



Reading Robert Mugabe Through the *Third Chimurenga*: Language, Discourse, Exclusion

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Abstract

This article interrogates narrow forms of nationalism and nativist ideologies that are hidden beneath post-colonial African political leader statements and rhetoric about reversing colonial imbalances. The focus is on Zimbabwe's Third Chimurenga spearheaded by Robert Mugabe during the last ten years of his presidency. An analysis of the linguistic and discursive aspects of economic nationalisation, land reform and indigenisation programmes in Zimbabwe—also known as the Third Chimurenga—enables us to see the elements of policy discord and inconsistencies that characterised the second half of Robert Mugabe's nearly four-decade rule. The argument is that the reified and reductionist framing of the Third Chimurenga resulted in two unintended consequences: (i) alienating the majority of the very same black people that the policy sought to empower and (ii) diminishing opportunities for beneficiaries to contribute towards realisation of the ideals and aspirational goals of pushing back the frontiers of colonially inherited social and economic inequalities. I conclude by suggesting that Robert Mugabe's language and discursive rhetoric around social transformation in Zimbabwe betray unhelpful commitment to political exigencies at the expense of sustainable economic empowerment of ordinary men and women.

Keywords Language of politics · Third Chimurenga · Land reform · Indigenisation · Economic empowerment · Political rhetoric · Anti-colonialism · Discrimination · Citizenship

Introduction

Robert Gabriel Mugabe, former president of the Republic of Zimbabwe, will probably go down in history as one of the most controversial and divisive political figures of our time. Friends and foes have admired and reviled him—in equal measure. Numerous books and treatises have been written about him, mainly from historical, political science and investigative journalism perspectives (see, for example, Godwin 2011; Holland 2009; Chan 2003; Meredith 2007; and Ndhlovu-Gatsheni 2009 & 2015). This previous body of work has shed

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some valuable insights into Robert Mugabe's political ideology and philosophy. However, some aspects of his political career have so far not been subjected to rigorous social-scientific analysis. The persuasive power of his political rhetoric is one. Particular types of rhetorical, linguistic and meta-discursive devices that are yet to receive full attention from critical discourse analysts underpin the political ideology of Robert Mugabe. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach alerts us to the fact that "language is not powerful on its own but gains power by the use powerful people make of it" (Blackledge 2005: 5). Though CDA has diverse strands, theorists wedded to this school of thought are united on three crucial points. The first is that CDA is concerned with social life and with the role of discourse in social life. The second is that CDA is concerned with the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures. Third, CDA is fundamentally political in its orientation, interdisciplinary in its scholarship and diverse in its focus (Titscher et al. 2000; Blackledge 2005; Chilton 2004; and Fairclough 2003).

This article is the first attempt at providing a CDA and linguistic turn to the reading of Robert Mugabe's political life. For a number of reasons, a language-based approach to the reading of Robert Mugabe is imperative. First, language is the first point of contact in human interaction. It is through language that we call things into existence. Second, political ideas, dialogues and debates are conducted and mediated in particular types of language. Additionally, it is partly through language that people express their fears, their joys and sorrows, and their aspirations and subjective perceptions about the world and everything around them. This article, therefore, seeks to show how language-based frameworks can be deployed in fresh and arresting ways that help us to engage those aspects of Robert Mugabe's political historiography that have so far not been adequately addressed in previous and current social scientific analyses.

Robert Mugabe may have been deposed through a 'military coup that was not a coup' in November 2017. However, his legacy, political culture and effects of his nearly four-decade-long rule still loom large in the Zimbabwean body politic. Through his long, uninterrupted and controversial political career, Robert Mugabe left an indelible mark in the form of the land reform programme, also known as the Third Chimurenga. The umbrella term 'Chimurenga' comes from the Shona language of Zimbabwe and refers to a nationwide uprising or revolt especially against a racist, discriminatory or oppressive social, political or economic system. In this article, I interpret the notion of 'Chimurenga' as a summary term or meta-discursive regime that captures series of social, economic and political movements in Zimbabwe that were all motivated by the desire to 'liberate', 'emancipate' and 'empower' the black/indigenous people. The genealogy of such movements dates to the 1890s wars of resistance against British colonial occupation, through nationalist liberation movements of the 1960s–970s up to the more recent land redistribution and indigenisation policies. For this reason, 'Chimurenga' is not an event or a one-off episode. Rather, it is a series of social and political movements characterised by the running theme of anti-colonialism and anti-West rhetoric with a strong anti-establishment banter, so to speak.

A number of factors motivated Zimbabwe's Third Chimurenga, which started in the year 2000. Pressures from a variety of quarters had been brought to bear on the government of Zimbabwe, particularly following the year 2000 constitutional referendum that ZANU PF lost to opposition social movements and political formations. The first was the genuine and long overdue imperative to achieve social transformation in a manner that would reverse the colonial legacy of endemic social, political and economic imbalances. This had always been one of Zimbabwe's main agenda items since attainment of political independence from Britain in 1980. However, progress was rather slow and lethargic. The second was the emergence in

1999 of a formidable opposition political party (the Movement for Democratic Change) and increased student union activism challenging the political establishment. The third source of pressure came from veterans of Zimbabwe's war of liberation (Second Chimurenga) who were increasingly getting impatient about the slow pace of land reform, the delayed financial compensation for the role they played in the Second Chimurenga and the continuing decline in their overall social and economic wellbeing. Together, these forces constituted a potent threat to the political survival of Robert Mugabe's government, thus prompting him to act. He responded by acquiescing to the demands of war veterans. This marked the genesis of the Third Chimurenga, which was largely characterised by chaotic and often violent invasion of white-owned commercial farms that destabilised the country's agricultural sector and the entire national economy (Muzondidya 2007; and Mlambo 2015).

There were two strands to the Third Chimurenga: the Fast Track Land Reform programme that started in the year 2000 and the 2008 Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment policy. I consider both programmes as having been sites where resurgent nationalist imaginings of identity, belonging, citizenship and entitlement have been and continue to be discursively constructed and legitimated before they are translated into action within wider society. The focus of this article though is exclusively on the Fast Track Land Reform programme with an eye on the persuasive power of Robert Mugabe's political rhetoric. I draw on data from policy documents and his speeches about the land question to contribute new insights on the benefits of critical political discourse analysis (van Dijk 1998; Fairclough 1995) in seeking a nuanced understanding of the life and politics of Robert Mugabe. Moving beyond the person of Robert Mugabe, this article also seeks to contribute an alternative explanatory paradigm for unpacking the underlying meanings of the language used by Zimbabwean national political leaders more broadly. I conclude by arguing that the language and discourse that mediate political debates and conversations around economic empowerment, land reform and social transformation in Zimbabwe betray parochial ethno-nationalist tendencies in ways that bring to bear the contradictions of the perceived anti-colonial and anti-racist motivations of such programmes.

The Critical Discourse Analysis Approach

The insights of critical discourse analysis (CDA) underpin the alternative reading of Robert Mugabe's life and politics that I proffer in this article. CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and inscribed in clearly defined socio-political contexts (van Dijk 1998). CDA is concerned with the ways in which structures of discourse enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge notions of power, hegemony and domination in society. It seeks to demonstrate that 'the [language] we use help shape or constrain our identities, relationships, and systems of knowledge and beliefs' (McGregor 2003: 3). CDA emerged out of Continental Europe in the 1990s in response to the 'uncritical' paradigms of the 1960s and the 1970s. The latter have been criticized presenting an idealized view, which isolates texts (linguistic usages, discourses, forms of speech) from the social and historical matrix out of which they cannot actually exist: 'an asocial way of studying language, which has nothing to say about relationships between language and power and ideology'. (Fairclough 1992: 7). Therefore, the main goal of CDA is to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality.

The CDA mode of enquiry is associated with the work of Fowler (1996); Fairclough (1992, 1995); van Dijk (1998); van Dijk and Wodak (1993); and Fairclough and Wodak (1997).

According to Chilton (2005), for many of these scholars, the toolkit for deconstructing the socially constructed (thus linguistically constructed) machinery of power lies in the work of social theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci and Jürgen Habermas. An additional influence on the analytical category of CDA is traced to the post-modernist ideas of Barthes and Derrida, among others. Although the post-modernist school of thought focused mainly on ideas from philosophy, literary studies and sociology, with no formal contact with linguistics, it nevertheless made assertions about the nature of meaning, attacking alleged essentialism, ontology and epistemology (Chilton, 2005: 2). CDA, thus, attempts to go beyond merely describing discourses by adopting an interdisciplinary approach that seeks to unpack power relationships and their effects in society. In other words, the main focus of CDA is on discursive practice, which basically refers ‘to rules, norms, and mental models of socially acceptable behavior in specific roles or relationships used to produce, receive, and interpret message’ (McGregor 2003: 3). Of critical concern to the CDA approach is the desire to unmask the spoken and unspoken rules and conventions that govern how individuals learn to think, act, and speak in all the social positions they occupy in life (Blommaert 1999).

What we learn from the foregoing is that discourse is inherently part of and influenced by social structure, and produced in social interaction. Therefore, when viewed with the lens of CDA, theory formation, theory testing, description and explanation are preeminently socio-politically situated. In the words of James Gee (1990: xix), discourses are ‘ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific groups’. This constitutive nature of discourse is further emphasized by Fairclough (1992: 87) who observes that ‘discourse constitutes the social, including ‘subjects’ and language is far more than a representational tool [because] it is a form of action and contains within it ideological elements’. This means language is a central vehicle in the process whereby people are constituted as individuals and social subjects. Moreover, because language and ideology are closely intertwined, a critical analysis of language has the capacity to expose some of the pervasive ways by which people are oppressed within the existing social structures.

In what follows, I draw on these promises of CDA to critically read the Zimbabwean situation and offer a different account of the political and social crisis that occurred during the last two decades of Robert Mugabe’s presidency. The emphasis on political discourse is a rich area to mine to augment previous interpretations of politics in Zimbabwe and African contexts in general. Unlike mainstream social science and its reliance on a universal template of key concepts and conventional approaches, a focus on discourse better allows for the exploration of local contexts and the immediate circulation of symbolic meaning among elites and ordinary citizens. In the Zimbabwean situation, CDA contains the crucial analytical tools that help better understand the relative political stability over long periods under Mugabe’s and Zanu-PF rule. By taking political discourse seriously, the insights of CDA deployed in this article shed new light on the immense influence of nationalist, and anti-colonial discourse in post-settler-colonial societies.

Third Chimurenga—Moral and Social Justice Imperatives

There have so far been three main Chimurengas in the modern history of Zimbabwe. The first was the 1896–1897 uprising against British colonial invasion of the Zimbabwe plateau, also

popularly known as the Ndebele/Shona uprising. The defeat of the indigenous people by the British during the First Chimurenga marked the beginning of formal colonial occupation of what later came to be known as Southern Rhodesia. The catastrophic consequence of the colonisation of the Zimbabwe plateau was the imposition of legislated racism, discrimination, apartheid and forced removal of black Africans from their ancestral lands to pave way for white colonial settlers. Two major apartheid-type pieces of legislation that legalised segregated patterns of access to land were the Land Apportionment Act (1930) and the Native Land Husbandry Act (1951). Both restricted the rights of Africans to land ownership by banishing them into what came to be known as Reserves (Needham et al. 1984). These were the driest, poorest, most inhospitable and disease-infested parts of the country with unreliable rainfall to which black Africans were forcibly relocated to pave way for the growing white settler population. Segregation was at the time—as is the case in most present day societies—never accidental but an overflow of direct and deliberate state political processes and policies. This was, therefore, the genesis of the land question which has always been and remains at the core of Zimbabwe's economic, social and political policy debates and contestations. It then follows that the 1896–1897 revolt was fundamentally a struggle for the recovery of lost land and dignity by the indigenous people of the Zimbabwe plateau. The story of the colonisation of Zimbabwe (and that of Africa in general) is well documented in the relevant body of historical literature and, therefore, now too well known to rehearse (see for example Ranger 1985, 1989; Davidson 1991; Rodney 1972; and Needham et al. 1984). For this reason, I will not belabour the reader with the history of colonisation except by way of passing remarks as and when necessary in relevant parts of this article.

The centrality of the land question in the history of modern Zimbabwe was summed up by Herbert Chitepo, then Chairman of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in his speech given on a trip to Australia in 1973.

I could go into the whole theories of discrimination in legislation, in residency, in economic opportunities, in education. I could go into that, but I will restrict myself to the question of land because I think this is very basic. To us [black people] the essence of exploitation, the essence of white domination, is domination over the land. That is the real issue (Herbert Chitepo, 1973, cited in Johnson 2017).

Arguments for equitable land redistribution continued to dominate political discourse after the attainment of self-rule in 1980. Addressing members of the predominantly white Commercial Farmers Union in Matabeleland in July 1989, the late Vice President Joshua Nkomo pleaded:

I don't think we are being unreasonable if we say you [white] commercial farmers, who own the best and the bulk of Zimbabwe's land because of history, should share part of it with the indigenous, displaced and landless blacks who are the majority (*The Financial Gazette* 1989).

Joshua Nkomo was reported as having gone further and said the situation inherited at independence in 1980 was 'morally unacceptable, economically unjustifiable and politically untenable' (*The Financial Gazette* 1989).

The Second Chimurenga, in which Herbert Chitepo and Joshua Nkomo cited above were among the key players, started in the late 1950s and took the form of mass nationalist movements. It culminated in an armed nationalist liberation struggle from the mid-1960s until 1979 when peace negotiations for a political settlement ushered independence and majority rule on 18 April 1980. Robert Mugabe was a late comer into the nationalist liberation struggle.

He took over the leadership of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) party in 1975, which he led to victory in the first democratic elections in 1980 (Ndhlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Moore 2015; and Chung 2006). Robert Mugabe became the first black prime minister of independent Zimbabwe. In 1987, Zimbabwe's parliament rewrote the country's independence constitution allowing Mugabe to become president shortly thereafter. The all-powerful position gave him the authority to dissolve parliament, institute martial law and run for as many terms as he desired (Simmons 2017). He was to remain president of Zimbabwe for nearly four decades until the military forced him to resign in November 2017.

At the heart of both the First and Second Chimurenga were two contentious issues: the land question and the quest for civil liberties, that is the treatment of black people as equal human beings who deserved fair, equal and unfettered access to their ancestral land. Although both the First and Second Chimurenga fall outside the scope of this article, they were undoubtedly a precursor to the Third Chimurenga, which is at the core of the discussion. As already indicated in the introduction, the Third Chimurenga started around the year 2000 in pursuit of unfinished business of the two preceding Chimurengas. At the heart of the Third Chimurenga were issues around land acquisition, land redistribution and economic empowerment of indigenous Zimbabweans who were victims of colonial injustices.

The moral and social justice imperatives of the Third Chimurenga are very clear and not subject to a lot of contestation. These relate to redressing the colonial legacy of social and economic policies that were skewed against the black people. The point over which opinion is vast and varied is one around the manner in which the programme was carried out. Though the Land Acquisition Act (1992) as amended in 2004 presents a semblance of positive intentions, it has numerable flaws. A critical policy analysis focusing on some key terms in the policy, coupled with speeches by Robert Mugabe and other national political leaders would suggest that Zimbabwe's land reform policy hides a lot more than it reveals.

Land Reform: Policy Ideals and Political Rhetoric

The Land Acquisition Act of 1992 (as amended in 2004) ushered in the fiercest land reform debate in the history of Zimbabwe and that of the southern African region as a whole. The land reform policy was intended to remedy the skewed land partition that was inherited from nearly a century of British colonial rule. Under British colonial rule, a mere 5000 white commercial farmers took possession of more than half the country's prime (productive) land, thus leaving several millions of black Zimbabweans impoverished and overcrowded on less fertile land (Palmer 1990). According to the World Bank (1991), land redistribution in post-colonial Zimbabwe was, therefore, critical and justified for poverty alleviation, and essential for political sustainability, and, indeed, imperative for increasing economic efficiency. This view aligns with and validates arguments consistently advanced by the Zimbabwean political leadership from the dawn of political independence to the present. Robert Mugabe's views and political rhetoric on the land question that date to the 1970s appear in his 2001 book titled *Inside the Third Chimurenga: Our Land is Our Prosperity*. Ostensibly put together 'for the purposes of propagandising the Youth of Zimbabwe' (Lamprecht 2008: i), this book is largely a collection of close to twenty speeches by Robert Mugabe that are organised into three themes: Our fight for land, Championing the Third Chimurenga and Remembering our fallen heroes. These are further sub-divided into twenty-three relatively short chapters. The majority of speeches were delivered at Independence Day celebrations, Heroes Days commemorations,

and ZANU PF Politiburo and Central Committee meetings. Other examples include speeches delivered at international fora such as the 62nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York (September 26, 2007); the 60th Anniversary of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome (October 17, 2005); the United Nations Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark (December 16, 2009); and the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva, Switzerland (December 10, 2003). A consistent theme that runs across all of Robert Mugabe's speeches is one that reflects populist anti-colonial discourses that resonate with post-colonial African concerns around the enduring legacy of colonially inherited social, economic and political inequalities. In this section, I provide a sample of the speeches, which I then analyse using the lenses of CDA to support the argument that a discourse approach opens a window into understanding the other side of Robert Mugabe's historiography that has so far received little attention in previous research reports.

In a speech at the Imbisa Plenary Assembly in Harare on 30 July 2001, then President Robert Mugabe gave a historical account of the land question in Zimbabwe, locating it squarely within the continuum of the Chimurengas, past and present.

The main basis of our fight with settlers, a fight which began at the very onset of colonialism, had been the national question of land. It informed Zimbabwe's entire politics, generated solid support base for the armed struggle with all its attendant hazards, and spurred our fighters, right up to the bitter end. Land, Land was the cry [...]. Apart from being the basis of our liberation struggle, its loss was the basis of African poverty and indigence in this country. To this day, alienation remains causally linked to the poverty and backwardness of our people. Equally, to this day, its allocation is largely as shaped by the same forces and decrees. The goal and struggle for self-determination and sovereignty included, in fact, rested and depended on our sovereign right, access, control and use of those natural resources which God in his infinite generosity gave us – the land, all creatures great and small that crawl on it, the plants, the rivers, and streams of water, clear and dirty, the soils, the pebbles, rocks, hills and mountains. All that God gave us all who belong to this land to use (Mugabe 2001: 36-37).

In his previous remarks at yet another occasion, the 'Africa at 40?' Conference in London on 28 October 1997, President Robert Mugabe tied Zimbabwe's land reform programme to the broader pan-African agenda for total political and economic liberation.

The roots of genuine democracy in Africa derive from our anti-colonial peoples' struggles whose goals incorporated civil liberties, national unity and the economic empowerment of all our people in place of bondage, ethnic fragmentation and chattel status. The task of our people and governments today is to transform this inherited economic structure so that the people can fully benefit from the exploitation of their labour and resources (Mugabe 2001: 19).

During the first post-independence decade of 1980–1990, the then prevailing willing seller, willing buyer principle had led to a conservative market-led reform policy (Moyo 2003). The 1985 Land Acquisition Act, though drawn in the spirit of the 1979 Lancaster House 'willing seller, willing buyer'¹ clause (which could not be changed for ten years), gave the government

¹ The "willing seller willing buyer" was part of the deal reached at the 1979 Lancaster House Conference, which resulted in a new constitution that led to the independence of Zimbabwe after nearly two decades of armed struggle between the nationalist movements and the Rhodesia Front forces of Ian Douglas Smith.

the first right to purchase excess land for redistribution to the landless. However, the Act had limited impact, largely because the government did not have the money to compensate landowners. Besides, most white commercial farmers mounted a vigorous opposition to the act. Not many of them were willing to sell off to the government some of the land they owned. Because of the “willing seller, willing buyer” clause, the government was powerless in the face of the farmers’ resistance. As a result, between 1980 and 1990, the government acquired only 40% of the targeted 8 million hectares (19.77 million acres) of land and 71,000 families out of a target of 162,000 were resettled. Much of the land acquired during this phase was of poor quality (Moyo 1995, 2001, 2003).

Here is what Robert Mugabe said in 2001 regarding the limitations of the land clauses in the Lancaster House agreement:

The Lancaster House Conference of 1979 gave us political sovereignty with many conditions and entrenchments, which we were determined to overcome later in the political battlefield. The Lancaster House Conference failed to solve the principal grievance of land, which had caused the war of liberation in the first place [...]. The colonial power has reneged on its promise [to provide funds to support the acquisition of land]. Instead it is siding with its children here to perpetuate conditions of internal white colonisation in this country. What was Government to do in order to fulfil the just mission? (Mugabe 2001: 37)

This statement by Mr. Mugabe illustrates the particular point about how the current and still ongoing land question in Zimbabwe—and everything that has gone wrong about it—rests at the feet of both the government of Zimbabwe and former colonial power, Britain. The relevant part of the Lancaster House Agreement (Section 16) cited by Robert Mugabe reads, in part:

Every person will be protected from having his property compulsorily acquired except when the acquisition is in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality, public health, town and country planning, the development or utilisation of that or other property in such a manner as to promote the public benefit or, in the case of under- utilised land, settlement of land for agricultural purposes. When property is wanted for one of these purposes, its acquisition will be lawful only on condition that the law provides for the prompt payment of adequate compensation and, where the acquisition is contested, that a court order is obtained (*Republic of Zimbabwe* 2005).

It was with respect to this clause that, in October 1979, Lord Carrington, representing the British Government at the Lancaster House negotiations, had made the following undertaking:

We recognise that the future government of Zimbabwe, whatever its political complexion, will wish to extend land ownership. The British government recognises the importance of this issue to a future Zimbabwe government and will be prepared, within the limits imposed by our financial resources, to help. We should for instance be ready to provide technical assistance for settlement schemes and capital aid for agriculture development projects and infrastructure. If an agricultural development bank or some equivalent institution were set up to promote agricultural development including land settlement schemes, we would be prepared to contribute to the initial capital (cited in O’Donogue 2009: 18).

The Lancaster House Conference, which gave birth to Zimbabwe’s Constitution, is the crucible of the perennial land issue that is still raging nearly four decades after the attainment

of political independence. What we also see in Mr. Mugabe's speeches are clear and present signs of a frustrated man, a man who feels he has a mandate to deliver socio-economic and political justice for the black people of Zimbabwe, but the constitutional clauses cited above are an impediment. The land clauses of the Lancaster House Constitution protected white interests at the expense of the generality of the black population. It seems the British did not honour their side of the bargain. Here is what Claire Short, then UK Secretary of State for International Development under the newly elected Labour Government of Mr. Tony Blair, said in a letter to the Zimbabwe Government in November 1997:

I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish and as you know we were colonised not colonisers (*The Guardian* 2003).

These sentiments expressed by the UK Labour Government provided a scapegoat the anarchy that was to follow in Zimbabwe. The refusal by the new British government to fulfil the promise made by their predecessor (Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government) to provide funds for the acquisition of land under the 'willing seller, willing buyer' principle as agreed at Lancaster House was not well received by the government of Zimbabwe. In an opinion piece titled *Lancaster House Accords: What Britain owes Zimbabwe*, constitutional lawyer, Ken Sibanda argues that "the agreement of a government, in this case a treaty/accord takes priority ahead of change of party policy. A winning political party cannot wish away treaty obligations and responsibilities made in the name of the Crown" (Sibanda 2015). Sibanda goes further and raises a pertinent question on the implications of what comes across as dishonesty on the part of the British: Is the black government supposed to address colonial damages all on its own; does Britain get to walk away from its moral obligation in the name of bad governance? He concludes by pointing out that good governance has nothing to do with the Lancaster Accords of 1979. The truth of the matter is agreeing parties must respect the conditions, history and ethics of their agreement.

In particular, the adoption in 1990 of a document declaring National Land Policy had generated intense controversy. In accordance with the principles set out in that document, the government sought to facilitate the acquisition of land for resettlement purposes, first by amending section 16 of the Lancaster House Constitution and subsequently by enacting the Land Acquisition Act. In formulating its policy, the government of Zimbabwe recognized the need to both redress inequalities in land distribution and to take into account current national and international socio-economic realities (Ndhlovu 2018). This was a noble course of action guided by equally sensible intentions. To this effect, the land acquisition policy was built around rosy, high sounding and progressive concepts such as rule of law, redress, social justice, equity, the respect for property rights, market-led reform, empowerment, and principles of willing seller, willing buyer, and fair compensation for improvements on the land, and so on. This is what Robert Mugabe said in his 2001 book titled *Inside the Third Chimurenga*:

Indeed, the land reform programme is a comprehensive policy intervention which targets those who bore children for the liberation struggle and therefore for the **emancipation** of our Nation, namely peasants [...]. Our policies on land reforms are very clear. Land comes from the **white dominated commercial sector** where a **disproportionate amount of prime land** continues to be held for **speculative purposes**. The end result should be a **one-farmer one-farm** outcome in a **de-racialised** commercial agricultural sector (Mugabe 2001: 94-95) – [*emphasis mine*]

All the keywords that I have highlighted in bold point towards good and constructive intentions, at least as far as the policy framework goes. They amount to good political speak meant to inspire confidence in the agenda of the Third Chimurenga. But a political discourse analysis of leader statements from Zimbabwe and Britain reveals a strategic use of language that allowed them to do things that contradict policies and treaties. This is political discourse. Its characteristic features include “speaking audibly, directing oneself to an audience, and respecting a topical (semantic) organization that is compatible with the issue on the (political) agenda at hand” (van Dijk 1998: 23). Other aspects of political discourse include using specific structures of language in strategic ways to enhance the legitimation of political opinions. These features of text and talk are necessarily part of political discourse. In order to unpack and understand them and their effect on political communication, we have to perform critical political discourse analysis (CPDA) (van Dijk 1998). CPDA deals especially with the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance. In particular, such an analysis deals with the discursive conditions and consequences of social and political inequality that result from such domination (van Dijk 1998; Fairclough 1995). Therefore, in addition to the social, economic and political arguments around land reform in Zimbabwe, another significant angle that is relevant to the debate is the linguistic one. It is particularly important to look at those things that are hidden in the language of various policy documents and political leader statements. These include (i) the Lancaster House negotiations; (ii) arguments advanced by the British labour government in denying responsibility to bear the costs of land purchase; (iii) political statements made by Robert Mugabe and other members of his government; and (iv) policies and relevant political pronouncements that justified chaotic farm invasions from year 2000 onwards.

The application of CPDA to the political speeches of Robert Mugabe and Claire Short cited above would lead us to the following conclusions. First, Claire Short’s letter to the Government of Zimbabwe in which she denies British responsibility for the costs of land acquisition betrays the existence of escape clauses in the Lancaster House Agreement. The land clause in section 16A of the constitution drafted at Lancaster House specified that land was to be redistributed on ‘willing buyer, willing seller’ basis for the first 10 years, awaiting policy review. There is a glaring loophole in the wording of this provision, which both Claire Short and some members of the Zimbabwean white commercial farming community took advantage of. The notion of ‘willing seller, willing buyer’ constitutes an escape clause—a term or condition in a contract that allows a party to that contract to avoid having to perform the contract. What this clause means in practice is that, for land to be redistributed, there has to be both a willing seller (white commercial farmers) and a willing buyer (Government of Zimbabwe 2008). The significant point here is one about ‘willingness’ by both parties to enter into an agreement. Arguably, as we now know, the Government of Zimbabwe was willing to buy the land but, in the absence of compulsion, the white commercial farmers were not willing to sell the land they owned. Another equally important part of this is one about the source of funds to pay for the land. Records of the proceedings and subsequent agreements entered at the Lancaster House negotiations indicate that the former colonial power (British Government) had an obligation to pay compensation for agricultural land acquired for resettlement, through an adequate fund established for the purpose (O’Donogue 2009). However, as was the case with the ‘willing buyer, willing seller’ clause, it appears the language of the compensation clause was not binding enough, thus giving successive British governments a perfect excuse for renegeing on this promise.

This is political discourse par excellence at play. Here we see a situation whereby ‘preferred structures and strategies that are functional in the adequate accomplishment of political actions in political contexts’ (van Dijk 1998: 25) being embedded in treaties and agreements in ways that are non-binding. The overall goal is to provide the responsible party (in this case successive British Governments) the leeway to void the agreement. This is precisely what Claire Short did. She took advantage of the escape clauses in the Lancaster House Agreement and even went further to give the clause yet another spin in claiming that she and the majority members of Tony Blair’s Labour Government ‘were colonised and not colonisers’. This later attempt at appropriating colonial victimhood is a discursive strategy aimed at diluting and denigrating the validity of compensation claims from the Government of Zimbabwe. It is all wrapped in the real politik of political talk and text; it is not so much the social and political economy that is directly at play here. Rather, it is the ‘symbolic economy of language and discourse that controls the minds of political actors and hence their actions’ (van Dijk 1998: 44). So, the long and short of it is that the battle for an amicable resolution to Zimbabwe’s longstanding national land question was lost and won at the linguistic and discursive terrain of the Lancaster House Conference of 1979.

Now, in the case of Robert Mugabe’s speeches quoted above, we see the deployment of linguistic and discourse structures of persuasion; lexical items and other ways of talk that seek to emphasize or de-emphasize political attitudes and opinions, garner support, manipulate public opinion or legitimate political power (van Dijk 1998). Some such levels and dimensions of discourse that exemplify these themes and motifs in Mr. Mugabe’s speeches include the consistent use of pronouns of legitimation ‘we’ and ‘our’; putting emphasis on the binary opposition between ‘white settlers’ and ‘black Zimbabweans’; constant reference to the ‘liberation struggle’, ‘sacrifices’, ‘misfortunes of black people’, ‘unrighteous decrees of colonialists’, ‘long outstanding injustices’, ‘historical injustices’, ‘bitterness and hurt’, ‘political sovereignty’, ‘economic empowerment’, and many more. The overall goal of such strategic use of passionate and emotionally charged linguistic and discursive tropes is to pique the emotions of a restive section of the black Zimbabwean population that had been waiting for resolution of the land question for two decades since the end of white minority rule. This is essentially about agenda setting whereby the tone of the political speech becomes the tone of his audience. In particular, the constant and repetitive use of collectivising pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’—also known as pronouns of political legitimation—is informative. Robert Mugabe’s intention here is to rally the troops behind the agenda that he has set by tapping into this very old, tried, tested and, therefore, well-established strategy of political persuasion. He carefully uses the language of legitimation as a way to create an impression of collective responsibility and collective decision-making, which enables him to garner the support of a desperate but increasingly skeptical following.

Furthermore, Robert Mugabe strategically spiritualises the land question by quoting Biblical verses and by tapping into African spirituality and tradition. For example, in his Imbisa Plenary Assembly speech cited earlier in this article, he refers to the Shona spiritual leaders of the Second Chimurenga, Nehanda and Kaguvu, as a way to bring a religious dimension to the land question. He does the same thing in most of his other speeches where he constantly talks about ‘our God given resources’ dismantling ‘decrees of misfortune’ and ‘unrighteous decrees’ that saw black people live as slaves on the land that ‘God gave them in his infinite generosity’. Zimbabweans are among the most religious and spiritual people in the world, and Robert Mugabe and fellow politicians know that. Conservative estimates indicate that 85–87% of the Zimbabwean population self-report to be followers of the Christian faith (Nations

Encyclopedia 2018; CIA World Fact Book 2018). Some followers of the Christian faith also dabble in African traditional religion. One of the underpinning pillars/teachings of these religious belief systems is reverence to authority, especially if those in authority invoke spirituality to support their actions. Again, Robert Mugabe and the majority of his political acolytes are aware of this fact, which they then leverage as a form of soft power in pursuit of their political agendas. The political invocation of spirituality is a metaphor for the myths of transnational worlds: the perceived existence of a continuum between the world of the living and worlds of supernatural or spiritual forces (God and the living-dead) (Ndhlovu 2018). But the question is do such worlds really exist and if they do, are they really in communion with the world of the living to a point where they can be invoked to justify political actions in the way that Robert Mugabe does? Some would argue that such worlds do indeed exist but only in the hearts and minds of those who believe, and not as objective reality. Nevertheless, the pervasive effects of the perceived existence of spiritual transnational worlds are felt by all who inhabit the world of the living—insofar as they are appropriated in processes of political legitimisation.

People who do not know a lot about Zimbabwe may wonder why and how Robert Mugabe managed to cling onto power and unleash his authoritarian rule for nearly four decades uninterrupted. There are of course several explanations for this. His ability to leverage the soft power of the Christian faith and African traditional religion/value systems is one of them. Power is often generally conceived as being hard, brutal and coercive or forceful. However, from the time Antonio Gramsci (1971) proffered his groundbreaking work on hegemony theory, the relevant body of social science literature is now replete with accounts of different manifestations of power and the exercise of power that do not necessarily entail the use of brutal force in the traditional sense of the word. Power can be visible, invisible, soft and hidden (see for example accounts by Gaventa 2006; VeneKlasen and Miller 2002; Scott 1990; and Gaventa 1980).

The spiritualisation of the land question in Zimbabwe is part of visible and invisible forms of power. It has seen the seemingly legalistic and sober language espoused in policy enunciations being dispensed in a very subtle and cunning way. The rhetoric about Zimbabwe's land reform programme being aimed at redress, equity and social justice—'one-man one-farm' and so on—is thrown out the window as the dictates of political expediency reign supreme over policy imperatives. Contrary to the rights-based land reform policy enunciations that appear to be premised on the rule of law, the execution of the Third Chimurenga was characterised by what came to be known as 'jambanja'² (Muzondidya 2007). It took the form of spontaneous, haphazard and chaotic commercial farm invasions, anarchy, and vigilantism. But Robert Mugabe chose to call this 'demonstrations' and 'commercial farm occupations'. As indicated above, politics was at the forefront of everything else, with veterans of the liberation war (Second Chimurenga) and other ZANU PF political functionaries taking on the proverbial roles of 'judge, jury and executioner' at the same time. It was under these chaotic circumstances that the notions of Zimbabwean citizenship, belonging and nationality ceased being civic matters and instead became indexically tied to the cardinal rule of 'political correctness' (Ndhlovu 2011). Some Zimbabwean citizens by birth, descent or naturalisation who were suspected of holding political views that were perceived to be anti-ZANU PF—regardless of

² 'Jambanja' is a Zimbabwean slang for violence or chaos that was popularised after year 2000. Politicians, government officials and members of the general public used the word to describe the violent and chaotic farm invasions under the auspices of the Third Chimurenga.

race and ethnic background—were arbitrarily stripped of their citizenship and the right to vote in national elections. Numerous research reports by notable academics and non-governmental organisations highlighted the partisan nature of the land reform process whereby only the politically connected and, especially those deemed to be loyal and patriotic members of the ruling ZANU PF party, were rewarded with farmland under the Third Chimurenga (Muzondidya 2007; Makumbe 2010; Masiwa 2004; and Meredith 2007). More on this follows in the next section.

Citizenship Parameters Re-drawn

What we see in the execution of the Third Chimurenga is a re-drawing and redefinition of boundaries of citizenship and belonging as well as the re-calibration of prime markers of indigeneity. The conventional understanding of an indigenous Zimbabwean was systematically narrowed and constricted to only refer to politically correct individuals who were then entitled to receiving farmland. Known or suspected members of opposition political parties—black and white alike—were stripped of their right to equal citizenship as they were denied access to the land that was being distributed to loyal and patriotic members of ZANU PF and their sympathisers. This clearly marked the emergence of hierarchies of citizenship within the Zimbabwean body politic—the very same hierarchies that all the Chimurengas sought to reverse. We have a situation whereby members of the governing ZANU PF political party and their sympathisers are effectively the *de facto* first-class citizens of Zimbabwe. Everyone else occupies the lower rungs as second- or third-class citizens. This mimics the colonial situation in which societies were bifurcated along racial lines where white people enjoyed the privileged position of first-class citizens with blacks/indigenous Africans relegated to the inferior subject position. Ugandan social scientist Mahmood Mamdani eloquently captures colonial hierarchies of citizenship in his 1996 book aptly titled *Citizen and Subject*. Mamdani's account of citizenship hierarchies in African colonial societies compares quite favourably with what we see in twenty-first century post-colonial Zimbabwe. The only difference is that parameters of citizenship hierarchies have changed; they are now socially and politically defined unlike colonial ones that were largely based on race and skin colour.

A category of Zimbabweans who bore the most brunt of this insidious onslaught on citizenship is that of descendants of people originally from Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique who came to then Southern Rhodesia as migrant labourers in the early to mid-1900s. Most are second-, third- or even fourth-generation descendants and do not know any home other than Zimbabwe. However, at the height of the Third Chimurenga, some were stripped of their Zimbabwean citizenship—by decree. For example, at an election campaign rally in 2002, president Robert Mugabe singled out residents of the suburb of Mbare (Harare) where most of these people live and labelled them 'undisciplined, totemless elements of alien origin' (*Daily News*, 14 October 2002) as they were perceived to be supporters of the main opposition political party, Movement for Democratic Change (Ndhlovu 2015; Campbell 2003). Effectively, what Robert Mugabe meant was that these people are not full or equal citizens of Zimbabwe by virtue of their myths of origin. This is in spite of the fact that they were born in Zimbabwe and that officially they are citizens of this country by birth and by descent. Furthermore, because the majority of these Zimbabweans predominantly worked in mining towns and commercial farms, they became the main victims of the chaotic farm invasions as they lost their jobs and subsequently became homeless. Unlike other black Zimbabweans,

most descendants of African migrants never had a rural home in Zimbabwe. Therefore, they stayed at the mine and farm compounds and city townships, which were their permanent homes, even during the festive holidays, such as Christmas: that time of the year when other black Zimbabweans generally travel to their rural homes to catch up with family and friends.

A third tier in the post-colonial citizenship hierarchy is that of white Zimbabweans, mostly descendants of commercial farmers. Again, the majority of people in this category are second-, third- or even fourth-generation white immigrants who hold valid and legitimate Zimbabwean citizenship in terms of the country's constitution. However, owing to the racialised, nativist and exclusionary approaches of the Third Chimurenga, white Zimbabwean citizens were treated as aliens in an overtly discriminatory and racist way that mimics colonial categories of 'citizens' and 'subjects' (Mamdani 1996). For example, the Sunday Mail newspaper carried a news item where then Lands Minister, Douglas Mombeshora explained the government's new land tenure system that would grant long-term (99-year) leases to resettled black farmers and short-term (5-year) leases to the remaining white commercial farmers.

We are looking at ensuring that [black] farmers get 99-year leases at the time they go onto the land or are approved to occupy a piece of land [...] There are white farmers who have been approved by our provincial officers to continue farming after satisfying a number of requirements. We will be giving such farmers five-year leases³ that are subject to renewal upon meeting certain conditions at the expiry of the documents. This will enable us to collect land taxes from these farmers. We do not want a situation where we repossess land from a white farmer and then wake up to see that farmer back again under the guise of a partnership (Douglas Mombeshora, quoted in The Sunday Mail 2017).

The minister was also reported having reiterated President Robert Mugabe's position that black Zimbabweans "who are unable to utilise the land should surrender it back to the state than enter into partnerships or lease it to white farmers" (The Sunday Mail 2017). This clearly betrays the racist nature of the Zimbabwean land reform programme, which lies hidden beneath the political rhetoric on 'redress', 'black economic empowerment' and 'anti-colonialism'. These political and policy statements on land tenure have to be called out for what exactly they are—an anti-white Zimbabwean, racist and discriminatory position that goes against the spirit and letter of fair and equal treatment of all citizens as enshrined in the national constitution. Other than the race-based discrimination and politicisation of land tenure, what else would be the motivation for granting white Zimbabwean farmers 5-year leases when their black counterparts are getting 99-year leases? This policy position exposes the deceptive nature of Mr. Mugabe's pronouncements on equity and fairness in dealing with the land question. This view on the political reformulation of Zimbabwean citizenship and access to land, which is based on race and party loyalty was echoed by one commentator:

Zanu PF political logic clouds judgement and so through pronouncements such as the minister's, we have shifted from nationalism (President Mugabe's early 80's let's turn our swords into plough shares speech) to nativism based on race and party loyalty (Mike Mavura, quoted in All Africa Online Newspaper, 30 October 2017).

³ This position has since been reversed by the new administration of Emmerson Mnangagwa. All commercial farmers—black and white alike—will now be given 99-year leases. However, while this is very good talk, it still remains to be seen whether the policy shift will actually be fully implemented.

Again, what we see here is a consistent subjective redefinition of Zimbabwean citizenship, belonging and entitlement in ways that are anachronistic to the civic conception of Zimbabwean national identity. Given that the descendants of black African migrants were born and lived at commercial farms their entire lives, the ideal situation would have been to offer them the opportunity to own portions of those farms that had been repossessed from their former employers (the latter should not have been dispossessed of all their land in the first place since they are bona fide citizens of Zimbabwe). This would have been the most logical thing not only because the people in question were Zimbabwean citizens but also because they stood a better chance of putting the land to good use since they had been practicing (and learning) from the white commercial farmers their entire lives. This obviously was not the preferred route for the government of Zimbabwe since, as I indicate below, the entire land reform programme and the resettlement exercise was driven more by parochial political interests than imperatives of economic productivity, sustainable social development, equity, fairness and social justice.

All noble ideals of equity and legalism written into the land reform policy proved to be hollow constructs that were trashed by imperatives of political expediency. The ZANU PF government and its functionaries adopted an approach that saw sanity being systematically overtaken by chaos and impunity. Nothing could have been more vernacular than this—to have the civic notion of citizenship enshrined in the country's national constitution thrown out of the window, and its place taken by narrowly defined, racist and political party constructs of 'patriotism' and 'loyalty'. What we have seen from Robert Mugabe's speeches and those of his ministers is the appropriation of the genuine and legitimate land question in pursuit of vindictive reverse racism. A political discourse analysis of the linguistic and discursive strategies used suggests Robert Mugabe is concerned more about getting back at his erstwhile former enemies and holding onto political power that was slowly slipping away. This was, indeed, less about establishing rapprochement with fellow Zimbabweans from the white commercial farming community.

In addition to all of the above, Robert Mugabe had frequent forays into the art of deception. He persistently harked into the mantra "we died for our land; we died and suffered for sovereignty over natural resources" and so on. True, Robert Mugabe may have spent some 11 years in detention under Ian Smith's colonial rule but he did not die. The use of pronouns of legitimation as strategy of political communication is noteworthy. His use of 'we' and 'our' is essentially aimed at piquing the emotions of the majority of poor black Zimbabweans who suffered during the colonial period and are still suffering today due to his nearly four decades of misrule. Arguably, the claim that he also 'died' is somewhat a hypocritical contradiction of sorts. Robert Mugabe is actually refusing to die, both physically and metaphorically. At the time of writing this article, he was only six years shy of becoming a centenarian while the average life expectancy of ordinary Zimbabweans is just under 40 years, having dropped down from around 61 years at the time he came into power in 1980 (Thornycroft 2006). The Zimbabwean average life expectancy is nearly two and half times less than his, which is a testimony to his catastrophic policies that crippled health, social services and food security in a country that was once the breadbasket of the entire southern African region.

Metaphorically, Robert Mugabe is refusing to die in the sense that his legacy of misrule and destruction of the Zimbabwean economy, including the commercial agriculture sector that used to be the backbone of the country, seems to continue unabated. All these negative consequences of what others have termed 'Mugabeism' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009, 2015) are embellished in his political discourse that is built around a combination of the language of legitimation, the language of victimhood and associated meta-languages that spiritualise his actions as a way to insulate the chaotic land reform exercise from scrutiny. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) says

Mugabeism is a contested phenomenon that is characterised by at least four motifs. The first is that ‘Mugabeism’ is a summation of a constellation of political controversies, political behaviour, political ideas, utterances, rhetoric and actions that have crystallised around Mugabe’s political life. The second, which is proffered by nationalist aligned scholars, views Mugabeism as a pan-African redemptive ideology opposed to all forms of imperialism and colonialism and dedicated to a radical redistributive project predicated on redress of colonial injustices. The third motif proceeds from a neoliberal-inspired perspective that sees Mugabeism as a form of racial chauvinism and authoritarianism marked by antipathy towards norms of liberal governance and disdain for human rights and democracy. The fourth motif presents Mugabeism as a populist phenomenon propelled through articulatory practices and empty signifiers. In summary, Mugabeism ‘can be read at many levels: as a form of left-nationalism; as Afro-radicalism and nativism; as patriarchal neo-traditional cultural nationalism and as an antithesis of democracy and human rights’ (Ndhlovu-Gatsheni 2009: 113). In the context of Zimbabwe’s Third Chimurenga, Mugabeism created a toxic political culture of impunity, looting, scapegoating and denial of equal citizenship for people who hail from diverse ethnic, racial, linguistic, cultural and political backgrounds—though all of them call Zimbabwe home. Appeals to spirituality and invocations of memories about people who genuinely sacrificed their lives during the war of liberation are one discursive trope that Robert Mugabe uses to avoid being held to account for his actions that have torn apart the dictates of civic citizenship and equality for all. These should be the linchpin of post-colonial Zimbabwean national identity.

Robert Mugabe said the land reform process was motivated by the desire to get a ‘one-man one-farm’ outcome in a ‘de-racialised commercial agriculture sector’. However, the reality on the ground contradicts this political rhetoric. The status quo of the skewed land ownership pattern has been maintained—if not worsened—following the partisan manner of land redistribution. The only thing that has changed is the colour and political affiliations of multiple farm owners. It is on public record that the majority of politicians in Robert Mugabe’s government as well as bureaucrats, senior civil servants and other ZANU PF functionaries own multiple pieces of land, thanks to the largesse of Mr. Mugabe. The commercial farming sector has not been de-racialised by any stretch of imagination. If anything, it has been heavily politicised, further racialised and then destroyed.

As we have come to know with the passage of time since the early 2000s when the Fast Track Land Reform programme started, instead of the economic success and prosperity that were promised in policy pronouncements and political leader statements, the majority of the resettled people were fast tracked into poverty, desperation and vulnerability. They have been unable to make a living out of the land due to a combination of factors: lack of knowledge of farming, lack of inputs and capital, and general poor attitude towards farming. Like any other profession, farming is not something that anyone without training can do with any degree of success. Consequently, most newly resettled farmers could not even produce enough to feed themselves, let alone the nation as a whole. In his autobiography, Cephas G. Msipa, the late Governor of the Midlands Province and Minister in President Robert Mugabe’s cabinet, gave a scathing but candid critique of the land reform programme. Here is some of what he said in relation to the failure of newly resettled farmers to make good use of the land:

Most of those silos [that used to be stocked with grain from commercial farms] are empty now and run down. We concentrated on distributing land without giving much thought to the effects on production. The government is more concerned with political interests than economic ones (Msipa 2015: 140).

This is a revealing assessment by a man who was at the forefront of both the Second Chimurenga and Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe. The lack of productivity on farms saw most ordinary Zimbabweans being exposed to further political manipulation as they relied on partisan food handouts distributed by the government. Resettlement areas were turned into hotbeds for ruling party political indoctrination programmes, maleficence of all manner and kind, violence, impunity and wanton violation of human rights (Campbell 2003). Newly resettled areas thus joined the long list of rural districts and villages that have traditionally become no-go areas for opposition political parties during election campaigns. As a way to convince the people of Zimbabwe and the international community about why the Third Chimurenga was necessary, ZANU PF's propaganda machinery popularized the use of selected words and phrases that appealed to the sentiments of ordinary men and women. The endless list of such terminology included the following: 'patriotism', 'sovereignty', 'self-determination', 'nationalism', 'territorial integrity', 'national interest', 'mature democracy', 'the will of the people', 'heroic sons and daughters of Zimbabwe'. The net effect of all this jargon seeded in Robert Mugabe's speeches was to legitimize the violation of the rights and freedoms of those sections of the Zimbabwean society perceived to be against the status quo. An impression was created through the process of discourse control that, in Zimbabwe, there is a unique notion of village-based human rights and democracy that is underpinned by an in-built tendency towards consensus. This, unfortunately, turned out to be mere propaganda executed through the political control of discourse. As Gero (2000:32) points out, human rights and democracy are not culturally relative. Authoritarianism—be it European, African or otherwise—is underpinned by one common denominator: the subjugation of the individual into a theocratic, or natural order of things.

Conclusion

Reading Robert Mugabe through the lens of the Third Chimurenga opens a window of opportunity for us to see how political rhetoric can easily subvert and undercut good social and economic policy intentions. As other commentators have concluded (Scoones et al. 2011; Moyo 2014; and Masiwa 2004), the much-vaunted Third Chimurenga turned out to be yet another politically motivated programme bereft of strategic thinking about sustainable economic and social transformation. The analysis of Robert Mugabe's linguistic and meta-discursive practices vindicates the view that Zimbabwe's chaotic land reform programme is shorthand for institutionalised economic, political and social marginalisation of those groups and individuals deemed to be politically incorrect and 'unpatriotic'. And, worse still, the major downside of it all is that there were very few winners: the whole exercise was a catastrophic disaster for the majority of people who were allocated blocks of land with very limited material and financial resources, let alone technical skills needed to make productive use of the land. What all this shows is that Zimbabwe's land reform exercise is a classic example of how not to pursue redress for past social, economic and political inequities. A major unintended consequence of the Zimbabwe approach to settling the land question was that the very same people who were marginalised and excluded during the colonial period are mostly worse off than they were before. This is probably the most important thing that we learn from reading the life of Robert Mugabe through the political rhetoric and discursive tropes that framed the Third Chimurenga.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by the author.

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