

The Construction and Decline of *Chimurenga* Monologue in Zimbabwe: A Study in Resilience of Ideology and Limits of Alternatives

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[Paper presented under Panel 109: Contestations over Memory and Nationhood: Comparative Perspectives from East and Southern Africa at the 4th European Conference on African Studies (ECAS4) on the theme: African Engagements: On Whose Terms? held at Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 15-18 June 2011]

Abstract: This article examines the construction and decline of *Chimurenga* monologue in Zimbabwe and the repression of alternative memories and imaginations of the nation. Since its formation in 1963, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has constructed and deployed the ideology of *Chimurenga* in combination with the strategy of *Gukurahundi* to install a particularly nationalistic-monologic narrative of the nation that enabled its leaders claim to control over the direction of national history; responsibility for the birth of the nation; and uncontested right to perpetual power in Zimbabwe. While the ideology of *Chimurenga* situated the birth of the nation within a series of nationalist revolutions dating back to the primary resistance of the 1890s, the strategy of *Gukurahundi* entailed annihilation of enemies and opponents of ZANU-PF. What is often overlooked in the analysis of ZANU-PF hegemony is that from the beginning the *Chimurenga* monologue was also dominated by internal and external contestations that questioned some of its representations of the nation. The inherent fissures and actual decline of *Chimurenga* monologue in the late 1990s and early 2000s opened the way for resurgence of alternative articulation of the nation and emergence of counter-memories and narratives of national events. The alternatives were informed by ideological differences drawing from post-Cold War global values of democracy and human rights; long-standing tensions between labour and nationalist politics of the 1950s and 1960s, particularistic pre-colonial Ndebele histories and post-colonial memories of human rights abuses; as well as pre-1963 unitary, civic, non-tribal and non-racial but liberal nationalism. These alternatives have met intense repression and surveillance as ZANU-PF continues to project itself as the only authentic liberation force and only legitimate heir to carry forward the historic mission of primary resisters of the 1890s to deliver Zimbabweans to the Promised Land.

Introduction

If one goes back, into history of the liberation war, there is also little unity of a hegemonic sort: the list of tensions is long one: the split eventuating in ZANU emerging out of ZAPU; the March 11 Movement [...], the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (Frolizi, or as some of its detractors

called it, the Front for the Liaison of Zezuru Intellectuals); the Nhari Rebellion—and centrally, the Chitepo Assassination [...], the Zimbabwe People’s Army and *Vashandi* Movement (wiped out with particular Machiavellian cold-hearts and ideological hypocrisy by the man these young radicals helped into power); the Hamadziripi-Gumbo ‘coup’ in 1978; and the mysterious death of Josiah Tongogara the day after he advised Robert Mugabe to go into elections together with ZAPU, with which ZANU was ostensibly allied in the Patriotic Front. The closer one looks at the history of Zimbabwe, the more one wonders how anyone could ‘imagine’ a ‘community’ based on the nationalism exemplified by its political brokers.

(David Moore 2008: 32)

Just like colonialism, Zimbabwean nationalism that crystallized around the ideology of *Chimurenga* sought to impose itself on the Zimbabwean political landscape through a combination of persuasion and violence. It was intolerant of any form of opposition as well as any dissenting voices inside and outside the dominant liberation movement which eventually emerged as the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). This reality about the similarities between colonialism and nationalism led Arif Dirlik to make an important scholarly intervention on the complex subject of construction of identities. His core thesis was that many of the identities that today were accepted and taken for granted as civilizational and national were not only ‘hybrid,’ but they were products of prior processes of ‘colonizations, resistances, and encounters of various kinds, including oppression, exploitation, and forceful conversion, which were now buried under celebrations of historical emergence’ (Dirlik 2002: 443).

This argument links with Tony Bennett (1995: 141)’s concepts of ‘nationing history’ and ‘historicising the nation’ that involved not only nationalism emerging as an anti-colonial force contesting colonially-created identities of African ‘subjecthood’ but also the nationalists actively working towards creating and articulating an alternative national history that ran counter to colonial history. This process of ‘historicizing the nation’ included dominant nationalist movements working tirelessly to claim the identity of being progenitors of the nation whilst at the same time deliberately blending their hagiographies into the history of the nation.

This article which seeks to unpack how the ZANU-PF government has used a combination of the ideology of *Chimurenga* and the strategy of *Gukurahundi* to build what Norma Kriger (2003: 72-76) termed a ‘party-nation’ and a ‘party-state’ as well as to maintain a hegemonic and monologic narrative of the nation, begins by exploring how ZANU (before it became ZANU-PF in 1980) appropriated the history of African resistance to construct the ideology of *Chimurenga* and to eventually claim to be the divinely ordained heir to the nationalist revolutionary spirit running from primary resistance of the 1890s to mass nationalism of the 1960s and armed liberation struggle of the 1970s up to the present.

The ideology of *Chimurenga* is also used to claim primal and permanent political legitimacy by ZANU-PF that needs no renewal every five years via holding of free and fair elections, since the party received prior oracular blessings from spirit mediums during the struggle for independence in the 1970s (Chitando 2005: 220-239). The official adoption of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism by ZANU in the late 1970s added another ideological resource that reinforced the notion of ZANU being the carrier of the ‘burden of history’ bequeathed on it by heroes of the 1896-7 risings. The messianic role received a further boost from the notion of a vanguard political party that led the masses from the front and knew what the people wanted (Chitando 2005: 223-225). It was this idea of ZANU-PF and President Robert Mugabe having a patriotic ‘historic mission’ that inspired Mugabe to arrogantly tell the electorate that:

You can vote for them [MDC], but that would be a wasted vote. I am telling you. You would just be cheating yourself. There is no way we can allow them to rule this country. Never, ever. We have a job to do, to protect our heritage. The MDC will not rule this country. It will never, ever happen. We will never allow it (quoted in Solidarity Peace Trust, 2008).

As will be clear in the later sections of this article, when ZANU-PF assumed state power in 1980, it quickly penetrated the state and nation, making sure the party was indistinguishable from the state and nation. This was done through selective deployment of history, memory and commemoration to establish hegemony and claim uncontested political legitimacy. The process involved creative yoking of ZANU-PF’s hagiography and national history resulting in ‘rule by historiography’ (Ranger 2005b). Political use of memorialization and commemoration dated back to the time of the liberation war where the Chinhoyi Battle of 1966 (where seven Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) cadres of ZANU’s military wing were killed by Rhodesia forces) and the death of Leopold Takawira (ZANU leader who died in detention due to diabetes) were commemorated annually in Mozambique in the late 1970s. The Chinhoyi Battle was celebrated as *Chimurenga Day*, marking the beginning of the armed liberation struggle (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009). ZANU-PF wanted to be remembered as the originator of the armed struggle ahead of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU from which ZANU emerged in 1963 as a splinter party and the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), the armed wing of ZAPU). As articulated by Robert Mugabe in the late 1970s, ZANU was the carrier of the ‘burden of history’ enjoying the oracular blessings of Nehanda and Kaguvi (Mugabe 1978; Chitando 2002; Chitando 2005).

The article is divided into five sections. The first section explains the politics behind the construction and use of the ideology of *Chimurenga* as a central pillar in ZANU-PF’s reconstruction of national history in partisan and Shona-oriented terms and imagination of the postcolonial nation as a successor to the pre-colonial Shona political formations (Mudenge 1988). The ideology of *Chimurenga* identified colonialism as the enemy of every black person and anti-colonialism as the rallying point of African unity and the basis for imagination of a postcolonial nation. Any black person who did not embrace the ideology of *Chimurenga* was

therefore a legitimate target of violence and Zimbabweans are currently struggling to liberate themselves from this ZANU-PF constructed monologue of the nation.

The second section traces the roots of the strategy of *Gukurahundi* as a central pillar of state-making and tactic of maintenance of regime security in Zimbabwe. *Gukurahundi* is defined here as a strategy of annihilating all those opposed to the ideology *Chimurenga* and ZANU-PF hegemony. It is rooted in the exigencies of the armed liberation struggle where violence was embraced as a legitimate tool of resolving political questions and issues. The third section explains the changing and additional articulations of the nation by ZANU-PF under the changed political circumstances of the post-2000 on its deeply ethnic and partisan formulation of the 1980s to indigenist, nativist, racist and autochthonic if not xenophobic narration. This shifting articulation of the nation happened concurrently with the process of ratcheting up the political language on the land reform, renewal of the ideology of *Chimurenga* and intensification of the strategy of *Gukurahundi*, this time ranged against vocal local civil society organizations and the popular opposition formation known as the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) that was formed in September 1999.

The fourth section focuses on the equally complex and ambiguous politics of counter-hegemonic initiatives. The post-2000 political circumstances were dominated not only by popularity of post-Cold War values of liberal democracy and human rights but also by revival of ideas of ‘ethnic nations’ and calls for national self-determination by those people who considered themselves to be written-out of the nation and suffering economic imagination and state sanctioned violence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009e). The final section is the conclusion that assesses the impact of ZANU-PF nationalist monologue on the character of current national politics.

One of my key propositions is that there was a fatal flaw at the very heart of the African modern nation-state project. The flaw took the form of the idea of ‘a tight correspondence between the nation and the state whereby each sovereign state was seen as a nation-state of people who shared a common language or culture’ (Laakso and Olukoshi 1996: 11-12). The problem was that this notion of a monolithic nation-state contradicted the realities of African social existence that was dominated by multi-culturalism, multi-lingualism, multiple religions and diverse ethnic and racial groups.

Zimbabwean nationalism was predicated on this assumption that diversity of ethnic and racial identities had to be homogenized into a singular national identity and that successful nation-building and state-making was to culminate in eradication of diverse identities and projection of the identity of the group that dominated state power. The ideology of *Chimurenga* became the nodal point around which imaginations of a monolithic nation-state had to crystallize.

***Chimurenga*: ‘Nationing history’ and ‘historicizing the nation’**

The ideology of *Chimurenga* is a tale of the invention of a complex politically usable narrative by ZANU in its bid to construct a postcolonial nation, unite people, gain popularity, and assume political power at the end of settler colonial rule. It was and is premised on doctrine of permanent nationalist revolution against imperialism and colonialism. This ideology constituted the leitmotif of ZANU-PF nationalism. The ideology of *Chimurenga* is deeply anti-colonialist. It began as part of nationalist innovation involving harnessing of pre-colonial and colonial historical moments to formulate an indigenous and vernacular conception of a nationalist revolution that linked primary resistance of the 1890s to the nationalist struggles of the 1970s. The ideology of *Chimurenga* is constantly being renewed by leaders of ZANU-PF and it is today used to legitimize an increasingly unpopular regime that has presided over Zimbabwe since 1980.

The early historical work of the liberal British historian Terence Ranger who was sympathetic to the cause of Zimbabwean nationalism, particularly his book *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* provided a nationalist-compliant narrative of primary resistance that was quickly appropriated by the nationalists for ideological purposes (Ranger 1967). Ranger’s central arguments were that the risings of 1896-7 were informed by the creative strengths of Shona and Ndebele culture; that pre-colonial religious leaders especially Shona spirit mediums (Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi) led the uprisings; that these religious leaders provided prophetic and ideological inspiration; and that there were continuities and connections between the risings of 1896 and mass nationalism of the 1960s (Ranger 1967; Ranger 1968; Ranger 1977).

Ranger’s early academic work provided the historical raw materials for the nationalist reconstruction of the ideology of *Chimurenga*. But in 2002 Ranger lamented how his history books were being used to construct what he termed ‘patriotic history.’ He defined patriotic history as a populist proclamation of the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition spearheaded by ZANU-PF cadres as patriots and those not belonging to it as dangerous traitors. Such a populist history repudiated academic historiography’s attempts to complicate and question the trajectories of nationalism. Its key trope was consistent anti-colonial rhetoric and anti-Western ‘bogus universalism’ (Ranger 2004: 215).

Sue Onslow (2011: 6) has correctly noted that present day articulations of patriotic history ignored internal tensions, contradictions, conflicts and struggles within ZANU/ZANLA of the 1970s and it also created a false impression of a united ZANU-PF, deliberately overlooking factionalism and potential divisions provoked by the succession issue. The tensions included the purging of the Zimbabwe People Army (ZIPA), the brutalization of younger and more junior ZANLA cadres throughout the liberation struggle; the use of violence against those peasants identified as ‘sell-outs’ and traitors during the course of *pugwes* (night vigils organised by ZANLA cadres) in rural communities; the *Gukurahundi* atrocities of 1982-1987 that targeted ex-

ZIPRA, ZAPU politicians and Ndebele-speakers (Onslow 2011: 6). The immanent logic of the strategy of *Gukurahundi* is elaborated in the next section of this article.

But during the early development of the ideology of *Chimurenga*, it drew its power from ‘nationalist historiography’ which was different from the ‘patriotic history’ that was articulated by ZANU-PF in the late 1990s and post-2000 periods. Nationalist historiography conceived of the African nationalist movement as ‘inclusive and even non-racial’ and nationalism was celebrated as emancipatory (Ranger 2005: 7-9). Nationalist historiography was also informed by universal ideas of human progress and modernity; hence it espoused projects of modernization, reform and even socialist egalitarianism (Ranger 2005: 8). Nationalist historiography matured into what Ranger termed ‘historiography of nationalism’ that embraced canons of critical social theory which set it apart from uncritical intellectual commissariat-discourses of ‘praising’ nationalism rather than question it (Robins 1996; Ranger 2005: 8).

Historiography of nationalism ‘raised questions about the nature of nationalism and about the course of its development’ (Ranger 2005: 8). It also revealed ‘struggles within the struggle,’ traced the roots of rural and urban nationalism, raised questions about nationalist violence, exclusionary tendencies and concerns about *Chimurenga* monologue (Ranger 1999; Raftopoulos 1999; Msindo 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a). The revisionist interventions of David N. Beach and Julian Cobbing on the 1896-7 risings can be said to have inaugurated a critical historiography of nationalism that ran counter to the populist pronouncements of the ideology of *Chimurenga* (Beach 1971; Beach 1986; Cobbing 1976; Cobbing 1977). Ranger has also been active in challenging his early ideas on nationalism (Ranger 1999; Ranger 2003: 1-37).

On the abuse/use of his academic work by politicians, Ranger wrote that: ‘I recognized the outlines of many of my books but boil down in the service of ZANU-PF’ (Ranger 2002: 60). As early as 1975, the names of secular and religious leaders of the 1896-7 risings that Ranger unearthed from the archives and oral sources were already being used by Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, the founder president of ZANU and first Commander-in-Chief of ZANLA to motivate them to continue the fight. In 1976 at the Geneva Conference, Bishop Abel Muzorewa who led the moderate and internally-based United African National Council (UANC) used the same list to connect the liberation struggle to primary resistance (Ranger 1977: 128).

Eventually Zimbabwe’s national history was re-articulated by ZANU nationalists as constituted by a series of nationalist revolutions known as *Zvimurenga*. *Zvimurenga* is a plural of the term *Chimurenga*. It was used by Beach who challenged Ranger’s thesis of a united Ndebele-Shona resistance to colonialism in 1896-7 (Beach 1980: 107-112). Beach argued that the rising was never ‘simultaneous,’ it was not coordinated and there was no religious element that provided ideological unity. To him, the rising followed the format of *chindunduma* (a Shona word he used to capture a situation of the rising spreading with ripple effect from area to area) (Beach 1979: 401-416).

Cobbing also challenged Ranger's thesis arguing that a major theme of the risings was 'disunity and fragmentation,' with the Ndebele disunited and even fighting a civil war while some Shonas even collaborated with the colonialists (Cobbing 1977: 84). Beach went further to deny that Nehanda (whom ZANU projected as the divine inspiration of the liberation) played any instrumental role during the 1896-7. Instead, Beach depicted her as an 'innocent woman' that was 'unjustly accused' (Beach 1998).

Despite the revisionist interventions of Beach and Cobbing challenging Ranger's ideas of a united African resistance in 1896-7, the notion of *Chimurenga* became very popular with ZANU nationalists in particular. The term was derived from Murenga; a name of a spirit medium that Ranger identified as actively involved in the 1896-7 war of resistance, providing the desperately needed ideological support to the African fighting forces. Murenga is said to have administered some traditional war medicine on the African fighting forces that would make them invulnerable and immune to white forces' bullets (Ranger 1967: 217-220).

But the term *Chimurenga* began to be widely used in the 1970s by the nationalists mainly in the ZANU and its fighting wing (ZANLA) as a vernacular name for the armed liberation struggle against the settler colonial state. It was also used as an ideological thread capturing the undying spirit of African resistance to colonialism, running from primary resistance of the 1890s to the present controversy-ridden and African elite dominated and driven struggles for black economic empowerment that began with the fast-track land reform programme that was christened as the *Third Chimurenga* (Mugabe 2001).

But it was in 1977 that the ideology of *Chimurenga* was re-defined from a radical Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) perspective as denoting the ideas of total war against colonialism and capitalism, and calling for total transformation society and people (ZIPA 1977; on ZIPA see Moore 1995). As they put it:

The word derives its meaning from the national liberation war, fought by our fore-fathers in 1896-7 uprising in opposition to the British domination and occupation. The 1896-7 armed uprising by the entire Zimbabwe masses was one of the stiffest resistances registered by the African people in Southern Africa to colonial rule and imperial advance in the region [...] This was a total war to expel foreign capitalists and imperialists from the soil of Zimbabwe. [...] This is a source of inspiration which guides us in our current struggle against the Smith regime. [...] With the defeat of our forefathers in 1897 African resistance went underground up to the mid-fifties when African nationalism came to the fore (Zimbabwe People's Army 1977: Ranger 1977).

In the ideology of *Chimurenga* the nation was born as a result of two violent *Zvimurenga* of 1890s and 1970s. While in the 1970s the concept of *Chimurenga* had found a dignified niche within African nationalist revolutionary politics as an anti-imperial and anti-colonial ideology, at the beginning of 2000, it had been dented by ZANU-PF's use of violence against members of the MDC as a continuation of *Chimurenga*.

By 2000 the ideology of *Chimurenga* was being deployed to justify any form of nationalist violence even against citizens of the postcolonial state. It was used to justify election-related violence beginning with independence elections of 1980 as part of defending national sovereignty (Kriger 2005). Every time when ZANU-PF was cornered politically by the opposition forces, it has tendentiously reminded people that ‘Zimbabwe *ndeyeropa*’ (Zimbabwe came after a violent war of liberation) and that it would go back to the bush to fight another *Chimurenga* if defeated in an election Sithole and Makumbe 1997).

The ideology of *Chimurenga* was also mobilized to fragment the people of Zimbabwe into patriots, war veterans, puppets, traitors, sellouts, born-frees and enemies of the nation. These political identities have resulted in polarization of the nation. The space of patriots and veterans is reserved for those who participated in the liberation struggle (*Second Chimurenga*) in general and all members of ZANU-PF specifically. Members of MDC political formations are categorized as traitors, sellouts and puppets that deserve to die if the Zimbabwe nation is to live. White commercial farmers constitute the enemies of the nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya 2011).

In 2010, Blessings-Miles Tendi systematically unpacked the *Third Chimurenga* as a terrain of competing ideas and contestations over national history. He argued that ‘patriotic history’ as the motive force of the *Third Chimurenga* was not just a ‘fabrication’ or a ‘polemic’ with little relevance to the interests of the people of Zimbabwe. To him, ‘patriotic history’ played on real grievances and its ‘narrative must be taken seriously’ (Tendi 2010: 2; Muzondidya 2007; Muzondidya 2010).

While the *Third Chimurenga* was popularly dubbed *Hondo Yeminda* (the war for land reclamation), President Mugabe articulated it broadly as ‘conquest of conquest’ marking the triumphalism of black sovereignty over white settlerism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009b). This means that the *Third Chimurenga* was not only defined by the land question. In fact, the re-assertion of revolutionary nationalist tradition was premised on four other issues namely; obsession with race; bifurcation of citizens into ‘sell-outs’ and ‘patriots;’ anti-Western politics; and defence of national sovereignty of Zimbabwe (Tendi 2010: 1).

One of the core objectives of the *Third Chimurenga* was to displace all other alternative political views that did not resonate with those of ZANU-PF. To achieve this objective, ZANU-PF mobilized what Tendi termed ‘nationalist public intellectuals’ and organise them into a priesthood of the *Third Chimurenga* that articulated various aspects of patriotic history and facilitated such televised programmes as ‘Nhaka Yedu’ (our heritage and national ethos) as well as ‘Living Traditions’ (Tendi 2010: 11-42). At the apex of this priesthood were President Mugabe and Professor Jonathan Moyo (by then a ZANU-PF spin doctor and Minister of Information and Publicity). At the end of the day, ZANU-PF worked tirelessly to install a national political monologue rather than dialogue. Tendi argued that:

Nhaka Yedu, National Ethos and Living Traditions were monologues, not dialogues, of ZANU-PF's cerebral praetorian guards, which attempted to legitimize violent land seizures and state-sponsored political violence against the MDC, divided Zimbabwean society along a good and evil distinction, and employed race essentialism (Tendi 2010: 42).

The ideology of *Chimurenga* was underpinned by the strategy of *Gukurahundi* that authorized a culture of violence. The ideology of *Chimurenga* and violence were closely interwoven 'because it sees itself as a doctrine of revolution' (Ranger 2005: 8).

***Gukurahundi* and ZANU-PF hegemony**

The term *Gukurahundi* was a colloquial expression which in Shona language means 'the storm that destroys everything' (Sithole and Makumbe 1997: 133). This early storm often destroyed crops and weeds, huts and forests, people and animal, opening the way for a new ecological order. ZANU officially adopted *Gukurahundi* as a strategy in 1979 and that year was declared *Gore reGukurahundi* (The Year of the Storm) (Sithole and Makumbe 1997: 133). This storm was presented in revolutionary terms of destroying the white settler regime, the 'internal settlement puppets,' the capitalist system and any other obstacles to ZANU ascendancy to power (Sithole and Makumbe 1997: 133; CCJP and LRF 1997). Sithole and Makumbe described *Gukurahundi* as 'policy of annihilation; annihilating the opposition (black and white)' (Sithole and Makumbe 1997: 133).

As part of official implementation of the strategy of *Gukurahundi*, Eddison Zvobgo (Information and Publicity Secretary of ZANU in the late 1970s), drew a 'hit enemies list' comprising of ranking personalities of the 'internal settlement' parties that were singled out for killing (Sithole and Makumbe 1997: 1333; Hudson 1981; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2006). In 2004, ZANU-PF produced another list of traitors and sell-outs that needed to be liquidated. The list included Archbishop Pius Ncube, a critic of Mugabe; Trevor Ncube, owner of critical independent newspapers; Geoffrey Nyarota, a journalist; leaders of MDC including Morgan Tsvangirai, Welshman Ncube, Paul Themba Nyathi; Wilfred Mhanda, leader of Zimbabwe Liberators Platform that was opposed to the main association of war veterans who have reduced themselves into ZANU-PF storm-troopers; and critical public intellectuals including Brian Raftopoulos, John Makumbe and Lovemore Madhuku (ZANU-PF Department of Information and Publicity 2004; Tendi 2010).

While the strategy of *Gukurahundi* was openly embraced as party policy in 1979, it had a long history in ZANU. It is traceable to the formation of ZANU in 1963. Its philosophy of confrontation entailed embracing violence as a legitimate political tool of fighting for independence and destruction of opponents and enemies. Zvobgo wrote of the 'ZANU Idea' which he elaborated as the 'gun idea' that was foundational to the party's ideology of confrontation (Zvobgo 1984: 23). Gerald C. Mazarire who has been researching the issue of discipline and punishment in ZANLA demonstrated how the gun was celebrated in ZANU as a tool of restoring order and 'cleaning up the rot' (Mazarire 2011: 2). The ZANU Departments of

Defence and Commissariat promoted ideas of supremacy of the military within ZANU and enforced violent disciplinary measures that included outright elimination of those considered to be failing to adhere to the party line (Chung 2006).

The deployment of the strategy of *Gukurahundi* within ZANU was necessitated by internal crises of the 1970s such as the Nhari rebellion of 1974 that became the first major disciplinary case to be dealt with by the *Dare reChimurenga* and High Command (Mazarire 2011: 7). Thomas Nhari and his comrades were eliminated through execution as disciplinary measures on the orders of Josiah Tongogara and against the trial verdict passed by Herbert Chitepo who had recommended demotions and other forms of punishment rather than execution (Chung 2006: 88-95). On the logic of using execution as a form of discipline, Fay Chung argued that the ZANU High Command believed in ‘Old Testament version of justice of an eye for an eye, a death for death’ (Chung 2006: 94).

By the 1970s the strategy of *Gukurahundi* entailing executions was entrenched within ZANU. It involved violent destruction of ZAPU structures inside Rhodesia (Moore 1995b; Ranger 1995: 203-210). It also took the form of punishing ZIPA cadres within ZANU. Mazarire argues that by the time of dealing with ZIPA cadres, ‘a new order of discipline emerged under the idea of the “parade” called to order by “whistles”’ (Mazarire 2011: 10). Camp authorities practised public displays as punishment which included thorough beatings until those accused cadres soiled themselves (Mazarire 2011: 10).

Obsession with exposing sell-outs and counter-revolutionaries is a ZANU practice developed during the liberation struggle. Parades were used to identify traitors and sell-outs within the party. *Pungwes* (night vigils) were also used to do the same in the operational zones deep inside Rhodesia. Mazarire identified what was termed *chikaribotso* whereby pit structures were dug and built to keep prisoners underground. Some ZIPA cadres experienced this harsh treatment. Robert Mugabe who took over as party president in 1977 celebrated the violent destruction of ZIPA in these words: ‘We warned any person with a tendency to revolt that the ZANU axe would fall on their necks: *tino tema nedemo* [‘we will axe you’] was the clear message’ (quoted in Vambe 2008:1).

Mugabe and his party were swept to power in 1980 by the use of the strategy of *Gukurahundi* (Sithole and Makumbe 1997: 134). The practice of dealing violently with opposition was decided during the war of liberation. When ZANU-PF assumed state power in 1980, the state itself was used to unleash *Gukurahundi* style of violence on those who happened to be constructed as enemies of the state like PF-ZAPU and ex-ZIPRA cadres. Matabeleland and the Midlands regions became theatres of postcolonial practice of the strategy of *Gukurahundi* and an estimated 20 000 civilians lost their lives as ZANU-PF pushed for a one-party state. Joshua Nkomo, PF-ZAPU, ex-ZIPRA and all supporters of PF-ZAPU had to be annihilated as they

stood of the way of ZANU-PF's assertion and consolidation of hegemony through imposition of a one-party state (Shaw 1986; Mandaza and Sachikonye 1991).

ZANU-PF has continued to use the strategy of *Gukurahundi* each time its hegemony is threatened. Such military style operation such as *Operation Murambatsvina* (Operation Urban Clean-Up) of 2005, *Operation Mavhoterapapi* (Where did you put your vote) of April-August 2008, *Operation Chimumumu* that involved abductions of opposition and civil society figures and others testified to the consistent use of the strategy of *Gukurahundi* by ZANU-PF against those identified as threatening its hegemony (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a). Stephen Chan argued that Mugabe was 'refusing to allow the Chimurenga to die' and interpreted this as a sign that Zimbabwe 'can never be cleansed because there cannot be an end to fighting and that for him [Mugabe] to fight is more important than to be cleansed' (Chan 2003: 183).

Decline of *Chimurenga* monologue

When ZANU-PF regime's popularity in the late 1990s and beginning of 2000 reached its lowest ebb, it ratcheted the ideology of *Chimurenga* and celebrated the strategy of *Gukurahundi*, boasting that the party and its leaders had 'degrees in violence' while at the same time trying to re-mobilize the populace around memories of the liberation struggle (Blair 2000). While in the 1980s, ZANU-PF used the concepts of reconciliation and unity; development and nationalist rhetoric and symbolism to construct its hegemony, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the policy of reconciliation was repudiated and the discourse of economic development that was articulated in socialist transformative terms no longer made sense as the party and the state had totally failed to deliver services to the citizens, it resorted to cultural nationalism as part of compensation for failure (Dorman 2001: 50; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009d; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011).

At another level, while the articulation of the nation in the 1980s assumed partisan and ethnic character where heroism was attributed to only those who participated in the liberation struggle from the ZANU side and names of historical figures from Shona ethnic groups such as Nehanda were elevated into guardians of the nation, the post-2000 nation was defined in autochthonic and nativist terms including attributing 'new meanings to concepts such as independence, heroes, and unity in the changed political context of the 2000s' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009d: 945). President Mugabe popularized the idea of 'Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans' including Occidentalizing white citizens (Muchemwa 2010: 505; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009c).

It was in 2001 that 'galas' and 'biras' were introduced to celebrate the lives of Joshua Nkomo and Simon Muzenda, co-vice presidents of Zimbabwe. After his death Nkomo who in the 1980s was represented as the 'father of dissidents' and who was even forced into exile in 1983; finally gained the status of 'father of the nation' posthumously. A special form of commemoration of Nkomo known as 'Umdala Wethu Gala' (Our dear old man gala) was introduced in 2001 and its celebrations emphasised the aspect of national unity as Nkomo was represented as a symbol of

national unity because he signed the Unity Accord of 22 December 1987 that enabled ZANU-PF to swallow PF-ZAPU, making it possible for Mugabe to pursue the objective of establishing one-party state unencumbered by any oppositional force. On the other hand, Muzenda was represented as the ‘soul of the nation’ and his life was celebrated under what became known as ‘Mzee Bira’ (Moore 2005c; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2010).

Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Wendy Willems concluded that ‘The national imaginary that was promoted through music gala was by no means an inclusive definition of the nation, but should be seen as the mediation of a “party nation”’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009d: 964). Moses Chikowero saw the galas as epitomizing ‘the public construction and carnivalization of that nationalist project, utilizing the iconography of the country’s departed and living patriarchs, matriarchs and heroes as well as the symbolisms of the 1987 Unity Accord and the achievement of independence in 1980’ (Chikowero 2008: 323). On the other hand, Kizito Muchemwa (2010: 504) noted how the cemetery and place of death particularly the National Heroes Acre became ‘the site from which the Zimbabwean polis is imagined and articulated’ leading him to write of the process of ‘necropolitan imagination’ of the nation. ZANU-PF’s obsession with death of the so-called ‘patriots’ as a crucial definer of political life is also captured by Joost Fontein who investigated the role of death and bones of the dead as central aspects of post-2000 memorialization and commemoration (Fontein 2009).

What is also worth noting is that galas and *biras* were introduced at a time when the society was not at peace with itself—the economy was crumbling and ZANU-PF’s political fortunes were declining. During galas and *biras*, modern music such as ‘urban grooves’ tunes were mixed with old *Chimurenga* songs so as to seduce the so-called ‘born-frees’ (all those born after the end of colonialism) into the nationalist project. ZANU-PF thought it was these ‘born-frees’ who supported and voted for the opposition MDC and as such needed to be exposed to subjectivation and interpellated and conscientised into patriotic citizens (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009d: 964).

This argument is further reinforced by the fact that all the galas and *biras* were staged in urban areas, where ZANU-PF had lost support to the opposition MDC and ‘the galas migrate from one province to another’ determined ‘by pragmatic demands of the electoral moment, targeting those places where either electoral support is waning or there are party factional fights’ (Muchemwa 2010: 512). Brian Raftopoulos argued that ZANU-PF attempted to ‘naturalize the unity of the nation by concealing the internal ethnic tensions within the polity and the reality of Shona political dominance’ (Raftopoulos 2007: 182). In short, memorialization and commemoration took the Stalinist form dominated by what Guy Debord described as ‘the ruling order’s non-stop discourse about itself, its never-ending monologue of self-praise, its self-portrait at the stage of totalitarian domination of all aspects of life’ (Debord 2002: 8).

In short, by the year 2000, Zimbabweans were being taken back to the 1970s, a time when the ideology of *Chimurenga* had successfully established itself as the popular nodal point around which the anti-colonial struggle crystallized and the imagination of a postcolonial nation-state developed. But it was difficult for ZANU-PF to successfully wind the wheel of history backward and to re-subjectivate and re-interpellate an angry and hungry populace that wanted food rather than doses of *Chimurenga*. The revival of the ideology of *Chimurenga* and the re-activation strategy of *Gukurahundi* under the changed political terrain of the 2000s provoked strong counter-hegemonic initiatives that could not be ignored.

Beyond monologue: Crisis and alternative articulations of the nation

Sue Onslow argued that ZANU-PF is an extreme example of the limits of how susceptible and receptive liberation leadership may be to internal dissent and debate as they address the considerable difficulties of nation-state construction after formal independence (Onslow 2011: 2). She went further to note that by the 'late 1990s, ZANU-PF was facing a profound challenge to the legitimacy of its victory, and to the legitimacy and identity of the liberation movement itself' (Onslow 2011: 2). However, she was not correct to reduce the post-2000 struggles to 'a battle for the state' only. By 2000, the ideology of *Chimurenga* was exhausted, it had lost its emancipatory aspects, memories of the liberation war were less meaningful to those people born after 1980 and the national trajectory itself was hit by a what Amanda Hammar and Brian Raftopoulos termed 'mutating millennial crisis' (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003: 1; Campbell 2003).

Hammar and Raftopoulos (2003: 2) correctly noted the crisis was not about a single issue; one-off event and single historical trajectory. But for these scholars to argue that the location, timing, form and effects of the crisis were specific was tantamount to reducing the crisis to an event of the post-2000 period. The crisis had deep roots in the development and articulation of the idea of Zimbabwe itself dated to the 1960s and the beginning of the construction of the ideology of *Chimurenga*. The strategy of *Gukurahundi* was adopted as part of dealing with both internal and external threats.

But some of the signs of the decline of ZANU-PF's hegemonic monologism after 1980 included the expulsion of the outspoken Secretary General of the party Edgar Tekere in 1987, who eventually formed the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) in 1989 that opposed the one-party state agenda. The expulsion of internal critics also included Margaret Dongo in 1995, who went on to form the Zimbabwe Union of Democrats (ZUD) and Lawrence Mudehwe in 1996 who later joined the MDC (Sithole and Makumbe 1997: 135). The other internal critic of ZANU-PF was Eddison Zvobgo who in 1995 openly called for democratization of the Zimbabwe through cutting the powers of Executive President (Zvobgo 1995).

The embers of counter-hegemonic articulations also took the form of internal party contestations that revolved around the definition and hierarchy of 'heroship' status and the concomitant

material benefits. As noted by Norma Kriger (2006) there were tensions among elite nationalists that spearheaded the war from exile; those who actually handled the guns and operated inside Rhodesia against colonial forces; those who were incarcerated (ex-detainees, ex-prisoners and ex-restrictees) inside Zimbabwe ; as well as those who were described as *mujibha* (male war collaborators) and *chimbwido* (female war collaborators). These contestations were over benefits and payments for the liberation war sacrifices.

What provoked questions was the open elevation of those elite nationalists who were in exile (otherwise known as the old guard that included Mugabe) into what Muchemwa (2010: 509) terms ‘Chimurenga aristocracy’ that displayed ‘vulgar opulence’ and dominated economic and political landscape of the country, whereas other categories were languishing in poverty. Contestations within ZANU-PF were exacerbated by the hierarchization of heroism into national, provincial and district heroes acres, with those buried in provincial and district heroes accompanied by less material benefits (Kriger 1995). At another level, throughout the 1980s, PF-ZAPU continuously protested against ZANU-PF’s dominance in the selection of national heroes through boycotting heroes’ celebrations (Werbner 1998; Kriger 1995b; Brickhill 1995). This was a direct challenge to ZANU-PF’s commemorative project by another former liberation movement until the time of the Unity Accord. PF-ZAPU and ex-ZIPRA initiated its own War Shrines Committee to identify and commemorate its fallen cadres (Brickhill 1996: 166).

The Heroes Acre which was meant to be a powerful source of national unity and strong source of legitimacy has become a site of contestation with two veteran nationalists from Matebeleland namely Welshman Mabhena and Thenjiwe Lesabe indicating before their death that they did not want to be buried at the national shrine. Despite President Mugabe’s glorifying words of condolences following the death of Mabhena stating ‘We have lost a true patriot par excellence,’ and the ZANU-PF Politburo subsequently declaring him a national hero, the Mabhena family stuck with his wish not to be buried at the national shrine (allafrica.com, 8 October 2010). On the other hand, Lesabe was denied heroine status because she had left ZANU-PF to join the revived ZAPU (swradioafrica, 15 February 2011). The last case was the refusal by ZANU-PF to declare Gibson Sibanda, former deputy president of the MDC despite request by Morgan Tsvangirai for Mugabe to declare him a national hero. Together, these events indicated that the National Heroes Acres was now exposed as ZANU-PF shrine rather than a national shrine that some veteran nationalists find it repugnant to be associated with it.

The formation of MDC in 1999 led to the open declaration by its leader Morgan Tsvangirai in 2000 that nationalism was ‘trapped in a time warp’ and ‘was an end in itself instead of a means to an end’ (Southern Africa Report 2000). This was a direct attempt to depart from the ideology of *Chimurenga* as packaged by ZANU-PF. The MDC as a political formation founded as a worker’s party tried to counter ZANU-PF rendition of *Chimurenga* in elitist terms by claiming that the liberation war was spearheaded by the working class and was then hijacked by nationalist elites (MDC 2000). Brian Raftopoulos (2001) and Timothy Scarnecchia (2008)

analyzed the roots of tensions between labour and nationalism, whereby nationalists became intolerant of independent trade unions that were not subordinated to the ideology of *Chimurenga* in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These struggles resurfaced in the late 1990s in the form of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) led by Gibson Sibanda and Morgan Tsvangirai (Raftopoulos 2001). The MDC was built on the struggles of the workers against ZANU-PF. But at the same time the MDC challenged the ideology of *Chimurenga* and the strategy of *Gukurahundi* as constituting gross violation of human rights as well as being anti-democracy.

As argued by Richard Werbner, ‘memory as public practice’ was ‘increasingly in crisis’ (Werbner 1998: 1). It was the MDC that encapsulated its vision of another Zimbabwe in the slogans of a ‘New Zimbabwe’ and ‘New Beginning’ that became very popular with the youth and urban residents (MDC 2007). Thus since its formation the MDC has ceaselessly worked towards proving to the Zimbabweans, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African continent and the international community, that ZANU-PF has become nothing but an elite project of wealth accumulation and it has completely lost interest in pursuit of the emancipatory agenda, and that the MDC seeks to restore economic sanity, democracy and human rights.

The pulling out of some members of ZANU-PF like the former minister of Home Affairs and veteran nationalist Dumiso Dabengwa to revive ZAPU is another indication of new attempts and initiatives to move beyond ZANU-PF monologue. ZAPU is partly trying to hark back to pre-1963 period of nationalist unity and inclusive nationalism while at the same time partly working towards re-gaining its Matebeleland and Midlands constituencies through appealing to Ndebele-speaking people’s grievances. ZAPU is also trying to pull the nationalist project from ZANU-PF which it accuses of having re-tribalised and regionalized the nation. ZAPU is also claiming its liberation credentials that ZANU-PF tried to down play and subordinate to those of ZANU-PF and ZANLA (ZAPU Manifesto 2010).

Finally, there are strong counter-messages from Matebeleland region that was adversely affected by postcolonial state-sanctioned violence that claimed lives of an estimated twenty-thousand civilians under the pretext of fighting against so-called dissidents that were said to be supported by the minority Ndebele community in the 1980s (CCJP and LRF 1997; Alexander, McGregor and Ranger 2000). The violence of the 1980s that is remembered in Matabeleland and Midlands regions as ‘Gukurahundi genocide’ has generated radical politics of secession spearheaded by such Diaspora-based political formations such as Mthwakazi People’s Congress (MPC) and the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) that are fighting for restoration of the pre-colonial Ndebele nation separate from the provinces of Mashonaland and Manicaland which they call Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009b). During the celebrations of Independence Day on 18 April 2011, members of the MLF marched through Johannesburg and they publicly burnt the Zimbabwean national flag as a symbolic statement of refusal to be part of Zimbabwe.

Those forces working for secession of Matebeleland have gone further to established a full-fledge virtual nation known as United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR) complete with all trappings of a nation-state including a radio station and national flag. Since 2000, ZANU-PF has been trying to ignore the rising tide of secessionist agitations simply because they were mainly exercised on the cyberspace but in 2010 MLF launched itself inside Zimbabwe in Bulawayo and the government has acted through arresting some members of MLF including a well-known politician Paul Siwela. Members of MLF have also written a long letter to President Mugabe dated 24 February 2011 stating that Mthwakazi's desire to exercise its self-determination as a free, independent and sovereign Republic of Mthwakazi is historical and that *Gukurahundi* massacres heightened the impetus for independence (Open Letter to Mugabe, 24 February 2011).

Conclusion

But despite falling on hard times including betrayal by some its heroes; heavily criticism by the Western nations including imposition of 'smart sanctions;' robust unpacking and caricaturing by critical academics; its lack of direct connection with the aspirations of those Zimbabweans born after 1980; and systematic criticism for human rights crimes and its antipathy towards democracy, the ideology of *Chimurenga* has defied its death and displayed remarkable resilience as well as resonance. There are indeed a number of factors that help to explain this resilience including the use of the strategy of *Gukurahundi* to discipline and displace any form of opposition; the abilities of President Mugabe to consistently create scapegoats while shielding his party from responsibility for violence and governance failures as well as his powerful oratory skills and charismatic leadership; particular articulation of national history and use of legitimate grievances to bolster ZANU-PF's political relevance, manipulation of the constitution; use of patronage, ability of ZANU-PF to answer back to Western criticism, play victimhood and to generate South-South solidarity and weaknesses of the opposition (Phimister and Raftopoulos 2004; Onslow 2011).

But the acceptance by ZANU-PF to share power with the MDC political formations in September 2008 through signing the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the installation of the inclusive government in February 2009 is a clear indication that President Mugabe and his colleagues have realized the limits of the ideology of *Chimurenga* and the strategy of *Gukurahundi* to some extent. But within the inclusive government the questions of ownership of the nation, control of the state, exercise of power, and lack of a unifying national narrative continues unabated. The nation remains polarized into patriots, puppets, sell-outs, war veterans, and born-frees as politicized identities and a clear testimony of ZANU-PF's survival through peddling of divisions of people rather than uniting them. The safest conclusion is that Zimbabwe is caught in a Gramscian interregnum whereby the old ideology of *Chimurenga* and the strategy of *Gukurahundi* are taking time to die and the new politics founded on values of tolerance, plurality, inclusivity, social peace and human security are taking time to be born. In the interim the old monsters continue to polarize the nation.

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