

Mugabe, The Land, And Neo-Colonialism: The Pragmatism Of An African Benevolent Dictator

Blazio M. Manobo (PhD)
The Catholic University of Zimbabwe

Abstract

Notwithstanding Popular Perceptions About Robert Mugabe's 38-Year Autocratic Rule As The President Of Zimbabwe (1980-2017), His Pan-African Philosophy On Land Reclamation From White Colonial Settlers Has Received National And International Considerations. At The Heart Of Mugabe's Pan-African Philosophy Was The Belief That Land Repossession Is Both A Biblical As Well As A Traditional Struggle Worth Dying For. Skeptics Of Mugabe's Ideology Point At His Authoritarian Leadership As Suggesting That Political Survival And Not The Empowerment Of The Zimbabwean People Motivated His Philosophy (Langan 2018). We Argue In This Article That The African Political Philosophies Of William Dubois' Pan Africanism, Kwame Nkrumah's African Nationalism, Julius Nyerere's Ujamaa, Kenneth Kaunda's African Humanism, Steve Biko's Black Consciousness, And Many Other Pan-African Thinkers, Find Their Pragmatic Significance In Mugabe's Philosophy Of Land Expropriation Without Compensation Carried Out In Zimbabwe Since The Year 2000. This Article Interrogates The Utility Of Using A Benevolent Dictator Leadership Style To Drive Pan-Africanism And A Neocolonial Agenda Within The Continent Of Africa In Contradistinction To Western Democratic Practices. It Puts To Test The Question; What Should Come First, Economic Development Or Political Liberalization In The Context Of Africa? The Idea Of Africa Cannot Be Articulated Without Repossessing The Rich Ancestral Land Currently In The Hands Of Foreigners In Most African Countries. The Article Supports The Thesis That; Just Like Africa's Independence From Colonial Rule Came Through A Protracted War Of Liberation, Neo-Colonial Independence Must Of Necessity Demand A Pragmatic Revolutionary Approach. It Further Asserts That The Neo-Colonialist Will Not Likely Offer Social, Cultural, Economic, And Political Independence On A Silver Platter As Africa Remains A Fertile Source Of Their Cheap Raw Materials And Labor.

Key Words: Mugabe, Land Reform, Dictator, African Leader

Date of Submission: 19-06-2023

Date of Acceptance: 29-06-2023

I. Introduction

Beginning with the period of the slave trade, Africa suffered a coordinated effort by Western colonial powers that were bent on undermining the economic, political, social, and intellectual development of its citizens. This is despite the reality that Africa has never been without great thinkers whose ideas have revolutionized and shaped the world. From antiquity, we have the great African founders of the Latin church, Tertullian, St Augustine, and St Cyprian whose writings have molded the world of Christian theology and by proxy, Western civilization. In the modern epoch, the voices of Kwame Nkrumah, Steve Biko, Julius Nyerere, and Keneth Kaunda among others have tried to restore the dignity and integrity of Africa through their Pan-African philosophies. 'Mugabeism' as coined by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) is a new anti-colonial philosophy of Robert Gabriel Mugabe, the first Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, born out of the struggle for land repossession without compensation from the former white colonial descendants. It is a philosophy that is founded on the principles of re-writing the historical injustice perpetrated on the African people by imperial powers.

Beyond the rhetoric of neo-colonial philosophies of many African nationalists, Mugabe decided to take the bull by its horns through a violent land reform program duped 3rd Chimurenga, which has changed the liberation trajectory of victims of colonial injustice in Zimbabwe. This he did against the popular democratic Referendum of 1998 that preferred a conciliatory approach to land reform. It is the contention of this article that changing the idea of Africa cannot be achieved through theories and philosophies only. The Pan-African philosophies of the founding fathers and intellectual gurus of the continent remain sets of ideals, standards, or beliefs that suffer stillbirth at the hands of Western neo-colonial intellectual midwives. In this article, we look at how Robert Mugabe's idea of Africa summarized under the mantra, "The land is the economy and the economy is the land" has the potential of redefining the neo-colonial hegemony of the continent of Africa.

II. Africa and Benevolent Dictators

The history of the world bears testimony to examples of benevolent dictators who transformed their countries from imperial domination or civil conflict into relatively peaceful societies or conquered other territories on behalf of their peoples. While a dictator is a ruler whose leadership is characterized by autocracy, benevolent dictators exercise this leadership with kindness and fairness, in manners that benefit their citizens. Most great leaders of history were to great extent benevolent dictators. Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), King of Ancient Macedonia was a military General whose dictatorship leadership style helped to create a vast empire stretching from Macedonia to Egypt, then Greece, and parts of India (Madalina, 2018). Napoleon (1799-1804 AD) merited the title of 'The Great' for his strategic military leadership which had an intense influence on the future of France and Europe in general (Roberts, 2014). German, under the dictator, Adolf Hitler managed to restore prosperity, purged stormtroopers, and curbed violent street demonstrations that had alienated the German middle class (History, 2016). Other countries noted to have developed economically under benevolent dictator leadership include Chile under Augusto Pinochet; South Korea under Park Chung-Hee; and China under Deng Xiaoping and his successors (Gilson & Milhaupt, 2010). These examples point toward the potential success of benevolence dictatorial leadership style during times of crisis.

While in the Western world, such bold autocratic leadership is depicted as acts of greatness, the same Western texts when speaking about African leaders with the same traits, often labeled them despots, tyrants, and oppressors among other neo-colonial tags. Shaka Senzangakhona (1787-1928 AD) popularly known as Shaka Zulu, was the founder of the great Zulu Kingdom and a pronounced military strategist in the traditional Kingdoms of Southern Africa, but in western literature, has been labeled a bloody thirsty dictator (Sithole, 2011). In Uganda, Yoweri Museveni often described as Africa's longest-serving benevolent dictator, brought about a positive fundamental change of relative peace and stability to conflict-ridden Uganda as a result of his predecessors, Idi Amin and Obote (Aloka-Onyango, 1998). Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, also labeled a dictator in western texts when viewed through the lens of basic freedoms and civil rights has managed to lead his country into stability, security, and development in a post-conflict setting (Russel, 2012). This supports the call for a redefinition of the neo-colonial characterization of democracy as a principle for economic development in Africa.

The concept of a benevolent dictator signifies a leader whose authoritarian leadership is not limited to pillaging and plundering of national resources for personal political and economic benefits but also invests in economic growth and development and provides some public goods as strategies to remain in power (Osilon 1993). Libya under Muammar Gaddafi enjoyed peace, prosperity, and massive economic growth. However, Gaddafi was portrayed negatively following his demise by western nations and their media, and Libya is still to taste the same peace and prosperity enjoyed during the reign of Gaddafi (Macias & Fernando, 2019). The single most important question is whether democracy, rule of law, and civil rights as practiced in the western world have the same effects in young nations emerging from years of colonial subjugation. We test this theory in the case of Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe, one of Africa's longest benevolent dictators chastised as one of the worst leaders Africa has ever produced. Specifically, we focus on his philosophy on land appropriation without compensation often described as the Fast trek Land Reform Program held in Zimbabwe during the year 2000.

III. The Neo-colonial agenda

Kwame Nkrumah in his seminal book, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965), offered a succinct description of imperialism that best describes the Zimbabwean situation under Robert Mugabe. According to Nkrumah, a former colonial independent state can possess all the features of a sovereign nation, and yet its economic system and political policy are directed from outside. He further warned that neo-colonialism will manifest itself in the form of asymmetric trade between Africa and the former colonial master of the West (Nkrumah, 1963). This is evidenced by the fact that the major trade institutions of the West like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the European Union have adopted policies and principles that keep continuing to ensure Africa remains just a source of raw materials and consumer of processed goods (Langan 2018). The structural adjustment programs of the 90s that left Zimbabwe and most third-world countries in the doldrums is a case in point (Kawewe, and Dibia 2000). This describes the neo-colonialists idea of Africa as a continent whose existence continues by extension to serve the economic interests of the former colonial masters.

There is a sense in arguing that neo-colonialism as the predecessor of imperialism is multifaceted, largely indirect, fluid, more complicated, and often championed by 'nationalists/patriots' themselves (Musingafi, et al. 2013). This assumption rests on two important factors that characterize neo-colonial philosophy: international capital and the role of the ruling elites. We concur with this observation that the success of the neo-colonial agenda is predicated to some degree on the cooperation of some ruling elites within the neo-colonized states. However, this is not fully supported by research as the fastest developing economies of Africa still suffer from the Western architected neo-colonial development conundrum. Their economies are largely driven by international corporations. Their land as the basic factor of production is owned by foreign organizations and individuals.

Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia) was colonized by Britain and named after the British leader of the Pioneer Column Cecil John Rhodes from 1890 to 1980. The coming of the British colonialists resulted in fertile land being parcelled out to white farmers while the indigenous people were lumped into reserves in what they called, the Tribal Trust Land. The colonization of Zimbabwe followed the Berlin Conference of 1884 where Africa was partitioned for resource allocation among the Western colonial states. The then Prime Minister of Rhodesia, Ian Douglas Smith declared a Unilateral Independence of Rhodesia in 1965 thereby dissociating the country from British rule. After a protracted war of liberation, Zimbabwe gained its independence from Britain in 1980 upon signing the Lancaster House Agreement in 1979. The Lancaster House Agreement protected the British investments in the newly independent state including farms that were considered owned by the white settlers.

At independence, white farmers rushed to get Zimbabwean citizenship in order to secure the rights to farm ownership (Mlambo, 2005). This scenario is common among African states where colonial agents shifted their strategy and acquired local citizenship as means to justify their continued stay in former colonial lands and obtain the rights to own properties either as individuals or as proxies of the imperial countries. This is more evident in South Africa today where the Boers still claim ownership of the Southern African land in their possession.

IV. Revisiting the Land Question in Zimbabwe

The idea of an independent Africa cannot be conceived logically outside the land question. The African land with its rich mineral deposit remains an incomplete decolonization experiment and a neo-colonial tool by the Western powerful nations. Not only has it been described in colonial terms, but the possession of land and its minerals by capitalist organizations has also become a matter of injustice and inequity (Moyo 2003). Conflicts emanating from the land as the source of energy for Africa's development have become a contemporary academic, political, and economic question. Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform has generated vast literature by Afro-centric as well as Western commentators.

Zimbabwe is among the latecomers to the club of independent African nations. The Lancaster House Agreement signed on the eve of Zimbabwe's independence gave special protection to white farmers by putting a clause that the Government could only acquire land from the white minority to the black majority after a decade through a willing-buyer, willing-seller agreement. The Agreement further prohibited compulsory land acquisition. This was made with full knowledge that few Africans would afford the price of a farm and was intended to serve the long-term interests of the imperial descendants (Musingafi et al, 2013). This means the Lancaster House Agreement gave the white landowners the discretion to sell or retain the land. In all these instances, the land which in Robert Mugabe's philosophy is the 'economy' would remain in the hands of the few descendants of the imperialist whose interest is to perpetuate the neo-colonial agenda.

The willing-buyer willing-seller agreement did not transfer land from the white minority to the black majority. In 1997, the government decided to embark on the compulsory acquisition of land putting the responsibility of paying compensation for the land on Britain (Tomini 2005). The then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher initially agreed. However, when the Labor-led by Tony Blair took over the government in Britain, the agreement fell off igniting the anger of Robert Mugabe who then initiated legislation authorizing the government to compulsorily acquire land without compensation. A spate of land invasions started in 2000 with many farms being parcelled out to local individuals.

V. The object of the land reform

There is an assumption that Robert Mugabe's philosophy on land was a political gesture aimed at sustaining his stay in power as the President of Zimbabwe (Tomini 2005). The formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), an opposition political party by the labor movement in 1999, a year before the onset of the Fast-track Land Reform Program gave the impression that the land question was being used by Mugabe to settle the dwindling political relevance of ZANU PF. Muzondidya (2010,) argues that behind the land crisis in Zimbabwe were the "unresolved racial inequalities in the economy, especially in land ownership and land utilization, which contributed to the country's economic crisis." His emphasis on racial inequalities in Zimbabwe suggests that the land question became political due to the neo-colonial injustice of racism. He does not put the blame completely on the political survival of the ruling ZANU PF party but recognizes how the racial question was used for political convenience.

Some academics and social scientists have advanced the view that Zimbabwe's Land Reform Program of the Third Chimurenga had nothing to do with the desire to empower the landless citizens of Zimbabwe. They argue that Mugabe did not harbor the idea of land expropriation without compensation before the formation of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change led by Morgan Tsvangirayi in 1999 (Moyo & Chambati, 2013). While this article does not condone the violent strategy used by Mugabe to repossess the land, the wanton disregard for the rule of law, and his use of the emotive question of land to appeal to the landless electorate for political survival, it takes the debate a bit deeper by analyzing his philosophy on land since independence in 1980. The article acknowledges the fact that the violent seizure of land took place against a weakened economy that to

a great extent would probably have resulted in a change of government. However, as will be argued in this study, the question of land needed a pragmatic revolutionary approach and the events of 2000 provided a conducive environment for such action. To analyze this assertion, we review four historical epochs in the struggle for land reclamation in post-independent Zimbabwe.

The liberation ideology

Robert Mugabe and other liberation icons in Zimbabwe like Herbert Chitepo, Leopold Takawira, Josiah Tungamirai, and Ndabaningi Sithole among others led the war of liberation on the basis of reclaiming the land that was lost to imperial powers and the quest for self-rule. Long before he joined mainstream politics, and soon after graduating from Chalimbana Teacher Training College in Zambia in 1957, Mugabe echoed the struggles and poverty among the black people in Zimbabwe (Mugabe, 2001). He bemoaned the land hunger that was rampant among the black natives who during those days were forced into what the whites called 'Reserve' or the Tribal Trust Lands. Individual white farmers were given by Rhodes, vast tracks of land some measuring as much as 3000 ha, while the thousands of local people were crammed into less than 1000 hectares. In his autobiography, Mugabe makes reference to the inspiration he got from the Catholic Bishop of Mutale Diocese called Bishop Lamont, a critic of the Rhodesian government and advocate of land reclamation. Bishop Lamont was later deported back to Germany in 1977 by the Smith Regime for supporting the liberation cause, especially the land question. What this suggests is that the land question was going to remain a political issue even if Mugabe had not used it for his election. Fernandes (2001) intimated that agrarian reforms shall remain a political issue in which people will ultimately take the law into their hands through land occupation should the governments remain silent in Africa.

The war of liberation cannot be divorced from the national question of land. The young people who joined the war of liberation were motivated by the prospect of reclaiming the lost ancestral land. The liberation fighters did not wage the war outside the community of the hungry people wailing in poverty due to the colonial injustices of land deprivation. The people who supported the liberation did so in view of the benefits of land reclamation. In this regard, Mugabe and other liberators waged a war of liberation to regain the lost land. Ancestral land in Africa has spiritual connotations. Even in post-independence Africa, many tribes are in conflicts among themselves as they try to repossess their ancestral land. Zimbabwe was no different. The use of land as a political tool for the emancipation of the African poor did not start with Mugabe but was an agenda shared by all the sons and daughters of Africa who fought the war of liberation.

While some voices have advanced the argument that Mugabe was not wrong in using the Land Reform Program for political survival, it must be noted that this strategy existed prior to the country's independence. Politics is about winning the hearts and minds of people. Addressing the needs of the electorate remains the primary objective of political campaigns. Zimbabwe's cost of living started to deteriorate in the 90s partly due to the Western influence of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP). As poverty intensified, the only accessible means of production was the land though it was in the hands of the white farmers. Not only was land needed for agricultural production, but the same land possessed by the whites constituted more than 99% of the minerals found in Zimbabwe. The 'white man's land' was protected and trespassers were prosecuted. Deciding to use the land endowed with minerals and agricultural potential was the most critical political decision that Mugabe used. He did not just win the elections, but he gave people land which today is the pride of many local Zimbabwean farmers

The Lancaster House Agreement

The second justification against the assumption that the land reform was mere political rhetoric for winning elections is the insincerity of the Lancaster House Agreement. The agreement was a strategy to salvage the long-term interest of the imperial capitalists (Musungafi et al. 2013). Britain wanted to protect the land and property rights of its citizens by crafting a bureaucratic process of willing-buyer-willing-seller strategy for land reclamation. The liberation representatives present at the Lancaster House Conference had no choice but to agree to a compromised offer as a way to stop the continued loss of lives due to war. They were also under immense pressure from the country's neighbors who had become victims of Smith's aggression by extension. Agreeing to a compromised treaty cannot be taken to mean that the land was secondary to the attainment of independence. Mugabe (ZANU) and Joshua Nkomo (ZIPRA), the leaders of the two liberation movements knew very well that without the land, the war of liberation was not won.

Second, the mere fact that the question of land was central to the Lancaster House Agreement is proof enough that the leaders of the liberation movements placed the land question at the center of the country's independence. Ian Smith (Prime Minister of Rhodesia) and the Queen of England, aware of the primacy of land, ensured that the question of land is affixed in the Agreement. This was a clear case of neo-colonialism. The agreement further demanded that 20 parliamentary seats be reserved for whites in order to ensure the defense of legislation in favour of neo-colonial policies. Consequently, Mugabe did not have much freedom to demonstrate his pragmatism on land reclamation. It was not until after the expiry of the Lancaster House Agreement restrictions

and the fallout with British labor party policies that the need for land reform became inevitable. Mugabe activated the long-held belief in indigenous emancipation and allowed the masses to reclaim their inheritance.

The 1990s land reform

The land reform program was not a product of the 2000 fast-track violent land occupations. It had its origins in the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979. Robert Mugabe tried to remain faithful to the Lancaster House Conference by ensuring that the willing-buyer-willing-seller policy is observed during the first decade of independence. In the second decade and in line with the spirit of the Lancaster House Agreement, Mugabe tried to observe the willing-buyer-willing-seller policy. Several resettlement programs were implemented under this policy but very few white farmers were prepared to offer their farms for resettlement. Since this was voluntary, Zimbabwe recorded very few resettlements in the 90s leaving most of the indigenous peasants yearning for opportunities to own land in Zimbabwe.

Mugabe's land reform program can not be premised on the political developments of the 1990s or 2000. The need for land reform program has its origins in the liberation struggle of the 1960s onwards. The significance of the 1990s is that Mugabe started to acquire land from the white on the basis of willing-buyer-willing-sellers. However, due to the impacts of the western imposed Structural Adjustments Programs, the country could not afford to pay for the farm developments demanded by white farmers as payment for the land. Mugabe made arrangements with Britain for financial support for the land reform. However, the agreement faltered when the British Labour Party of Tony Blair came into power in 1997. Mugabe felt betrayed leading to the fast-track land reform program. Contrary to popular perceptions that the land reform program was a product of Mugabe's desire to retain political power, the refusal of Britain to honour its pledge to support the land reform program ignited the violent seizures experienced by the country in 2000.

The 1999 Referendum

In 1999, the country held its first Referendum to determine the popular support for land reform programs. This coincided with the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change led by Morgan Tsvangirai. Mugabe wanted to use the referendum to gain legitimacy in acquiring land without paying compensation to white farmers. Morgan Tsvangirai took advantage of the increasing poverty levels and the deteriorating human rights abuses by the Mugabe regime to campaign for a NO vote. Of significance in his campaign was the support he got from the white commercial farmers which was displayed on public media. The white farmers found in Tsvangirai the protection they wanted against Mugabe's intention to unilaterally seize land without paying the white farmers. This angered Mugabe further igniting the rhetoric of opposition political parties as frontiers of the West. The rhetoric which outlived Mugabe himself has become a political tool for ZANU PF during Presidential and local government elections. The significance of the referendum in the discourse of land reform is the assumption that the people did not consciously vote against the need for Land reform, but were coerced by white farmers with the help of the newly formed opposition political party.

VI. Robert Mugabe's benevolent leadership principles

Mugabe was largely labeled a dictator due to his persistent strangling of people's freedoms, disregard for human rights, and persecution of perceived opposition voices. He ruled the country for nearly four decades until he was removed through a soft coup by the military. During his reign, all dissenting voices received backlashes and he never intimated a plan for leadership succession. Corruption intensified as his close elites went on a rampage of looting and abusing their positions on the basis that they received political protection. Protection was guaranteed to those who supported his continued stay in power. There was great fear among people as his dreaded Intelligence officers victimized people who did not support him. This created some great fear and perceptions of him as an authoritarian leader.

Deep down in Robert Mugabe's vision was the belief in the relationship between national independence and the land question. For Mugabe, these are Siamese twins (p. 92). As the people of Zimbabwe have gained sovereign independence through a protracted war of liberation, so shall the question of land. He was aware that the neo-colonial strategies of the imperialists were to retain the land with its rich minerals in the hands of the few whites. Mugabe knew that the white farmers did not just hold on to land for agricultural purposes only, but were aware of the vast mineral deposits hidden under the guise of farming. All the gold, coal, diamond, and chrome deposits were hidden in the farming areas. Zimbabwe. The mining sector alone today accounts for 12% of the country's Gross Domestic Product with a potential to generate more than 12 Billion United States dollars by 2023. For Mugabe, the whites were holding on to land for speculative purposes when its distribution and richness had the potential to improve the general welfare of the people of Zimbabwe.

The 2000 Land Reform Program sought to break through the economic dominance of white farmers. The farms were parcelled out to many people and mining licenses were given to both young, women and anyone with potential for mining. Within a year of embarking on the land reform program, more than 127 507 families had

been resettled on 4 762 065 hectares of new, better land taken from the whites. Many people had never dreamt of owning land in Zimbabwe until Mugabe started the land reform program. At the beginning of the program, many people were hesitant to join the scramble thinking the process was a political gimmick. 20 years later, most Zimbabweans who did not participate in the fast-track land reform program are now begging for the government to allocate to them some portions of the residue of under-utilized land taken from the whites. Skeptics thought Mugabe just wanted to use the land to retain his position as the leader of the party and government.

As punishment for taking land from whites without compensation, the Western countries, led by the United States of America and the European Union slapped Zimbabwe with sanctions with the hope that people will revolt and unseat him. The welfare of the people of Zimbabwe deteriorated with most young and productive groups leaving the country in search of greener pastures. However, this did not change Mugabe's vision of an empowered indigenous black landowner. Mugabe made sure all who wanted land got it. Recipients were divided into A1 for small-scale farmers and A2 for large commercial farms. He assured the recipients that the land will never return to the white farmer anymore. The legitimacy of the policy directive was the spirit of the liberation struggle waged by the young black people. For Mugabe, the West was making minor reformist concessions that served to distract the people's aspirations but did not satisfy the land hunger of the once-colonized people of Zimbabwe.

The land reform helped decongest the rural areas which for years had become the poverty hub for the people. The process of land repossession was accompanied by violent demonstrations. On some farms, the white farmers resisted eviction on the basis of property rights. The violence that followed their resistance was used by the West and local human rights activists to label Mugabe, a dictator. However, Mugabe and his supporters argued that such violence is a natural consequence of the spirit of liberation. He accused the white farmers of not reading between the lines when he declared the process as the Third *Chimurenga* (Third war of liberation).

Today, most people are of the opinion that Zimbabwe has done what no other former colonized country had ever done. While the critics of Mugabe argue that the land reform was a failure on the basis that Zimbabwe is still reeling in poverty 20 years after the violent land reform, several pan-Africanists affirm that the empowerment of the citizens is an investment that no other country has managed to give to its people. Had it not been for the continued onslaught by the West through sanctions, Zimbabwe would by now become at least a middle-income society. Mugabe resisted several machinations of former colonial masters. He had the guts to openly criticize the hypocrisy of the West on such public platforms as at the United Nations Assembly meetings. Mugabe went beyond party politics in dealing with the question of land.

After two decades in power, Mugabe risked leaving the Office of Presidency with a failed state. There was a growing call by a cross-section of the citizens in opposition to his misrule characterized by political violence, bad governance, and undermining the rule of law among others. He had also gotten tired of Britain's laxity in addressing the land reform. This ignited a revolutionary strategy of mobilizing the hungry electorate to invade farms on the ticket of repossessing the 'stolen' land. The courage to embark on the suicidal path of violently attacking the white commercial farmers leading to the death of some foreign citizens was the bravest decision ever to be made by an African country. The people supported the political decision as they felt that land reform is a right that must be defended to the extent of even death.

VII. Conclusion

This study concludes that Mugabe was a pragmatic leader who did not compromise the needs of his people over Western democratic processes. While several people may choose to focus on his dictatorial leadership style that to a great extent led the country into serious economic difficulties, the land program remains the biggest investment that ordinary citizens got in post-independence Zimbabwe. His level of pragmatism has earned him the most distinguished African revolutionary leader on historical neo-colonial land questions. His focus was on ensuring the achievement of the tenets of the liberation struggle. The opposition he underwent did not deter him from achieving the long spirit of land reclamation. Several African leaders have talked about the need to regain our sovereign Africa but very few have taken bold steps to achieve the quest for self-rule economically. Mugabe paid a prize for such bold decisions so much that he died before he could witness the success of the land reform program. For Mugabe, Africa is not yet liberated until it has control over its resources, and chief among them is the land question. For this reason, Mugabe remains the most pragmatic African leader who managed to fight neo-colonialism until his death in 2018.

References

- [1]. Fernandes, B. M. 2001. The Occupation as a Form of Access to Land. Paper prepared for delivery at the XXIII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association. Washington, D.C., September 6-8, 2001.
- [2]. Gilson, R. J. & Milhaupt, C. J. (2010). Economically Benevolent Dictators: Lessons for Developing Democracies. SSRN Electronic Journal 59(1), DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.1564925
- [3]. History, H. (2016). Adolf Hitler: A life from Beginning to End. Hourly History Publishing. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/518457/>

- [4]. Kawewe, S. M. and Dibie, R (2000) "The Impact of Economic Structural Adjustment Programs [ESAPs] on Women and Children: Implications for Social Welfare in Zimbabwe," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 27 : Iss. 4 , Article 6. Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol27/iss4/6>
- [5]. Langan, M. (2018). Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of 'Development' in Africa, *Contemporary African Political Economy*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58571-0_5
- [6]. Macias, O. and Fernando, A. (2019). The Fall of Gaddafi Through CNN and Fox News: The Spectacular Enemy Vision According to Edelman Murray. *Ánfora*, 26(46), 1-13
- [7]. Madalina S. (2018). Alexander The Great and the "Clash" of Ancient Civilizations. *International Conference Knowledge-Based Organization*, 24(2), 421-426.
- [8]. Mlalmbo, A. (2005). Prelude to the 1979 Lancaster House Constitutional Conference on Rhodesia: The Role of International Economic Sanctions Reconsidered. *Historia*, 50(1), pp 147-172.
- [9]. Moyo, S. (2003). The Land Question in Africa: Research Perspectives and Questions. Paper presented at Codesria Conferences on Land reform, the Agrarian Question and Nationalism in Gaborone, Botswana (18-19 October 2003) and Dakar, Senegal (8-11 December 2003)
- [10]. Moyo, S. and Chambati W. (2013). Roots of the Fast Track Land Reform. *Land and Agrarian Reform in Former Settler Colonial Zimbabwe*. Dakar: CODESRIA and AIAS: pp.1-28.
- [11]. Mugabe, R. G. (2001). *Inside the Third Chimurenga*. Harare: Ministry of Information.
- [12]. Musingafi, M. C., Tom, T. and Muranda, K. (2013). Imperialism, Neo-Colonialism and Paranoid Authoritarianism in Zimbabwe: Experiences and Manifestations. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Management*, 2(2), 17-29.
- [13]. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. (2015). Introduction: Mugabeism and Entanglements of History, Politics, and Power in the Making of Zimbabwe. In: Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. (eds) *Mugabeism?. African Histories and Modernities*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137543462_1
- [14]. Nkrumah, K. (1963). *Africa must unite*. London: Heineman.
- [15]. Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism*. Sixth Printing—New York International Publishers, 1976.
- [16]. Oloka-Onyango, J. (1998). Uganda's 'Benevolent' Dictatorship. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3621118> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3621118>
- [17]. Olson, M. (1993). Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development. *American Political Science Review*, 87(3), 567-576.
- [18]. Roberts, A. (2014). *Napoleon the Great*. Penguin Books: New York.
- [19]. Russel, S. (2012). The Benevolent Dictatorship in Rwanda: Negative Government, Positive Outcomes? *The Applied Anthropologist*, 32(1), 12-23.
- [20]. Sithole, J. (2011). Shaka kaSenzangakhona, the founder of the Zulu Kingdom. *Vibrant Culture*. Available at <https://www.southafrica.net/za/en/travel/article/>
- [21]. Tomini, D. C. (2005). The Breadbasket Goes Empty: Zimbabwe – a Country in Crisis. *Education in Emergencies and Post-Conflict Situations: Problems, Responses and Possibilities*, 2(1), 93-107.