

CHAPTER 4: VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE 1980-1999

This chapter furnishes a political background to violence and nonviolent resistance by the political actors before the formation of the MDC in 1999. The chapter explores how the state founded in 1980 by the Mugabe government was a violence valuing state. It shows how democracy was subverted by various overt and covert measures. These measures were legalised through various laws and supported by some government policies. The chapter brings to the fore how earlier political players faced violence each time they attempted to carry out political activities.

After getting into power, the formerly exiled nationalist party began a process of nation building. The process of nation and state building was rather rushed. As argued by Mlambo (2016: 54) “after independence in 1980, there was no social or legal process to deal with the trauma suffered during the struggle, and therefore the bitterness and mutual suspicions continued.” The new government faced several problems after its inauguration. Important political and social reforms were side-lined for an ill-thought out process of national reconciliation and appeasement of white capital.

Despite the challenges of years of war no one was taken to account for the massacre of peasants, the atrocities of the militias, the missing school children, massacre of refugees and landmines across the country. These issues buttress the point by Duduoet (2006: 39) that “the transition from armed resistance to conventional politics requires adopting a new political culture, formulating a new programme, installing party organisational structures, recruiting party cadres, and building their capacity to govern.” Zimbabwe witnessed the continuation of liberation rhetoric which betrayed incapacity to transform. Further, the deliberate employment of party cadres in

positions not befitting them and the incapacity to build institutions independent of political interference was a worrying trend.

Mugabe ignored one of the most important fundamental aspect of peace building which is truth telling and justice especially through the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as was the case in South Africa. The challenges of the war became a footnote of the nation building which created fissures in the newly independent nation. The Lancaster House Conference and the subsequent constitution showed that “both Zimbabweans and the international community were too much in a hurry to declare the success of democracy over minority white rule, and did not stop to deal effectively with the past, and that ugly past continued to affect the new Zimbabwe” (Mlambo, 2006: 55). No one was prosecuted for human rights violations, and victims of war received no compensation; there was no truth telling and no one accounted for their misdeeds. In the elections of 1980 “ZANLA controlled two thirds of Zimbabwe and had promised the population that any result other than a ZANU-PF victory would entail the resumption of war, something that Muzorewa had failed to stop” (Munemo, 2016: 135). This is clearly explained by Ndlovu-Gatsheni who argues “the ZANU-PF government was concentrating more on the consolidation of regime security at the expense of a clear nation-building agenda beyond the policy of reconciliation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b: 211). These proclamations in 1980 elections have been a constant feature of ZANU-PF electioneering up to date. Each time it is faced with threats to its political power, ZANU has been quick to remind the people of its liberation exploits and that given an option it would choose war over elections.

The postcolonial state created in 1980 has been deficient in providing basic necessities and institutional reforms aimed at achieving lasting peace and human security. It is correct to use the argument by Mamdani that “Africa’s real political challenge is to reform and thus

transcend the form of the state that has continued to reproduce race and ethnicity as political identities, alongside a discourse on nativism and ‘genuine’ tradition” (Mamdani, 2003: 149). This resonated with the 1980 state building by the new government. Ethnicity and regionalism became the new divisive instruments after the fall of the Smith regime. The Mugabe regime virtually adopted all the mechanism and repressive laws of the Smith regime. While independence came to Zimbabwe in 1980, impunity and repression continued. The violence unleashed by Smith on political opponents became a common feature of the Mugabe regime.

The history of Zimbabwe since 1980 has been characterised by a series of challenges which, at different turning points, manifested themselves through violent conflicts. Since its independence, the issue of achieving sustainable peace and development has remained a challenge due to a lack of comprehensive approaches to issues of violence and human security. The political events of the period 1980-2017 in Zimbabwe have created challenges that have drawn the attention of both domestic and international actors. To confront emerging challenges which lay ahead, the Mugabe regime attempted to rebuild the nation through a delicate balancing act. First was the pronouncement of the policy of reconciliation, a half-hearted attempt at removing colonial institutions, colonial laws, colonial practices, culture and ethnic integration. Within the army the former warring parties were integrated into a single unity comprising of ZANLA, ZIPRA and Rhodesian forces. The newly introduced cabinet was in a way a unity cabinet which included Rhodesians, ZAPU and ZANU members. However, ZANU controversially presented a narrow narrative of the liberation struggle conveniently ignoring other liberation actors especially ZAPU. This was problematic because it affected relations within the newly created national army posing a risk to peace and unity. The attempt to present a united front however failed because of ZANU Shona triumphalism.

As noted by Kriger “this historical moment of ZANU-PF triumphalism was also characterised by the use of Shona pre-colonial heroes and historical monuments to imagine the nation, while Ndebele heroes and history were marginalised” (Kriger, 2003: 74-75). The presentation of this narrow history created a platform for disunity as the ZAPU liberation war efforts were suppressed for a carefully laden propaganda which portrayed Mugabe as the symbol of liberation resilience. In fact, even within ZANU itself some luminaries of the struggle such Ndabaningi Sithole, Herbert Chitepo received little recognition for their efforts. With this propaganda, Mugabe dictatorship was born and violence became a celebrated tool against opponents.

The first crisis that beset the post-colonial nation-building project had to do with ethnicity and integration of military forces. A crisis which began in the ranks of the military, involving open exchange of fire between the triumphant and Shona-dominant ZANLA and the Ndebele dominated ZIPRA in Connemara (Gweru) and Entumbane (Bulawayo), ignited a reign of state terror in Matabeleland and the Midlands region in the period 1980-1987 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006). The reign of terror that became known as the Gukurahundi campaign was ostensibly meant to seek and destroy some ex-ZIPRA combatants who had defected from the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) to embark on a life of dissidency. To some extent, the atrocities showed clear mistrust and distrust in the nationalist project after independence. Firstly, the 5th Brigade was formed outside the official government system and was directly responsible to the Prime Minister. In a letter to Mugabe, Nkomo wrote that:

It is obvious to me that you decided to form the Fifth Brigade outside the structure and command of the National army, so that you may use it as a party Tribal brigade for eliminating or liquidating, as you have many times said, those you chose to destroy. As a matter of fact, when I questioned the formation of the Fifth Brigade outside the Zimbabwe National Army

without consultation, you angrily replied and said, "Who are you to be consulted?" "This Brigade," you said, "has been formed to crush those who try to subvert my government and if you attempt that, they will crush you (Informative letter to Mugabe, 1981).

Mugabe unleashed the Gukurahundi violence to finish unresolved differences from the nationalist struggle. The letter clearly showed the limits to the policy of reconciliation and the rushed Lancaster House Peace Conference. Mugabe initially used ex-Rhodesian forces in Matabeleland in 1982 before deploying the 5th brigade who were protected by the emergency powers of 1982. The emergency powers were used to protect the activities of the 5th brigade in Matabeleland and its deployment. In short they were a declaration of a state of emergency. Further to that they were used to detain ZAPU leaders like Dumiso Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku without trial. The severity of repression was somehow planned to suppress ZAPU support and to clear the path towards a one-party state.

The statements attributed to the ZANU-PF leadership during the Matabeleland disturbances show how the unfinished reconciliation process of 1980 compounded the security situation and promoted violence as the means to achieve peace. There was an open threat not only to the ZAPU leadership but to everyone who resided in the place of conflict. Mugabe openly remarked that "where men and women provide food for dissidents, when we get there we eradicate them. We don't differentiate when we fight, because we can't tell who is a dissident and who is not..." (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986:38). Emmerson Mnangagwa, the then Minister of State Security went further to say "blessed are they, who will follow the path of the government laws, for their days on earth shall be increased... but woe unto those who will choose the path of collaboration with dissidents for we will certainly shorten their stay on earth" (The Chronicle, 1983).

Enos Nkala, the then Minister of Home Affairs summed the intention of ZANU as follows:

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

The chilling statements were a clear threat which provided impetus to the armed forces to use all the means necessary to stop dissident activity. Within two years of independence the ugly scourge of violence engulfed Zimbabwe just as it had done before. This violence somehow shows the nature of the nationalist discourse and how it evolved. To some extent, it was a continuation of the ZAPU-ZANU split of the 1960s which had left unresolved political differences and 1982 provided an unsavoury opportunity to settle the longstanding dispute.

The violence in 1982 was a consequent of a narrow developmental agenda. As noted by Gatsheni-Ndlovu (2016) the violence was somehow an inevitable consequence of the way nationalism had evolved and how the nationalist armies had been formed. This is how he frames it:

To some extent we accept the notion of the inevitability of a violent post-colonial civil war pitting the former liberation movements and their former armies against each other. But there is need to posit that the inevitability of violence was underwritten by incompatibilities of Ndebele and Shona particularities. The violence was in a way symptomatic of the failure of a smooth blending of major ethnicities into a new national identity called Zimbabwe. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016).

The cumulative effect of this was that violence eschewed human security. To ZAPU, the end of the war spelt insecurity and a threat to its existence and to some extent the existence of the Ndebele ethnic group.

The Matabeleland war was triggered by the “discovery” by the government of vast amounts of arms on properties owned by the ZAPU Company, Nitram, and around Zipra Assembly Points in February 1982. History has shown that to crush opponents Mugabe repeatedly used the “discovery’ approach against Joshua Nkomo in 1982, Ndabaningi Sithole in 1996 and Morgan Tsvangirai in 2002. These spurious allegations were used as grounds for confiscating and sacking Nkomo and other ZAPU ministers from government. ZAPU members and military deserted the army due to fear of persecution. After February 1982, the political pronouncement of reconciliation became a mirage and it completely disappeared. Prime Minister Robert Mugabe used this pretext as definitive proof that ZAPU had always been planning a coup. It was said that it had held “back forces and cached weapons to fight in a final struggle to overthrow a ZANU-PF government if it came to power” (Alexander *et al.*, 2000: 181).

Former ZIPRA cadres were persecuted, especially those in the army. Some fled for dear life while those who remained in the army were often demoted. Alexander *et al.* (2000) note that:

The desertion in 1982 of thousands of armed former ZIPRAs from the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) and their persecution at home led to a vast increase of dissident violence in Matabeleland. These dissidents were not the same as those of 1980. Their position was due to the deterioration of relations within the ZNA and targeting of former ZIPRAs outside it, a situation that was to worsen dramatically with the deployment of the notorious Fifth Brigade to Matabeleland North in 1983 (Alexander *et al.*, 2000: 181).

The creation of the Fifth Brigade reflected deep-seated mistrust as it was only accountable to the then Prime Minister, and not to the normal military chain of command. It was specifically intended for what were termed ‘internal defence purposes’ (Alexander *et al.*, 2000: 181). From its deployment in Matabeleland North in January 1983 until its

withdrawal from Matabeleland South in late 1984, the brigade carried out a grotesquely violent campaign. It targeted party chairmen and civil servants, civilians at large, and former ZIPRA combatants, refugees, and anyone suspected of having crossed the border to Botswana during the liberation war. Former ZIPRA combatants rarely survived encounters with this brigade. Its “violence largely shaped the spread and character of dissidency (Alexander *et al.*, 2000). The operation to expunge the dissidents was code-named Gukurahundi (in Shona, this phrase means the first rains of the year that wash away rubbish). Although the government deployed many sectors of its security apparatus, the Fifth Brigade excelled in repression. Many people were tortured, raped, murdered, and maimed in the pursuit of dissident quashing. Many people still bear the mental and physical scars of the war.

Mugabe had a contrasting nationalist view to achieve development. His idealism was based on his political security and of his ZANU party. He narrowly believed that development could only be achieved on his terms rather than on multiparty democracy. That was the essence of the violence of the 1980s. It is within the purview of this context that the impact of that violence has to be understood, particularly its role in the re-packaging of post-Gukurahundi politics in Matabeleland. Incapacity to tolerate political difference and/or the lack of tolerance to share political space by the ruling elite marred Africa’s post-colonial nation building processes. Zimbabwe’s civil war of 1982 to 1987 was an outcome of weak conceptualisation and practice of nation building in Africa. Close to twenty thousand people perished in what became known as the Matabeleland crisis. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (Alexander, *et al*, 2000) give a detailed critique on the history of violence in Matabeleland. The war pitted the newly formed (Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front, ZANU-PF) government against its liberation ally, Zimbabwe African People's Union Patriotic Front (ZAPU-PF).

The 1982 war can somewhat be seen as a spill-over from the nationalist politics of the 1960s and 1970s. Nationalism had the ambiguity of being both exclusionary and all-embracing. It subsumed class, ethnic and religious differences, and, at the same time, tried to use these cleavages for its sustenance. Alexander observed that the escalation of violence after the end of the liberation war was built on the two guerrilla armies (Zanla for ZANU and Zipra for ZAPU), regional patterns of recruitment and operation during the 1970s, and the history of animosity and distrust between the two armies and their political leaders (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, 2000: 181).

The impact of the war was that it left bitter memories and hatred amongst the Ndebele. “In the eyes of the Ndebele public, what was portrayed as a mission to stamp out dissidents became an anti-Ndebele campaign that deliberately conflated Joshua Nkomo, ZAPU, ex-ZIPRA and every Ndebele-speaking person into a dissident; a dissident collaborator; a dissident sympathiser and sponsor” (Muzondidya & Gatsheni, 2007: 286). The way this violence evolved had far reaching consequences on future political differences. The war led to the underdevelopment of Matabeleland.

The Matabeleland war ended after the signing of the Unity Accord on 22 December 1987 between Prime Minister Mugabe and the ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo, who had been persecuted by the ZANU government. The Unity Accord aimed to do what Gukurahundi had failed to do, that is, conquer the last frontier of resistance to ZANU-PF hegemony by delivering the Ndebele-speaking region to the Shona-dominated party. This delivery was in part a political settlement which exposed the nation to a singular view political narrative as Mugabe used the settlement to close all opposition against him. The road to the Unity Accord began in 1985 but it was only signed two years later with the chief players failing to agree to a solution. Within the period of negotiations ZAPU leaders were arrested and harassed while Dumiso

Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku languished in prison despite court orders for their release. This was a sign that Mugabe wanted a capitulation of the ZAPU leaders, and peace to be achieved on his terms. In fact, several reports show that the imprisoned ZAPU leaders were promised release only if they agreed to join ZANU.

The outcome of this conflict was the Unity Agreement in 1987 that, while it ended the atrocities in Matabeleland, effectively emasculated the major opposition party PF ZAPU and confirmed the regional subordination of Matabeleland. Thus, while the ruling party used the language of reconciliation to structure its relations with the white elite and international capital, it deployed the discourse of unity to control ZAPU and its members. The terms of the Unity Accord clearly showed that Nkomo had been forced to surrender. It was a capitulation in which Nkomo had to save his people from the continued onslaught by the 5th Brigade. Masipula Sithole stresses that:

Even a cursory look at the terms of the Unity Accord (let alone the Chiwewe minutes) gives one the impression that the document spells out terms of surrender and not compromise. Nowhere in the eleven-point agreement does Nkomo's name appear, but Mugabe's appears three times. (Nkomo's name only appears as a signatory to the document)...Eight of the eleven points are pregnant with victorious Mugabe's ideas. Where mention is made of PF-ZAPU it is to indicate that henceforth it shall be called ZANU (PF) (Sithole, 1991: 285-6).

“The Unity Accord offered ZAPU very little except a commitment that killings in ZAPU strongholds would stop. In short – you cease to exist and we will stop killing you” (Eppel, 2009: 8). What the Unity Accord taught ZANU-PF was the continued use of the military to solve political disagreements. ZAPU was left powerless to demand concessions from Mugabe. It was a Mugabe deal sold to the world the same as the reconciliation mantra was initiated.

Just like the national Reconciliation Policy of 1980, the Unity Accord hardly addressed the key issues to the conflict. It was a political

settlement which was devoid of key aspects of human security. Communities affected were not consulted and their views were not taken aboard, rather the leadership assumed that their agreement would be fully embraced by everyone. It was a continuation of their “liberation heroism” in which they felt whatever agreed would be embraced by the people. The affected people did not come to terms with it but rather were subdued to avert further massacre. The CCPJ (1997: 3) note that:

One of the most painful aspects of the 1980s conflict for its victims is their perception that their plight is unacknowledged. Officially, the state continues to deny any serious culpability for events during that year, and refuses to allow open dialogue on the issue. In effect, there is a significant chunk of Zimbabwean history that is largely unknown, except to those who experienced it first-hand. All Zimbabweans, both present and future, should be allowed access to history (CCPJ, 1997: 3).

The closest that the leadership was to accept, and acknowledge the atrocities was during Nkomo’s burial in 1999 that Robert Mugabe described it as a moment of madness. This showed a basic lack of understanding of the key reconciliation program. The Unity Accord ceased hostilities but brought no peace; it left lasting memories which played into the future.

The Unity Accord has been ethnicised. It is somehow viewed with ethnic lens as people view it as Unity between the Ndebele and the Shona which is somehow misleading as the events leading to the conflict were not ethnic motivated but rather a culmination of long standing unresolved national differences. By viewing ethnicity as the cause of conflict it also gives credence to those who see the operation of the 5th Brigade as ethnic cleansing. The agreement falls short of the requirements of proper peace and national healing. Just like in 1980 when the reconciliation policy was pronounced, the Unity Accord left room for bitterness as it was a cover up for atrocities committed. The Chihambakwe Commission of Inquiry in Matabeleland and Midlands

(1984) atrocities' findings were never made public and people had to rely on the CCJP for findings. The Chihambakwe Commission was tasked by the Zimbabwean government to investigate reports of atrocities committed by the 5th Brigade in Matabeleland during the period 1982-1983; however, its findings were never made public. The government since then has ignored the Matabeleland issue despite demands from various groups.

The Unity Accord failed to live beyond Nkomo's death in 1999. The unity failed to materialise due to the politics of exclusion practised against the people of Matabeleland region. Sikhanyiso Ndlovu, a former senior ZAPU member commented that "if you neglect people on the basis that they are former Zapu then those people won't feel emotionally attached to unity" (Nehanda Radio, 23/12/2014). The CCJP and other groups:

have called for government accountability and an apology as steps towards healing and reconciling the bitterness that remains. These organisations conceived reparations, in the form of justice, compensation and rehabilitation for the victims of organised violence, to be fundamental to reconciliation. In the light of ZANU-PF's continuing refusal to acknowledge the atrocities its forces committed in Matabeleland, a broad spectrum of Zimbabweans believed the ruling party lost the moral authority it had enjoyed at independence to reconcile the nation. Notwithstanding the State's own problems with historical remembrance and accountability, the President continued throughout the 1990s to espouse the idea of reconciliation. It was a principle deployed to support ZANU-PF's political platform, and racial and regional minorities were cajoled and threatened to respond (Fisher, 2010: 52).

The government and ZANU-PF were quick to use the reconciliation and Unity Accord rhetoric to cow critical voices. They have used these policies to create a false sense of unity while violently silencing those opposed to their policies. The amnesty of 1980 and 1987 discouraged critical thinking on areas of disharmony. Broadly speaking the unity Accord was a minimalist approach focused on ending conflict rather than affording the people human security. It was elitist in orientation as

it looked at the causality of conflict as simply political differences between Nkomo and Mugabe, yet the problems were multi-layered.

The signing of the Unity Accord did not stop ZANU-PF's quest for a one-party unitary state. Rather the Constitutional Amendment Act (No.7) was drafted to create an executive presidency with Mugabe as President and Nkomo as one of two national Vice Presidents. One salutary effect of this rapprochement was that former PF-ZAPU leaders were now positioned to urge moderation against the push to create a *de jure* one-party state in Zimbabwe. In all this, ZANU-PF campaigned for a unitary state where differences would be articulated and presented in a one-party system. Raftopoulos (1991:18) commented that "in reality, the push for a one-party state in Zimbabwe, as in most other African states, has been an attempt to consolidate the domination of the State by sections of the petty-bourgeoisie, particularly in the face of growing opposition within the country." The main opponents to this were ZUM, student movements, civil society, the academia and labour. This was a method of keeping power while shutting opposition activities. Mugabe believed that the Unity Accord had united the nation from a polarised ethnic culture to a centrally united nation. There was no longer room for other political parties. Through Amendment No.7 Robert Mugabe became the Executive President while Nkomo and Muzenda were his two Vice Presidents. The post of President was given a variety of unlimited powers. He had become the supreme leader. Those who protested against the grotesque and obscene powers given to Mugabe were fired from ZANU-PF. Notable among those was the then Secretary General of ZANU-PF Edgar Tekere who formed his own party, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM). ZUM contested in the 1990 general elections which were marred by violence and voter intimidation. A senior official in ZUM, Patrick Kombayi, was short by state operatives who despite being convicted for the crime were pardoned and promoted by Mugabe. This clearly showed the triumph of violence over peace.

The constitutional amendment and the attempt to force a one-party ideology was a veritable move towards a one-party state. The ideology was enforced through violence and coercion of the citizenry. Brian Raftopoulos viewed this attempt as "the displacement of questions and alternatives to the dominant discourse" (Raftopoulos, 1991: 3). This increased authoritarianism especially in view of the worsening economic situation. One factor which can be attributed to the attempts at one-party state is that those that "have failed to carry out their major tasks of consolidating nation states, unifying the various social and political forces through democratic structures and an accountable state, and providing effective economic strategies for growth and redistribution" have attempted to create an imaginary unitary state through one-party state. Thus, the role of the State "changed from the prime mover of development to that of its main obstacle" (Doornbos 1990 in Raftopoulos, 1991: 4). Evidence has shown that despite spirited attempts by the elite to chart a free market economy, the state had become the major obstacle to free enterprise since one-party state ideology is construed as largely a commandist economic model.

The second decade of independence began with leaders pushing for a *de jure* one-party state, a move ultimately made necessary by ZANU-PF's easy *de facto* dominance at the polls. The regime grew increasingly intolerant of dissent and was ever more willing to use violence as a campaign tool. The party asserted supremacy over the state by politicizing the bureaucracy and army and turning a blind eye to rent-seeking.

Two general Parliamentary elections took place during this period, in 1990 and in 1995. The 1990 elections were important in that they were held against a rebel party of former ZANU-PF Secretary General Edgar Tekere who had protested against the one-party state imposed by Mugabe. Violence was instrumentally used to send a lesson to the renegades. Political violence was perpetrated against the opposition

supporters, and candidates. Patrick Kombayi a Gweru based ZUM heavy weight was injured in the 1990 general elections in an attempted assassination attempt which left him paralysed. The perpetrators of this violence were the Zanu-PF Government organised supporters. State agencies were also directly involved in the Kombayi case. The perpetrators were pardoned by Mugabe after the elections General Notice 424A of (1990), while in the 1995 elections the Clemency Order No. 1 of 1995 was used to free ZANU-PF members arrested for violence, especially the CIO. The violence was more in the form of politically motivated intimidation, assaults and destruction of property. Faced with deficits and debts, the government had little choice but to accept the IMF and World Bank sponsored reforms to structurally adjust Zimbabwe's ill-performing economy. Under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai, the ZCTU reacted with a series of strikes and stay aways and, in coalition with civic associations bent on constitutional reform, formed the MDC, an opposition party. For his part, Mugabe was only able to hold together his splintering ruling coalition by using unbudgeted state resources to buy off the militant war veterans. Mugabe continued to implement his structural adjustment policies. By 1997 pressure was coming from different angles as the economy continued to bite. Civil servants, war veterans, peasants, students, the unemployed all pressurised Mugabe for economic recovery. The War veterans were pacified by lump sum payment for participating in the war. This pacified them and ensured their continued support for ZANU-PF. These different groups by 1999 coalesced to form the MDC.

Since attainment of independence in 1980 Mugabe faced opposition from different quarters. The most notable at independence were ZANU Ndonga led by Ndabaningi Sithole the founding president of ZANU and the UANC led by the former Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Prime Minister Abel Muzorewa. While ZAPU was initially co-opted into the 'Unity Government' at independence in 1980, by 1983 it was effectively an opposition political party against ZANU. In 1990 Zimbabwe Unity

Movement (ZUM) led by the ZANU former Secretary General Edgar Tekere emerged opposing the ZANU-PF government. The main reason for all these political parties was a lack in human security. By the end of the 1990s, the scattered social interests that had contested the one-party state at the beginning of the decade began to crystallize into a nascent opposition coalition. Formal organizations in political society started to align themselves with this civic movement. For example, all but two opposition parties boycotted the 1995 elections because of the absence of electoral and constitutional reforms. The failure to institute and provide an inclusive government can be traced to the execution of the liberation struggle mainly in ZANLA led areas where violence against political opponents was instrumentalised. Mugabe's approach in the nationalist discourse since independence was shaped by the liberation values. His approach was enforced by the war veterans who deemed anyone opposed to Mugabe an enemy. The liberation discourse was reinvented to ensure regime survival. The regime survival was ensured at the expense of human security. In fact, it was a return to the old traditionalist security survival. In the 1990, 1995 elections, Edgar Tekere and Ndabaningi Sithole the ZANU Ndonga leader respectively faced hostilities and resistance.

The rise in human insecurity between 1990 and 1997 led to various groups, notably in civil society, to fight insecurity through constitutional challenges. The underlying argument by members of the civil society, academia and students was that the underlying human insecurity in Zimbabwe since independence was due to a defective constitution which served narrow political power interests than citizen interests. The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was formed by civil society organisations, labour and student unions to fight for constitutional change. For its part, the NCA effectively advocated a popular boycott of the government's official constitutional commission. While some citizens heeded this call, others felt emboldened to speak up to the government's handpicked commissioners by presenting their

own unvarnished views. As an independent civic organization, the NCA claimed to have no partisan agenda. The NCA on its part pressurised the government to draft a new constitution. Initially the government rejected the idea but in 1999 the government led Constitutional Commission was tasked with drafting a new constitution.

Thus, as the decade ended, an emergent popular movement born in civil society arose to challenge an entrenched ruling party whose mismanagement and corruption had called into question its right to rule. To offset the loss of political support, ZANU-PF tried to shore up its heartland among the Shona-speaking peasantry, for example by providing rural voters with food relief during droughts and distributing free seed and fertilizer afterwards. In addition, Rural District Councils were legally merged, thus transferring tax revenues from commercial to communal farming areas. At the same time, ZANU-PF began to reverse its relations with traditional chiefs and headmen by restoring some of their lost powers and including them in the party's patronage network. Formerly, the leading source of progressive ideas in Zimbabwe, the party elite thereby began to transform ZANU-PF into a force for social and political conservatism.

By the end of the 1990s, the ZANU-PF leadership coalition had become narrow and less cohesive. Few former PF-ZAPU members remained in Cabinet, rifts had begun to emerge among rivals to succeed Mugabe and parliamentary backbenchers were restive. The party's loss of political legitimacy was starkly illustrated by the 1996 presidential elections. Although Mugabe won over 90 percent of the vote, rival candidates withdrew because of irregularities and barely one-third of the registered electorate bothered to show up on polling day. In the next decade, violence and disorder would become the prime instruments of ZANU-PF rule, symbolized most clearly by chaotic invasions of commercial farmland. At the same time, an opposition

movement growing out of civil society offered a more orderly and constitutional vision of the future.

The food riots of 1998 were a momentous activity in the Zimbabwean history. Food riots can be defined as “a violent, collective unrest leading to a loss of control, bodily harm or damage to property, essentially motivated by a lack of food availability, accessibility or affordability, and which may have other underlying causes of discontent” (Berazneva and Lee, 2013: 29). The riots, looting and violence occurred as people were reeling from the devastating effects of ESAP which had led to high inflation, corruption, high demand for housing, war veterans’ compensation and the subsequent payments which were unbudgeted. People were generally disenchanted by ZANU-PF. A study commissioned by the government “indicated that 74% of Zimbabweans were poor, with 45% of Zimbabwean households living below the food poverty line. Food shortage was reported as the primary indicator of poverty, followed by shortages of clothing, lack of draught power and inability to send children to school” (ZIMRIGHT NGO FORUM, 1998: 10). Labour increasingly demanded constitutional reforms while the landless under Chief Svosve invaded white owned commercial farmers. War veterans became rebellious demanding compensation for their role in the armed struggle which Mugabe agreed to pay straining the fiscus. People in Chitungwiza and Harare protested by looting shops in townships and the city centres. The government used its police and military in beating, arresting and torturing people.

The heavy-handed response by the government to the food riots showed fear and panic. It can be argued that this was the first real challenge to Mugabe’s rule. Mugabe’s response resonates with *The Economist* (May 17, 2012) which stated that “from the start, food has played a bigger role in the upheavals than most people realize”. The violence meted out on culprits shows that he feared for regime survival

more than the interests of the people. After the people retreated, they coalesced to form the NCA and later the MDC. Mugabe resorted to violence against opponents. The food riots signified a real confrontation against Mugabe's confrontational politics. As Makumbe (2009) attests the food riots and the general economic decline culminated in the suspension of the rule of law to suppress opponents. To curtail the continued opposition due to worsening economic conditions "The rule of law was effectively suspended to enable the war veterans to harass, beat up, rape and even murder people who were perceived to be supporting opposition political parties, or resisting forcible land redistribution" (Makumbe, 2009: 11). What the country experienced between 2000 and 2017 was a consequence of these actions. The violence was an unprecedented show of force in which the Minister of Home Affairs Dumiso Dabengwa (ZIMRIGHT NGO FORUM, 1998: 10) stated "let no one tempt the police ... I want to warn the demonstrators who think they want to take to the streets to loot and commit acts which are in breach of the law that they stand a danger of being shot at by the police". Critics claimed that "the success of the demonstration indicates the anger of the people. It shows that they are no longer going to allow the Government to do whatever it wishes. The demonstrations indicate that people are far from being happy with the ruling party. We will see more of these (demonstrations) as the economic gravy train grinds to a halt" (ZIMRIGHT NGO FORUM, 1998: 10).

The chapter has furnished a comprehensive analysis of the development of violence in Zimbabwe. Violence practised after 1980 increased the level of human insecurity. The use of security services to intimidate opponents benefitted the Mugabe government and not the people. The denial and negation of basic rights in a way undermined development as Mugabe policies were state-centric and not individual-centric. The analysis concludes that violence in Zimbabwean politics was a result of the intensification of repression reminiscent of colonial

rule. The nature of Mugabe's rule entailed subjugation of the opponents in the economy, politics and the social life. Post-independent Zimbabwe failed to rein in the use of violence against opponents. In fact, violence became its default settings against opposition. Mugabe perfected the state machinery to his advantage. The Gukurahundi atrocities and the 1990 General Elections violence, reflects a systematic resort to violence. The next chapter will probe the historical background to the formation of the MDC.