

# **Economic nationalism amid ethnic disharmony in postcolonial Zimbabwe (1980-2013): A case of Matabeleland Provinces**

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## ***Abstract***

The colonial legacy of uneven economic development in Zimbabwe and the use of such constructs as 'Mashonaland', 'Matabeleland' and 'Manicaland' have remained substantially unaltered under the post-colonial government. Those regions and peoples with privileged access to national economic resources after independence have implemented policies to ensure that this advantage has continued. The unintended resultant effect is the stimulation of ethnic consciousness on the part of those social groups that believe that they are economically marginalized because of their ethnicity. This article focuses on the distributive concerns that have arisen since independence in Zimbabwe in terms of which the lack of economic development parity in the colonially conceived provinces of Zimbabwe has given rise to ethnically motivated political contestation and national economic stagnation. It argues that the economic disparity and the concomitant 'diaspora' phenomenon in Zimbabwe can be dealt with if policies based on ethnic considerations and favouritism give way to merit-oriented ones. This article argues that distributive concerns are situated at the heart of Zimbabwe's economic and political challenges which inevitably feed into each other to concoct an economic dispensation that rewards the dominant ethnic group in the echelons of power. This is based on an observational or ethnographic qualitative research methodology that was used to collect data through in-depth interviews. Document analysis of the diverse works on Matabeleland complemented the interview data. The research found that uneven economic development and patron-client ties contributed to the politicization of ethnicity, thus relegating groups that are not represented in the higher echelons of power to the fringes of the national economy. It concludes by suggesting that the reconciliation process must be ongoing and genuinely supported by transparent mechanisms to get rid of the "victims" mentality amongst the people of Matabeleland for lasting peace and unity to prevail.

**Keywords:** Zimbabwe; Mugabe; Ethnic; Consciousness; Economic; Nationalism; Marginalisation; *Gukurahundi*, Qualitative, Matabeleland.

## Administrative Provinces of Zimbabwe



Source: Available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_of\\_Zimbabwe](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Zimbabwe), as accessed on 24 August 2018.

## Introduction

The salience of ethnicity in Zimbabwe is as old as the history of the liberation struggle against colonialism that started in the early 1950s. This ethnicity became apparent with the skewed allocation of economic resources in favour of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) to reflect the pre-independence animosities between Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) as essentially Shona and Ndebele nationalist parties respectively. More than three decades after the attainment of political independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, certain areas in the country's provinces remain neglected and economically underdeveloped whereas other areas enjoy a modicum of affluence. This resulted from the conspicuously disproportionate access to the country's economic resources that was fuelled not only by the drive towards provincialism among political leaders, but also by the challenges of language

affinity and ethnic solidarities that characterized postcolonial development initiatives and shaped political re-alignments.

The existing national Zimbabwean state as well as the provinces within the state are colonial constructs conceived in political terms. Quite often, provincial political boundaries have come into conflict with the economic boundaries originally drawn up by the colonial administration and, since then, repeatedly adjusted by the Zimbabwean government for instrumental purposes. In more concrete terms, there are cases where the electorate in a particular constituency vote for a candidate of their choice in the election in the hope that the candidate would represent them in all matters, including and especially development, even though, in terms of development, that constituency belongs to a different economic district. Under such a scenario, it is very likely that the district's political leadership may not prioritize development initiatives for that constituency. As such, the constituency is based on politics rather than on recognised economic districts and the leadership of the economic district is not answerable to that economic district.

Internet sources and newspapers that are sympathetic to the cause of the people in Matabeleland constantly harp on the relegation of Matabeleland as second fiddle to Mashonaland in terms of prioritisation of development projects by government. A good example is an article in *Bulawayo News24* by Phithizela Ngcobo entitled "Politicians from Matabeleland need to 'break the deputy mentality'", and the interview reported in *Zimbabwe Independent* by the former Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) Commander and Home Affairs Minister Dumiso Dabengwa,<sup>1</sup> among other sources. Zenzele Ndebele, a film producer, has been criticised for his documentary that is based on interviews he held with the Ndebele participants alone<sup>2</sup> because it resulted in the omission of the perspectives of the Shona people about economic marginalisation in Matabeleland. In many cases, conclusions seem to be drawn based on emotions rather than reason and, therefore, the conclusions drawn differ markedly from the official position taken by state-controlled media platforms such as *Nehanda Radio* and Zimbabwe newspapers such as *The Patriot*, *The Herald* and *The Chronicle*.

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1 D Dabengwa, "Dabengwa tackles ED [Emmerson Mnangagwa] on *Gukurahundi*", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 29 March 2018.

2 A Rwafa, "Representations of Matabeleland and Midlands disturbances through the documentary film *Gukurahundi: A moment of madness*", *African Identities*, 10(3), 2007 (DOI: 10.1080/14725843.2012.715458, accessed 7 May 2018), pp. 313-327.

Levels of representation in parliament and at other levels by the members of the different political parties have added to the effects of economic marginalization throughout the country's ten provinces. The retention of such colonial provincial names as Manicaland, Matabeleland and Mashonaland continues to perpetuate the imperialist project to divide and rule through the perpetuation of ethnic and tribal categories that are of relatively recent invention. Over time, these divisions have become naturalized as the basis for political mobilization seeking access, control and distribution of resources by means of patron-client relationships. For some critics, this smacks of a renewed kind of colonialism from within the nation state and fostered by the ruling elite.

The emphasis in this discussion is to address the question of uneven economic development in Zimbabwe's constituencies, districts and provinces, linking it to the politicization of ethnicity at the higher levels of political power, and to a localised ethnic "nationalism" organized around resource allocation. There has been notable economic development in certain regions since independence whereas other regions continue to suffer from years of neglect. The findings of this research will, it is hoped, lead to the adoption of a non-partisan and ethnically blind mechanism of resource allocation that would facilitate parity of economic development in the country.

The underlying assumption of this research is that provinces, political constituencies and districts that are ethnically well-represented in government institutions benefit more from the country's resources and national development projects than those that are either less represented or under-represented. This hypothesis fits in well with Zuber's ethnic outbidding model which argues that ethnically heterogeneous societies often appeal to voters on the basis of their ethnic identity rather than on other social identities such as class and religion or even on the basis of firmly-grounded policies.<sup>3</sup> Under such conditions it is possible that ethnic minority parties with strong blood bonds begin to identify themselves as "nations" on the basis of a common attachment to a specific territory which they claim has been theirs throughout history.

Another view is that ethnic groups are not merely based on the occupation of exclusive territory, but on the continual expression and validation<sup>4</sup> of who they think they really are. Ethnic groups are particularistic. They thus share

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3 CI Zuber & E Szöcsik, "Ethnic outbidding and nested competition", *European Journal of Political Research*, 2015, pp. 784-801.

4 W Sollors, *Theories of ethnicity: A classical reader* (New York, NYU Press, 1996), p. 303.

mutually exclusive political preferences. This suggests that they can be mobilized politically in terms of specific group interests. This framework informs the debate on economic nationalism amidst ethnic disharmony in Zimbabwe.

### To be enlightened from literature

There is sometimes talk at cross purposes when people speak of ethnicity, race and nationhood, as these conceptual variables do not have clear definitions. Some of the first-generation anthropologists working in Africa produced pioneering work on ethnicity. Classics include Clyde Mitchell's study of the *Kalela* Dance in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia)<sup>5</sup> and Epstein's monograph *Politics in Urban African Communities*.<sup>6</sup> Such works argue that urbanization did not lead to the shedding of ethnic affinities. One of the theoretical approaches to the study of ethnicity in Zimbabwe explains and defines ethnicity in terms of the primordial realm as "...the givens of social existence such as blood, speech and custom which have an ineffable coerciveness in and for themselves".<sup>7</sup> A closely allied view is that of social constructivists who see identity as fluid, and thus as open to exploitation under certain conditions for certain interests.<sup>8</sup> These two broad approaches to ethnicity – "constructivist" and "primordial" – are relevant to this study. The latter sees ethnic identity as resulting from deep-rooted attachments to group and culture, while the former focuses on ethnicity as a political strategy that is pursued for pragmatic interests. According to Barth, most perspectives embrace the view that ethnicity emerges during interaction between groups and is not evident at ethnic boundaries.<sup>9</sup>

The classical liberal perspective is that the rights of ethnic minorities should be safeguarded, and that such minorities should enjoy equal treatment in comparison with the rights of the ethnic majority. A communitarian view, on the other hand, holds that the function of the state is not to protect the interests of any group but to promote the good of society.<sup>10</sup> This view needs

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5 JC Mitchell, "Aspects of social relationships among Urban Africans in Northern Rhodesia" (The Rhodes-Livingston Institute, Manchester University Press, 1956).

6 AL Epstein, *Politics in an urban African community* (New York, Humanities Press, 1958).

7 K Manganga, "A historical study of industrial ethnicity in urban colonial Zimbabwe and its contemporary transitions: The case of African Harare, c. 1890-1980" (PhD, Stellenbosch University, 2014), April 2014.

8 A Slbiez-Wieck, A Becker, M Krämer, A Manke, M Pelican, A Sáez-Arance & T Widlok, "Ethnicity as a political resource conceptualizations across disciplines, regions, and periods", 2015 (available at [www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3013-8](http://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3013-8), accessed, 7 November 2017), p. 12.

9 A Slbiez-Wieck et al., "Ethnicity as a political resource conceptualizations..." (available at [www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3013-8](http://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3013-8), accessed, 7 November 2017), p. 13.

10 A Slbiez-Wieck et al., "Ethnicity as a political resource conceptualizations..." (available at [www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3013-8](http://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3013-8), accessed, 7 November 2017), p. 13.

to be contextualised in the light of the blame that has been attributed to the people from Matabeleland for what they regard as the consequence of the lack of government commitment to improve their economic situation.

Albiez-Wieck and Becker define ethnicity as a collective identity that is based on shared meanings and cultural practices that engender a sense of belonging.<sup>11</sup> Brubaker has carried out many works on nationalism, immigration and citizenship in which he challenges the pervasive and common-sense notion of groupism based only on primordial affinities.<sup>12</sup> He views ethnicity as socially constructed and he holds that such self-identifications can be used or abused for political purposes. In the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland that existed prior to independence, a group fluidity that was characterized by specific esteem for western occupation, dress, furniture, etiquette, education, leisure activities and language was the hallmark of civilization. The westernized and educated black elite in the Zambian Copperbelt community was heterogenous and it met regularly to redefine their way of life, businesses, professions, politics and other interests and by so doing, constituted a separate class of its own.<sup>13</sup> Mitchell and Epstein concur that new social identities in Northern Rhodesia were formed based on the outward marks of western civilization. According to Kenneth, the ability of the educated to think rationally and analytically, as opposed to appeal to supernatural explanations of natural phenomena, are important factors drawing them together and creating a sense of corporateness and solidarity.<sup>14</sup> This constructivist approach to the development of ethnic groups suggests that ethnic groupings are fluid and not hard-wired. As such, the constructivist discussion above helps to unpack the ethnic heterogeneity of what is supposedly a homogenous Ndebele society. From this approach, the economic setbacks in Matabeleland are not only viewed as targeted to harm the Ndebele alone as an ethnic group, but also to harm other categories of people who have been assimilated into Ndebele society, whether voluntarily or through conquest.

Chandra and Wilkinson posit that ethnic identities in Africa are strengthened by exposure to political competition and that they are useful in the competition

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11 A Slbiez-Wieck et al., "Ethnicity as a political resource conceptualizations..." (available at [www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3013-8](http://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-3013-8), accessed, 7 November 2017), p. 12.

12 R Brubaker, "Ethnicity without groups", 2006 (available at <http://journals.cambridge.org>, accessed, 16 July 2018).

13 L Kenneth, *Urbanization as a social process: An essay on movement and change in contemporary Africa* (London, Routledge, 2017), 2017, p. 73.

14 L Kenneth, *Urbanization as a social process: ...*, 2017, p. 74.

for power.<sup>15</sup> They further emphasize the salience of ethnicity as playing a functional role in that it is a tool deployed by politicians for mobilizing people, policing boundaries and building coalitions in the endless struggle for scarce resources.<sup>16</sup> Again, the functional role of ethnic consciousness and the fluidity of Ndebele society as currently constituted pose challenges in the characterisation of economic marginalisation in Matabeleland as being based on power politics, ethnicity or provincialism.

Ethnicity is a relational concept that mirrors cultural differences and the manner in which they are communicated and maintained by contact rather than in isolation.<sup>17</sup> Turton avers that if ethnicity is used as a political resource, an identity that is narrowly-defined, selective and embellished in terms of its past history, is deliberately constructed for the ethnic followers.<sup>18</sup> The political usefulness and strategic importance of ethnicity in group mobilisation around perceived material gains have had a direct impact on Zimbabwean politics since independence in 1980.

The theoretical and politico-ideological discourse on the concept of development posit that power and politics are crucial to development if societal needs and aspirations are to be met.<sup>19</sup> Rudebeck regards “representation” and “participation” as strategies to meet societal needs and aspirations and he equates them with “democracy” and “democratization” respectively. He admits, however, that democracy as a concept is problematic and contested, and that it means different things to different users.<sup>20</sup> Rudebeck’s focus is on the entitlements to be given to the people so that they overcome poverty by being empowered to make direct decisions on issues that affect them. He thus goes far beyond mere development, to “sustainable development” which was popularized by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 as “...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” Griggs describes sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present while safeguarding Earth’s life-support systems on which the welfare of the current and future generations

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15 K Chandra & S Wilkinson, “Measuring the effect of ‘ethnicity’”, *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(4-5), April 2007, p. 515.

16 K Chandra & S Wilkinson, “Measuring the effect of ‘ethnicity’”, *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(4-5), April 2007, p. 516.

17 D Turton, *War and ethnicity: Global connections and local violence* (Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2003), p. 78.

18 D Turton, *War and ethnicity: Global connections and local violence*, p. 78.

19 L Rudebeck, “Democracy and development – A disputed pair”, *Africa Development*, 41(1), 2017, p. 3.

20 L Rudebeck, “Democracy and development ...”, pp. 3-4.

depends.<sup>21</sup> Of interest is the Human Development Report of 2002 entitled “Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World” which makes the conclusion that development that meets legitimate majority needs and aspirations is more likely to take place under conditions of substantial democracy than under other forms of rule.<sup>22</sup> This framework should inform the study of economic nationalism in Matabeleland.

The Keynesian development model argues that for an economy to grow, there must be an adequate amount of savings to invest to make growth possible, and that investment in human capital is a pre-requisite if growth and development is to take place.<sup>23</sup> In accordance with the Bretton Woods institutions, the Berg Report of 1991 recommended neo-liberal economic policies as suitable for promoting Africa’s growth and development path, but it overlooks the neo-colonial class structures in Africa which impede that development.<sup>24</sup> In his book, *Wretched of the earth*, Frantz Fanon argues against the conclusions of the Berg Report and intimates that neo-liberal economic agendas, such as the Economic Structural Reform Programme (ESAP) adopted in Zimbabwe in 1992, failed because they represented narrow interests. The applicability and effectiveness of the economic liberalism that the Berg Report proposes ought to be evaluated against the background of politically-motivated ethnic tension between the Mashonaland and Matabeleland provinces during the 1990s.

### **Exploring with ethnography as research methodology**

This article is largely based on ethnography, a qualitative research methodology to gather data using in-depth interviews as collection tools. This method enabled the researcher to understand the behaviour of the people being studied. Through this observational study, the researcher was able to understand or “get inside” the social interactions, perceptions and behaviours of the Ndebele people. Document analysis of the diverse works produced by writers on the history of Matabeleland after the liberation war was utilised to provide holistic insights into their world view and actions. Existing scholarly literature in the form of textbooks and journals that focus on ethnicity and economic and political marginalisation were also consulted. The information

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21 H Knudson, “Pragmatic considerations for implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Contradictions and necessities within the earth system”, *Institutt for industriell økonomi og teknologiledelse*, 2014, p. vii.

22 L Rudebeck, “Democracy and development ...”, p. 16.

23 L Keita, “Models of economic growth and development in the context of human capital investment...”, *The way forward for Africa, Africa Development*, XLI(1), 2016, p. 39.

24 L Keita, “Models of economic growth and development...”, p. 43.

collected from the above secondary data augmented information gathered through oral interviews carried out with 15 people from Matabeleland who were purposively sampled. The sample comprised five former ZIPRA combatants, one of whom is now a lecturer, five political activists from the political divide and five professionals drawn from the fields of education and local government. The research combined desk-top research<sup>25</sup> involving the summarisation, collation and synthesis of existing researches, and primary research, where data were collected from research participants. This qualitative research paradigm, which links meaning in any social setting to experience,<sup>26</sup> is interpretivist in the sense that it sought to make sense of the lived subjective experiences of the people in Matabeleland who are the object of this study.

## **The historical and political context**

### ***Colonial heritage and its effects on post-independence ethnic relations***

The white settler colonial economy was biased in favour of promoting the economic interests of the white minority population, safeguarding white privilege and buttressing its ideological conviction of racial superiority over Africans. Social, economic and political privileges were for the whites to enjoy. Exclusionary legislation was promulgated that dovetailed with capitalist interests and relegated the Black population of Zimbabwe to the fringes of the economy.<sup>27</sup>

It must be pointed out that the colonial administration operative in Rhodesia was conceived in violence and was maintained by the free application of force on defenceless Black people. Reasons for this were many. Firstly, it is the position of this article that unleashing violence in its various manifestations was calculated to cow Blacks into unquestioning submission to their subservient position. Secondly, the article also argues that violence, which could either be physical in the form of torture, unlawful detention and murder, or non-physical in the form of prohibitive state laws, was deemed indispensable as a mechanism to consciously thwart any token show of African nationalism which the settlers feared would dislocate the existing capitalist system of production. Thirdly, violence was institutionalized to prevent Blacks from competing

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25 Desk Research is used to describe the process of tracking down useful existing pre-published information. "A guide to desk research" (available at [Dobney%0Awww.dobney.com/Papers/A\\_guide\\_to\\_desk\\_research.pdf](http://Dobney%0Awww.dobney.com/Papers/A_guide_to_desk_research.pdf), accessed, 27 October 2017).

26 M Buchler & C Puttergill, *Understanding social change and research* (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 1997), p. 195.

27 B Raftopoulos & A Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008* (African Books Collective, 2008), p. 85.

with whites and to ensure that the unequal land distribution resulting from the Land Apportionment Act of 1930/1, the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951, and the Land Tenure Act of 1969 could not be altered for as long as the white settler regime continued to have a firm grip on the economy. Given the level of colonial racial discrimination, the Second Chimurenga (War of Liberation) that started in 1966 with the Battle of Chinhoyi sought to redress past colonial injustices. The dawn of independence in 1980 brought national euphoria in its wake especially after the agony experienced by Blacks during the protracted liberation struggle.

The first group of liberation fighters included the 1966 Chinhoyi Battle heroes. This category, from which future leaders of the country after independence emerged, comprised men who had endured racial oppression for a much longer time, and had been involved in numerous protests prior to the formation of mass political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) in 1957, National Democratic Party (NDP) in 1959, ZAPU in 1960 and ZANU in 1963. The other category of secondary school students who were voluntarily recruited for guerrilla training around 1976 differed considerably from their earlier group stated above in that they were more enlightened and better-educated and so made conscious decisions to join the liberation struggle. Nonetheless, recruitment in the 1970s was ethnically-based, with ZAPU recruits from Matabeleland sneaking into Botswana before they were transferred to Zambia for their guerrilla training whilst ZANLA recruits from other parts of the country headed for Mozambique.

### ***Politicizing ethnicities***

Zimbabwe is a country with many ethnic groupings and the major ones include the Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Nambya, Tsonga, Karanga, Venda, Sotho, Zezuru, Manyika, Xhosa, Kore Kore and Kalanga. The misnomer is that these groupings are lumped together into the Shona and Ndebele categories and all others are regarded as ethnic minorities. There is need to distinguish between languages and dialects as these ethnic groupings are generally regarded as distinct only in terms of using a different dialect of Shona. This applies to the Zezuru, Manyika, Karanga and Kore Kore that are dialects of the Shona language. Similarly, Kalanga, Sotho and Xhosa present challenges in classifying them either as dialects or languages independent of the Ndebele language. As a result, this article regards them as ethno-racial identities because of the complex interactions between these groupings that took place before the

establishment of the Ndebele state by King Mzilikazi. As Mazarire notes, until fairly recently, we did not know as much about the Kalanga who have constantly been treated as a sub-ethnicity of the major groups in southwestern Zimbabwe such as the Ndebele, Tswana and Shona.<sup>28</sup> However, history has affirmed the dominant role of the Ndebele and the Shona in their struggle against imperialism, beginning with the First Chimurenga (Umvukela 1) of 1896-1897<sup>29</sup> and has thus downplayed and even marginalized the roles of other ethnic groups in the anti-imperial struggle. To begin with, ZAPU was formed in 1961 after the National Democratic Party (NDP) under Joshua Nkomo as its President before it was banned in 1960. Its members included George Nyandoro, George Silundika, Ndabaningi Sithole, Enos Nkala and Robert Mugabe among others. ZAPU had members from all the ethnic groups in the country.

In 1963, ZAPU split because of personality and temperamental differences. These included disagreements over leadership style, strategies, ideology and ethnicity.<sup>30</sup> Nkomo's opponents such as Mugabe, Ndabaningi Sithole, Leopold Takawira, Enos Nkala and Morton Malianga blamed what they called a weak leadership and opposed Nkomo's idea of setting up a government in exile in Tanzania.<sup>31</sup> When these 'dissidents' broke away to form the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by Ndabaningi Sithole in 1963, Nkomo interpreted the split as an express show of tribal feelings against him.<sup>32</sup>

According to Mokwetsi, the Zezuru, Manyika and Karanga jostled for political power in ZANU and that enhanced the composition of *Dare ReChimurenga* (War Council) that had Robert Mugabe, Edgar Tekere, Henry Hamadziripi, Noel Mukono, Emmerson Mnangagwa, Rugare Gumbo, John Mataure, Josiah Tongogara and Herbert Chitepo.<sup>33</sup> In the anti-colonial struggle, ZAPU and ZANU tended to represent Shona and Ndebele national

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28 GC Mazarire, "Who are the Ndebele and the Kalanga in Zimbabwe?", Konrad Adenauer Foundation Project on 'Ethnicity in Zimbabwe', November 2003, p. 1.

29 This was the first organized resistance to colonial occupation by the Shona and Ndebele people. Murenga Sororenzou demonstrated his bravery to challenge the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and his name became a symbol of all the fighting struggles against oppression in Zimbabwe, hence 'Chimurenga D Beach from a colonial school of thought, and T.Ranger, from a nationalist perspective, debate this war at length.

30 Anon., "Power Struggles within ZANU-1973-1975" (available at <https://www.pindula.co.zw/>, as accessed on 3 September 2018).

31 F Chung, *Zimbabwe: Looking east* (Bulawayo, Directory Publishers, 2015), p. 238.

32 JM Nkomo, *The story of my life* (London, Methuen, 1984), p. 9.

33 J Mokwetsi, "A regional provincial analysis of Zimbabwe", *Southern Eye*, 28 March 2004 (available at <https://www.southerneye.co.zw/2014/03/28/regional-provincial-analysis-zimbabwe/>, as accessed on 18 August 2018).

interests respectively.<sup>34</sup> Thus, even when nationalism could lay claim to its strongest appeal, the fault lines of class, race, ethnicity and gender, amongst other cleavages, were always attendant.

Some of the works produced by Epstein critically analyse mining in the Zambian Copperbelt during the era of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953-1963) when the Bemba-speaking, the Ngoni-speaking and the Nyasaland groups strove to maintain their ethnic identities despite the progressive de-tribalization resulting from African urbanization.<sup>35</sup> The Bemba in Zambia's northern Luapula and Copperbelt Provinces are described as a tribe that prides itself on its past military accomplishment and is considered 'arrogant' by other Africans and by Europeans as due to its ethnocentrism.<sup>36</sup> However, the Copperbelt is highly cosmopolitan in its ethnic mix, even though the province's lingua franca is Bemba. This example of the Bemba in Zambia suggests that urban life and interactions were premised on ethnic differentiations that smacked of preferential treatment in work places.

British colonialism under the British South Africa Company (BSAC) rule from 1890 thrived on the policy of divide and rule. Ethnic divisions were actualized and given a new impetus so that the Ndebele and the Shona people would view themselves as belonging to irreconcilable ethnic categories. Wimmer argues that already-existing ethnic distinctions were moulded by pre-colonial history and then altered by colonization before becoming politicised.<sup>37</sup> It becomes even more important to consider how, after independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, the government that was predominantly Shona-speaking, would interpret colonial accounts of the Shona-Ndebele relations which portrayed the Shona as victims who lost all they held dear through Ndebele raids, and how they lost their grain and women to Ndebele *amabutho* (soldiers). That set a precedent for reciprocal retribution which made ethnic unity difficult to build, even after the proclamation of the national reconciliation policy in 1980. This also became an obstacle to a genuine transformation of Matabeleland. At the height of opposition politics

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34 BM Mupfuvi, "Land to the people: Peasants and nationalism in the development of land ownership structure in Zimbabwe from pre-colonialism to the unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) period" (University of Salford, 2014), p. 15.

35 J Ferguson, "The country and the city on the Copperbelt", *Cultural Anthropology*, 7(1), 1992, p. 81.

36 A Epstein, "Politics in an urban African community", *Institute for African Studies* (University of Zambia: Manchester University Press, 1958), p. 5.

37 A Wimmer, "Who owns the state? Understanding ethnic conflict in post-colonial societies", *Nations and Nationalism*, 3(4), 1997 (available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1354-5078.1997.00631.x>, as accessed on 24 October 2017), p. 633.

in Zimbabwe after 1999, when the MDC was officially launched, key party positions were distributed in such a way that cognisance was given to the ethnic heterogeneity of the Zimbabwean population. Whether these ethnic divisions were eliminated given the representativeness of the opposition MDC in terms of the distribution of party positions to reflect that reality remains unclear.

The preceding view cannot be confirmed because of the unprecedented splits within the MDC after 2005, splits that smacked of ethnic solidarity and ethnic nationalism. The schism which weakened the opposition MDC occurred over the government's move to have a bicameral parliament by creating an upper chamber, the Senate. It appeared to be a battle between the educated and the uneducated in the MDC and those who sided with Professor Welshman Ncube and later broke away to form another MDC faction saw nothing wrong in supporting ZANU-PF on the issue. Those against the idea remained with Richard Morgan Tsvangirai and viewed the idea as an attempt by ZANU-PF to weaken opposition votes in the two-chamber parliament.

Cronyism in Zimbabwe has thrown into political oblivion, great heroic figures of the Second Chimurenga such as Didymus Mutasa and Rugare Gumbo, amongst many others who were accused of *Bhora Musango* (Kicking the ball into the forest)<sup>38</sup> in the 2013 harmonised elections.<sup>39</sup> They were sacked from the ZANU-PF party for disloyalty to Mugabe and for abrogating the revolutionary ideals by siding with internal and external enemies in the form of the opposition MDC and western countries respectively. These ZANU-PF politicians were among many others who were alleged to have led an anti-Mugabe faction in the 2013 elections which retained ZANU-PF power. "Kicking the ball into the net" was a catch phrase used by Mugabe's faction and it denoted Mugabe scoring in the elections.<sup>40</sup> "Kicking the ball into the jungle" depicted Mugabe's enemies within the party who covertly de-campaigned him so that the electorate would vote against him.<sup>41</sup> The whole political drama was theoretically taken to the football field and then interpreted as a game to

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38 They are alleged to have been leading an anti-Mugabe faction in the 2013 elections which retained ZANU-PF power. "Kicking the ball into the net" was a catch phrase used by Mugabe's faction and it denoted Mugabe scoring in the elections. "Kicking the ball into the jungle" depicted Mugabe's enemies within the party who covertly de-campaigned Mugabe so that the electorate would vote against him. The whole political drama was taken to the football field and then interpreted as a game to undermine each other's factions.

39 L Ncube, "Bhora Muedhi versus Bhora musango": The interface between football discourse and Zimbabwean politics", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 51(2), 2016, pp. 208-212.

40 L Ncube, "Bhora Muedhi versus Bhora musango'...", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, p. 212.

41 E Mushava, "Mugabe's 'bhora musango' election nightmare" (available at [nehandaradio.com](http://nehandaradio.com).News, as accessed on 2 January 2012).

undermine each other's factions. Former Vice President of Zimbabwe, Joice (Teurai Ropa)<sup>42</sup> Mujuru left government in 2014 on allegations that she had formed parallel political structures within the party and government with a view to challenging Mugabe for the ZANU-PF presidency.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Ethnic reactions to state-orchestrated marginalisation***

It would be naïve to imagine that the liberation struggle was ethnically blind because ethnic-based politics dates to the 1960s and 1970s when political agitation by the nationalists was painted in ethnic colours.<sup>44</sup> Though Sithole was replaced by Mugabe as president of ZANU for his renunciation of violence during the liberation war, Chung describes the ZANLA military as fulfilling the role of “king maker”, the title given to General Solomon Mujuru for supporting Mugabe rather than Ndabaningi Sithole during the struggle for power between 1974 and 1976.<sup>45</sup> The involvement of the military in disputes over political leadership even before independence was evidenced by a rebellion by ZANLA leader, Thomas Nhari, in Zambia in 1975 against his commander, Josiah Tongogara. The Chairman Herbert Chitepo, who led the party when the ZANU Central Committee and the Executive were in prison or in disarray before 1975,<sup>46</sup> got killed from a bomb blast that shattered his car. Mazarire highlights what was called “Democratic Centralism” in which at that time, the military was subordinated to the political goals of the party, an arrangement that changed once the military gained influence in leading and determining the party affairs.<sup>47</sup> That military influence set a lasting precedent for Zimbabwean politics and this resulted in a growing tendency within ZANU to celebrate the “gun” under the guise of restoring order and “cleaning up the rot”. It also suggests that the army became key in determining the leadership of the state and in the regime’s consolidation of state power.

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42 Her Second Chimurenga War name which means “spilling blood”.

43 K Chitofiri, DE Mutasa & T Gwekwerere, “Fighting for justice and freedom through music: The case of Thomas Mapfumo, Hosiach Chipanga and Leonard Zhakata, ca. 1988-2015”, *South African Journal of African Languages*, 37(1), 2017, pp. 59-73.

44 M Phiri, “Ethnic politics on the Zimbabwean campaign trail: Do voters really care?”, 2013 (available at <http://africanarguments.org/.../ethnic-politics-on-the-zimbabwean-campaign-trail-do-vote>, as accessed on 17 September 2017).

45 F Chung, *Zimbabwe: Looking east* (Bulawayo, Directory Publishers, 2015), p. 94.

46 GC Mazarire, “ZANU’s External Networks 1963-1979: An Appraisal”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43(1), 2017, p. 83.

47 GC Mazarire, “Discipline and punishment in ZANLA: 1964–1979”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37(3), 2011, p. 572.

The government that assumed power in 1980 was a coalition in the sense that ZAPU with its twenty-seven parliamentary seats as well as the white Rhodesians with twenty seats reserved for them by the 1979 Lancaster Constitution, were drafted into the government. However, this coalition government was further weakened by Mugabe's pledge that if ZAPU decided to oust ZANU-PF from power by military means, the government would respond to that violence with violence.<sup>48</sup> This indicated a lack of mutual trust between the two liberation parties from the inception of the coalition.

Nkomo was a bad loser in the 1980 general elections and was seen to be fuelling Shona-Ndebele animosity to get revenge.<sup>49</sup> From the foregoing, the ZANU-PF elite was seen to have appropriated all the most important positions at government level and, in the process, as having become exclusionary and a class in itself. The message from the ZANU-PF government to the Ndebele was that they should support the ruling party, so they could have representation in government from their own people. As Chung noted, Black racism, which manifests itself in violence against one's political opponent, is a colonial heritage that has replaced white racism in terms of ownership without necessarily altering the system itself.<sup>50</sup>

Integrating the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), the former Rhodesian army, ZANU Sithole forces and Muzorewa forces into the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) presented the government with serious challenges. ZANLA had 60 percent, ZIPRA 35-40%, Rhodesia Front (RF) 5% of their fighting forces combined to form a national army.<sup>51</sup> The distrust of other forces generated against a repressive Shona military leadership of the ZNA, provided good breeding ground for political and military dissent which then translated into an insurrection in the Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands regions between 1982 and 1987. These disturbances led to *gukurahundi*, a term in the Shona language which means the storm of the summer that sweeps away the chaff.<sup>52</sup> According to Chung, ZANU-PF believed that PF-ZAPU was planning a military coup through its arms caches discovered in

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48 Anon., "Mugabe pledges violent action against revolt", *The Herald*, 5 March 1981.

49 L Laakso, "Opposition politics in independent Zimbabwe", *African Studies Quarterly*, 7(2), 2003, p. 4.

50 F Chung, *Zimbabwe: Looking east*, p. 174.

51 NJ Kriger, *Guerrilla veterans in post-war Zimbabwe: Symbolic and violent politics, 1980-1987*, 105 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 131.

52 M Sithole & J Makumbe "Elections in Zimbabwe: The ZANU (PF) hegemony and its incipient decline", *African Journal of Political Science/Revue Africaine de Science Politique*, 1997, p. 133.

a ZAPU farm near Bulawayo:<sup>53</sup> on the other hand, PF-ZAPU believed that ZANU-PF was determined to annihilate and exterminate the Ndebele people as an ethnic group.<sup>54</sup>

One needs to fully comprehend the multi-dimensional character of the *gukurahundi* conflict as political, economic and ethnic. From a political perspective, the conflict was premised on control of the state by ZANU-PF which could be achieved by the removal of the ZAPU challenge. It is for this reason that Muzondidya and Gatsheni (2007) argue that ethnicity was used by Mugabe as a pretext to crush ZAPU and establish a one-party state.<sup>55</sup> The *gukurahundi* narrative became a Shona-Ndebele dichotomy interpreted in ethnic terms in many circles. From an economic point of view, the conflict entailed completed state control of the national resources, particularly gold that abounds in Matabeleland. The conflict was also interpreted in ethnic terms as a war between the Ndebele and the Shona. It was only after two years of independence that the Ndebele realized that they were being marginalized, and that ZANU-PF's drive towards a one-party state would push PF-ZAPU into political oblivion. PF-ZAPU had therefore to stand firm to avoid extinction from the political limelight.

Enos Nkala, one of the founder members of ZANU, asserted that the dissidents were Ndebeles, calling for a second war of liberation and referring to Nkomo as "the self-appointed Ndebele King ... a tribalist who should be crushed".<sup>56</sup> Such claims were hard to believe because individuals like Joshua Nkomo, Dumiso Dabengwa and Enos Nkala were not Ndebele but Kalanga. There was no way Nkomo could literally become a Ndebele king. At the same time, labelling Nkomo as such could give ZANU-PF political mileage as it brandished him as leading Ndebele dissidents against the state. Mugabe demoted Nkomo from the post of Minister of Home Affairs to Minister without Portfolio after skirmishes in Chitungwiza and Entumbane in 1982<sup>57</sup> between ZANLA and ZIPRA forces that exchanged fire from their urban bases.

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53 F Chung, *Zimbabwe: Looking east*, p. 133.

54 M Sithole & J Makumbe, *Elections in Zimbabwe ...*, p. 133.

55 J Muzondidya & S Ndllovu-Gatsheni, "Echoing Silences: Ethnicity in post-colonial Zimbabwe, 1980-2007", *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 7(2), 2007, pp. 275-297; A Rwafa, Representations of Matabeleland and Midlands disturbances through the documentary film '*Gukurahundi: A moment of madness*', *African Identities*, 10(3), 2007 p. 316 (DOI: 10.1080/14725843.2012.715458, as accessed on 7 May 2018).

56 *The Chronicle* cited in N Musiwaro, "Ethnicity, narrative and the 1980s violence in Matabeleland and the Midlands Provinces of Zimbabwe", *Oral history Forum*, *Centre for African Studies*, 2014, p. 27.

57 J Nkomo, *The story of my life*, pp. 217-220.

The discovery of heavy Soviet-made weapons in Gwai, the main ZIPRA base, and on Ascot farm, a ZAPU property in 1982<sup>58</sup> gave the government a legitimate claim of a coup plot as this development confirmed its earlier fears of ZAPU intentions, leading to expulsion of all ZAPU members in government. The discovery led to the arrest of ZIPRA High Commanders, among whom were Lookout Masuku and Dumiso Dabengwa, and the expulsion of all ZAPU leaders from Cabinet.<sup>59</sup> The ruthlessness with which the crisis in the Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands regions was crushed has not been fully exposed, and reconciliation attempts after the fiasco have largely been cosmetic as evidenced by incessant pleas for redress. The Task Force to quell the political disturbances after the North Korean trained Fifth Brigade was Shona-speaking and led by the former Rhodesian Security Force (RSF), Colonel Lionel Dyke. Its leadership was dominated by former ZANLA guerrillas.<sup>60</sup> The experiences that PF-ZAPU gained from the insurgency led to the realization that continuing an armed insurrection against ZANU-PF, with all the state machinery at its sole disposal, was futile.<sup>61</sup> *Gukurahundi* consequently concretised the strong element of Ndebeleness and made almost permanent, the reciprocation of disdain between the Shona and the Ndebele. Above all, it greatly influenced the way Matabeleland is constituted within the framework of the Zimbabwean polity. What has remained after the conflict are notions of Shona hegemonial power as evidenced by the specialization of the Ndebele in deputising when it comes to the allocation of government and administrative posts.<sup>62</sup>

It can be argued that the PF-ZAPU leadership entered into a fragile Unity Accord with ZANU-PF in 1987 as an acknowledgement of the political supremacy of the ruling party and that their agreement was conditional to their release from prison. Before the Unity Accord, both municipal and parliamentary elections in the city of Bulawayo stirred interparty hostilities, especially given the fact that ZANU-PF failed to make inroads in constituencies in Matabeleland.<sup>63</sup>

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58 KP Yap, "Uprooting the weeds: Power, ethnicity and violence in the Matabeleland conflict 1980-1987", 2001 (available at [https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/3736331/19058\\_UBA002000573\\_09.pdf](https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/3736331/19058_UBA002000573_09.pdf), as accessed on 28 August 2018).

59 "Gukurahundi Timeline (1980-1990)" (available at [https://pindula.co.zw/Gukurahundi\\_Timeline\\_\(1980-1990\)](https://pindula.co.zw/Gukurahundi_Timeline_(1980-1990)), as accessed on 10 April 2018).

60 N Musiwara, "Ethnicity, narrative and the 1980s violence in Matabeleland...", *Centre for African Studies*, 2014, p. 27.

61 J Alexander, J McGregor & TO Ranger, *Violence and memory: One hundred years in the 'dark forests' of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe* (Heinemann & James Currey, 2000).

62 K Manganga, "A historical study of industrial ethnicity in urban colonial Zimbabwe..." (PhD, Stellenbosch University, 2014), p. 185.

63 M Musemwa, "Disciplining a dissident' city: Hydropolitics in the city of Bulawayo, Matabeleland, Zimbabwe, 1980-1994", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32(2), 2006, pp. 239-254.

Paradoxically, the Unity Accord led to the suspension of all major development initiatives that the government had on the table for the Matabeleland region on the pretext that the region harboured dissidents,<sup>64</sup> and as a result of the fear that the dissidents had not surrendered their guns to the state.

The death in 1999 of the second vice-president Joshua Nkomo, whose post was created in partial fulfilment of the Unity Accord and calculated to placate the Ndebele, made possible the revival of the old ZAPU under Dumiso Dabengwa in 2000. The contention of this faction of ZAPU was that the Unity Accord of 1987 was a sell-out deal that stood to benefit the PF-ZAPU elite much to the disappointment of the ordinary Ndebele people who actually suffered from ZANU-PF orchestrated violence in the first decade of independence in Matabeleland.<sup>65</sup> Another source of anger among the Ndebele was their knowledge of specific party stalwarts in ZANU-PF such as the vice-president Mnangagwa who allegedly masterminded the *gukurahundi* campaign but instead of being tried for the atrocities they supposedly committed, they enjoyed solace in government by way of promotion,<sup>66</sup> an issue that Coltart highlighted as a major bone of contention between the revived ZAPU and ZANU-PF.<sup>67</sup>

The emergence of radical secessionist movements from Matabeleland – the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) formed in South Africa in 2010, and the Matabeleland Liberation Organisation formed in 2013<sup>68</sup> must be analysed in the context of similar contemporary parallel breakaway attempts sweeping right across Africa.<sup>69</sup> The general underdevelopment of Matabeleland and the City of Kings (Bulawayo) has resulted in many people in Matabeleland coming to regard the region as an appendage of Zimbabwe that received no entitlement to the overall national development efforts coordinated centrally in Harare. The perceived high-handedness in the state's dealings with political dissent, many believe, is antithetical to the ideals of political democracy. The

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64 M Musemwa, "Disciplining a 'dissident' city...", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32(2), 2006, p. 240.

65 SJ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Nation building in Zimbabwe and the challenges of Ndebele particularism", *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 8(3), 2008, pp. 27-56.

66 N Musiwara, "Ethnicity, narrative and the 1980s violence ...", p. 45.

67 D Coltart, "50 Years of Tyranny in Zimbabwe" (available at <http://nehandatv.com/2016/.../struggle-continues-50-years-tyranny-zimbabwe-david-coltart/>, as accessed on 7 May 2017).

68 N Musiwara, "Ethnicity, narrative and the 1980s violence in Matabeleland...", p. 45.

69 The Boko Haram in Nigeria are fighting for an Islamic state free from Nigerian control. The recent split of Sudan in 2012 is another case in point and the growing disturbances in Somalia are indicative of the drive towards irredentism. More recent examples such as Brexit, which refers to the vote in 2016 by the majority of people in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union; the push by the Catalonia region in 2017 for independence from Spain.

Unity Accord ushered in in 1987 has come to be regarded as imposed unity that allowed peace to hang precariously and temporarily in the balance.

The concerns of the former ZIPRA guerrillas were both economic and political. Within the military ranks of the ZNA, preferential treatment in promotion was perceived to be reserved for the former ZANLA forces, most of whom were drawn from the Shona people, even though most ZIPRA cadres felt that they were better trained and could be more effectively used in conventional military campaigns to safeguard the independence of the country. This further reinforced the feeling that resource redistribution was along ethnic lines. Yet, on the other hand, there was sound reason for the ruling party to doubt the sincerity of its main political rival in the nationalist struggle after the discovery of huge arms caches on a PF-ZAPU owned farm and that suggested a possible planned armed insurrection once ZANU-PF was in power. This also explains why the Commonwealth remained silent over the Matabeleland massacre between 1982 and 1987, and why Margaret Thatcher's government in Britain increased its financial aid to the government by ten million pounds during that period.<sup>70</sup> What is clear is that the interparty struggles of the revolutionary period spilt into the postcolonial era and that some ZIPRA fighters regarded Joshua Nkomo as the "Father of Black Nationalism" in Zimbabwe, and that a pattern of ethnic voting resulted, instead, in Robert Mugabe being at the political helm.

Interviewees concurred that state-orchestrated marginalization [or the economic marginalisation thesis] in Matabeleland is linked to post-independence violence between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU. They cite political impunity granted to ZANU-PF perpetrators of violence such as Munangagwa, and Perence Shiri among others as having made the opposition to view the country's court system and its institutions as wholly controlled by ZANU-PF and therefore anti-opposition. The argument was that these institutions were manipulated by the state to satisfy the political and military demands of the incumbent government. In the 1997 Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) report, Mugabe admitted that development programmes in Matabeleland came to a standstill during the *gukurahundi* conflict.

When the government was investing in development projects in other parts of the country, Matabeleland was losing out on the premise that the

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70 RSA, Hansard: Commons, 2001.

disturbances made development difficult<sup>71</sup> just at a time when Mashonaland, Manicaland and parts of the Midlands were given attention, thus dividing the country into two parts of unequal development. For example, the proposed scheme to draw water from the mighty Zambezi River to the arid Matabeleland region, some 450 kilometres away, still remains a pipe dream whereas Mundi Matapa dam in Midlands, Osborne dam in Manicaland and Kunzvi dam near Harare were prioritized.<sup>72</sup> On account of the recurrent droughts due to the region's climatic conditions, Musemwa argues that water challenges in the city of Bulawayo were deliberately ignored by the government as a way to cow the Bulawayo City Council, dominated as it were by supposedly PF-ZAPU recalcitrant councillors, into politically submitting to ZANU-PF.<sup>73</sup> By implication, the electorate in Bulawayo would continue paying the harsh price of voting for PF-ZAPU candidates.

Marginalisation is said to have heightened ethnic attitudes of Ndebeleness among the people of Matabeleland and Bulawayo, their capital city. The *gukurahundi* debacle, which was a code name for a state military crackdown on perceived anti-government insurgents, most of whom had Ndebele origins in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands provinces,<sup>74</sup> also helped to solidify feelings of Ndebele marginalization by a Shona-dominated state.<sup>75</sup> This article also established that the degree of psychological damage that *gukurahundi* had on the Ndebele is difficult to assess, but the survivors remain traumatised by the experiences that they went through back then.

The Shona people, from both written and oral accounts, are accused of taking all important jobs and opportunities in educational colleges and universities such as National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and Selous University in Bulawayo.<sup>76</sup> That was so rampant when there was de-industrialisation in the city of Bulawayo as most companies relocated to other countries or closed under the sheer weight of a dysfunctional economy. In 2010, about 87 business establishments were closed in Bulawayo resulting in over 20 000 workers losing their jobs.<sup>77</sup>

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71 "Report on the 1980s disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands" (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, March 1997), p. 87.

72 L Dube, "Zimbabwe: Zambezi Water Project fails to take off", *The Standard*, 24 August 2003.

73 M Musemwa, "Disciplining a 'dissident' city:...", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32(2), 2006, p. 241.

74 "Gukurahundi open chapter", *NewsDay*, 11 July 2011.

75 SJ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Nation building in Zimbabwe...", *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 8(3), 2008, p. 48.

76 J Muzondidya & S Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "'Echoing silences'...", *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 7(2), 2007, p. 288.

77 *Zimbabwe Independent*, 28 October-3 November 2011.

Manganga, in his study of industrial ethnicity in Harare, contends that in crisis situations, people tend to identify with their “type” and to use ethnic kinship and other social ties in the scramble for resources.<sup>78</sup> This analysis can be appropriate to use in tracing the origins of a single Ndebele mentality in Matabeleland and Bulawayo. The perception can also be applied to evaluate tribal or ethnic political consciousness in that region of the country which people erroneously equated with nationalist politics. The economic marginalization of Bulawayo, the second largest city in the country, by a ZANU-PF-led government, is argued to have given it second status not only in priority areas of development, but also in government positions. *The Zimbabwean Independent* described Bulawayo in terms of “a tale of two cities” with Harare getting preferential treatment.<sup>79</sup> The article went on to say that Harare and Bulawayo had one thing in common in 2003, which was that the MDC ran them both, and that was as far as the comparison could go because of the sharp contrast in their fortunes. This, to some extent, affirmed the assertion that the Ndebele are a tribe that specializes in deputizing.<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusion

The seeming lack of economic development throughout Matabeleland in comparison to other parts of Zimbabwe, and the apparent lack of growth, in both quantitative and especially qualitative terms, in the city of Bulawayo raise questions among many Ndebele people about the government’s commitment to the economic advancement of Ndebele people in the country. The way in which politics has developed in Zimbabwe in the post-independence period has shown that divisions along ethnic lines are avoidable if the state commits itself to ideals of national unity and democracy. The Unity Accord in 1987, together with the political and economic challenges that gave rise to it, were not accurately understood by both the ruling ZANU-PF party and the wider Zimbabwean population.<sup>81</sup> The Ndebele people in both Matabeleland North and South have in recent times formulated a marginalization thesis which claims that the ZANU-PF government since 1980 deliberately underdeveloped Matabeleland through social, economic and political marginalization.<sup>82</sup>

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78 K Manganga, “A historical study of industrial ethnicity in urban colonial Zimbabwe...”, April 2014, p. 1.

79 “Harare and Bulawayo: A tale of two cities”, *The Zimbabwean Independent*, 20 June 2003.

80 K Manganga, “A historical study of industrial ethnicity in urban colonial Zimbabwe...”, April 2014, p. 185.

81 A Mlambo, M Vambe, A Zegeye, E V Masunungure and S Badza, “The Internationalization of the Zimbabwe Crisis: Multiple Actors, Competing Interests”, *Journal of Developing Societies*, 26(2), 2010, pp. 207-231.

82 K Manganga, “A historical study of industrial ethnicity in urban colonial Zimbabwe...”, April 2014, p. 184.

*Gukurahundi*, about which Mugabe lamented as “a moment of madness”<sup>83</sup> on the part of decision-makers in the first post-independence decade, was unilaterally declared “a closed chapter”<sup>84</sup> to stop the Ndebele victims from seeking redress and compensation. However, the Organ on National Healing set up by President Mnangagwa in 2017 re-opened the chapter so that reconciliation after a violent conflict becomes a process, not an event.

For the project of nationalism to succeed in Zimbabwe, this chapter argues, national unity should not be narrowly defined in political terms but should also be organically derived from the proportionate distribution of national resources in pursuit of true democracy. Secessionist maneuvers in Matabeleland by the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) led by Fidelis Ncube and Matabeleland Liberation Organisation (MLO) by Paul Siwela<sup>85</sup> can hardly be explained in ethnic terms only, but also in terms of the history of political and economic seclusion in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Uneven economic development has contributed to the politicization of ethnicity, which, coupled with the resultant patron-client ties, has relegated groups that are not represented in the higher echelons of power to the fringes of the national economy. Reconciliation after a long period of violent conflict is always difficult. Appropriate unifying policies that are perceived to be fair to all protagonists, supported by transparent mechanisms to ensure that those who continue to see themselves as “victims” are not constantly reminded about unaddressed injustices of the past, are the surest guarantee for lasting peace. Such measures ensure that Zimbabwe remains an indivisible entity.

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83 O Maseko, “Trials and tribulations of an artist”, 1-4, 2015 (available at [http://archive.kubatana.net/docs/artcul/osisa\\_trials\\_tribulatn\\_of\\_artist\\_110630.pdf](http://archive.kubatana.net/docs/artcul/osisa_trials_tribulatn_of_artist_110630.pdf), as accessed on 15 November 2018).

84 K Manganga, “A historical study of industrial ethnicity in urban colonial Zimbabwe...”, April 2014, p. 182.

85 M Ndakaripa “Ethnicity, narrative, and the 1980s violence in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe”, *Oral History Forum d’histoire orale*, 34, Special Issue on Human Rights and Oral History, 2014, p. 45.