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Andries Matenda Rukobo

Director

INTRODUCTION

The inauguration of the Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies represented an important breakthrough for the development of a national research culture in Zimbabwe. We were fortunate at the inaugural seminar to have brought together a number of well-know academics from Africa and elsewhere, to come and share their collective experiences with us in the field of development research. For nearly a week we listened and learned from the comparative experiences of fellow researchers and benefited greatly from the fruitful exchanges.

We were also fortunate enough to have had the President, then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Comrade R. G. Mugabe, to open the proceedings and to set the tone for the discussions that ensued. Along with the President, various ministers also took time off to engage in debate with the gathering of researchers and academics.

This special ZIDS publication presents the various papers delivered at the ZIDS Inaugural Seminar. Minutes of discussions held are available separately at the ZIDS library. It is hoped that this record will provide a useful framework for understanding and assessing the development of ZIDS.

The Inaugural Seminar will always serve as a living reminder to those of us at the Institute and the larger society, about the objectives for which ZIDS was created, namely to contribute to national development through intellectually and academically sound socio-economic policy-oriented research. Those objectives are even more pertinent now as the nation moves from reconstruction of the economy and society, and braces itself for the consolidation of the socio-economic system and charts a path for our development. Researchers at ZIDS and indeed elsewhere should play as critical role during this phase by providing empirical information and data from their research for use by policy-makers and planners.

We, therefore, take this opportunity to thank, once again, all the government officials and the academics and researchers from various parts of the world who found time to be present at the birth of the Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies. Their collective knowledge, experience and fraternal solidarity served as an important source of encouragement for our development.

A. M. Rukobo

Director

ZIMBABWE INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Determination of Land Policy In Zimbabwe

by

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INTRODUCTION

This paper which focuses on the determinants of land policy will consist of two sections.

The first section will attempt to describe the background or context in which Zimbabwe's land policy has evolved since independence in 1980. It will try to show that the formulation of a land policy¹ has been more of a process rather than a political event.

The ensuing policy has been a result of the interplay of several factors, such as the inherited natural resources, opposed political class interests and economic imperatives.

It will be shown that, in trying to meet its political and economic objectives, the Government has had to grapple with several existing constraints, some of which were inherited as part of the previous socio-economic system, while others such as shortage of suitable agricultural land, climate and population were more or less naturally given.

The evolving policy can, therefore, be regarded as a pragmatic and reconciliatory attempt to resolve contradictions and conflict in a transition of continuing social and economic struggle. The second section is a brief outline of the actual policy as it has evolved so far in Zimbabwe.

SECTION I

Physical Geographical Background of Country

Zimbabwe is a land-locked country bounded by Zambia and Mozambique to the North and East, Botswana to the West and Apartheid South Africa to the South.

It occupies an area of 39,075,700 hectares and is part of the great plateau which is a major feature of the geography of Southern Africa. Almost the whole of the country lies above 300 metres and more than 80% above 600 metres but less than 5% is above 1,500 metres while some points are above 2,600 metres in the eastern border mountains near Inyanga.

It is drained by three major river systems, the Zambezi to the North and North West and the Limpopo and Sabi rivers to the South and South East respectively. The Makgadikgadi pan drainage basin of Botswana extends into the South Western area.

An outstanding feature is a broad ridge or watershed running across the entire country from which emerges a belt of high plateau about 640 kilometres long by 80 kilometres wide. This

1 The term 'land policy' refers to a wide range of issues. It can mean land transfer or acquisition, land resettlement, or the system of land tenure. In Zimbabwe land policy has so far embraced the first two aspects only, in other words, policy has so far been focused on land redistribution, that is, acquiring land from the commercial landlords and transferring it to landless peasants. The government is still working on the aspect of land tenure with the intention of formulating a uniform kind of tenure for the whole country, if possible, in line with the government's politico-ideological principles. Therefore, for the purpose of understanding the analysis in this paper, 'land policy' should be read to mean 'acquisition and redistribution' rather than 'tenure'.

watershed which averages 1,400 metres above sea level traverses the country in a north-easterly direction from Plumtree, near Botswana border through Bulawayo, Gweru, Umvuma and Enkeldorn and rises to an altitude of 1,500 metres in the vicinity of Harare. There it divides to continue eastwards to the border mountains and northwards on a broad front to the Zambezi escarpment. The drainage system originates from this watershed.

The vegetation varies from semi-desert in parts of the Hwange game reserve to open grasslands, woodland savannah along the watershed, forests in the eastern highlands and tropical forests in the well-watered areas.

Rains result mainly from the convergence of tropical air streams moving South from Zaire and air streams from the South and East. The country depends on a summer rainfall extending over approximately four months, from December to March, with occasional light showers emanating from South East during winter. The heaviest precipitation is usually experienced in the North and East, with an average of approximately 600mm over the central watershed and variable amounts to the South East and South West.

Land Resources; Natural Regions and Their Suitability to Farming

The land in Zimbabwe has been categorised into five agro-ecological regions which have been based on average rainfall, height above sea level and other climatic conditions pertaining in each region. Basing on this information, farming systems suitable for each region have been determined.

The different regions and a brief description of the farming system suitable for each region is given on Table 1.

Table 1
Main Characteristics Of Agro-Ecological Regions

REGION	CHARACTERISTICS
Natural Region I:	Specialised and Diversified Farming Region. Above 1 000 mm rainfall per year with comparatively low temperatures, and favourable for forestry, fruit and intensive livestock prod
Natural Region II:	Intensive Farming Region. Rainfall is confined to summer and is moderately high (750-1 000 mm). The region is suitable for intensive systems of farming based on crops and/or livestock production.
Natural Region III:	Semi-Intensive Farming Region. This zone receives 650-800 mm rain much of which arrives in infrequent heavy falls - and is marginal for crop production.

REGION	CHARACTERISTICS
Natural Region IV:	Semi-Extensive Farming Region. The region is low in its receipt of rainfall. (450-650 mm) as is subject to periodic seasonal droughts and dry spells. The predominant use is thus livestock production.
Natural Region V:	Extensive Farming Region. This region is characterised by very low and erratic rainfall, making it unreliable even for the production of drought-resistant fodder and grain crops. It is largely characterised by extensive cattle ranching and game ranching.

The area of each natural region in relation to the area of the whole country is given in Table 2 below:

Table 2
The Agro-Ecological RegiOns of Zimbabwe

Natural Region	Area in Hectares	As Percentage of Country
I	703,400	1,8%
II	5,861,400	15,1%
III	7,287,700	19,5%
IV	14,782,300	36,7%
V	10,441,100	26,8%
TOTAL	39, 075,900	100%

It can be seen from Table 2 that Natural Regions I and II, which are the most favourable for Specialised and Intensive farming, comprise only 16,9% of the entire country. While Regions I, II and III comprise only 36,4% of the whole country; Regions I and II are only 6,564,800 hectares in extent; while Regions I, II and III together are only 13 852,500 hectares in extent.

This shows that the fraction of the country suited to gainful agriculture, in other words, the country's land resources, are extremely limited. This is an absolute and natural shortage which does not reflect the relative shortages arising from the racial and unequal ownership of land.

Later, we shall see that this limited nature of the most productive land has a bearing on land redistribution policy. It is, in fact, one of the most pertinent and inherited factors which has a bearing on the amount of the 'good' land that the government can redistribute to peasants.

Categories of Ownership and Use of the Natural Farming Regions

In Zimbabwe land is classified into four major groups according to its ownership and use as follows:

1. Commercial land (formerly European land) comprising all privately-owned commercial farming land, the former African purchase lands, the main urban centres and some small areas of state land which have yet to be designated for resettlement or which are being used for government purpose;
2. Communal Areas (formerly Tribal Trust Lands) comprising 170 defined areas of state land which are occupied on a traditional pattern of land tenure;
3. Parks and Wild Life; and
4. Forest land.

These categories are distributed in the various natural farming regions referred to above as shown in Table 3 below.

Distribution of Ownership Categories According to Natural Regions

See Table 3.

It can be seen from Table 3 that most of regions I, II and III which are the regions most favourable to specialised and intensive agriculture, lie in the commercial land area and are privately-held. For instance, 74 per cent of all region II is commercial land and 63 per cent of all region I is under commercial private ownership.

Since 15,679,500 hectares of commercial land in the best regions is owned by a mere 5,700 white farmers, while 16,279,400 hectares of communal land, most of which is in regions II to V is owned by 800,000 African peasant farmers, the unequal distribution of land by race is, therefore, quite obvious and so is the need for redistribution from one race to another and from the commercial sector to the peasant sector.

However, what is even more pertinent to our present analysis of the determination of land policy are the various amounts of commercial land in the different farming regions. Three statistics are of particular importance in this respect. The first one is 4,764,700 hectares which is the total of all commercial land in regions I and II. The second is 8,005,300 hectares which is all the commercial land in regions I, II and III. And the third statistic relates to the total

TABLE 3
LAND OWNERSHIP CATEGORIES AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION

Natural Region	Large Scale Commercial Land		Communal Areas		Small Scale Commercial Land		Other Land		Total	
	Area ('000 Ha)	%	Area ('000 Ha)	%	Area ('000 Ha)	%	Area ('000 Ha)	%	Area ('000 Ha)	%
I	440,2	63	128,3	18	7,3	1	127,6	18	703,4	100
II	4 324,5	74	1 255,1	21	252,1	4	29,1	1	5 861,4	100
III	3,240,6	44	2 814,7	39	536,1	7	696,3	10	7 287,7	100
IV	4 025,8	27	7 307,3	49	523,0	4	2 696,2	20	14 782,3	100
V	3 648,4	35	4 774,0	46	97,6	1	1 921,1	18	10 441,1	100
TOTAL	15 679,5	40	16 279,4	42	1 416,1	4	5 700,9	15	39 075,9	100

SOURCE: CONEX, Ministry of Agriculture.

amount of commercial land in all the five natural farming regions, which is 15,679,500 hectares. All land redistribution policy assumptions have to relate to these amounts of commercial land and use them as the base line or starting points.

For instance, the figure of 8,005,300 hectares, which is the total of all the commercial land in regions I and III, governs or determines the total amount of land that can be acquired from that part of the country which is considered most favourable for agriculture. It determines both the quality and quantity that can be acquired. In fact, it can be seen from this that if only 8,005,300 hectares are available for acquisition from regions I, II and III (assuming, in fact, that the policy is to acquire all the commercial land in these regions) then the total amount of land, considered good in whole country is extremely limited. It means there is only 8,005,300 hectares of 'good' land if the rest of the country in regions IV and V is poor or marginal. Thus, apart from the relative or racially created shortage of 'good' land, it can be seen that super-imposed upon this, there is, in fact, an absolute shortage of the 'good' land. Later, it will be shown that problems arise when this figure is related to the number of landless people needing to be resettled.

The amount of acquirable commercial land is, therefore, a governing or limiting factor in the determination of land redistribution policy. Policy options revolve around the amounts of acquirable commercial land in the different regions. For instance, if the policy is to resettle people on 'better' land, then it means fewer people would be resettled because there is only 8,005,300 hectares of land considered 'better'. And if the policy is to resettle many people, then it would have to be accepted that many of them would be resettled on those regions considered marginal such as IV and V.

Production by Sectors and their Relative Importance

Of all the inherited problems, the disparity in production and economic importance between the commercial sector and the peasant sector is the most serious and difficult to redress. It is also the one with the most serious implications on any land redistribution policy because of the uncertainty of its likely impact on food production and the rest of the economy, especially in the short-run.

At present the share of the agricultural sector as a whole in Gross Domestic Product is well over 20 per cent, while its share in total formal wage employment is over 32 per cent. In addition, agriculture is an important source of industrial raw materials, and accounts for more than 45 per cent of total merchandise exports.

However, because of the present imbalance in the structure of agricultural production, much of this production comes from the commercial sector. For instance, the communal areas consume 80 per cent of their production on the farm as against 14 per cent in the large-scale commercial farming sector.

And over 90 per cent of the value of all agricultural produce marketed through official or formal channels is from the large-scale, mainly European, commercial sector, 2 to 3 per cent is from the small-scale commercial sector (the former African Purchase Areas), while 5 to 7 per cent is from the communal areas.

A recent investigation by the Commission of Inquiry into Prices and Conditions of Service under the Chairmanship of Roger Riddell recognised the agricultural importance of the commercial farming sector when they recommended that; "new areas of land be acquired to absorb the population that is in excess of the safe carrying capacity of the present day peasant sector, *while ensuring that commercial farming land is able to continue to provide the bulk of the nation's basic food requirements, a surplus for export and for the provision of inputs for industrial production*". It added that "the fact that approximately 230,000 families are currently dependent on commercial agriculture for livelihood" or that upward of 33,000 people were employed by the commercial agricultural sector should not be overlooked.

Therefore, for these reasons, it can be seen that the commercial sector is very important to the country's present mixed economy.

Moreover, the recent creation of the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Committee (SADCC) and its assigning of the responsibility for sub-regional food security to Zimbabwe, added another dimension to the importance of commercial agriculture in the country as well as the sub-region. This recognition of the present importance of commercial agriculture does not, of course, deter the Government from implementing a land redistribution policy, but it certainly makes Government very cautious in its approach. It, therefore, registers as a moderating and conservative force. This becomes even more so when it is realised that Government is anxious to avoid plunging the country, albeit in the short-run, into a situation where it has to import food.

On the other hand, the existence of abject poverty in the peasant sector which results, amongst other things, from population pressure, acts as a spur on Government's implementation of land redistribution.

It is, therefore, clear that the existing production pattern does not have a bearing on the nature of land policy that Government would adopt and the tempo of its implementation.

To resolve the political contradictions in present production, any redistribution policy had to strike a balance between the vested interests of the landed commercial farmers and the landless peasants. It had also to strike an economic balance between the two extreme policy options of either radically redistributing all commercial land which might disrupt production, especially in the short-run, or adopting a more cautious and pragmatic redistribution policy which might not immediately satisfy all the existing land hunger.

Very often this contradiction presents the most difficult choice for the Government when it resolves itself into its most naked or simplest form, i.e. when it becomes simply a question of foreign exchange versus people's land hunger.

Moreover, the formulation of a land redistribution policy is further complicated by the fact that the casual connection between land and agricultural production is not clear. Numerous other factors other than land are involved in agricultural production.

It cannot be said that the mere transfer of land to people needing it will automatically lead to successful agricultural production. Therefore, to redress the imbalances of the previous production structure, hence the relative importance of the commercial and peasant sectors, reliance should not be placed on land redistribution alone as the total answer, but rather on a much more thorough analysis of the mechanisms and operations of state aid, and the role of inputs such as extension, management and credit.

For instance, it is generally known that much of the present success and development of the commercial (formerly European) sector is largely due to the fact that this sector has had, in the past, better access to credit, better management and extension and better infrastructure. While it is also generally recognised that the poor performance of peasant agriculture is not due to 'poor' land alone but also to lack of numerous other factors such as:

- efficient infrastructure
- credit
- inputs, e.g. seed and fertiliser
- adequate extension and management
- transport and collection depots
- inappropriate cropping systems
- over-crowding and over-stocking

It is this very fact, that for successful agricultural production to be achieved, a redistribution policy must be accompanied by the provision of several other factors, which makes the analysis of factors determining land policy extremely complex.

Very often a Government has to pursue different policies for different objectives. For instance, a land policy with the political objective of bringing about egalitarianism or of eliminating the exploitation of one class by another, or whose aim is to transform one mode of production into another, is not necessarily the same policy that will be pursued when the objective is simply to increase production. Attempts to achieve both the political and the economic objective with one policy often fail.

Sometimes the problem of trying to remove inherited imbalances in production has the nature of a vicious circle. This is because the short-run period where land hunger is most acute and where, therefore, a ruthless and radical land reform policy is needed, is also, unfortunately, the period when the foreign exchange from commercial agriculture is most needed to provide the infrastructure, transport, equipment and machinery for the transformation of peasant agriculture.

Thus, to attempt to acquire both large amounts of land and foreign exchange at the same time from the commercial sector always appears as a contradiction and a land redistribution policy which tries to achieve this also becomes contradictory. As long as the commercial sector remains the important producer of exports and foreign exchange, a land redistribution policy has to choose from various possibilities such as:

- acquiring all commercial land and getting no foreign exchange;
- acquiring a little commercial land and getting more foreign exchange; or
- more commercial land and less foreign exchange.

One cannot have it both ways until the peasant sector also becomes an important producer of food and surplus exportable products which presupposes prior transformation of the peasant sector itself.

An Estimation of Landlessness

There is no accurate record or figure of all the people needing land in the post-independence Zimbabwe. Previous population censuses were not designed to reveal people's landlessness. However, various people such as academics and Government officials have, on the basis of analysis and deduction, given certain estimates of landlessness.

It is generally known that the land situation in the communal areas (former Tribal Trust Lands) is very bad. There is tremendous population pressure and overcrowding especially in those communal areas which form a crescent running from the South West of the country passing through the southern Victoria and Buhera districts and turning to the North-East and ending in the Mangwende and Murewa districts.

At the time of independence in 1980, it was estimated that about 1,5 million returning war refugees and other displaced people would need to be rehabilitated or resettled. Most of these people have now been rehabilitated mainly in their old homes.

The recent Riddell Commission of Inquiry into Incomes, Prices and Conditions of Service, assessing the land requirements, estimated that at independence there were about 780,000 farming families in the peasant communal sector. On the basis of conservation and extension criteria, communal areas could carry only a total of 325,000 families providing them with adequate income. Assuming that 235,000 families were partly dependent upon incomes from migrant worker family members, the Commission concluded that there, therefore, remained some 219,000 families which needed to be resettled.

If we take this figure of 219,000 families as a fair reflection of the overall situation of landlessness, we should then relate it to the various amounts of acquirable commercial land in the various natural farming regions. This relationship of numbers of people needing to be

resettled and the total amounts of potentially acquirable commercial land is the limiting relationship which sets the parameters of any land redistribution policy.

We have seen above that the total amount of commercial land in regions I, II and III which are considered the best for agriculture amounts to only 8,005,300 hectares. And commercial land in all regions amounts to 15,679,500 hectares.

Therefore, various policy options exist. For instance, if the policy were to resettle as many people as possible on the land considered the best, then the figure of 219,000 families would have to be related to 8,005,300 hectares.

Earlier on it was calculated by the conservation and extension experts that to make a minimum reasonable income of \$400 per annum while using modern methods of tillage on regions I, II and III, a settler family needed an average of 36 hectares of grazing and arable land in those regions. On this basis, therefore, if all the 219,000 families were resettled on regions I, II and III, they would take up a total of 7,884,000 hectares of commercial land from this region. Now this almost wipes out all the productive commercial land on the most favourable regions. This obviously has consequences on agricultural production especially in the short-run. As we have seen above, most of agricultural value is at present from regions I, II and III of commercial agriculture. The policy objective of resettling all people on the best land, therefore, in the short-run clashes with the objective of expanding production.

A policy comprises therefore, to be made whereby land for resettlement is acquired from the 15,679,500 hectares of commercial land from *all* regions including regions IV and V considered marginal or poor.

Thus, we see that all the time policy intentions are constrained by inherited artificial or natural realities. Policy is determined by a set of given factors, it does not arise entirely and unfettered from the political aspirations of the politicians or the Government. It is always a dialectical and synthetic process always taking place in a given context.

SECTION II

The first part has tried to provide the context in which policy has evolved. It has attempted to point out some of the factors which have constrained and, therefore, helped to determine and shape policy in Zimbabwe in the short period of its independence.

This second part will briefly outline what the actual policy has been and summarise what has been achieved so far.

The Present Policy and its Objectives

The Government's land redistribution policy is double-pronged. The first prong seeks to redress the imbalances in the past racial land allocation policies. Its objective is to transfer land from those with too much of it to those without it.

The second prong seeks to maintain or increase agricultural production both in the commercial and communal areas. The aim is, therefore, redistribution with production which is in line with the Government's overall economic policy of 'Growth with Equity'.

So far emphasis has been on redistribution and no systematic and rigorous attempt has yet been made to actually transform the existing modes of production. The issue of socio-economic transformation will be addressed at a later stage when a uniform system of Land Tenure has been worked out for the entire country. At the moment, the inherited reality of a mixed economy has had to be accepted.

The Government's redistribution policy is tempered by the 1979 Lancaster House Peace Constitution which, under its Declaration of Rights, includes a section which protects the property of landowners from forceful seizure by the State. The section establishes the principle of compensation for any land it might acquire from a private holder.

Apart from the requirements of the Lancaster House Constitution, the Government's policy is also tempered by the policy of reconciliation and the Government's overriding desire to consolidate the people's power under peaceful conditions during the first post-war years of independence.

The policy which has emerged has, therefore, been cautious and pragmatic, but based on orderly and sound planning.

The Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development is charged with the responsibility of administering the Government's land redistribution policy.

As the name of the Ministry implies, there are three main functions to be performed, namely;

- to transfer land from the commercial sector to the peasant sector;
- to resettle people on an orderly basis upon the newly acquired land; and
- to develop all the communal and resettlement areas.

Land Acquisition

The Ministry of Lands has been acquiring land from the commercial areas in all the natural regions of the country. Land has been purchased from its present holders on a willing-seller-willing-buyer basis. There has been no forceful seizure of private land.

A Land Selection Committee, acting on the advice of Government land valuation and extension officers, has been deciding on what land the Ministry should purchase.

The Government has been particularly anxious to acquire all under-utilised, abandoned and derelict land. Those commercial farmers who have been fully utilising their land have been left to make their own contribution through production for food and exports.

By August, 1981, the Government had purchased 438,000 hectares of land out of a total 2,300,000 hectares on offer for purchase, and by the end of December, 1981 the area of land purchased had increased to 528,000 hectares and was still increasing steadily.

Intensive Resettlement

Once land has been acquired, it is surveyed, planned, demarcated and its carrying capacity is determined. When this is done, essential infrastructure is built. This includes such things as; access to roads, dip tanks, boreholes, clinics, schools, and so on. At the same time as the basic infrastructure is being laid out, settlers are selected on the basis of laid down criteria which emphasise the need for land. The selection is made out of refugee, displaced and landless peasant population who show a willingness to settle down as farmers.

After selection, people are then resettled according to certain models of resettlement.

So far, three models of resettlement have been chosen by Government. The first model involves intensive village settlements with individual arable allocations and communal grazing areas. The second model is an intensive settlement with communal living and co-operative farming. The third model envisages the formation of an intensive settlement such as in the first model, but combined with 'core' estate.

In each case the amount of grazing and arable land allocated per family is determined by the potential of the area in question and will vary greatly from one natural agro-ecological region to another. The department responsible for conservation and extension determines the agricultural potential of each region and advises on the most appropriate cropping and livestock system.

The third model, that of co-operative farming, is intended for those groups of people who are well-motivated and with a heightened ideological consciousness. In the long run, this model shall become the basis of implementing the Government's policy of socialist transformation of peasant agriculture. People are not compelled to join co-operatives against their will or before they understand the merits of co-operative agriculture.

In many cases the Government gives initial assistance to genuine co-operative groups to help them to establish themselves, otherwise the Government insists on the principle of self-reliance. The assistance offered is usually in the form of agricultural inputs such as: fertilisers, seed, credit and draught oxen.

The largest component of assistance is, however, via the provision of infrastructure, such as: transport and service centres, roads, dip tanks and water supplies. Recently, the Ministry embarked on an emergency programme of accelerated intensive resettlement. Under this programme the Ministry tried to resettle as many people as possible in the shortest possible time, by putting them on resettlement land before roads and other infrastructure were built. It is assumed that the settlers would, in this case, use the infrastructure available in adjacent communal areas. The Government plans to resettle 162,000 families in the next three years.

Land Tenure

The Government has not yet evolved a national system of land tenure. This is a complex exercise whose analysis would have to take into account the desired socio-economic transformations as well as the likely impact on production.

However, in the meantime, the settlers on different models of resettlement schemes are occupying their holdings under a variety of permits as follows:

Model A

- There is a permit to reside which covers the residential plot in the village;
- Permit to cultivate which covers the arable land;
- Permit to depasture stock which covers the right to raise a given number of livestock units;
- Temporary permit to cultivate which covers the half hectare of land ploughed for the settler when he first moves on to his holding.

Model B

Permits are also issued in respect of those farms run as co-operatives organisations registered with the Registrar of Co-operative Societies.

All the permits emphasise and encourage the practice of proper and sound land husbandry methods by the settlers.

CONCLUSION

We have presented above a brief outline of the Government's redistribution policy as it actually is, as well as the factors and constraints determining it in the past 23 months of independence.

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