Dynamics of the Zimbabwe Crisis in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Zimbabwe is experiencing one of its worst crises since the attainment of independence in 1980. The official explanation of this crisis is biased towards external forces at the expense of internal dynamics. The crisis is

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blamed on the minority group of white settlers, the British, and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which is officially depicted as a front for Western interests. This article seeks to provide an alternative explanation for the crisis affecting Zimbabwe at the present moment. This explanation is predicated on the critique of the dominant nationalist position represented by the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). The article proceeds to present the Zimbabwe crisis as a consequence of blocked
democratic transition at the turn of the century. The significance of this contribution lies in the fact that the Zimbabwe crisis has crucial lessons for Southern Africa. It has shaken peace and security in the region. As such it deserves to be fully understood by all those who are pre-occupied with the stability of the region.

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe is beset by a serious crisis of governance. This crisis has given birth to political, economic, social, ideological, and humanitarian problems in the country. While it is true that the colonial legacy bequeathed serious problems to all post-colonial African states, the contribution of African leaders themselves to some of the problems must not be ignored. For instance, it is clear that in Zimbabwe the dominant nationalist ideology that guided the liberation struggle has become bankrupt. It has only succeeded in entrenching a nostalgic thinking about the government and some Zimbabweans, particularly the war veterans, who are devoid of future plans and of a way forward for the country. The economic salvation of Zimbabwe and other crucial facets of development have been reduced to the politicised, violent, and partisan land reform programme.

The analysis in this article is predicated on three crucial concepts. These are *regime security*, which is the main pre-occupation of the ruling ZANU-PF party; *human security*, which is a currently sought after dispensation by the civil society; and *post-nationalist alternative*, which is a clarion call of the opposition MDC party and its supporters. Regime security is concerned about the welfare, safety and protection of the ruling elite and its few cronies. Its main reference points are territorial integrity, sovereignty, and state security (Kondowe 2000:85). In most cases, African dictators, in order to deny their citizens democratic rights and to justify autocracy, use these

high sounding terms. Human security means safety for the people from both violent and non-violent threats (Hubert 1999:3; Dorn 2001:113-5). It is an alternative way of seeing the world, taking people as its point of reference, rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or the government in power. A post-nationalist alternative is grounded in civil society and social movements and is predicated on empowerment and participation of people in governance. It accepts the crucial fact that the Zimbabwean nationalist paradigm has become bankrupt and has reduced itself to unproductive patronage, cronyism, violence, and lawlessness as a survival strategy. It also accepts that Zimbabwean nationalism has now lost its noble emancipatory ideals and has become impervious to the human rights and democratic demands of the people. Worse still, the nationalist consensus crafted in the 1960s and 1970s to spearhead the liberation war has broken down and needs to be replaced by a new consensus predicated on pluralism, democracy, human security, tolerance, rule of law, consent of the governed, and respect for human rights.

In this article, it is posited that Zimbabwean nationalism as espoused by ZANU-PF has an inherent authoritarianism, which combined, right from the onset in 1980, with other factors, such as the colonial legacy to thwart the emergence of a new democratic, human rights conscious, and human security sensitive political dispensation. This article therefore tries to reveal the concealed and inherent negative aspects of Zimbabwean nationalism that have contributed tremendously to the Zimbabwe crisis.

This study does not by any means deny the contribution of the external forces to the crisis in Zimbabwe. What it attempts to do is to provide an audit of the contribution of the internal forces to the current crisis unfolding in Zimbabwe. It focuses particularly on ideological problems simply because they are rarely discussed in Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans at the moment are inundated with songs, poems, media articles and government speeches that solely blame the West for the Zimbabwe crisis. While this position is warranted, it tends to overshadow the contribution of government policies and ideas to the crisis. In fact, it may be regarded as fallacious and escapist to simply blame the West for all the African problems. Worse still, to always explain African problems using external factors or to always blame people of white stock for Zimbabwean problems is tantamount to elevating the 'white agency' in African affairs. This is why this article focuses on critiquing the internal dynamics of Zimbabwe as another very important way of under-standing the Zimbabwe crisis.

2. Some Negative Determinants of the Present Zimbabwean Political Culture

Zimbabwe's political culture is largely a product of four main influences: the pre-colonial, the colonial, the armed liberation struggle, and ZANU-PF rule. As noted by Stefan Mair and Masipula Sithole (2002:21), the contemporary political culture of Zimbabwe represents an articulation of these four streams. This was also confirmed long ago by Karl Marx who contended that: 'the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living' (Mair & Sithole 2002:21).

The four influences that gave birth to the Zimbabwean political culture were all undemocratic.

For instance, pre-colonial societies were characterised by non-competitive politics. Competition for power was not only illegitimate, but fatal, and often those who sought power had to found their own polity else-where (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003b). Hence, to this day, the Zimbabwean political elite looks at political competition with suspicion and open hostility. The other important and cardinal operative principles of pre-colonial Zimbabwean political authority was the idea of life kingship or chieftaincy, an idea and practice that easily translates itself into the notion of 'life presidency' (Mair & Sithole 2002:21).

Colonialism that succeeded pre-colonial rule was, by definition and design, an autocratic system of governance. It was undemocratic to the core. There was no pretence at all by the settler colonial government to create democratic institutions that embraced the Africans. Political participation was severely limited. No political competition was allowed or tolerated between the Africans and the white races. As articulated by Mair and Sithole (2002:22):

> Colonial authoritarianism, far from deepening a commitment to democratic norms and practices on the African nationalist elite, merely consolidated an incipient authoritarian psyche in the nationalist leadership. The authoritarianism of the colonial era reproduced itself within the nationalist political movements. The war of liberation, too, reinforced rather than undermined this authoritarian culture.

The more recent influence in the shaping of the Zimbabwe political culture is the nationalist liberation struggle. Every African was expected to embrace the liberation war and every one had to toe the line. This, more than anything

else, generated and institutionalised a culture of fear, conformity and unquestioning support. The guerrilla armies and the nationalist parties were never democratically structured and did not operate in a democratic fashion. They were highly commandist and authoritarian. Robert Mugabe captured the modus operandi of the liberation forces well when he said:

> The ZANU axe must continue to fall upon the necks of rebels when we find it no longer possible to persuade them into the harmony that binds us all (Mair & Sithole 2002:22).

The government of ZANU-PF is permeated by the culture of intolerance, intimidation and violence derived from the liberation struggle. The liberation struggle instilled in many political leaders and their supporters a militaristic conception and perception of politics and political process. At the present moment ZANU-PF certainly prides itself in its violent past and its capacity to deploy this infrastructure of violent politics to those who dare challenge it.

3. The Nationalist Struggle and the Birth of Authoritarian Politics in Zimbabwe

It should be clear then that none of the above outlined political precedents that shaped the Zimbabwean political culture promoted democratic values and practices. None of them were driven and underpinned by the noble values of civic tolerance and human security. For instance, the nationalist struggle was characterised by complex ambiguities and contradictions to the extent that the liberation war became fraught with intense intrigues, frictions, factionalism, violent purges, and assassinations. There was a lot of witch-hunting and intimidation, and 'enemies' within were summarily liquidated.

Nevertheless, the struggle for Zimbabwe was conceived as a movement for democracy and human rights. The nationalist movements tried by all means to project a people-centred outlook. Populist propaganda was used to mobilise people across class and ethnic divides. Indeed, peasants, workers, women, the youth as well as the petit bourgeoisie heeded the appeals of African nationalism and fought for the liberation of Zimbabwe.

What has escaped the minds of many analysts is that the African nationalist movements were not only positive schools of democracy and human rights that 'put the people first'. They were also negative schools of despotism, authoritarianism, violence and the cult of personality (Bhebe &

Ranger 2003:2). These negative aspects of African nationalist movements in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa emerged poignantly at independence and continued to influence the character of the post-colonial African state.

In Zimbabwe the African nationalist struggle is still being glorified, and the former nationalists are still leading the country. The dominant party political rhetoric emphasises that the African nationalist struggle bestowed democracy and human rights on the Zimbabwean people. While this is true to some extent, analysts must not be blind to the negative legacy of African nationalism that has continued to shape the Zimbabwean state ideology. For instance, the current pre-occupation and obsession with 'regime security' as opposed to 'human security' was embedded in the nationalist struggle for Zimbabwe.

At the present moment, the ruling ZANU-PF has been pushed by the opposition, labour-backed MDC to frantically project itself as a people's organisation that 'puts the people first' in its agenda. This was clearly demonstrated during the ZANU-PF Congress held at Victoria Falls in December 2001, which carried the theme 'People First'. The ruling party even went back to its nationalist archives to remind the people how it liberated them from the yoke of Rhodesian white minority settler rule. The wartime songs were revived and fine-tuned. The legacy of departed nationalist heroes like Dr Joshua Nkomo took centre stage on national television and radio. In schools, teachers were ordered to teach nationalist history, and history as a subject was made compulsory for every student at 'O' level.

All this effort is being done against the bedrock of heated contestation for power and support between ZANU-PF and the MDC. The MDC has mounted a serious challenge to ZANU-PF's political dominance, particularly in the urban areas, where it has argued that the ruling party is no longer with the people, especially the workers (Bond & Manyanya 2002). A new debate has emerged in Zimbabwe as to which party really represents the true interests of the people, ZANU-PF or MDC. The fact that the ruling ZANU-PF party has taken refuge in war-time nationalist rhetoric and propaganda in its bid to render the MDC politically redundant and irrelevant, calls for a reflection on the legacy of African nationalism itself as a powerful force that continues to shape the character of the post-colonial state as well as the nature of political contestation over power and dominance.

In Zimbabwe the nationalist struggle combined militarism with mass mobilisation. The latter dictated the need for populist slogans, propaganda and rhetoric in the nationalist movement. It was in this bid to mobilise the

masses that African nationalists tried by all means to 'put people first'. The issue of 'putting people first' was central to the survival of the nationalist movement as indicated by such nationalist literature as Maurice Nyagumbo's *With the People: An Autobiography from the Zimbabwe Struggle*. Nyagumbo was himself a leading African nationalist, who perceived his long detention in Rhodesian institutions of incarceration as part and parcel of remaining with the people (Nyagumbo 1981).

In order to mobilise the masses, African nationalism became populist in outlook. Leading Zimbabwean nationalists like Joshua Nkomo, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, Robert Mugabe, Herbert Chitepo and Bishop Abel Muzorewa among many others, were unanimous in denouncing colonial violation of the dignity of Africans, political disenfranchisement of the colonised, racial discrimination, lack of equal opportunity, oppression and exploitation of the colonised as well as the denial of basic human rights in general. The African nationalists tried by all means to identify themselves with the 'people's historic grievances'. Ngwabi Bhebe (1989:53-54) noted that the first African nationalist organisation to be formed in Zimbabwe, the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC), did 'some home-work on the people's grievances concerning racial discrimination, land, health, education and so on, so that their political propaganda and education would be based on concrete situations'.

As a result, by 1958, the SRANC had already identified the historic grievances of the African masses as the Land Apportionment Act, the Land Husbandry Act, the oppressive Native Affairs Department, the limited educa-tion opportunities for Africans, the racist franchise system and the discriminatory industrial relations (Bhebe 1989:54). Subsequent political organisations such as the National Democratic Party (NDP), the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and others such as the United African National Council (UANC), all modelled themselves as 'people's movements'. The nationalist struggle itself was presented as a 'people's revolution' meant to establish a 'people's state' where the interests of all social groups including peasants, workers, the youth and women would be promoted and respected (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987:75). A more democratic and human rights conscious political, economic and social dispensation was promised in the wake of an African nationalist victory.

The nationalist populist ideology managed to raise the nationalist movement into a broad-based coalition of labour, student, religious, women, youth, and peasant movements as well as into an unstable organisation

encompassing conservative, moderate and radical tendencies (Sachikonye 1995:129-140). All this was a product of the nationalist populist agenda of trying to 'put people first'.

On the other hand, the exigencies of the armed struggle added the element of quasi-military tendencies to the nationalist movement. Quasi-military tendencies had to co-exist with populist tendencies for the survival of the nationalist movement. In pursuit of populism, the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe was popularised as *Chimurenga* and the supporters of the nationalist struggle were christened as *vana vevhu* in Shona, *abantwana benhlabathi* in Ndebele, or *children of the soil* in English (Tshuma 1997; Martin & Johnson 1981). All this was meant to maintain the full steam of mass mobilisation and to retain the element of the nationalist struggle as a 'people's struggle' for land.

However, the armed phase of the struggle for Zimbabwe added some negative tendencies to the whole nationalist movement. African nationalism itself as a social movement was basically hegemonic and intolerant of diversity, internal and external criticism and dissent. As a movement it was basically sweeping in what it claimed and annihilatory in what it rejected. Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger (2003:2) in their book, *Nationalism, Democracy and Human Rights in Zimbabwe*, observed:

> But perhaps there was something inherent in nationalism itself even before the wars and the adoption of socialism, which gave rise to authori-tarianism. Maybe nationalism's emphasis on unity at all costs – its subordination of trade unions and churches and all other African organi-sations to its imperatives – gave rise to an intolerance of pluralism. Maybe nationalism's glorification of the leader gave rise to a post-colonial cult of personality. Maybe nationalism's commitment to modernisation, whether socialist or not, inevitably implied a 'commandist' state.

Indeed the post-colonial state authoritarianism cannot be explained only on the basis of its being a successor to an equally authoritarian settler colonial state. Rather, the legacy of African nationalism itself tainted the post-colonial state with authoritarian tendencies.

Masipula Sithole's (1999) S*truggles-within-the-Struggle* captured the main contradictions and ambiguities within the Zimbabwean nationalist move-ment, which nurtured intolerance and authoritarianism. The Zimbabwean nationalist movement was a 'revolution that ate its own children', where

'revolutionary justice' was used to eliminate others (Sithole 1999). Beginning with the swallowing of autonomous youth, women, student, labour and church organisations, African nationalism and the liberation struggle proved to be intolerant of pluralism, dissent and different opinions, and tried to foster a mono-dimensional definition of the struggle based on the interpretation of dominant petit-bourgeois nationalist leadership. Differing interpretations of the struggle and methods of achieving independence led to the rise of splinter nationalist groups that were hostile to each other. Intolerance was indicated by the use of rigid and annihilatory terms such as 'patriots' versus 'puppets', 'freedom fighters' versus 'sell-outs', as well as by officially sanctioned violence against those defined as 'puppets' and 'sell-outs' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni forth-coming:10-18).

What is even more important to note is that the Zimbabwean state ideology and dominant party political rhetoric emerged from the hegemonic and authoritarian circumstances of the nationalist liberation struggle. The circumstances of prosecuting a protracted liberation war necessitated the emergence of a strong leader who could combine both military and political attributes. What was also necessary, was unquestioning loyalty to one leader and one party. The exigencies of war called for authoritarian discipline among the supporters of the nationalist movement. Violence was officially accepted as a legitimate tool of the struggle (Bhebe & Ranger 1995a). Indeed ex-detainees like Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe worked very hard in exile to elevate themselves to the heights of commanders-in-chief of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), respectively, in the 1970s (Gava n.d.:2-10).

It was during the struggle for Zimbabwe that the party leader and the party itself were glorified in such slogans as *Pamberi ne ZANU, Pamberi na Robert Gabriel Mugabe!* (Forward with ZANU, Forward with Robert Gabriel Mugabe!) (Nyangoni & Nyandoro 1979:43-49). The adoption of Marxist-Leninist ideologies, particularly by ZANU, solidified the prominence of the leader and the party in a nationalist movement. During the struggle for Zimbabwe, disagreement could lead to death. For instance, in 1963 and 1964, ZAPU and ZANU bitterly fought each other in the townships. ZAPU could not accept and stomach the reality of the existence of ZANU as an autonomous nationalist movement (Nehwati 1970). The operations of the nationalist movement on quasi-military lines were not amenable to democracy

and human rights within the movement itself. This was evident in Stanlake Samkange's post-colonial reflections on nationalist thinking and operations in the 1960s. He remembered that:

> Before a rally, our youth must wake up at 3 a.m., knock at the door of every house and tell the inmates we expect them to be at the rally and we shall be watching to see that they are. People will be afraid to stay away. We will have a huge rally and our leader will be acknowledged by all as the leader and spokesman of Africans in this country. Those who are not with us are sell-outs. Those who form a rival political party must be prevented at all costs. So houses and cars were stoned. Petrol bombs thrown into people's bedrooms (Sunday Mail 1984).

To have a different political allegiance was tantamount to committing suicide and treason. For instance, trade union leaders who supported the nationalist struggle but did not wish to sacrifice the autonomy of the trade union movement by joining the nationalist movement, like Rueben Jamela of the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress (SRTUC), were branded as sell-outs, imperialist stooges and threatened with direct nationalist violence such as 'Kill Jamela, Drive him away – sell-out' (Raftopoulos 1999:141-142). The prosecution of the armed struggle also introduced the tendency of accumulating arms of war as the only surety of safety, and these arms of war were used to eliminate political opponents even within the nationalist movement itself.

The glorified and worshipped nationalist leadership developed 'tough talk' and sophisticated propaganda and political rhetoric. It also developed arrogance and self-confidence. The African patriarchal ideologies were combined with nationalist authoritarianism to produce a 'father-figure' in the nationalist leader. For example, Joshua Nkomo became referred to as *Umdala* and 'Father Zimbabwe'. Songs and poems were composed and written about the person of the nationalist leader. Various names and praises were showered on the nationalist leaders such as *Shumba yeZimbabwe* (Lion of Zimbabwe) and *Chibwechitedza* (Slippery Stone) (Parade 1999; Moto 1999).

The other legacy of a protracted war of liberation was the generation of suspicion and fear, and of a siege mentality. The nationalist movement became over anxious about being infiltrated and about the existence of 'enemies within us'. It became very difficult to criticise nationalist leaders, as people with critical minds were easily branded as enemies of the revolution

and traitors. This was clearly demonstrated by the Chairman of the Bulawayo Youth League in 1961, Dumiso Dabengwa, when he stated that:

> Any African who remains independent and does not take part in the common cause is as bad a sell-out as the so-called moderates.
>
> …Those who are not with us are against us (Bantu Mirror 1961).

The Youth League was very active in harassing, intimidating and beating up those who were considered to be against the nationalist cause. Bhebe and Ranger (2003:6) noted that 'in exile the hunt for spies and those who threatened unity inevitably became more frenzied and brutal'. Indeed, moderate African nationalists like Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who entered into an 'internal settlement' arrangement for majority rule with Ian Smith, were lambasted and threatened with death. For instance, in 1979, Dr Eddison Zvobgo, the Deputy Secretary for Information and Publicity in ZANU, went to the extent of drawing up a 'death list' with all the names of politicians who participated in the short-lived Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government of Bishop Abel Muzorewa (Hudson 1981:Appendix 2).

The net effect of all this was profound for the future politics in the post-colonial state. Firstly, the glorification of the nationalist leaders engineered a feeling of indispensability as well as irreplaceability. The elevation of the nationalist party above everything else generated rigid party loyalties and a preparedness to kill and be killed in defence of the party. Secondly, the quasi-military legacy of the nationalist movement has bequeathed intolerance of dissent and has entrenched the culture of violence in the game of Zimbabwean politics. Mass mobilisation generated a blind worship of majoritarian politics. Eddison Zvobgo emphasised this point in the 1980s when he said 'we worship the majority as much as Christians worship God' (*The Chronicle* 1983). Thirdly, the hegemonic tendencies of African nationalism eventually led to the attempt by the petit-bourgeois nationalists to try and 'privatise politics' as a preserve of only those who participated in the liberation struggle and their clients. This became poignantly clear after 1980 when the triumphant petit-bourgeois nationalists tried hard to demobilise and depoliticise women, youth, trade unions and student organisations, including some ex-freedom fighters (Ndlovu-Gatsheni forthcoming:98-104). All these issues had far-reaching implications for the Zimbabwean perception of peace and security.

4. The Post-Colonial State of Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwean post-colonial state was a product of particularly two recent major legacies. Firstly, it was a direct successor to the brutal and authoritarian settler colonial state. Secondly, it was a product of a protracted nationalist armed struggle. Thus, the character of the post-colonial Zimbabwean state was shaped by these two major historical realities. These also shaped the Zimbabwean peace and security perspective. The third element that determined the peace and security perspectives of Zimbabwe was the geo-political realities of the Southern African region.

What must be emphasised here is that the conclusion of Zimbabwe's guerrilla war in 1980 heralded the country's first opportunity and ideal chance to build democratic institutions that would really put the people first and promote the much-awaited human security. The people expected a break with the tradition of nationalist and guerrilla violence, and were looking forward to the emergence of expanded democratic spaces, to the protection of human rights, and to basic, tangible material benefits, once majority rule had been achieved (Alexander & McGregor 1996).

However, as noted by Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja in his *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, the post-colonial state as a 'regulator' or 'societal gendarme' endeavoured to moderate and contain the very contradictions of which it is a product, so as to maintain order and social cohesion. In doing so, the post-colonial state upheld the interests of the classes that dominated the social order and acquired its character in the process (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987:74-77). His argument seems to imply that by its very nature the post-colonial state is not people-centred. It does not put people first, but the interests of the triumphant petit-bourgeois nationalists who led the nationalist struggle for independence.

On the other hand, Ibbo Mandaza in his *Peace and Security in Southern Africa* noted that the post-colonial state is a nation-state-in-the-making, which is weak, lacks essence and is suffering from being a hostage and dependent state. As such, it is increasingly vulnerable and is unable to mediate competing forces in society, which makes it incapable of satisfying growing social demands. The post-colonial state has poor political and economic foundations. It is fragile and is given to conflict (Mandaza 1996:xviii-xxi). Indeed, the legacy bequeathed on the post-colonial state by both colonialism and African nationalism needed a strong apparatus with the

ability and capacity to embark on radical transformation of the existing order if ever the wishes and aspirations of the people were to be fulfilled.

5. Authoritarian and Hegemonic ZANU-PF Politics in the 1980s

The post-colonial Zimbabwean state under ZANU-PF failed dismally to make a break with the tradition of nationalist authoritarianism and guerrilla violence as well as colonial settler repression. The ruling party itself, having been a militarised liberation movement, failed to de-militarise itself, not only in practice, but also in attitude and style of management of civil institutions and the state at large. The new ZANU-PF government readily assumed the resilient colonial and military oriented structures left by the retreating Rhodesian settler state, with serious implications for democracy, human rights and human security. From the outset in 1980, the people's keen concern for democracy and human security clashed and contended with the different authoritarian legacies from the nationalist and liberation war. From the beginning also, the ZANU-PF government thwarted the chances of the formation of new civic structures outside party and government patronage, representing different voices in civil society, which resurfaced with the end of the liberation war to assert an autonomous position (Saunders 2000:15-20).

The ZANU-PF government in 1980 inherited the colonial and violently repressive legal machinery of the Rhodesian state. Taken together with the tradition of African nationalist authoritarianism, a new intolerant state soon emerged. No wonder that militarism and violence became part and parcel of the nascent Zimbabwean state. Both settler colonialism and African nationalism were schools of violence and intolerance, as settler brute force had to be met with an equally brutal and intolerant African nationalist strength (Ncube 2001; Bhebe & Ranger 2003:6-10).

However, African nationalism was also underpinned by populist ideology that appealed to the people's aspirations, interests and wishes. As such, the Zimbabwean peace and security perspective was a compromise of authoritarian violence and populist ideology, the security of the ruling elite and the security of the people, regime security and human security. This falls neatly within Gramsci's notion of hegemony, which emphasises the importance of changing balance between coercion and consent in state strategies of

domination. The new leadership of Zimbabwe had to strike a balance between its interests and those of the people. People expected a radical societal reform programme with the aim of raising the standards of living of the African population as well as an equally radical transformation of the colonially inherited structures of the economy (Alexander, McGregor & Ranger 2000:308-312).

As such, the survival of the Zimbabwean post-colonial state depended on striking a balance between the interests of the ruling elite and those of the ordinary people. This was particularly important in 1980 when the ruling party elite desperately needed the support of the people. The support of the people on its own was a strong source of security for the ruling elite. Popular support for the ruling elite depended on the ability of the post-colonial state to satisfy the people's expectations of independence.

The government tried, by all means in line with the nationalist populist ideology, to pursue welfarist policies. First and foremost, the government declared itself to be socialist in ideological orientation, implying that it was committed to principles of equitable distribution of resources for the benefit of the disadvantaged social groups such as women, peasants and workers. Secondly, in line with the nationalist quest for unity, a government of national unity was established in 1980 that included the Patriotic Front of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF ZAPU) and the white politicians. Thirdly, an attempt was made to heal the deep scars of war through adoption of national reconciliation among all the former warring combatants. Robert Mugabe as the new Prime Minister made an impassioned plea for peace in these words:

> If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. Is it not folly, therefore, that in these circumstances anybody should seek to revive the wounds and grievances of the past? (Saunders 2000:17).

This was indeed a bold step in the direction of inclusion of everybody into the new Zimbabwean nation as well as an impressive step in the direction of political tolerance.

Concrete steps were also taken to fulfil some of the wartime promises. For instance, impressive steps were taken towards addressing the severely unequal and intolerable differences between the economically privileged minority and the impoverished black majority. The government invested heavily in education, health and other social services. Free compulsory primary education was introduced, massive expansion in secondary schools and teacher training was undertaken, community primary health care was

developed, and large investments were made in rural hospitals and clinics. In the public service, a deliberate acceleration and advancement of the Africans was launched. An attempt was also made to build a unified national army out of ZANLA, ZIPRA and the Rhodesian forces (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003c:18-21).

All the above efforts were meant to fulfil the aspirations and wishes of the people and were part and parcel of the nationalist legacy of populism. However, while all these commendable steps were being taken, an opposite development was taking place concurrently – in the wrong direction and away from the people.

It must be noted that the authoritarian legacies from the nationalist liberation struggle emphasised the concept of monolithic unity. The result was that even the celebrated policy of reconciliation announced by the government in 1980 was not part and parcel of acknowledgement of diversity, but was a move to co-opt the former warring parties into the dominant party structures. The same is true with regard to the idea of a government of national unity. These populist policies were meant to endear the opposition into joining forces with ZANU-PF and at the end being swallowed up. This argument is vindicated by the case of PF ZAPU, which joined forces with ZANU-PF to form the first coalition government of Zimbabwe in 1980, but was later violently crushed because of its attempt to continue as an opposition movement. Indeed PF ZAPU ended up being swallowed by ZANU-PF.

As noted by Richard Saunders in his book, *Never the Same Again: Zimbabwe's Growth Towards Democracy*, the top-down strategies and politics needed to win a liberation war strongly influenced the behaviour of the nationalist parties once they were in power. The nationalist leadership now in government soon displayed strong signs of intolerance, which raised questions about the nature of Zimbabwe's emerging democracy (Saunders 2000:20). Intolerance and authoritarianism permeated the official populist ideology and the dominant political rhetoric. Immediately after 1980, the ruling elite began to subordinate imperatives of economic development and people's freedom to the major goals of regime security and keeping ZANU-PF in power forever.

A number of factors complicated Zimbabwe's growth to democracy, and favoured growth towards regime security. In the first place, rural assertions of collective rights to land, tradition and local economy soon conflicted with the state-led, state-determined, state-formulated and confident interventions in the people's lives. Secondly, workers' attempts to assert their rights and their demands for a solution to their long standing grievances dating back to the

colonial period, soon conflicted with the hegemonic desire of the ruling party to subordinate trade unions and to speak on their behalf. Thirdly, the women's advocacy movements inevitably came to clash not only with the essential patriarchy of African nationalism but also with the new government's desire to de-politicise and re-domesticate women (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003a:10-15; Ranger 1985; Kriger 1992; Raftopoulos & Phimister 1997; Raftopoulos 1992; Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000)

As noted by Bhebe and Ranger, the Zimbabwean situation in 1980 was a complex and plural one, which required complex and multiple solutions. However, the ruling ZANU-PF government attempted to use a hegemonic and monolithic solution underpinned by the sword of its violent agencies inherited from the past such as the party Youth League, Women's League, ex-combatants, the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and the army (Bhebe & Ranger 2003:18).

In the 1980s, an ambiguous and contradictory situation prevailed in Zimbabwe whereby the powerful aspirations of the ordinary citizens for rights, democracy and human security co-existed with the strong and resilient practices of authoritarianism and violence. This meant that even the noble ideas of welfare socialism that undoubtedly promoted human dignity in the 1980s, were tainted with top-down authoritarianism. The situation was further complicated by the pre-occupation with regime security, which by its very nature allowed for official violence at the expense of human security.

It is vital to note that a number of factors indicated the government's move away from the people to its pre-occupation with regime security. The first move was the creation of so-called 'politically correct' military units, parallel to the national integration of ZIPRA, ZANLA and Rhodesian forces into a unified Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) (Mazarire & Rupiya 2000; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003c). Secondly, there was the move to destroy PF ZAPU as an opposition party through violent means. Thirdly, there was enthusiasm in the use of the military in the maintenance of internal order. Fourthly, there was the official sanction of violence against the citizens, particularly the workers, students and members of the opposition movements.

One of the disturbing issues about Zimbabwe in the 1980s was the failure of the society to de-militarise itself more rapidly in line with the new political realities. Such a de-militarisation was itself an indispensable pre-requisite for the entrenchment of a new culture of peace, human rights, democracy and human security. However, instead of adopting a broad-based de-militarisation process, the new 'politically correct' military units were

formed such as the North Korean trained Presidential Guard, the Artillery Regiment, the People's Militia and the notorious Fifth Brigade. These units were highly politicised and partisan, and they were formed in the midst of and parallel to the tenuous demobilisation of some ex-ZANLA, ex-ZIPRA and ex-Rhodesian forces (Mazarire & Rupiya 2000:72-73).

Thus, the overarching framework of de-militarisation was abandoned midway as the ZANU-PF government felt threatened. Zimbabwe had to deploy forces on two fronts in the early 1980s, barely two years into independence. This was on the external front in Mozambique along the Beira, Limpopo and Nyamapanda Corridors and inside the country in Matebeleland and the Midlands (The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Legal Resources Foundation 1997). In 1981, Robert Mugabe justified re-militarisation of Zimbabwe by saying 'a large army is necessary to answer the threat that South Africa poses to our democracy' (Martin & Johnson 1986:51-76).

The de-militarisation process was also marked by the failure to achieve a non-violent and smooth integration of ex-ZIPRA, ex-ZANLA and ex-Rhodesian combatants into the new ZNA. This failure was demonstrated by savage fighting between the ex-ZIPRA and ex-ZANLA forces at Entumbane, Connemara and other Assembly Points (APs) around the country, as well as the defection of some ex-ZIPRA combatants from the ZNA and the fleeing of others into the countryside to become what became known as 'dissidents' (The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and The Legal Resources Foundation 1997).

What is even more revealing about the ruling ZANU-PF's conception of peace and security, came from the government response to the so-called 'dissident problem' in Matebeleland and the Midlands. As noted by Bhebe and Ranger (2003:21), the violent response was not conditioned by objective security dangers but more by the nature of Zimbabwean nationalism. Government forces, particularly the newly formed 'politically correct' units sympathetic to ZANU-PF as a party, combed the Matebeleland and Midlands villages, looking for the ex-ZIPRA forces. In the process gross violations and abuse of civilians' rights were committed by the military. The atrocities committed in Matebeleland and the Midlands are well documented in the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and the Legal Resources Foundation Report, *Breaking the Silence: Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matebeleland and the Midlands, 1980 to 1988* (The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and The Legal Resources Foundation 1997)

and in a courageous academic book written by Jocelyn Alexander, Joan McGregor and Terence Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matebeleland* (Alexander, McGregor & Ranger 2000).

The violence that engulfed Matebeleland and the Midlands in the 1980s demonstrated more than any other episode in the history of independent Zimbabwe, the ZANU-PF regime's preparedness to use violence against defenceless citizens. The ruling party, in a bid to violently crush once and for all PF ZAPU as an opposition movement, eagerly seized the security problem in Matebeleland and the Midlands. Enthusiastic, politically motivated and partisan forces such as the CIO, Fifth Brigade, ZANU-PF Youth Brigade, Police Internal Security Intelligence (PISI), Zimbabwe People's Militia (ZMP) and others less enthusiastic forces such as the ZNA, the Police Support Unit (PSU) and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), lumped together PF ZAPU as an opposition party, PF ZAPU leadership, PF ZAPU supporters, the de-mobilised ex-ZIPRA combatants and all Ndebele speaking people as 'dissidents' and as a security threat (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003c:16-23; Nkomo 1984; Werbner 1991; The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and The Legal Resources Foundation 1997).

As a result of the violent handling of the security situation in Matebeleland and the Midlands, the remaining hopes for human security and the expected spaces of peace, democracy and human rights in the two regions and the rest of the country, were rapidly replaced by the culture of fear, suspicion and insecurity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003c:16-24). The insecurity grew as a result of the realisation by the people that the atrocities were not an accident but officially blessed by the ruling elite of Zimbabwe. For instance, in April 1983 Robert Mugabe as the Prime Minister stated that:

> Where men and women provide food for dissidents, when we get there we eradicate them. We don't differentiate when we fight, because we can't tell who is a dissident and who is not… (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights 1986:38).

In the same month 1983, Emmerson Mnangagwa, who by then was the Minister of State Security, told a gathering of Ndebele speaking people in Matebeleland North, that the army had come to Matebeleland like fire and that in the process of cleansing the area of the dissident menace, had also wiped out their supporters. He went on to state in a parody of scriptures that:

> Blessed are they, who will follow the path of the government laws, for their days on earth shall be increased. But woe unto those who will choose the path of collaboration with dissidents for we will certainly

shorten their stay on earth (*The Chronicle* 1983).

Another culprit was Enos Nkala, the Minister of Home Affairs. He did not mince his words when it came to the intentions of the violent campaign in Matebeleland and the Midlands. He once stated that:

> We want to wipe out the ZAPU leadership. You've only seen the warning lights. We haven't yet reached full blast…the murderous organisation and its murderous leadership must be hit so hard that it doesn't feel obliged to do the things it has been doing (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights 1986:52).

All these statements and speeches were said in the midst of the violence in Matebeleland and the Midlands, and had the effect of making the security forces commit more and more atrocities up until the time of the Unity Accord in December 1987.

The celebrated Unity Accord as a conflict resolution measure succeeded only in meeting the minimalist conditions for peace, human security and human rights. On the positive side, one can cite the fact that the violence that had engulfed Matebeleland and the Midlands for almost a decade came to an end. However, modern studies on conflict resolution and peace building such as F. Deng and I.W. Zartman's *Conflict Resolution in Africa* and P. Mathoma, G. Mills and J. Stremlau's *Putting People First: African Priorities for the UN Millennium Assembly*, have clearly shown that the absence of overt violence or open conflict does not mean that there is peace and security in a society (Deng & Zartman 1991; Mathoma, Mills & Stremlau 2000).

One of the tragedies of the Unity Accord is that it was not a product of a broad-based democratic consensus that included the people's voices. It was part and parcel of the authoritarian and top-down strategies of ZANU-PF meant to strengthen regime security rather than to entrench the desperately needed culture of democracy and peace. The agreement was confined to the top leadership of PF ZAPU and ZANU-PF. What was at stake was not the security of the people but power sharing among the political elites. As such the Accord lacked a comprehensive post-conflict peace building arrangement, which is always necessary for the enhancement of human security. Worse still, the swallowing of PF ZAPU by ZANU-PF tended to confirm the success of the authoritarian legacy of nationalism predicated on monolithic unity rather than diversity and pluralism (Chiwewe 1989:242-286; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003c:19-28).

The Unity Accord was at best a pact between the petit-bourgeois nationalist elite in PF ZAPU and ZANU-PF, who by the fact of their common

class position realised that they shared a common ideology. As such, the post unity period saw the 'new united' ZANU-PF openly pushing for a legislated one-party state in Zimbabwe. Saunders saw this as one of the clearest examples of the government's move away from the people. He argued that the party leadership worked determinedly towards the establishment of a one-party state using the following means: the tightening of control over debate and political expression within the ruling party; the promulgation of the party's views and perspectives (to the exclusion of others) in the wider space of civil society; and the 'colonisation' by the party of the state, the bureaucracy and a range of public institutions. Most importantly, it involved the marginalisation if not eradication of the opposition parties, which were seen as the chief obstacle to one-party rule (Saunders 2000:20-21). The details on the debate on the one-party state in Zimbabwe are well captured in Ibbo Mandaza and Lloyd Sachikonye's book, *The One Party State and Democracy: The Zimbabwe Debate* (Mandaza & Sachikonye 1991).

The ruling party moved away from identification with the basic aspirations of the masses, remaining in agreement with popular hopes only at the level of rhetoric. The government leadership pursued its own enrichment at the expense of the people. Corruption and primitive wealth accumulation by the political leadership led to the introduction of a ZANU-PF leadership code in 1984, as a means of curbing avaricious behaviour on the part of senior party and government officials (ZANU-PF Leadership Code 1984).

The state, the government and the ruling party became alienated from the people. The people realised that the political elite was beginning to betray them. The ruling party quickly realised the danger of being rejected by the people, hence it intensified the agenda of a one-party state that was going to close the door for regular elections as well as party choice. Despite the fact that the agenda of a legislated one-party state was officially shelved in 1990, the ruling party continued to devise more strategies of keeping power and destroying opposition.

One of ZANU-PF's most eloquent and articulate ideologists, Dr Eddison Zvobgo, superbly summed up his party's obsession and pre-occupation with regime security in the following manner:

> A party's eyes are focused on one thing if it is a political party: conquest of power, and retention of power. Conquering power and keeping it— that is the primary function of ZANU-PF (Saunders 2000:38).

The one-party state political system was meant to be the major method of keeping power in the 1990s. The liberation war and the violent military

campaign in Matebeleland and the Midlands were used to conquer power by ZANU-PF in the 1980s. In its quest to remain in power in the 1990s, ZANU-PF used the following broad methods: constant amendments to the constitution, manipulation of state institutions, coercion, intimidation and outright violence.

In pursuit of regime security, Robert Mugabe was elevated from a Prime Minister to an Executive President with very wide, discretionary and arbitrary powers. For instance, the president was given unlimited powers to interfere with the electoral process and even to manipulate it to the advantage of the ruling party (Constitution of Zimbabwe; Moyo 1992:43-50, Makumbe & Compagnon 2000:15-35). The idea was to make sure that all restraints on absolute and supreme power were removed, and the intention was to create an 'imperial presidency' in Zimbabwe.

Besides the use of strategic electoral reforms, ZANU-PF has mobilised other aspects of the state machinery to guarantee regime security. John Makumbe and Daniel Compagnon's book, *Behind the Smokescreen: The Politics of Zimbabwe's 1995 General Elections* and Jonathan Moyo's *Voting for Democracy*, provide detailed evidence of the openly partisan use of public facilities by ZANU-PF, including a monopolistic access and use of publicly-owned media, such as the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and Zimpapers, as party mouthpieces during and after elections (Moyo 1992; Makumbe & Compagnon 2000)

Muzzling of opposition is another strategy used by ZANU-PF to remain in power. Opposition political movements in Zimbabwe have not been tolerated by the ruling ZANU-PF party ever since 1980. The intolerance of opposition was embedded in the nationalist struggle itself, where disagreement could lead to death.

Beginning with PF ZAPU in the 1980s, opposition movements have been treated as political enemies rather than political opponents. The strategy used to destroy PF ZAPU combined outright violence and attempts to 'rubbish' its nationalist credentials. The leader of PF ZAPU, Joshua Nkomo was subjected to character assassination. He was portrayed as a coward who reluctantly embraced the armed struggle and who always avoided detention by going overseas. Nkomo's continued search for peace through negotiations with Ian Smith until 1976 was portrayed as an act of selling-out. Nkomo was said to have committed a few military forces to the front, keeping the bulk of well-trained forces in Zambia with the intention of staging a *coup d'état* if ZANU-PF won elections. For instance, Robert Mugabe in 1983 publicly

called for violent action against Joshua Nkomo's person. He told the supporters of ZANU-PF that:

> ZAPU and its leader, Dr Joshua Nkomo, are like a cobra in a house. The only way to deal effectively with a snake is to strike and destroy its head (Nkomo 1984:2).

The harassment of PF ZAPU leadership and the killing of its supporters, which began in 1983 and continued up to 1987, forced PF ZAPU to enter into a unity agreement with the ruling party and into a process of disbanding itself as a political party.

The year 1989 saw the formation of the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) by Edgar Tekere. This party vehemently opposed the one-party state agenda of the ruling party in its campaigns throughout the country. Like ZAPU, ZUM was harassed and its supporters attacked by the supporters of the ruling party. The clearest case of intolerance of ZUM by the ruling party was the shooting of Patrick Kombayi in broad daylight by a state agent (Saunders 2000:41). The other opposition parties that existed included ZANU (Ndonga), the United Parties (UP), the Zimbabwe Union of Democrats (ZUD) as well as the MDC formed in 1999.

The other clear strategy used by ZANU-PF to frighten the opposition is to trump up treason charges against opposition leaders. In the 1980s, Dumiso Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku of PF ZAPU languished in detention on unproven charges of wanting to dethrone the government of ZANU-PF. In the 1990s, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole of ZANU (Ndonga) was also summoned before the courts on charges of attempting to kill president Robert Mugabe and for forming a rebel movement called *Chimwenje*. In the run up to the March 2002 presidential elections, the MDC leaders, Morgan Tsvangirai, Professor Welshman Ncube and Renson Gasela were hurled before the courts on treason charges of organising with a Canadian consultant firm to assassinate president Robert Mugabe. In February 2003, the treason trial began in the Supreme Court in Harare based on a very unclear videocassette and very unreliable state witness, Ari Ben-Menashe. All this was and is being done to enhance regime security of ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe.

6. The Democracy and Human Rights Crisis of the 1990s

The ZANU-PF regime has not taken the people's quest for democracy and human rights kindly. For instance, following the findings of the Sandura

Commission and student demonstrations against corruption in high places as well as the rejuvenation of a critical voice from the civil society, Robert Mugabe admitted that:

> We now must admit that we are reaping the bitter fruits of our unwholesome and negative behaviour. Our image as leaders of the party and government has never been so tarnished. Our people are crying for our blood and they certainly are entitled to do so after watching our actions and conduct over the nine years of our Government (Saunders 2000:37).

Indeed the people had been watching the actions of the ruling party and the government busy trying to 'privatise' politics as a preserve of the petit-bourgeois nationalists that led the liberation struggle from Zambia and Mozambique in the 1970s. The people also watched the avaricious behaviour of the party leaders in accumulating wealth at the expense of the peasants, workers, youth, students and women.

As a result of these observations coupled with international and regional developments of the 1990s, including the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union, the crumbling of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, the retreat of apartheid in South Africa and the collapse of dictatorial and one-party state regimes of Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia and Kamuzu Banda in Malawi, Zimbabwe entered its own ambiguous and contradictory period of *glasnost* (Saunders 2000:35). These developments did not only expose the one-party state system model of government as prone to corruption, dictatorship and unworkable, but also inspired a renewed debate and activism on the part of Zimbabwean civil society formed around the pertinent issue of good governance, democracy, human rights and human security.

The ZANU-PF government was forced to abandon its selfish idea of establishing a one–party state in Zimbabwe. Under pressure from the civil society, particularly students, workers and intellectuals, ZANU-PF government was also forced to repeal the colonially conceived and constructed State of Emergency (Ncube 2001). During the same period of hope and anxiety, the government adopted the neo-liberal Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), without consulting the people. This arbitrary decision reminiscent of the authoritarianism of the 1980s provoked widespread criticism, mainly by the workers and the students (Mlambo 1997).

The adoption of the Western conceived ESAP and misinforming people that it was home grown was a direct assault on the economic and social security of the people. Government subsidies on health, food, education and other basic social protection schemes were removed. Prices of goods skyrocketed in

the midst of retrenchments. The workers through the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) embarked on strikes and stay-aways, which were met by violent response from the government. What is even more important to note is that the adoption of ESAP did not only demonstrate the abandonment of the people by the government, but also the successful transformation of the Zimbabwean petit-bourgeois nationalists over time into a state-based bourgeoisie with capitalist interests. Hence the ease with which it readily embraced neo-liberal structural realities against the wishes of the people. This, however, happened within an ambiguous and contradictory framework characterised by a fragile process of accumulation that was being curtailed by the same ESAP. With the adoption of ESAP the ZANU-PF leadership became less and less concerned about the welfare needs of the peasants and workers and abandoned the goal of equity (Mlambo 1997).

Thus, by the 1990s, the Zimbabwean former nationalist elites had not only arrived at the accommodation of each other through the Unity Accord but also accommodated itself with global capital, which made the adoption of ESAP attractive and feasible (Bhebe & Ranger 2003:23-4; Bond & Manyanya 2002; Nabudere 2000).

While the conditionality of the Western Financial Institutions (FIs) like the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) dictated the need to adopt triumphant liberal democratic political reforms as well as reduced cabinet, this was ignored by ZANU-PF as a threat to regime security. Instead of opening up the political space the ZANU-PF government tightened its grip on power through intolerance of any opposition. This led to what Bhebe and Ranger (2003:19) preferred to term 'the rights and democracy crisis of the late 1990s'.

The crisis was precipitated by the fact that the welfare socialism of the 1980s was now scrapped by ESAP and in the political arena there was no credible opposition to chart an alternative political dispensation. People demonstrated their hatred of ZANU-PF politics by just not participating in elections in large numbers. Political analysts came to talk about apathy. This was not until the civil society organisations, particularly the ZCTU and some new human rights groups like ZimRights, rose to the occasion to fill the political vacuum (Moyo, Makumbe & Raftopoulos 2000).

The civil society organisations such as the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association (ZNLWVA) and others were committed to address their members' needs and interests in the face of the deepening economic crisis and the devastating HIV/AIDS pandemic. Others like the

Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and the Legal Resources Foundation concentrated on the protection of people's rights in the face of an arrogant, corrupt and power-hungry political elite manning the state. There were also women movements such as Women Action Group (WAG) and Msasa Project, which concentrated on the protection of women's rights (Moyo, Makumbe & Raftopoulos 2000).

The government response to the pressure from the civil society organisations involved the use of the 'stick and carrot'. Attempts were made to castrate the ZCTU and the students through introduction of the Labour Relations Amendment Act of 1992 and the University Amendment Act of 1990. These two instruments were meant to limit the autonomy and assertiveness of the workers and the students in the political landscape of the 1990s. In 1995 the government introduced a further draconian piece of legislation in its bid to contain the pressure from various civil society organisations in the form of the Private Voluntary Organisations Act (PVO). This Act replaced the liberal Welfare Organisations Act of 1967 (Saunders 2000:74-79).

However, these harsh measures were not able to extinguish the pressure of civics. For instance, in 1997 the ZNLWVA openly confronted the government, demanding to be given compensation and gratuities for their participation in the liberation struggle. They accused the government of being negligent on the plight of the war veterans. Their struggle successfully forced the government to award each war veteran a Z$50 000 lump sum, a Z$2 000 monthly pension and various other social benefits. This preferential treatment extended to the war veterans bought them to the side of ZANU-PF, and they were and are being used by the party to intimidate, harass, threaten, and even torture civilians on behalf of ZANU-PF.

The current struggle for democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe is still championed by the civil society, and the current credible opposition in the country was born out of the civics, more specifically the ZCTU and National Constitutional Assembly (NCA). The role of the civil society, particularly the labour movement in the struggle for democratisation in Zimbabwe, is well treated in Brian Raftopoulos and Lloyd Sachikonye's brilliant and well edited book, *Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe, 1980-2000* (Raftopoulos & Sachikonye 2001).

The MDC represents the most formidable challenges to the ruling party, though it has faced the same treatment as PF ZAPU including the character assassination of its leader Morgan Tsvangirai. The party has been described as foreign sponsored and reduced to a front of the imperialist forces bent on

the re-colonisation of Zimbabwe. The supporters of the MDC have faced threats to their lives, others have been killed and yet others detained (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum August 2001).

To constrain the operations of the MDC, the ruling party has enacted new draconian pieces of legislation such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). This piece of legislation has been used to harass MDC members and to deny them permits to hold rallies and to campaign freely. Despite the formidable factors working against it in the Zimbabwean political landscape, MDC has forged ahead, gaining 57 seats in the parliamentary elections and winning substantial votes in the presidential elections, nearly defeating the ruling party. At the moment the MDC is challenging the results of the presidential elections in the high court of Zimbabwe.

7. The Zimbabwe Crisis and Blocked Democracy

The nationalist project represented by ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe has failed to provide the broad masses of the people with human security and social peace. This failure is well treated in Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya's most recent classic book, *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism, and the Search for Social Justice*, where they wrote that it is clear that two decades after independence, fatigue associated with the ruling ZANU-PF's malgovernance and economic mismanagement has reached a breaking point (Bond & Manyanya 2002). The fact that Zimbabwe has reached 'a breaking point' is also implied in Amanda Hammar and Brian Raftopoulos's recent book, *Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Citizenship in Zimbabwe*, where the two authors noted that the dramatic changes in Zimbabwe's economic, political and social landscape since early 2000, have come to be known as the 'Zimbabwe Crisis' (Hammar & Raftopoulos 2002). Moreover, this crisis takes place against a background of deeply entrenched structural impediments as well, which hinder the development of democracy in Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwe crisis is basically that of legitimacy, governance, economic decadency as well as a humanitarian crisis. It is worsened by the fact that the democratic embers are now trapped by the bankrupt and violent nationalist backlash. This is demonstrated by the widening polarisation and tension between the ruling ZANU-PF and the civil society. People are crying for protection from hunger, disease and poverty. Indeed Zimbabweans are

facing a serious drought coupled with the existing ravaging HIV/AIDS pandemic. ZANU-PF's legitimacy is under serious scrutiny and critique. Nationalism has lost its emancipatory appeal to the people. The threat of state violence has failed to silence the masses' critique of existing bankruptcy of the existing government. Basic commodities such as mealie-meal, sugar, salt, petrol, bread and cooking oil are nowhere to be found in Zimbabwe.

The politics of the period from 1996-2002 witnessed a concerted effort to provide a 'post-nationalist' framework of debate. This post-nationalist position was clearly articulated in March 2000 by the MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai when he stated that:

> In many ways we are moving away from the nationalist paradigm to politics grounded in civil society and social movements. MDC politics are not nationalist inspired, because they focus more on empowerment and participation of the people. ZANU's thinking has always been top-down, centralised, always trapped in a time warp. Nationalism was an end in itself instead of a means to an end. One of ZANU's constant claims is that everyone in Zimbabwe owes the nationalist movement our freedom. It's therefore also become a nationalism based on patronage and cronyism (Southern Africa Report June 2000).

However, this post-nationalist framework was soon beaten back by a radical, vindictive and authoritarian nationalism. In the meantime, however, the embers of such a post-nationalist politics are still burning. The advocates of post-nationalist politics include bigger coalitions of civil society such as the NCA and the Zimbabwe NGO Forum, and they have agreed that the popular consensus created by the nationalist movement in the 1960s and 1970s has served its purpose and that it has broken down under the weight of new demands in the twenty-first century. The nationalist inspired consensus was not based on consent but on authority and coercion. What is needed is a new consensus emanating from the civil society, a consensus which is pluralist, democratic, human rights oriented and people-driven and people-centred.

The 'Zimbabwe crisis', therefore deepened and became complicated as the new social democratic process soon locked horns with a concerted, defensive, well calculated and hard line nationalist backlash championed by the ruling ZANU-PF party. The ruling party has taken refuge in its history and has tried to remind the masses about the longevity of its revolutionary credentials. It loudly proclaimed that:

> Our party is the only one with a proven history of revolutionary achieve-
> ments whenever the political and economic situation in our country has

called for real transformation. Ever since its formation, ZANUPF has distinguished itself as an unwavering, principled, revolutionary party with a tradition of promoting political participation, social and economic advances and total human freedoms that are constitutionally protected and guaranteed under conditions of unity, peace and development (ZANU-PF Manifesto, as quoted in Raftopoulos 2001:18).

The long-standing land question was utilised as the central organising theme for the ZANU-PF election campaign. The slogan 'Land is the Economy, Economy is the Land' was popularised at the expense of other pertinent issues such as employment creation and reduction of inflation. In line with its attempt to force ZANU-PF's history down the throats of hungry and unemployed Zimbabwean youth, the government introduced the so-called national service. This national service is in real terms a revival of the notorious ZANU-PF Youth Brigade that was famous in the 1980s for intimidating people into voting for the ruling party.

On the other hand, the MDC became ambiguous as it tried hard to pose the labour movement as the true inheritor of the now bankrupt nationalist legacy. This was clearly revealed its Manifesto that partly read:

The political struggle in Zimbabwe, historically led by the working people, has always been for dignity and sovereignty of the people. In the first Chimurenga, workers fought against exploitation in the mines, farms and industry, and peasants against the expropriation of their land. The nationalist movement that led the second *Chimurenga* was born from and built on the struggles of the working people. The current nationalist elite hijacked this struggle for its own ends, betraying the people's hopes and aspirations (MDC Manifesto Summary 2000:2).

In terms of real policy framework, the MDC presented itself as a social democratic party, committed to 'human-centred, equitable development policies, pursued in an environment of political pluralism, participatory democracy and accountable and transparent governance' (MDC Manifesto Summary 2000:2). What is interesting to note is that the MDC was clear on the need for a 'human-centred' political dispensation and that ZANU-PF too was forced to masquerade as an organisation that 'puts people first'. The fast track land reform programme was expressed to the people as a monumental indication of ZANU-PF's concern with human security after twenty years of neglect. If the fast track land reform programme is anything to go by, then credit must go to the emergence of credible opposition that forced ZANU-PF to go back to the people.

A fundamental dimension to the current 'Zimbabwe crisis', however, relates to the ideological contest between ZANU-PF and MDC in the context of a multi-polar international dispensation. This multi-polar dispensation requires a flexible and pragmatic ideological orientation amenable to the imperatives of globalisation and democratisation. At the local level, Brian Raftopoulos (2001:34) has summarised the situation very well when he stated that:

> Zimbabwe is caught on severely contested terrain in which a beleaguered state, presiding over an economy in severe crisis, nevertheless retains a critical mass of rural support through a combination of a populist articulation of the land question, and the use of force to break an alternative political presence in the rural areas.

For the purposes of gaining support during the June 2000 parliamentary and March 2002 presidential elections, ZANU-PF was indeed capable of raising itself from the looming political cemetery through a populist articulation of the land question. However, this can only work in the short term for ZANU-PF. The future requires ZANU-PF to adjust its ideological orientation in such a way that it suits the imperatives of the multi-polar world and globalisation if it is to survive longer than now. The nationalistic arrogance of trying to withdraw Zimbabwe from the international community of states is a disastrous option in the twenty-first century.

Zimbabwe at the moment is trapped in an ideologically muddled situation, which continues to generate economic crisis, social strife, political conflict and more importantly, fostering uncertainty about the future on the part of Zimbabwean populace in general. It is more than clear at the moment that ZANU-PF is ideologically bankrupt save for the remaining populist rhetoric that has failed to revive the failing economy. On the other hand, the MDC as a promising alternative, is now trapped in a neo-liberal web and matrix, where it is finding it difficult to reconcile the specific 'justice-related issues', like the land question that powerfully influences politics in former settler colonies, with the demands of neo-liberal capitalism and globalisation. Worse still, the MDC has not succeeded in projecting a clear, attractive and pragmatic post-nationalist paradigm, capable of rendering ZANU-PF's exhausted nationalism redundant and at the same time taking the peasants, youth, women, intellectuals and other social groups on board.

The net effects and implications of this confused situation have been far-reaching and adverse for Zimbabwe. Firstly, it has made it possible for ZANU-PF to cling to power with its bankrupt ideological trappings, which are

in turn trapped in a time warp. The democratic train has been blocked by the intransigence of ZANU-PF and this has worsened the crisis in Zimbabwe. For instance, ZANU-PF stepped up its nationalist authoritarianism, violence and intimidation. ZANU-PF has been portrayed as bloody (*ndeyeropa*) and its leadership has projected an image of having degrees in violence. The state has undergone re-militarisation through the war veterans and the youth brigades in the opposite direction from the worldwide demilitarisation in the post cold war era. The militarisation of the state culminated in the treasonous statement uttered by the military *chefs* prior to the presidential elections of March 2002, that they would not salute anybody without liberation war credentials even if that person was elected by the people as the country's president. Secondly, the ruling party has gone ahead with its practice of endless amendment to the remaining constitutional structures. This has reduced the current constitution to nothing more than an instrument of political warfare. The existing constitution has been turned into a shield for ZANU-PF regime protection and a sword to be used against the commercial farmers and the MDC (Okoth-Ogendo 2000:41-43). The government also introduced new draconian legislation such as the POSA and Access to Information Act, further limiting the rights of citizens, and not enhancing human security. Thirdly, under the guise of making the fast track land programme possible, the ruling ZANU-PF government has tied and clipped the hands of the judiciary, ushering in a phase of lawlessness, particularly in the designated farms. Fourthly, the image of Zimbabwe abroad has been damaged beyond repair.

8. Conclusions: The way forward

The starting point for Zimbabwe is to accept first of all that the country is in a very deep crisis. The government must accept that this crisis is not only a product of the so-called enemies of Zimbabwe or the current drought, but is due to unsound past and present economic and political policies that need urgent review. This is a necessary pre-requisite for the review of past performance, before looking for new alternatives. What is clear is that economic crisis cannot be solved by populist rhetoric, devoid of pragmatism.

In this century of globalisation, it is impossible for any nation, including the developed West, to try and isolate itself even in a 'splendid isolation' fashion from the complex web and framework of the international community

of states. Samir Amin's notion of 'de-linking' as a way forward seems to be too theoretical to be practical in dealing with the threats of capitalist globalisation. As such, the way forward for Zimbabwe lies in returning to the diplomatic chessboard and to bargain from within, rather than to adopt a belligerent stance against the international community. The starting point in this arena is to take open steps towards restoration of the rule of law at home and a commitment to good governance consonant with internationally cherished and accepted standards. Perhaps Zimbabwe should not shun the current NEPAD package as it incorporates attractive principles regarding governance in Africa, particularly the unique peer review mechanism. Zimbabwe needs to take advantage of NEPAD to return to the ambit of the 'global village'.

There is need for a sincere and honest search for a democratic consensus grounded in the civil society. The time for high-sounding speeches is over. The way forward lies in the development of an urgent and concerted leap forward beyond the authoritarian, violent, intolerant and hegemonic tendencies of the liberation war. The truth is that the nationalists have made their contribution and must quickly change their mentality of seeing themselves as the alpha and omega leadership of Zimbabwe. After all, the nationalists are not indispensable and irreplaceable. There is urgent need for a flexible, malleable and visionary leadership capable of charting a new dispensation not clouded in bankrupt ideologies, but consonant with the prevailing local, regional and international developments.

The Zimbabwean case study has demonstrated the failure of the nationalist project to develop and nurture a democratic and human security oriented dispensation. Nationalist inspired economic policies have proved to be antagonistic to market forces, but amenable to regime survival and security. What is clear is that while market forces require moderation, they cannot just be ignored by any serious government or subordinated to the imperatives of regime security always.

In terms of practical steps to be taken to push Zimbabwe beyond this current crisis, one cannot ignore the need for a new constitution. The existing constitution no longer satisfies the name constitution. It has been overtaken by events and has been ghettoised through constant amendments. A new constitution derived from the people themselves is one of the fundamental pre-requisites for the burial of the past authoritarianism and a necessary condition for the entrenchment of a new genuine, people-centred, pluralist and democratic consensus in Zimbabwe.

There is need for the de-militarisation of the Zimbabwean society. This century does not belong to the warlords and their militaries. It belongs to civil society. What is desperately needed in Zimbabwe is not coercion derived from military might, but consensus framed around the pertinent issues of governance, democracy, human rights, human security and economic stability and prosperity.

The practice of 'privatising politics' as a preserve of the nationalists and war veterans is not consonant and amenable to democratisation in Zimbabwe in the twenty-first century. It stifles the necessary broad-based, open and honest dialogue involving civil society over the way forward for the country. Opposition needs to be tolerated as a necessary audit and critique in the body politic of Zimbabwe.

At the moment Zimbabwe desperately requires a courageous and bold adjustment of the existing inflexible nationalist ideology, and the adoption of a new flexible people-driven, visionary and pragmatic ideology consistent with global developments, while at the same time not sacrificing local needs and demands of Zimbabweans. Finally, the inevitable march of the social democratic movement needs to be nurtured and tolerated as an essential pre-requisite for social peace and human security in the twenty-first century. This means that the following steps be taken in Zimbabwe: firstly, politics must be liberated from its present perception of warfare. Secondly, the electoral process must emerge from its present conversion into an intellectual fraud and a political illusion. Thirdly, the Zimbabwean society must be saved from its current division into the 'people' and 'their leaders'. Lastly, the security of the state must cease to be privileged over other forms of security such as human security, social security and security from arbitrary power.

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