African states have the propensity to silence dissenting voices of citizens by invading every aspect of public life. In discussing this tendency, Musayemura Zimunya notes the following:

*African governments are not content with just running the affairs of the State and providing their people with the necessities of life, but would also run the very lives and control the thinking of the citizens they govern.*⁶⁰

Early efforts to appropriate all forms of civil society manifested in the use of the party’s own local structures, enveloping even the most micro-level of neighbourhood organizational structures, such as burial societies and cooperatives.⁶¹ Moyo further states that ZANU–PF took full advantage of an “underdeveloped” civil society by asserting that it was the sole legitimate representative of the people,⁶² thus excluding people’s voices and favouring obedience and allegiance instead. For ZANU–PF, power retention is only possible if they can exercise control and dominance over the entire population. This has

56 Chikohomero, Education in Service of Patronage?; J. Makumbe, Bureaucratic Corruption in Zimbabwe: Causes and Magnitude of the Problem Africa Development / Afrique et Développement 19 (1994) 3, pp. 45–60; M. B. Zimunya, Intolerance: The Bane of African Rulers in: Mandaza and Sachikonye (eds.), The One Party State and Democracy, pp. 61–69.

57 Bratton and Masunungure, The Anatomy of Political Predation, p. 14.

58 Moyo, Civil Society in Zimbabwe, pp. 1–13.

59 Ibid.

60 Zimunya, Intolerance, p. 61.

61 Analysis from personal experiences of growing up in Harare in the late 1980s into the early 1990s, where burial society membership was linked to party membership. Meetings at the local burial society started with ruling party slogans.

62 Moyo, Civil Society in Zimbabwe, p. 7.

taken various forms over the years since independence but the underlying intent to control how the population engages in civic and political spaces abides.

5. State-Citizen Relations after the Fast Track Land Reform Programme

In several policy fields, including agriculture and mining, the ZANU–PF government has set up economic arrangements that bind the huge voting bloc to a relationship of dependency with the ruling party. One example is the resettlement areas resulting from the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), launched in 2000. The merits and demerits of the FTLRP have been discussed in length elsewhere.⁶³ While the urgent need to redress the untenable colonial injustices in the sphere of land ownership was clear and reform both morally and legally justified, this paper insists that a closer look at the implementation of the programme reveals an intent by the ruling party to use land as another means of control.

Political scientists,⁶⁴ agriculture economists,⁶⁵ as well as development practitioners⁶⁶ have written on the subject of the FTLRP, focusing on various elements, including the process of appropriation, regularization attempts, and ensuing production and ownership patterns.⁶⁷ Much of the discussion has centred around the process and methods of land appropriation and the levels of productivity thereafter. For example, Toendepi Shonhe shows positive results in terms of production and increase in national yield.⁶⁸ However, the social impact of the programme has so far been insufficiently investigated.

Zimbabwe has a few land tenure systems in place. This includes different types, including state, leasehold, permit, communal, and freehold.⁶⁹ What is of specific interest to this

63 See also M. Masiwa (ed.), *Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe: Disparity Between Policy Design and Implementation Post Independence Land Reform in Zimbabwe*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Harare 2004, pp. v–147; S. Moyo, *African Land Questions, the State and Agrarian Transition: Contradictions of Neoliberal Land Reforms*, African Institute for Agrarian Studies, Harare 2004 pp. 1–39; I. Scoones et al., *Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths & Realities*, Oxford 2010; T. Shonhe, *Covid-19 and the Political Economy of Tobacco and Maize Commodity Circuits: Makoronyera, The 'Connected' And Agrarian Accumulation In Zimbabwe: Agriculture Policy Research in: Africa Working Paper 055 (2021)*, pp. 4–36.

64 A. C. Laurie, *The Land Reform Deception: Political Opportunism in Zimbabwe's Land Seizure Era*, Oxford 2016.

65 S. Moyo, *Land reform under structural adjustment in Zimbabwe: Land use change in the Mashonaland provinces*, Stockholm 2000, pp. 1–266; N. H. Thomas, *Land reform in Zimbabwe*, in: *Third World Quarterly* 24 (2003) 4, pp. 691–712.

66 Scoones et al., *Zimbabwe's Land Reform*; T. Shonhe and I. Scoones, *Private and state-led contract farming in Zimbabwe: Accumulation, social differentiation and rural politics*, in: *Journal of Agrarian Change* 22 (2022) 1, pp. 118–138; P. Zamchiya, *The Role of Politics and State Practices in Shaping Rural Differentiation: A Study of Resettled Small-Scale Farmers in South Eastern Zimbabwe*, in: *Journal of Southern African* 39 (2013) 4, pp. 937–953.

67 Shonhe, *Covid-19 and the Political Economy of Tobacco and Maize Commodity Circuits*, pp. 4–36.

68 After an initial setback in the production of maize and tobacco between 2000 and 2015, there is growing evidence of a turn around with small-scale farmers increasing their production of both crops. Data compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture shows an increase in maize production from 471,152 tonnes in 2008 to 2,155,526 tonnes in 2017, and with respect to tobacco, production rose from 69,791 tonnes in 2008 to 206,947 tonnes in 2018. See T. Shonhe, *The Political Economy of Agricultural Commercialisation in Zimbabwe*, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town Working Paper 012, April 2018, p. 15.

69 J. Nyoni, *USAID Strategic Economic Research and Analysis – Zimbabwe (Sera) Program Land Tenure and Land*

paper is that a relationship between the citizens and the ruling party that is defined by patronage and dependency has been reinforced through the land tenure arrangements designed after the FTLRP and agriculture input support schemes. While the FTLRP was set in motion by landless (smallholder) farmers and war veterans that invaded farms, the subsequent process of regularization and allocation of farming plots was a bit more structured, with the government taking the lead. The beneficiary identification and selection processes – though not always uniform – usually included community members (grass-roots level); members of the ruling party, state security personnel, government departments; and war veterans.⁷⁰ War veterans morphed into an auxiliary force for the ruling party and became the gatekeepers of the land reform, especially among the A1 (explained below) small-scale farmers.⁷¹ Ian Scoones et al. assert that land beneficiaries were not all relatives and cronies of the political elite.⁷² However, one had to prove a certain level of allegiance to the ruling party to be given land.

Joyce Sifile states that “the FTLRP was carried out based on clientele and rampant sponsorship such that land claims were channelled through clientelist network superintended by ZANU–PF for its own political survival”.⁷³ This also created farmers that were heavily indebted to the party who could be counted on to vote *en masse* for ZANU–PF to return the favour. Their right to remain on the acquired land and to utilize it depended on this relationship. Both the leasehold and the permit land tenure contain provisions that empower the state to withdraw the lease or permit at will with only a three-month notice. The reconfiguration of land tenure via the FTLRP did not create land-owning Zimbabweans. The FTLRP was based on a two-tier model (A1 and A2). A2 was the medium-scale model that included farmers and other beneficiaries with a certain degree of knowledge and potential of commercial farming. A1 incorporated approximately 70 per cent

Marketability in Zimbabwe: Policy Options and Recommendations Contract No. AID-613-C-11-00001, September 2016, p. 8.

- 70 J. Chaumba, I. Scoones, and W. Wolmer, From jambanja to planning: the reassertion of technocracy in land reform in south-eastern Zimbabwe, in: *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41 (2003) 4, pp. 533–554.
- 71 The FTLRP followed the model for restructuring appropriated land laid out in 1982 and the 1998 Land Policy. The A1 model was designated for small-scale farming, targeting mainly landless peasants and the unemployed. This created a villagized model. Each household was to get 5 ha of land in natural farming regions I, II, and III and 10 ha in areas mainly designated for cattle ranching and grazing. The A2 model was for medium-scale commercial learning farming activities, and the farm sizes varied from the natural farming region I to V. Marongwe argues that in practice only 53 per cent of the resettled farmers in the A1 models were poor landless peasants. Over one-third of the allocated land went to civil servants, business people, and other professionals. See N. Marongwe, *Redistributive land reform and poverty reduction in Zimbabwe. Working Paper for Livelihoods after Land Reform*, 2002 pp 13. See also G. Mkodzongi, *Fast Tracking Land Reform and Rural Livelihoods in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe: Opportunities and Constraints, 2000–2013*. PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, School of Social and Political Science, 2013, pp. 1–157.
- 72 Scoones et al., *Zimbabwe's Land Reform*; I. Scoones et al., *Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Challenging the Myths*, in: *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (2011) 5, pp. 967–993.
- 73 J. Sifile, M. K. Chiweshe, and P. Mutopo, *Political Economy of Resettlement Planning and Beneficiary Selection in A1 and A2 Settlement Models in Zimbabwe Post 2000*, in: *Open Access Library Journal* 8 (2011), p. 5.

of the beneficiaries and constituted a villagized⁷⁴ model,⁷⁵ which included the allocation of 5 ha plots for farming and 0.5 ha plots for residential use.⁷⁶ The resettled farmers were given 99-year leases, but the land remained state land. In other words, the citizens occupied the land as tenants on behalf of the state. Those who occupy the land are cognizant of the fact that they do so only at the mercy of ZANU–PF, as the farmer’s tenure is only guaranteed by the ruling party. In fact, for the first decade, the resettlement areas were no-go areas for any dissenting or alternative voices. The party maintained a tight grip over the lives of the citizens in relation to what they deliberated or debated about in public spaces. Various community structures in the villagized model A1, which emerged in resettlement areas, were led by either war veterans or members of the security sector. Any visitor of the respective areas had to report to this structure to make their presence and intentions known.⁷⁷

Due to the fact that the land tenure structure that has emerged did not provide ownership via title deeds, farmers have been unable to access commercial loans from banks. The government has come up with various own financing schemes, which, in turn, has further fortified a relationship of loyalty and acquiescence between resettled farmers and the ruling party. In the last two decades, these state-centred public contract farming schemes have taken various forms, from the Presidential Well-Wishers Input Scheme to the so-called Command Agriculture scheme.⁷⁸ These are the main financial lifelines for most of the resettled farmers. Shonhe notes that for small-scale commercial farmers, strong relations with the political elite increases the chances of one benefiting from the Command Agriculture scheme.⁷⁹

Notwithstanding all the economic and legal arguments⁸⁰ for and against the current land tenure arrangements under the FTLRP, the land use structure for the resettled

74 The A1 model was organized along village settings, where the recipients are organized into a village with a village chairperson instead of a headman. The residential stands are set apart in one location, creating a communal area, while the farming and grazing lands are separate and clearly demarcated. This is opposite to the A2, which is commercial in nature, with no predefined arrangements for residential and farming areas.

75 F. T. Gonese et al., *Reform And Resettlement Implementation In Zimbabwe: An Overview of the Programme against Selected International Experiences*, 2002, pp. 1–37; J. Sifile, M. K. Chiweshe, and P. Mutopo, *Political Economy of Resettlement Planning and Beneficiary Selection in A1 and A2 Settlement Models in Zimbabwe Post 2000*, in: *Open Access Library Journal* 8 (2011), pp. 1–17.

76 Gonese et al., *Reform and Resettlement Implementation*.

77 This is from personal experiences working with orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) in resettlement areas in Makoni district between 2007 and 2008. The first interviewee I was advised to see to was the chairperson of the village, who was a war veteran to be cleared to work in the area. The chairperson made it clear that it was his responsibility to vet every visitor and to know their business before they could be welcomed in the village. The chairperson was feared by members of the community, including school teachers; as such, no one accompanied me to meet with him. The headmaster of the local school where I was going to be based simply said I had to explain myself and state my case to the village chairperson and only then can I do the assessments on the levels of vulnerability of the OVCs in the area.

78 Shonhe, *Covid-19 and the Political Economy of Tobacco and Maize Commodity Circuits*.

79 Ibid.

80 Market-oriented economists argue that the current land tenure for resettled farmers excludes them from actively participating in a market economy as they cannot access loans and capital from commercial banks by virtue of their tenure structure.

households is precarious, and tenure is not guaranteed. The government's 99-year lease and permits are designed to keep the farmers perpetually beholden to the ruling party. Through its command-and-control approach to governance across the spectrum, the ruling party has also retained a stranglehold on the value chain, especially the marketing of agricultural produce that takes place via the marketing boards that are government controlled – such as the Grain Marketing Board, an institution that is itself a vestige of the former colonial government.

This intentional design is something akin to what Makamure calls “the feudalism of both state and government.”⁸¹ Proponents of the current land tenure arrangement under the FTRLRP argue that the model will ensure that the gains made by the programme will not be reversed by recipients selling off their pieces of land.⁸² This argument is buttressed by a paternalistic view of citizens as irresponsible and unable to make sound decisions over assets, such as land. In this sense, this new land arrangement is ironically in sync with the very design of the dispossession of land of black Africans during colonial rule. Mamdani observes that in order to perfect its hold over the African farmers, the British colonial masters prioritized the customary and communal land ownership structure over private land ownership.⁸³ The net effect was extended control over “the native”, who did not own property and whose possessions were linked to the whims of an adulterated traditional structure reporting to the native commissioner. Mamdani states:

*The general rule was that land could not be a private possession, of either landlords or peasants. It was defined as a customary communal holding, to which every peasant/ household had a customary access, defined by state-appointed customary authorities.*⁸⁴

This analysis is not to suggest that the citizens who occupy land in Zimbabwe today are without agency of their own. However, farmers do not own their means of production and are not independent economic agents. As it stands, the structure of a number of designed contract farms keeps the farmer in the position of a glorified labourer whose energy and efforts are expended on land that they do not own themselves. The government is not keen on transferring ownership to these citizens. In essence, the position of the resettled farmers is only guaranteed by their proximity to the ruling party.⁸⁵ Without

81 Makamure, *The Struggle for Democracy and Democratization*.

82 Cheater, *The Ideology of “Communal” Land Tenure*. Angela Cheater notes that this model of converting appropriated land to state land and cancelling titles to the same, which was instituted following independence, faced resistance from resettled farmers as it did not offer them the security of tenure. She notes that some resettled farmers preferred to go back or to maintain claims to their “communal land”, where they felt they had control over their future.

83 Cheater notes that there are many contradictions between anthropologists, native commissioners, and even African nationalist scholars as to the obtaining relations between traditional leaders, their subjects, and land. Cheater refutes the notions that in the pre-colonial period there was no individual freehold of farming land. See Cheater, *The Ideology of “Communal” Land Tenure*.

84 Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, p. 22.

85 It has become common that whenever one falls out of favour with the ruling party, the land they were given during the FTRLRP is threatened to be expropriated. The case of the former minister of higher education as well as information and publicity, Jonathan Moyo, and the former police commissioner, General Augustine Chihuri,

secured tenure, these citizens remain locked in an asymmetrical relationship with the allocating authority, with the government perpetuating a pyramid placing the ruling party on top and the citizens on the bottom.

The relationship between the resettled citizens and the state, shaped through tools such as the FTLRP, is also visible in many other spheres of the economy, especially in the allocation of mining rights and operations, the organization of artisanal miners, the (now defunct) Indigenisation Act (2007), and the public sector. Even though citizens do exercise agency to the extent that they can “play” the party to get what they want (e.g. by pledging allegiance), this form of agency is yet to mature to be holistic and transformative. An indication of an increasing maturity would be the active organization and building up of a movement that holds their leaders accountable and aims to reverse the skewed relations between the leader and the led. Meanwhile, the government is bent on closing the civic space and further limiting agency through a number of planned legislations.⁸⁶ A case in point is the Private and Voluntary Organisation Bill, which is by and large aimed at clipping the wings of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the area of human rights, civic education, and other political rights under the guise of fighting money laundering.⁸⁷

6. Conclusion

The relationship between the state and citizens in Zimbabwe, which is rooted in the pre-colonial era, has continued to be shaped and defined by critical junctures in the country’s politics, moving from the pre-colonial to the colonial and finally to the post-independence era. The colonial regime created a bifurcated society with parallel systems of governance in which black Africans were governed by what I have called an adulterated traditional system. By making them subjects of a (pseudo-)traditional order, Africans were denied genuine citizenship. As such, Africans had no civil rights and had very limited sociopolitical spaces to participate in. The fight against colonial rule then focused more on an anti-white and anti-colonial narrative than on individual rights and agency. In the end, the post-independence state did not drastically alter these relations. Instead, the ruling party sought to emphasize the power differential between the citizen and the leadership. The narrative around massive social services roll-outs, such as education and health provisions, often centred around the notion that these services were provided not by a state with obligations to its citizens, but by a benevolent ruling party to whom the citizenry thus was indebted. This narrative found a receptive population that had been browbeaten into silence by the protracted armed anti-colonial struggle and decades of an oppressive colonial governance structure.

illustrate this point. See Nehanda Radio news article “Jonathan Moyo challenges seizure of Mazowe farm in court”, 17 January 2020.

86 A number of laws make it difficult for citizens to actively and independently participate in political activities, such as the Maintenance of Peace and Order Act (2019).

87 The Private and Voluntary Organizations Bill has passed through the legislative structures and awaits the presidential approval.

While citizens demonstrate agency in various ways, the citizen-as-subject conception remains strong. This notion is reinforced by the high power distance culture in Zimbabwean society. The primacy of hierarchy as defined by age and the role of leadership is learned via a process of socialization from childhood. This paper has discussed these enduring power dynamics and skewed state-citizen relations as an impediment to the realization of an active citizenry and redefining of the state-citizen and the leader-led relationship. The ruling party has used various tools, including the FTLRP, to maintain these relations to lock citizens into positions of powerlessness and indebtedness. While benefitting a significant number of landless people and redressing historical injustices, the design of the land redistribution programme has contributed to keeping citizens in a subservient relationship with the state. Although citizens demonstrate agency in many spheres of life, this agency is (and understandably so) usually primarily geared towards personal survival rather than civil consciousness towards a recalibration of state-society relations.