

LOCALISED POLITICS, CONFLICTING INTERESTS AND THIRD CHIMURENGA VIOLENCE, 2000-2008: REFLECTIONS FROM SHURUGWI DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE

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This paper, using the case-study of Shurugwi district, examines how localised politics, petty-jealousies and differing socio-economic interests fed into the national grid of political violence during the Third Chimurenga violence in Zimbabwe. It troubles the more generally accepted view that the violence was carried out by specific state agents and organised groups such as Zimbabwe African national Union (ZANU-PF) and Movement for Democratic Change[s] (MDC[s]) structures, war veterans, uniformed forces, state security agents and National Youth Service Graduates. Without minimising the differing contributions of these bodies to the web of violence, the paper argues that while these larger institutions offered some sort of centralising co-ordinations and the official authorising narratives for the violence, these depended on, and were aided largely by, the existence, at the local levels, of different personal or community-level interests upon which were grafted these broad national discourses. The existence of these competing interests also concretised the meaning of the discourses at the local levels. These differences also offered a platform for the decentralisation of the structures, to the village-levels, of the commission of the violence.

Keywords: Local politics, Third Chimurenga, conflicting interests, violence, Shurugwi, decentralised, petty jealousies

1. Introduction

More often than not, the violence of the 2000-2008 era has been written against a pressure to simplify a story that produces good and evil, or that embodies the negative all too easily in Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party and its President, as if all that is good or bad is authored in a simple manner from the central political authority. This paper, using the case-study of Shurugwi district, reevaluates this thesis and seeks to complicate our thinking on the violence through analyzing the influence of local land shortages, local differences, local politics and contradictory interests on the larger national grid of violence. On the whole, it accepts that the ordinary locals had several disadvantages: economic and socio-political compared to those in central leadership positions. However, the local conditions, needs and, differing forms and levels of accumulation of wealth

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ensured that political agency transcended their lowly socio-economic-political status. To this extent, some of the locals from Shurugwi actively encouraged the farm occupations, the perpetuation of threats and actual terror against their counterparts, and also became important political participants. They also identified the farms to invade and the strategy to use, the local ‘enemy’ (those of a different political or socio-economic disposition), and they also were responsible for mapping the national discourses to the local conditions. However small a role they played, including political activities such as ululations, songs, dances and praise poetry, which performed a “political hospitality” role (Karlstrom, 2003: 66), they helped to push the levels of hatred, emotions, and related attacks or their threats, to new levels, significantly spurring the violence in the process. Without objectifying them, these roles also set out their agency.

Another important discussion point is why people participated in the violence. Taking the latter thread further, why did locals discard their social identity for party political identity in the violations of close relations, fellow workers and fellow villagers? Having said this however, these people were not a homogenous group and need to be discussed in their plurality. Different people had differential experiences of and in the violence.

A related question is whether their participation was only due to coercion. In other words, how far is it possible to argue that without Mugabe there could not have been violence in Shurugwi? How possible is to write on the history of violence in Shurugwi solely on Mugabe’s / ZANU-PF’s terms? This question derives from the strong Movement for Democratic Change[s] (MDC[s]), human rights, and generally Western discourse on the violence in Zimbabwe that portrays Mugabe and ZANU-PF as the authors and executors of the violence between 2000 and 2008. Violence is construed mostly in ZANU-PF leadership and/ or in terms of Robert Mugabe’s biographies, which is reductionist because the structures of that violence extended beyond these two institutions. Secondly, how much agency did the rural people of Shurugwi have between 2000 and 2008? If they did, as I would like to posit, where was that agency located? To what extent was it based on their party political membership, coerced or self-propelled agency?

While an attempt is made to disrupt the overestimated power of ZANU-PF and its leadership in the violence, the bottom line of the argument is to try to show the ambiguous nature of the relations of power between these people at the bottom and those in the political leadership positions. While these people from “below” are prone to victimisation, they sometimes used their same positions and conditions to their advantage, to influence their leaders, and to contribute to the violations of their peers.

2. The Concept of Decentralised Power and Agency

To unpack the seemingly contrary position, I seek to draw on Michel Foucault’s thesis on power relations. By debunking a centralised source where power is generated and distributed, Foucault regards power as an immanent and relational quality that is not obtainable from an outside source. Rather, it is internally produced at different locations by the “divisions, inequalities, and disequilibriums” that occur in the multivalent situations (Foucault, 1978 pg.94). As he says, “power is everywhere, not because it embraces

everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Ibid pg. 93). As such, power relations in any society are more than just hierarchical top-down. Rather they are complex, multi-dimensional, and multi-directional (Ibid). Thus at times power “comes from below,” with local struggles and differences constituting the base for larger ones or instructing the larger hegemonic explanations (Ibid pg.93).

On the whole, Foucault’s notion widens our scope on relations that are not usually “captured by the Manichaeic [...] dominant analyses” of power (Rutherford, 2003 pg.196). The above helps in understanding further the web of relationships between the “extrinsic site of legitimation” which produces the authorising narrative and the site of doing (Feldman, 1991 pg.3). Crucially, it situates agency at the site of doing because “agency was not the author but the product of doing” (Ibid). The “doing” is measured in acts and effects. As a result, agency is temporal and spatial (Ibid). In this way, the political violence that rocked Shurugwi district can thus be perceived as not “anchored in ideological codes and conditions external to the situation of enactment and transaction” (Ibid pg.4). Instead it can be imagined as “being sedimented with its own local histories that are mapped out on the template of the body” (Ibid) and not necessarily as the sole product of the external ideological constructions in Harare. The effect of this is that the justification for its occurrence, or what Feldman calls the “legitimation”, then “becomes performative and contingent” (Ibid pg.3).

Following in this modality in relation to the commission of violence in Shurugwi, it can then be argued that while there was the overall ZANU-PF narrative for the force-driven farm, factory and firm takeovers, the threatening and the physical lynching of MDC[s] supporters, its success depended on local conditions. The acute land shortages, local politics, petty jealousies, as well as the presence of identifiable MDC[s] supporters concretised the imperative in the “space of dispute”, in Ranciere’s (2006 pg.51) words, and provided the fuel that drove the violence in Shurugwi district.

It is in the Foucaultian complex web of interactions and relations of power between the local and the national that I seek to locate the various levels of agency the locals of Shurugwi had in the violence. This also enables a vocabulary of the violence that looks at locals not only as objects but also as subjects (however unequal) whose actions generated effects which impacted on their neighbours and the overall direction of the ZANU-PF political strategy. It also speaks to James Scott’s (1985) findings regarding how benign forms of resistance are useful in responding to a stronger power. Broadly, Scott challenges us therefore to perceive agency in its variegated forms, especially by those ordinarily considered weak.

Useful as this distribution of power and action is, it has to be read, however, alongside Immanuel Kant’s thesis on radical evil. It also has to be considered on the backdrop of a strong state presence in the people’s lives. Arguing in the realm of morality and rationality, Kant avers that evil is an immanent human quality that drives human beings to take certain courses of action, albeit without a positive being of its own (Grimm, 2002 pg. 161). Rejecting the theodical perception of evil as merely a negation, a subversion or a perversion of God’s will, he suggests that the immanence of evil means humans have the power to perform evil, and its (non)commission basically depends on the choice individuals take. The outcome of

the commission had also to be gauged in terms of good or bad *vis a vis* moral law. For Kant, however, humans have a propensity for evil over good (Love and Schmidt, 2006 pg.xvi).

However, Kant says that where there is no freedom of choice and where human beings are compelled by situations, both in time and space, to physically do evil there is no agency involved (Ibid). This is productive in assigning the agency that can be ascribed to the ordinary villagers and other actors outside compulsion. The question then is: to what extent was the physical commission of “evil” by many constitutive of agency? In this regard what therefore seizes this discussion is whether the rural people of Shurugwi, for example, who participated in the violation of others, the singing, or keeping of lists, which literally constituted “singing for their supper”, had any moral evil (agency), in the Kantian sense, since they had limited positive choices. This tension between Foucault and Kant animates the anxieties, and the causal-effect relationship between the “centre” that provided both institutional and narrative legitimation and, the site of the commission of violence. The same fault line also informs the shifting categories of actors between perpetrators and victims of violence that I grapple with throughout this chapter.

3. Problematising Categories of Perpetrators and Victims

There are many groups of people that can fit the description of perpetrators in the violence in Shurugwi (and Zimbabwe) in the years between 2000 and 2008. Events in Shurugwi help to debunk the oft-conveyed narrative that quickly equates the history of the post-1990s violence in Zimbabwe to the biographies of Mugabe and ZANU-PF. By 2008 the politics around raising fear, coercion, intimidation, threats and physical harm was so pervasive, structured, and “democratised” that it had reached deep into the extended family circles. This therefore meant that large sections of society participated and sustained the violence.

The pervasiveness of, and to some extent the “democratisation” of, the structures of violence therefore makes it imperative that we think beyond the two binary categories, first, the centre-periphery used in hierarchized power relations, and the perpetrator-victim binary. Rather, it would be productive to “fracture the appearance of lawful continuity between centres of legitimation and local acts of domination” (Feldman, 1991 pg.2).

The move towards transcending these divisions enables us to look at the relations between the state and the ordinary people as complex and not as given. This also allows us to have a glimpse into the contrariness of the nature of the interactions, on the one hand between the ordinary villagers and the state, and on the other between these villagers and their respective political parties in the violence. By merely participating, either willingly, grudgingly, or coerced, whether to either gain from the fruits of participation and belonging to the key political parties in whose names the acts were committed, or to simply survive, this involved their agency. As Foucault and Feldman above argue, power and agency lie in the doing subject and not at some central place. These various actions from the multiple situations that the ordinary supporters found themselves in pushed larger national politics further. It also opens us to the more intimate and hidden sources that sustained the hatred, intolerance, name-calling, the political bifurcation, the keeping of lists, denial of access to food and other social services at the lower levels of society.

Following in the Foucauldian line, the localised activities then fed into the national ideological grid where the commission of the “evil” at the village levels was used to showcase the necessity of the Third Chimurenga. It also gave more credence to the ideology. Probably as Mamdani (2001 pg.5) argues for the Rwanda genocide, the violence experienced in Shurugwi, and elsewhere in Zimbabwe, can then be viewed as a product of planning and participation. Planning was done in Harare while the execution was led by the war veterans, villagers and local communities. The start of the nationwide violence was the period following the defeat of ZANU-PF in the constitutional referendum in February 2000. Besides marking the first defeat of ZANU-PF at the ballot, the constitutional referendum served as a sort of a “plebiscite on ZANU-PF rule since 1980” (Raftopoulos, 2009 pg.212). At another level, this defeat actualised the dwindling electoral fortunes of the ruling party and it inauspiciously pointed to subsequent election defeats for ZANU-PF (Madhuku, 2004 pg.137).

Following this, ZANU-PF leadership planned and started farm invasions, which became the harbinger of the post millennium violence in the country (Hammar et al, 2003). The same strategy of fomenting insecurity, steering emotions and the targeting of opposition was also repeated at intermittent times, especially around election times (Machakanja, 2010 pg.1). ZANU-PF party also organised the violence through its authorising narrative rooted in anti-imperialism that typecast and caricatured the MDC[s] as a foreign face of Western colonialists. What gives credence to this thought is that besides having had the means to stop the violence, the party leadership condoned or openly supported it. Also, the duration, intensity, and recurrence of the violence point to some form of its encouragement and coordination.

It also has to be said that in time the mastermind of this strategy, that is, ZANU-PF’s top echelons and the Joint Operations Command (JOC) seemed to have devolved control of the violence, which gave rise to local centres of control. As the violence deepened and was further extended there was little way they could manage it all, which gave rise to local initiatives and opportunities by the lower level structures. Thus, while the general strategy and authorising ideology were controlled from Harare, the tactics on the ground were not as firmly controlled. The solidarity Peace Trust (2008 pg.25) established that “[i]n May and June (2008) there was a clear falling off of the direct role played by JOC in the actual day to day implementation of violence. The violence appeared to become self-perpetuating without the daily oversight of JOC.” Thus as Feldman (2003 pg.2–3) avers, for the violence to be sustainable at these levels it was suffused with localised struggles and localised histories.

Importantly for Shurugwi, the national ideology was buttressed by the severe historical land shortages, and the conflicting legacies of the late ZANLA commander Josiah Tongogara and the late far-right Prime Minister of Rhodesia Ian Smith. The Tongogara legacy especially made for a strong case for emotive electioneering for ZANU-PF. He embodied the Zimbabwe African national Liberation Army (ZANLA) struggle and triumph against the Rhodesia settler state. Ironically, Tongogara had worked on Ian Smith’s mother’s farm in his youth (White, 2003 pg.103), which in some sense symbolised the history of racialised economic inequalities and black suffering in Rhodesia.

Furthermore, there were various groups of people who contributed to the perpetration and sustenance of the orgy of political violence either in groups or as individuals. There were also instances when localised jealousies, competitions, examples, and conditions were used to justify the violation of the opposition MDC[s] supporters. Locals again identified farms to invade and enemies to target, plus strategies to deal with them. However, this was largely in the brand name of, and in the service of, ZANU- PF's scheme to retain power. Eppel (2009) has alerted us to this argumentation and posits that there was a tendency to utilise the party franchises in settling local and/ or petty struggles.

Addressing the violence in Shurugwi in terms of Foucault's discourse on the multivalent sources of power that takes into account the different relationships is also helpful in unpacking the various categories of perpetrators in Shurugwi. There were perpetrators at different levels depending on the political, social and economic power at their disposal. Others showed more active roles while others had more at stake. Yet for others their lowly positions meant that they had a smaller stake in the political violence, hence their minimal contributions. The latter's participation seemed to have been spurred by the need to benefit materially in an economy of severe shortages.

Among those who had some seemingly benign agency were rural residents and women. This of course did not diminish their cumulative impact on the overall violence. However, the exhibition of one's agency depended on the amount of profit to be gained. The profits were either material gains or simply the need to survive. For the majority of them in Shurugwi the profit was safety from being cast as the opposition. This meant that they were not beaten, threatened or had their property destroyed. They also needed the benefits that membership of ZANU-PF brought: access to food hand-outs, access to the GMB, access to agricultural inputs and access to social services or social grants, among others.

The above, other than merely highlighting the imperative of analysing the moral blameworthiness of the perpetrators, also calls for the troubling of the categories of perpetrators and victims. In this regard, following the vantage point provided by Fujii (2009 pg.8) that posits for complexities, that is, tensions, blurred lines and ever-changing relations between and amongst perpetrators, victims and bystanders, is productive. This is crucial in unpacking the complex forms of interactions between these different categories, as well as in sifting through the different shifts between these categories. It invites us to see the participants in these categories as transient between rigid categories (Ibid). Thus, this link again invites us to consider the 2000-2008 violence as "... a temporal and spatial unfolding of ambiguous actions, shifting contexts, and actors with multiple and contradictory motives" (Ibid pg.11). What emerges on the whole therefore is that agency from such power relations is complex: at times covert, even suppressed, at others dominant, while at other times, benign.

But, where did that agency come from? We turn to troubling the importance of coerced agency. For Shurugwi, in the face of the spread of the violence to the lowest social levels of the extended family, the distinction between willing and coerced participation is nebulous to demarcate. Again, the participation of ordinary party members and villagers (and other categories) in the violence, either as victims or perpetrators, in the name of political parties

further complicates it. It then becomes tenuous to say whether those at the grassroots got involved simply as members of their political parties which compelled them to participate, or whether they joined out of their own choice or to fight their own conflicts on the political stage.

The task of demarcating voluntary participation from coerced participation became further complicated by the circumstances around the period of the research, between January and July 2010. Besides the fact that this was the moment immediately after the violence, fraught with emotions and unsettled scores, there were more gains in claiming victimhood. Informants told of rumours that promised compensation for the victims during 2010. There was also trepidation concerning reprisal attacks among those who had caused or threatened harm on their neighbours. These anxieties were exacerbated by the calls by human rights and the MDC[s] for justice to the victims. In this atmosphere it also became difficult to get to elicit complex narratives of the occurrence of the 2000-2008 violence as “truths” became purposeful and instrumentalised (Eppel, 2009 pg.6-7). The “truth” also became polarised along ZANU-PF and MDC[s] narratives of the period that foregrounded the purpose of the violence either as necessary for redistribution of national resources or the violation of individual and property rights, respectively. In the end, it became apparent that although there were collusions in some of the versions, for example, individuals at the centre of the violence, dates, and venues, for example, there were also fundamental contrasts between them. This polarity was even decipherable in the testimonies by those at the lowest structures of the political movements, which mirrored that disseminated by the top political party structures.

Arguing for the need to locate agency outside of the so-called “authorising centre” is not to reduce the role of the state in the actual commission of the violations. The state had a strong hold in the rural areas especially as ZANU-PF has always regarded them as its powerbase. As for Shurugwi, the political symbolism regarding the legacy of Tongogara, the ZANLA commander, who hailed from the district, was strong. His legacy sat alongside that of Smith, who also came from Shurugwi, the hallmark of Rhodesian far right conservatism and settler colonialism that featured prominently in ZANU-PF’s authorising narrative. Boasting of “degrees in violence” (Blair, 2002), President Mugabe, the chief ideologue of the “Third Chimurenga”, and other senior party as well as government officials, constantly hammered on the importance of violence to ZANU-PF. In Shurugwi, this was largely suffused with Tongogara’s Second Chimurenga biography, in the simplified and overkill narrative of fighting against Western imperialism and its supposed local face, the MDC[s].

On the whole, the pronouncements of another liberation war (Third Chimurenga) served to clear the path for ordinary members of the party and at times criminals to evoke their agency, taking advantage of the situation, to violate the emotional well-being, as well as the social, political and economic rights of the members of the “ethnic” MDC[s] group with guaranteed impunity. Crucially, however, once the processes framing of the “enemy” and of inciting differences, “fears and hatred” (Fujii, 2009 pg.5), as well as the targeting of opponents and enemies had been set in motion the government withdrew from the day to

day overt supervision. With this, it was then left to local communities to extend the fears, hatred and differences, through marrying their struggles on to the larger party political discourse. In an atmosphere where the targeting of the opposition MDC[s] supporters was acceptable, it was easy to convert personal battles into political battles between ZANU-PF and the MDC[s].

4. Petty-Jealousies: Some Cases

In Shurugwi, I came across cases such as “Naomi” who, for example, told me that she had been labelled MDC[s] by her late husband’s brother because she had refused to be inherited under the Shona system of *kugara nhaka* (wife inheritance). She also claimed that her late husband’s brother was jealous of her proficiency as an independent woman entrepreneur. I gathered that she was a cross-border trader, who by the village standards was doing well. I also came across a case where someone whose cattle had allegedly grazed in a neighbour’s maize field was turned into an MDC[s]-ZANU-PF issue. Because the accused did not want to compensate the victim, he allegedly accused the victim of supporting the MDC[s]. This distracted attention from the real issue in which one sought compensation for their loss to the larger and emotive stage of the political. Furthermore, I heard of a case of a communal farm border squabble that was also transformed into a political issue. It is alleged that the accused took advantage of the absence of his neighbour to extend his fields into neighbour’s allocated holding. Upon return the victim confronted the accused to rectify the problem. However, the accused, it is alleged, used his party influence to accuse the victim of being an MDC[s] supporter.

There were also several issues between teachers and former students, and between teachers and some community members, which resulted in the teachers being labelled MDC[s] supporters. Among the common allegations in the latter cases was that once teachers failed to buy beer or pay protection fees to the villagers they were reported to ZANU-PF leaders as MDC[s] supporters, which invited their violations. In this way, petty jealousies were mapped on to the larger national political struggle. Through this way, the jealousies became vital cogs that sustained the political violations, and the ability of ZANU-PF to punish descent, through the family and village-level confrontations and structures.

There were also some people who took advantage of their association with ZANU-PF to loot property from the white farmers and also from the generality of the MDC[s] supporters. Criminals allegedly benefitted from the confusion created by the statements that condoned violence against the opposition to deprive the defenceless peasants of their valuable property. There were numerous reports of theft of property from white farms. These included cattle, fence equipment, irrigation equipment, poaching, and theft of water pumping engines. Such actions were also witnessed in other sectors, such as gold panning. In this regard, criminal elements took advantage of their association with ZANU-PF to accumulate wealth through clandestine means but under the shield of ZANU-PF tag. During the research I was also alerted of criminal gangs that demanded protection fees from gold panners in the name of ZANU-PF. It is to gold panning that I now turn.

5. Gold Panning and Localised Struggles

Shurugwi district is blessed with huge mineral deposits ranging from chrome, gold and platinum. While chrome and platinum mining is done by formalised companies that of gold is performed by both sanctioned and unsanctioned players. Gold panning in the district rose to prominence at the time of the Zimbabwe crisis, between 2000 and 2008. To this end, up to by the year 2000 there were about 15 000 panners (Daily News, 13 January 2000) from all over Zimbabwe and beyond national borders converged at the Boterekwa escarpment and surrounding river valleys, such as Mutevekwi and Runde valleys as well as at Mangwende farm (Interviews). The figures of panners grew as the economic meltdown in the country worsened. After 2007, however, the Shurugwi gold panning sites lost their lustre because of the government-sponsored Operation *Chikorokoza chapera*, (Operation end gold panning) a violent reaction that resulted in several injuries, arrests and deaths of panners, as well as the destruction of property, including wares for sale, personal clothes and their shacks. In addition, there were also reduced gold pickings which coincided with the discovery of the lucrative Chiadzwa diamond fields in Manicaland province where most of the panners flocked with mixed fortunes.

Important for this paper is the fact that local politics were infused into the gold panning activities. This was primarily the function of socio-economic needs and rather contradictory activities, and competing jealousies between the gold panners and the newly resettled farmers. From interviews that I carried out between January and July 2010, I was informed, among others things that panners were accused of engaging in sexual liaisons and adulterous affairs with the farmers' wives and daughters. They were also accused of causing the deaths of farmers' cattle and other domestic animals through their use of cyanide in the gold purification process. Consequently, the panners were labelled as anti-resettlement hence anti-ZANU-PF because their actions negated the success of the ZANU-PF sponsored programme. On their part the panners did not completely reject the allegations. However, they pointed out that the newly resettled farmers were jealous of the way they made "lots" of money. They further claimed that at times the wives and daughters of the farmers sought them out because they wanted to enjoy the "rich pickings" that the panners enjoyed.

Notwithstanding the above, I however, established that at times there existed mutual dependency between the two groups. To this extent, at times the farmers sold their maize and other agricultural commodities, and other wares such as blankets, jackets, clothes, and electronic gadgets at inflated prices to panners. In like manner, some of the more "successful" panners extended loans to some farmers, and they enhanced the farming business through paying more for the crop products than the farmers were able to derive from the GMB. Furthermore, some of the new farmers also engaged in the panning of gold to supplement their farm earnings and/ or to boost their farm capital.

6. Patronage, Coercion and Commission of Violence

In this section, I return to the discursive framework that Mamdani (2001 pg.5) used for Rwanda in which the state planned (and participated) in the 1994 genocide. It is instructive

in unpacking the organisation, distribution, and execution of violence in Zimbabwe, and Shurugwi in particular. As Mamdani says, the technology of the Rwanda genocide, the machete, demanded that many participated. In like manner, in the violence that engulfed Zimbabwe, the technology used was mostly the axe, knobkerrie and the whip, which meant that many took part. In the Zimbabwe situation, and Shurugwi specifically, the ZANU-PF leadership and government set the tone for the attacks through a series of hate speeches against the whites and opposition MDC[s] supporters in general (Mugabe, 2001), it prepared its supporters to launch onslaughts on them. It also enticed them with threats and rewards of various kinds (Eppel, 2009).

What I have established for Shurugwi is that patronage drew more people to participate in ZANU-PF programmes, including farm takeovers and violence, rather than the oft-claimed spontaneity by the land hungry citizens. As Alexander and Chitofiri (Undated, pg.5) established for Norton:

ZANU-PF relied on the state's assets and the state's ability to control assets, and it deployed its resources to encourage and coerce performances of loyalty and- crucially- to mobilise violence... Our point here is to emphasise the way in which such practices were woven into the organisation of violence, creating particular kinds of incentives, expectations and relationships.

They go on to say the MDC[s] also created its own version of patronage as a counter by giving food and a support network to its supporters to counter the ZANU-PF model (Ibid).

What this translated to in a situation of severe shortages basically was that everyone had to belong to either party to gain certain provisions and to survive. This also meant the entrenchment of the binary of belonging. The two political parties controlled the scarce resources; in the case of ZANU-PF it was state resources through its control of government, and for the MDC[s], especially MDC[s]-Tsvangirai, because of its internal and external donor resources. However, for the MDC[s], this was rather a counter and at times subterraneous patronage system because its supporters were being discriminated against and it feared for its supporters.

Once this binary of belonging was established people had to prove the worth of their belonging in order to continue to access the benefits or they could be labelled outsiders or sell-outs. Importantly, this helped to complicate the already tenuous zone between perpetrators and victims. By belonging to a side, one became guilty by association in cases of violence committed by or in the name of the party. This character of the execution of the violence added a group dimension to the individualised commission for most of the rural party supporters in Shurugwi.

From Shurugwi, there are a number of cases of rural residents who were forced to publicly renounce their MDC[s] party affiliations to benefit from ZANU-PF patronage goods and services (Marongwe, 2012). Whilst there was a political push towards these, they were also a function of the impact of the debilitating economic atmosphere in the country between 2000 and 2008 premised on the industrial closures, economic sanctions, and the collapse of the agricultural sector under the twin pressures of unplanned farm

takeovers and a combination of natural disasters in the form of floods and droughts. As a consequence, there were unprecedented job losses, which led to rampant unemployment; astronomical and historical inflation; a battery of shortages of basic goods; high poverty levels and a desperate need for citizens to survive (Raftopoulos, 2009).

While the above mentioned public renouncements were humiliating, they simultaneously provided those concerned with opportunities to reap some rewards, especially financial, material and security. In the environment where daily commodities were scarce, identifying with and actively participating in political movements' activities was beneficial if not rewarding. At times such goods as mealie-meal, the staple in the district, were sold or were given for free at rallies.

Besides the basic goods such as mealie-meal, maize barley, millet, soya beans and cooking oil that were either given or sold at rallies or the GMB, active membership of ZANU-PF, and to a limited degree of the MDC[s], again entitled one to other goods and services. These included the agricultural inputs, scotch carts, ploughs and other agricultural implements handed out. Jobs in the civil service were also accessed on the basis of one's strong participation in ZANU-PF politics. The desire to live and escape poverty was therefore quite crucial in enticing residents to participate in political performances (see similar argument in Lwanda, 1996 pg.19). This ought to be put in the perspective of a clear patronage system from the national ZANU-PF hierarchy. The President, for example, gave out computers, food, buses, farm equipment and cows at rural rallies (Mail and Guardian, 18/02/2008), and in other cases he announced pay rises for civil servants; and distributed vehicles and agricultural equipment to ZANU-PF supporters (Congressional Research Service, 2008). Elsewhere, it was not uncommon for rally attendees to receive alcohol, soap, cooking oil, cell-phone lines (sim packs), school uniforms, and to get promises their kids' school fees. High Court Judge Rita Makarau also made reference to the existence of this practice of patronage in giving of food and other hand-outs when passing judgement in the Elton Mangoma vs Didymus Mutasa election petition (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2006). Further, the Physicians for Human Rights established these cases of "politically motivated discrimination" were also extended to children of MDC[s] supporters who were excluded from accessing social services such as schooling and donor feeding schemes for those of school-going ages and the under-fives.

In addition, I established also that party attire, such as wrap-around materials commonly referred to as *mazambias*, and T-shirts, scarfs, whistles, bandanas and flags were not randomly given. They were allocated according to the levels of participation in party political activities. The most active, besides providing entertainment, also advertised and campaigned for their respective political parties. Except for flags and whistles, most of these became important fashion apparel in an era in which it had become luxurious to buy clothes. This meant that the political apparel came in to fill an important gap, and they became important everyday fashion items both inside and outside of the political contexts and spaces. This was in addition to the symbolic role the attire played in identifying those who supported or belonged to whichever political party, especially around election times, which also came to signify moments of intense onslaught against non-supporters.

In the above scenario one cannot help but notice the contrariness between the ordinary villagers being forced to participate, in order to benefit, on the one hand, and the symbolic empowerment that they experienced from the material benefits they acquired, on the other. They might have been forced, literally and figuratively, to attend and/ or to perform at rallies, but they ended up surviving the scathing poverty of that infamous decade. One might be tempted to posit that this ended up as somewhat skewed, though contemporaneously mutually beneficial, relationship.

7. State Coercion

As the economic conditions became dire and overall made survival a mammoth task, state repression and coercion also worsened. This was the result of the transformation of politics into an extension of war by ZANU-PF during the Third Chimurenga (Marongwe, 2012). Faced with a strong opposition, which perhaps was the strongest in the post-independence period, ZANU-PF increasingly called upon its coercive apparatus in the form of the security forces to mobilise support for its survival. Alongside this was also the deployment of a “war” language, reminiscent of the Second Chimurenga, which clearly categorised opponents as outsiders and enemies who had to be annihilated (Muzondidya, 2009 pg.177).

In this background, as Mbembe has established for Cameroon and Togo, there was always the possibility of a resort to violence to enforce compliance whose aim was “not just to bring a specific political consciousness into being but make it effective” (Mbembe, 1992 pg.4). This placed the locals in an untenable position. To navigate their survival in such an economy they had to, among others, engage in active politicking. For example, dancing at rallies became somewhat dancing for survival. This further complicates the symbiosis we attempted to posit above because what most of the villagers got was nowhere near what they were forced to give out.

Confronted with state excesses that demanded unquestioned loyalty to ZANU-PF, villagers had to participate as a form of public gesture. Threats to violence, and examples of what could befall “sell-outs,” sustained the belief in the strength of the tactics of intimidation. Aware of their shortcomings common villagers felt obliged to take part in the economy of these performances at rallies and in public spaces. They saw more reward in being seen as belonging and being co-opted as insiders than to seek resistance and disengagement that amounted to being labelled as sell outs or public violation. They, among others, had to know the slogans by heart, and were expected to keep abreast with changes within these slogans as part of this scheme of ZANU-PF’s version of biopolitics. By repeating these slogans and songs they were put through a regime of indoctrination, which engraved the political images and words as epitaphs on their minds. The above speaks to Ruddick’s assessment of fear in generating for the underclasses moments of empowerment. In this way, faced with little freedom, the weak villagers passively participated in order to avoid painful encounters, such as threats and actualised physical violence (Ruddick, 2010).

The above has to be taken together with the dissemination of a powerful state propaganda, that of a nation at war against the British, the European Union, the United

States of America and their agents in the form of the MDC[s]. In the propaganda campaigns, graphic images of the suffering during the Second Chimurenga, the aggressive speeches and calls for sacrifice to retain national sovereignty compelled the submission of women. We ought to note, however, that in the ZANU-PF narrative there were a range of very emotive issues that were raised, which had a powerful resonance among the poor citizens of the district. These included, *inter alia*, land redistribution and the fight against Western imperialism that targeted the re-colonisation of the country.

8. Land Shortages in Shurugwi

The importance of land shortages in Shurugwi is that they provided an imperative upon which the land hungry fulfilled the national ideology of land shortages in communal areas by invading white farms. It also provided a platform on which many residents violated the rights of fellow locals. Shurugwi district's land problems, like in many other districts in Zimbabwe, were engineered by the creation of reserves by the colonial state in the 1890s starting with the Gwaai and Shangani, and further extended with the creation of sixty more reserves in 1905 that were characterised by poor quality soils and overcrowding (Chitiyo, 2000). The extent of the overcrowding in the district can be evinced even from 1920s and 1930s reports of the Native Commissioners (NCs) that spoke of acute shortages. To this extent, one NC wrote: "from the figures relating to the population and stock on the reserve at any disposal it was apparent to me that under the system in vogue the reserve was overcrowded- in fact I marvelled that so large a number of people were able under the conditions to be self-supporting" (Ibid, 1929). In fact, Shurugwi reserve with 76,000 morgen (about 152,000 acres) (NAZ, S235/505-508, 1929) and a population of about 19,889 people by 1934 (NAZ, S235/505-508, 1934), which translated to approximately 9 acres per person fared comparatively worse than most reserves which had an average of 30.49 acres (Moyana, 1984 pg.47).

The land shortages can be further witnessed in the selection of the district to pilot the centralisation programme from the 1930s. Centralisation was a pseudo technical-scientific project whose stated objectives were to maximise land usage, minimise land wastage and better production through the use of African demonstrators (NAZ, S138/72). Under centralisation,

...people under headmen [had] to centralise their scattered crop lands together into large arable blocs and to set aside large stretches of other land to be used as communal grazing lands where cattle can graze freely during the growing season. Then, after the crops are harvested the cattle could graze freely in the arable areas to clean up crop residue for a month or two while the grazing land had a rest (Kremer, 1998 pg.91).

However, as the Chief Native Commissioner (Cited in Drinkwater, 1989 pg.293) says the hidden aim was to "... avoid, as far as possible, the necessity for acquisition of more land for native occupation" This policy of centralisation first tested in Shurugwi together with its central, rational and rather impractical, ethos of improving techniques of farming by

the Africans, instead of availing more land, was extended, modified and adapted to other districts under the Land Husbandry Act codified in 1951. It was also to be the central motor for all “[n]ative” agricultural planning during the colonial period, and into the first two decades of post-independence (Marongwe, 2003 pg.156). Thus, by the time of the Third Chimurenga acute land shortages persisted in the district. This is supported by the resettling of people on 118 of its 151 farms between 2000 and 2003 (Ibid pg.69). In addition to these 118 farms, 5 more farms were “illegally” occupied in the district (Ibid pg.70). Importantly, these statistics put Shurugwi second in the Midlands Province both regarding the highest numbers of resettled farms and illegally resettled farms (Ibid).

Furthermore, the number of farms gazetted for resettlement in the early years of the 2000s also represented sites where violence was encountered, as more often than not the process was fraught with violence, firstly to remove the white farmers and to sustain the settlers. For the white farmers, violence was employed to try to retain control of their farms. This was despite the provision of legal protection for the new settlers under the Rural Land Occupiers (Protection) Act (Utete Commission Report, 2003 pg.19). We should also consider the two background factors to the launch of the FTLRP, which were the harbingers of the violence. These are the disorderly land invasions, commonly called *jambanja*, by the war veterans before the official launch of the FTLRP, and the defeat of ZANU-PF in the 2000 constitutional referendum which pushed it to deploy violence against opponents.

9. Conclusion

The paper has attempted to demonstrate the significance of local differences, petty jealousies and local shortages of land in aiding the perpetuation and the perpetration of the national politics of violence during the Third Chimurenga. In a large way, it has thus, tried to decentre the agency in the violence from centralised state and political party actors. It sought to argue that while the larger institutions offered some sort of centralising co-ordinations and the official authorising narratives for the violence, these depended on, and were aided by, the existence, at the local levels, of different conditions and interests upon which were grafted these broad national discourses. For Shurugwi, the historic land problems that were shown by the selection of the district to pilot the centralisation programme, existence of known opposition members, the contrasting legacies of Tongogara and Smith, economic differentiation and social-based enmity offered the pillars on which the violence of the Third Chimurenga was fought and sustained. The existence of these competing interests thus concretised the meaning of the larger national discourses at the local levels. These differences also offered a platform for the decentralisation of the structures, to the village-levels, which sustained the commission of the violence.

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