

**STRATEGY OF DOMINATION**  
**ZANU-PF'S USE OF ETHNIC CONFLICT AS A MEANS OF**  
**MAINTAINING POLITICAL CONTROL IN ZIMBABWE, 1982-2006**

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

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### Abstract

Zimbabwe is currently a country in crisis politically and economically. President Robert Mugabe's extreme policies against the opposition have led to Zimbabwe's international isolation. Within Africa, however, Mugabe has largely been shielded from criticism. The framing of his campaign against the opposition within the rhetoric of anti-colonialism has created a veil of legitimacy behind which Mugabe has been free to act.

This paper argues that Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party have habitually used ethnic conflict as a self-serving political weapon in Zimbabwe. It first develops a two-tiered theoretical framework within which the case of Zimbabwe can be analyzed. It then analyzes three case studies in which Mugabe utilized ethnic conflict to neutralize political opposition: the campaign against the Zimbabwe African People's Union (1982-1987); the legitimization of the seizure of white-owned farms by ex-combatants (1998-2005); and the repression of the Movement for Democratic Change (2000-2006).



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*“Our people, young and old, men and women, black and white, living and dead, are on this occasion being brought together in a new form of national unity that makes them all Zimbabweans.”*

--Robert Mugabe, April 17, 1980<sup>1</sup>

*“Zimbabwe is a black man's land, and a black man will determine who gets it.”*

--Robert Mugabe, June 17, 2000<sup>2</sup>

## **I. Introduction**

Africa has seen a lot of change since 1980: the end of the Cold War; the fall of apartheid; and the transition from the Organization of African Unity to the African Union.

Throughout all of this change, however, one thing has remained constant; Robert Mugabe has led Zimbabwe. This is an examination of how Robert Mugabe has survived.

In his 26 years in office, Robert Mugabe has faced three significant political challenges to his rule: the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) party of Joshua Nkomo; the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWA); and Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). In each case Mugabe utilized ethnic conflict as a means of neutralizing his opponents. Mugabe used racially infused rhetoric to create a veil of legitimacy behind which he was able to employ violent and repressive means to eliminate his opposition.

This exploration of Robert Mugabe's use of ethnic conflict as means of political control begins with a review of ethnic conflict theory. In this section I construct a theoretical

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<sup>1</sup> “Mugabe's Pre-Independence Broadcast, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, April 21, 1980. Available from LexisNexis. Accessed April 12, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Susanna Loof, “Mugabe: Whites Must Recognize Zimbabwe Is For Blacks,” *The Associated Press*, June 17, 2000. Available from LexisNexis. Accessed on April 20, 2006.

foundation within which ethnic conflict in Zimbabwe can be evaluated. The result is a two-tiered explanatory framework. I assert that elite manipulation serves as the primary cause for ethnic conflict in situations such as Zimbabwe. The second tier offers three motivations that elites can use to generate general support for their policies; political competition, economic differentiation, and group security. Having established the theoretical framework, the analysis then turns to the three case studies that demonstrate how Mugabe has used ethnic conflict as a political tool.

Between 1982 and 1987, the government of Zimbabwe, controlled by Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Unity (ZANU) party, carried out a broad and repressive campaign in the southwestern provinces of Matabeleland and the Midlands that were predominantly inhabited by the minority Ndebele people. Commonly overlooked, the operation was officially conducted to eliminate the threat of "dissident" guerillas remaining from Zimbabwe's war of independence. The ultimate goal, however, was to eliminate the opposition ZAPU party whose stronghold was in the targeted region. This study compares the actual threat posed by the "dissidents" with the robust campaign launched by the government. The analysis concludes that the mission was politically rather than security motivated. In order to justify its repressive tactics, Mugabe's ZANU government not only exaggerated the threat posed by the "dissidents" but infused the national dialogue with rhetoric playing upon the historic tensions between the targeted Ndebele peoples and the majority Shona. This created a zone of permissibility within which ZANU was ultimately able to crush ZAPU.

In 1997, Mugabe and ZANU faced their second major political threat in the form of a disgruntled and mobilized veterans organization, the ZNLWA. Angered over perceived governmental neglect for ex-combatants, the ZNLWA began to openly protest Mugabe and the government. As a party of national liberation, the war veterans' opposition constituted a serious threat to ZANU's legitimacy. Mugabe moved quickly to appease the veterans through a massive financial support plan. When the viability of the plan was threatened by a series of national strikes, Mugabe facilitated the ex-combatants' seizure of white-owned farmlands as an alternative cooptation payment. To create a sense of public legitimacy for the violent seizures, Mugabe framed the veterans' conduct within the context of the historical black-white tension in Zimbabwean society rooted in colonization.

Finally in 2000, following its stunning defeat in a constitutional referendum, ZANU faced its most significant challenge, the MDC a trade unionist political party. Again Mugabe used the context of black-white hostility to legitimate repression, this time labeling the mostly black MDC as agents of "neo-colonialism." The result was the justification of black-black violence within a black-white context. Ultimately, the repressive political environment created by ZANU forced a split in the MDC in 2006 neutralizing it as a threat.

Zimbabwe is a country in crisis. It presently has the world's highest annual inflation rate<sup>3</sup> and lowest life expectancy.<sup>4</sup> Over the last seven years the country's economy has declined dramatically<sup>5</sup> while its crime rate has skyrocketed.<sup>6</sup> At the center of this disaster is Robert Mugabe's drive to maintain power. The seizures of white-owned commercial farms destroyed the country's agriculture industry, one of its leading sources of revenue and food. In addition, the ZANU government's brutal repression of the opposition resulted in international isolation and cessation of foreign investment. Having cut off Zimbabwe, the West now lacks leverage to push Mugabe towards change. Only Zimbabwe's African neighbors, on whom the country is increasingly dependent, are in a position to influence Mugabe's behavior. By framing the current crisis with anti-colonial rhetoric, however, Mugabe has received the tacit support of fellow African leaders.

The goal of this paper is to demonstrate that Robert Mugabe's current campaign of repression is not primarily the result of anti-colonialism, but is rather part of a habitual strategy of using ethnic conflict to maintain political primacy. Hopefully the removal of this veil of ethnic justification will open the way to regional engagement and change in Zimbabwe.

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<sup>3</sup> Zimbabwe's year-end inflation was 585%. By comparison Iraq was second to last with an inflation rate of 40%. Data from: "Rank Order-Inflation Rate" *CIA World Factbook*, Available online at: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2092rank.html>

<sup>4</sup> According to the World Health Organization Zimbabwe's average life expectancy is 36. "Zimbabwe Has Shortest Life Expectancy," *UPI*, April 8, 2006. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 20, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Zimbabwe's economy has shrunk by 40% since 1999. *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> "Crime Rate Rises in Zimbabwe," *Xinhua General News Agency*, January 10, 2006. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 20, 2006.

## **II. Theoretical Framework**

Ethnic conflict theory is a broad and complex field.<sup>7</sup> Explanatory theories range from Darwinian inspired models of ethnic competition<sup>8</sup>, to Marxist theories based on class division<sup>9</sup>, to views on historical preconditions of ethnic conflict.<sup>10</sup> Many of these theories attempt to provide universal explanations for the causes of ethnic conflict. This broad approach seems unhelpful as there are most certainly multiple causes for each event. Therefore for the purposes of this study, I will take a few discreet instrumentalist theories to create a composite framework within which the Zimbabwean case studies can be analyzed.<sup>11</sup> The ultimate goal is to create a theoretical foundation which can explain the shifting use of ethnic conflict in Zimbabwe.

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<sup>7</sup> For a brief discussion on the variety of theories related to ethnic conflict see pp.403-404 in J.H. Turner, "Toward a Unified Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: A Preliminary Synthesis of Three Macro Models," *Sociological Forum*, 1, no.3: 403-427.

<sup>8</sup> According to Tatu Vanhanen, people are biologically predisposed to group themselves among those they resemble. Building upon Pierre L. van den Berghe's theory of ethnic nepotism, Vanhanen proposes that ethnic conflict is the result of a Darwinian struggle for scarce resources whereby ethnic groups promote their own and compete with those perceived to be outside of the group. Tatu Vanhanen, "Domestic Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Nepotism: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no.1 (1999): 55-73.

<sup>9</sup> For example M.S. Prabhakar uses class differences to explain the outbreak of violence between Assamese and Bengalis in Assam in the early 1970's. M.S. Prabhakar, "The Bongal Bogey," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay) VII, no.43 (1972): 2140-2142. See also, Okwudiba Nnoli, "Ethnicity as a Counter Revolutionary Force," *Africa Review* 7(1977):1-12.

<sup>10</sup> See Blanton et al., who surmise that former British colonies are more predisposed to ethnic conflict than former French colonies given the greater degree of decentralization that marked British colonial rule. Robert Blanton, T. David Mason, and Brian Athow. "Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict in Africa." *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no.4 (2001): 473-491.

<sup>11</sup> There is a split in the ethnic conflict literature between instrumentalist and primordial theories. Instrumentalists believe that environmental factors cause ethnic groups to conflict, whereas primordial theorists "attribute the politicization of ethnic groups for violence to primordial characteristics of ethnicity, and consider the existence of ethnic divisions in a nation as sufficient condition for the occurrence of violence." Mousseau, 547. Vanhanen uses the terms "proximate" and "ultimate" rather than "instrumentalist" and "primordial", Vanhanen, p.56. As my hypothesis is that ethnic conflict was used as a tool for political consolidation, I certainly fall within the instrumentalist school and as such will be using instrumentalist theories to create a framework for analysis. Demet Yalcin Mousseau, "Democratizing with Ethnic Divisions: A Source of Conflict?" *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no.5 (2001):547-567.

This composite framework is divided into two parts: causation and implementation. The causation section examines what I propose is the primary cause of ethnic conflict in Zimbabwe, elite manipulation. In this section I will outline the development of scholarly research into role of elites in the creation of ethnic conflict. By creating a theoretical foundation, I hope to reinforce the argument that the successive crises in Zimbabwe have been primarily the result of manipulation from the country's political leadership.

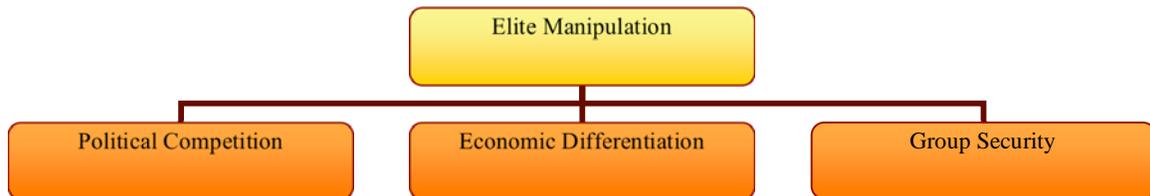
Donald Horowitz has criticized elite-centric explanations of ethnic violence. Horowitz points out that these theories "encounter difficulty in explaining why nonelites take part in the conflict at all."<sup>12</sup> The implementation section seeks to respond to this problem by demonstrating the general motivations upon which elites play to incite support for self-serving ethnic conflict. In this section, I present three motivations for the outbreak of ethnic conflict: political competition, economic differentiation, and group security. These secondary causes of ethnic conflict are the means which elites use to achieve political control. In Zimbabwe, the political leadership has played upon different combinations of these stimuli in each of the case studies to achieve and maintain dominance.

The foundation of this composite theory is the idea that social grievances alone do not cause ethnic conflict. Rather a catalytic agent is needed to mobilize public sentiment towards violent action. My proposition is that in some cases elites are this agent. Blanton et al summarize: "Thus exclusive reliance on deprivation-based grievances as predictors of ethnic violence is inadequate empirically. It is also deficient theoretically. Collective-

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<sup>12</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 140.

action and social movement theories point out that widespread and deeply felt grievances are not likely to result in collective violence unless counter-elites and mobilizing structures are available to persuade aggrieved individuals to participate in the collective action.”<sup>13</sup>



This framework is not universal. However, in certain circumstances, like that of Zimbabwe, it may explain why and how ethnic conflict has broken out. The purpose of this section is merely to lay out the theories from the field that are relevant. Their application will come in the case studies presented in the following three case studies.

### **Primary Causation: The Role of Elites**

There is a thread within ethnic conflict literature that has increasingly demonstrated a connection between the actions of elites and the initiation of ethnic violence.

Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth Shepsle’s research regarding the democratic politics within plural societies forms the foundation of elite manipulation theory.<sup>14</sup> Rabushka and Shepsle describe how political elites use ethnicity as a means of “outbidding” non-ethnic

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<sup>13</sup> Blanton et al, 474. For studies demonstrating the primary importance of mobilization for the emergence of ethnic conflict see Ronny Lindstrom and Will H. Moore, “Deprived, Rational or Both? ‘Why Minorities Rebel’ Revisited”, *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 23 (Winter), 167-190, and James R. Scarritt and Susan McMillan “Protest and Rebellion in Africa: Explaining Conflicts Between Ethnic Minorities and the State in the 1980s,” *Comparative Political Studies* 28, no. 3, 323-349. For a foundational work in the field of social mobilization see Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978).

<sup>14</sup> Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1972).

and moderate rivals for power. These ethnic entrepreneurs focus on communal rather than national issues and thus remove platforms of negotiation, moderation, and cooperation available between groups. As ethnicity becomes central to political control, leaders have incentive to become more and more extreme in their positions and resort to “flame-fanning” behavior in order to outbid moderate rivals.<sup>15</sup> For Rabushka and Shepsle this flame-fanning behavior consisted of political rhetoric, but the implications are clear. Political violence is only a small leap from political rhetoric.

Stephen Saideman in his work on the cause of secessionist movements makes the connection. Much like Rabushka and Shepsle, Saideman describes the motives for why elites move towards ethnic outbidding: “ethnic identity often presents political entrepreneurs who seek to enhance or maintain their positions with tantalizing opportunities.”<sup>16</sup> Saideman then goes on: “Political competition for the support of specific ethnic groups often causes ethnic conflict to increase, because the competition forces politicians to support policies that hurt the economic opportunities, and sometimes physical security, of other ethnic groups in the polity.”<sup>17</sup> Thus Saideman has taken the analysis one step further, openly linking elite ethnic outbidding to policies which damage the “physical security” of other groups and lead to ethnic conflict.

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<sup>15</sup> “Once ethnicity becomes salient and, as a consequence, all issues are interpreted in communal terms, the rhetoric of cooperation and mutual trust sounds painfully weak. More importantly, it is strategically vulnerable to flame fanning and the politics of outbidding.” Ibid. 86.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen M. Saideman, “Is Pandora’s Box Half Empty or Half Full? The Limited Virulence of Secessionism and the Domestic Sources of Disintegration,” in *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation*, eds. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) 132.

<sup>17</sup> For Saideman the significance of this ethnic entrepreneurship is the impact it has on out of power groups who might seek secession as a result. The significance for this study is the resulting violence that arises out elite outbidding. Ibid. 133-134.

Zeric Kay Smith advances the argument to its end point, the explicit description of ethnic conflict as a tool for elite consolidation. Smith tests the commonly held hypothesis that African political liberalization and democratization will lead to an initial upsurge in ethnic conflict followed by a decrease as democratic norms become instilled within the society.<sup>18</sup> To determine the accuracy of this theory Smith compared liberalization/democratization with incidents of ethnic conflict in 44 Sub-Saharan African countries over a period of ten years.<sup>19</sup> Smith's model returned unexpected results. Rather than forming the predicted bell curve in which initial liberalization lead to ethnic conflict, Smith's results determined that there is "an inverse relationship between ethnic conflict and civil liberties."<sup>20</sup> In his analysis of these surprising results, Smith looks to the role of the ruling elite as the cause of ethnic conflict:

The circumstances are explicable if ethnic differences have been systematically employed by African leaders in order to strengthen and buttress the power of illiberal regimes. Under such a circumstance, ethnic conflict would likely diminish when illiberal leaders either leave power or are forced to embrace more liberal policies and institutions.<sup>21</sup>

Smith's conclusion is clear, ethnic conflict is a manipulative tool used by elites to maintain their control.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Smith cites the predictions of post-liberalization and democratization bloodshed by Stephen Ndegwa, Marina Ottaway and Nicolas van de Walle. The expected result of the impact of liberalization and democratization upon conflict would be a bell curve with 22-23. Zeric Kay Smith, "The Impact of Political Liberalization and Democratization on Ethnic Conflict in Africa: An Empirical Test of Common Assumptions," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, no.1 (Mar. 2000): 21-39.

<sup>19</sup> To determine the level of liberalization/democratization Smith used Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* annual report. For incidents of ethnic conflict, Smith used the annual yearbook *Africa South of the Sahara*. Ibid., 27-30.

<sup>20</sup> "Contrary to the assertions of many authoritarian leaders, as well as some scholars of Africa, these results give a clear indication that liberalization is associated with decreases in ethnic conflict when the influences of all other variables are held constant." Ibid. 32.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>22</sup> This idea of elite causation for ethnic conflict is echoed throughout the literature. For example see: David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 1996), 53 (political entrepreneurs as "catalysts"); J. Craig Jenkins and Augustine J. Kposowa, "Explaining Military Coups d'Etat: Black Africa, 1957-1984," *American*

Having established that there is a theoretical basis for the proposition that elite manipulation is a primary cause of ethnic conflict, it is now necessary to turn to how elites actually implement these policies. As demonstrated by Horowitz's criticism above, elites alone cannot carry out ethnic conflict; they need the participation or at least the complicity of the general public to succeed.

### **Implementation: Political, Economic, and Security Motivations**

In order to implement their policies elite play upon latent grievances or motivations to generate support. This brief survey will describe three applicable motivations; political competition, economic differentiation, and group security concerns.<sup>23</sup> Each represents an aspect of group comparison.<sup>24</sup> The end result is the creation of an *us vs. them* mentality that creates a zone of permissibility for elite machinations.

#### *Political Competition*

Popular perceptions of political competition provide a mechanism for elite manipulation. In post-colonial states where there is often a winner take all mentality towards

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*Sociological Review* 55, no.6 (Dec. 1990), 861-875 (ethnically structured elite competition leads to political instability and insecurity); Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 1996), 108-138 (presence of belligerent elites as a necessary factor in the outbreak of ethnic war); E. Ike Udogu, "The Issues of Ethnicity and Democratization in Africa: Toward the Millennium," *Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 6 (Jul. 1999), 792 (review of organizational theory's idea of individual usage of ethnic ideologies for personal objectives).

<sup>23</sup> This is by no means an exhaustive list of motivating factors. In fact, I will only be using parts of each of these posited motivations to construct the framework. These particular interests were the ones played upon by the Zimbabwean leadership.

<sup>24</sup> Horowitz, 141-184.

governance, control of government becomes a commodity to be gained.<sup>25</sup> The expectation of a zero sum game combined with the tendency for political parties in multi-ethnic states to organize around ethnic identities may create an environment conducive for exploitation.

The theoretical foundation for this proposition is found within the Modernization School. Early modernization theorists, like Karl Deutsch, argued that with modernization new needs and even needs that were traditionally supported through local social networks now were supposed to be met by the government:

As people are uprooted from their physical and intellectual isolation in their immediate localities, from their old habits and traditions, and often from their old patterns of occupation and places of residence, they experience drastic changes in needs. They may now come to need provisions for housing and employment, for social security against illness and old age, for medical care against health hazards of their crowded dwellings and places of work and the risk of accidents with unfamiliar machinery... They need, in short, a wide range and large amounts of new government services.<sup>26</sup>

Thus access to government becomes incredibly important. It is possible that this centrality of the government could have a unifying effect bringing all peoples within the umbrella of government support. In countries with scarce resources and a zero sum game expectation of governance, however, this increased importance can be dangerous particularly within the context of ethnic politics.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For an examination on the impact of the colonial state structure upon post-independence states see: Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>26</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development," *The American Political Science Review* 55, no. 3 (September 1961), 498.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe describe the potential for violence resulting the perception of scarcity: "'Social mobilization' means not only the emergence of a new set of motivating values and career paths, but also that the demand for scarce resources cannot keep up with the supply... It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the competitors perceive themselves as involved in a "zero-sum game," in which

Multi-ethnic societies have a propensity to mobilize politically around ethnic parties rather than other cross-cutting identities or issues. According to Milton Esman: “In an environment of rising expectations, ethnic solidarity proves to be the most useful and available strategy by which people can position themselves to compete for access and shares of scarce political and cultural as well as material values.”<sup>28</sup> Thus the process of democratization becomes interconnected with ethnic identity as ethnic based parties vie for political power. In his study on the politicization of ethnic identity in Sierra Leone, J.D. Kandeh describes the mentality:

The Individual is seen as an embodiment of the tribe, consequently his fortunes are strongly identified with the fortune of the tribe. If he succeeds it is the tribe that has progressed, and if he fails it is the tribe that has suffered a setback...each time a high office goes to someone in the community his or her tribesmen jubilate openly.<sup>29</sup>

E. Ike Udogu’s analysis of Kandeh’s finding puts this celebration into broader context:

“Such jubilation could be taunting to the neighboring ethnic groups, who watch from the sideline, because they are not so blessed with a similar fortune. Indeed, what this does is aggravate and sharpen ethnic competition for political power in a future election.”<sup>30</sup>

Government becomes essentially a scarce commodity that some groups have and others do not.

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one man’s failure is attributable to another man’s success...It is against this backdrop of social mobilization and a highly competitive modern sector that communal conflict in culturally plural societies must be understood.” Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, “Modernization and the Politics of Communalism,” *The American Political Science Review* 64 (December 1970), 1116.

<sup>28</sup> Milton J. Esman, *Ethnic Politics*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 18.

<sup>29</sup> J.D. Kandeh, “Politicization of Ethnic Identities in Sierra Leone,” *African Studies Review* 35, No. 1 (1992), 94.

<sup>30</sup> E. Ike Udogu, “The Issue of Ethnicity and Democratization in Africa: Toward the Millennium,” *Journal of Black Studies* 29, No. 6 (July 1999), 798.

Thus a situation arises in which government has increased importance, government resources are scarce, and competition for government is seen along ethnic lines. This combination of factors opens the door for mass acceptance of ethnic conflict. Given the winner take all mentality regarding government, elites can receive the support of followers even in the use of violence in order to preserve or obtain access to political power.<sup>31</sup>

### *Economic Differentiation*

Economic differentiation provides the second comparative feature that elites can play upon to create a zone of permissibility for ethnic conflict. This is a relatively clear-cut process as perceived differences in the economic state of ethnic groups can be used to create a receptive public for ethnic conflict. Several economic based theories are useful in relation to the Zimbabwe experience.

The foundation for the applicable economic theory is Ted Robert Gurr's relative deprivation theory. Relative deprivation is an "actor's perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities."<sup>32</sup> For Gurr "value expectations" are goods and conditions of life which the actor feels they are entitled while "value

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<sup>31</sup> Demet Yalcin Mousseau's finding that political violence has an asymmetric inverted U curved relationship with liberalization/democratization confirms this. In heterogeneous societies the move from slightly autocratic to democratic produces a consistently increasing rate of political violence before decreasing upon the attainment of an established democratic system. In homogenous societies, Mousseau found that there was an increase in violence only up to the point of democratization followed by a decrease. These findings seem to link ethnic political competition with violence. Demet Yalcin Mousseau "Democratizing with Ethnic Divisions: A Source of Conflict?" *Journal of Peace Research* 38, No. 5 (September 2001), 547-567.

<sup>32</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 24.

capabilities” are the goods and conditions which the actor believes they can obtain.<sup>33</sup> When there is a large gap between the two values actors may resort to violence.

A key to relative deprivation theory is to determine how exactly expectations are raised. Gurr provides several factors that contribute to this rise including what he terms “the demonstration effect.” The demonstration effect occurs when peoples are exposed to new experiences which provide context from which to judge their own condition.<sup>34</sup> Gurr presents a series of exposures which might have the effect of raising value expectations. Two are of particular relevance to this study. When a group attains certain values in society it raises expectations for the attainment of other values.<sup>35</sup> When a social group witnesses an attainment in values by another social group it can raise expectations for similar gains.<sup>36</sup> It is these two phenomena, the acknowledgement of relative deprivation as a result of the attainment of other rights/values or as a result of another group’s attainment of rights/values that were used to create a sense of permissibility for ethnic conflict in Zimbabwe.

Building upon Gurr’s relativist economic theory, the “middleman minorities” theory of ethnic conflict also contributes to our understanding of the Zimbabwe situation. First developed by Edna Bonacich, middleman minorities theory seeks to describe the phenomenon by which ethnic minorities that occupy intermediate economic roles in

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>35</sup> Gurr describes contrasts in the level of a group’s participatory (voting) or status (i.e. size) values and their welfare values.

<sup>36</sup> If Group A sees Group B has the right to vote, Group A may soon expect that it be able to vote as well. Ibid., 105-106.

society have become the targets of ethnic violence.<sup>37</sup> According to Bonacich: “Middleman minorities are strangers. They keep themselves apart from the societies in which they dwell, engage in liquidable occupations, are thrifty and organized economically. Hence, they come into conflict with the surrounding society yet are bound to it economically.”<sup>38</sup> This economic dominance can make host communities hostile and ultimately bring discrimination and violence against the minority community. According to Bonacich, most of the time these communities have a “sojourner” character meaning that their presence is meant to be only temporary until they return to their homeland.<sup>39</sup> However, in some cases middlemen minorities decide to remain permanently in the host country becoming “lasting middlemen minorities”.<sup>40</sup> These long-term minority communities create virtual monopolies in particular sectors of the economy.

The difficulty of breaking entrenched middleman monopolies, the difficulty of controlling the growth and extension of their economic power, pushes host countries to ever more extreme restrictions. One finds increasingly harsh measures, piled on one another, until, when all else fails, “final solutions” are enacted.<sup>41</sup>

Again ethnic hostility is caused by the perception of economic differentiation. In Zimbabwe, the middleman minority, the white community, is not actually an economic middleman as they occupy the upper classes of the nation’s economy. The theoretical principle of a host community’s hostility towards an economically entrenched minority, however, is very apt.

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<sup>37</sup> Examples include: the Jews in Europe, Chinese in Southeast Asia, South Asians in East Africa, the Lebanese in West Africa, and the Parsis in India. Edna Bonacich, “A Theory of Middleman Minorities,” *American Sociological Review* 38, No. 5 (October 1973), 583.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 593.

<sup>39</sup> These plans to return to their homeland are not necessarily short-term. In many cases, middleman minority communities remain in a host country for generations but maintain an attachment to their homeland. *Ibid.*, 585.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 592.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

Therefore, economic-based motivations for ethnic conflict provide another tool that can be used by elites to create permissiveness for the generation of ethnic hostility. By emphasizing relative gaps between the economic position of ethnic groups, especially minorities vis-à-vis the majority, leaders can create a sense of entitlement which creates an opening for the use of ethnically hostile tactics.

### *Group Security*

The final motivation that leaders can play upon to create a general will for ethnic conflict is group security. Like political competition and economic differentiation, group security concerns are comparative. The existence of an other, which threatens to harm in part or in whole the physical security of an ethnic group, can create a security dilemma in which a kill or be killed mentality develops.

Donald Horowitz's group comparison theory provides the basis of this theory. Horowitz describes the dichotomy that forms in society between "backward" and "advanced" groups.<sup>42</sup> The split is primarily driven by the feeling of weakness by the backward group relative to the advanced group.<sup>43</sup> This feeling of inferiority often leads to violence against perceived advanced group.

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<sup>42</sup> These categorizations are often the result of historical precedence and in many cases colonial definition. In many colonies, administrators created artificial divisions within society based on ethnicity, deeming certain ethnicities more competent than others. This legacy has carried over into the postcolonial period creating a sense of inferiority on the so-called "backward groups". Horowitz, 167.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Horowitz describes the fear of extinction as one of the main factors contributing to this often extreme response. Backward groups feel the necessity to catch up with perceived advanced groups. If they are unable to catch up, there is a belief that the backward group will be completely dominated by their advanced counterpart.<sup>44</sup> This domination could lead to a situation in which the group “ceases to exist” altogether.<sup>45</sup> Fear of extinction is by nature an “anxiety-laden perception.” Such perceptions “are characterized by a ‘disproportion between the external stimulus and the response,’ and in extreme cases that disproportion is also extreme.”<sup>46</sup> Thus the presence of perceived advanced groups in essence forms an existential threat. The response to such a threat creates a rationalization for the use of extreme measures including violence in order to ensure the survival of the group.

Building upon Horowitz’s threat of extinction, the creation of a security dilemma between competing ethnic groups can also create a basis for violence. Barry Posen frames the problem of ethnic groups emerging from post-colonial/post-imperial situations within the discourse of the realist concept of the security dilemma.<sup>47</sup> For Posen, the dilemma arises in the anarchy created in the transition from colonial/imperial rule to independence. In this period of fluidity it is hard to distinguish between another group’s offensive and defensive intentions. The

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<sup>44</sup>Horowitz explains: “The group must catch up ‘before it is too late.’ The future looks uncertain. In fact, backward groups have frequently exhibited severe anxiety about threats emanating from other groups. One form this anxiety takes is apprehension about being dominated...Every issue can then become a survival issue.” Ibid., 175-176.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>47</sup> Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict” in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, Michael E. Brown, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 103-124.

inherent instability of this period creates a fear that the other side might renege on peace agreements. Making this determination even more difficult is the similarity between offensive and defensive weaponry used in low-level conflict.<sup>48</sup> The result is that groups “invest in and prepare for violence, and thereby make actual violence possible.”<sup>49</sup> In the end, the security dilemma creates a fear of the other group’s offensive intentions and capabilities and therefore a fear for survival. Again the existence of an existential threat creates legitimacy for extreme and often preemptive offensive action which will “save” the group.

Therefore by creating a sense of threat by “the other” against the very existence of the ethnic group, group security provides a useful tool for general acquiescence for extreme action by elites against other ethnic groups. The fear of extinction felt by self-assessed backwards groups and the inherent security dilemma create in transitional period help explain the willingness of the masses to support extreme tactics perpetrated by their leaders.

Each of these motivations, political competition, economic differentiation, and group security, is based upon the idea of relative position. By playing upon differences between ethnic groups leaders can create a zone of permissibility for their actions. This manipulation is exactly what has been perpetrated by the ZANU-PF elite over the last 26 years. In each of the three case studies below, the

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<sup>48</sup> Because the weapons used in communal conflict (light weapons, artillery, sheer man-power) are both offensive and defensive in nature it is difficult to distinguish the intentions of other groups. Therefore the maintenance of arms caches for purely defensive purposes can easily be seen as an offensive threat. This is exactly what happened in Zimbabwe in 1982.

<sup>49</sup> Lake and Rothchild (1996), 43.

ZANU-PF leadership utilized different combinations of the comparative motivators. During the Shona-Ndebele conflict (1982-1987), the Zimbabwean Government utilized political competition and group security concerns to justify their brutal campaign against the Ndebele peoples of the Southwest of the country. In the cooptation of the war veterans (1996-1998) Robert Mugabe used the justification of economic differentiation to build acquiescence for land seizures of white-owned farms. Finally, during the campaign against the Movement for Democratic Change (2000-2006), ZANU-PF has used a combination of all three mechanisms to legitimize its actions.

Ultimately, in all three cases the utilization of the government security apparatus meant that active public participation was not needed. Rather, the above justifications were used in an attempt, with varying levels of success, to create a sense of legitimacy and permissibility within the public. This threshold of acquiescence rather than active participation made the burden of proof significantly lower in regards to gaining public support.<sup>50</sup> We now turn to the first case study, the 1982-1987 campaign against the Ndebele.

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<sup>50</sup> Asking people to actively do something is more difficult than merely asking them to do nothing.

### **III.Shona-Ndebele Conflict: Violence in the Southwest (1982-1987)**

Beginning in 1982, the southwestern Zimbabwean provinces of Matabeleland and the Midlands were subjected to a six year period of violence. While there were fears of the black majority seeking retribution against the white minority in the aftermath of Zimbabwe's independence from white-minority rule, this violence occurred mainly between country's two largest African ethnic groups, the Shona and the Ndebele. Initiated by a small group of disgruntled former combatants and a South African destabilization program, the situation soon escalated into a widespread campaign of government repression which ultimately cost the lives of at least 1,400, the starvation of hundreds of thousands and the imprisonment and torture of countless others.<sup>51</sup> Though sometimes framed in the language of historical antagonisms between the Shona and Ndebele peoples, the so-called "disturbances" were largely the result of contemporary political rivalries and aspirations that had arisen since the rise of the nationalist movement in the early 1960's and into the first years of independence.

As the violence played out, its one-sided nature became clear. The former guerillas that began the conflict lacked a coherent political message, strong leadership, popular support or strategic vision. This organizational weakness reduced their actions to isolated operations that achieved little and further marginalized their position. The Shona-led government on the other hand saw the conflict as an opportunity to widen its control over the county. It developed a clear message, sharp media campaign and a multi-layered military response to achieve its highly focused political goals. The relative success of the

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<sup>51</sup> Some estimates claim the death of up to 20,000 in the violence. However, this paper is basing its data on the extremely conservative figures derived by The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe.

government campaign was seen in the uneven Unity Accord of 1987 which brought hostilities to a close. In the end, the brutal policy against the Ndebele achieved its true purpose the elimination of political opposition within the country.

This case study provides an in-depth examination of the 1982-1987 Shona-Ndebele conflict. As this event is often referred to as the establishment of security in a newly independent country, I will provide additional context to demonstrate the largely political nature of the conflict. To do so it is imperative to show the imbalance between the security threat posed by the dissidents and the robust response of the government within the context of the fluid political situation in post-independence Zimbabwe. Therefore, this section contains a security-focus not present in the subsequent two case-studies which are more purely political. This approach is done through a comparative presentation of the formation, goals, motivations, organization, tactics, and results of the dissidents and government forces. Ultimately, this episode provides the first example of Robert Mugabe's use of ethnic conflict as a means of marginalizing political opposition.

### **Roots of the Conflict**

Although it was the product of contemporary political calculations, the conflict in Matabeleland and the Midlands has its roots in Zimbabwe's long history ranging from pre-colonial times to post-independence. This history created a legacy of ethnic separation and political divergence that set the stage for the eruption of violence in the southwestern provinces in the 1980's.

*Pre-Colonialism, Mfecane and the Initiation of the Shona-Ndebele Rivalry 900-1890*

The history and myth of Shona-Ndebele antagonism dates back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>52</sup>

The Shona emerged as a discernable linguistic group in Zimbabwe by 900 AD.<sup>53</sup>

Between 1000 and 1800 a variety of Shona-speaking states emerged controlling valuable trade routes leading from the region's gold laden interior to the Indian Ocean.<sup>54</sup> By 1700, however, the power of these states began to decline. Depopulation brought about largely by Portuguese colonization and the exhaustion of the gold supply significantly weakened the power of the states.<sup>55</sup> As the income of the external gold trade dropped, individual Shona villages turned against each other as a means of generating wealth through land acquisition and livestock raiding.<sup>56</sup> By 1800, the resulting disaggregation of the Shona states opened the way for outside peoples to move into what had been previously Shona territories. One of these peoples was the Ndebele.

In the 1820's and 1830's, groups of Ngoni speakers, who were members of Northern Zulu, began moving from Southern Africa into the Zimbabwean plane. Briefly settling in what is presently the southwest of Zimbabwe, they continued their movement north in

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<sup>52</sup> The origin of the peoples of Zimbabwe is extremely contentious. Ethnography, historiography and archaeology have been used successively by British, Rhodesian and Zimbabwean leaders to further political agendas. The following brief presentation is taken largely from David Beach's *The Shona and Their Neighbors*, which weighs evidence from all periods of Zimbabwean history in its analysis.

<sup>53</sup> Between 200-900 AD Shona developed as a distinct language. It is based in a combination of Bantu most likely brought to the region by migrants from West Africa and languages spoken by local populations north of the Zambezi. The Shona are comprised of many "peoples" who are often geographically, dialectically and politically distinct. David Beach, *The Shona and Their Neighbors*, (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, US: Blackwell, 1994), 42.

<sup>54</sup> Among these groupings was the Gumanye community who are believed to have constructed the city known as Great Zimbabwe from which the modern Zimbabwean state obtained its name. Ibid, 68-111.

<sup>55</sup> Gold exports from the territory declined by 560% between 1667 and 1790. Ibid, 113-114.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 115.

1836 leaving behind a power vacuum in the territory.<sup>57</sup> In 1838, another group of Ngoni, the Ndebele, entered southwest Zimbabwe led by General Mzilikazi.<sup>58</sup> Mzilikazi established a state with a central capital, but composed of a confederation of allied sub-rulers. The Ndebele ruled through a tribute system whereby Shona villages were given the option of paying a tribute to avoid being raided by Ndebele soldiers. Gradually, the Ndebele language spread through the sparsely populated territory and by 1890 most of the southwest of the country was Ndebele.<sup>59</sup> Overall it was a relatively peaceful form of coexistence.

This reality has been obscured by a mythology of ethnic antagonism that directly fed the violence of the 1980's, the myth of the *mfecane*. Beginning in the 1850's an alternate history appeared which was subsequently perpetuated by British, South African and Rhodesian historians. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Zulu peoples of Southern Africa began migrating north. As they moved a series of conflicts arose throughout the continent that came to be known as *mfecane*, meaning "the crushing". The *mfecane*, as the myth goes, were so violent that they led to the depopulation of large parts of southern Africa and allowed for the entrance of white settlers on now unoccupied land.<sup>60</sup> This theory places Mzilikazi, the Ndebele leader, as a general closely linked to Shaka Zulu's army in Southern Africa and the Ndebele migration into southwestern Zimbabwe firmly within

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<sup>57</sup> As with the Shona, these Ngoni speakers were divided by dialect and other identifications. They often fought among themselves. This internal violence is one of the reasons for their continued migration north. Ibid., 133.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 134.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 133-136.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 129-130.

the *mfecane*.<sup>61</sup> Once in Zimbabwe, the Ndebele established a despotic state which ruled the Shona population harshly taking its crops, raiding its villages and selling its people into slavery ultimately resulting in their extermination from the region.<sup>62</sup> It is this myth of the *mfecane* that has come to identify the Ndebele existence within the country as one of an invading and warrior people who dominated the weak and hapless Shona.<sup>63</sup> This perception would come into play in the violence that occurred between 1982 and 1987.

### *The Colonial State and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence 1889-1965*

The period of colonial rule for the most part did not carry over the legacies of Shona-Ndebele antagonism. By its end a non-ethnic nationalist movement united black Zimbabweans. Fissures within the movement, however, ultimately created an even more significant precondition for the violence that would erupt in Matabeleland and the Midlands in the 1980's.

In 1889, the British South Africa Company launched a series of expeditions predominantly in the eastern sections of the territory that would soon be called Rhodesia. These expeditions resulted in the creation of several settlements that would form the foundation for the expansion of white settlement throughout the country. From 1889 until 1893, the Rhodesian settlers strengthened their position in the eastern portions of the area without confronting the Ndebele state which controlled the southwestern section of the

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<sup>61</sup> There is little evidence that Mzilikazi had anything more than a superficial relationship with Shaka. Ibid, 134.

<sup>62</sup> Part of this theory places the Ndebele as primarily herders as opposed to the agrarian based communities of the Shona. However, evidence demonstrates that the Ndebele were also largely and agrarian people.

<sup>63</sup> This myth became so pervasive that it was even taken up by the Ndebele themselves. It provides the basis for the identification of the Shona as the "backward" group and the Ndebele as the "advanced" group according to Horowitz's categories of group comparison.

territory. In 1893, however, after Shona cattle raids led to an outbreak of violence in the country, the white settlers unified their forces and exerted control over the southwest.<sup>64</sup> For three years, the Rhodesians engaged in a campaign of seizing and killing Ndebele livestock simultaneously weakening the Ndebele state and strengthening the emerging white colony.<sup>65</sup> In 1896, the remnants of the Ndebele state launched a mass uprising, or *chirumenga*. The resistance almost succeeded in overthrowing the white settlers, but ultimately the effort failed as the settlers were able to successfully defend their settlements against Ndebele and Shona attacks. By 1897, the resistance was defeated and the Rhodesian colony began to take shape.

In 1922, the British South Africa Company ceased control of the colony and it came under self-rule of the white minority community. Colonial rule was marked by discrimination and brutality against the African population. Onerous labor and land laws restricted African rights and forced many into life on rural “reserves” or into forced labor in white owned mines throughout the country. Throughout the period of colonial rule there were several incidents of Shona-Ndebele violence, though most of these were localized incidents.<sup>66</sup>

By the 1950’s nationalist African movements across the continent had begun to press for independence. Ghana’s declaration of independence marked the beginning of a new era

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>65</sup> A succession crisis at the time prevented a unified resistance by the Ndebele. Ibid,

<sup>66</sup> In 1929-1930, the city of Bulawayo was the site of a 12 day riot between Shona laborers and Ndebele residents. However, Phimister and van Onselen have determined that the causes of the conflict were primarily the result of economic desperation rather than latent ethnic hostilities. Ian Phimister and Charles van Onselen, “The Political Economy of Tribal Animosity: A Case Study of the 1929 Bulawayo Location ‘Faction Fight,’” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 6, no. 1 (1979).

for African politics. In Rhodesia the nationalist movement also began to coalesce. In 1957, the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress was created (ANC).<sup>67</sup> The ANC's platform was explicitly non-racial and sought the abolition of discriminatory laws that restricted land ownership and suffrage.<sup>68</sup> The ANC organized both in rural and urban areas and garnered the support of both Shona and Ndebele. The ANC's leader was an Ndebele lay preacher named Joshua Nkomo. Within two years, the Rhodesian government recognizing the threat that the ANC posed banned it and arrested 300 of its leaders.<sup>69</sup> It soon reformed as the National Democratic Party (NDP) and developed a more radical agenda which called for majority control of the government.<sup>70</sup> Nkomo remained leader; however questions about his competency ultimately would ultimately lead to the fracturing of the nationalist movement.

In 1961, facing British pressure to respond to nationalist demands the two main white political parties met with the NDP in the capital Salisbury to formulate a new constitution. The NDP's delegation led by Nkomo demanded universal suffrage whereas the hard-line Rhodesian Dominion Party (DP) wanted no change at all. The governing United Federal Party (UFP) proposed a compromise whereby there would be two voter rolls determined by income. Even though this technically would extend the vote to all Rhodesians, white and black, it practically meant the maintenance of minority rule for the foreseeable future given the discrepancy in white and black incomes. Nkomo under

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<sup>67</sup>Rhodesia had a long history of nationalist movements. However, the white colonists had for the most part successful countered their spread through repressive laws against organization. Martin Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe*, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2002), 24.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 25. The 1957 electorate consisted of 52,000 of whom 560 were African.

<sup>69</sup> Nkomo escaped arrest and traveled to London. Ibid., 25.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 26.

tremendous pressure from the British representative to the conference accepted the compromise.<sup>71</sup> Upon the announcement of the agreement, Nkomo faced a tremendous backlash from within the NDP. Nkomo and the NDP were forced to repudiate the deal but the agreement had already been struck and it easily was accepted in a referendum boycotted by the nationalists.<sup>72</sup>

By 1962 the NDP was banned and replaced by the Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU). Nkomo decided that given the restrictions placed on organization within Rhodesia, ZAPU should operate largely outside of the country and combat minority rule externally. In 1963, he convened a meeting of nationalist leaders in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to plan further action. However, upon arrival the other leaders found that Nkomo did not even have the support of Tanzanian leader Julius Nyerere. Fed up, several high ranking leaders of ZAPU urged Nkomo to abandon the external campaign of circumvention and take up a strategy of confrontation.<sup>73</sup> Nkomo refused and in the summer of 1963 a group of ZAPU leaders led by Reverend Nabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe split from the party and formed the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).

The Rhodesian government, now led by hardliner Ian Smith, sought to exploit the split in the nationalist movement by cracking down on both ZAPU and ZANU through mass arrests. At the same time the British were coming under increasing international pressure to end its colonial control over the territory. The British sought to negotiate with both the Smith regime and the nationalists to reach an agreement that would bring independence

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<sup>71</sup> B. Vulindlela Mtshali, *Rhodesia: Background to Conflict*, (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967), 110-111.

<sup>72</sup> Meredith, 28.

<sup>73</sup> Vulindlela., 125.

under terms different than the 1961 constitution which was widely perceived to be discriminatory. Smith, however, perceived that with the weakening of the nationalist movement he was in a position of power and refused to compromise.<sup>74</sup> On November 11, 1965, Smith unilaterally declared the state of Rhodesia independence.

*The War of Independence, the ZANU-ZAPU Rivalry, and the Patriotic Front 1965-1980*

The war of independence saw the further separation of ZANU and ZAPU through the development of quasi-ethnic identities and the entrenchment of mutual mistrust. Though ultimately re-unified in military combat, their differences remained beyond independence and significantly contributed to the violence of the 1980's.

By 1964, both ZANU and ZAPU realized that armed confrontation was necessary to achieve majority rule. The war of independence was marked almost as much by the contentiousness of ZANU/ZAPU relations as the conflict with the white Rhodesian regime. From their very beginnings ZANU and ZAPU had viewed each other with distrust and ill-will.<sup>75</sup> As each sought to organize for conflict the gap between the two widened. ZANU and ZAPU initially were forced to recruit from the same pool of expatriate Zimbabweans residing in neighboring countries such as Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique. This brought tensions to a boil. ZAPU, possessing a greater initial institutional structure, was able to organize more quickly and recruit a larger pool of forces for its armed wing the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA). In an attempt to catch up, ZANU's armed wing the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 131.

<sup>75</sup> In 1963-1964 much of the violence within Rhodesia was actually the result of turf wars between ZANU and ZAPU followers. Meredith, 33.

(ZANLA) began attacking ZIPRA forces based in Zambia, capturing them and then “press-ganging” them into service.<sup>76</sup> Such open attacks between the groups were common and created a legacy of mistrust between the two armies.<sup>77</sup>

The ZANU and ZAPU split also extended to their external supporters. ZANLA received Chinese assistance whereas ZIPRA was trained and equipped largely by the Soviet Union. More significantly the two armies soon established bases in different frontline states. ZANLA’s border camps were located mainly in Mozambique bordering the northeastern portion of the country. ZIPRA on the other hand had its bordering camps largely in Zambia near the western area of Rhodesia. These divergent locations had an important impact on the makeup of the two armies.

As the war progressed, each side began to gain recruits from within Rhodesia through voluntary recruitment programs in the regions bordering their respective bases.<sup>78</sup>

Therefore, ZANLA drew largely from the heavily Shona eastern region of the country and ZIPRA from the predominately Ndebele west. Neither force was explicitly ethnic by definition. Additionally, both armies consisted of Shona and Ndebele forces. However,

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<sup>76</sup> Josiah Tungamirai, “Recruitment to ZANLA: Building Up a War Machine,” in Ngwabi Bhebe & Terence Ranger, eds., *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War* (Harare: UZP, 1995), 40-41.

<sup>77</sup> This mistrust was clearly seen later in the war. ZIPRA and ZANLA had engaged in a solely guerilla struggle against the Rhodesian regime. However, in 1977, ZIPRA began to organize and train regular armed forces to secure the country in the post-independence period. Several ZANLA leaders became convinced that the new units were being developed to overthrow any non-ZAPU government. See: Dumiso Dabengwa, “ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation,” in Ngwabi Bhebe & Terence Ranger, eds., *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War* (Harare: UZP, 1995), 35.

<sup>78</sup> Tungamirai, 41-42. ZANLA in particular began to recruit followers from villages in the border regions through the use of nighttime meetings called *pungwes*, which combined political speeches with spiritual singing.

this quirk of geography affixed the Shona and Ndebele identities to ZANU and ZAPU respectively.

Throughout the conflict the two armies were continually pressured to unite their actions by their African supporters.<sup>79</sup> Each time the initiatives failed as the two forces could not develop the trust needed to combine or coordinate their activities. Finally, in 1979 in the final months of the war, the two sides were able to unite under the Patriotic Front (PF).<sup>80</sup> Under the Patriotic Front the ZAPU and ZANU restructured their political and military structures so as to loosely unify their organizational structure. The main purpose of the PF was to strengthen the nationalist position in the upcoming peace negotiations to be held in Britain. Despite significant misgivings, especially within ZANU on the possibility that Nkomo would emerge as the post-independence leader, the front held through the negotiations.<sup>81</sup>

In late 1979, British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington chaired a conference in London to resolve the conflict in Rhodesia. Attended by representatives of the Patriotic Front and the Rhodesian regime, the Lancaster House Conference ultimately led to the holding of elections under universal suffrage, and the demobilization and integration of three major armed forces. Issues surrounding both of these goals set the stage for the rise in violence in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces in 1982.

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<sup>79</sup> Major efforts were launched in 1967, 1973, 1974, 1976 and 1977 each failed because of ZIPRA and/or ZANLA non-participation.

<sup>80</sup> Dabengwa, 35.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. Even in unity, the two sides were loosely held together. Each maintained separate headquarters and spokesmen throughout the proceedings. Meredith, 38.

### *The 1980 Elections-Setting the Stage for Future Conflict*

Upon the conclusion of the conference, Robert Mugabe, the ZANU party leader announced that it would stand alone in the upcoming elections, dissolving the Patriotic Front.<sup>82</sup> In February 1980 the elections were held and Mugabe's renamed Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) won a resounding victory taking 57 of the 100 seats, giving it a majority but falling short of the 66 seats needed to change the constitution. Nkomo's ZAPU, running under the name Patriotic Front, won just 20 seats, all of which were from constituencies located in the heavily Ndebele Matabeleland region of the country.<sup>83</sup> Mugabe offered Nkomo the post of President, a purely ceremonial position. Nkomo refused saying that he did not want to retreat into "an official prison."<sup>84</sup> After negotiation, Nkomo was ultimately given the Home Affairs portfolio.<sup>85</sup> As the country entered independence, Mugabe had firm control over government, with only Nkomo and Matabeleland standing between him and virtual one-party rule. This did not bode well for either Nkomo or the region.

### *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration*

The second part of the Lancaster House resolution was the planned disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and unification of the three major forces; ZANLA, ZIPRA and the Rhodesian Defense Forces.<sup>86</sup> Most of the Rhodesian forces were

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<sup>82</sup> Meredith , 38.

<sup>83</sup> 3 seats went to the United African National Council and the remaining 20 were reserved for whites. David Caute, *Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1983), 424.

<sup>84</sup> Meredith, 39.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> There are divergent estimates of the force totals of the combatants due in large part to the concealment of actual numbers by the parties themselves. However, it appears that there were approximately 120,000-150,000 total combatants at the end of the war consisting of 90,000-100,000 Rhodesian forces, 20,000-

demobilized internally as conscription was ended, negative units were disbanded and South African support troops returned home.<sup>87</sup> For the ZIPRA and ZANLA guerillas however, DDR was to take place within the confines of an established camp structure. The program enjoyed moderate success as 17,000 guerillas reported to the camps during the established 2-week ceasefire period, with a further 5,000 entering after the official period ended.<sup>88</sup> Significant numbers of both ZIPRA and ZANLA forces within the country and based in neighboring countries refused to enter the camps.<sup>89</sup> There were also reports throughout the country of forces hiding arms caches rather than turning them in. The presence of unaccounted for soldiers and weapons created a feeling of unease within the country on all sides.

Perhaps the most difficult part of dealing with former combatants was the creation of an integrated armed force comprised of troops from each of the three armies. The process for integration began with the cantonment of forces in camps designated as exclusively for ZANLA or ZIPRA. However, the integration and retraining process was slow. By the end of 1980 several thousand ZIPRA and ZANLA troops remained cantoned across the country. It was decided that these remaining forces would be relocated to housing

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30,000 ZANLA forces, and 8,000-15,000 ZIPRA soldiers. Susan Willet, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Military Spending Trends and Developments in Southern Africa: Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa*, Feb. 1997 Ed., July 1997, pp.25-26. (Accessed April 20, 2005); Available from: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/16/49/1886726.pdf>

<sup>87</sup> Martin Rupiah, "Demobilization and Integration: 'Operation Merger' and the Zimbabwe National Defense Forces, 1980-1987", *African Security Studies Review* 4, no.3 (1995). (Accessed April 20, 2005); Available from: <http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/ASR/4No3/Demoblisation.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Jeffrey Davidow, *A Peace in Southern Africa: The Lancaster House Conference on Rhodesia, 1979*. (Cambridge: Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, 1984), 91.

<sup>89</sup> It was reported that up to 1/3 of ZANLA forces were ordered not to enter the demobilization camps by their commanders. Ibid.

schemes in and around major city centers in the country.<sup>90</sup> However, the new housing areas did not separate ZANLA and ZIPRA forces. Problems soon arose. In October 1980, former members of ZANLA and ZIPRA now integrated in the new Zimbabwean armed forces clashed with each other in the new housing camps.<sup>91</sup> A few weeks later, ZANU government minister Enos Nkala declared in a speech that: “ZAPU has declared itself the enemy of ZANU-PF...if it means a few blows, we will deliver them.”<sup>92</sup> This was followed immediately by the outbreak of violence between former ZANLA and ZIPRA forces at a housing camp in the Bulawayo suburb of Entumbane.<sup>93</sup> Order was eventually restored after 2 days of fighting.

Entumbane was the scene of an even more serious outbreak of violence in February 1981. Fighting again broke out between ex-ZIPRA and ZANLA troops and soon spread to the surrounding towns of Ntabazinduna and Glenville.<sup>94</sup> Former ZIPRA forces in the vicinity came to join the battle against the former ZANLA elements.<sup>95</sup> Former Rhodesian Defense Forces had to be called in to restore order. In the end 300 people were killed and the entire city of Bulawayo, the country’s second largest, had to be closed.<sup>96</sup>

By the beginning of 1981 the country was on edge. The tensions that had developed between ZANU and ZAPU during the war had risen to the surface politically and

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<sup>90</sup> The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, *Breaking the Silence Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980 to 1988*, (The Legal Resources Foundation: Harare, 1997), 32.

<sup>91</sup> Rupiah.

<sup>92</sup> Catholic Commission, 32.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> In one particularly disturbing scene, ZIPRA forces surrounded a company of ZANLA forces and proceeded to shell them with mortars for 16 hours. Rupiah.

<sup>96</sup> Catholic Commission, 32.

militarily. This hostile environment was primed to boil over. A few precipitating events ensured that it would.

### **Precipitants to the Conflict**

Over a period of six months in 1982 three events occurred that brought the tense situation in Zimbabwe to a head. These events: the discovery of arms caches in ZAPU territory; the arrest and removal of ZAPU leaders from the government; and the kidnap and murder of 6 foreign tourists were each carried out by different actors. They built upon each other eventually leading the outbreak of widespread conflict in the southwest of the country.

In February 1982, Prime Minister Robert Mugabe announced the discovery of large caches of weapons on ZAPU-owned farms throughout the country.<sup>97</sup> Coming in the aftermath of the Entumbane violence, the discovery greatly exacerbated the already widening rift between ZANU and ZAPU. In the year following the 1981 violence, official statements made by ZANU-PF government officials increasingly targeted ZAPU leaders and followers.<sup>98</sup> The discovery of the arms pushed this largely rhetorical battle over the edge. Mugabe and the ZANU-PF leadership had long suspected that ZAPU planned to overthrow any non-ZAPU led government.<sup>99</sup> Now there was clear evidence of the existence of such a plot.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Recall ZANU's fear of the development of regular ZIPRA forces for this reason. ZAN-PF fears largely arose out of fear of the far superior forces of ZIPRA which had received assistance from the Soviet Union.

There is evidence that the discovery and possibly the creation of the caches themselves were part of a South African destabilization effort carried out by double agents working within the Zimbabwean Central Intelligence Organization (CIO).<sup>100</sup> It is likely that the “discovery” of the weapons caches was timed to cause the most political damage to ZANU-ZAPU relations. CIO agents had known about the existence of the caches for over a year; however Mugabe was not informed about them until early in 1982.<sup>101</sup> Taken with the growing animosity between the parties, the discovery of the weapons caches at this sensitive time pushed the relationship past “a point of no-return”.<sup>102</sup>

The discovery of the arms caches led directly to the second precipitating act, the arrest and removal of ZAPU leaders from government posts. Mugabe saw the discovery of the weapons as an opportunity to marginalize his only true opposition and at the same time move closer to his dream of establishing a one-party state. In the six weeks following the discovery of the weapons caches, most high ranking ZAPU officials were removed from office including Joshua Nkomo and three other ZAPU cabinet ministers.<sup>103</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>100</sup>During the subsequent trial of one of the weapons caches, it came out that ZIPRA members had frequent contact with then CIO station chief Matt Calloway during the period of weapons caching. Calloway subsequently defected to South Africa and organized part of that country’s destabilization program in southwestern Zimbabwe. Joseph Hanlon, *Beggar Thy Neighbor: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 183.

<sup>101</sup> The existence of extant arms caches was widely known. In 1981, the British press even reported on the existence of such remnants of the war. In January 1982, ZANU and ZAPU leaders, including Mugabe and Nkomo, met to discuss how to handle the problem of such caches. However, before the committee could act the news of the ZAPU caches was broken. Ibid. Catholic Commission, 41.

<sup>102</sup> Catholic Commission, 41.

<sup>103</sup> The political calculations that informed Mugabe’s decision to remove the ZAPU leadership are clear in the reapportionment of the vacated cabinet posts. Mugabe greatly desired the creation of a stronger executive in the country’s governing structure, however ZANU-PF’s 57 seats fell 9 votes short of the requisite 2/3 required to alter the constitution. Immediately following the removal the 4 ZAPU MPs from the Cabinet, a group of white MPs split from Ian Smith’s Republican Front becoming independent representatives. Mugabe formed an alliance with the independent white MPs awarding them two spots in the cabinet left vacant after the firings of the ZAPU representatives. John Edlin, “Mugabe Threatens to Jail Nkomo, Renews Charges of Coup Plot, *The Associated Press*, February 28, 1982. Accessed May 2, 2005. Available from LexisNexis. *see also* “Seven Whites in Parliament Backing Mugabe, *The Associated Press*,

several leading ZIPRA commanders were put on trial for high treason related to the discovery of the caches.<sup>104</sup> ZANU-PF's actions did serve to marginalize ZAPU and its followers, however with this marginalization came discontent. Urban violence broke out around the country as gangs of ZAPU supporters protested the targeting of their leaders.<sup>105</sup> Joshua Nkomo warned that the country was on the “brink of war”.<sup>106</sup> Mugabe tried to bring the situation back under control by appointing three new ZAPU representatives to the parliament; however the damage had already been done. Motivated in large part by firings and arrests large numbers of former ZIPRA soldiers deserted the armed forces and returned to their homes in the southwest of the country. Most of the soldiers peacefully returned to their homes, but a few hundred formed armed gangs that roamed the countryside carrying out acts of banditry or political violence.

The final act which brought about the explosion of violence in the Matabeleland and the Midlands was the kidnapping and murder of 6 foreign tourists by former ZIPRA forces in Matabeleland. On July 23, 1982 a group of 10 tourists returning from an expedition to Victoria Falls were stopped at a roadblock set up by a band of ex-combatants. The soldiers robbed the group, took 6 tourists hostage and released the other 4. They demanded that the government release two former ZIPRA commanders, Lookout Masuku and Dumiso Dabengwa, who were on trial for treason for their involvement in the

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March 4, 1982. Accessed May 2, 2005. Available from LexisNexis. see: “White Party in Zimbabwe Suffers Another Defection, *Christian Science Monitor*, March 10, 1982. Accessed May 2, 2005. Available from LexisNexis. see: John Edlin, “Two Whites Named to Zimbabwe Cabinet, *The Associated Press*, April 16, 1982. Accessed May 2, 2005. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>104</sup> Dumiso Dabengwa., a participant in the January 1982 ZANU-ZAPU discussions on the caches was later acquitted of charges of treason. Catholic Commission, 41.

<sup>105</sup> “Rival Political Supporters in Street Fighting, *The Associated Press*, March 21, 1982. Accessed May 2, 2005. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>106</sup> “Zimbabwe In Brief: Nkomo Says Country “On Brink of War. *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, April 6, 1982. Accessed May 2, 2005. Available from LexisNexis.

weapons cache case.<sup>107</sup> The government refused and launched a massive search. Nkomo appealed to the kidnappers to release the hostages and asked the local population to assist in the search. The murdered bodies were not located for another year.

The kidnapping marked the beginning of the disturbances in the southwest of the country. For the next 6 years the local population was forced to endure violence perpetrated by former ZIPRA combatants, known as “the dissidents” and by the government’s armed forces.

### **The Dissidents**

There were two main groups of dissidents; Super-ZAPU a small South African created and funded force of former ZIPRA soldiers that operated only in the first years of the conflict; and regular dissidents, groups of loosely organized former ZIPRA soldiers which acted almost completely independently. An undeveloped message, limited resources, lack of strong leadership and failure to generate public support restricted dissident activity to isolated acts of political violence. Their presence in Matabeleland was largely responsible for the beginning of violence in the province; however, their weakness meant that they had only a marginal impact on the direction and outcome of the conflict.

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<sup>107</sup> Both were later acquitted based on a lack of evidence. “Nkomo Supporters Hold 6 Tourists, *Facts on File World News Digest*, August 6, 1982. Accessed May 2, 2005. Available from LexisNexis.

## Super-ZAPU

Super-ZAPU was the product of the South African destabilization program against Zimbabwe. Acting as a proxy for South African interests in the country, this extremely small group had very specific goals closely linked with its sponsor state. Its operations closely matched its goals. However, its limited size prevented it from having a major impact in the region. The force was ultimately abandoned after only 2 years of operation.

## *Motivation*

As states throughout sub-Saharan Africa gained their independence, apartheid South Africa found itself increasingly isolated. To combat the ever growing list of hostile frontline states, South Africa adopted a policy of covert destabilization and support for proxy armed groups.<sup>108</sup> With the Zimbabwe's declaration of independence, South Africa now had to contend with a potentially hostile state directly on its border. South Africa contributed heavily to the white Rhodesian war effort, even supplying combat units, and viewed the new majority ruled state with great caution.<sup>109</sup> With the onset of Zimbabwean independence South Africa instituted a destabilization program.

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<sup>108</sup> South African support for RENAMO in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola are examples of this policy.

<sup>109</sup> South Africa's fears were confirmed when Prime Minister Mugabe made the following declaration shortly after independence: We have moral and political obligations to the people of Namibia and of South Africa. We uphold the right of Namibians to fight for liberation, to have their land back. Similarly, we uphold the right of the people of South Africa to establish a democratic system in their country. We will assist, at international forums, in the Organisation of African Unity, the non-Aligned Movement and in the UN where we hope to play an active part in obtaining the objective of liberation in those countries. John Dzimba, *South Africa's Destabilization of Zimbabwe, 1980-89*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 51.

### *Goals*

South Africa had two major goals in its destabilization program of Zimbabwe: to prevent Zimbabwe from establishing a successful multi-racial state that could provide a model for post-Apartheid South Africa and to prevent the use of Zimbabwean territory as a base for African National Congress (ANC) operations.<sup>110</sup> It was with these dual goals in mind that South Africa began the development and deployment of Super-ZAPU in the southwest of the country.

### *Formation*

In the first two years of independence (1980-1981), South Africa's destabilization program in Zimbabwe largely consisted of operations carried out by its own agents and double agents within the country. Between 1981 and 1982 South African saboteurs carried out a series of attacks aimed at Zimbabwean political, economic and military targets. These included: an October 1981 destruction of a vital rail line connecting the eastern city of Mutare with the Mozambiquan port of Beira<sup>111</sup>; a December 1981 assassination attempt against Prime Minister Robert Mugabe in which ZANU-PF headquarters were blown up killing 7 and injuring 124<sup>112</sup>; and the August 1981 destruction of Z\$50 million of munitions at the Inkomo Barracks outside of Harare.<sup>113</sup> After the death of several of its agents caught carrying out acts of sabotage in Zimbabwe,

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>111</sup> South Africa sought to stunt Zimbabwean economic development. The destruction of the rail lines into Mozambique were part of a policy targeted at restricting the use and development of commercial transportation throughout the country. In addition to destroying arteries to neighboring countries, South Africa also prohibited the sale and maintenance of locomotives previously leased to the country during the period of the Rhodesian Republic. Ibid., 97.

<sup>112</sup> Catholic Commission, 3. South African agents also targeted ANC leaders residing in the country, such as ANC representative Joe Nqabi, who was murdered in August 1981. Dzimba, 56.

<sup>113</sup> Dzimba, 55.

South Africa shifted its destabilization policy at the beginning of 1982 to one of proxy war.<sup>114</sup>

In early 1982, South Africa launched Operation Drama, a train and equip program which sought to organize malcontent ex-ZIPRA soldiers. These former combatants were extremely displeased with the ZANU-PF government of Robert Mugabe and sought a way to combat it. Run by two colonels in South Africa's Special Forces, Operation Drama established links with ex-ZIPRA in the Dukwe refugee camp in neighboring Botswana.<sup>115</sup> The resulting force was called Super-ZAPU.

### *Organization*

Super-ZAPU was an extremely small organization. Operation Drama resulted in the training of "tens" of soldiers.<sup>116</sup> Units operated in small bands of combatants under the orders of South African and ex-Rhodesian agents based in Botswana. The groups were armed by South African supplied caches located in Botswana.<sup>117</sup> Men and arms were then infiltrated into Zimbabwe over the porous border. Weapons supplied included light machine guns (AK47 and RPK), ammunition, anti-personnel mines, rocket launchers, rocket propelled grenades and plastic explosives.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> These included the 1981 deaths of 3 members of the South African Defense Forces which provided clear evidence of South Africa's covert destabilization program. Catholic Commission, 29.

<sup>115</sup> Hanlon, 180.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>118</sup> Weaponry was the main determinant that differentiated Super-ZAPU from other dissident groups. Other ex-ZIPRA used weapons from caches set up during the war of independence. Super-ZAPU on the other hand had newer weapons, many of which post-dated independence and differed in make from the weaponry used during the independence struggle. Ibid. Additionally, Super-ZAPU groups were supplied with intelligence obtained by South African funded, surveillance flights over western Zimbabwe carried out by French pilots. Dzimba, 61.

### *Tactics*

As stated above, Super-ZAPU's operations had two major purposes, the destabilization of Zimbabwe and the targeting of ANC operations. In the pursuit of these goals, Super-ZAPU employed a variety of tactics during its operational period, 1982-1984.

Destabilization operations came in three main forms; political violence, attacks on whites and sabotage of development projects. Super-ZAPU sought to exploit the political tensions that existed in the country by perpetrating a series of attacks against ZANU-PF supporters in the region.<sup>119</sup> The overtly political attacks were carried out to demonstrate the weakness of the government and to exploit and escalate tension within the political establishment.

A major target of Super-ZAPU attacks was the white community living in Matabeleland. A number attacks were committed against white farmers in the region. In addition, two white senators, Paul Savage and Max Rosenfels were assassinated by Super-ZAPU forces while on their farms in the area.<sup>120</sup> These attacks were aimed at causing panic within the white community remaining in Zimbabwe. While it might seem odd that a South African controlled force would target whites, South Africa desperately did not want a majority ruled Zimbabwe in which whites lived harmoniously with blacks. The existence of such a state threatened the very ideological foundations upon which the apartheid state was based.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>120</sup> Hanlon, 181.

The final type of destabilization attacks were those perpetrated against development projects in the area. South Africa was incredibly fearful of the possible threat that a stable and developed Zimbabwe would pose. Super-ZAPU sought to prevent such a state through the targeting of rural development projects in the southwest of the country. Attacks were carried out against clinics, literacy programs and agricultural extension projects throughout Matabeleland.<sup>121</sup> The planned effects of such attacks were two-fold: first they slowed overall development weakening the economic base of the country; they also created discontent among the rural mostly Ndebele populations to whom these projects were dedicated, further weakening the control of the Zimbabwean state.

Besides destabilization, creating an operationally difficult environment for the ANC was the other main goal of Super-ZAPU operations in the region. Units operating in the Matabeleland South region directly engaged existing ANC cadres in the area. Additionally, Super-ZAPU purposely carried out display operations to draw the Zimbabwean army into regions where the ANC traditionally had operational bases. This created a crowding out effect which made it harder for the ANC to operate quasi-independently in the region bordering South Africa.<sup>122</sup>

### *Results*

Overall, Super-ZAPU operations had an extremely limited impact. Though well armed, their small numbers prevented them from carrying out anything more than isolated

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<sup>121</sup> Dzimba, 59-60.

<sup>122</sup> Hanlon, 182.

attacks against their respective targets. Additionally, the minor violence that they perpetrated created an opening for an overwhelming government response (see below) that ultimately strengthened the Zimbabwean government and extended its control over the entirety of the country.

### *The End of Super-ZAPU*

After just 2 years of operation, Super-ZAPU was phased out at the end of 1984. Three factors led to its demise. First was the inability to maintain Super-ZAPU force levels. Though initially attracted to the possibility of combating the ZANU-PF government, Super-ZAPU forces became increasingly disillusioned with their work as South African proxies. During the war of independence, ZIPRA had conducted a series of joint operations with the ANC forging ties between the organizations. As the Super-ZAPU campaign progressed it became clear that rather than fighting for the interest of ZAPU, Super-ZAPU was fighting for South Africa.<sup>123</sup> Hostility of other ex-ZIPRA reinforced these misgivings. These sentiments resulted in abandonment by many of the Super-ZAPU soldiers and the inability to recruit replacements. The development of a more effective response to Super-ZAPU arming and infiltration also contributed to the group's downfall. By 1984, Zimbabwean governmental forces had effectively deployed along the country's border with Botswana and were more effective in preventing movement of forces across the border.<sup>124</sup> Additionally, Botswana began to crack down on the group's operations

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<sup>123</sup> One former Super-ZAPU combatant stated: "We said we don't want to be UNITA." Catholic Commission, 35.

<sup>124</sup> An example of this is an August 1984 fight between Zimbabwean forces and Super-ZAPU near the border. Hanlon, 181.

within the country.<sup>125</sup> The final factor in Super-ZAPU's demise was the cessation of South African support. In May 1984, the South African Security Chief P.W. van der Westhuizen held talks with Zimbabwean Army Chief of Staff Sheba Gava resulting in a truce between the two countries.<sup>126</sup> Though the truce ultimately did not hold, it marked a shift in South African policy away from the promotion of proxy soldiers within the country. The increasing difficulty in supplying and recruiting forces led South Africa to turn elsewhere in its campaign against Zimbabwe. By the beginning of 1985, Super-ZAPU had ceased to exist.

### Regular Dissidents

The unaffiliated regular dissidents comprised the vast majority of non-governmental combatants operating in the region. Though much larger than Super-ZAPU, this collection of former ZIPRA troops still constituted a small operational force. Driven into rebellion primarily through discontent fear of the post-independent government, this group failed to develop a coherent message or goals. The result was a largely ad hoc and survival based tactical approach that alienated the group from the local population. As with Super-ZAPU, the activities of the regular dissidents primarily opened the way for governmental action that solidified ZANU-PF's control of the country.

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<sup>125</sup> For example in December 1983, Botswana captured a Super-ZANU agent, Hillary Vincent and turned him over to Zimbabwean authorities. Botswana later captured two South African arms caches in the country. Ibid., 180.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 181.

### *Motivation*

Regular dissident revolt was motivated primarily by concerns about the ZANU-PF controlled government and military. Difficulties in the integration of the armed forces and the perceived persecution of ZAPU and ZIPRA leaders created a sense of alienation among this group of former combatants resulting in desertion and for some rebellion.

In the aftermath of the violence at Entumbane in 1981, in which former ZANLA and ZIPRA forces engaged in open combat (see above), tensions ran high. Rumors spread that ZIPRA contingents sent for training had disappeared and that food for ex-ZIPRA soldiers had been poisoned.<sup>127</sup> In some units, high ranking ZIPRA soldiers were demoted while lower ranking ZANLA forces were promoted past them.<sup>128</sup> This resulted in a sense of threat and that ex-ZIPRA did not have a place in the new Zimbabwean National Army (ZNA).

This sentiment was compounded significantly with the arrest and removal from government posts of several high ranking ZAPU and ZIPRA officials following the discovery of illicit arms caches in February 1982. For many this was the last straw. In the winter of 1982, thousands of ex-ZIPRA soldiers deserted from the ZNA and returned to their homes in the southwest of the country or fled to refugee camps in neighboring Botswana.<sup>129</sup> However, several hundred of the deserters, feeling threatened by the attacks

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<sup>127</sup> Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Terence Ranger, *Violence & Memory: One Hundred Year in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*, (James Curry: Oxford, 2000), 186-187.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>129</sup> In an interview an ex-ZIPRA deserter stated: "Our party put us into this integration to form the National Army. Because of the problems we encountered there we left... We wouldn't have left if there were no problems." *Ibid.*, 192.

against ZAPU and ZIPRA, made the decision to actively oppose the ZANU-PF government and took up arms. This decision appears to have been more motivated by survival than by a developed political decision to overthrow the government.<sup>130</sup> One dissident interviewed after the conflict states “In the 1980’s war, no one was recruited, we were forced by the situation, all of us just met in the bush. Each person left on his own, running from death.”<sup>131</sup>

### *Goals*

Unlike Super-ZAPU, the regular dissidents lacked a cohesive set of goals. Instead they had three general types of goals that dictated operations: immediate survival, ad-hoc goals such as the release of specific ZAPU prisoners<sup>132</sup> and general opposition to the ZANU-PF government. The undefined and limited nature of these objectives were largely caused by the dissident’s isolation from their traditional leaders and resulted in the group’s isolation from the general public.

### *Leadership Vacuum*

From the beginning, the dissidents found themselves cut off from their traditional leaders. Following the discovery of the arms caches in February 1982, a large number of ZIPRA commanders were detained. Those upper level ZIPRA and ZAPU leaders who escaped

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<sup>130</sup> In their study on Matabeleland, Alexander, McGregor and Ranger determined that “the view that these former guerillas took up arms with a clear plan to ‘overthrow’ the Mugabe government is not borne out by the testimonies of those we interviewed. Rather, they stressed the life-threatening pressures of what they called ‘the situation’ and their abandonment by their leaders, who were often in jail or who actively disassociated themselves from and condemned their activities.” p.192.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> The 1982 kidnapping of the 6 foreign tourists and subsequent demand for the release of ZIPRA commanders is an example of this type of goal.

arrest quickly separated themselves from the dissidents.<sup>133</sup> This resulted in the absence of virtually any kind of developed political program. Additionally, the lack of upper level ZIPRA commanders severely limited the operational congruity between operational brigades. The dissidents were left with mid-level military leadership and no political apparatus. This resulted in a solely military program operating at a low-level.

### *Organization*

At their height, the regular dissidents numbered no more than 400.<sup>134</sup> In an attempt to differentiate themselves from Super-ZAPU, the dissidents organized themselves based on the territorial responsibilities of the old ZIPRA command. Matabeleland was divided into three regions led by a regional commander. Each region had several platoons of 15-30 soldiers. Operationally the platoons were divided into subgroups of 5.<sup>135</sup> Despite this semi-hierarchical structure, the subgroups and platoons largely operated independently without much coordination. This decentralized makeup led primarily to operations of convenience.

The dissidents lacking a political arm could not garner outside support to supply their efforts. This meant that they had to obtain supplies completely on their own.<sup>136</sup> This

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<sup>133</sup> Catholic Commission, 34.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>136</sup> A dissident interviewed by Alexander, McGregor & Ranger stated: The first war was well known internationally. It was supported by super powers and small countries...Zapu and supreme commander Joshua Nkomo (were) organizing clothes, food, weapons, ammunition and man power... Whatever we needed, it was easy to get...The second war of the 1980s was not supported by any political party or country...Clothes, food, ammunition was difficult to get. Alexander, McGregor & Ranger,200. The absence of political legitimacy combined with local resentment and government repression also withheld another important resource from the dissidents, information. During the war of independence, ZIPRA guerillas had been assisted immensely by local youth who passed on information about Rhodesian

organizational reality had a significant impact operationally as most actions were forced to be maintenance focused. The groups were armed by ZAPU weapons caches remaining from the war of independence and from weapons taken after deserting from the ZNA. These sources were extremely limited however, and the force faced severe munitions shortages for the entire period of the conflict.<sup>137</sup> These organizational weaknesses dictated the tactical approach taken by the regular dissidents.

### *Tactics*

The regular dissidents carried out two types of tactical operations; operations for personal gain and survival which targeted the local Ndebele population; and destabilization operations aimed at government targets and whites. Because of their overall weakness, most dissident activity was restricted to the night.<sup>138</sup> The ad hoc nature of both types of operations is largely a reflection of the group's organizational weaknesses. The result was an ineffectual campaign that ostracized the dissidents from the local population, created widespread government repression and ultimately led to the virtual destruction of ZAPU.

The majority of dissident activity can be characterized as operations of personal gain or survival that involved interaction, consensually or more often violently, with the local Ndebele population. These operations fell into three categories; food and shelter, robbery, and personal violence.

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movement in the area. During the 1980's conflict the dissident's lack of political legitimacy removed this organizational element significantly hampering dissident effectiveness. Ibid, 200.

<sup>137</sup> One dissident "spent two years armed with a grenade only and a pistol with no spring, a toy." Ibid., 199.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

After deserting the armed forces and returning to the bush, the dissidents found that they lacked the supply lines needed to survive for an extended period of time. Therefore, operations focused on the acquisition of food and shelter became a major necessity. Initially these operations were comprised of nighttime forays into villages where guerillas obtained needed supplies and then left. However, almost immediately the guerillas had difficulty carrying out these peaceful operations and soon resorted to the use of force against locals to obtain needed supplies and shelter. Initially, dissidents tried to establish relationships with the local population. During the war of independence, local villagers were vital in the maintenance of the guerilla effort, providing supplies and shelter to combatants often at great risk to themselves and their families. The dissidents now tried to recreate this bond. These efforts were largely resisted by the locals for a combination of reasons. During the guerilla war, villagers were attracted to aid in the war effort largely because of the political message of the movement.<sup>139</sup> The dissidents completely lacked such a message and found only limited and grudging support. Public trepidation at supporting the dissidents was compounded significantly by the abandonment of the former combatants by ZAPU and ZIPRA leaders. Local Ndebele residents maintained a high degree of loyalty for ZAPU leaders, especially Joshua Nkomo, the father of Zimbabwean independence. Nkomo's frequent condemnations of the violence perpetrated by the dissidents completely undercut dissident efforts to win local support. Government repression also hurt support for the dissident movement.<sup>140</sup> The

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<sup>139</sup> The guerilla movements of the war of independence made hearts and minds of the local population an important part of their operations in the country. *Pungwes*, political meetings held in the countryside that combined singing and speech making, were held throughout the country to garner the sympathies and support of non-combatant residents.

<sup>140</sup> These included speeches made in villages throughout Matabeleland in which Nkomo instructed parents to keep their children away from dissidents. Catholic Commission, 115.

Zimbabwean armed forces carried out an indiscriminate campaign of retribution against those suspected of giving assistance to the dissidents. Whereas during the war of independence, this was a risk that locals were willing to take, in the 1980's Ndebele did not think it was worth torture, imprisonment or death to assist such a rudderless group.<sup>141</sup> Finally, as the dissidents found it harder and harder to receive assistance cooperatively from villagers, they began to obtain it forcibly through armed robbery. This combined with other atrocities carried out by the dissidents resulted in further disenchantment with their efforts and even less cooperation from the local population.

The theft of food and other supplies from villages soon shifted into robbery of non-vital materials. Groups of dissidents carried out a series of robberies against rural stores businesses primarily for personal gain.<sup>142</sup> Such activities further de-legitimized the dissidents in the eyes of the local population making their activities and survival even more difficult. The robberies also made it hard to differentiate the ex-ZIPRA dissidents from groups of bandits that wandered the countryside committing highway robbery. This allowed the government to attribute several cases of common crime perpetrated by criminal groups to the dissidents justifying a larger military response.<sup>143</sup>

Acts of personal violence represented the final type of survival or personal gain tactic used by the regular dissidents during the violence of the 1980's. The dissidents targeted civilians in communal areas and commercial farms that they determined had been "sell-

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<sup>141</sup> Jackson, McGregor & Ranger, 201.

<sup>142</sup> These robberies ranged widely in value from the theft of \$40,000 from a cattle merchant to \$6 worth of cigarettes from a store. Catholic Commission, 38, 40.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 41.

outs” and had cooperated with the security services.<sup>144</sup> Occasionally, these locals were tortured but primarily they were executed. These acts of violence were often extremely sadistic as they were intended to serve as warnings to other civilians not to cooperate with the authorities.<sup>145</sup> This further isolated the dissidents from the local population and provided important media fodder for the government press.

Destabilization operations were carried out much less often by the regular dissidents. Due to their limited supplies and intelligence gathering capabilities, the dissidents were forced to perpetrate such attacks in a largely ad hoc manner. Dissidents attacked government property such as construction and farm equipment, development projects such as dams and relocation programs such as government created homesteads.<sup>146</sup> These attacks were small-scale and often amounted to the destruction of several vehicles or pieces of equipment.<sup>147</sup> More significant were attacks against ZANU-PF members and white commercial farmers. In revenge for the detention of ZAPU members, the dissidents perpetrated a series of attacks against ZANU-PF party members in the region.<sup>148</sup> Attacks on white commercial farmers comprised a large part of destabilization activities. Dissidents were responsible for the murder of 33 white farmers and relatives of farmers

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>145</sup> Testimony in the Catholic Commission report displays the level of violence used: “At about 5 pm, eight dissidents came to our home, asking for my husband...They accused him of being a sell-out, and of having reported the dissidents at the police camp. Then they beat him on the head. When he collapsed, they told me, his wife, to kill him with an axe...They put his severed head in a plastic bag and told me to take it to the nearest hospital the following day.” Ibid., 39.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>147</sup> In the words of one dissident the reasoning behind such attacks was, “where Government put money, we destroyed that thing.” This demonstrates the lack of complexity in strategy that marked the dissident campaign. Ibid., 40.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 39.

during the conflict.<sup>149</sup> Unlike Super-ZAPU attacks against whites, the regular dissident attacks lacked a specific goal. Dissidents claimed that they merely murdered white farmers that they thought were hostile.<sup>150</sup> In essence, the dissidents attacked symbols of the establishment where they could.

### *Results*

Overall, the regular dissidents were extremely ineffectual. In the end the dissidents failed to achieve any of their goals as large numbers were killed or captured; the ZANU-PF government extended its power over the entirety of the country and ZAPU ceased to exist as an independent political party. Their undeveloped message and uncontrolled tactics provided a convenient excuse for ZANU-PF to use increasingly repressive measures against the southwest.

By 1987, they numbered only 122.<sup>151</sup> Over the 6 year conflict, the group lost 75% of its members to death, capture and desertion. Its small numbers, organizational weaknesses and lack of popular support incredibly limited its operational effectiveness. From 1982 until 1987, the dissidents were identified as responsible for a total of 142 offences. This comprised only 2% of the total offenses committed in the conflict.<sup>152</sup> Despite government reports that the group was responsible for 700-800 murders, strong evidence has linked the dissidents to 64 deaths, 4% of the 1,437 which occurred in the conflict.<sup>153</sup> These

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>151</sup> Alexander, McGregor & Ranger, 198-199.

<sup>152</sup> The Catholic Commission identified 7,246 total offenses that were committed during the conflict. These consisted of murders, disappearances, property destruction or theft, torture, detention, assault and rape. Catholic Commission, 161.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 39.

figures are not meant to absolve the dissidents of fault. These groups certainly carried out atrocities and illegal actions and would have carried out more if they had been able, but they were not. The numbers demonstrate just how weak these groups were and how limited the threat they posed was. When contrasted with the overwhelming governmental response the small scale of dissident activity is especially startling.

### **The Government**

As opposed to the dissidents, the government instituted a complex and well developed campaign in Matabeleland and the Midlands. Using the violence as an opening, the government utilized a multi-faceted approach to achieve its well defined political agenda. Combining political debate, state owned media and a variety of armed forces; the government shaped and perpetuated the conflict until it was able to reach its ultimate goal, the creation of a one-party state in Zimbabwe.

### *Motivation*

Three things motivated the Mugabe regime in its campaign in Matabeleland and the Midlands: ZANU-PF's dislike and mistrust of ZAPU; its longstanding aspiration for the establishment of a one-party state; and the desire to create stability within the country. Each of these factors contributed to the formulation of ZANU-PF's program of repression and political alienation during the 1980s campaign.

Since its inception, ZANU-PF had had an extremely contentious relationship with ZAPU. During the war of independence this hostility reached extreme levels as violence

frequently broke out between ZANU and ZAPU forces both within the country and in staging bases in neighboring states. Only after several failed attempts were the two parties able to form a united front, and even then it only lasted for a few months during the Lancaster House Conference. In the war, Mugabe and the ZANU-PF leadership developed significant misgivings about ZAPU and its intentions for the future Zimbabwean state.<sup>154</sup> Mugabe became convinced that ZAPU's vision of Zimbabwe did not include ZANU. These misgivings carried over into the post-independence era as Mugabe decided to split from the Patriotic Front and have ZANU run independently during the country's first parliamentary elections. Though ZANU won the elections its leaders still viewed ZAPU with great caution fearing it would seek power through non-legal avenues following its electoral defeat. This lingering hostility was a core motivation in ZANU-PF's Matabeleland campaign.

ZANU-PF's long-standing desire to establish a one-party state served as the primary motivation behind its policy in the southwest. This desire was rooted in the party's Marxist-Leninist ideology<sup>155</sup>, close connection with Maoist China<sup>156</sup> and relationship with Julius Nyerere's Tanzania.<sup>157</sup> Prior to the 1980 election this goal was kept largely within the party. However following its electoral victory, ZANU-PF began to make its vision for a single-party state known through party platforms and statements from various

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<sup>154</sup> For example: the ZANU fears of the establishment of non-guerilla ZIPRA units. In 1978, Joshua Nkomo began covert negotiations with Rhodesian leader Ian Smith contributing significantly to Mugabe's fears of Nkomo's intentions.

<sup>155</sup> Though the party officially committed itself to the scientific socialism of Marxism-Leninism in 1977, many of its leaders including Mugabe had long held Marxist views. William H. Shaw, "Towards the One-Party State in Zimbabwe: A Study in African Political Thought," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, No. 3 (Sep., 1986), 374.

<sup>156</sup> China was ZANU-PF's principal supplier during the war of independence.

<sup>157</sup> A one-party state that served as the primary base of Zimbabwe's liberation movement.

leaders.<sup>158</sup> It was the pursuit of this vision that largely motivated the government's actions.

Finally, the Zimbabwean government genuinely wanted to restore law and order to the area. Despite the obvious political motivations that led to the prolonged campaign of violence perpetrated by the government in the 1980's, there was an actual desire to create stability within the country. These three motivations shaped the government's strategy as it faced the outbreak of violence in the southwest of the country.

### *Goals*

The government's goals closely mirrored its motivations. There were three major goals in its campaign in Matabeleland. The government sought to marginalize ZAPU and weaken its electoral base in Matabeleland, create a one-party state and rid the country of dissidents. To achieve these goals, the ZANU-PF regime used a comprehensive program which included the development of a clear political message, the control of media sources and the deployment of a variety of military and quasi-military forces.

### *Organization/Tactics*

The government utilized a complex organizational model as it sought to leverage the situation in Matabeleland into political gain. The regime used multiple tools each targeting a different audience to achieve all three of its goals by the end of the conflict in

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<sup>158</sup> Mugabe and other leaders gave 4 reasons why Zimbabwe needed one-party rule: 1)It reflected the traditional chief system of governance in the region, 2)The "overwhelming majority" of Zimbabweans wanted one-party rule, 3)Since the country was so new, it needed a one-party state to unify its disparate peoples, 4)The country had many serious problems related to its development, it could not afford to waste time on parliamentary debate. Shaw, 377-383.

1987. These tools included: the development of an increasingly ethnic political ideology to gain domestic public support for the government's repressive policies; control of information coming from the effected regions preventing widespread international or domestic opposition; the mobilization of conventional military forces to combat the actual dissident problem; and the use of specialized armed forces to harass and intimidate the local Ndebele population. The four lines of attack while operating separately worked in concert with each other creating a comprehensive and extremely formidable plan of attack.

### Political Message

The first pillar of the government's strategy in Matabeleland was the delivery of a clear political message linking ZAPU to the dissidents. The purpose was to marginalize ZAPU politically and to create a justification first for ostracizing the party and then the persecution of the Ndebele people. The message was simple: ZAPU is connected with the dissidents and ZAPU is Ndebele therefore the Ndebele are dissidents. ZANU-PF Minister Enos Nkala made this connection explicit when he declared in the same speech that ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo was the "self appointed Ndebele king" and that the dissidents were "Ndebele who were calling for a second war of liberation" who needed to be "crushed".<sup>159</sup> Underlying this message was the historical legacy of the *mfecane*. By referring to Nkomo as the "Ndebele king", Nkala was linking him not just with the dissidents but with Mzilikazi, the leader who originally brought the Ndebele into

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<sup>159</sup> Alexander, McGregor & Ranger, 185-186. In subsequent speeches Nkala would call for the "liquidation" of ZAPU because of the party's connection to the dissidents. "Zimbabwe in Brief: Nkala's Call for "Liquidation" of ZAPU, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, March 7, 1983. Accessed on May 5, 2005. Available from LexisNexis.

Zimbabwe. This linkage created a justification for the persecution of the Ndebele not only for dissident actions but as retribution for the perceived harsh treatment that Mzilikazi's state carried out against the Shona 150 years before.<sup>160</sup> In a country that was approximately 70% Shona such a political message resonated strongly.

### Information Dissemination

The second part of the government campaign was the control and dissemination of information related to the conflict. Through control of the media and restrictions on independent sources of information, the ZANU-PF government was able to dictate the terms under which the conflict in Matabeleland was fought and to justify its actions by exaggerating the actions of the dissidents. The result was the legitimization of governmental action and a lack of international condemnation.

The basis of governmental informational control was the Mass Media Trust. In January 1981, following ZANU-PF's electoral victory, the Mass Media Trust was established to ensure an "independent and responsible press."<sup>161</sup> The trust was not a parastatal but a public trust that was in theory independent. However, its controlling Board of Trustees was filled with several high level ZANU-PF leaders and included very few ZAPU representatives.<sup>162</sup> This organizational structure ensured that the Zimbabwean press operated as a mouthpiece for the ZANU-PF government rather than as a voice of

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<sup>160</sup> This connection is made explicit in the training and ideology espoused by the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade which is discussed below.

<sup>161</sup> Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, "Representing Violence in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe: Press and Internet Debates," in *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*, Tim Allen and Jean Seaton, eds.. (London & New York: ZED Books, 1999), 247.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

objectivity. The effect of ZANU-PF control over the media is clearly seen in the contrast in language used to describe violence in the southwest before and after the creation of the trust. Before 1981, violence and crime was attributed to “bandits”, “unruly elements” or “outlaws”.<sup>163</sup> After 1981, most violent or criminal acts were reported to have been carried out by “dissidents” a term carrying a much stronger political connotation than the earlier language used. Beyond such semantics, actual reporting was often skewed heavily in the government’s favor. Many attacks clearly not carried out by the dissidents were attributed to them, including RENAMO attacks in the east of the country and assaults perpetrated by government forces disguised as dissidents.<sup>164</sup> The volume of dissident attacks was greatly exaggerated while government created violence went completely unreported.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, newspaper columns consistently dehumanized the dissidents further legitimating government repression.<sup>166</sup> Enhancing the effectiveness of this one-sided journalism were governmental restrictions on freedom of movement in the region that created a virtual media blackout.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 249. For a thorough discussion on the implications of the uses of the phrases “dissident” and “bandit” in relation to the Matabeleland conflict see, Terence Ranger “Bandits and Guerillas: The Case of Zimbabwe,” *Banditry, Rebellion & Social Protest in Africa*, Donald Crummey, ed. (London: James Currey), 373-396.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>165</sup> The Zimbabwean press attributed 7 times as many murders to the dissidents as they actually committed. Ibid., 251.

<sup>166</sup> One columnist referred to the dissidents as “cockroaches” and the government’s anti-dissident 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade as “DDT.” Ibid., 252.

<sup>167</sup> “Journalists were banned from leaving Bulawayo without permission, and no unauthorized people were allowed into and out of the curfew areas. There were road blocks established on all roads into these areas. In short, these measures, together with the curfew, ensured that there was a near-total information blackout.” Catholic Commission, 50. Additionally, XINHUA Press reports at the time appear to have disseminated the governmental line almost verbatim.

By preventing the dissemination of the truth Zimbabwe largely avoided international pressure. Additionally, the promotion of ZANU-PF's policies and condemnation of the dissidents further bolstered domestic support for the repression.

### Anti-Dissident Armed Forces

The third element of the government's campaign in the southwest was the deployment of armed forces to directly combat the dissidents. Two units, the Zimbabwean National Army and Police Support Units were the primary forces engaged in this facet of the government's response. These forces were largely successful in tracking dissidents and either killing or capturing them.

The Police Support Unit was a paramilitary force created under Rhodesian rule. By the early 1980's it was an integrated force comprised of both black and white members. The Support Unit proved particularly adept in tracking dissidents and was able to form cooperative relationships with locals who provided important actionable intelligence.<sup>168</sup>

The discretion that the Support Units displayed is demonstrated by the lack of human rights offenses attributed to them. From 1982-1987 only 14 offenses were attached to Support Unit operations in Matabeleland and the Midlands, less than .2% of the total committed during that period.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Catholic Commission, 51. One dissident described the operational abilities of the Support Unit: "With the Support Unit, those people didn't hurry, they weren't beating the civilians. They would monitor your movement as long as possible, seeing how and where you relaxed. That's where they would pounce on you and kill you. They would discover your likes and dislikes and study them." Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 200.

<sup>169</sup> Catholic Commission, 161.

The Zimbabwean National Army (ZNA) carried out the most anti-dissident operations both directly engaging the dissidents and restricting their ability to operate. Direct engagements were largely carried out by paratrooper units within the army. Using tactics first used against the ZANLA and ZIPRA guerillas during the independence war, these largely white units used a combination of surveillance and helicopter support to quickly surround groups of dissidents.<sup>170</sup> Additionally, ZNA infantry units constructed roadblocks and enforced curfews imposed by the central government. These actions served to restrict dissident movements; however, they also negatively affected the lives of the local population. The ZNA was less discrete in its use of force as is evidenced by the higher number of human rights offences attributed to it (324 from 1982-1987).<sup>171</sup>

The military response to the dissident problem was vastly successful. From 1982 until 1987 roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the dissidents were killed, captured or deserted. This is directly related to the professional manner in which it carried out its mission. By directly targeting the dissidents, these armed forces were able to garner public support which provided vital intelligence. The success that these forces had in engaging the dissidents almost completely addressed the government's goal of eliminating the dissidents. The use of further military action in region points to the non-security interests that played a significant role in the government's campaign.

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<sup>170</sup> A dissident recalled ZNA paratroop operations: "The advantage over us by the paras was they'd send out sticks of one or two to an OP (Observation Post, usually on a high place, a kopje or mountain) and would keep an eye on our movements from a concealed position. So if they saw us they'd radio for helicopters and drop men in a circle around us. You would have to fight hard to penetrate. It was a Rhodesian tactic." Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 200.

<sup>171</sup> Catholic Commission 161.

### Armed Units Engaged With the Population

The final and most destructive segment of the government's campaign in Matabeleland and the Midlands was the use of armed units against the local Ndebele population. The primary purpose of these units was the destruction of ZAPU's political base. In the 1980 election, virtually all of ZAPU's support and virtually all opposition to ZANU came from the southwest provinces. From 1982-1985, the Zimbabwean government engaged in a campaign to break that support. Ultimately it failed; however, the tactics and operational structure of the units involved clearly demonstrate the underlying political motives of the government's policy. Three units in particular were involved in the specific targeting of Ndebele civilians, the Central Intelligence Organization/Police Internal Security Intelligence Unit, the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade and the ZANU-PF Youth Brigades. Of these, the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade was by far the most significant with the other two units occupying more marginal roles.

#### *Central Intelligence Organization/Police Internal Security Intelligence Unit*

The Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) and Police Internal Security Intelligence Unit (PISI) carried out operations against ZAPU members in the southwest provinces. Both groups operated in plainclothes and traveled in unmarked vehicles carrying out missions mainly at night.<sup>172</sup> CIO and PISI units often conducted midnight sweeps, arresting several ZAPU members at a time. The party members were then detained at local prison camps and often tortured using methods such as asphyxiation and electric shock.<sup>173</sup> In some instances detainees were never heard from again.<sup>174</sup> Operations were

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 63-66. In 1992, 8

heightened in the period leading up to the 1985 National Elections, as the government sought to disrupt ZAPU electoral efforts. Human rights offenses attributed to the CIO increased 570% from 1984 to 1985, while the PISI began its operations in that year.<sup>175</sup> Overall, these organizations had a limited impact in the region, especially when compared with the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

### *The 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade-Gukurahundi*

The 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade represented the most destructive and overtly political force employed in the government's campaign in Matabeleland and the Midlands. Targeting local civilians, the group carried out brutal attacks committing far and away the most atrocities during the conflict (80% of total human rights offenses). The Brigade was openly political and ethnic in composition. In its three years of operation, the unit became the defining force of the conflict. Ultimately its tactics proved unsuccessful, but its existence provides clear evidence of the political motivations that drove the government's campaign in the region.

In October of 1980, Prime Minister Mugabe entered into a secret agreement with North Korean President Kim Il Sung. Announced a year later, the agreement sent 106 North Korean's to Zimbabwe to train a special internal defense force to be known as the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade.<sup>176</sup> The unit was given the name *Gukurahundi*, a Shona word meaning the rain

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<sup>174</sup> In 1992, the remains of 8 bodies were recovered from an abandoned mine in Matabeleland. The CIO is suspected as being responsible for these murders. Ibid., 67-68.

<sup>175</sup> CIO offenses dropped 42% in 1986 providing further evidence of the political nature of the government's repression campaign. Ibid., 162-163.

<sup>176</sup> Mugabe declared that the force would be "purely for the purpose of defense and not for any use outside this country." He went on that it would be used "to deal with dissidents and any other trouble in the country." Joshua Nkomo expressed his misgivings stating that the police should handle internal security and that the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade "is for the possible imposition of a one-party state in our country." Ibid., 45.

which washes away the chaff before the spring rains, in Matabeleland however, the word means “the sweeping away of rubbish.”<sup>177</sup>

The brigade was extremely distinct from the rest of the armed forces. Its equipment and transport, uniform and communications procedures all differed from the other brigades in the military.<sup>178</sup> Additionally, the unit was considered outside of the conventional ZNA command structure and was answerable to “nobody but Mugabe.”<sup>179</sup> Another distinctive part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade was the inclusion of political education in its training. The brigade was almost entirely comprised of former ZANLA Shona speaking soldiers. The few ex-ZIPRA that were integrated into the unit were quickly demoted or transferred out resulting in a politically motivated ethnically based and operationally independent force.<sup>180</sup>

In January 1983 the unit was deployed to Matabeleland. Immediately it began committing atrocities. The 5th Brigade focused its actions against local Ndebele villages throughout the southwest. Its typical tactic was to set up camp in a region and then carry out missions to neighboring villages. Upon entry to a village, the Brigade would commit summary executions, take prisoners, destroy property, carry out acts of torture and

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<sup>177</sup> Meredith, 66.

<sup>178</sup> The Brigade used AK 47's with distinctive bayonets, wore red berets and were unable to communicate with other units because of incompatible equipment. Catholic Commission, 46.

<sup>179</sup>This sense of impunity was captured in the unit's passing out parade when one of the Brigade's commanders told his troops: “From today onwards I want you to start dealing with dissidents. We have them here at this parade... Wherever you meet them, deal with them and I do not want a report.” Ibid., 46.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

commit acts of sexual violence.<sup>181</sup> While these actions were carried out in the name of hunting dissidents, their true purpose was the persecution of perceived political and ethnic opponents. The complete lack of concern for the dissidents is evident in the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade's combat deployments. One dissident described the unit's penchant for singing ZANU-PF anthems:

The Gukurahundi wasn't a good fighting unit- where do you see soldiers who sing when on patrol?..(W)e would come across them singing and would just take cover. Soon after you'd hear people crying in their homes...We'd clash with them, but instead of following us they'd call for villagers. That's where they'd take their revenge, that's where you'd hear bazookas and AKs firing into homes.<sup>182</sup>

The overtly political nature of the unit was further displayed in its use of sadistic *pungwes* in a cruel mutation of the liberation war tradition. The soldiers forced villagers to partake in meetings in which they sang songs praising ZANU and cursing ZAPU and in some cases villagers were forced to dance “on the mass graves of their families and fellow villagers, killed and buried minutes earlier.”<sup>183</sup>

In other actions, ZANU-PF's ethnically divisive political message was carried out operationally. Motivated by the incendiary language of governmental leaders, 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade soldiers sought to carry out retributive justice as is seen in this victim testimony:

They (5<sup>th</sup> Brigade Soldiers) told people that they had been ordered to ‘wipe out the people in the area’. To ‘kill anything that was human’. They said they had been told that all Ndebeles were dissidents, making women and children as well as men targets. ‘The child of a snake is also a snake’, as one put it. Others said they were taking revenge for nineteenth century

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<sup>181</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade was responsible for 1134 murders (78% of total in conflict), 169 disappearances (48% of total), 523 instances of property destruction or theft (77% of total), 273 cases of torture (75% of total), 2232 imprisonments (82% of total), 1284 assaults (84% of total), 128 acts of rape (81% of total). Ibid., 161.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

Ndebele raids against their Shona ancestors: ‘They said, “Your forefathers ate out cattle- where are they?” We were attacked for being Ndebele...they didn’t hide their real motive: “You have been killing out forefathers, you Mandebele.”’<sup>184</sup>

One final method in which the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade repressed the local population, was through the imposition of curfews and travel restrictions on the local population. These blockages prevented farmers in these primarily agrarian regions from traveling to their fields, bringing about massive starvation.<sup>185</sup> The ultimate purpose of these actions was the destruction of ZAPU’s political base through intimidation and destruction.

By the end of 1984, the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade’s actions had reached unprecedented levels.<sup>186</sup> As it became difficult for the government to conceal its actions, it was decided to redeploy the brigade for 5 months of retraining. In late 1985, the unit was briefly returned to active service in the region, before being finally withdrawn early in 1986.<sup>187</sup> After just three years of action, the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade left in its wake a massive amount of violence and destruction, the legacy of one of the government’s four tools in its campaign in the southwest.

### *ZANU-PF Youth Brigades*

The final group the government utilized against Ndebele civilians was the ZANU-PF Youth Brigade. The Youth Brigade was modeled on the Chinese Red Guard and was

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<sup>184</sup> Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 222. In some cases rape was used as a weapon of ethnic warfare as 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade soldiers sought to “create a generation of Shona babies.” Catholic Commission, 59-60.

<sup>185</sup> Estimates of those affected by starvation range into the hundreds of thousands.

<sup>186</sup> That year 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade was attributed with 2,831 total human rights offenses, its highest in any single year. Ibid., 162.

<sup>187</sup> Even this brief redeployment resulted in an upswing of violence as a spate of mass arrests and tortures occurred. Ibid., 57.

deployed in Matabeleland in 1984-1985 ahead of the elections.<sup>188</sup> The group acted as a semi-organized mob and sought to promote ZANU-PF interests in the region and to counter ZAPU actions. Its activities included coercing locals into purchasing ZANU-PF membership cards, forced transportation of locals to ZANU-PF rallies, property destruction and beating of those perceived to oppose ZANU.<sup>189</sup> In the two years before the 1985 elections, the ZANU-PF Youth Brigades were attributed with 165 human rights offences, including the deaths of 29.<sup>190</sup> They operated with virtual impunity as the ZANU controlled security forces did little or nothing to halt their actions. Overall the Youth Brigades had a limited impact, however, they did contribute to the overall environment of threat and repression that the government tried create in the southwest.

#### *The 1985 Elections and Strategy Shift*

The 1985 national elections were a key moment in the course of the conflict. After carrying out its intimidation campaign against the local population over a course of 4 years, the ZANU-PF regime could finally see if it had been successful in crushing its main opposition. In July 1985, the elections were held and ZANU-PF again garnered an overwhelming victory. However, despite the massive campaign against ZAPU and its Ndebele supporters, voters in Matabeleland elected ZAPU MPs to all 15 of its allocated seats.<sup>191</sup> The will of the Ndebele had not been broken.

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 62-63.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., XVI.

ZANU-PF determined that it needed to pursue a different tact. It was obvious that ZAPU could not be crushed, so instead ZANU-PF sought the next best thing, unification.

Between 1985 and 1987 ZANU-PF and ZAPU held an ongoing series of talks regarding the unification of the two parties. Throughout this period ZANU-PF continued to use violence to pursue its political ends. However, the post-1985 period reflects a shift in the perpetrators and targets of violent action.

By 1986 the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade had cease to operate in the southwest. This marked a shift away from attacks against the general population and towards more targeted attacks against ZAPU officials. From 1986 to 1987, by far the largest perpetrator of human rights offenses was the CIO, the organization which had traditionally targeted members of ZAPU.<sup>192</sup> ZANU-PF'S new strategy was to use violence against ZAPU members to gain leverage in the unity talks. In addition, ZANU-PF Home Minister began a campaign of political restriction against the party, banning party meetings and rallies and closing party offices throughout the country.<sup>193</sup> This direct pressure forced ZAPU into acquiescence of a deal heavily skewed in ZANU-PF's favor.<sup>194</sup> On December 27, 1987 Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo signed the Unity Accord. To mark the occasion Mugabe declared: "The nation must feel jubilant at this moment, at this act which has brought us together... We are one."<sup>195</sup> In April 1988, an amnesty was declared for all remaining political

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<sup>192</sup> In 1985 the CIO committed 20% of the total human rights offences, in 1986 this rose to 81%. Ibid., 162-163.

<sup>193</sup> Meredith, 72-73.

<sup>194</sup> A demonstration of ZAPU's weakness was its inability to even negotiate a name change for the party. One of the final issues of negotiation surrounded ZAPU's desire to replace the hyphen of ZANU-PF with parentheses to signal the change in party. They were unable even to extract this small change and the name remained ZANU-PF.

<sup>195</sup> John Edlin, "Mugabe, Nkomo Agree To Merge Parties; OAU Head Lauds Move, *The Associated Press*, December 23, 1987, Accessed April 12, 2005. Available from LexisNexis.

dissidents and the remaining 122 dissidents surrendered. For ZANU-PF it was a jubilant moment. The dissidents had been virtually wiped out, ZAPU had ceased to exist and Zimbabwe had become a virtual one-party state. ZANU-PF's campaign had succeeded.

### **The Shona-Ndebele Conflict Within the Theoretical Framework**

One remarkable feature of the 1982-1987 period was the lack of opposition from within the Shona community for Robert Mugabe's repressive campaign in Matabeleland and the Midlands. Part of this inaction is certainly a result of the virtual media blackout imposed by the government. This, however, cannot be the entire explanation. No serious anti-government protests occurred outside of Ndebele majority areas of the country. In fact the most serious political demonstrations were anti-ZAPU rallies.<sup>196</sup> The 1985 election results demonstrate the approval the Shona public had for ZANU's anti-Ndebele policies. In the general election of that year ZANU-PF garnered 76% of the vote, an increase of 15% over the 1980 election.<sup>197</sup> The message was clear; Mugabe had the support of his Shona supporter. Why?

Looking at the Shona-Ndebele conflict within the context of the theoretical framework presented in the previous section provides an explanation. ZANU-PF was able to frame its anti-Ndebele campaign within the context of the political competition and group security motivations. The linkage of the ZAPU political leadership with the actions of

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<sup>196</sup> See "Anti-Zapu Demonstrations in Zimbabwe," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, June 25, 1984. Accessed March 20, 2006. Available from LexisNexis. "ZANU-PF and ZAPU Clashes in Zimbabwe: Criticism of Nkomo and Muzorewa," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, June 22, 1985. Accessed March 20, 2006. Available from LexisNexis.

<sup>197</sup> Jan Raath, "Election Appears to Bring Zimbabwe Closer to Single-Party Rule," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 9, 1985. Accessed March 20, 2006. Available from LexisNexis.

the dissidents and with the heritage of Shona-Ndebele antagonism created a sense of threat within the Shona community. By linking the political discourse with such threatening historical discourse, the ZAPU government created legitimacy for the marginalization of ZAPU. This raised the stakes of political competition reinforcing a “winner-take-all” mentality. The ultimate 1987 unification ensured Shona political control of the government.

Even more clearly, the government employed the motivation of group security to justify its actions in Matabeleland and the Midlands. The historical myth of the *mfecane* created the basis for Horowitz’s dichotomy of “backward” (Shona) and “advanced” (Ndebele) groups. Within this context the ZANU leadership used the threat of extinction to justify its robust exploits in the southwest. ZANU government minister Enos Nkala’s declaration that the Ndebele were “calling for a second war of liberation” served as a warning of the security threat that the Ndebele posed.<sup>198</sup> The perceived insecurity of the security dilemma was even utilized by the government with the exploitation of the discovery of ZAPU arms caches which furthered the impression that the Ndebele were intent on launching an offensive campaign. This potential threat to the Shona people created the justification needed for ZANU-PF to carry out its broad campaign of violence in the Southwest.

The ZANU campaign against the Ndebele led directly to the 1987 Unity Accord, which effectively made Zimbabwe a single-party state. Robert Mugabe would not see another serious threat to his hold on power for another 10 years when his base, the liberation war

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<sup>198</sup> Supra note 153.

veterans, began to mobilize politically. Again Mugabe turned to ethnic politics to eliminate his opposition. This time however, rather than crushing his opponents, Mugabe sought to co-opt them. In the process he shifted the political dialogue of Zimbabwe back to the black-white conflict that had dominated the era of the war of liberation.

#### **IV. Black-White Conflict: War Veterans & Violent Farm Seizures (1996-2005)**

In 1996 and 1997 Robert Mugabe faced dual crises which produced the most significant challenge to his rule since his election in 1980. Both Zimbabwe's trade unions and its war veterans rose in protest of the government. Mugabe chose to deal with both problems within the context of black-white ethnic conflict, but in very different ways. The next two sections examine ZANU-PF's response to the war veterans and trade unions.

The present section looks at Mugabe's cooptation of Zimbabwe's war veterans and the related series of violent occupations of white-owned farms that occurred in the summer of 1998. The next section will review Mugabe's attempts to crush the trade unionist movement and its political party the Movement for Democratic Change by framing it as a force of neo-imperialism. ZANU-PF used both land seizures and charges of neo-imperialism as ethnically charged vehicles to justify its attempt to maintain political dominance in the country by removing the threat of political opposition.

#### **Roots of the Conflict**

The decision to play upon the black-white conflict and in particular land as a means of legitimating the cooptation of the war veterans was rooted in Zimbabwe's colonial and post-independence history. The lingering presence of white farmers within the country created an easy rallying point for ZANU-PF and allowed the government to create an internal zone of permissibility for its policy of land-seizure.

*Colonial Seizure of Land-Uneven Distribution (1889-1979)*

In 1889, the British South Africa Company was granted a charter for development of present-day Zimbabwe by the British Government.<sup>199</sup> The Company originally planned to use the land for mineral extraction but initial surveying expeditions were disappointing. Very quickly the business plan for the territory shifted away from mining and towards agriculture. White settlers were offered large land grants irrespective of whether the land was vacant or occupied by indigenous peoples.<sup>200</sup> In 1898, the British government ordered the British South Africa Company to set aside land, called “Native Reserves”, for indigenous Africans to settle on.<sup>201</sup>

Following the establishment of colonial self-rule in 1922, the minority white community sought to solidify its land holdings in the territory. The 1930 the Land Apportionment Act set aside 51% of the territory’s best land for whites.<sup>202</sup> Blacks were restricted from owning or leasing land in white-reserved areas. Those who remained were evicted and forced onto the Native Reserves. Rhodesia became severely divided with 3,000 white farmers occupying over-half the land and over 750,000 blacks forced to live on the much smaller and less fertile reserves.<sup>203</sup> As the black population continued to expand, the

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<sup>199</sup> “Blood and Soil: Land, Politics, and Conflict Prevention in Zimbabwe and South Africa,” *International Crisis Group* (2004), 21. Available online at : <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3396&l=1>

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> A 1919 case before the British Privy Council found that the British South Africa Company did not have a right to title of lands conquered on behalf of the crown. This effectively gave title to the white settlers who occupied the land. Another part of the decision determined that black Africans had no right to title because the concept of private title was foreign. Ibid., 22.

<sup>202</sup> The Land Apportionment Act also created a small Native Purchase Area (1.8 million hectares) in which indigenous Africans could purchase land. This was largely marginal land which received far less rainfall than the abundant white lands which dominated the veldt. Ibid., 23.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. 24.

quality of life on the land-scarce reserves declined.<sup>204</sup> This unequal system would continue until 1978, at the end of the independence struggle, when the Land Tenure Act<sup>205</sup> was revoked and land purchasing was opened to all Rhodesians.<sup>206</sup>

### *War of Independence and Lancaster House Settlement (1975-1979)*

In 1965, the war of independence broke out following Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Land reform featured prominently in the platforms of both ZAPU and ZANU.<sup>207</sup>

In the mid-1970's informal negotiations began regarding a final settlement of the conflict in Rhodesia. The British, who took the lead in these efforts, floated the idea of establishing a "Zimbabwe Development Fund" to which the British government would contribute £75 million.<sup>208</sup> Both ZANU and ZAPU were supportive of such a plan which would solve one of the most contentious issues for post-independence Zimbabwe.

By the start of the Lancaster House Conference in 1979, however, there had been a change in government in Britain. Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government abruptly pulled the Development Fund off the table. Instead, a new plan in which the British would underwrite half of the cost of resettlement was put forward. Under the plan, land

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<sup>204</sup> The black population more than doubled from 1.35 million in 1937 to 2.56 million in 1951. Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> The Land Apportionment Act had been amended and renamed.

<sup>206</sup> This legislative tactic was an attempt by the white minority government to preempt wider ranging plans for redistribution that might occur in the process of peace negotiations. Ibid. 25.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>208</sup> This idea was based on Britain's experience in Kenya where it had purchased land from white farmers to ease the transition to independence. The British felt a degree of responsibility for the white landowners in Rhodesia as most were of British descent. Robin Palmer, "Land Reform in Zimbabwe, 1980-1990," *African Affairs* 85, no. 355 (April 1990), 165-166.

could only change hands on a “willing seller, willing buyer” basis.<sup>209</sup> Only land that was under-utilized and that would be used for public purposes could be compulsory seized by the government, and in these cases full-market value had to be paid immediately in foreign currency.<sup>210</sup> The ZANU/ZAPU Patriotic Front had misgivings about the plan, which was a far cry from the fully supported Development Fund. An agreement was finally reached when the Patriotic Front’s frontline allies forced its acceptance.<sup>211</sup>

### *Resettlement and Inactivity (1980-1990)*

On April 18, 1980, the Republic of Zimbabwe gained its independence. It entered the new era with a majority-rule government and a heavily skewed land tenure situation. 6,000 white farmers owned 42% of the country’s land.<sup>212</sup> Up to 35% of white farmland was unutilized or underutilized while the communal lands remained severely overpopulated.<sup>213</sup>

The new government, however, did not have much latitude for action. The large-scale farms comprised a significant portion of Zimbabwe’s economy and fed the nation. In 1981, 46% of Zimbabwe’s exports were produced by white owned farms.<sup>214</sup> These

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Of particular import was Samora Machel of Mozambique’s threat to withdraw logistical assistance from ZANU and ZAPU if they did not reach an agreement. Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 169. Further skewing the imbalance was the fact that most of the white held land was located in Zimbabwe’s most fertile regions (39% of the total land) whereas most of the indigenous communal and small-scale farms were in the less fertile areas of the country (61%). “Zimbabwe: Land Reform and Resettlement: Assessment and Suggested Framework for the Future- Interim Mission Report,” *United Nations Development Program*, January 2002. Available online at: <http://www.undp.org/rba/pubs/landreform.pdf>

<sup>213</sup> United Nations Development Program.

<sup>214</sup> White owned farms producing tobacco, cotton, sugar, and maize produced approximately Z\$398 million in exports. Dan Weiner, Sam Moyo, Barry Munslow, and Phil O’Keefe. “Land Use and Agricultural Productivity in Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 23, 2 (1985), 256.

ventures produced the foreign currency reserves that were crucial to support the new nation. 90% of internally marketed food was produced on white owned farms, meaning that white owned farms largely sustained the food demands of the country.<sup>215</sup> A large-scale redistribution of farmland would simultaneously cripple the country's export economy and undercut its domestic food supply. Mugabe was also bound by the Lancaster House agreement which strictly limited the redistribution process.

Despite these pressures, the ZANU-PF government still went forward with moderate land redistribution through the channels of the Lancaster House plan. From 1980 until 1983 the government purchased and redistributed 2 million hectares of land.<sup>216</sup> The government made bold predictions for planned 10-year resettlement figures projecting a total of 162,000 families would be resettled by 1989.<sup>217</sup>

In 1983, this ambitious resettlement program hit a wall. That year the World Bank pressured the country to restructure its budget to decrease expanding deficits. The resettlement program was drastically cut.<sup>218</sup> Over the last five years of the program only 474,000 hectares of land would be distributed.<sup>219</sup> By 1989 only 52,000 of the planned 162,000 families had been resettled. Over 4,300 white owned large-scale farms

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<sup>215</sup> The involvement of white-owned large-scale farming in domestic consumption was a relatively new phenomenon. International sanctions brought on following the 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence forced the Rhodesian agriculture sector to shift its focus from external export to internal food markets. Palmer, 167.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> The British government pulled back its promised resources from this venture citing a lack of match money by the Zimbabwean government. Ironically, the British government joined with the World Bank in pressuring Zimbabwe to restructure its budget in 1983 which led to the decrease in resettlement funding on the Zimbabwean end. Ibid.

controlling 29% of total land still existed while over 7 million blacks occupied the over-worked communal lands.<sup>220</sup> Thus by 1990, the end of the 10-year mandatory Lancaster House period, the country found itself largely in the same position vis-à-vis minority land holdings as it was at independence.

### *Legislation, and Governmental Inaction (1990-1996)*

Freed from the Lancaster House plan, the ZANU-PF parliament amended the constitution in 1990.<sup>221</sup> The new amendment made land redistribution easier, shifting the wording of redistribution requirements from a “prompt” period to a “reasonable” time before payment for redistributed land was required. It also called for “fair” rather than “adequate” compensation for redistributed land.<sup>222</sup> Then in 1992 Parliament passed the Land Acquisition Act which removed the “willing seller, willing buyer” concept that had defined the Lancaster House Plan. Under the new legislation, the Government could expropriate land without permission from the seller for a price set by the government.<sup>223</sup>

Despite its new found legislative flexibility, the new push for resettlement soon fizzled.

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<sup>220</sup> The reduction from 46% to 29% of white-owned land does not reflect the true situation. Most of the white land sold was marginal or unfertile land. Therefore the 29% of white-held land constituted a vast majority of the most fertile and productive land. Ibid., 171. Gumisai Mutume, “Zimbabwe-Politics: Land-Grab Scandal Hits Government,” *Inter Press Service*, March 29, 1994. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed March 15, 2006.

<sup>221</sup> Prior to the expiration of the Lancaster House agreement, the British and Zimbabwean governments had a series of contentious exchanges over the prospect of Zimbabwean seizures of land. This may have set the stage for the later showdowns between the two governments that occurred in the late 1990’s. Ibid., 177-178.

<sup>222</sup> Craig Richardson, *The Collapse of Zimbabwe in the Wake of the 2000-2003 Land Reforms*, (Lewiston, ME; The Edwin Mellon Press, 2004), 37.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid. The act also allowed the free acquisition and distribution of abandoned land by the government. Kimberly Ludwig, “Race, Class and Land in Zimbabwe,” *Southern Africa Report* 8, No. 1 (July 1992). Available online at: <http://www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=4715> Accessed March 10, 2006.

In April 1993, the government released its first list of 70 white-owned farms that it intended to seize.<sup>224</sup> Included on the list was the farm of opposition politician Nabaningi Sithole, raising questions about the political motives and legitimacy of the government's new program.<sup>225</sup> On appeal many of the farms scheduled for seizure were de-listed limiting the impact of the new initiative.<sup>226</sup> Even more damaging to the program was the revelation that many of the beneficiaries of the initial seizures and resettlements were not landless farmers from the communal lands but rather high ranking officials within ZANU-PF.<sup>227</sup> The attempt to resettle had again stalled.

#### *Economic Decline, Popular Dissatisfaction and the War Veterans (1991-1997)*

In the midst of ZANU-PF's attempt to restart land redistribution, the country entered a period of economic turmoil. In 1991, the World Bank instituted a new structural adjustment program for the country which forced the government to reduce subsidies and abolish its monopoly on the sale of agricultural commodities.<sup>228</sup> The cuts in spending resulted in significant price fluctuations; the price of maize meal tripled between 1990 and 1993 and the price of bread doubled from 1992 to 1993.<sup>229</sup> In addition, liberalization brought a decline in worker's incomes and negatively impacted Zimbabwe's previously protected manufacturing sector.<sup>230</sup> Compounding the difficulties, Zimbabwe experienced a severe drought throughout the early 1990's which negatively affected exports and drove

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<sup>224</sup> International Crisis Group (2004), 49.

<sup>225</sup> Lewis Machipisa, "Zimbabwe: Government Defies Court Order Not to Evict Residents," *Inter-Press Service*, November 2, 1993. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>226</sup> International Crisis Group (2004), 49.

<sup>227</sup> The Minister of Education, Head of the Air Force, and Secretary to the Cabinet were among those who received appropriated land. Mutume.

<sup>228</sup> International Crisis Group (2004) 47.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Andrew Zhakata, "Zimbabwe: Trade Liberalization Spells Disaster for Industry," *Inter-Press Service*, April 30, 1993. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 1, 2006.

domestic food prices even higher.<sup>231</sup> As Zimbabweans felt the squeeze they began to protest. A series of strikes involving various sectors of society rose around the country.<sup>232</sup> The culmination of the tumult was a general strike in 1996 organized by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).<sup>233</sup>

### *The Rise of the War Veterans Movement (1987-1996)*

One of the groups that organized during this time was the veterans of Zimbabwe's independence struggle. In 1987, the government disbanded the Demobilization Directorate that was responsible for administering assistance for ex-combatants.<sup>234</sup> Minister of Labour, Manpower Planning and Social Welfare John Nkomo explained the reasoning behind the decision:

One does not have to single out a particular group for preferential treatment eight years after independence. I think in the eight years we have gone through too many things have been evened out between the ex-combatant and the non-ex-combatant. We should now be addressing unemployment as a national problem that faces both veterans of the war and those who were young during the war, but who have now attained the age of majority.<sup>235</sup>

The move infuriated the veterans who argued that while they were fighting in the bush others were attending school leaving ex-combatants relatively less qualified in a tight labor market. They felt abandoned by their former leaders whom they had fought for

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<sup>231</sup> 1991-1992 was Zimbabwe's driest year since 1950. Between 1990 and 1994, 4 of Zimbabwe's 11 driest years occurred. Richardson, 74.

<sup>232</sup> These included strikes by local municipal workers, healthcare professionals, and tourist industry employees.

<sup>233</sup> The rise of the ZCTU as a threat to ZANU-PF's rule is the subject of the next section and thus is dealt with in greater depth below.

<sup>234</sup> Norma J. Kriger, *Guerilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980-1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 209.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

during the war.<sup>236</sup> In 1991, the agitated veterans formed the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWA) to promote the cause of ex-combatants.<sup>237</sup> The ZANU-PF leadership realized the threat that this organization posed to its legitimacy. ZANU-PF was the party of liberation. The perceived abandonment by ZANU of the very soldiers that had sacrificed themselves for liberation would undermine the legitimacy of the government.

ZANU-PF moved quickly to head-off this threat. Parliament passed a series of bills aimed at placating the veterans. In 1992, the War Veterans Act was passed which promised funding for social programs targeted at ex-combatants.<sup>238</sup> This was followed by the 1993 passage of the War Victims Compensation Act which established a fund to compensate wounded veterans and also promised access to land.<sup>239</sup> These moves appeased the newly organized veterans. For awhile at least ZANU-PF had averted a threat.

#### *Corruption and Anger: The Return of the War Veterans (1997)*

Having passed the dual legislation of 1992 and 1993, parliament had appeased the war veterans. These moves, however, proved to be only temporary fixes. The Treasury, pinched by the economic downturn and structural adjustment program, refused to fund

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<sup>236</sup> One ex-combatant said in reference to leaders such as Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo who led the guerilla armies during the war: "I agreed to be demobilized thinking it would be easy to get a job. It seems our leaders are to blame as their promises were not fulfilled, They are living in luxury while we are suffering. It seems the exercise to demobilize us was not done properly." Ibid., 211.

<sup>237</sup> Lewis Machipisa, "Zimbabwe: Plight of Ex-Combatants Haunts Ruling Party," *Inter Press Service*, September 20, 1993. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 13, 2006.

<sup>238</sup> Kriger, 214.

<sup>239</sup> The Act promised that 20% of future land resettlement would go to War Veterans. International Crisis Group (2004), 48.

the 1992 War Veterans Act. Then there was difficulty in administering the War Victims Compensation Fund established in 1993. Veterans faced several levels of bureaucracy in trying to access the fund.<sup>240</sup> Even if the ex-combatants managed to pass through the cumbersome they often found that there were no resources available to them.

Then in March 1997 allegations of corruption regarding the War Victims Compensation Fund flooded the press. Cabinet secretaries, members of parliament, and others linked to ZANU-PF had claimed over half of the funds leaving needy veterans without support.<sup>241</sup> The revelation of corruption sent shockwaves through the country and galvanized the previously placated ZNLWA. Ex-combatants began to publicly confront ZANU-PF leaders.<sup>242</sup> In July, three Cabinet ministers had to flee the ZANU-PF party headquarters in Harare after a mob of veterans threatened their safety.<sup>243</sup> One week later, the veterans besieged the African-African American Summit being held in Harare gaining international recognition for their displeasure.<sup>244</sup> Then in August, Mugabe, the leader of the independence struggle, was openly heckled by veterans during the annual Heroes Day commemoration in which the nation honors the fallen from the liberation struggle.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Injured veterans needed to bring letters from two separate doctors confirming their injuries and an official history of their participation in the war from the army just to begun the processing of their claim. Lewis Machipisa, "Zimbabwe: War Veterans Suffer Cold Shoulder," *Inter Press Service*, May 28, 1996. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

<sup>241</sup> Andrew Meldrum, "Zimbabwe Cabinet 'Looted Penions'" *The Guardian (London)*, April 19, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

<sup>242</sup> This included several incidents of ex-combatants disrupting ZANU-PF meetings and threatening the security of ZANU-PF leaders. "Zimbabwe's Ex-Combatants Demand Government Compensation," *Xinhua News Agency*, July 21, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

<sup>243</sup> Lawrence Bartlett, "Warning of Violence as War Veterans Turn On Political Leaders," *Agence Presse France*, July 21, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

<sup>244</sup> "United States and Africa: African-American Summit: War Vets Protest," *Africa News*, July 22, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

<sup>245</sup> "Zimbabwe; War Veterans Heckle Mugabe at Heroes Day Commemoration," *Africa News*, August 11, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

Three days later, a group of ex-combatants sacked the ZANU-PF headquarters in Harare. Police on the scene were ordered to arrest the veterans but refused.<sup>246</sup>

By mid-1997 Robert Mugabe's position was tenuous. He faced a mobilized trade unionist movement, an increasingly violent organization of ex-combatants, and an economy in decline. Something had to be done or else the government might fall. It was at this point that ZANU-PF shifted to a new strategy, cooptation and incorporation of the war veterans. It is within the context of this new policy direction that ethnic conflict would occur in the form of violent land seizures that began in the summer of 1998.

#### **ZANU-PF's Strategy of Accommodation (1997-2005)**

Following the Heroes Day heckling and subsequent sacking of the ZANU-PF headquarters, Robert Mugabe decided upon a new course vis-à-vis the war veterans, total accommodation. Initially, Mugabe sought to co-opt the ex-combatants financially. The strong reaction from civil society and continuing decline in the nation's economy effectively prevented financial compensation from being a viable long-term strategy to deal with the war veterans. It was then that Mugabe turned to one of the last resource streams that he had available, land. Mugabe's rhetorical assault on continued white landholdings in late 1997 and early 1998 set the stage for the violent land seizures that would occur at the hands of the war veterans in the summer of 1998. Again ethnic conflict had become a political tool for the ZANU-PF government. This time however, it was used to co-opt rather than crush its opponents.

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<sup>246</sup> "War Veterans Ransack Mugabe's Party HQ," *Agence Presse France*, August 14, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

*Financial Compensation and Backlash (1997)*

In the wake of the sacking of the ZANU-PF headquarters, Mugabe agreed to hold talks with the leaders of the war veterans.<sup>247</sup> Following the meeting the government announced the immediate initiation of a broad veteran's assistance program. The size of the program was staggering. Each of the country's 70,000 veterans would receive an initial lump sum payment of Z\$50,000, an indefinite monthly allowance of Z\$2,000, and all veterans and their families would receive free education and healthcare. The estimated one-year cost of the program was Z\$7.5 billion an amount that increased state spending by 25%.<sup>248</sup> Mugabe's plan of co-opting the war veterans had begun.

The World Bank reacted by freezing a scheduled \$62 million loan to Zimbabwe. The funds would be frozen until the Government of Zimbabwe could demonstrate that it would be able "to find additional revenue to finance the payments."<sup>249</sup> In November, the government found the additional revenue to finance the project in the form of sweeping new taxes and levies: a 5% "war veterans levy" on pensions; 2.5% increase in the sales tax; and 5% increases in the prices of petrol, diesel, and electricity.<sup>250</sup> Civil society was not pleased. In December 1997, the ZCTU launched a series of massive strikes to protest the new taxes. After an initial attempt to crush the protests using the armed forces,

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<sup>247</sup> "Mugabe Gives in to War Veterans' Demands," *Agence Presse France*, August 21, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

<sup>248</sup> "Mugabe Moves Country Into Crisis With Lavish War Veterans Package," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, August 27, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

<sup>249</sup> "World Bank Halts Lending to Zimbabwe," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, September 13, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 5, 2006.

<sup>250</sup> Michael Hartnack, "Zimbabwe: Unions Vow to Oppose Z\$2BN Tax Hike," *Business Day (South Africa)*, December 1, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

Mugabe ultimately relented and announced a repeal of the new measures.<sup>251</sup> With no alternative revenue source to pay for the new war veterans' program inflation skyrocketed. The option of financial cooptation of the ex-combatants was not viable. With no other revenue sources available, Mugabe turned to his final asset, land.

*The Turn to Land: ZANU's Ethnic Laden Rhetoric (1997)*

Beginning in the winter of 1997 the ZANU-PF government initiated a prolonged public attack against white-owned commercial farming in Zimbabwe. Consisting of racially infused rhetoric and the announcement of increasingly hostile programs, the campaign set the stage for the illegal farm seizures by war veterans that would begin in the summer of 1998.

In November 1998, the government of Zimbabwe announced its plan to seize 1,800 white-owned farms covering 5 million hectares of land for redistribution to blacks. The plan was especially notable because the government did not intend to compensate farmer for land seized, a blatant violation of the constitution.<sup>252</sup> In announcing the rationale behind the plan, Mugabe clearly demonstrated its ethnic undertones: "We are going to take the land and we are not going to pay a cent to any soul. If the British government wants us to compensate its children, it must give us the money, or it does the compensation itself."<sup>253</sup> The message was clear, whites were not Zimbabweans, they

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<sup>251</sup>Despite this repeal the World Bank backed off its previous demands and released the \$62 million loan to the country. Michael Hartnack, "Zimbabwe Scraps Tax Increases After Nationwide Protests," *Business Day (South Africa)*, December 11, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>252</sup> Article 16 of the Zimbabwean Constitution protected citizens from deprivation of property and promised compensation for land seized by the government.

<sup>253</sup> Jan Raath, "Mugabe to Demand Britain Pay for Seized White-Owned Farms," *Deutshce Presse-Agentur*, November 2, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

were outsiders, the “children” of the British. In response to the illegality of the plan Mugabe responded, “forget the constitution.”<sup>254</sup> The present Zimbabwean government did not have an obligation to pay for land “grabbed by colonizers.”<sup>255</sup>

In the following months, as negotiations commenced between the Zimbabwean government and the international community, and particularly Britain, over compensatory funding for land seizures, the racially infused rhetoric increased. At the ZANU-PF party conference in December, Mugabe declared: “land is the people's sovereign asset. It is their home, economic resource, a social and cultural asset, their religious shrine, their heritage and very livelihood. They are born on it, live and die on it, and get buried on it. It enshrines our genealogy and ancestry.”<sup>256</sup> He went on: “We are bringing a stop to colonialism. So go back to your homes and tell your people we are taking the land back.”<sup>257</sup> ZANU-PF Information Minister Chen Chimutengwende justified the new land seizure policy as a move to protect whites, ““We are doing (land reform) for their own protection. Otherwise the people will grab the land and they will be killed by the landless peasants.”<sup>258</sup> Between January and June 1998, Mugabe referred to

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> “No Going Back on Land Acquisition: Mugabe,” *Xinhua News Agency*, December 5, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>257</sup> “Mugabe Warns White Farmers Land Issue ‘Not a Matter for the Courts,’” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, December 8, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>258</sup> “White Farmers Will be Killed if They Don’t Give Up Land: Minister,” *Agence Presse France*, January 11, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

the presence of white farmers in Zimbabwe variously as “occupation”<sup>259</sup>, “an extension of Britain”<sup>260</sup>, a “colonial problem”<sup>261</sup>, and perhaps most explosively “Rhodesian.”<sup>262</sup>

The purpose of this rhetoric was to highlight the “otherness” of whites in Zimbabwe.

Whites constituted a foreign element which precluded real Zimbabweans from acquiring what was rightfully theirs. In essence Mugabe was framing the situation within the context of Gurr’s relative deprivation theory (value expectations v. value capabilities).

The result was a ripening of the environment for the outbreak of perceptually legitimated ethnic violence.

#### *Farm Seizures and Governmental Acquiescence (1998-2005)*

In an attempt to resolve the escalating crisis, an international donor’s conference was planned for June 1998. Due to a lack of interest, however, the conference was postponed until September.<sup>263</sup> This postponement marked a significant shift in land crisis, from rhetoric to action.

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<sup>259</sup> “We are not going back on the land issue. We cannot accept perpetual occupation of most of our fertile land by a few white commercial farmers.” “Mugabe; Land Reform to Go Ahead,” *Xinhua News Agency*, January 21, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>260</sup> “Zimbabwe cannot be an extension of Britain.” “Zimbabwe: Furious Mugabe Denies Land Reform Abandoned,” *BBC Monitoring Africa*, January 22, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>261</sup> “The land issue is a critical matter. We cannot tax our own people in order to buy back land which was never bought. We are prepared to pay for the improvements on the farms, not the land itself. That is a colonial problem for Britain to resolve.” Tabby Moyo, “Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Steadfast On Land Issue,” *Africa News (The Namibian)*, May 19, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>262</sup> “There have been various promises, economic independence did not come in 1980, land belongs to Zimbabwe by name and remains Rhodesian in practice... the soil is ours, what came in 1980 was the right to rule ourselves.” “Zimbabwe: UK Softening on Land Issue-Mugabe,” *Africa News*, June 27, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>263</sup> Michael Hartnack, “Zimbabwe Farm Plan Conference Postponed,” *Business Day (South Africa)*, June 18, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

In response to the postponement, ZNLWA leader Chenjerai Hitler Hunzvi, questioned the viability of the donor talks: “Is it that the leadership has been threatened by external forces?”<sup>264</sup> The same week a group of 1,000 farmers from the communal area of Svovse were transported to the Marondera-Goromonzi region 70 km east of Harare. There they began occupation of 3 white-owned farms. The operation was organized and carried out by the ZNLWA.<sup>265</sup> The occupation of the Marondera-Goromonzi Farms began a three year period of illegal farm seizures. Though the initial seizure occurred without the use of overt violence<sup>266</sup>, many subsequent farm occupations were extremely violent.

Farm seizures occurred with frequency in the summer of 1998.<sup>267</sup> Despite some domestic and international calls for a governmental response, the ZANU-PF regime did little to evict the largely ex-combatant squatters from the farms. Robert Mugabe publicly declared that the squatters had a genuine reason for their actions and asked: “Why should we use tear gas? Why should we use force on our people who are hungry for land?”<sup>268</sup> There is even reason to believe that the government was complicit in the seizures, as white farmers known to be ZANU-PF supporters were not targeted by squatters. The ongoing seizures also strengthened Zimbabwe’s position for the September donors conference raising the sense of urgency for the previously uninterested international

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> One of the Svovse farmers explained the situation: “We are not squatters. We are not foreigners on foreign soil. We are Zimbabweans and this is Zimbabwean land. Our forefathers were evicted from here. Our ancestors are buried here. This is our fatherland,” “Zimbabwe: Zim Peasants Take Back Land,” *Africa News*, June 26, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed April 6, 2006. Donald G. McNeil, “Zimbabwe Squatters: Land Claims on White Farms,” *The New York Times*, June 22, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>266</sup> The very act of forced seizure can be characterized as an act of violence.

<sup>267</sup> International Crisis Group (2004), 61.

<sup>268</sup> “President Mugabe Defends ‘Genuine Reasons’ for Squatters’ Land Grab,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, June 27, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

community. Beyond the improving Zimbabwe's position before the donors conference, which ultimately failed, the land seizures produced a win-win situation for ZANU; they appeased the war veterans and weakened the supporters of the opposition political movement.<sup>269</sup> The complicity of the Zimbabwean government in the land seizures would continue for their duration, until 2005.

### Violence<sup>270</sup>

Between 1998 and 2000, 1,600 farms were occupied for some period of time, mostly by war veterans. 1,000 of those farms remained under squatter control beyond the year 2000.<sup>271</sup> As the land seizures progressed they demonstrated increasing levels of overt violence. According to a 2002 Human Rights Watch Report, at least 829 "violent or hostile" incidents occurred in the process of commercial farm seizure from 1998 until September 2001.<sup>272</sup> Included in these incidents were the murders of at least seven white farmers.<sup>273</sup> Between 2001 and 2003 seven more white farmers were killed and only 500 of the 4,500 farmers from 1998 remained.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> The opposition political movement will be dealt with in the next section.

<sup>270</sup> There are no comprehensive statistics regarding the violence perpetrated by War Veterans during the 1998-2005 land seizures. For the purposes of this study, I will include partial statistics from several sources. I will also include accounts of individual attacks to provide perspective. The ultimate goal is merely to demonstrate the occurrence of ethnic conflict to establish its use as a political tool.

<sup>271</sup> "Zimbabwe" in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2000*, United States Department of State, 2001. Available online at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/af/852.htm>

<sup>272</sup> "Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe," *Human Rights Watch*, 2002. Available online at: [http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/zimbabwe/ZimLand0302-03.htm#P291\\_78318](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/zimbabwe/ZimLand0302-03.htm#P291_78318)

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Basildon Peta, "Mugabe Ratchets Up the Terror," *Toronto Star*, May 25, 2003. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

Many white farmers were wounded or killed in the midst of takeovers as they tried to defend their land:

- “Early Tuesday, 40 to 100 attackers armed with AK-47 assault rifles drove onto a farm in western Zimbabwe and besieged the home of cattle rancher Martin Olds. The 42-year-old rancher was killed in a three-hour gunbattle...The attackers then burned down his house.”<sup>275</sup>
- “Squatters occupying farmland in Zimbabwe attacked a white farmer Tuesday, slashing at his face with a machete and seriously wounding him, officials said. Attackers cut through Marshall Roper's nose and into the roof of his mouth, officials said...12 farm occupiers...allegedly tried to prevent Roper and his black workers from planting tobacco on his 3,600-acre property.”<sup>276</sup>

In other instances attacks on whites were more clearly politically motivated:

- “The Commercial Farmers Union said Henry Elsworth, 70, and his son Ian were returning to their homestead around dusk Tuesday when they were ambushed by gunmen at the farm gate. Ian Elsworth, the driver of their vehicle, was shot five times in the lower body. His father, wounded by one shot, ‘staggered to the driver's side to attempt to start the car and was shot in the stomach,’ the union said in a statement based on Ian's account. He died 15 minutes later, the statement said. Ian Elsworth, 20, was in a stable condition in a Harare hospital Wednesday. He told reporters that \$73 in the car was left untouched by the attackers. ‘This was not done by thieves,’ he said. ‘We are not treating this as a random killing but more as a calculated political hit’ aimed at scaring and intimidating white farmers, said Malcolm Vowles, a spokesman for the Commercial Farmers Union. Ian Elsworth said he received an anonymous telephone death threat in April and was warned to leave the country. He was accused of supporting opposition to the government. During the shooting, he said his father yelled: “Please, please stop. We will leave Zimbabwe tomorrow.” The two were returning to the farm after his father had received regular cancer treatment. “He was a defenseless old man on crutches. They shot him down.”<sup>277</sup>

The black farm workers who worked on white-owned farms were even more of a target than whites. A Zimbabwean National Employment Council report stated that by June 2000 there had been 26 murders, 1,600 assaults, 11 rapes, and 3,000 displacements of

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<sup>275</sup> Angus Shaw, “White Farmer Killed; Mugabe Calls White Farmers Enemies,” *Associated Press*, April 18, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>276</sup> Angus Shaw, “Squatters Attack White Farmer in Zimbabwe,” *Associated Press*, September 26, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>277</sup> Angus Shaw, “Violence in Zimbabwe Claims the Life of Seventh White Farmer,” *Associated Press*, December 13, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

black farm workers as a result of the farm seizures, numbers that far exceeded the numbers of whites attacked.<sup>278</sup> Attacks on black farm workers are particularly interesting for the purposes of this study. According to Human Rights Watch, black farm workers were specifically targeted because of their affiliation with white-owned commercial farms. Thus black workers became the predominant target of black violence within the context of a black-white conflict.<sup>279</sup>

Robert Mugabe continued to legitimate the violence through the use of racially infused language. In April 2000, immediately following the murder of white farmer Martin Olds, Mugabe told state television that in a meeting with white farmers: “I told them that our present state of mind is that you are our enemies because you have behaved as enemies and that we are full of anger. The entire community is angry and that's why you see the war veterans seizing land.”<sup>280</sup> In December at the ZANU party congress he declared: “Our party must continue to strike fear in the heart of the white man, our real enemy.”<sup>281</sup> Rather than pacifying the situation, such statements legitimized the violent acts being perpetrated against the white community and affiliated black farm workers by the war veterans. Mugabe’s comments facilitated the ex-combatants’ seizure of white-owned land, appeasing their demands for compensation and in the process co-opting one of the potential threats to his power.

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<sup>278</sup> The fact that there were many more farm workers than white farmers certainly accounts for this discrepancy in numbers of attacks. Human Rights Watch “Fast Track...”

<sup>279</sup> This phenomenon will be examined further when reviewing ZANU-PF attacks against black MDC supporters who had been labeled “neo-colonialists.”

<sup>280</sup> “Mugabe Brands White Farmers ‘Enemies,’” *Agence Presse France*, April 18, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>281</sup> “Mugabe Blasts Whites at Party Congress,” *United Press International*, December 14, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

Again, ZANU-PF had used ethnic conflict as a means for marginalizing its political opposition. By infusing the land seizure debate with increasingly racial language, including allusions to colonialism, the government attempted to create a veil of legitimacy behind which the war veterans could enrich themselves and cease to threaten ZANU politically.

### **The Farm Seizures Within the Theoretical Framework**

Three elements of the theoretical framework come into play when examining ZANU's attempt to marginalize the political threat of the war veterans by facilitating their seizure of white-owned farms. Primarily, this case study provides another example of elite manipulation as a cause of ethnic conflict. Robert Mugabe's government facing the threat of an organized and hostile veterans movement, at the very least cultivated an environment ripe for ethnically hostile farm takeovers and may have even actively participated in the program.

Without Robert Mugabe's sudden shift towards an active government land seizure program in November 1997, the outbreak of ethnic violence related to the farm occupations would not have occurred. The primary goal for Mugabe was the acquisition of an asset, land, to buy-off the war veterans. The use of stridently divisive language, such as calling the whites "children of Britain", from the onset demonstrates the conscious effort that Mugabe made in fostering an environment conducive to ethnic violence. Due to Zimbabwe's struggling economy, ZANU did not have the funds needed to compensate white farmers. If Zimbabwe was unable to get international funding,

which ultimately it was not, Mugabe needed another way to acquire land to pay-off the war veterans. The creation of a hostile environment facilitated an alternative vehicle for the acquisition of land, violent seizure.

In order to create the zone of permissibility ZANU-PF played upon two of the proposed motivations from the framework; economic differentiation and group security. Economic differentiation provided the central thrust of ZANU's campaign. By declaring that the land was the people's "sovereign asset" and that the continued presence of whites constituted "a colonial problem", Mugabe raised the value expectations of the land starved people. After all, Zimbabwe had defeated colonialism in 1980; its continuation in any form did not match the public's perception of what an independent Zimbabwe should be like. Mugabe's attempts to highlight the inequity of land ownership are an example of Gurr's demonstration effect.

The continual definition of the whites as an other also fits into the framework.

Throughout the period leading up to the initial seizures in June 1998, the white community was variously referred to as "occupiers", "colonizers", "children of Britain", and "an extension of Britain." The purpose of this language was to separate whites from Zimbabwe. Regardless of how long whites might have lived in the country, they were still outsiders. This clear attempt to frame the white minority community as "the other" jives with Bonacich's middleman minorities theory. Despite the fact that the whites occupied a social position on top, rather than in the middle, of the economic hierarchy, their overwhelming control of commercial farming created the seeds for hostility. By

using such explicit language, Mugabe reinforced the image of this separateness as a means for legitimating hostility against the community.

Finally, ZANU-PF's hostile rhetoric in the midst of the farm seizures played upon group security motivations. Mugabe's charge that the whites were "enemies" of the state and "Rhodesians" had the effect of framing them as threats to Zimbabweans. Blacks had only 20 years before ended a bloody war against Rhodesia. Thus, explicitly linking the present white community with the regime that had inflicted so much pain upon the black population resonated.

Ultimately it is unclear how effective the ZANU elite's efforts to legitimize the seizure of white farms were. This period marked the rise of a significant opposition movement within the country and the seizures were met with wide-scale international condemnation.<sup>282</sup> On the other hand, there was considerable support for the policies among the rural poor and several African leaders commended Zimbabwe's active approach to the land problem.<sup>283</sup> For the purpose of this study the level of effectiveness of this strategy is irrelevant. That it was tried at all is what is significant. ZANU again showed its willingness to use ethnic conflict as a means of eliminating political competition.

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<sup>282</sup> "Pressure Mounts on Mugabe," *Zimbabwe Independent*, April 21, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>283</sup> Timothy Kalyegira, "Namibia Party Officials Support Mugabe Land Grab," *United Press International*, May 27, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

## **V. Black-White Conflict: Trade Unions, The MDC & Neo-Colonialism (1996-2006)**

In ZANU's response to the trade unionist movement, we see the third example of ethnic conflict being used as a means of responding to political opposition. This time the government would use the rhetoric of "neo-colonialism" as a means for legitimating its repression of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). By labeling its opponents with a term so related to Zimbabwe's painful recent history, ZANU hoped to create sense of threat and thus a zone of permissibility for its actions.

### **Roots of the Conflict**

In the mid-1990's Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF government faced its two most serious threats since it took power in 1980, the simultaneous rise of organized veterans and trade unionist movements. The government took very different approaches to these two threats. As seen in the previous section, Mugabe took drastic means to appease the veterans even creating a national climate within which the ex-combatants could enrich themselves through land seizure.

In response to the trade unionists, ZANU took the exact opposite approach, one of confrontation rather than accommodation. After a series of skirmishes during the mid to late 1990's in which the government combated strikes with riot police, the trade unionists formed an opposition political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The MDC led rejection of ZANU's draft constitution in 2000 was the opening salvo in what would become a virtual war against the opposition and its supporters.

*Economic Decline and the Rise of the ZCTU (1995-1998)*

As previously noted, Zimbabwe's economy took a downturn in the early 1990's as severe drought combined with a new World Bank imposed structural adjustment program drove domestic prices up and wages down. The hard economic conditions drew the ire of civil society and the country faced a series of sector specific strikes. First municipal workers in the eastern city of Mutare struck to increase their wages to reflect new rising prices.<sup>284</sup> Then media workers walked out in search of a salary adjustment.<sup>285</sup> Finally, healthcare professionals nationwide went on strike.<sup>286</sup> They were soon joined by a cross-sector nationwide strike organized by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). The entire nation was paralyzed as public and private sector workers joined together to protest the government's World Bank defined economic policy. The government responded to the strikers with force, deploying riot police, batons, and tear gas to force the workers to return to their jobs.<sup>287</sup> The government prevailed and the next day the strike broke.

Despite its initial failure, however, the general strike of 1996 marked an important turning point in the labor organization in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean labor historian Brian Raftopolous describes the impact of the 1996 strikes:

(T)he decline of workers' incomes resulted in intensified strike actions that were characterized by several features: the involvement of increasing numbers of workers; more nationwide actions; the inclusion of more sectors;...and the growing militancy of public sector workers...The national public sector strike in 1996, in particular, strengthened the links

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<sup>284</sup> "Municipal Workers on Strike in Eastern Zimbabwean City," *Xinhua News Agency*, January 13, 1995. Available at LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006

<sup>285</sup> Lewis Machipisa, "Zimbabwe-Media: News on Strike," *Inter Press Service*, May 17, 1996. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>286</sup> "Workers Strike Renders Zimbabwe's Civil Service in Crisis," *Xinhua News Agency*, August 20, 1996. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>287</sup> Susan Njanji, "Zimbabwe's General Strike Flops," *Agence Presse France*, November 13, 1996. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

between the ZCTU and the public sector unions, and shook the confidence of the state.<sup>288</sup>

A new force in Zimbabwean politics had been born, the trade unionist movement.

In August 1997, facing pressure from the increasingly militant ex-combatants, Robert Mugabe announced his massive war veterans assistance package. Under pressure from the World Bank, in November of that year, the government announced a series levies and taxes targeting pensions and energy products to pay for the Z\$7.5 billion program. The ZCTU objected to having to bear the costs of Mugabe's pay-off for the war veterans and announced its plans to strike in protest.<sup>289</sup> In an attempt to intimidate the strikers, before the protests Home Affairs Minister Dumiso Dabengwa announced: "Once again, workers should know that if they stretch police patience too far, they would not hesitate to shoot them."<sup>290</sup> This time however the workers would not be cowed.

In March, following the imposition of the onerous taxes, ZCTU Secretary-General Morgan Tsvangirai declared a national strike.<sup>291</sup> For two-days Zimbabwe was paralyzed as workers throughout the country stayed home. At the end of the two-

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<sup>288</sup> Brian Raftopolous, "The State in Crisis: Authoritarian Nationalism, Selective Citizenship and Distortions of Democracy in Zimbabwe," in *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis*, Amanda Hammar, Brian Raftopoulos and Stig Jensen eds. (Harare: Weaver Press, 2003.), 227.

<sup>289</sup> Joyce Hamba, "Zimbabwe: ZCTU Threatens Strikes Over Vets," *Africa News*, December 1, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>290</sup> "Minister Warns Police Will Shoot Demonstrators Protesting at Planned Tax Rises," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, December 12, 1997. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>291</sup> Andrew Meldrum, "Zimbabwe Unions Defy Mugabe," *The Guardian (London)*, March 4, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

day walk-away the workers returned peacefully to work.<sup>292</sup> The ZCTU had demonstrated its ability to successfully mobilize on a massive scale. Following the threat of another massive walkout, the government relented and abolished the war veterans tax in September of 1998.<sup>293</sup> The ZCTU had won the standoff.<sup>294</sup>

### *Rise of the MDC and Constitutional Referendum (1999-2000)*

Building on the momentum of its 1998 victory, the ZCTU decided to form a political party to contest parliamentary elections slated for 2000. In May 1999, Tsvangirai announced the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change.<sup>295</sup> Four months later the party released its manifesto. It was to be “a united front of the working people, to pursue common goals and principles that advance the interests of all people across Zimbabwe-workers, peasants, the unemployed, women, students, youths and the disabled people, among others.”<sup>296</sup> It was an explicitly non-racial unity party.

ZANU had seen the establishment of opposition parties before. None had gained traction and the most serious opposition the government had faced since the 1987

Unity Accord were the three independent members of parliament currently in

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<sup>292</sup> Iden Wetherell, “Zimbabwe: Threats Fail to Stop Zim Workers,” *Africa News*, March 6, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>293</sup> Michael Hartnack, “Harare Will Drop Its Tax Plan Says Union Body,” *Business Day (South Africa)*, September 7, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>294</sup> Talking about the 1998 strikes Brian Raftopolous said: “The general strike and the mass stay-aways of 198 established the potential effectiveness of labour as a social movement for change, signaling the escalating momentum for change in the country.” Raftopolous, 228.

<sup>295</sup> “MDC to Contest General, Presidential Elections,” *The Financial Gazette*, May 20, 1999. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>296</sup> “New Party Releases ‘People’s Manifesto,’” *Africa News*, September 12, 1999. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

office. Instead of worrying about the challenge of the MDC, ZANU focused on drafting a new constitution.

In June 1998, President Robert Mugabe called for the drafting of a new constitution adopted by the people of Zimbabwe to replace the 1980 constitution created at the Lancaster House Conference.<sup>297</sup> Mugabe appointed a Presidential Commission of Inquiry to look into the adoption of a new constitution. Civil society groups protested the executive dominated process, arguing that the people should be included in the drafting as well as approval of the new constitution.<sup>298</sup> The Commission did conduct a four week outreach campaign to gain public views, but the drafting was done solely by the 400 Presidential appointees.<sup>299</sup> In November 1999, the Commission revealed its draft constitution, which looked remarkably similar to a draft ZANU-PF had previously developed.<sup>300</sup> The draft called for the creation of a powerful executive, with powers to appoint and fire ministers, appoint judges, and with immunity.<sup>301</sup> Despite widespread public anger at the draft, the government went ahead with plans for a national referendum to vote on the draft in February 2000.

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<sup>297</sup> Mugabe said, "If democracy is to thrive and become a national heritage, then the nation's political course to change government or its leadership can only be that of an orderly democratic process as prescribed by our constitution." "Zimbabwe: Mugabe Calls For Constitutional Reform," *Africa News*, June 26, 1998. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>298</sup> "Zimbabwe: People Not Government Should Draft Constitution," *Africa News*, February 26, 1999. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>299</sup> "Commissioners Vow to Resist Political Meddling: Say People's Views Will Stand in New Constitution," *Financial Gazette*, October 14, 1999. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>300</sup> "Zimbabwe: Uproar Over Draft Constitution," *Africa News*, November 30, 1999. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>301</sup> "Zimbabwe: Outcry Over Constitutional Reform Blueprint," *Africa News*, December 2, 1999. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

The MDC immediately began to organize a campaign to reject the draft constitution. Leading a movement comprised of a broad base of civil society organizations, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai campaigned throughout the country to mobilize Zimbabweans against a constitution that would further entrench Robert Mugabe and ZANU in power.<sup>302</sup> Meanwhile, ZANU did little to campaign in favor of the document. On February 15, after two days of voting, the draft constitution was voted down.<sup>303</sup> The MDC had proven itself to be a viable threat to ZANU-PF. In response to this new threat, Robert Mugabe and ZANU turned to its old tactic, ethnic violence.

### **ZANU-PF's Strategy of Confrontation (2000-2006)**

In the aftermath of the 2000 rejection of the draft constitution, ZANU-PF retrenched and began an aggressive campaign against its new opponent the MDC. It was a two tiered strategy:

- 1) Paint the MDC as neo-colonialists which threatened independent Zimbabwe legitimating extra-legal methods to preserve the country from an existential threat;
- 2) Implementation of repressive, often violent, measures against the MDC and its perceived supporters.

The ultimate goal was to superimpose the mostly-black MDC into the role of white colonial aggressor within the traditional framework of the black-white conflict.

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<sup>302</sup> "Zimbabwe: Coalition of Civic Groups Campaigns Against Draft Constitution," *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, January 9, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

<sup>303</sup> "Zimbabwean Ruling Party Relaxation Blamed for Referendum Defeat," *Xinhua General News Agency*, February 15, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on March 20, 2006.

*ZANU-PF's Rhetoric Campaign Against the MDC:2000 Parliamentary Elections*

In the aftermath of its defeat in the February 2000 constitutional referendum, ZANU-PF shifted its strategy to one of vilification and repression. The foundation of this strategy was the linkage of the opposition MDC to neo-colonialism, an existentialist threat to the independence of Zimbabwe, an identification which created a zone of permissibility for repression.

Jonathan Moyo, who would later become ZANU-PF's information minister, described the threat that the MDC posed in March 2000:

I started working with the ruling party when it became clear that our country and heritage as an African people were yet again under historic attack. This was during the work of the constitutional commission...But as the work of the commission unfolded it became obvious to me that the process was being used by some vested interests - some foreign and others local - but by and large racially defined, not only to get to the President (Mugabe) but also to the gains of the liberation struggle itself...

Moyo continued:

A peaceful and democratic process was frustrated in the hope that the country would be plunged into chaos and that some groups would then use that chaos to come to power under the wave of the so-called winds of change. For me it became clear that these groups have to be stopped and finally so. There is no better way of stopping them (the opposition and white liberals) outside the liberation movement of this country. That's why people like me are regrouping within the movement (Zanu PF) to reassert the same values that the people of this country fought for which are under threat from the same merchants of doom who colonized us. We are now all (revolutionaries) regrouping in defense of our sovereignty.<sup>304</sup>

The message is clear, the MDC is an agent of outside "racially defined" forces which constitute a threat to independent Zimbabwe. Especially noteworthy is the marshal tone

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<sup>304</sup>“ZANU-PF Will Not Stand By and Watch Foreigners Violate Our Sovereignty’ -Moyo,” *Zimbabwe Independent*, March 31, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 3, 2006.

in Moyo's concluding statement: "we are all (revolutionaries) regrouping in defense of our sovereignty."

Such statements were reinforced at the highest levels of ZANU. In the run up to the parliamentary elections Robert Mugabe, while speaking in Mutare claimed that whites had "conspired" with black Zimbabweans to take over the country. He went on: "Those who try to cause disunity among our people must watch out because death will befall them."<sup>305</sup>

ZANU's message resonated with its supporters. Febiano Muvonzi, an ex-combatant, described MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai in April 2000:

This (Morgan) Tsvangirai who leads the so-called opposition is just a puppet for the whites. Mugabe supports us 120 per cent. We went into the bush to win this land and we are disciplined soldiers who have waited for 20 years to get our land. But now we have had enough. We saw, after the liberation war, that the whites only gave up their stony land and kept the fertile areas, so we cannot trust the so-called proper channels organized by people who call us 'kaffirs'.<sup>306</sup>

The goal was to place the MDC and its leaders within the context of historical black-white tensions in Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans had painful memories of colonization at the hands of the British and subsequent Rhodesians. By connecting the MDC as "puppets" of the British, ZANU raised the specter of a return to colonization. In the days immediately before the parliamentary elections a ZANU-PF county chairman told a crowd: "Make sure that the MDC and Tsvangirai do not get the vote they could use to sell Zimbabwe's

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<sup>305</sup> "Mugabe Threatens Opponents With Death," *Global News Wire*, March 17, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 3, 2006.

<sup>306</sup> Alex Duval Smith, "We Have Been Waiting Too Long For Land That is Rightfully Ours," *The Independent (London)*, April 7, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 3, 2006.

sovereignty to their masters.”<sup>307</sup> Having established the threat that the MDC posed to an independent black Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF proceeded with the second part of its campaign against the opposition; brutal repression.

*ZANU-PF's Violence Campaign Against the MDC: 2000 Parliamentary Elections*

Between the February 2000 constitutional referendum and June 2000 parliamentary elections, ZANU-PF and its supporters unleashed a brutal campaign of violence against the MDC and its perceived supporters. Acting to save the state from the threat of neo-colonialism, thousands of attacks against opposition targets occurred.

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum found 2351 acts of political violence in the run-up to the elections, including 72 murders and over 60 cases of torture.<sup>308</sup> MDC leaders were attacked and threatened. On June 21, Zacharia Rioga, the MDC candidate for the Masvingo South district, was assaulted by a group of ZANU-PF youth supporters and veterans. Rioga was beaten unconscious and his vehicle was set on fire.<sup>309</sup> The independent media also came under attack. In April, the Daily News, an independent newspaper viewed as sympathetic to the MDC, was bombed.<sup>310</sup> Individual MDC supporters were targeted in particular. Zenzozenkosi Hove, was the MDC Treasurer for Mberengwa district:

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<sup>307</sup> “Stage Set for Fierce Battle For MDC and ZANU-PF in Buhera North,” *Global News Wire*, June 24, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>308</sup> Angela Cheater, “Human Rights and Zimbabwe’s June 2000 Election,” *Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Human Rights Research Unit*, January 2001.

<sup>309</sup> *Crisis of Governance- A Report on Political Violence in Zimbabwe: An Account of Events Highlighting Efforts to Subvert the Popular Will in Parliamentary Elections Held in June 2000*, The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, 87.

<sup>310</sup> “Blasts Targets Independent Newspaper,” *Agence Presse France*, April 23, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

It was on 24 May 2000, when I was in my business when I saw a lot of people coming holding sticks, iron bars, stones and other weapons. They came straight for us. I tried to run away but since these people were so many I couldn't run away from them. They quickly caught up with me and beat me up with sticks, some kicking and battering me with feet, open hands and clenched fists. Someone had called for the police, but when they came and saw these ZANU-PF people on the rampage, I mean beating people and stoning stores, they did nothing.<sup>311</sup>

People with no affiliation to the MDC, but presumed to be sympathetic to the opposition were also targeted. This happened in particular to rural black farm workers who were employed by white farmers.<sup>312</sup> A nurse who worked on a white-owned commercial farm recounted a confrontation with pro-ZANU war veterans:

I was coming from the store, then I saw plenty of people coming, boys and women...Then they beat me with a stick on my arm. They took us here to the yard. They were saying, 'Pamberi ne Zanu-PF, pasi ne MDC.' ['Forward Zanu-PF, down with MDC.'] After some seconds they took another boy and they beat that boy thoroughly. Then they went off.<sup>313</sup>

Such attacks, which became commonplace throughout the country, were justified by the charge that the MDC were simply proxies which would return the country to white foreign control. Thus though purely political in nature, the violence against the MDC was carried out within an ethnic context. Regardless of the fact that the vast majority of MDC supporters were black, they were perceived to represent whites within the framework of Zimbabwe's history of black-white antagonism.

Despite, ZANU-PF's repressive campaign against the opposition, the MDC did well in the elections winning 57 of the 120 contested seats.<sup>314</sup> Though ZANU-PF maintained a

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<sup>311</sup> Catholic Commission "Crisis of Governance", 90.

<sup>312</sup> "Zimbabwean War Veterans Strike Fear Into Black Farm Workers," *Agence Presse France*, April 27, 2000. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>313</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Fast Track..."

<sup>314</sup> Angela Cheater, 30.

slim majority, MDC had established itself as a legitimate opposition and genuine threat to ZANU's 20 year hold on power. Mugabe had failed to eliminate his opponents. Over the next six years, however, he would be more successful.

*ZANU's Continuing Campaign Against the MDC(2000-2004)*

In the years since the June 2000 parliamentary elections, ZANU-PF has continued to use its dual strategy of labeling and repression of the MDC. During that time, the government has utilized new weapons, including the courts and food aid, to squeeze the opposition and to create the impression that the MDC presents a threat to the independence of Zimbabwe.

The next major test following the June 2000 parliamentary elections, was the March 2002 Presidential election. The contest featured a race between Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai. In the run-up to the election, Mugabe continued his assault against the legitimacy of Tsvangirai and the MDC:

We are in a state of political war. We are in a war to defend our rights and the interests of our people. The British have decided to take us on through the MDC...Tsvangirai has decided he must be white. He must become "Tsvangison" in line with his wishes for all things white. How can we have blacks who masquerade as whites? Whatever Blair tries to do, we will not back down. We went to war; we went to prison; we have suffered over the years but we are not afraid of the struggle. We will not run away. You can count on us to fight.<sup>315</sup>

Along with the rhetoric ZANU-PF increased its physical repression against the MDC and its perceived supporters. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum reported 86

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<sup>315</sup> Peter Thornycroft and David Blair, "Mugabe: It's War on White Puppets Zimbabwe's President Begins His Re-Election Campaign With an Attack on Britain and Brands His Poll Opponent a Colonial Stooge," *The Daily Telegraph (London)*, February 2, 2002. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

politically motivated killings and 484 instances of torture in the immediate run-up and aftermath of the 2002 election.<sup>316</sup> This time, unlike 2000, the repression worked and Mugabe won with 56% of the vote.<sup>317</sup>

Following its victory in the Presidential election, ZANU continued its attack against the MDC. As a result of the widespread farm seizures and a new series of droughts, Zimbabwe's food production dropped dramatically. Millions of Zimbabweans faced starvation.<sup>318</sup> The country that once was the breadbasket of Southern Africa could now no longer feed itself. ZANU used this condition to its advantage and began to use food aid as a political weapon. Only supporters of ZANU could receive assistance, those perceived to be sympathetic of the MDC were forced into starvation.<sup>319</sup> In order to leverage its control of the food supply, ZANU went so far as to sharply restrict World Food Program assistance, despite its millions of starving citizens.<sup>320</sup>

In addition to the use of food as a weapon ZANU began to use the courts in its attack against the MDC. In February 2002, just weeks before the Presidential elections, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai was charged with treason for allegedly planning to assassinate

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<sup>316</sup> "Are They Accountable? Examining Alleged Violators and Their Violations Pre and Post the Presidential Election, March 2002," Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, December 2002, 31-33.

<sup>317</sup> "Zimbabwe Presidential Election, 9-11 March 2002, The Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group," Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003. 41.

<sup>318</sup> Angus Shaw, "Food Woes Worsen in Zimbabwe," *Associated Press*, November 23, 2002. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>319</sup> "Zimbabwe: Food Used as Political Weapon," *Human Rights Watch*, October 24, 2003. Available online at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2003/10/24/zimbab6477.htm>.

<sup>320</sup> "Two Million Zimbabweans Will Go Hungry This Year, New Report Finds," *Agence Presse France*, June 23, 2004. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

President Robert Mugabe.<sup>321</sup> The government produced a video of a meeting between Tsvangirai and Ari Ben-Menasche, an Israeli security consultant and former Mossad agent. Tsvangirai could be heard in the recording inquiring about the possibility of assassinating Mugabe. In an interview following the release of the video, Ben-Menasche said of Tsvangirai, “He and his masters are desperate for power.”<sup>322</sup> After fears that Tsvangirai would be barred from running, he was ultimately allowed to contest the election. The episode, however, added a taint to the MDC campaign and reinforced the idea that the party was trying to subvert Zimbabwean independence. The charges and subsequent trial lasted until late 2004, when Tsvangirai was ultimately acquitted for lack of evidence.<sup>323</sup> Over the two years though the government was able to use the charges to pressure the MDC and bolster its argument that the party was a threat.

#### *The Decline of the MDC (2005-2006)*

Given the ongoing environment of repression, the MDC mulled boycotting parliamentary elections in 2005, but ultimately decided to run. Following the trend of 2002, ZANU won a considerable victory in an election marred by a series of irregularities. The MDC lost 16 seats in the election. The viability of the opposition came into doubt.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> “Zimbabwe: Opposition Leader Interviewed on Alleged Plot to Kill Mugabe,” *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, February 21, 2002. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>322</sup> “Zimbabwe; Ben-Menasche Arrives, Criticizes Tsvangirai,” *Africa News*, February 23, 2002. Accessed on April 6, 2006. Available on LexisNexis.

<sup>323</sup> The surveillance video showed massive evidence of tampering, including dramatic jumps in the time displayed on a clock hanging in the room in which Tsvangirai and Ben-Menasche. It also was revealed that Ben-Menasche and the ZANU-PF government had extensive connections.

<sup>324</sup> “Zimbabwe; Losing MDC Faces Tough Decisions,” *Africa News*, April 10, 2005. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

Following the parliamentary defeat, it became apparent to some in the MDC leadership that the party could not be competitive in such a hostile environment. The party's decision making council decided by one vote (Tsvangirai's) to boycott the November senatorial elections.<sup>325</sup> The decision was a controversial one and many within the party opposed the boycott. 26 MDC members refused to withdrawal their names from the ballot and were subsequently expelled from the party.<sup>326</sup> These officials subsequently formed a "pro-senate" faction of the MDC and contested the elections, winning only 7 seats.<sup>327</sup> Following the elections, the pro and anti senate faction's position hardened. In April 2006, the factions announced that they would be fielding opposing candidates in upcoming by-elections.<sup>328</sup> The opposition had been broken.

As Zimbabwe entered the summer of 2006 ZANU-PF controlled the presidency and both congressional houses. The MDC, which seemed on the verge of taking power in 2000 lay divided. Robert Mugabe had yet again been successful in neutralizing his political opponents through the use of ethnic conflict.

### **The Campaign Against the MDC Within the Theoretical Framework**

In creating a justification for its violent repression of the MDC, ZANU utilized both the motivations of political competition and group security. The public campaign to paint the MDC as agents of modern-day colonizers was an attempt to frame the opposition as

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<sup>325</sup> "Zimbabwe: Opposition to Boycott Senate Elections," *Agence Presse France*, October 12, 2005. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>326</sup> "Dissenting Zimbabwe Opposition Officials Expelled From the Party," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, November 13, 2005. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>327</sup> "Zimbabwe: ZANU-PF In Landslide Victory," *Africa News*, November 28, 2005. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 6, 2006.

<sup>328</sup> "Zimbabwe: MDC Factions Lock Horns in Budiriro," *Africa News*, April 7, 2006. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed April 20, 2006.

whites within the context of Zimbabwe's colonial past. By framing the MDC as the other, despite it being a largely black broad cross-cutting coalition, ZANU was able to create a zone of permissibility for its campaign of violence. It is within this context that primarily black-black political violence became enmeshed in a black-white ethnic conflict.

ZANU-PF's framing of the MDC as the other created a sense of legitimacy for its extreme actions. Within the context of political competition, the charge that the MDC would "sell Zimbabwe's sovereignty" if elected played upon the sense of government as a commodity as presented by Udogu. The message was clear: an MDC victory would benefit its constituents, its white masters, rather than the people of Zimbabwe. Therefore and MDC victory had to be stopped at all costs.

The primary motivation that Mugabe played upon was group security. By linking the MDC with the "merchants of doom who colonized us", ZANU sought to frame the MDC as an existential threat that was a menace to the Zimbabwean state. Moyo's call for revolutionary defense of the state further reinforced the gravity of the threat. In the face of such an insidious opponent, hostile even violent actions were justified. Such dire language fits with Horowitz's fear of extinction. The MDC, as an agent of the other, threatened to demolish the free and independent Zimbabwe that so many had fought for.

As was the case with the farm seizures, it is unclear how effective Mugabe's attempts to legitimate the repressive attacks on the MDC were. ZANU faced widespread domestic

and international condemnation for its actions. On the other hand, following its 2000 parliamentary defeat, the government was able to win elections in 2002 and 2005.<sup>329</sup> Regardless, ultimately Mugabe's strategy was successful. By 2006 the MDC had split and the country again lacked a viable opposition to the governing party. Once again, Robert Mugabe had utilized ethnic conflict as a means of marginalizing political opposition.

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<sup>329</sup> Though these elections were extremely marred.

## **VI. Conclusion**

This thesis is an effort to demonstrate that Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF have consistently used ethnic conflict as a means for eliminating political opposition in Zimbabwe. The extensive military campaign against the Ndebele in Matabeleland and the Midlands (1982-1987) conducted under the guise of internal security was perpetrated largely to eliminate the political challenge of Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU political party. The facilitation of the violent seizure of white-owned farms by ex-combatants (1998-2005) created a justification within the framework of historic black-white conflict and was done primarily to co-opt the newly organized war veterans who presented a significant challenge to the ZANU government. Finally, the labeling of the MDC as agents of neo-colonialism (2000-2006) legitimated the political repression of the party within the context of the black-white conflict by superimposing the largely black MDC as the "new whites."

When taken with the theoretical framework outlined at the beginning of the paper, we see that what has occurred in Zimbabwe has been primarily caused by elite manipulation. Through the use of general motivations based on group comparisons, Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF have continually created a zone of permissibility to legitimate their self-interested violent actions.

Zimbabwe now lies at a crossroads. As a result of international condemnation the country finds itself largely isolated from the world.<sup>330</sup> Rather than bringing about change, these

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<sup>330</sup> US & EU sanctions against the country have frozen large amounts of assistance and have restricted investment in the country. Zimbabwe was suspended and subsequently withdrew from the Commonwealth

moves intended to apply pressure on Mugabe have largely given him a free hand, removing the West's leverage on the country. Only Zimbabwe's African neighbors, particularly South Africa, maintain strong enough ties to influence ZANU-PF.<sup>331</sup>

Despite Zimbabwe's negative impact on Southern Africa<sup>332</sup>, Mugabe, has largely gotten a pass from his regional counterparts.<sup>333</sup> By framing the current crisis in Zimbabwe within the language of the struggle against colonialism, Mugabe has been able to gain the support or at least the acquiescence of other African leaders who still respect him as an independence era leader. Until African statesmen look beyond Mugabe's ethnically charged rhetoric and recognize his campaign against the political opposition for what it is, self-serving political violence, true change will not occur in Zimbabwe.

Recently, Zimbabwe has begun to turn East in an attempt to break out of its isolation. Zimbabwe has actively sought new strategic relationships with China and Iran.<sup>334</sup> The

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in 2003. For much of 2004-2005 Zimbabwe was suspended from the IMF, though it has since been reinstated.

<sup>331</sup> Trade with South Africa accounts for 57% of Zimbabwe's imports a 10% jump over 2004, demonstrating Zimbabwe's increasing dependence on its neighbor. "Trade Between ZIM and SA Surges," *Africa News*, December 11, 2005. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 20, 2006. The International Crisis Group says that Zimbabwe is "heavily dependent on the import of electricity and fuel from South Africa." "Zimbabwe: In Search of a New Strategy," *International Crisis Group*, April 19, 2004. Available online at:

[http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/africa/southern\\_africa/078\\_zimbabwe\\_web.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/africa/southern_africa/078_zimbabwe_web.pdf)

<sup>332</sup> The ongoing crisis in Zimbabwe has shaken investor confidence in the region driving away \$2.6 billion in economic activity from 2000-2002. The massive numbers of refugees flowing into neighboring South Africa and Mozambique has also resulted in increased crime rates and unemployment in those countries. *International Crisis Group* "Zimbabwe: In Search of a New Strategy".

<sup>333</sup> South Africa's Thabo Mbeki has chosen to engage in "quiet diplomacy" with Zimbabwe, which has consisted largely of bilateral closed door talks which have produced few results.

<sup>334</sup> In March 2006, the Zimbabwe Defense Force announced a new strategic partnership with China. This followed the signing of new mining and transport deals between the two states. Zimbabwe also announced its plan to make Chinese compulsory for all university students. "ZDF, China to Establish New Type of Strategic Partnership," *Africa News*, March 28, 2006. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 20, 2006.

early results of this policy have been mixed, however these new relationships offer the potential to lighten Zimbabwe's dependence on its African neighbors.<sup>335</sup> Therefore, the time for African states to push for change in Zimbabwe is now, while they maintain maximum leverage.

Robert Mugabe's recent invitation to white farmers to return to Zimbabwe seems to signal a positive change.<sup>336</sup> The weakening of the MDC has allowed for a move away from political repression and towards economic development. The world must be aware, however, once a new threat to his political control arises, Robert Mugabe will again turn to the weapon of ethnic conflict.

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In December 2004, Zimbabwean Foreign Minister Stanislaus Mudenge traveled to Iran to meet with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi to discuss improving relations between the two countries. In January 2005, Iranian President Mohammed Khatami made a state visit to Zimbabwe. "Zimbabwe: Iranian Leader's Visit Providential," *Africa News*, January 19, 2005. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 20, 2006; "Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister Confers with Iranian Counterpart," *Iran News Agency*, December 21, 2004. Available on LexisNexis. Accessed on April 20, 2006.

<sup>335</sup> Zimbabwe has seen some increase in trade and investment from these new relationships, but not to extent it has expected.

<sup>336</sup> "Zimbabwe Confirms White Farm Move," *BBC News Online*, April 24, 2006. Available online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4937310.stm>.

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