

# What Western imperialism is up to now in Zimbabwe

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**Imperialism is less concerned with human rights and democratic elections in Africa. What really matters is the maintenance of a system that serves their interests no matter how it assumes or maintains power. The same goes for Zimbabwe; what they are interested in is not the new president, but what the West hopes he would do to safeguard their interests.**

When the press and media of the so-called Western world adjust their depiction of a nation they had formally demonised to a depiction of one worthy of cooperation we should pause for a more critical analysis.

When it comes to capitalist and white supremacist portrayals of African countries Zimbabwe is no different. It is never about the details or the context and all about the optics and the propaganda. From news outlets like Reuters and across US and European press in general, the message is - Mugabe out - white farmers back in and the poor blacks with bad teeth dance and celebrate the return of the white saviours. Irrespective of the real details behind a given story, the fact that such images are broadcast around the world is a blow against Africans/Black people at home and abroad. The media of white supremacy is a beast. Just as dangerous is the capitalist agenda at the back end manoeuvring to neo-colonise Zimbabwe and appropriate its labour and land.

A 21 December 2017 [article in Reuters](#) suggesting that Blacks were elated by the return of white farmer Rob Smart actually reveals something different upon closer examination. The racist spin of the article first explains that, "Land ownership is one of Zimbabwe's most sensitive political topics. Colonialists seized some of the best agricultural land and much of it remained in the hands of white farmers after independence in 1980 leaving many blacks effectively landless." Then it describes the 2001 fast track land redistribution programme to reclaim African land by President Robert Mugabe. "Twenty years later, Mugabe authorised the violent invasion of many white-owned farms." Erased from this account is the brutal violence that accompanied Europe's settler colonisation in Southern Africa in the late 1800s with the help of the maxim gun, as well as the horrors of the apartheid system in Rhodesia. It is also a mischaracterisation to claim that the fast track land programme kicked off the violence of the land seizures in the late 1990s. The truth is the programme was an intervention to [the violence](#) led by African liberation war veterans who were dissatisfied with slowness in rectifying the unjust colonial allocations of land.

The Reuters story also implies that returning the farm to Smart could signify a reversing of the entire land redistribution process by the new president of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa for the sake of the economic recovery of the country. But Rob Smart [lost his farm](#) just last June in what was apparently an illegal seizure that was not in compliance with the program implemented under Mugabe. Because the taking of this farm was so recent, and apparently did not follow an established procedure, it appears that no wider conclusions can be drawn. It is more of a special case.

Reversing the 17-year-old land reforms to hand land back to whites is highly unfeasible. That

process is past the point of no return. Doing so would be the easiest way to get the country to reject the new transition in government. While the media is fond of showing images in the urban areas, particularly in the capital Harare where there has been majority opposition to Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front and Mugabe, the country's majority population is in the rural areas that benefitted most directly from the land reform.

In his 4 December 2017 [inauguration speech](#) President Mnangagwa said "...given our historical realities, we wish the rest of the world to understand and appreciate that policies and programmes related to land reform were inevitable. Whilst there is a lot we may need to do by way of outcomes, the principle of repossessing our land cannot be challenged or reversed."

When imperialism's magicians perform sleights of hand it is media that is central to the distractions. Even though African land in Zimbabwe reclaimed from white settlers appears to be safe for now, the other areas where collusion with the West is acute should be of serious concern. The magician's trick to destabilise Zimbabwe under the leadership of Mugabe was to impose measures to ruin the economy through pervasive sanctions of the United States, United Kingdom, and European Union then blame the outcome on Mugabe. Only folly can make anyone accept that the sanctions were a response to human rights abuses or election rigging. The West not only turns a blind eye to but aids and abets the most unspeakable human rights violations in the heart of Africa; Uganda, Rwanda, and Congo.

Sanctions against close US and Western ally Saudi Arabia would be unthinkable, a country that holds no elections at all and sentences its citizens to be [stoned to death](#). Furthermore the US has [orchestrated](#) the overthrow of a virtually endless list of democratically elected governments from Africa, Asia to Latin America. US hands are currently drenched in the blood of Africans in Libya.

Their goal in Zimbabwe has been the consistent one for imperialism. The strategies change to adapt to the varied conditions, historical and otherwise, of a particular country. About nine years after Zimbabwe's 1980 independence, the country like many others following the collapse of the Soviet Union, was forced into accepting loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The loans notorious for having strings attached in the form of Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAPs) that mandate various privatisation and deregulation measures had gravely adverse impacts on Zimbabweans like they do in any country.

So it was in the subsequent political standoff between ZANU-PF and imperialism beginning in the late 1990s and led by President Robert Mugabe that three key things happened: 1.) Zimbabwe initiated its Fast Track land reform, 2.) it enacted a law for indigenous [African control](#) of foreign companies including mines, and 3.) done nowhere else in Africa it [jettisoned the ESAPs](#) to re-embark on a more socialist path, as it had started with after independence. Needless to say imperialism was not happy. Amid all of this were all manner of [regime change](#) methods that included a media propaganda campaign of misinformation, half-truths, and outright lies to demonise Zimbabwe and an aging Robert Mugabe.

Fast forward to today, following the removal of Robert Mugabe from power last November, less attention should be paid to the status of the land reform and more to the rebirth of the ESAPs under the new president Emmerson Mnangagwa. And unsurprisingly the West has toned down, if not completely backed off of its condemning rhetoric. If the new leadership of Zimbabwe is maintaining the anti-imperialist disposition it had under the leadership of Mugabe, then they are also strangely allowing Western press to tell what would be blatant lies to the contrary, [reporting that](#): "Since his appointment, Mnangagwa has promised to rebuild relations with the West, to protect foreign investors and to hold elections."

In and of itself a coup does not necessarily indicate that the action is against the people's interest, whether the nature of the incoming government is revolutionary or neo-colonialist. "[The Upright Man](#), revolutionary leader of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara came to power through a coup. Hugo Chavez's first [attempt](#) to power in Venezuela was via a coup. The case of the Arab pan-Africanist of the [Libyan Jamahiriya](#), Muammar Gaddafi was the same.

As far as imperialism is concerned, however, coups are perceived as negative and referring to the power change in Zimbabwe as a coup would be problematic if it is your guy coming in. And the US certainly seems to believe or want Mnangagwa to be their guy, [given](#) "US Ambassador Harry Thomas avoided the term 'coup' to describe Mugabe's overthrow, referring to it as a 'military intervention.' Thomas said Mnangagwa's administration should be judged by its performance – most notably whether it manages to hold credible elections next year [2018]." Par for the course is that it really matters very little to imperialism whether or not elections set to be held in or before September 2018 are "credible," as long as what now seems to be unfolding continues.

High-level military officials are being appointed to high-level civil servant roles in the government and in at least one case holding dual roles. This is the case with former head of the armed forces Constantino Chiwenga who was named vice president on 23 December 2017 and appointed Defense Minister on 29 December 2017, retaining control of the military.

Over the last month Zimbabweans have seen moves to resurrect ESAPs like the [privatising of parastatals](#), the semiprivate/semi-public agencies that are meant to provide public goods like in energy, transport, communications, and agricultural sectors. Privatisation of this nature is always the application of a [neo-liberal rationale](#) that judges the performance of such institutions on an economic basis. Do they turn a profit or do they operate in the black? A revolutionary or socialist rationale would put the public good or need that the institution serves first and if there is a financial burden, consider an alternative that is not privatisation.

In response to questions about the 1 January 2018 dissolving of the State Procurement Board (SPB) and the establishing of the new Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe, Permanent Secretary in the Office of President and Cabinet, Ambassador [Boniface Chidyausiku said](#):

"There will be a new set up, which is in line with best practices world over. The decision to procure now rests with the accounting officer whereas in the old system, they used to send documents to SPB for approval. We came up with the new system following consultations with the World Bank and the African Development Bank."

The sad truth is that the history and complexity of what happened and is now unfolding in Zimbabwe is not known nor understood by most people. Western media allow only very simplified and misleading accounts. Instead of feeling compelled to repay the West unjust debts, underdeveloped countries in Africa and around the world should remember that the wealth amasses and used by international financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF came from the plunder and rape of their lands and forced use of their labour.

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