

# Expectations and the issue of land in South Africa – the historical origins and current debate

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## ***Abstract***

Land remains a contentious political issue that has the potential for further conflict in South Africa. Expectations over land are a legitimate result of a history of dispossession, displacement and deprivation during the pre-colonial, colonial and Apartheid eras. The importance of placing discussions on land within a historical context is salient. Legitimate perceptions around the slow pace of sustainable land reform since 1994 have left a vacuum for politicians to continue to use the land issue as tool for political mobilisation. However, development programmes that are meant to deliver on the expectations such as the National Development Plan (NDP) and the New Growth Path (NGP) are often undermined by the same politicians. The ideological divisions between the NDR and the NDP/NGP within the ruling African National Congress-run (ANC) government hamper progress towards achieving the land redistribution objectives outlined in these development plans and programmes. The dilemma that this creates is that factors required to mitigate this problem such as an emphasis on sustainability of redistributed land for increased food security have fallen victim to this ideological tug-of-war. The widening gap between the politically fuelled expectations trajectory on the one hand, and the inability to meet these expectations by current development programmes on the other, are sources of increasing social conflict in society.

**Keywords:** Land; Transformation; Land reform; Expropriation; National Democratic Revolution; National Development Plan; New Growth Path; Conflict; Expectations; African National Congress.

## **Introduction**

Expectations around land are fuelled by political rhetoric that is entrenched in South Africa's colonial and Apartheid past. Much of the history of South Africa during the pre-colonial, colonial and Apartheid eras is rooted in conflicts between various groups of people over land. While settlement of land throughout South Africa's history was based on violent conquest, the colonial and Apartheid eras were different in that conquest was followed by legislated dispossession, displacement and deprivation of land. One of the

most famous quotes explaining the effect of the infamous 1913 Natives Land Act was from Sol Plaatjie's political tract *Native Life in South Africa?* in which he stated: "Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth".<sup>1</sup> This comment explains the basis for the expectation that a post-1994 South Africa would meet the demands for redistribution and redress. The slow pace of visible transformation in this regard has become a source of political mobilisation around the issue of land redistribution.

Comments by South Africa's former President Jacob Zuma during a speech at the 2017 official opening of the National House of Traditional Leaders emphasised that historically based issues relating to transformation of land ownership are far from resolved. On this occasion Zuma made the following comments:<sup>2</sup>

The land question is central to the achievement of a National Democratic Society and true reconciliation and empowerment of our people. It is a central issue for traditional leaders. We have identified the weaknesses in the land restitution and redistribution programme. The willing buyer, willing seller principle did not work effectively. It made the State a price taker in an unfair process. In addition, there are too many laws dealing with land reform which causes confusion and delays. The fact remains that land hunger is real... .

While such comments lack tangible solutions, they do fuel expectations of alternative methods to speed up transformation of land ownership in South Africa. Many expectations in this regard are based on National Democratic Revolution (NDR) political rhetoric over transformation of land ownership. In more recent times, this has fuelled a more radical approach to land reform, land restitution and land tenure reform. In this respect radical land reform is conceptualised by Jankielsohn and Duvenhage as:<sup>3</sup>

... policies and legislation that allow for the abrupt and fundamental (often revolutionary) modification of the patterns of land ownership and usage through the redistribution of land from one group to another, using methods that may be regarded as an extrinsic threat to an existing order.

The slow pace of state induced redistribution of land from white to black ownership has increased expectations that have become a significant source of

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1 M Plaut & P Holden, *Who rules South Africa? Pulling the strings in the battle for power* (Jeppestown, Jonathan Ball, 2012), p. 305.

2 J Zuma, "Address by President Zuma at the Annual Official Opening of the House of Traditional Leaders on 3 March 2016, Parliament, Cape Town" (available at <http://www.gov.za/speeches/president-jacob-zuma-annual-opening-national-house-traditional-leaders-3-mar-2016-0000>, as accessed on 3 March 2017).

3 R Jankielsohn & A Duvenhage, "Radical land reform in South Africa – A comparative perspective", *Journal for Contemporary History*, 42(2), 2017, p. 7.

potential conflict in society. Government economic development programmes such as the most recent National Development Plan (NDP) and the New Growth Path (NGP) have been unable to meet the economic expectations of pre-1994 revolutionary objectives that continue to be espoused by politicians in the African National Congress (ANC) led government.

Where land redistribution has taken place, economic expectations of sustainable livelihoods for beneficiaries have in most instances been dashed by the lack of effective post-settlement support. It has been estimated that up to 90% of farms that were redistributed between 1994 and 2012 are no longer productive.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of land has the potential to increase social conflict in South Africa. In this respect it is important to define social conflict as existing:<sup>5</sup>

... when parties believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously, or perceive a divergence in their values, needs or interests and purposefully employ their power in an effort to defeat, neutralise, or eliminate each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction.

The dissatisfaction among the rural poor is rooted in a legitimate expectation that democracy would result in significant economic benefits. South Africans believed that a change in the power structures in society would reduce unemployment, poverty and inequality. The unemployment rate of 27,1% (36,3% when discouraged job seekers are included) remains very high. Poverty continues to increase, with an estimated 21,7% of South Africans living in extreme poverty.<sup>6</sup> Inequality is illustrated by statistics that indicate that in 2014 the average income of the top 10% full-time employees was 82 times higher than the bottom 10%.<sup>7</sup>

While unemployment and poverty increase and inequality gaps in South Africa widen, it appears that the ANC government is adamant to divert political attention away from this through an increased emphasis on unresolved historical issues relating to redistribution and redress of land. Attempts by politicians to divert attention away from their own failures by fuelling conflicts

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4 T Lund, "SA not reaping benefits of land reform", *Financial Mail*, 8 Aug 2012 (available at <http://financialmail.co.za/politics/2012/08/08/sa-not-reaping-benefits-of-land-reform>, as accessed on 24 May 2016).

5 M Anstey, "Negotiating conflict – insights and skills for negotiators and peacemakers" (Cape Town, Juta, 1991), p. 4.

6 StatsSA, "Quarterly Labour Force Survey Quarter 3: 2016" (available at <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02113rdQuarter2016>, as accessed on 12 December 2016); A Musgrave, "More people living below breadline-Stats SA" (available at <http://www.iol.co.za/business/news/more-people-living-below-breadline---stats-sa-1813099>, as accessed on 1 December 2016).

7 G Isaacs, "Minimum wage would cut poverty and boost growth in SA" (available at <http://www.fin24.com/opinion/minimum-wage-would-cut-poverty-and-boost-growth-in-sa-20160803>, as accessed on 1 December 2016).

based on diverse values, needs and interests relating to land are exacerbated by a perception that there cannot be a simultaneous resolution to this.

The article comprises a literature study using various sources such as books, academic journals and popular articles. Where necessary, definitions and conceptual references are used to contribute to the understanding of important concepts relating to the discussion.

The central aspects of the article deal with the historical context of land in South Africa, land as a source of political expectations, expectations as a source of conflict in society and in the concluding remarks suggestions are made regarding ways in which the conflict around land may be mitigated.

### **A historical context for expectations over land in South Africa**

A historical perspective on the interaction between various racial and ethnic groups in South Africa will contribute to a contextual understanding of the current debates around the issue of land in South Africa. In this respect, Pienaar<sup>8</sup> correctly indicates that in South Africa it is “impossible to discuss history and land separately”. South Africa has experienced 364 years of documented conflict over issues relating to the ownership and occupation of land that is rooted in tribal and colonial conflicts as well as a system of race-based institutionalised separate development during the Apartheid era.

South Africa was inhabited for almost 2000 years by Khoikhoi who occupied the coastal regions of the current Western and Eastern Cape, while the San people lived in the interior of the country. The Khoikhoi were pastoralists who moved south and divided into three groups, namely the Korana who settled where the Orange and Vaal Rivers join, the Namaqua who moved into the Cape areas and the Einiqua who settled and followed the Orange River westwards. These groups clashed with the San people who had already inhabited the areas and who relied on wildlife for their hunter gatherer existence. While some San people fled into the mountainous and desert regions, others joined the Khoikhoi as hunters, herders, slaves or warriors. They later also merged into these societies.<sup>9</sup> These people may be regarded as the traditional inhabitants of South Africa, long before the so-called “Bantu” and “Europeans” moved

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8 JM Pienaar, *Land reform* (Cape Town, Juta, 2014), p. 53.

9 R Beddy, *Inleiding tot die Geskiedenis van die Khoikhoi en San as Afrikane* (Bloemfontein, Handisa Media, 2007), pp. 25-27, C Saunders (ed.), *Illustrated history of South Africa. The real story* (Cape Town, The Reader's Digest Association, 1989), pp. 21-22.

into this area and occupied the land. The establishment of settlements into the interior by Europeans combined with the impacts of the Difeqane had devastating impacts on the indigenous people of the country. By the 1850's the control of the Khoi groups passed on to the Kora and Griekwa. Instability caused by internal conflicts, however, served as a reason for the Cape Colonial Government to take political control of their territories that were subsequently occupied by groups of white settlers.<sup>10</sup>

The “Bantu” (people) are regarded as all those groups who moved into Southern Africa from Central Africa and exclude the Khoikhoi and San people. The Bantu were divided into various groups such as the Nguni, Sotho, Venda and Tsonga. The Nguni was sub-divided into the Xhosa, Thembu, Mpondo, Mpondomise, Mfengu, Ndebele and Bomvana people. The Sotho was sub-divided into the Southern Sotho, called Basotho, and the Northern Sotho who was sub-divided into the Pedi, Lobedu and Tswana people. These groups moved into, and settled in, various fertile areas in the current South Africa between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup>

While the Portuguese were the first Europeans, under Bartholomew Diaz and Vasco da Gama, who sailed and landed along the shores of Southern Africa in the fifteenth century, the first settlement in the Cape by the Dutch East India Company in 1652, led by Jan van Riebeeck, is regarded as the first European occupation of land in the southern part of Africa. The settlement was agricultural in nature and was meant to serve as a supply base for trading ships travelling between Europe to the East. This European settlement expanded and soon clashed with indigenous people living in the area.<sup>12</sup>

The British occupied the Cape in 1795, by which time the Europeans had settled vast tracts of land from the Fish River in the east and halfway to the Orange River in the north. During the period between 1803 and 1806, the Cape was handed over to the Dutch government as a colony. The colony was, however, retaken by the British due to threats of French invasion. By 1806 the number of Europeans in the Cape Colony had amounted to about 27 000. The British actively recruited people from Britain to settle in the Cape Colony and from 1820 many of these settlers were given farms along the eastern

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10 J de Villiers, “The Dutch era at the Cape, 1652-1806”, FJ Pretorius, *A history of South Africa. From the distant past to the present day* (Pretoria, Protea Book House, 2014), pp. 49-53.

11 C Saunders (ed.), *Illustrated history of South Africa...*, pp. 62-63; L Changuion & B Steenkamp, *Disputed land: The historical development of the South African land issue, 1652-2011* (Pretoria, Protea Book House, 2012), p. 17.

12 J de Villiers, “The Dutch era at the Cape, 1652-1806”, FJ Pretorius, *A history of South Africa...*, pp. 41-43.

border as a buffer between the colony and the Xhosa. Ongoing conflicts between the British government in the Cape and the Dutch population, as well as frontier conflicts with the Xhosa, led to the Great Trek (Voortrekkers) between 1834 and 1854. This resulted in the spread of groups of white people into the interior through lands inhabited by various black tribes.<sup>13</sup>

Many of the Southern African tribes were displaced due to the conflicts that had preceded the arrival of whites. In this respect, any discussion on the history of land ownership must take into account the pivotal role of the Nguni people in South Africa. In the eighteenth century land, water and grazing became important commodities in Nguni societies. The quest for land was mainly driven by large herds of cattle that were at the centre of the Nguni economy and social structures. Scarcity in this regard led to violent inter-clan conflicts that resulted in the annihilation of smaller Sotho and Nguni groups by the Mthethwa clan. After defeating the Buthelezi clan, Shaka gained control of the Zulu kingdom in 1815. By building a powerful army, he was able, through extreme violence and brutality, to unite many clans into his kingdom and drive many others into exile.<sup>14</sup>

While the Zulus traded regularly with the Portuguese in Algoa Bay, the first significant settlement of white people in the interior of the country were the "Voortekkers", whose initial numbers were about 15 000. They acquired land through negotiation that resulted in treaties or agreements, through bartering and exchanges of services, or by means of conquest. These groups of white "Boer" settlers added to the already volatile conflicts between the various groups such as the Ndebele under Mzilikazi and the Zulu under Shaka. During this time, many people and groups were unsettled and forced off their land by larger groups with stronger armies. Examples of such groups include the Ngwane, who fled the Zulu only to defeat the Hlubi, who in turn fled to join the Mfengu people. Other groups, fleeing the violence inflicted on them by the Zulu armies, fled into what is known today as Mozambique and caused a great deal of disruption on the Tsonga and Portuguese settlers. Invading Hlubi people also fought fierce battles with the Tlokwa people that disrupted the Sothos along the Caledon River. With the disbanding of some groups, others such as the Sotho and Tlokwa consolidated under Moshoeshoe. In

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13 J de Villiers, "Cape colonial society under British rule, 1806-1834", FJ Pretorius, *A history of South Africa. From the distant past to the present day* (Pretoria, Protea Book House, 2014), pp. 79-104; JM Pienaar, *Land Reform* (Cape Town, Juta, 2014), p. 61.

14 C Saunders (ed.), *Illustrated history of South Africa...*, pp. 80-84; HB Giliomee and Bulbenga, *New history of South Africa* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2007), pp. 124, 126, 138.

other areas, the movement of the Ndebele together with the raids by the Ndwandwe caused great disruptions to the Pedi. Another group that was a victim of this, namely Mfengu assimilated with the Xhosa, while others settled under the protection of missionaries in the Cape.<sup>15</sup>

The 19th century of South African history was characterised by massive land dispossession as a result of tribal conflicts.<sup>16</sup> Omer-Cooper makes the following comment regarding this era:<sup>17</sup>

The colossal upheaval was accompanied by carnage and destruction on an appalling scale. Whole tribes were massacred and even more died in the famine and anarchy that followed in the wake of desolating hordes. Still greater numbers abandoned their ancestral lands and sought refuge in difficult mountain country or elsewhere, where geographical features held out hope of asylum. The pattern of the population distribution in South Africa was radically changed. Instead of fairly even scatter of tribes with population density varying according to the advantages of water and soil, great agglomerations of peoples emerged, often centred on relatively inhospitable terrain and separated from one another by considerable tracts of virtually empty land.

This era was generally known as the Mfecane by the Zulus and Difaqane by the Sotho. and remains a highly contentious issue in current political debates in South Africa. It has been argued that this era of political disruption and subsequent social instability paved the way for various groups of white people to enter, conquer and settle in territories inhabited by groups of black people in the interior of the country.<sup>18</sup> The current ethnic population sizes and distribution of South Africa could be attributed to this era in which the Zulu, who assimilated women and children of other tribes into their own during conquests, remains the largest group in South Africa at 22,6% of the population, followed by Xhosa at 16%.<sup>19</sup>

Eye witness accounts of various naturalists and explorers such as Le Vaillant (1795), Lichtenstein (1806), Burchell (1815), Thompson (1827) and Gordon-Cummings (1850) indicate that large areas comprising much of the interior of South Africa, about two thirds of the country, were largely deserted in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries and had probably never carried a population of more than 250 000. Most human settlements were

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15 C Saunders (ed.), *Illustrated history of South Africa...*, pp. 62-63; JM Pienaar, *Land reform*, pp. 88-92.

16 J de Villiers, "The Dutch era at the Cape, 1652-1806", FJ Pretorius, *A history of South Africa...*, Chapters 5-7.

17 O Cooper, *The Zulu aftermath. A nineteenth century revolution in Bantu Africa*, 7.

18 J Visagie, "Migration and the societies north of the Gariep River", FJ Pretorius, *A history of South Africa...*, pp. 105-124.

19 STATSSA, "Census 2011. Census in Brief. Report No 03-01-41" (available at [www.statssa.gov.za/census/census\\_2011/Census\\_products/Census\\_2011\\_Census\\_in\\_brief.pdf](http://www.statssa.gov.za/census/census_2011/Census_products/Census_2011_Census_in_brief.pdf), as accessed on 11 April 2016), p. 24.



along the coastline, adjacent interior and along the larger rivers in the interior of the country. Permanent settlements in the interior only took place after technology had been imported from Europe allowing for the extraction of underground water and the construction of storage dams. Only small isolated groups of nomadic settlements existed in the water scarce interior at the time, and these groups of people moved around in search of grazing, hunting grounds and water.<sup>20</sup> Most major conflicts between various ethnic and racial groups at that time were over the more fertile parts of the country. This is supported by figures supplied by Changuion and Steenkamp<sup>21</sup> who indicate that, when the “Voortrekkers” arrived in the interior of the country, only about 33,6% of South Africa’s current land was occupied by Bantu tribes. Alternative calculations indicate that this figure was closer to 41,2%.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, land had become a scarce commodity. By the 1870s, there was a scarcity of farmland across the whole of South Africa. The issue of tenure was problematic since the African chief normally held the land on behalf of his people and he had the power to allocate arable land for use, but never outright ownership.<sup>22</sup> Grazing land was held in common, but the chief had control over it by the villagers’ livestock. Outside of the Cape Colony, land tenure in the form of title deeds was reserved for whites. Many black people were forced, due to both the reduction of land and survival, to work on white owned farms. There were two types of labourers on white owned farms, those who were labour-tenants and those who worked for cash as well as payment in kind. Most labourers were labour-tenants, who were allowed to settle and graze their cattle and cultivate on farms. Male labour-tenants were obliged to work three months per year and females two days per week for the white farm owners. These individuals were known as “squatters”, many of whom preferred this relative independence over having to provide wage labour in urban areas. By the end of the twentieth century,

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20 E Pringle, “Lessons from the drought”, *Agri-SA, Agri Magazine*, 45(1), February/March 2016, p. 34.

21 L Changuion & B Steenkamp, *Disputed land...*, p. 298.

22 While land tenure is embedded into modern laws, it must be noted that freehold tenure that provides absolute ownership rights that imply the right to own, control, manage, use and dispose of property is often regarded as a western practice that was imported into Africa and other parts of the world. The Economic Commission for Africa explains that: “European settlers in Africa came with their own laws on land ownership. In Southern Africa for instance these were derived from Roman-Dutch law. The settlers created for themselves the legal regime of ownership that best protected them and gave them the largest bundle of rights possible under the imposed legal regimes”. The pre-1994 legislative history of land tenure in South Africa is an example of how a white dominated legal system was imposed on South Africa to the detriment of the black majority (ECA, “Land tenure systems and their impacts on food security and sustainable development in Africa”, *Economic Commission for Africa. Addis Ababa: ECA Printshop* (available at [www.unctad.org/.../land-tenure-systems-%20and%20their%20impacts%20on%20Food%20Security](http://www.unctad.org/.../land-tenure-systems-%20and%20their%20impacts%20on%20Food%20Security), as accessed on 15 February 2015), p. 21.



there were more black people on white owned farms than in the reserves (created to house various groups of black people). The problem with this system was that it denied tenure in most areas to black people who first had to do work for the white landowners before they could tend to their own animals and crops. The introduction of “pass laws” later made it illegal for a black person to seek other employment or move to another landowner. The rise of a capitalist economy created the need for labour elsewhere, which resulted in legislation that attempted to curb labour tenancy and squatting. This was further augmented by the mechanisation on farms.<sup>23</sup>

The founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910 saw various pieces of legislation being implemented that included the Natives Land Act (Act No. 27 of 1913), Native Administration Act (Act No. 38 of 1927) and Bantu Trust and Land Act (Act No. 18 of 1936), all of which were aimed at regulating and restricting the movement and land ownership of black South Africans.<sup>24</sup> An era of legislated Apartheid (separate development) was implemented in the country from 1948 when the Reunited (Herenigde) National Party (later National Party) took over power in the country up to the negotiation phase with liberation movements in the early nineteen nineties. During this time, South Africa was divided into “Bantu Homelands”, many of which were later to become so-called self-governing states under the supervision of the National Party government in South Africa.<sup>25</sup> It is estimated that 3,5 million people were uprooted between 1960 and 1983 as a result of the implementation of Apartheid policies and legislation.<sup>26</sup> Towards the end of the 1980s and early 1990s seeds were sown for the dismantling of the Apartheid system in preparation for the first all-inclusive elections in 1994 and the enactment of a new constitution in 1996. From 1994, the newly elected ANC-led government began a process of transformation that included reversing the entrenched historic patterns of land ownership in South Africa.

Expectations relating to transformation of land ownership since 1994 were based on the presumption that redistribution and restitution would assist the

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23 EM Letsoalo, *Land reform in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Scotaville, 1987), pp. 30-31; TRH Davenport, *South Africa: A modern history*, p. 164.

24 HM Feinberg, “Pre-apartheid African land ownership and the implication for the current restitution debate in South Africa”, *Historia*, 40(2), 1995, pp. 48-63; CJF Muller, *Five hundred years...*, pp. 396-397; C Saunders, *Illustrated history of South Africa...*, pp. 379-380.

25 DW Scher, “The consolidation of the apartheid state, 1948-1966”; K du Pisani, “BJ Vorster and separate development”, FJ Pretorius, *A history of South Africa...*, pp. 329-350; 354.

26 T Pepeteka, “Reversing the legacy of the 1913 Natives Land Act: progress of land reform”, Research Unit Parliament 2013 (available at <http://www.parliament.gov.za/content/Land%20Act%20-%20Paper%20-%20Thembi%20-%20Final.pdf>, as accessed on 10 June 2015), p. 1.

rural poor to overcome poverty through access to land for sustainable and productive agricultural production. The post-Apartheid failures regarding sustainable land reform, together with a recent history of dispossession and deprivation, have become sources of political mobilisation that serve to increase of political expectations around the issue of land.

## **Land as a source of political expectations in South Africa**

As indicated in the introduction, this article will explain how historically based political expectations resulting from ANC party political NDR based rhetoric regarding transformation of land ownership are not aligned with the official ANC government development plans. The result of these contradictory approaches is a growing gap between political expectations and economic development which is a potential source of social conflict in society. It is therefore important to interrogate the NDR as a source of political expectations within the framework of the NDP and NGP as vehicles for rural agricultural development.

### ***The NDR as a source of political expectations***

Transformation of land ownership was a central feature of anti-Apartheid rhetoric, but also in attempts to transform South African society since 1994. In this respect, it is important to define the concept transformation as:<sup>27</sup>

... the fast progressive, comprehensive, and fundamental political change of society, that arises from an unacceptable past, which takes on the form of central planning (social engineering and political manipulation), often driven by hegemony, with an emphasis on the management of change in general and conflict management in particular.

One of the ANC's founding documents that outlines the ideological struggle against Apartheid and for post-Apartheid transformation, the 1955 Freedom Charter pronounces that: "Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and hunger..."<sup>28</sup>

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27 A Duvenhage, "Politieke transformasie as 'n ideologiese denkraamwerk: 'n Beledsdinamiese analise en perspektief", *Koers*, 72(3), 2007, pp. 377- 404.

28 ANC, "The Freedom Charter" (available at <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=72>, as accessed on 29 May 2015).

The NDR is based on the Freedom Charter and remains the central ideological basis, and to a large degree also the political strategy, through which the governing alliance in South Africa plans to transform South African society. The ANC defines the NDR as: “A process of struggle that seeks to transfer power to the people and transform society into a non-racial, non-sexist, united, democratic one, and changes the manner in which wealth is shared, in order to benefit all the people”.<sup>29</sup>

The ANC’s 52<sup>nd</sup> Polokwane Conference held in 2007 confirmed the commitment to the NDR. This was reaffirmed by the ANC’s Bheki Khumalo, who indicated that: “There should be no denying the fact that our tradition is firmly revolutionary, now committed to the National Democratic Revolution of Reconstruction”.<sup>30</sup> At the conference, the following resolutions were taken regarding land and agriculture by the ANC:

- The state must regulate, but not prohibit ownership of land by non-South Africans who must take the country’s commitment to land reform, restitution, redistribution and access to land into account.
- The state and mandated entities must exercise their right to expropriate land in the public’s interest and for public purposes and compensation must be awarded in accordance with the constitution with special emphasis on equity, redress and social justice.
- The willing seller, willing buyer principle must be reviewed and market-driven land reform should be discarded in order to accelerate the equitable distribution of land.
- The adequacy of post-settlement support in land reform programmes must be reviewed.
- The management and control of state-owned land should be placed under one department.
- A land audit should be conducted.
- Customary land should be democratised and not only be the preserve of traditional leaders.
- Redundant land belonging to state-owned enterprises and municipalities should be transferred for low cost housing.<sup>31</sup>

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29 ANC, “Strategy and tactics of the ANC December 2012” (available at [www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf](http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf), as accessed on 16 February 2016), p. 70.

30 “We are all in this together: Budget 2008”, *ANC Today*, 8(7) (available at [www.anc.org.za/docs/ancoday/2008/at07.htm](http://www.anc.org.za/docs/ancoday/2008/at07.htm), as accessed on 25 April 2016), p. 3.

31 ANC, “52<sup>nd</sup> National Conference resolutions 20 December 2007” (available at [www.anc.org.za/show](http://www.anc.org.za/show), as accessed on 4 May 2016).

The ANC's 53<sup>rd</sup> Mangaung conference in 2013 reaffirmed the above resolutions, but emphasised that land reform "... must represent a radical and rapid break from the past without significantly disrupting agricultural production and food security".<sup>32</sup> The emphasis on "a radical and rapid break from the past" is an indication that the NDR has gained prominence as an ideological vehicle to transform land ownership in South Africa.

The NDR is characterised by two phases in the achievement of its transformation agenda. The first phase was gaining political control of the country achieved during the transition to democracy in 1994. The ANC's Strategy and Tactics document indicates that this first phase has been completed successfully.<sup>33</sup>

Given the nature of the political settlement, the democratic movement used the breakthrough of 1994 as a beach-head to lay the foundation for a systematic transition from colonialism to a National Democratic Society.

The second phase is summarised as:<sup>34</sup>

... interventions required to speed up change, especially with regard to economic and social transformation, can be understood as marking a second phase in the transition to a National Democratic Society.

In terms of agriculture, the second phase sees the National Democratic Society as follows:<sup>35</sup>

In this regard, such a society will place a high premium on redistribution of land in both urban and rural areas for the benefit of those who were denied access under colonialism. Such access must be provided for a variety of purposes including agriculture, housing, environmental preservation, mining and other economic activity, public utilities and spaces, entertainment and other uses. In order to ensure effective and sustainable land and agrarian reform, effective measures will be put in place to assist 'emergent' and small-scale farmers and co-operatives.

While the NDR was meant to be strategy through which to mobilise against the Apartheid regime, it continues to play a central role in ANC political

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32 ANC, "53<sup>rd</sup> National Conference resolutions 13 January 2013" (available at [www.anc.org.za/res/resolutions53rd](http://www.anc.org.za/res/resolutions53rd), as accessed on 4 May 2016), p. 25.

33 ANC, "Strategy and tactics..." (available at [www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf](http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf), as accessed on 16 February 2016), p. 34.

34 ANC, "Strategy and tactics..." (available at [www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf](http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf), as accessed on 16 February 2016), p. 13.

35 ANC, "Strategy and tactics..." (available at [www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf](http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf), as accessed on 16 February 2016), p. 26.

campaigns and rhetoric since 1994. In line with the NDR, former President Zuma indicated at the ANC's birthday celebrations in Rustenburg in January 2016 that the party needed to come up with new "instruments" to fast-track land reform to be able to resolve the problems of poverty, inequality and unemployment. While addressing traditional leaders, Zuma took a radical stance stating that: "The source of poverty, inequality, unemployment is land ... which was taken, not bought. Stolen". He went further to say: "But the government of the people has been buying it back as if it was sold at one point. It was never sold, it was taken ... stolen". Later on the same day he repeated these sentiments with the comment that "land hunger" was the cause of poverty and inequality and: "Without solving that problem, rest assured, we would talk about it for many decades to come. We need some bold decisions", and speaking at the event celebrating the ANC's 104th anniversary, Zuma said the pace of land reform "must be radically accelerated".<sup>36</sup> These comments caused concern within the agricultural community and are indicative of a more aggressive NDR-based approach to transformation of ownership.

During the 54<sup>th</sup> ANC Conference in December 2018 the ANC resolved to pursue a policy of expropriation of land without compensation. The resolution also indicated that expropriation should be pursued without destabilising the agricultural sector, without endangering food security in the country and without undermining economic growth and job creation.<sup>37</sup> During the same conference, Cyril Ramaphosa was elected as President of the ANC and was sworn in as South Africa's President on 15 February 2018 after Zuma had resigned the previous evening.<sup>38</sup> Later that month the ANC supported a motion in Parliament that allows for Parliament's Constitutional Review Committee to undertake public hearings on the issue of expropriation without compensation and report back to Parliament by 30 August 2018.<sup>39</sup> However, before the Constitutional review Committee had concluded its

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36 S Shoba, "The land was never sold, it was stolen", *Sunday Times News*, 10 January 2016 (available at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/stnews/2016/01/10/The-land-was-never-sold-it-was-stolen>, as accessed on 11 February 2016).

37 ANC, "54<sup>th</sup> National Conference Report and resolutions", 16-20 December 2017 (available at [http://www.anc.org.za/sites/default/files/54th\\_National\\_Conference\\_Report.pdf](http://www.anc.org.za/sites/default/files/54th_National_Conference_Report.pdf), as accessed on 4 August 2018), p. 11.

38 G Davis, "Cyril Ramaphosa sworn in as President of RSA" (available at <http://ewn.co.za/2018/02/15/watch-live-ramaphosa-to-be-sworn-in-as-sa-president>, as accessed on 4 August 2018).

39 J Gerber, "National Assembly adopts motion on land expropriation without compensation" (available at <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/breaking-national-assembly-adopts-motion-on-land-expropriation-without-compensation-20180227>, as accessed on 4 August 2018).

public hearings Ramaphosa made the following comments as President of the ANC in a speech following an ANC meeting on 31 July 2018:<sup>40</sup>

The ANC reaffirms its position that the Constitution is a mandate for radical transformation both of society and the economy... Accordingly, the ANC will, through the parliamentary process, finalise a proposed amendment to the Constitution that outlines more clearly the conditions under which expropriation of land without compensation can be affected.

Due to the fact that the hearing was not completed in the Western Cape Province, the announcement by Ramaphosa was met with criticism by the opposition with the Leader of the Democratic Alliance, Mmusi Maimane, making the following comments:<sup>41</sup>

...it appears the ANC does not care about the opinion of the people of this province. Because on Wednesday they announced that they will definitely be changing Section 25 of the Constitution. So it appears these land hearings are about ticking boxes, not consulting South Africans...I call on all South Africans to reject populism, embrace constitutionalism, and work together to build One South Africa For All.

The confusion over the issue of a more radical approach to land reform in the form of expropriation without compensation, using history as an instrument to stir up expectations, has the potential to cause a great deal of economic uncertainty in the agricultural sector which in turn could impact negatively on rural investment and food security.

Van Zyl Slabbert indicates that what politicians in the “old and new South Africa” have in common is the misuse of history: “History is not seen as an impartial investigation into what happened, but rather as a part of a political mobilisation to promote some or other self-interest”.<sup>42</sup> As a relic of the historical struggle against Apartheid, the NDR remains a powerful ideological force in South Africa. While the NDR-based revolutionary political rhetoric may mobilise political support around historically-based racial disparity relating to land, it does not contribute to investment in agriculture or food security, which are aims of government’s official development plans such as

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40 C Ramaphosa, “Read President Cyril Ramaphosa’s full speech here” (available at <https://www.news24.com/Columnists/GuestColumn/read-president-cyрил-ramaphosas-full-speech-here-20180731>, as accessed on 4 August 2018).

41 M Maimane, “Land hearings are about more power for the corrupt and elite ANC, not the people”, Remarks delivered by the Leader of the Democratic Alliance, Mmusi Maimane, to members of the public outside of the Constitutional Review Committee land hearing in Goodwood, Cape Town, on 4 August 2018, issued by the Democratic Alliance.

42 F Van Zyl Slabbert, *Duskant die Geskiedenis, 'n persoonlike terugblik op die politieke oorgang in Suid-Afrika* (Jeppestown, Jonathan Ball, 2006), p. 21.

the NDP and NGP. In this respect Jeffery summarizes the NDR's racially motivated redistributive agenda as follows:<sup>43</sup>

The documents (ANC Strategy and Tactics documents) make it clear that the ANC's principal objective is not in pursuit of economic growth in order to increase the size of the economic pie. Though the organisation recognises the importance of growth, its main emphasis is rather on redistribution on taking existing wealth from whites and transferring it to blacks.

Liberation based revolutionary political rhetoric from the ANC-led government, relating to transformation of land ownership, is used to mobilise voters during elections and fuels political expectations that can easily serve as a source of resistance to the same government that espouses this if these political expectations are not met on an economic level.

### *Other sources of political expectations*

Not to be outdone by President Jacob Zuma, the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), Julius Malema addressed a crowd in Newcastle in November 2016 with the following controversial utterances: "They found peaceful Africans here. They killed them! They slaughtered them, like animals! We are not calling for the slaughter of white people, at least not for now".<sup>44</sup> This radical stance is echoed in EFF policy documents on land that include references to radical land reform programmes as revolutionary processes similar to those of Russia, the PRC, Cuba, Mozambique, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe.<sup>45</sup>

In December 2014, the EFF National Assembly passed various policy on proposals that included sections on land redistribution. The most prominent proposal relating to this was, among others, that all land must be transferred to the custodianship of the state in a similar manner that the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (Act No 28 of 2002) transferred mineral and petroleum resources to the ownership and custodianship of the state. The state will then "administer and use land for sustainable development purposes". Such transfers should take place without compensation and should apply to both black and white South Africans alike.<sup>46</sup>

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43 A Jeffery, *Chasing the rainbow. South Africa's move from Mandela to Zuma* (Cape Town, CTP Printers, 2010), p. 8.

44 Timeslive, "DA to report 'hate speech' to Human Rights Commission" (available at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2016/11/08/DA-to-report-Malema-hate-speech-to-Human-Rights-Commission>, as accessed on 12 November 2016).

45 EFF, "Taking back our stolen land – EFF" (available at [www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/taking-back-our-stolen-land--eff](http://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/taking-back-our-stolen-land--eff), as accessed on 29 July 2016).

46 EFF, "On land: Expropriation of land without compensation for equitable redistribution", resolution passed at the Economic Freedom Fighters National Assembly, December 2014 (available at [Sacsis.org.za/site/article/2271](http://sacsis.org.za/site/article/2271), as accessed on 29 July 2016).



The EFF are not the only organisation that supports radical revolutionary approaches to transformation of land ownership. The *Black First! – Land First! Movement* also supports the redistribution along strong racial lines with the following comments:<sup>47</sup>

Without land there can be no freedom or dignity. We want Land First because it is the basis of our freedom, our identity, our spiritual well-being, our economic development and culture. The land of Africans was stolen and this theft has rendered us landless in our own land. We want all the land with all its endowments on its surface together with all the fortunes underground as well as the sky. All of it belongs to us. We are a people crying for our stolen land. We have decided to get it back by any means possible.

While a strong historical basis exists to support the arguments that land was expropriated from various groups of black people by means of conquest and discriminatory post-conquest legislation (i.e. stolen), most of the agricultural land that is currently in the hands of white commercial farmers is protected by constitutionally guaranteed property rights and other legislative arrangements. Individuals farming such land can legitimately argue that they purchased and developed the land into businesses using their own capital and through loans, and now contribute to food security, employment creation and local economic stability.

### ***The NDP and NGP as vehicles to meet expectations***

By placing an emphasis on the NDR as the foundation for political rhetoric around more radical approaches to speed up land redistribution, the ANC as a political movement appears to be in conflict with the ANC as a government. As the basis for political rhetoric, the NDR does not share an ideological platform with the NDP.

The NDP places a greater emphasis on agricultural production than the previous Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) or Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative (ASGISA) economic plans. As part of the Vision 2030, the NDP envisages rural economies that have greater opportunities for participation in the social, economic and political life of the country. The NDP requires agriculture to support rural economies through land reform, job creation and

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47 BLF, “BLF Revolutionary Call” (available at <http://blf.org.za/policy-documents/blf-revolutionary-call/>, as accessed on 29 January 2017).

poverty alleviation programmes. The main driving force of rural agricultural development will be irrigated agriculture supplemented by dry-land agriculture and the exploitation of the economic potential of agro-processing, tourism and small enterprises such as fisheries. In terms of the broader objectives of the NDP, agriculture is an important feature of a differentiated rural development strategy alongside quality basic services such as education, health care and public transport. Central to this strategy are access to basic services, food security and the empowerment of farm workers.<sup>48</sup> In terms of transformation of land ownership the NDP makes the following proposals regarding land reform:

- The speed of transfers of agricultural land from white to black beneficiaries should be increased without distorting land markets or the confidence of business in the agricultural sector.
- Human resources should be developed through incubators, learnerships, apprenticeships, mentoring and accelerated training in agricultural sciences in order to ensure the sustainable production of agricultural land.
- Land markets should be monitored against undue opportunism, corruption and speculation through various institutional arrangements.
- Land should be successfully transferred by streamlining the land transfer targets with fiscal and economic realities.
- White commercial farmers should be encouraged to contribute to the success of land reform activities through mentorships, chain integration, preferential procurement and skills transfers.<sup>49</sup>

The achievement of the above proposals would be carried out by a model that includes a District Lands Committee (DLC) in each district municipality comprising all landowners in the district, private sector (banks and agribusinesses), national and provincial government departments and government agencies (Land bank and Agricultural Research Council). The DLC would be tasked with identifying 20% of commercial land in each district and give white commercial farmers the option to assist in the transfer of such land to black farmers. Accompanying this is a proposal for an accelerated financing system that would be implemented to assist with skills development and spread the cost between future earnings of the farmer and government. This should be implemented through the following three strategies that, in

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48 Republic of South Africa (RSA), NDP, "National Development Plan Vision for 2030" (Pretoria, National Planning Commission, 11 November 2011), p. 197.

49 RSA, NDP, "National Development Plan Vision for 2030", p. 206.

terms of the NDP, would remove uncertainty around land reform and loss of investor confidence:

- The identification of available land for transformation purposes which includes land already in the market, land of commercial farmers who are already under severe financial pressure, land held by a willing to exit absentee landlord and land in deceased estates. The aim of this is to acquire land without distorting markets.
- Acquisition of land through the state at 50% of market value, making up the shortfall by cash in kind contributions from commercial farmers who volunteer to participate.
- Farmers who participate would be exempt from losing land later and would gain Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) status.<sup>50</sup>

The above suggestions relating to land reform have not yet been implemented and would not necessarily comply with the demands of the NDR that, in terms of rhetoric, would require aggressive state intervention in transformation.

Concerns have been raised over the fact that the NDP runs parallel with the NGP. Both developmental plans include the objectives of creating jobs and increasing economic development. The framework of the NGP introduced by government in 2010 placed an emphasis on a green economy, a review of the legal framework in the mining sector, the re-industrialisation of the economy through increased manufacturing, tourism development and high level services, as well as interventions in agriculture. Interventions included job creation through addressing the high costs of fertiliser and other inputs and improving exports and processing. The NGP indicates that more assistance would be given to smallholders with seed, silos, tractors, finance, marketing, water, extension services and other inputs. The plan also emphasised the need to improve the living conditions of farm workers and unblocking stalled land transfers that constrain investment.<sup>51</sup>

In his 2014 budget debate in parliament, Minister for Economic Development, Ebrahim Patel, emphasised the need for “radical economic transformation” within the framework of the NDP and the NGP. In order to achieve radical economic growth, there would be a greater concentration on what Patel referred to as the six “I”s, namely:

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50 RSA, NDP, “National Development Plan Vision for 2030”, p. 207.

51 E Patel, “Ebrahim Patel unveils New Growth Path”, *Politicsweb*, 2010 (available at <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/party/ebrahim-patel-unveils-new-growth-path>, as accessed on 16 February 2016), p. 2.

- infrastructure;
- industrialisation;
- investment;
- innovation;
- inclusion, and
- integration.<sup>52</sup>

There are currently two plans for economic growth and increased job creation which form the basis of developmental initiatives that run parallel to each other. The NGP appears to supply greater strategic direction for the implementation in some areas of the NDP. In this respect, Hendriks<sup>53</sup> indicates that the NDP places a great deal of emphasis on public resources to achieve its development outcomes, while the NGP recognises that investments in poverty reduction, job creation and economic growth require a social commitment and partnerships. Deficiencies of both plans are that neither of them place enough emphasis on food security or agriculture. While agriculture is mentioned in both, food security is ignored. Both programmes ignore the fact that hunger and poverty are inextricably linked to one another.

South Africa in practice appears to have three approaches to development and agriculture, namely (i) the NGP that has a vision based on state-led growth as a strategy for creating a developmental state, (ii) the NDP that favours private sector investment-led growth and (iii) the politically driven NDR that aims for a national democratic society with a mixed economy, with state, co-operative and other forms of social ownership and private capital.<sup>54</sup> Although each of these approaches have noble objectives, their ideological diversity remains an inherent source of internal conflict within both the ANC and society. These conflicting ideological views within the ANC-led government remain the greatest source of policy uncertainty. Policy uncertainty creates a breeding ground for politically opportunistic rhetoric that breathes life into often unrealistic expectations.

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52 E Patel, "Budget vote speech by Minister of Economic Development" *Parliament*, 22 July 2014 (available at <http://economic.gov.za/communications/50-media-releases/261-budget-vote-speech-by-miniter-of-economic-development-ebrahim-patel-22-july-2014>, as accessed on 16 February 2016).

53 S Hendriks, "South Africa's National Development Plan and New Growth Path: Reflections on Policy Contradictions and Implications for Food Security", *Presidential Address of the Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa*, Bloemfontein, 1 October 2012 (available at [Repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/22052/Hendriks\\_South\\_2013.df?sequence=1](http://Repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/22052/Hendriks_South_2013.df?sequence=1), as accessed on 16 February 2016), pp. 10, 13-14.

54 ANC, "Strategy and tactics..." (available at [www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf](http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf), as accessed on 16 February 2016), p. 27; F Cronjé, *A time traveller's guide to our next ten years* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2014), p. 11.

When determining which strategies are regarded by the NDR as dominant in the implementation of its aims of a national democratic society, the following extract from the ANC Strategy and Tactics document is crucial: “In broad terms our approach is informed by the ideals contained in the Freedom Charter”, while “The practical measures towards a national democratic society are contained in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) adopted by the ANC, the Tripartite Alliance and the broad mass democratic movement in the run-up to the first democratic elections”.<sup>55</sup>

This statement in 2012 only recognises the Freedom Charter which was a political document and only the previous 1994 RDP as a government programme, for the transformation of society. While various ANC-led governments might have attempted to speed up growth and employment through more liberal government programmes of action, it is clear that the radical NDR paradigm has prevailed at a party political level. The ANC has been unable to make the important paradigm shift from liberation movement to governing political party.

The current, more radical proposals to transformation of land ownership that include land ceilings, restrictions on foreign land ownership and the deviation from the willing buyer, willing seller principle are further indications that the NDR is soundly entrenched as the dominant paradigm within the current Zuma-led ANC government.<sup>56</sup> The problem is that NDR rhetoric creates economic uncertainty that undermines the economic plans and programmes that are meant to deliver the objectives of the NDR. This has exacerbated the gap between expectations and the ability to meet those expectations. The implications of this gap are explained in the next section.

## **Expectations as sources of conflict over land ownership**

A useful tool to explain expectations as a source of conflict is what James C Davies coined the J-curve theory. In developing his theory on revolutions, Davies indicated that revolutions are most likely to occur when there have been periods of social and economic improvements that are suddenly replaced by periods of sharp reversal.<sup>57</sup> After such a reversal, people fear that what they

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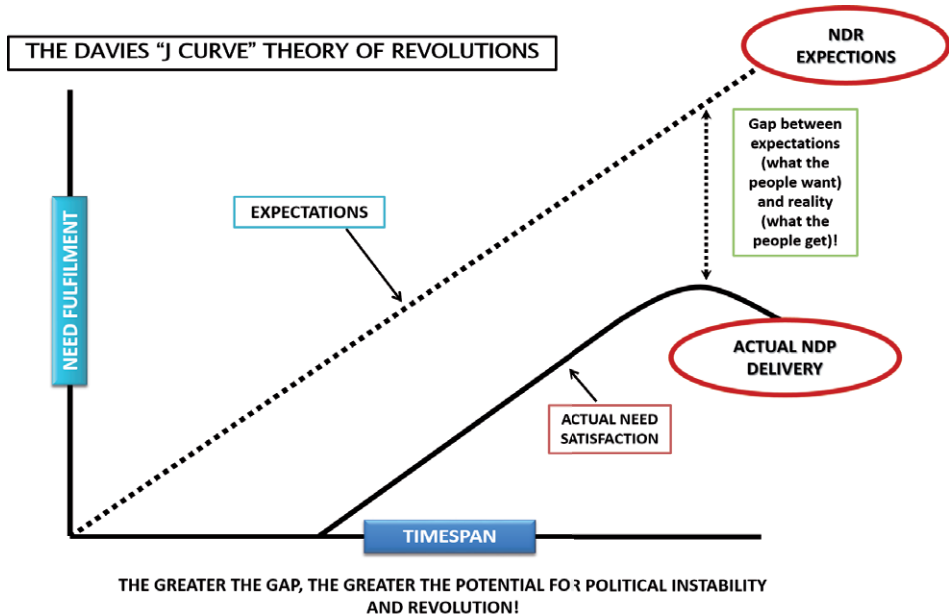
55 ANC, “Strategy and tactics...” (available at [www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf](http://www.anc.org.za/docs/pol/2013/strategy.pdf), as accessed on 16 February 2016), p. 57.

56 JC Davies, “Towards a theory of revolution”, JC Davies (ed.), *When men revolt and why. A reader in political violence and revolution* (New York, The Free Press, 1971), p. 135.

57 JC Davies, “Towards a theory of revolution”, JC Davies (ed.), *When men revolt and why....*, p. 135.

have fought for or earned will be lost and their mood becomes revolutionary. Davies argued that, rather than the poor, it is those who have gained the most from a transformation process who are most likely to revolt when their fears of losing that which they have gained appear to become a reality. The revolt is not necessarily due to their material losses, but rather due to their state of mind and mood that is driven by a fear of losing hard won material benefits. Based on this assumption, he argues that revolutions are most likely to occur in societies where basic day to day survival is not at the forefront of people's minds. Physical deprivation is not the cause of a revolution, but rather the fear of physical deprivation.<sup>58</sup> In this respect, a growing black middle class in South Africa has experienced substantial economic growth and has a great deal to lose through political decisions that have the potential to negatively affect their newly found economic status. The politically expedient NDR rhetoric fuels increased expectations which are not able to be met by actual delivery by development programmes such as the NDP.

**Image 1: The J-curve adapted to the NDR (expectations) and NDP (actual development) paradigm, illustrated in the diagram below:**



Source: TG Jacobsen, “The J-curve – James C Davies’ theory of revolutions”, *Popular Social Science*, 2013 (available at [www.popularsocialscience.com/2013/04/17/james-c-davies-j-curve-theory-of-revolutions/](http://www.popularsocialscience.com/2013/04/17/james-c-davies-j-curve-theory-of-revolutions/), as accessed on 5 July 2015), p. 1.

58 JC Davies, “Towards a theory of revolution”, JC Davies (ed.), *When men revolt and why...*, pp. 134-147.

From the above diagramme<sup>59</sup> it is evident that the gap between the politically mobilised expectations (what people want) and the lethargic implementation of economic plans (what people get) could be an important cause of political dissatisfaction and ultimately even revolutions. The greater the gap, the greater the potential for revolutions or other forms of political unrest. The increasing gap between expectations and the government's ability to deliver effective government services and growing unemployment are sources of political protests in South Africa. There is also concern that economic and political post-1994 gains are being rapidly lost. An analysis of the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISS) Public Violence Monitor data from January 2013 to December 2015 suggests that South Africa experiences an average of three protests per day (including labour strikes). The increase in protests, combined with a history of violence, the unresolved structural inequalities and growing frustration with the ruling ANC are serious threats to the political and economic stability in the country.<sup>60</sup> The slow progress in the transformation of land ownership together with political expectations in this regard are growing sources of potential conflict in South Africa. Political expectations have been fuelled by historically based and politically driven NDR rhetoric, while expectations are dashed by the slow progress of economic transformation required for the success of transformation of land ownership. In this respect it is important to note that transformation of land ownership is not only about transfers of land, but even more importantly about the effective use of transferred land to contribute to rural economic development and food security.

The historical need for transformation of land ownership must be motivated by social equity, achievable economic objectives and mature political outcomes. Land reform that is carried out for ideological reasons or to placate leftist movements in society often leads to political unrest or even violent conflict. Government can mitigate expectation-based social conflict through a greater emphasis on post land redistribution support, employment creation through agribusinesses in rural areas and by ensuring that food security is an important outcome of transformation of land ownership. Redress must be viewed in terms of the overall economic upliftment of rural communities and not only through land transfers to individuals or small groups of beneficiaries.

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59 JC Davies, "Towards a theory of revolution", JC Davies (ed.), *When men revolt and why...*, p. 135.

60 Businesstech, "This is what's driving South Africans to violent protests" (available at [Businesstech.co.za/news/general/127489/this-is-whats-driving-south-africans-to-violent-protests](http://Businesstech.co.za/news/general/127489/this-is-whats-driving-south-africans-to-violent-protests), as accessed on 28 July 2016).



## Concluding remarks

In his book “Feeding Frenzy”, Paul McMahon states that: “especially in Africa, land has cultural, sentimental and political meaning. It is a reminder of past dispossession, a symbol of present dignity and a source of future security”.<sup>61</sup> In this respect transformation of land ownership in South Africa is less about forging a livelihood out of marginally productive land and more about historically motivated social redress. It is therefore important to separate the three issues namely, land as a source of livelihoods, land as a source of historic and social redress and land as a source of political mobilisation.

Land remains a symbol of past dispossession that is a central feature of completing the second phase of the NDR, which is to break the perception of white monopolies over certain industries such as the agricultural industry. Transformation of land ownership, and the conflicts created over this issue, have become a source of political mobilisation based on McMahon’s above description of land as having “cultural, sentimental and political meaning”. The dilemma that this creates is that land has to be put to productive use in order to provide food security for a growing urban population and economic stability for an impoverished rural population. In this respect the current political approaches have proved to be economically unsustainable and have widened the gap between political expectations and economic delivery. The expectation gap regarding various social and political issues continues to serve as a significant source of conflict and protest action in South Africa.

Future political stability will depend on government’s ability to create a delicate balance between redress for historical wrongs through land redistribution on the one side, while maintaining food security and rural economic stability on the other. South Africa has a history of finding resolutions to serious political, social and economic issues through dialogue. An inclusive approach that is aimed less at political approaches that fuel expectations and more at finding economic solutions that include redress and redistribution is the only way to prevent the current social and political uncertainty over land from becoming a source of political conflict.

While history cannot be wished away, the effects of history can be mitigated in order to prevent expectation based conflict. The purpose of transformation of land ownership should not only be political in nature, but should also

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61 P McMahon, *Feeding frenzy: The new politics of food* (London, Profile Books, 2014), p. 201.

have the aim of contributing to the fight against poverty, unemployment and inequality. This implies that transformation initiatives should ensure that transferred land is put to productive use. Government transformation initiatives should not only ensure redistribution of land, but also promote employment opportunities in agriculture, expand local economic development and contribute to food security.

Employment creation remains an important objective for the agricultural industry. In modern economies, more employment is created by agribusinesses than in farming itself. In less-developed agricultural economies there is less agribusiness and farming remains the main employer in rural areas. Agri-processing such as, among many others, grain milling, cotton spinning and weaving, food processing and cigarette factories are crucial sources of employment. When small scale traders, food wholesalers, retailers and peddlers are included in the value chain, the volume of indirect employment often overtakes employment on farms. These employment opportunities assist individuals to escape from the rural poverty traps.<sup>62</sup>

Food security is an equally important factor that has to be factored into transformation of land ownership. A nation is regarded as food secure when it is able to manufacture, import, retain and sustain food required to support its population at minimum per capita nutritional standards.<sup>63</sup> Sustainability of affordable sources of food for a growing population can have serious political implications. Food has been a source of conflict and even revolutions throughout history, whether in ancient Rome, Queen Marie Antoinette's France or Tsarist Russia. In more recent times the political unrest in Arab countries is directly linked to food. Arab autocrats maintained stability through cheap food supplies. The social contract was: "we give you cheap bread, you don't demand democracy". Skyrocketing food prices in 2008 resulted in bread riots in Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. In Tunisia the protestors faced riot police with baguettes. Bread prices in Egypt rose by more than one-third and by March 2008 people had begun to die in bread lines due to fights or exhaustion. The army was instructed to take over the baking and distribution of government subsidised bread on instruction of President Mubarak. By January 2011, unrest over food in Egypt had started a revolution with people complaining that they were forced to live on beans.<sup>64</sup>

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62 GM Meier & JE Rauch, *Leading issues in economic development* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 405.

63 DC Du Toit, "Food security", *Directorate Economic Services Production Economics Unit*, March 2011 (Pretoria, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2011), p. 3.

64 P McMahon, *Feeding frenzy...*, pp. 49-51.

Contrary to what many people in South Africa might believe, the country is not well-suited for agriculture. A large portion of the country is drought prone and most farms survive as businesses due to the efficient manner in which the land is managed. About 20% of farms supply 80% of all food in the country. Commercial farmers account for 95% of all locally produced food, while the remaining 5% is produced by the approximately 220 000 emerging farmers and two million subsistence farmers. While 69% of land in South Africa is estimated to be good for grazing alone, only 13% of land is arable (good for cultivation) and 3% are considered to be high potential agricultural soil. This cannot be ignored in discussions concerning the transformation of land ownership.<sup>65</sup> In order to remain competitive it has become necessary for farmers to obtain more land and increase the size of farming operations. Most smallholder and even medium-sized farms are struggling to survive due to the demands of a global environment. Government has to ensure that South African farmers survive and remain competitive through relevant research, support and improvement of their access to credit through secure tenure, especially in former homeland areas.<sup>66</sup> Modern farming is about business and entrepreneurship as much as it is about land. In this respect, Herbst and Mills correctly indicate that:<sup>67</sup>

Like any other sectors, those who survive and prosper will be the better farmer, marketer and entrepreneur, improving yields and technology, and inserting themselves into local and global value chains.

This is supported by Hall<sup>68</sup> who advocates that adequate budgets are required for transformation of land ownership to cover the capital required to purchase land for redistribution and restitution purposes as well as support such as infrastructure and equipment, administrative budgets for the effective administration of the department and transformation activities and a budget for extension and training support for beneficiaries of transformation initiatives. Current budgets for the DRDL are not adequate and will have to increase significantly if government's redistribution of land targets are to be met.

Within a transformation context, it remains important to ensure that historically necessitated redistribution initiatives are accompanied by

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65 I Kotzé & M Rose (eds.), *Farming facts and trends: Reconnecting South Africa's food systems to its ecosystems* (Cape Town, World Wildlife Fund – South Africa (WWF-SA), 2015), pp. 405, 410.

66 J Herbst & G Mills, *How South Africa works and must do better* (Johannesburg, Pan Macmillan, 2015), p. 73.

67 J Herbst & G Mills, *How South Africa works...*, p. 73.

68 R Hall (ed.), "Another Countryside? Policy options for land and agrarian reform in South Africa", *Institute for Poverty Land and Agrarian Studies* (Cape Town, University of the Western Cape, 2009), pp. 262-263.

the necessary support to ensure that redistributed farms are sustainable, productive and ultimately become businesses (commercial enterprises) that are free of dependency on government support. In this respect it is important that NDR-based political rhetoric is toned down and emphasis is placed in implementing government's development plans such as the NDP.