

Beyond the Third *Chimurenga*?: Theological Reflections on the Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe, 2000-2010ⁱ

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Abstract

The land question has a long history in Zimbabwe, and has always been an issue at the heart of Zimbabwe's struggles for national liberation (*Chimurenga*). Stretching from the colonial era to the present, there have been three milestone *Chimurenga* wars, notably in 1896-1897, 1965-1980 and 2000-2008. The indigenes have perceived these wars as emanating from the land question, and this is how the land issue has been contentious and thereby placing Zimbabwe under an international spotlight. The study concurs with universal acclamation that land is an inalienable birth-right linked to notions of national sovereignty and a search for identity. Yet from the Western standpoint, the land reform programme has been misconstrued as a source of racial animosity and unprecedented human rights abuse. This study posits that the land reform programme in Zimbabwe reflects a continuation of the wider African struggle against neo-colonialism. In terms of methodology, the researchers carried out fieldwork in resettled former white commercial farms in the Masvingo province of Zimbabwe. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and from print and electronic media. From a theological perspective, the paper critically discusses land audit revelations in Zimbabwe beyond the third *Chimurenga*. In addition, the research configures the viability of land reform processes, and makes an appraisal of the political mud-slinging that characterise the operations of the government. Apparently, the political developments in Zimbabwe have had a bearing on the diplomatic relations in Africa, at large, and the effects of the controversial land reform programme are linked to the imposition of sanctions. The study concludes that far from being over, the land issue in Zimbabwe remains a contentious challenge.

Key Words: Land Reform, Sustainable Development, Pan-Africanist, Theology, Third *Chimurenga*, Zimbabwe Crisis.

Introduction

The land reform programme (third *Chimurenga*) is a monumental agrarian revolution in Zimbabwe, and its repercussions have been largely paradoxical to the extent that they have sent shockwaves in Africa and beyond. Throughout the colonial period, land in Zimbabwe as in several other African nations was expropriated through force and colonial legislation. Moyo (2004:6) observes that at independence in 1980, 6000 white farmers retained 39% of the prime land, adding up to 15,5 million hectares of agro-ecological farmland, whereas one million Black households were confined to 41.4% of land that constituted 16.4 million hectares of marginal land. Apparently, agriculture was the mainstay of the economy and one of the most important economic sectors, which accounted for 40% of the GDP and employed more than 70% of the population (Stoneman and Cliffe 1989; Maguwu 2007). Because of its thriving agricultural sector, Zimbabwe was accorded the role of ensuring food security in the then the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), the forerunner of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region until the year 2000. This rosy picture earned Zimbabwe the status of being the ‘bread basket’ in Africa south of the Sahara. Nevertheless, the land reform programme has not retained this prestigious status for Zimbabwe. Instead, judged in the context of the impact of the fast track land reform programme, Zimbabwe plummeted from being a ‘bread basket’ into a being ‘bread case’ of the region (Ndhlovu-Gatsheni 2009). Among other reasons, the land reform lacked adequate government financial support, the new and inexperienced farmers failed to feed the nation, and the land question created enmity from the international community, which turned Zimbabwe into a pariah state.

In general, the discourses about land reform in Zimbabwe have been undertaken from various perspectives. For instance, Moyana (2002), Moyo and Raftopoulos (2004), Sachikonye (2000), Bond and Manyanga (2003) have examined the delicate land issue mostly from a socio-economic standpoint whilst Jocelyn Alexander (2007) provides a historiography of land in Zimbabwe. This study is yet another contribution to the on-going debates on the matrix of land in Zimbabwe, hence a framework of evaluation from theological perspectives. However, it must be noted that a theological voice is not new in the land discourses in Zimbabwe. For example, Bakare (1993), MacGarry (1994) and Banana (1996) are some of the pioneering theologians who offered comprehensive critiques on land reform programmes in post-independent Zimbabwe. In addition, Gundani (2001), Chitando (2005) and Maposa (2011) have supplied recent voices on issues related to the contemporary land reform programme in Zimbabwe. Apart from that, commentaries have started to emerge on religion and land reform in Zimbabwe and beyond. This study presents theological reflections on the land reform programme in Zimbabwe, and therefore posits that the land redistribution exercise was meant to correct the colonial imbalances so that it could benefit the landless majority, notwithstanding that it has been hijacked by the new Black ‘land barons’. A theological analysis advanced in this paper reveals that human rights have been sacrificed on the altar of injustice and political expediency.

It has to be asked: Has Zimbabwe gone beyond the third *Chimurenga*? Accordingly, this study will begin with a historical purview of the land question in order to situate the Western and African perspectives on the mechanics of land reform programme in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the study will examine the linkages between the land issue and globalisation, the Government of National Unity and the issue of identity. Some reflections on the land issue beyond the third *Chimurenga* are given as the basis for the recommendations that conclude this study.

Methodology

The researchers used the phenomenological approach in which fieldwork was conducted in the resettled former white commercial farming areas in the Masvingo province. Furthermore, the study utilised the historical approach to reconstruct the nature of the controversial land question from the colonial period to post-independent Zimbabwe, which also included the use of literary sources such as magazines, newspapers, books and journals. Data was gathered through the techniques of observation and in-depth interviews.

Trajectory of the Land Question

Zimbabwe was colonised by the Britain in the last decade of the 19th century. From the arrival of Cecil Rhodes' settlers in 1890, ownership of the land became a contested issue. Thus, the land question emerged as a colonial creation, and its trajectory is painfully complex. The whites expropriated land from the black majority. Gundani (2001:48) observes that the history of the land question is fundamentally a history of alienation in Zimbabwe. This triggered wars of liberation, popularly code-named *Chimurenga*. The first *Chimurenga* was fought in 1896 to 1897 by the Shona and the Ndebele under the leadership of traditional leaders such as Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi and Mkwati, religious luminaries who doubled as political leaders in times of crisis. Though much debate has arisen about the role of traditional religious leaders during the first *Chimurenga*, T.O. Ranger asserts that they played a key role. Notwithstanding the flaws of Ranger's argument as noted by historians like D.N. Beach and J.R. Cobbing, this study subscribes to it given that religion is a pervasive element in African societies whose place cannot be underrated. Ranger cited in Beach (1986:120) suggested that there were two joint operation centres that linked the Shona and the Ndebele uprisings. One was based at Tabazikamambo where Mkwati of the Mwari cult operated from among the Ndebele. The other centre was under chief Mashayamombe where Gumboreshumba, the medium of Kaguvi *mhondoro* spirit operated from 1896 to coordinate the Shona people. It was from this latter centre that the Kaguvi medium influenced surrounding Shona districts with the support of traditional/secular leaders and other *mhondoro* mediums, including Nehanda in Mazowe and Goronga in Lomagundi. The common motive was to resist white settler misrule. Hence, there has always been a link between religion and politics in Zimbabwe, indeed throughout Africa, and beyond.

The inseparability of religion and politics is also notable in Biblical contexts when ancient Israel was still a nascent State. In a traditional African context, traditional leaders are regarded as religious functionaries in their own right. As such, in Zimbabwe during the first *Chimurenga*, the traditional leaders and religious authorities were coordinated. This cooperation spilled into the subsequent struggles for self-determination in Zimbabwe. As Beach (1986:120) notes “there was a strong element of continuity between the 1896 *Chimurenga* and the nationalism of the 1960s”. For instance, Chief Rekayi Tangwena of Kaerezi in Nyanga District was regarded as one of the most iconic traditional chiefs of the post-first *Chimurenga* epoch. He waged a relentless war against the forced removal of his people from their ancestral homeland of Kaerezi by the Rhodesian Front regime in the 1960s and 1970s; despite, the fact that the settler regime razed and torched his people’s village, Tangwena assisted young men and women to cross into Mozambique to join the guerrilla warfare (Mangwende 2012:6). In fact, even when reflecting on the current national political scenario, traditional leaders have reasserted their stance as pro-active unifying forces as exemplified by their active participation in parliament and land redistribution.

In this history, it is also important to note that by the end of the Shona and Ndebele war of liberation (1896-97), the white settlers had already expropriated and transformed large tracts of arable land, about 1/6 of the total area of the country, into the white lands (MacGarry 1994:5). Hence, it was ‘un-African’ that a person can now travel for hundreds of kilometres without even seeing a rural village. But, once the British settlers expropriated big arable commercial farms, known locally as *mapurazi*, a transliteration of a Portuguese term *prazeros*, the white settlers needed cheap labour, known as *chibharo/isibhalo*, which became common. Furthermore, cheap labourers who were forcefully recruited in this way were parcelled out to white farmers like pumpkins (*manhanga*). And if any of them ran away, one was tracked, recaptured and thoroughly beaten with a *sjambok*, the hippo-hide whip (Mukanya 1997:107). This demonstrated the ways of the entire colonial system, in short, it was brutal and de-humanising to African people. They were made to work as slaves on the land of their ancestors. In this way, the British settlers were very conscious of the exploitative nature of their colonialism. Thus, this callous colonial mentality was captured by a British settler in Kenya stating that “We have stolen the African land. Now we must steal his limbs. Compulsory labour is the corollary of our occupation of the country” (New African, 2005:15). Hence we cite the Kenyan example to show that British colonialism was like a one-armed banditry in which all colonies were “created for the metropolis by the metropolis” (Rodney, 1974). And with regards to cheap labour, the locals were not keen, because they could sustain themselves by their own labour on their own ancestral lands. However, in order to reverse the pre-colonial *status quo* the white settlers had to take drastic measures to the detriment of the indigenous majority.

First, land was alienated when the local African population were forced by the British to leave their historical (ancestral) land, and driven like herds of cattle to live in the Reserves, later to be called the Tribal Trust Lands. Even the white liberal historian, Riddell (1978) saw that the reserves simply were hot, poor, and stony, along with the white open-minded anthropologist Auret (1990:5) who observed that they were holding spots for indigenous labour, with the most deplorable in Gwaai and Shangani created in 1894 and Chikukwa in the eastern province of Manicaland (Moyana 2002: 31). Second, land was alienated through taxation. After dispossessing the local population, the British imposed taxation to create a pool of African farm labourers that could work in white commercial lands. Thus, Black people were forced to pay taxes like: *mutero wembwa* (dog tax), *mutero wemusha* (hut tax), *mutero wesoro* or *mutero wemunhu* (head tax), among others. And as Rodney (1974) has pointed out, Africans were forced to pay taxation to sustain a colonial bureaucracy they had not called for. And like in Kenya, in the land of their ancestors, the local African person was prohibited by law from owning more than five herds of cattle, and it became a criminal offence to have more than the stipulated five cows as the colonial State forcibly took over the rest of the herd of cattle to reduce it to five in cases people tried to evade the law. Such stringent measures constituted space for resistance (grievances) to spark the modern African nationalism which ignited the second *Chimurenga*.

Interestingly, like in the first *Chimurenga*, land issue was a sticky matter in shaping the tone and quality of the armed struggle. The prophecy of Mbuya Nehanda that '*Mapfupa angu achamuka*' (My bones shall rise again) became the watch words of the gallant 'sons of the soil' who fought in the second *Chimurenga*. The 'rising of bones' and the emergence of a transformative paradigm shift in the unbalanced land question debacle is reminiscent to the Biblical story of Ezekiel and the vision of the dry bones (cf. Ezekiel 37) which bore the hope for the restoration of Israel just as a new liberated Zimbabwe could be envisaged. The metaphor of the 'rising bones' is also prevalent in Zimbabwe's popular literature about the interplay between religion and land as exemplified by Chenjerai Hove's novel, *Bones* (1990), and in one episode this theme is detected when Hove writes: "Arise all the bones of the land...Wield the power of the many bones scattered across the land and fight so that the land of the ancestors is not defiled by strange feet and strange hands" (1990:51). Correspondingly, this is a strong message of protest that enhanced the historical consciousness of the oppressed, with strong references made to the ancestors through cultural songs and spirit mediums virtually "for guidance, protection, inspiration and for courage" (Bhebe 1999:97).

Hence, this traditional religious, political and cultural tempo linked the first *Chimurenga* (1896-97) and second *Chimurenga* (1965-1980) as one historical continuum that culminated in the third *Chimurenga* (2000-2008). Kriger (2006) and Raftopoulos (2009) thus show the unity between the first and second *Chimurenga* wars to the historical consciousness and emergence of the land question as attributes of the traditional, religious and cultural identity of the Zimbabwe nation.

Land has always been at the heart of the *Chimurenga* wars of liberation in Zimbabwe, and as stated above, land is an inalienable birth-right linked to notions of national sovereignty and a search for identity (in Zimbabwe and elsewhere), and in many ways the traditional chiefs are the guardians of the land (Schoefeleers 1979). And in addition, as Bourdillon (1998:67) has indicated, the significance of land is anchored in a Shona folklore in which Mwari distributed resources to people so that eventually one who possessed land became the chief and leader of the people. Thus, land is the people and people identify themselves with their land and this is why a people's survival is enshrined in land as a collective group, and not as an individual. This approach is also reminiscent to the African communitarian philosophy popularised by Mbiti (1969:2) that 'I am because we are, we are because I am', hence the heart of an African philosophy of *Ubuntu* (humanness) that guides key values of wholesome personhood in a community in contrast to a Western philosophy of individualism. In theological notions, this communitarian philosophy subscribes to the ideas that without land, there is no food, and if there is no food, there can be no people and thus, there is no life (Bakare, 1993).

Thirdly, the colonial State alienated land through legislation. After 1898, the white settlers enacted the Pass laws that disadvantaged African peoples, legislation that empowered the colonial police to stop Africans at any given point and time, to question and search them. The purpose was to physically embarrass the people or rather scare them to remain in rural areas or to seek employment on white-owned farms, or in the mines. Thus, the African population were allowed to move to settle in mining and farming areas and work as cheap wage labourers.

It was realised that by 1899, nearly 16 million acres of arable land had passed into white settler hands. But the white 'hunger' for land was not quenchable. It was finalised through the obnoxious Land Apportionment Act of 1930 that divided land along deep racial lines. The result was that about 1000 acres of land per head were set aside for 48,000 white settlers against a mere 29 acres per head set aside for the Black majority, and although the Land Tenure Act superseded the Land Apportionment Act in 1969, the basic principles were retained and the pattern of land distribution decisively put indigenous Africans at a disadvantage. Worse, 48 000 acres of land by the 1970s were specially meant to produce cash crops for external export to metropolitan markets (MacGarry, 1994), and by 1977 the indigenous people (the Africans) were groaning under poverty and under-nourishment, whilst the white Rhodesian government realised Z\$122 million from agricultural exports, as African productive output from the land deteriorated and the size of the African allocation of land also diminished wherein in terms of statistics, 96% of the African populous occupied 50% of the total land of the country whilst whites, coloureds and Asians who made up the remaining 4% of the entire population occupied the other 50% of the total land of the country (Auret, 1990).

Therefore, in the nationalistic politics of the 1960s and 1970s, every African person was *mwana wevhu* (son of the soil or land), and as such, was viewed from a political perspective wherein every son of the soil must continue to be tied to the land, and to deny the son of the soil of his land, becomes a violation of the natural divine law (Zvarevashe 1982:14). This importance of land has been succinctly captured by Moyana (2002) when he writes: Land is vital for the dead, the living and the unborn. This is the basis upon which Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and which the Zimbabwe African People's Union protracted the armed struggle in order to restore land ownership in the hands of the African majority. Hence, as South African writer, editor and author Andile Mngxitama said: "The return of the land is a foundation to liberation in countries that suffered settler colonialism", as reported by Machivenyika (2013:36). And furthermore, the possession of land and its use are interpreted religiously as emanating from the spiritual realm which in part explains chief Rekayi Tangwena's resilience against the forced removal of people from their ancestral homeland when he said in earnest: "I am married to the land, as I was put here by God and only God can remove me here..." (Mangwende 2012:6). Hence, the vitality of land cannot be underestimated in Zimbabwe.

Today, when the government of Zimbabwe says the land question is a bilateral problem between the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe, many people and nations around the world would sniff at it (*New African*, 2007/08: 8). Thus, what happened at the Lancaster House Conference in 1979 perhaps validates the manner in which the ZANU (PF) government has handled the land reform exercise ever since. The Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher that came to power in 1979 in the UK under whose auspices the Lancaster House Conference was held reneged to honour the promise that would have facilitated the purchasing of land for resettlement in independent Zimbabwe. It only gave twenty million pounds, instead of the agreed upon seventy million pounds, spread over five years. Thus, the ZANU (PF) government of President Mugabe, then Prime Minister in 1980 faced a difficult task of how to urgently re-settle more than 162,000 families on nine million hectares of land only. Hence, Mugabe's government could only acquire land on the *willing-seller* and *willing-buyer* formula and principle. And the other challenge that the new Zimbabwean government faced was to reconcile the racial differences and interests in the country that were directly tied to the land question. Ali Mazrui (1981) rightly noted that soon after independence, there was a 'dual Zimbabwe' that emerged, whereby Zimbabwe was engrossed in a racial bipolarity between African people and the whites which had profound effects on the issues of land, labour and capital with long term implication on the political economy of nascent state (Mazrui 1981:7).

As embedded in the Lancaster House Agreement, the government was entitled to expropriate unused and underutilised land, but had to pay a market-related price for productive land. This obviously set the limits to the quantity, quality and location of land to be re-distributed. Such land 'free market' characteristic that was deeply entrenched in the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979 led to dire consequences, especially in view of the fact that the British government failed to fund the process of land transfer from the white farmers. Had the government of the UK honoured to fully finance land re-settlement early on in the 1980s, the history of the land question would probably have been closed. Instead, the government in Harare had to battle with piece-meal efforts at land reform between 1980 and 1990, however, many peasants continued to be landless.

And ironically, even as late as 1999, fertile land was still in the hands of the few 4000 white farmers whilst about 80% of the Black population had no land at all (*New African*, 2007/08). It was only in February 2000 that a gigantic programme of commercial land seizures was undertaken in what has come to be popularly known as '*hondo yeminda* (war for the land), and thereto code-named, the third *Chimurenga* (Nyawo-Viriri-Shava 2012).

Findings and Discussion: Mechanics of the Land Reform Programme

Subsequently, a collaboration of war veterans of the second *Chimurenga* and the long-disgruntled landless people initiated the land reform programme in February 2000, as mentioned. Hence, the land invasion kicked off in Mashonaland east province, under chief Svosve and then engulfed the whole country by the end of 2001. Ranches were then seized mostly in the Masvingo area, and in two provinces of Matabeleland. These seizures were done through force called *jambanja*. The term '*jambanja*' was initially popularised through one of the hit songs by Marko Sibanda entitled, '*Jambanja paHotera*'. The fiasco at the hotel in the song was adopted to refer to the haphazard nature of the 'fast track' land reform programme.

In this action war veterans mobilised the rural peasants, district committees (made up of war veterans), councillors and traditional chiefs compiled a list of the landless people and eventually submitted it to a Provincial Land Allocation Committee. But on the ground, war veterans ended up exclusively administering the land allocation (*The Sunday Mail*, 2001). They have always been linked to the land issue in as far as it remains the 'unfinished business' (Bond and Manyanga 2003). And as an 'unfinished business', the land reform programme is a result of complex factors. First, land reform was/is a result of land hunger among the majority of the landless Black people who had lost their ancestral lands to the white settlers. Thus, land reform was a pragmatic response by the ZANU-PF government to the British letter of arrogance in from Clare Short, the British Secretary for International Development, denying responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:1154). Second, the land reform programme was punitive in that the results of the referendum in 2000 were interpreted as a rejection of ZANU-PF, and third, because of the involvement of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the opposition which was regarded as the brain-child of Britain in order to effect 'regime change' and thus re-colonisation of Zimbabwe was involved.

And not surprisingly, in addition to land reform issues were socio-economic, political and religious factors. Hence religious themes were creatively appropriated into political discourses in order to defend the land question which was sacralised. Chitando (2005:224) refers to a production of the Department of Information and Publicity which stated: "In the beginning was the land. The people were on the land. The people owned the land. As it was in the beginning, so shall it always be. Welcome to Zimbabwe. We are down to earth!"

Clearly, this is one way that the land issue was theologised yet politicised by ZANU-PF politicians as supporters appropriated symbols and canons of indigenous religion and Christianity in their political crusades to 'sacralise' Mugabe and his political party. For example, Mugabe was compared to the biblical Moses to deliver the oppressed to the Promised Land (Chitando 2005), and along the same lines, songs of praise from ZANU-PF's Women's League on Jesus Christ were appropriated to give a messianic status to Mugabe wherein instead of 'I will never cry if Jesus is there' it was redubbed to 'I will never cry if Mr Mugabe is there'. Thus, in a 'theology of land' that emerged, the land issue became the "first and only issue that was central to the nation" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:1150), and all pre-colonial prophecies associated with spirit mediums like Nehanda and Chaminuka on land found their consummation in Mugabe who is regarded as one of the most obedient 'sons of the soil'. And in fact, ZANU-PF and Mugabe claimed to have a 'divine mission' to fulfil the 19th century oracular prophecies on the land question and national sovereignty (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:1150). Here, this theologization and politicization of the land question explains the philosophy behind Mugabe's anti-Western rhetoric to uphold developmental nationalism. But it has to be asked: What sort of perspectives did the West hold about the controversial land reform programme in Zimbabwe?

The responses of the international community to the land reform programme have been mixed. On one hand, there is the African voice, particularly, from Southern Africa, which is generally sympathetic to Zimbabwe's land reform programme, despite the simmering challenges. On the other hand, there is a hostile voice from the Western world, particularly finding representation in Britain, the USA, Canada, France, Germany, Australia and New Zealand. There is an extent to which the land reform by the Zimbabwe government can be regarded as a response to the failed provisions of the Lancaster House Agreement and Zimbabwe's rejection by the international community as a pariah state. Yet, what is the anger of the West over this Southern African nation? The anger of the West over Zimbabwe centres on the transfer of land, from white hands to Black hands. The West alleges that the mechanics and dynamics of land reform have been unilateral and forceful. Hence, their starting point is when the government passed the Rural Land Occupation and Protection from Eviction Act (Chapter 20:06), a legal instrument to facilitate the land seizures across the country that the white racists perceived it as a 'baptism of fire' in which the white farmers who resisted moving off the farms now would lose everything.

In this context, the writers, Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock (1994) were prophetic in perceiving that '*Rhodesians Never Die*'. Like the pre-independent white Rhodesia's ignorance of the reality on the ground, some of the post-independent white farmers could not quickly read the writing on the wall and the 'winds of change' on the land question. The stubborn 'Rhodies' were thus evicted from their farms through *jambanja*. They were removed *from* their isolated farmlands, their 'little Englands' located inside the domains of *mwana wevhu* (son of the soil or land) of Zimbabwe. Consequently, the white racist media pointed out that a white rancher from the Mwenezi district in Masvingo province lost 700 herd of cattle to war veterans between the months of July and December in 2000 just as a game rancher in the Chiredzi district who had skirmishes with war veterans was murdered in daylight (Wolmer 2007:196).

And as a result, a number of shivering white farmers fled the country and went to South Africa, Zambia, Nigeria, Malawi, Tanzania, Namibia and Mozambique, and many of these white *émigrés* also took their farm equipment and livestock (Chinooneka, 2011). Next, the white media also pointed out that agricultural activity almost came to a standstill as whites and occasional Black farm labourers were injured, maimed, lost property and some murdered. Thus, overall, the land reform programme is pictured as the nastiest exercise in which the war veterans have avowed to save the country from a new Western neo-colonialism, creating a scenario of lawlessness (usually abrupt) in every parliamentary and presidential election done in 2002, 2005 and 2008 (Zhou, 2011), wherein public institutions like the police, army, courts and prison services are accused of aligning with the machinery of ZANU (PF) government (Banning, 2001:17). Consequently, this is why President Mugabe, as Zimbabwe's chief executive, has been demonised as the *be`te noire* of the West (*New African*, June 2006:22). And thus, the new mantra is one of demonization: that President Mugabe's government by addressing and re-dressing the historical land imbalances has ignored human rights issues, there is economic mismanagement (corruption), and so there is bad governance in Zimbabwe (Mareverwa, 2011).

Here, it must be noted, that the concept of 'bad governance' is elastic, for it could be stretched to cover anything the West disdains. Indeed, Zimbabwe was once described as 'an extreme case of bad governance and lawlessness' which attracted reprimand from the citizens and the international community (Maguwu 2005). The West accused Mugabe's leadership as Machiavellian as it lacked good governance and democratic principles. The USA passed the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) in 2001 as a response to 'bad governance' in Zimbabwe according to Western standards. One of ZIDERA's demands was that no aid would come to Zimbabwe until the government upholds the rule of law and executes a legal and transparent land reform programme (Maguwu 2005). However, in our assessment, now that those who challenge Western hegemony cannot be called "communist" anymore, the only insult remaining on the Western books or their media is "human rights violator". This is the Western way to justify why and how they eventually "sponsor" opposition movements in several African countries as a strategy to sustain their imperialistic hegemony. Thus, it is no small wonder that these opposition movements have often been seen as part of an agenda-less phenomena, only planted to destabilise legitimately elected governments in Africa, creating a need to be on the lookout against these separatist forces described by the ZANU-PF as the 'running dogs of imperialism' and a politics of exclusion emerged where Zimbabweans were divided into "traitors, puppets, sell-outs, enemies of the nation versus patriots and authentic national subjects" (Ndhlovu-Gatsheni 2009). Perhaps, a pragmatic word of advice here comes from President Mugabe's wise counsel, when invited in Malawi in May 2005 he cautioned African people to listen to themselves and not outsiders. Mugabe proclaimed, thus: "We cannot listen to other people's views about us. We listen to ourselves, to our people, to our leaders..." (*New African*, 2006: 23). Hence, African agency and self-reliance must be the new reality of Africa in the face of neo-colonialism, particularly when resolving critical issues such as the land question which also operates within Mugabe's uncompromising Pan-Africanist position anchored in an anti-imperialist ideology in defence of Africa in response to white oppressive and exploitative misdemeanours (Nabudere 2003:25).

Here, his Pan-Africanist perspective is based on the historical reality of the process of colonisation in Africa which negated the human rights of the colonised in Africa, and thus no longer a debate in academia and elsewhere, a reality supported by Guinean historian Hajia Aminata Sow and others (*New African*, 2007:51). This perspective is also shared in 2005 by Ngila Michael Muendane, a member the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), when he declared that:

Land is the most important asset. Without it, there can be no houses, food, clothes, roads, there will be nowhere to hold water, in short no life at all. The whole of existence is predicated upon land. Our conscience, on its own turn, would lead us to establish that it is wrong to deny another human being at least to meet any of his or her needs.... What is happening in Zimbabwe is what was created yesterday (*New African*, 2006:14).

Thus, the above citation outlines how the current standoff between Zimbabwe and the West over the land issue is a historical question, wrought by colonialism and obviously underlies Mugabe's point during the dead-heat of the liberation war in 1976 when he said "the justness of our gun is the justness of our struggle" (Mugabe, 2001). The armed struggle was meant to restore land that was despoiled from African people on the onset of British colonialism, based in a Pan-African redemptive ideology that seeks to redress colonial imbalances as Mugabe, ZANU-PF and other 'nationalists' reasoned that land reform was a 'war without guns' but a necessary one to "safeguard the honour, integrity and sovereignty of the nation (and) to resolve once and for all the warped land question in the country" (Boateng 2013:13).

Given that Zimbabwe now holds a record of implementing the largest land reform in Africa in which "6,000 white farmers have been replaced by 245,000 black farmers" (Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart cited in Boateng 2013:22), countries like South Africa now believe that they can learn from Zimbabwe's land reform programme (du Preez 2013:33). And second, despite its continued domestic challenges, Zimbabwe continues to influence the SADC region and defending African interests in general and Zimbabwe's sovereignty in particular, hence, championing a Pan-Africanist agenda.

Situating the Land Issue within Globalisation

In the context of the Third World, globalization is a dominant neo-colonial feature in the contemporary times. In general, globalisation exists in two main forms. First, intensive globalization is when there are changes within the global economy where an integrated process is not catapulted by increased openness, but is a result of external changes for an already open economy. Second, extensive globalization is what characterises many economies and where there is increased openness that dominates the process.

Zimbabwe's globalization is characterised as being policy-induced and extensive (Bhalla, Davies, Mabugu and Mabugu 1999:1). From a Pan-Africanist perspective, globalisation is a new way that African societies and resources are made vulnerable to Western capitalist forces. Notably, in a globalized world the African and Western economies occupy two extremes of a competitive continuum with Africa being condemned to a marginal uncompetitive end in contradistinction to the Western economies that progress to high levels of productive competitiveness.

Perhaps, Nkrumah's warning on the reality of the exploitative nature of neo-colonialism best sums up the gist of the impact of the globalization process. Zimbabwe like many other developing nations has been subjected to the nagging evils of globalization. The natural resources including land have been 'eyed' and jealously guarded by transnational corporations. The multinational companies are controlled from the metropolitan capital cities of the West and the profits are also syphoned to those metropolitan centres (Rodney 1974). And also, the 'global governance' of resources is controlled from bourgeois institutions like the World Trade Organisation and Bretton Woods institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It is interesting to note that from 1965 through 1990, Zimbabwe's economy was relatively well regulated, however, in the 1990s two structural adjustments programmes were implemented, namely, the World Bank/IMF-inspired Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1990 and the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) in 1995. These were capitalist packages which liberalised the economy due to increased openness in the economy, but they resulted in de-regulation (Bhalla, Davies, Mabugu and Mabugu 1999). Hence, evidently, the signs of the strong forces of globalisation that were already manifesting in Zimbabwe.

In a way, it must be noted that the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) cannot be isolated from the impact of the strong forces of globalisation, given the deteriorating economic conditions after the 1990s in Zimbabwe. Thus, the formations of MDC with its vigorous regime change agenda, injected political fear within ZANU (PF) and it perceived that the MDC was a front for whites, both the internal white farmer interests and the external white financial masters (Taderera, 2011). Here, in ZANU (PF)'s perception, "The opposition is an extension of imperialism ... they were put together as an opposing packaged by the British" (*New African* 2007:18), and Nabudere (2003:30) notes that imperialists reasserted their interests in post-colonial political economies where they set up agencies for the continued control of African resources. Perhaps, this is why ZANU (PF) accused the MDC of being puppets of the British, set to reverse the gains of the liberation struggle (Chitando, 2005). Furthermore, ZANU (PF) claims to be defending Africa's cause, as exemplified by Mugabe's retort that: "Every inch of Africa matters. If that inch loses its freedom, then the whole of [the] African continent is affected. It's freedom minus. And you don't want anything of that nature to happen" (*New African* 2007:13). This is a typical Pan-Africanist stance that has placed Zimbabwe in the spotlight in defending an African identity, at all costs.

Government of National Unity and Identity

Subsequently, the Government of National Unity (GNU) emerged as a temporary measure to the Zimbabwe crisis that culminated in the Global Political Agreement signed on 15 September 2008 by the three principals of ZANU (PF) represented by President Mugabe, MDC (T) represented by Morgan Tsvangirai and MDC (M) represented by Arthur Mutambara. This was a power-sharing agreement that resulted in the ‘marriage of convenience’ (or for others ‘marriage of inconvenience’) in the form of GNU, beyond the third *Chimurenga*, and thus, the ideological differences that exist between the political parties of the GNU makes them a rare political ‘honey moon’. Sibanda and Masaka (2010:16) have portrayed the ideological disparity thus:

While ZANU (PF) seem to be mired and obsessed with the nostalgic memories of their past exploits and contribution towards the political liberation of Zimbabwe from colonial grip and a return of the stolen indigenous resources such as land to its indigenous black owners as a bastion of retributive justice, the MDC is obsessed with the thinking that enhancing productivity and adherence to democratic principles in all facets of human concern ought to be the hallmark of any attempt to redress colonially induced resource distribution disequilibria in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

Hence, the land question remained at the heart of the points of convergence and divergence in the era of the GNU to the extent that the issue of identity ensued. Article 5 of the 2008 SADC-brokered agreement between the three main political parties in Zimbabwe named the Global Political Agreement (GPA) focused on the land question, where it recommends that land redistribution is not a closed chapter in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, land must be fully distributed with transparency and fairness. However, in reality, this puzzling matter on land cannot be understood well in isolation of other Articles of the GPA. For instance, one top priority of the GNU is a restoration of economic stability and sustainable growth for Zimbabwe which is mostly anchored on the critical issues of economic production and food security.

One way of restoring economic stability in Zimbabwe is based on the need to bring business sanity and agricultural productivity in the acquired and redistributed former white commercial farms. This method is affirmed in President Mugabe’s *Inside the Third Chimurenga* (2001), and ZANU (PF) has been consistent in saying that “land is the economy and the economy is land”. And in contrast, MDC’s manifesto (1999) also called for *Ivhu kuvanhu* (land to the people), however, this stance was subsequently muffled as mere ‘window dressing’ by ZANU (PF) as MDC has seemed to favour a ‘middle way’ that was more accountable and well planned whilst ZANU (PF)’s strategy ‘inside the third *Chimurenga*’ and even ‘beyond the third *Chimurenga*’ could employ *jambanja* for political expediency and to defend ancestral land.

In this process, Alexander (2007:194) predicted a kind of ‘militarization’ in the agricultural interventions to enforce the autochthonous claims to land. In this way, Mugabe was likened to the biblical figures such as Moses (Exodus 3:1ff) and Joshua (Joshua1:1ff) who were divinely mandated to deliver the Israelites to the Promised Land. In one way or another, the major players in the GPA promised to consolidate the ‘gains’ of the fast track land reform programme. Thus, it was noted in the GPA that: “While differing on the methodology of acquisition and distribution, the parties acknowledge that compulsory acquisition of land has taken place under a land reform programme since 2000” (IRIN Global-Africa 2009). Along the same lines, the GPA that resulted in an inclusive government that has an important caveat to accept the “irreversibility of ... land acquisitions and redistribution” (Boateng 2013:21). In addition, the GPA hinted on the need for an independent land audit (Nyawo-Viriri-Shava 2012:431). It was stated thus: “The parties hereby agree to conduct a comprehensive, transparent and nonpartisan land audit ... for the purpose of establishing accountability and eliminating multiple farm ownership” (*The Zimbabwean* 2009).

With reference to the appointment of an independent land audit, it must be mentioned that there was initial resistance within the ZANU (PF) ranks (Rimbi, 2011). The principal reason was due to the fear that corruption and the looting of prime agricultural land could be unravelled (Mutseyami, 2011). The hard fact was that there were emerging Black ‘land barons’ and those close to President Mugabe such as cabinet ministers, governors, top civil servants, diplomats and service defence chiefs (*The Zimbabwean* 2009). These constituted a huge clientele of the political ZANU (PF) base that hoarded multiple farms (Mutsaa, 2011). Hence, Mugabe’s cronies ended up with an average of 6 farms (Zhou, 2011); one new Black ‘land baron’ was in possession of 21 farms (Zhou, 2011); and in all, it was reported that Mugabe’s elite controls a total of 5 million hectares of prime land in Zimbabwe (*The Zimbabwean* 2009). In analytic terms, this small fraction of the entire population possesses approximately 50% of about 11.5 hectares of land that was acquired through the third *Chimurenga* (Maguwu 2007). However, this study established that the real picture of land possession is obscured because the land audit has been deliberately delayed due to a presumed lack of funding. And furthermore, the majority of our informants asserted that the non-completion of the land audit exercise on the basis of inadequate funding is a flimsy excuse meant to safe guard those hoarding land.

Clearly, the above scenario is evidence of pervasive ‘*lootocracy*’ in Zimbabwe instead of *democracy*. One can also posit that, in the context of post-colonial instabilities and black-to-black exploitation, to some extent, African people pose as their own liberators and oppressors. This is a negation of sustainable development for the country. Paradoxically, the nationalists who liberated the majority of the marginalised peoples in Africa are the new oligarchy forming another class of ‘new oppressors’. This would mean that the pattern of land ownership that was obtained under white settler rule is being replicated by the few Black ‘land barons’ at the expense of the landless majority. Ideally, this selfish capitalist stance is ‘unAfrican’ and negates a theology of enough. The theology of enough emerged as a prophetic voice to ensure that those in leadership positions would be progressive and shun egoism. In fact, a theology of enough is against a theology of heroism. Chitando (2010) suggests, people must learn to ‘let go’, that is, people must not hoard material possessions at the expense of the marginalised people in society.

As part of the theological reflections, the foregoing insight provides a *kairos* situation, that is, a crucial time of realisation in which the Zimbabwe crisis is summoning all people to re-affirm their righteous humanity in solidarity with one another as a nation (The Kairos Document, 1985:2). This realisation must reveal a spirit that is inspired by the command of one New Testament writer, thus: “Among the gentiles it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. With you this must not happen. No, the greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he was the one who serves (Luke 22:25ff).

In the backdrop of the Zimbabwe crisis, people must re-read and understand the present times. It must be pointed out that contemporary Zimbabwe is analogous to the past times when ancient Israel was served by ‘men of Issachar’, that is men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do (1 Chronicles 12:32). Therefore, the church in Zimbabwe must stimulate the development of such people. Such an unbalanced scenario caused one of our interviewees to conclude that even beyond the current third *Chimurenga*, there is bound to be a fourth or fifth or sixth *Chimurenga*, until the land issue is finally resolved (Machena, 2011). This situation resonates with Alexander’s (2007:194) insightful questioning: “Will this round of evictions, appropriation, and reappropriations bring stability, or only set the stage for yet another round of contestations of land?” Be that as it may, the GNU eventually agreed to the appointment of an ‘inclusive’ Land Audit Commission in August 2010. This Commission was mandated to oversee the implementation of the decade-long land reform exercise, and among its functions would be to advise the government and parliament on all issues relating to the tenure, distribution and use of land, and its development and management of natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations (*The Zimbabwean* 2010). However, the Commission has not performed well, largely due to a lack of funds, hence, the land saga continues to be a divisive even ‘beyond’ the third *Chimurenga*.

Lessons of the Third *Chimurenga*: Reflections about Africa and Beyond

In every historical epoch in the progress of humanity, land has been a means for livelihood, tranquillity and identity. Several other African nations, notably, South Africa, Namibia, Kenya and Ivory Coast are wrestling with this sentimental problem of land inequity and inequality. Thus, evidently, Zimbabwe provides a mirror into the future of land reform in Africa. This is why we see land reform programmes a *re-invention* of the liberation struggles across Africa, a continent grappling with the quandary of neo-colonialism in the context of a perverse globalisation. And again, no one saw this neo-colonial rot clearer other than Ghana’s founding President, Kwame Nkrumah. In his ground-breaking books, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last stage of Imperialism* (1965) and *Consciencism* (1972) he has a comprehensive reflection on the current African quandary in a new geo-political world that is now a global village, as we realised that freedom and democracy possess an economic and a political dimension. Thus, African majority rule is not the end of national liberation but only the first stage. The second stage involves freeing up the wealth engrained in the natural resources of the country wherein the slogan, “African lands in African hands” should be welcomed.

Folklore has it that in the beginning, African people had land, and the whites had the *Bible*, but after the Rudd Concession (or rather deception?) of 1884, the whites had the land, and the Africans had the *Bible*. We are revisiting this story because Zimbabweans are being punished through “smart sanctions” for restoring their land back to the African. Here, in any case, one wonders how sanctions could be smart, they are heinous and therefore hurt collectively, those intended and those, unintended. The Western nations may want to mend their bilateral relations and be seen to befriend African people, but as the Psalmist in the *Old Testament* laments, “The words of their mouth are smoother than butter, but war is in their hearts...” (Psalms 55: 21). Clearly, there is need for political vigilance in the modern power politics of international relations.

In our reflections, once more, it must be noted that somehow, Zimbabwe has bequeathed the philosophy of willing-seller and willing-buyer. It is now classical in the political discourses dealing with debates on conflict management arising out of land conflicts in contemporary Africa. Just, what does this philosophy of willing-seller and willing-buyer mean? It means that the government has to find money and literally go to the open market, like an ordinary buyer, and purchase land when it is available from the white farmer. But, in the context of Zimbabwe, we know now that the white seller is organised to resist and exploit the African further. Therefore, it becomes prudent to mention that the Zimbabwean experience on land reform is boldly indicating that the philosophy of willing-buyer willing-seller has great flaws in any undertaking for conflict management in a neo-imperialist environment in which the U.S.A and its surrogate imperialists in the West are dictating everything, including the micro-economics of a sovereign nation.

Admittedly, whilst the land reform movement has been associated with bloodshed, it must rekindle the hopes of a new beginning for Zimbabweans. The last decade has been very momentous in affecting the facet of society. Just as with the birth of a new baby, a lot of blood is lost, but at some crucial moment, that blood has to stop to give way for healing. It is important to record our history as Zimbabweans to avoid a situation where this history is recorded by pseudo-historians of the West who are inclined to falsify the facts, as we know them. For example, the fact that Westerners claimed to have ‘discovered’ the mighty *Mosi-oa-Tunya* (the smoke that thunders: Tokaleya Tonga) waterfall on the Zambezi river at the boarder of Zambia and Zimbabwe and renamed it ‘Victoria Falls’ despite the full prior knowledge by indigenous population, should be an enduring warning to all African people.

Second, this study is one such contribution in this struggle, and therefore we posit that even in the backdrop of the painful history that gives an account of the land reform movement, Zimbabweans of all social shades and political persuasions must critically reflect on the need to unite to build the nation afresh, under the inspiration of a reconstruction theology whose essence is to transform society so that it can become more humane.

Summary and Recommendations

The discourse on land is complex, and has thus brought division among Zimbabweans from all walks of life. Perhaps this discussion can be sealed by evoking the ringing words of Sir Shridath 'Sony' Raphael, the former Commonwealth Secretary-General (1975-1990), who at the Lancaster House Conference in London in 1979 declared that:

The land issue in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) is not ancient history. It is modern history. Blacks were dispossessed of the land that was theirs within the lifetime memory of some, and certainly in the lifetime of the generation before. Now if you forget that, then you can't answer rationally any of the pertinent questions about Zimbabwe. And I think it is the forgetting of that, that ultimately has led us to where we are.

This foregoing citation is crucial in the explication of Zimbabwean politics today. And as the study revealed, no other subject occupied the Lancaster House (1979) negotiations more than the land issue, and like the editorial comment of the *Zambian Daily Mail* (11 October 1979), the land issue was not a negotiable issue, on the part of the majority of the people. The land issue is the basis of the African revolution and the script for the Zimbabwean context has always been written on the wall for everyone to contemplate, hence, political power is meaningless until the majority of Zimbabweans have land. We saw that when it was found fit, religious imagery was employed creatively in political discourses to show that the two overlapped in Zimbabwe as President Mugabe has consistently and definitely declared, "Let Britain and her allies know that we shall never, never, ever be a colony again" (*New African*, Winter 2008). Whilst these words have aroused fear within Zimbabwe's foes, and simultaneously they have also created hope in people. In conclusion, we understand that it is clear that a reversal of the agrarian reform is neither politically feasible, nor is it a prerequisite to economic recovery, and sustainable development. Rather, there is a need for a spirit of *Aluta continua* ('the struggle continues', in Portuguese), sustained under the banner of the Pan-Africanist ideology. Hence, the land reform programme should be brought to an amicable conclusion, lest the land question would persist like a 'race without a finishing line' in Zimbabwe. And perhaps in addressing Zimbabwe's agrarian issue, it can be seen as a vehicle to advance the question that it is a home-grown, Pan-Africanist, economic empowerment, national sovereignty and African identity issue, hence, 'unfinished business' in Zimbabwe, even beyond the third *Chimurenga*.

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Note

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