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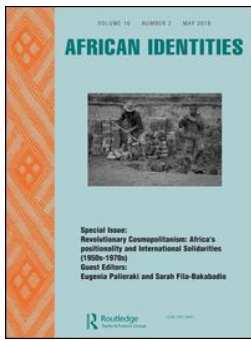
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ARTICLE



The Bill, the Billed and Billy: analysis of media framing of the South African land expropriation Bill

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ABSTRACT

Arguably, no issue evokes so much emotion amongst South Africans, post-1994, like the land and agrarian question. After going through various stages of 'failed' implementations of the land reform programme, the government decided to consider the path of land expropriation, with a Bill to that effect already passing the motion in Parliament. The Bill, which seeks to provide for the expropriation of property for a public purpose or in the public interest, was recently passed by the South African Parliament, with attendant discordant discourses amongst the populace. Given the vociferous nature of the South African media and its potential to influence public perception of sensitive social issues, this article undertakes a content analysis of media reportage of the land expropriation Bill with a bid to ascertain how it has impacted on public opinion and understanding of the Bill, and land reform in general.

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Expropriation; land; land expropriation; land reform; peace journalism; media frames

Introduction/background

The land question in post-apartheid South Africa is arguably one of the most contentious and sensitive issues in the country's socio-political milieu. The government's promise to undertake a concerted land reform programme aimed at historical redress, wealth redistribution and economic growth has been disparaged by a section of the populace who are displeased by the policy's slow pace of implementation, the inability to translate redistributed land into improvements in agricultural productivity, and a top-down approach to land reform that is not people-centred. Thus, whenever the delicate issue of land reform is discussed, emotional outbursts are common given the nation's peculiar sociocultural, socioeconomic and socio-political history.

One platform where the land reform discourse has generated much controversy is the media. South Africa's vociferous media has the potential to be divided along ethnic and racial lines. Media messages in South Africa often have a myriad of interpretations that may not necessarily be as intended by the source. Decades of racial segregation and economic inequality means that media messages are often wittingly or unwittingly construed through a nexus of sociocultural, sociopolitical, ethnic and racial connotations. Thus, since most South Africans rely on the media for information, especially

regarding issues like land reforms, there is the tendency to fall prey to biased and insensitive reportage, capable of inciting violence which is elicited by prejudiced information often presented as news.

Titled the Bill, the Billed and Billy, this article explores, through content analysis, media's framing of the land expropriation Bill to the general public, and how these frames affect public understanding of the Bill. The Billed, in the context of this study, refers to individuals and/or groups that are likely to be affected by the possibility of government expropriation, while 'Billy' refers to the man (woman) who, by virtue of the Bill, may now stand a chance of owning land. The article makes a case for the application of the Peace Journalism Model in the reportage of the Land Expropriation Bill. The model, popularised by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), encourages journalists to report social issues in ways that create opportunities for members of society to consider and value nonviolent responses toward conflict by using insights from conflict analysis and transformation to update concepts of balance, fairness, and accuracy in reporting. It also provides a new route map, which traces the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their reportage. In addition, it builds awareness of nonviolence and brings creativity into the practical job of everyday editing and reporting.

South Africa, the land question and the question of land

Discourses over the years have traced South Africa's land question to the 1913 Native Land Act which many believe fostered disparate land distribution, and which ultimately encouraged the entrenchment of apartheid. The Act forbade Africans from purchasing land outside areas specifically demarcated as 'scheduled native areas', it also provided for a commission to demarcate the scheduled areas which were to be occupied by Africans, and prohibited cash rentals and sharecropping by Africans living outside the areas. The Act also required Africans living in white-owned farms to render a minimum of 90 days' service a year to the landowner (Beinart & Delius, 2015, p. 26).

Modise and Mtshiselwa (2013) argue that the Act not only legalised the dispossession of lands from blacks, it further widened socioeconomic disparities, as the land was generally seen as a source of economic power. They further argued that prior to the Act, black ownership of land in South African had productive results as manifest in land ownership and use by blacks from a meager 6000–8000 acres in the 1880s, to 238 473 acres in Natal alone by 1905. This position concurs with an earlier view held by Maylam (1986, p. 86) who states that prior to the Act, black South Africans owned and utilised land effectively for their welfare while participating actively in the nation's economic growth.

Beinart and Delius (2015) however hold contrary views to those put forward by Modise and Mtshiselwa (2013) and Maylam, 1986, p. 86) regarding the impact and modus operandi of the Native Land Act. They argue that the Act in itself did not take land away from African people 'directly'; instead, they contend, it was designed to change the terms on which Africans could occupy white-owned land and extend the areas already reserved for Africans. By 1994, Lahiff (2007) claimed that over 82 million hectares of farmland, totaling 86% of total agricultural land or 68% of the total surface

area was concentrated in the hands of less than 0.1% of the population, thereby bringing the land question, and the need for reform, to the forefront of public discourse.

Efforts by past governments, post-apartheid, to initiate land reforms have often led to mistrust, fear and even physical violence. This, according to Walker et al. (2015, p. 1) may not be unconnected with the fact that the reforms and/or policies have been mostly simplistic and unrealistically unmindful of the complexities and subtleties of the issue at stake by '... elevating single elements in the puzzle into simplistic prescriptions such as: Restore stolen land! Maintain national food security! Respect traditional institutions and culture! Etc.' One of such policies is the 'Willing Seller, Willing Buyer (WS/WB)' approach which allows for land to be purchased from owners in terms of the currency of market value largely determined by the aggregated business interests of the sellers. The WS/WB concept found its way into mainstream land reform discourse during the period of negotiated democracy as the nation prepared to transit from apartheid. It was during this period that the foundation of the South African land reform programme was laid. Lahiff (2007) recalls that the concept was systematically introduced into the discourse on land reform during the period 1993–1996 as it was not originally a part of the African National Congress' (ANC) ready to govern policy statement of 1992 which advocated expropriation and other non-market mechanisms, and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which is the manifesto upon which the party rode to power in 1994. However, by 1997, the WS/WB approach to land reform had found its way into the White Paper on South African Land Policy.

It can be argued that the protracted land and agrarian issue in South Africa took a new turn with the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in Zimbabwe which took place from 2000 to 2005. The reform, which saw the transfer of almost 90 percent of the white-owned agricultural land to black beneficiaries from the communal areas of the country, further heightened public discourse on land reform in South Africa. Suddenly, it seemed, there were concerns from both local and international watchers (especially the media) that South Africa may go 'the Zimbabwean way'. The 'Zimbabwean way' describes the absolute dispossession and redistribution of lands. It was also feared that South Africa may also experience 'the Zimbabwean effect' if it implemented complete land expropriation. The 'Zimbabwean effect' in this context would mean the impact land reform in Zimbabwe had on the country's economy as well as its place in the comity of nations. Many aver that the reform led to the withdrawal of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Zimbabwe as occasioned by economic sanctions which led to plummeting in economic activities and international isolation, such as the country's expulsion from the Commonwealth organisation.

Suffice to add, however, that much of media reportage has focused largely on the negative effects of land reform in Zimbabwe and not much was reported in the sampled media on the success (es) of the programme. For example, Hanlon, Manjengwa, and Smart (2013) claim that by reallocating agricultural land which was not being effectively or fully utilized to over 1.3 million beneficiary families, land reform more than doubled the productive use of land – and in this sense, land reform can also be seen as having intensified the productive use of national resources as a whole. In a little over a decade since the collapse of the country's industrial and manufacturing employment sector, a new mode of production led by small farms emerged as the 'dynamic sector' of the agrarian economy. Hanlon et al further stated thus:

“Productive land use is far more extensive than under the previous system and has produced far more jobs – most of them as independent farmers (not poorly paid labourers). This has had direct effects on empowerment as labour reserves, farm labourers and poverty wages have been replaced with small to medium farms who are engaged in diversified farming across cash and food crop sectors. An increase in the number of contractors in tobacco and cotton has created more opportunities for small farmers to enter contract farming to compensate for lack of credit at the moment (Hanlon et al., 2013, p. 26).

According to Hendricks (2013, p. 28), the FTLRP in Zimbabwe may be a contributing factor for the intensive calls for a review of the market-based land reform programme, particularly the WS/WB principle which clearly was not working as attested to by President Jacob Zuma in his 2012 State of the Nation Address (SONA) where he clearly admitted thus: ‘the process is slow and tedious and there is general agreement that the willing buyer, willing seller option has not been the best way to address this question’. President Zuma’s remarks came seven years after President Thabo Mbeki admitted in 2005 that the WS/WB would be reviewed in ways that would address loopholes in the strategy.

Ntsebeza (2007) recalls that as far back as 2005, there had been a general consensus that the WS/WB approach was inefficient and generally unable to address the lingering land question. This was clearly stated in a resolution passed after the 2005 Land Summit organised by the Department of Land Affairs themed: ‘A Partnership to Fast Track Land Reform: A New Trajectory, Forward to 2014’. The overwhelming manner in which delegates reached resolutions concerning the needed changes to the land reform programme clearly showed that the programme had not succeeded addressing societal discontent. Some of the resolutions reached include:

- That the state should be proactive and be the driving force behind land redistribution;
- The willing seller, willing buyer principle be rejected;
- The state to have right of first refusal on all land sales
- Land reform should benefit the poor, particularly women, farm workers and youth
- and that land should be expropriated

Although there was a general consensus at the summit that the WS/WB policy had not aided the attainment of equitable and just land reform, it nonetheless had few contesting views. For example, Aliber (2015, p. 145) argues that the WS/WB was rejected by the delegates due to two ‘overlapping but distinct’ concerns. First, he avers that delegates generally alleged that the WS/WB was the main reason behind the slow pace of land reform. Secondly, he asserts that most delegates described the policy as the ugly face of the ‘property clause’ of the 1996 South African constitution which had been severally considered protective of white landowners at the expense of disenfranchised South Africans. These points, according to him, have not been clearly substantiated by clear evidence of its unfeasibility or impracticability. Aliber believes the general consensus of the perceived failure of the WS/WB policy is drawn from generalised condemnations which are based on moral grounds. He asserts that most arguments against the policy are generally presented as self-evident, using the language of hurt, blame, and outrage.

He further remarked thus:

"In its most concrete form, the moral outrage relates to the idea expressed by Andile Mngxitama (and others) that the Constitution unjustly protects the illegitimate property rights of whites, and therefore the idea of using market mechanism for shifting land back is wrong; moreover, it simply doesn't work. However, even for those who don't share Mngxitama's perspectives, the market mechanism is suspect ... on the one hand; WS/WB is dismissed with little evidence brought to bear. On the other hand, there are numerous other explanations for the poor pace of land reform, but none inspires nearly the same kind of disgust and wrath that WS/WB does" (Aliber, 2015, p. 148).

In what seemed like government's response to the arguments for and against the WS/WB approach, it introduced the Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS) in 2006. The policy saw the government getting more involved in the buying and selling of lands by buying farms and leasing them to beneficiaries, thereby replacing all previous grant-based programmes in the various phases of land reform. According to Hall (2015, p. 138), what land would be acquired would still be determined by whatever farms were offered for sale, with the government now acting as the 'willing buyer'. This policy empowered the government to buy as much land as was needed, thereby avoiding the constraints of the subsidies provided under previous policies. Hall contends that the PLAS programme introduced a type of 'state landlordism' which made the state become more involved in the land market. This meant that the state became more conservative in its plan for land by insisting that beneficiaries provide commercial business plans before they could get leases to use the land. This led to delays as people waited for approval of business plans and recapitalization applications, which preceded secured land rights. According to Hall: 'Now the metric used to determine success in departmental strategic plans was the number of farms purchased, regardless of whether or not people have access to these farms, secured land rights to them, or had the ability to use them to improve their lives in other words, whether or not there has been any redistribution of property or wealth' (Hall, 2015, p. 139).

Unbundling the Bill

This section of the article will not provide a detailed exposition of contents of the Expropriation Bill as that would be an unnecessary duplication. However, it would provide a summary of the Bill's content. The Expropriation Bill, as introduced in the National Assembly of South Africa (proposed section 76) states thus: To provide for the expropriation of property for a public purpose or in the public interest, subject to just and equitable compensation; and to provide for matters connected therewith. The Bill stems from section 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 which provides thus:

(1) No one may be deprived of property except in terms of the law of general application and no law may permit arbitrary deprivation of property

(2) Property may be expropriated only in terms of the law of general application a. for a public purpose or in the public interest; and b. subject to compensation, the amount of which and the time and manner of payment of which have either been agreed to by those affected or decided or approved by a court.

(3) The amount of the compensation and the time and manner of payment must be just and equitable, reflecting an equitable balance between the public interest and the interests of those affected, having regard to all relevant circumstances, including-

(a) The current use of the property (b) the history of acquisition and use of the property (c) the market value of the property (d) the extent of direct state investment and subsidy in the acquisition and beneficial capital improvement of the property and (e) the purpose of the expropriation

(4) The Bill further explains the public interest to include: (a) the nation's commitment to land reform and to reforms to bring about equitable access to all South Africa's natural resources; and (b) Property is not limited to land

(5) The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis.

(6) A person or community whose tenure of land is legally insecure as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament, either to tenure which is legally secure or to comparable redress

(7) A person or community dispossessed of property after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws or practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of Parliament, either to restitution of that property or to equitable redress.

(8) Parliament must enact the legislation referred to in subsection (6) and Whereas section 33(1) of the Constitution provides that everyone has the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair; and whereas uniformity across the nation is required in order to deal effectively with these matters: And in order to ensure that: -

- Expropriation does not take arbitrarily and takes place only for a public purpose or in the public interest;
- Procedural norms and standards are set for organs of state and persons with powers to expropriate
- A person whose right to property is expropriated is entitled to just and equitable compensation (Expropriation Bill, B4-2015).

The aim of the study

As earlier stated, the study explores, through content analysis, media's framing of the sensitive land expropriation issue to the general public, and how these frames affect public understanding of the Bill. The study makes a case for the application of the peace journalism model in the reportage of conflict-sensitive issues such as the South African Land Expropriation Bill.

Study objectives

The study is predicated on the following research Objectives:

- (i) Determine the media's framing of South African media reportage of the Land Expropriation Bill.
- (ii) Ascertain the relationship between media frames and public understanding of the Bill
- (iii) Examine the effectiveness of the Peace Journalism Model as an alternative style of reportage of social issues, specifically the Land Expropriation Bill.

Methodology

This paper draws on content analysis of selected South African newspapers initially conducted for 6 months between February 2016 and July 2016 and extended to the early weeks of 2018 when the Bill was adopted by Parliament. This article employs framing analysis to examine and analyse the representation of land and reform issues, specifically the Land Expropriation Bill in the South African media. A purposive sample of news articles published in selected online versions of newspapers in South Africa (*The Mail and Guardian*, *Business Day*, *Daily Maverick* and *Sowetan*) were subjected to content analysis. The newspapers were sampled because of their readership, spread, and influence. For example, the researcher decided to analyse the *Business Day Newspaper* because one of the dominant discourses regarding land reform in South Africa was the supposed economic impact it would have on the country.

Theoretical framework

Two theories-agenda setting and media framing have been adopted to provide elucidation of the study's aims and objectives. First put forward by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the agenda-setting theory suggests that the media sets public agenda, in the sense that it (the media) may not exactly tell the public what to think, but they may wittingly or unwittingly influence what to think about. Although originally intended to apply to news media, it has been applied to other areas of media messages transmitted to the audience. It may be argued that one of the reasons for a possible lack of understanding of the Land Expropriation Bill could be due to the fact that the media has not accorded sufficient prominence to the issue.

The second theory-media framing can be said to be an extension of the agenda-setting theory. McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver (1997) refer to media framing as the second level of agenda-setting. According to Scheufele (1999), the theory of media framing is based on the conjecture that audience's understanding of an issue is strongly dependent on the way that issue is characterised by news reports. In other words, the media can 'frame' a social issue in such a way as to give it a meaning different from that originally intended (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Given that most media messages seek to elicit an emotional response from the audience, news stories are systematically framed and laced with emotional appeals (Muhlman, 2010).

Agenda setting and media framing theories are very important to the land discourse in many respects because the media can frame potential conflict situations in ways that can significantly affect their intractability by creating mutually incompatible interpretations of events (Chaudhry & Ashraf, 2012). As would be presented in this study, it is clear that the South African media created a 'we vs them' divide that created the impression that the calls for land reform were a black vs white issue. Kauffmann, Elliot, and Shmueli (2013, p. 2) maintain that disputants in a conflict always construct media frames to suit their points of views because frames are often built upon underlying structures of beliefs, values, and experiences.

The peace journalism model

Lynch and Galtung (2010, p. 13) outline the ways in which Peace Journalism differs from war (or traditional) journalism. They argue that traditional journalism puts the focus on the visible effects of violence, embraces an 'us vs. them' mentality, is reactive and makes conflict and war opaque and secret. On the other hand, Peace Journalism focuses on the invisible effects of war and violence, makes conflict transparent, and is proactive and truth orientated rather than propaganda orientated

Where the focus is on violence and a final victor/victory in traditional journalism, peace journalism involves a conflict-orientated analysis of the underlying causes of the conflict and seeks solutions. Peace journalism gives a voice to all parties and a voice for the voiceless; as such it is a form of journalism that is people orientated rather than elite orientated. In this way, peace journalism works against existing journalistic practices of relying exclusively on official sources and offers a way for journalism to provide a more-nuanced style of reporting. Lynch and Galtung also emphasise that traditional journalism and peace journalism are two different ways of reporting the same events, in the sense that they are both descriptive of reality. The difference is that peace journalism tries to take in more reality.

The model is not without its criticisms. For example, Loyn (2007, p. 2) contends that the biggest problem with peace journalism is where it puts the reporter. He asserts that the primary duty of a reporter is to be an observer and not a participant in a conflict situation, or indeed, any issue of social relevance. According to Loyn, the reporter is not there to make peace but to address the complications of a messy world and construct a narrative, not to search for connotations. Similarly, Hanitzsch (2007, p. 5) argues that the idea behind peace journalism is often based on individualistic and voluntarist illusion which suggests that journalists only need to change their attitudes and behaviours in order to produce coverage that will embrace the tenets of peace journalism. He further contends that there are many structural constraints such as inadequate personnel, availability of sources, access to the scene and information in general etc. which shapes and limits the works of journalists. Therefore, he affirms, it would be imprudent to suggest that the conduct of peace journalism is solely a matter of individual scope.

In stout defense of the model, Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) maintain that peace journalism is often misunderstood as 'advocating for peace'. Rather, they aver, it is a journalism model concerned with giving peace a chance in the national and international debate, by ensuring that nonviolent responses to conflict get a fair hearing. Similarly, Peleg (2007, p. 3) faults Loyn's position that reporters should maintain objectivity by acting as detached observers and not players in the social sphere. He remarks that it is callous, inconceivable and insensitive for journalists to remain aloof and disconnected in the face of social injustice and tyranny. He is of the opinion that it is near impossible for example to report disasters like the Rwandan genocide, the war in the DRC, the ravaging scourge of HIV/AIDS etc. without a sense of attachment, distinct emotional slant, and empathy. He also disagrees with Hanitzsch's position that peace journalism overemphasizes voluntarism and individualism, ignoring the sustaining surroundings, organisational logic and economic pressures that go with day to day journalistic duties. Individual reporters, according to Hanitzsch, work alongside a group of other

peace-minded people or groups to ensure peace as they cannot possibly work alone or in a vacuum.

Discussion of findings

Framing the Bill

Public discourse of the Bill threw up various counteracting views and created disquiet about the possible direction the expropriation will take and the impact it would have on the socioeconomic, sociocultural and sociopolitical life of the country. This is because the news media, whether wittingly or unwittingly, determine which issues members of the public think and talk about through various discursive practices and interpretative frames.

For example, on the 10th of February 2016, *Business Day Newspaper* published a story titled: SA Heading for Policy Discouraging Trade through New Bills. The article presented the position of a roundtable on the SA-European Union (EU) which warned that the country was moving from a policy encouraging trade and investment to one that contradicts this; the impression was that the country was going to have the '*Zimbabwean Experience*' in terms of socioeconomic and socio-political woes, if land was expropriated. Similarly, the newspaper on 13/02/2016 published a story titled: State's Land Ownership will cause Investor Exodus says Right Group. In what seemed like 'prophetic journalism', the story provided the views of a rights group-AfriBusiness, which warned that the planned implementation of the Land Expropriation Bill would 'see foreign investors fleeing the country with their funds to find better investment opportunities'. Describing the Bill as 'economic extortion', the group further warned that it would fight in the law courts 'any form of legislation which seeks to undermine the constitutional right to own property within South Africa or that seeks to promote the unlawful expropriation thereof ...'.

While the newspaper was within its ethical rights to 'objectively' publish the stories as told, it is nonetheless important to note that a peace journalism approach to reportage of the Bill would have provided voices to all parties, showed equal empathy and understanding to all involved in the land issue, as well as humanised all sides to the issue. Granted, land expropriation potentially could elicit global reactions that may have economic effects, media narratives often live out the human angle to the conflict-sensitive issue. The newspaper focused more on the possible negative effects of land expropriation without highlighting the equally possible positives. Although the effect of land expropriation in Zimbabwe was frequently referred to, not much was reported on the positives of expropriation in the country.

In a related report, the newspaper (*Business Day Live*: 24/02/2016) published an article titled: 'Harmful' Expropriation Bill gets passed. Coming just 11 days after the report on the fears expressed by *AfriBusiness*, the newspaper seemed to frame the Bill to the public as the beginning of South Africa's economic demise. In its opening statement, the article remarked thus: 'the controversial Expropriation Bill was passed in Parliament on Tuesday night despite concerns from opposition parties that it was unconstitutional ...' Agreed, the Bill has been shrouded in controversy; however, the choice of an 'opening' for the article created a 'we vs them' tug-of-war between proponents and opponents of the Bill.

Although the article provided both sides of the argument for and/or against the Bill, it however subtly tilted towards oppositions to the Bill by stating that: 'the ability to expropriate land in the public interest has raised fears that the legislation will become a tool for use in land reform'.

The Daily Maverick had a similar tilt to the approach of the *Business Day*. In the 25 August 2015 edition of the newspaper, it published an opinion article titled: Expropriation at the Whim of a Bureaucrat. The newspaper added an interesting introduction to the author: '... He writes on this and many other matters, from the perspective of individual liberty and free markets. **He is seldom wrong**'. The statement gave the impression that the newspaper was validating the author and that whatever his position(s) were, they were 'seldom wrong'. The article listed several red flags in the then proposed Expropriation Bill; it subtly suggested that the Bill was created to conciliate Julius Malema and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and that it would come at 'a grave cost' to South Africa's economy and constitutional democracy.

Sowetan, a Gauteng-based newspaper took a more generalist approach to the reportage of the Bill by providing a platform for all views to be aired. In a 24 February 2016 news report titled: MPs Pass 'Problematic' Expropriation Bill, the paper provided the position of the governing Africa National Congress (ANC), as well as the positions of the Democratic Alliance (DA), the EFF, the Freedom Front Plus and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The paper reported that the debate for and against the Bill was spirited and further stated that 202 members voted in favour of the Bill, 88 voted against it, while two abstained. The paper's approach, which was a largely all-inclusive reportage, was a clear departure from the *Business Day* and *Daily Maverick*, whose ideological inclinations seem to tilt towards anti-Bill style reportage. *The Mail and Guardian's* reportage of Bill's passage was also largely all-inclusive. An 29 April 2016, article in the newspaper titled: Expropriation Bill will boost Land Reform, the paper provided a detailed and somewhat neglected analysis of the Land Exploration Bill. The article delved on the content of the Bill as well as the underlying dynamics in its implementation. The article concluded that '... the Bill provides an orderly procedure through which the state may expropriate property. The public purpose and public interest requirements are meant to prevent the state from abusing power'.

Similarly, in 26 May 2016, news story titled: Parliament Approves Land Expropriation Bill, *The Mail and Guardian*, like the *Sowetan*, presented diverse views regarding the Bill. The story presented views from the ruling party the ANC, as well as dissenting views from the DA and the UDM, thereby providing the public with a bank of information with which to interpret the Bill. Providing the public with balanced reportage of sensitive social issues like the Expropriation Bill is critical because as Kauffman et al. (2013, p. 2) aver, media frames are very important in many respects because the media can frame conflict-sensitive situations (such as the Expropriation Bill) in ways that can significantly affect their intractability by creating mutually incompatible interpretations of events.

Media representation of the 'Billed'

One of the most controversial issues regarding the Bill is where it puts the 'landowners'-the Billed, in the context of this article, as concerns have been raised, vis-à-vis the issue of compensation over time. There have been questions posed by opponents of the Bill,

such as: Who administers it? At what rate is the compensation? Is expropriation going to impede on the Constitution? What happens to section 25 (1) which states that “no one may be deprived of property except in terms of law if the general application and no law permit arbitrary deprivation of property? Etc. For example, Aliber (2015, p. 159) argues that the problem with expropriation is with strategy and not implementation. He contends that the idea would result in little practical gains if swung around aimlessly. He also believes the major contestation with the issue of land reform in South Africa is that of compensation. He thus proposes two possible ways to significantly accelerate land reform (including expropriation): “seize or expropriate white-owned land with little or no compensation or significantly increase the government budget for land reform which presently is less than 0.6 percent.

As observed in the sampled newspapers, media framing of the ‘Billed’ was more focused on the impact it would have on ‘landowners’ and the dynamics involved in the compensation. *The Mail and Guardian* in its 20 May 2016 article titled: Expropriation Bill will Boost Land Reform, allayed the fears of property owners by clarifying that ‘... this power, which entails the compulsory acquisition of property by the state from affected owners without permission, is not new, as it also existed during apartheid’. The article also clarified that the Bill provides an orderly procedure through which the state may expropriate property ... *Business Day* had a different approach to the style of reportage adopted by the *Mail and Guardian*. The paper’s reportage of the ‘Billed’ framed landowners as victims whose properties would soon be illicitly expropriated. Quoting Anchen Dreyer of the Democratic Alliance, the paper averred that ‘... that the Bill created uncertainty for property owners and that it would act as a deterrent to investment, further harming an already fragile economy.’ Suffice to add that the paper presented the views of (then) Minister of Public Works, Minister Thulas Nxesi who argued that the Bill was fair and equitable and that disagreements concerning amounts offered during expropriation could be challenged in court. Yet, the paper’s general framing of the ‘Billed’ was that of victim vs. perpetrators, with landowners as ‘victims’ and the government as ‘perpetrators’.

The general public’s perception of expropriation is that land is going to the ‘taken away’ from rich affluent whites and transferred to blacks. While most of the lands in present-day South Africa are still in the hands of whites, it is imprudent to assume that they are all affluent. *The Sowetan* in 6 February 2016 news report titled: MPs Pass Problematic Expropriation Bill, the paper quoted the Deputy Minister for Public Works Jeremy Cronin as stating that ‘... it was wrong to imagine that only wealthy property owners would get expropriated.’ It can be argued that bringing the Deputy Minister’s remark to public knowledge was a conscious attempt by the paper to douse public apprehension concerning the Bill, particularly as it concerns expropriation.

What about Billy?

When the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe that took place from 2000 to 2005, it transferred almost 90 percent of the white-claimed agricultural land to black beneficiaries, principally from the communal areas of the country. Although years down the line there have been complaints about the programme’s implementation and the choice of beneficiaries, the fact remains that the people (Billy) were the main focus of

the reform. The whole idea behind land reform programme is to restore or redistribute land to the nation's landless majority. However, the focus over the years has been on the impact the reform would have on the country's economy, the racial implications and even on global perception of South Africa. Media framing of the issue is somewhat the same; not much is said about 'Billy' and the how expropriation would affect him/her.

It is imperative to consistently ask the salient question according to Walker and Cousins (2015), what ultimately is the wider purpose and rationale for land reform as we move deeper into the 21st Century? Failure to keep the question constant on the front burner of public discourse could result in the entire process turning into a witch-hunting exercise or an attempt to settle 'old scores'. In the long run, the idea behind land reform is to correct the injustices of the past and attempt to achieve a semblance of balance in land availability, distribution, and use. Makhura (2013) noted that the focus of land reform should be correcting the policy that aided the dispossession of land from native blacks. Analysis of media reportage of 'Billy' showed that all the sampled newspapers paid little or no attention to the supposed beneficiaries of the planned land redistribution.

The Expropriation Bill was reported by the selected newspapers as consisting of the Bill itself and the impact expropriation would have on the 'Billed'; not much was said about Billy the one who historically has claim to the land, and to whom land should be justly expropriated to. The *Sowetan's* 28 May 2016 news report titled: KZN community receives title deeds to ancestral land was amongst the very few which sought to bring 'Billy' into the land reform discourse. The story talked about plans to hand over title deeds to 8,000ha of ancestral land to 376 claimants of the Amangcolosi Community in Kranskop near Nkandla. According to the paper, "... the community lodged a land claim in 2004 and in July 2005 officially received part of their land which included 12 formerly white-owned lands. The paper further provided benefits inherent in the handover by stating that: '... the Amangcolosi Community Trust is hailed as one of the most successful land restitution projects in the country and it boasts timber, sugarcane, maize, chillies and leather fern and has agreements with Glenbow Sugar Mill, Umkhumbi Maize Mill, and NCT Forestry Cooperative'. This slight shift in focus presented a telling possible positive from expropriation and the benefits inherent for beneficiary individuals and communities. This was largely lacking in most of the other sampled newspapers.

Conclusion: a peace journalism (PJ) approach to reporting the Bill, Billed and Billy

The weighty 'bulk' on Ramaphosa's table

In February of 2018, the South African Parliament finally adopted the motion for land expropriation without compensation. Expectedly, the media was awash with stories of the Bill's adoption and the implications for the country. This also had momentous implications for President Cyril Ramaphosa who had just assumed office as the country's President. Media reportage of the Bill's adoption was as feisty as it was during the weeks and months leading to parliamentary deliberations. For example, on 5 March 2018, the *Mail and Guardian* published an opinion piece titled: A white person's guide to land expropriation without compensation, where the writer expressed concerns that the

public (especially white South Africans) do not have sufficient information on the modus operandi of expropriation and the impact it would have on both the 'Billed' and 'Billy'. The writer's concerns confirm the author's views that media reportage of the Bill lacks detailed backgrounding and exhaustive contextualisation.

President Cyril Ramaphosa's handling of the land question could potentially damage or advance his political influence. Many argue that President Ramaphosa has been 'set up' to either fail or succeed. Media reportage has also put pressures on the President, with proponents and opponents of the Bill trying hard to catch his attention on the pages of newspapers. For example, former South African ambassador to Ireland, Melanie Verwoerd was quoted on the 13 March 2018 online platform of *News24* as saying:

"I want to be clear that I believe that we urgently need to address land reform. It has not been implemented speedily or comprehensive enough and it is not morally or politically sustainable that Africans do not own the majority of land in this country ... As long as Malema doesn't become president, I also don't believe that we are heading for the Zimbabwean model. I am confident that the cooler heads in the Ramaphosa-led ANC will prevail and that land reform will be escalated but in a responsible manner. It is important to understand how dangerous the issue of land reform is, not only to the country but also for Ramaphosa ... "

The President himself has assured that the issue of land reform would be treated with caution. He insists expropriation would not be undertaken in a 'smash and grab' manner and has instead sought a process of reform that would provide avenues for all concerned to discuss the issues in ways that would not injure the country's already fragile polity. In an 8 January 2018 online edition of the *Huffington Post* (South Africa), the President remarked thus:

"We must not even see it as taking land from people. We are merely restoring the land to its original owners. As this happens, we will keep in mind securing important resources such as food security. Farm production must go up and so must the economy ... We will come up with tactics and plans for practical implementation ... "

Whatever steps the President takes will be very crucial for the country going forward. He is mindful of the fact that beyond the need for concerted and all-inclusive land reform aimed at historical redress, there is also the politics of land. The ability of the President to manage and delineate between politics and realism concerning the land question will go a long way in determining his, and the country's political future.

PJ and the Bill

From the content-analyzed newspapers, it can be clearly seen that the reportage of the land expropriation Bill lacked conflict-sensitivity and was more tailored towards a traditional mode of reportage that often wittingly or unwittingly created a 'we vs. them' scenario regarding the issue. Hyde-Clarke (2011, p. 43) states that one main feature of peace journalists is their ability to frame stories in ways that provide society with enough information with which to respond nonviolently to conflict or conflict situations. She also affirms that peace journalism is not only relevant in conflict situations; it can also find relevance in attempts at maintaining peace in the society by providing varied viewpoints that will help a large section of the citizenry make informed

decisions about issues bothering them. This places enormous responsibilities on the media as society's watchdogs. It is vital to note that the media can play a very important role in positively shaping society.

Most of the newspaper reportage of the Bill were simplistic and narrow. Although the Bill in its entirety was long, it was nevertheless expected that the selected media would provide some form of the summary to the public that would further aid understanding of its requirements and/or impact on the Billed and Billy. In a study by Rodny-Gumede (2015), where she analysed coverage of the Marikana crisis, she argued that most journalists who covered the crisis were 'parachuted in' to cover a situation they knew little or nothing about and on which they had very little background information and research to base their coverage and analysis. Thus, coverage was mainly laden with assumptions and generic conclusions. Similarly, reportage of the Land Expropriation showed a lack of effort by the media to provide detailed contexts and background that would aid public understanding. News coverage of sensitive social issues such as land reform rarely chart trajectories or provide historical explanations for the underlying causes of a conflict, and journalists seldom have time to prepare and research the situation before being given an assignment. This was very obvious in the sampled newspapers.

Giving a voice to the Billed and Billy

Most of the analysed newspapers whether wittingly or unwittingly focused on promoting a neoliberal approach to the discourse on the land question rather than giving voices to the often 'unheard' in society women, the aged and chronically poor. Most of the sampled newspapers did not give voice to the Billed-individuals from whom land will be expropriated. The lack of a humanized approach to reporting the issue meant that individuals were fused into groups and reported as such. Thus, statements like 'white-owned lands', 'landless blacks' were common in the reportage by the selected newspapers. What this created was a 'we vs them' scenario in which each party was looking for ways to 'win' the argument. Detailed backgrounding and 'voices' of 'actual humans' was lacking in the stories by the selected newspapers. Such approach to reportage of the land expropriation Bill does little or nothing to create an understanding of it because opposing parties do not have options to propose a change in policy which does not move them to victory over the other. It creates a 'win at all cost' stance that means anyone or group that is not 'winning' must be 'losing'. Thus, because of man's innate desire not to concede defeat, each has a ready-made incentive to step up or escalate his efforts for victory.

As noted by Rodny-Gumede (2015), context and backgrounding, major tenets of peace journalism, are very important in reporting conflict-sensitive issues. They were, however, lacking in the sampled newspapers' reportage of the Bill. Media discourses regarding the land reform programme pitched opponents and proponents against each other with both accused of using unsuspecting journalists (and sometimes conniving ones) to produce media frames that will serve not only as an aid to construing events in their favours but also to promote tactical advantages or benefits. Politicians often use the media as tools for framing aimed at justifying acts of selfishness, convincing a larger audience, building political bridges of convenience, or adopting support for specific

outcomes. Thus, one can safely conclude that the factors that influence the direction conflicts are multifaceted. When media personnel gathers information, they consciously or unconsciously frame them to achieve a certain goal which could be personal, institutional or even that of the media owner.

A peace-motivated media message, on the other hand, can be framed in such a way as to result in the resolution of conflicts. It was generally observed that the newspapers did not create a level playing field for all sides of the land discourse to be heard. This is very important because by focusing on the core issues and by providing avenues for various opinions to be aired, an understanding of the viewpoint of others is achieved shifting focus from a win-lose state in the land discourse, specifically the Land Expropriation Bill, to a win-win situation. Chong and Druckman (2008, p. 104) state that the media framing theory is premised on the fact that individuals and/or groups can view issues from different worldviews and perspectives and that these differing views form the basis from which decisions are reached

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