

GOVERNANCE, POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND NATION BUILDING IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

The government's clampdown on individual, group and opposition political party is the main focus of this paper. In post-colonial Zimbabwe opposition political meetings throughout the country were violently disrupted under the reign of president Robert Mugabe people who were unable to produce a Zanu-PF party membership card were severely dealt with in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The government of Zimbabwe under the leadership of Mugabe applied all available measures in restricting oppositions thereby violating an aspect of fundamental human right. Right to freedom of assembly and association. The political opposition, trade unions, human right groups and other civil society organizations were targeted. Security agents were used to in breaking up meetings. In some cases, these security agents disregard court orders. Excessive use of force by the police and other security agents was obvious. The government of Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe was a dictatorial one as he employed all measures under his power to ensure that no any form of opposition is allowed to exist. These policies and programmes did not go down well with the citizens.

Keywords: Governance, Political Leadership, Nation Building.

Introduction

According to the United Nations Organization (UN) human rights are rights inherent to human beings, regardless of race, sex nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status. These rights include the right to life, liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to Education, and many more. The organization concludes that human being (man or woman young and old) is entitled to these rights without discrimination.

According to Marco (98:19), human rights are moral principles norms that describe certain standard of human behavior and are regular protocol as natural and legal rights in municipal/national and international laws. He opined that these rights are commonly understood as inalienable, fundamental rights to which a person inherently entitled. Simply because he or she is a human being and which are inherent in all human beings, regardless of their nation, locality, language, religion, ethnic origin or any other status. Nickel (2010:2) stated that these laws in human right and its application are applicable everywhere and at every time in sense of being universal.

Garry (2010) opined that human and individual rights of every being are protected by different international human right laws obligations, universal declarations and conventions, which nations of the world are signatory to. These laws and conventions according to the author lays down the obligations of governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts in an order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. He stated that fundamental of this body of laws are the charter of the united Nations and the universal declaration of human rights, as adopted by the united Nations General Assembly in 1948.

These laws as further expanded by the united nations and her brother organization encompass specific standards for women, children, persons with disabilities, minorities and other vulnerable groups who now possess rights that protect them from discrimination that had long been common in many societies.

These rights have been so categorized into civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights which are covered under the UN human right slaws as: international covenant on civil and political rights and international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights.

There are two international bodies that monitor human rights issues in the world, though independent, but their reports have always been the handy document to the issues of human rights in the world. These agencies are Amnesty international and the Human Rights Watch.

These study therefore attempts to investigate and analyze commutatively the practice of human right in colonial and post Colonia/independent Zimbabwe. The study will be guided by the limit or prevision of the human right laws, conventions and obligations and we shall rely heavily on the report of amnesty international and human right watch where available.

Zimbabwe was one out of the many colonies of Britain. Formally known as southern Rhodesia. She got her independence in 1980 and from the time of her independence to early 2018, Zimbabwe had been under the leadership of one man – Robert Mugabe and controlled by one political party known as ZANU – PF. Politically, since independence Zimbabwe has been structured around this political part ZANU – PF. Politically. Such that the country could be aptly described as a one-party state where opposition is not allowed. Therefore, events (economical, socially and politically) ventured around President Robert Mugabe and his party ZANU – PF

until recently. It is on this premise therefore that one can now attempt an analysis of the past and present (colonial and post-colonial) Zimbabwe.

Chikwanha (2009: 1) observed that the history of human rights practice and violation in Zimbabwe is complicated by the inheritance of colonial system, because skewed racial consideration did not universally respect and protect basic human rights. Just as religious societies, the author further observed, justifies their human rights stance through religious arguments, the post-colonial or liberation state of Zimbabwe has tried to justify its position through non – imperialist ideological arguments.

Note however, that understanding the character of the colonial state of Zimbabwe is the starting point for understanding the practice of human rights in Zimbabwe. It is noteworthy to state according to Numann (2005) that the post-colonial state of Zimbabwe has just become as discriminatory as the colonial state.

The colonial Zimbabwe state evolved from the conquest of different chiefdoms in Southern Rhodesia. The state started with the establishment of a town Bulawayo in the southern part of country, and then finally the embellishment of a capital Harare-formally Salisbury, in a more central region of the country.

First the chiefdoms were incorporated under one new authority through the use of a bureaucracy that reflected the imperial powers of her colonial masters. International patterns for its colonies. The colonial state however established separate structures for the conquerors with the vanquished natives being ruled through a system of indirect rule in which local traditional authorities were separate parts of governance structures (Chikawania 2009; BBC 2007, Kimaganta 2013) Mkwanazi 2014).

The colonial policies placed many limitations on the development of a human rights culture on the continent. This was done through denial of human rights and democracy to Africa. The colonial regime also acted against the promotion and protection of human rights on the continent as a whole in addition to its exploitation. More so, the colonial regime defined the concept of citizenship in a way that exalted white supremacy and hegemony.

Citizenship came to be defined as a privilege for the civilized man who then could enjoy all his civil rights, but for the so called uncivilized natives, political rights in particular were

seriously and systematically denied. Ranger (98:7) observed that it was this categorization and treatment of the natives in both North and Southern Rhodesia that was the root cause of all anti-colonial resistance which made African defiant from the very beginning. Therefore, it is safe to say that the colonial state of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was an authoritatively imposed state that perpetrated racial differences and all manner of human rights (economic and political right) practical that denied Africans rights of participation in the politics of their home Country. The colonial state became responsible for engendering social pattern that militated against the enjoyment of social, political and economic rights by Africans (Chikwanha: 2009) Note however that immediately after the colonization of Zimbabwe in 1890 by the British, South Africa company, that the colonizers institutionalized and imposed a political economy that was anchored in the ideology of fascism, this system made the resource of the state to be authoritatively allocated and authoritatively denied. So that power and all socio-economic resources were skewed in favour of the minority ruling white race. The colonial state was interested only in the physical maintenance of the African Urban labour force while denying these people any human rights of habitat (Nkwanazi 2014) Niemann (2005) collaborating the above opined that the colonial state laws were equally designed to center on keeping the public service in white hands as evidenced by the 1931 public services Act, Chapter II Section 8 (1) which states in a very explicit terms that service in the public sector would not be open to any native or colored person. Also, the 1901 constitution of the colonial Zimbabwe provided for a controversial justifiable Bill of rights. This bill of Rights did not provide for the protection of some basic rights as espoused in international conventions, especially as it concerns the universal human right declaration of 1945 and 1948k respectively. More so, the state of emergency the 1961 bill allowed was grossly abused across the Chiefdoms or the colonial state from 1965 until 1990 when it was effectively suspended (Niemann: 2005) this was the picture of the colonial southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) a colonial state where rights – political, cultural, economic and social rights were denied the natives, that is the Zimbabweans and that was what triggered increased agitations for independence by the nationalists who were led by no other than Robert Mugabe and his compatriots. This is no wonder why he (Mugabe) immediately after independence 1980 he became the president, a seat he occupied till the early 2018 and never welcomed any form of opposition and even when a pocket of nationals arose to form opposition parties they were always repressed. However it will be nice I highlight the background of the

colonial state repression or human right segregation as highlighted by Chikwanha (2006) as the author stated *inter alia*; that even after the Bill of rights were suspended in 1990 by the colonial administration in Zimbabwe, they introduced the all-white legislature which practically denied the native Africans their political right. The author went further to state that the colonial masters introduced what was known as unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) that was an “authoritarian administrative systems that were closely Noven” centralized and hierarchical”. This period witnessed a high level of brutal and intensive denial of basic human rights to the Africans, continued expropriation of their land and severe political representation that was upheld by the colonial state legal system. He concluded therefore that the excessive preoccupation with maintaining law and order exacerbated freedoms for the black population in Zimbabwe.

However, it must be noted that in the war or struggle leading to the independence of Zimbabwe, that the liberations or liberating forces, as they were called at the time, trampled on the rights of the natives or outright disregards for basic human rights of the native Africans. Rangers and Alexander (1994) opined that the experiences of the villagers in their guerrilla war were horrible, they maintained that the Nationalists in their ZANU – PF ideology mobilized the natives to concentrate on dismantling racial discrimination and neglected other types of discriminations. The concern of the liberating forces was clearly with national identify and not with human rights and all oppositions was considered treacherous and loyalty to the liberators was crucial for survival. And that situation made the natives or civilians condoned the use of violence, by the liberators to achieve their most sorted after independence and end to racial discrimination while most of their basic fundamental human rights were disrespected or disregarded. More so Ranger (1998) observed however that atrocities committed by the liberators were thus ignored in the aftermath of the war as having been justified in the collective pursuit of the collective human rights – which is their national independence.

Having attained independence, the post – colonial government led by native Africans headed by Robert Mugabe tried to introduce policies to correct traceable injustices seen under the colonial masters but it was not difficulty since the government that came on board had their foundation laid on violence and disregard to basic fundamental human rights. This is why Niemen (2005) noted that with the inheritance of the means of violence of the Rhodesian state at independence this triple legacy of violence continued to subvert the real efforts that welfare.

Socialization between 1980 and 1990. He further stated that in the campaign against dissidents in Matabeleland and the campaign against Renamo in Mozambique, independent Zimbabwe again invoked unity against nations of democracy and human rights. The declining economic fortunes after 1990 and the decreasing ability of ZANU – PF to improve ordinary people’s lives finally made nationalist unity again a club with which to subdue opposition and demand for human rights. Niemann concludes that the human rights and democratic potentials of Zimbabwean nationalists have both been fully realized”.

It must be noted that post-colonial Zimbabwe had to fall back to violent ways immediately after independence due to the fact of rise of opposition. Recall that there were two parties that fought the liberation wars against the colonial regime and each had different ideological inclinations.

The parties were ZANU – PF and the Zimbabwe African Nation Liberation Army (ZANULA) for ZANU – PF and the Zimbabwe Peoples Liberation Army (ZIPRA) for ZAPU. Trouble started when attempt was made by the ZANU – PF government led by Robert Mugabe to reinstate those 2 armies into the national force/army. The government started discriminating against ZIPRA and the group called Ndebele and this resulted into dissertations by the ZIPRA members, and made government uneasy.

Government immediately arrested and detained the leaders of ZIPRA. However, this arrest and detention of the ZIPRA leadership without laying charges or bringing them to court for trial became the first violation of basic fundamental human rights in post – colonial Zimbabwe. This people were only held up in detention on allegations that they were supporting the insurgents and they were held up to 4 years and this confirmed ZIPRA fears that ZANU – PF wanted to wipe them out. To worsen their fear was that Mugabe had also signed an agreement the then North Korean leader Kim 11 Sung, which allowed for the training of the militia force that Mugabe claimed he needed to deal with the disgruntled citizens. The forces were utilized between 1980 and 1988 when Mugabe said he wanted to contain insurgency in the southern part of the country Ndebele land, when he massacred about 7,000 civilians (Mkwannazi, 2014).

Chikwanha (2009) observed these atrocities titled “Breaking the silence building truce Peace” was compiled from 1000 witnesses by the CCJP and the legal Resources foundation. The report detailed how the Korean trained 5th Brigade or Gururahundi – meaning the first rain that

washes away the chaff before the spring rain – created carnage among the Ndebele people who were accused of supporting the insurgents, the author concluded.

The report however provided disturbing evidence of how thousands of civilians was tortured, starved and murdered in public executions. ZAPU as a group or political party lost all its property as the government consecrated it under the pretext that ZAPU was preparing for a war against the new government. To make matters worse, President Mugabe's only response to the report of widespread massacre or genocide was to castigate the authors for digging up the wrong historical facts which would disrupt the unit the country had achieved. He went further to state that to insist that the government had legitimate right to use any method to contain insurgency, whether real or imagined and he refused to offer a public apology or to compensate the relatives of the victims.

The government also introduced all forms of discrediting laws which resulted in discrimination in land allocation process which particularly sidelined the people of the south. There were also laws discriminating individuals on information and rights of expression which runs contrary to the universal declaration of Human Rights especially as it regards to rights of expression. There was also restriction against opposition and party formation which in fact rubbed the political rights of Zimbabweans.

There is also laws that neglect freedom of choice especially during elections. To highlight the above state violation of human right in post-colonial Zimbabwe (Kimaganta, 2013) observed that the deliberate interference in and violation of privacy started in 2000 when the government enacted law that allowed it to monitor and intercept private communication between citizens via emails leaving and entering the country. Furthermore, through the Zimbabwe Broadcasting corporation, the government also controls the electronic media, especially domestic radio broadcasting. Corroborating the above (Chukwuanha; 2009) observed that Zimbabwe is signatory to many international best practices conventions on elections and the role of free media, but neither the constitution nor the electoral laws of the country guaranteed this basic rights. He went further saying that throughout independent Zimbabweans 29 years' history, nothing has changed with regards to violence associated with elections. Most of the violence has been directed at the opposition by the ruling party, as human rights watch reported cases of about 25,889 of violation of human rights in 2002 elections alone. In his 2013 Zimbabwe human rights,

rule of law and Democracy 2013 annual Report (Kimangata; 2013) said “although cases of politically motivated murders, abductions, disappearances, torture and intimidation had been lower than in previous years, the overall situation was still far from perfect, as there were ongoing serious human rights abuses, including the selective application of law, massive corruption and tight control of electronic media”.

Chronological presentation of the facts will take this shape

- **Police Repressions:** There is widespread consensus among human right organization that systematic violations of the rights of personal freedom and integrity are frequent in Zimbabwe.
- **Restricted Civil Liberties:** In Zimbabwe the freedom of assembly is several restricted by law.
- **Discrimination:** Women are disadvantaged in Zimbabwe, with economic dependency and social norms preventing them from combating sex discrimination.
- **Torture:** It is alleged that Zimbabwe security forces had a torture camp in the Marange diamond fields, methods include severe beating, sexual assault and dog mauling.
- **Crimes Against Humanity:** There are widespread report of egregious crimes against humanity by the Mugabe government between 1980 and 2017. Mkwanzazi (2014) writing claimed that there was “clear evidence that Mugabe was guilty of crimes against humanity” in 2009, the author said that then president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, and Helen fein, then Executive Director of the Institute for the study of Genocide, published a letter in the New York Times stating that there was sufficient evidence of crimes against humanity to bring Mugabe to trial in front of the International Criminal Court. The Mugabe administration has also been criticized by political opponents and groups like Amnesty international for the human rights abuses carried out by the country’s security services.
- **Aftermath of the 2017 Zimbabwe alleged coup d’etat attempt:** The Zimbabwe government claimed to have foiled an alleged coup in May 2007. According to the government, the soldiers planned on forcibly removing president Robert Mugabe from office and asking rural Housing Minister Emerson Mnangagwa to form a government with the heads of the armed forces. Several men either on active duty or retired from the

Zimbabwe National Army were arrested and charged with treason between May 29 and early June 2007.

- **Escalating Violence during the 2008 National Elections:** In 2008, parliamentary and Presidential elections were held. The opposition movement for Democratic change (MDC) led by Morgan Tsvangirai win both the parliamentary election and the first round of the Presidential, sparking a run-off in a latter. The 3 months' campaign between the first and second rounds of the presidential election was marred by increasing violence targeted at MDC supporters. The MDC stated that at least 86 of its supporters – including Gidbson Nyandoro and Tonderai Ndira – had been murdered and that 200,000 others had been forced out of their homes by pro-government militia.
- **Government Response:** The government of Zimbabwe has generally responded to accusations of human right violations from western countries by counter-accusers of colonial attitudes and hypocrisy, claiming that counties such as the United Kingdom and the United States are guilty of similar or worse transgressions for example in the Iraq War (Mkwanazi, 2014, Kimagamta 2013, Dormino 1998, Ranger 1998).

Theoretical Framework

This study, adopted Human Need Theory (HNT) developed in the 705 as a generic theory of human behavior hypothesizes that human have basic needs that must be met to ensure a stable society. According to John Burton, human participants in conflict situations are compulsively struggling in their respective institutional environment at all social level to satisfy primordial and universal needs. For example, government/leadership, development, recognition, identity, security. The struggle is primordial that cannot be curbed.

Methodology

Non experimental design is adopted as the most appropriate methodology in enhancing the information best relevant in the study. The design is chosen because of the nature of the study which is qualitative to carefully analyze governance political leadership and nation building in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe.

Findings

It was gathered in the findings that the colonial Zimbabwe only practice racial discrimination, where the natives or the blacks were not allowed to participate in government of their country and also reserved to a particular place. But with respect to right and dignity. While the post-

colonial Zimbabwe under the leadership of Robert Mugabe was entirely different as citizens were not only denied their fundamental human right but were also tortured and sometime killed in an attempt of deviation from the policies of Robert Mugabe and his Zanu Pf party which was against a true democracy. Post-Colonial Zimbabwe witnessed human right, abuse, abuse of power and lack of the democracy, centrally to colonial Zimbabwe with just racial discrimination.

Conclusion

In comparing the colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe state in their human rights practice, one can aptly say that while the colonial state practice racial discrimination, where the natives were not allowed to participate in government and are reserved to particular place, their right to live and dignity were preserved but the post-colonial Zimbabwe under President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party did not only deny the people political rights but many were tortured, others killed, for only calling for true practice of democracy and demanding for human rights. Crimes against humanity are being committed on daily basis, crimes against a particular ethnic group, race have been committed, men and women are discriminated upon just because they belong to a particular race or group etc. Life under the post-colonial Zimbabwe is more difficult than that of colonial era.

Recommendations

- i. There should be a clear separation of power between the arms of government in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular.
- ii. Human right practice should be enforced in Zimbabwe and Africa Countries in general.
- iii. Tenure of presidents in office in Africa and Zimbabwe in particulars should be fixed to avoid over stay in power which could lead to abuse of power and office.
- iv. Policy makers in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular should in their policies discourage one party system which will go a long way to encourage opposition and regulate the excesses of presidents.
- v. The constitution of Zimbabwe should be revisited to curb the excesses of president.

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