

CHAPTER 5: THE FORMATION OF THE MDC AND THE RISE OF THE NONVIOLENCE IDEA

This chapter seeks to provide an historical overview of the circumstances around the formation of the MDC. It will articulate the political philosophy of the MDC, its key stakeholders and why it ended up preferring non-violent resistance as its political strategy. The chapter critically interrogates the MDC founding values and the discourse on nonviolent resistance. It analyses the founding principles of the party and how it sought to marry nonviolence and the violence espoused and practised by ZANU-PF. The chapter begins by analysing the National Peoples working convention which mapped the MDC political journey and the MDC policies which followed later.

From 26-28 February 1999, after a decade of clashes with the government, the leadership of the ZCTU with other civil society organisations, convened an all working people's conference in Chitungwiza which gave rise to the formation of the MDC. The result was the creation of the National Peoples Convention in May 1999 "mandated to map out strategies to protect workers from the economic hardships and put in place a strong, democratic popularly driven and organised movement which represented a broad spectrum of society" (Dansereau, 2003).

Forty popular groups and over 20 000 people witnessed the official launch of the MDC and its declaration to contest the 2000 parliamentary elections (*The Worker*, September 1999). The MDC claimed in Article 3.1 that "the MDC shall be a Social Democratic Party whose core values shall be solidarity, justice, equality, liberty, freedom, transparency, humble and obedient leadership and accountability". Article 4.8 states that the MDC has its roots in the working people of Zimbabwe. It recognises the role of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, (ZCTU), National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the

Church, Women's and Student movements in its formation (MDC Constitution, 2000: 4). The MDC while purporting to be a worker's party as it was led by workers' representatives was funded by the black petit-bourgeoisie and white elites, and international allies.

In 1999-2000 the government initiated the drafting in of a new constitution to replace the Lancaster House Constitution through a government sponsored Constitutional Commission. A massive campaign instigated by and comprising the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the MDC and the white Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) led to the defeat of the draft constitution at the polls, with Mugabe immediately accepting the result. But, within days, twelve war veterans occupied farms in Masvingo Province, proclaiming that the white farmers had connived to defeat the constitution in the referendum. The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) supported these occupations and called for further action as a way of demonstrating the need for land. When leaders of the war veterans association and the ruling party realised by the end of March that white farmers were actively campaigning for the MDC, and encouraging farm workers to do the same, farm occupations became more violent with the build-up to the political campaign for the June 2000 parliamentary elections (Moyo, 2001: 318). At the end, of the National Working People's Convention the members came up with various recommendations. These recommendations gave birth to the MDC. The preamble to the resolutions provide that:

AND WHEREAS the Convention noted the need and desire for forming a political movement that would seek to address the broad concerns of the Convention. AND WHEREAS it was subsequent to the Convention established through wide consultations throughout Zimbabwe that there is an overwhelming desire for the formation of a broad - based political party. AND WHEREAS a political Party known as the Movement for Democratic Change dedicated to the promotion and advancement of human rights and to setting up of a government based on the principles of freedom and good governance, was launched at Rufaro Stadium on the 11th of September 1999 (MDC CONSTITUTION, 2000: 3-4).

The members gathered for the national working convention set out the stage for the formation of the MDC as a broad movement of labour, workers, students and lawyers. This formulated the stage for its political birth struggle against ZANU-PF.

The rise of the MDC in 1999 is arguably one of the most important political landmark activities in the history of Zimbabwe. Its challenge to ZANU-PF hegemony has been profound and arguably changed the political landscape in Zimbabwe. While there has always been opposition political movement in Zimbabwe throughout independence, the MDC shook the stranglehold of ZANU-PF in politics especially in the urban areas where it constantly trounced ZANU-PF whenever there was an election. Years of ZANU-PF rule had produced nothing but socio-economic hardships as a result of gross economic mismanagement and misplaced priorities. On its part ZANU-PF blamed the West for creating and subsequently funding the MDC in an effort to effect regime change. The MDC and its members were ostracised and declared enemies of the state by the Mugabe government. The Commercial farmers immediately became victims and the land issue was reignited and became a political mantra, journalists in the private press were targeted and newspapers closed, the rural areas were cordoned off and there were threats to close western embassies. On the other hand, it is also argued that there was Western influence in the creation and/or funding of MDC. This created polarization in the country leading to widespread violence as there was a redefinition of patriots and puppets. The rise of MDC challenged ZANU-PF's leadership.

Several factors converged to influence the formation of the MDC and its political standing as an iconic movement towards the political hegemony of ZANU-PF. Its formation received widespread support throughout the length and breadth of the country shaking the ZANU-PF stranglehold of the political movement. While being officially

formed in 1999 through the Peoples Working Convention the seeds and signs were already there. Firstly, the seeds came unfulfilled promises of independence in land, jobs, repression, Gukurahundi atrocities in Matabeleland, the vagaries of the Structural Adjustment Programmes, attempts at creating a One-Party state, and the general economic meltdown. The general economic decline after 1991 SAPs and the subsequent crushing of the Zimbabwean Dollar on the now infamous Black Friday after the unsanctioned War Veterans compensation converged to unite people of all social, political and economic classes to come together against ZANU-PF. Its invincibility was now put to question, and it resorted to underhand tactics. The introduction of structural adjustment began the process of broad-based convergence of democratic forces to form a mass movement different from the previous political parties before it.

The formation of the MDC was as a result of an enmeshed confluence of factors, some of which dated back to pre-independence; the ZANU-PF government failed to address the systematic lingering problems after gaining power in 1980. The government also failed to address critical issues emergent in the independent era thus breeding a ground for opposition politics. ZANU-PF viewed the economic problems and some of its mistakes as immaterial to the formation and rise MDC. It can be argued that most ZANU-PF Members of Parliament and the national leadership began to view itself as the divinely appointed leadership of the country. They cared less about their respective constituencies and national development, and corruption deepened.

The MDC has adopted various Policy documents from inception to date. In 2000, 2005, 2008, 2013, 2014 and 2018 various policies were promulgated. The 2000 MDC constitution set the tone for the party to adopt a nonviolence principle. Article 4.4.3 of the constitution provides that “The MDC is against all forms of violence and does not believe in the use of violence as a way or means of attaining any political, social,

economic or religious objective” (MDC Constitution, 2000: 5). The MDC Policy document promulgates that the party recognised the values of the liberation struggle, the need for land reform and social justice in Zimbabwe. The MDC in 2008 stated that:

The M.D.C. has always recognized the need for land reform and has since its inception phase, called for reform and equity in land occupation and use...The M.D.C. will also establish a system of compensation for displaced farmers that will address their rights, make restitution for their losses, and ensure justice for those whose basic rights, including the right to safety and security and life, were violated. Those farmers who have been displaced and who no longer wish to resume production will be dealt with fairly and within the same framework as all other landowners...Potential claims for losses by displaced farmers are thought to exceed US\$ 8 billion and will, by the time the transition takes place, be backed by several local and international court cases (MDC Policy Document, 2008).

At its formation, the MDC received funding from USA, Britain, through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), and major commercial farmers which gave rise to the “regime change” label pasted on it by the ZANU-PF political leadership. Commercial farmers funded the MDC following the violent seizure of their farms by the war veterans. War veterans of the 2nd Chimurenga became the foot soldiers of ZANU-PF campaign.

State security agents became spectators in the ensuing violence. In many ways, contemporary Zimbabwe politics assumed a new trajectory after the February 2000 constitutional referendum when an alliance of diverse civil-society organizations including the ZCTU and its National Constitutional Assembly allies, defeated the government through their ‘Vote No’ campaign in the 2000 Constitutional referendum. It was the first referendum in the country’s history, and the first ever defeat of ZANU-PF in a national poll. The result sent shock waves through the ruling establishment and the looming June 2000 parliamentary elections precipitated a series of deeply destabilizing events including the farm invasion by veterans of the

liberation war of settler- owned commercial farms. Since then, state institutions have been dramatically restructured, and the militarization of society has altered the nature of both the ruling-class alliance within the political hierarchy and the terrain of civil-society activism. The state's onslaught on the MDC's structures, leadership, and rank and file did not eliminate the opposition, but severely constrained the party's capacities on the ground. Some commentators focus narrowly on leadership politics within the MDC and highlight significant dangers for popular constituencies in the MDC's apparent confusion over whether to advocate social democracy or neoliberalism, and internal divisions between competing blocs.

The MDC was formed as a broad-based consensus movement encompassing a variety of groups including business, students, workers, intellectuals, farmers and the general people namely the peasants, unemployed and the elderly. Article 3.4 clearly sets out the key stakeholders in the party as follows "the MDC believes in the principle of active civic participation in public affairs and shall, in pursuit of this principle, work with trade unions, business and employers, human rights organisations and other civic groups in the formulation of national policies" (MDC Constitution Article 3.4, 2000: 6). The MDC through article 4.8 asserts that it "recognises its roots in the working people of Zimbabwe and in particular recognises the role of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, (ZCTU) National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the Church, Women's and Student movements in its formation" MDC Constitution Article 3.4 (2000: 7). Provides:

The MDC shall recognise the sovereign equality of all countries and shall promote progressive forms of economic, social and political cooperation that advance national development goals. The MDC shall maintain the unity and integrity of Zimbabwe as a nation state and shall oppose any forms of tribalism and any attempt to divide the country on tribal or regional lines (MDC Constitution Article 3.4, 2000: 7).

The MDC therefore promised to form alliances with political organisations, or united or popular fronts. It also promised to join national or international organisations which share the same social democratic values with it.

The MDC viewed itself as a pro-poor political party whose core values were informed by social democracy, non-racial and non-sexist philosophy. It was formed as an inclusive party as reflected by its demographically representative inaugural leadership. The political philosophy was aptly captured in Article 4.3 which stated that “the MDC is against all forms of violence and does not believe in the use of violence as a way or means of attaining any political, social, economic or religious objective” (MDC Constitution, Article 3.4, 2000: 7). Democracy was to be the core value of the movement as it sought to entrench the people’s basic freedoms of speech, ideas, right to information and expression.

The MDC Goals were to create an inclusive and sustainable democracy which supports multiparty democracy to address the demands of justice in the country. The Goals can be summed up as follows:

1. A participatory democracy through constitutional and other democratic institutions.
2. A strong economy with market principles and state intervention strategies to promote economic and social justice.
3. A redistributive state that addresses social rights and development.

The MDC vision was to create a corruption free country to counter the widespread corruption and pervasive nepotism in the ZANU-PF government; they wanted to create an impunity free country and an equitable justice delivery system. In its vision, it sought to democratise the country by assigning powers to the 3 levers of the state which are Executive, Judiciary and the legislature at the same time respecting the

ethos of the liberation struggle and protecting human rights and the freedoms of press. In its Policy Document encapsulates the above as follows:

The MDC is fundamentally committed to the creation of a state that will consult all stakeholders on all aspects of the management of the country that affect them. It will hold itself accountable to the people at all times and will ensure that all elections are open to all who want to monitor them and witness the procedures and the outcome. We will ensure that Zimbabwe becomes a constitutional democracy in which the rule of law is applied fairly and objectively to all. We are committed to total transparency in leadership and will require all MDC leaders to declare their assets on a regular basis. Gender will be mainstreamed in all areas of the State and the government administration (MDC Policy Document, 2013: 2).

The MDC (2013: 3) is committed to the following key principles, an Executive that is fully accountable to the people and to Parliament, an Executive that is fully accountable to the people and to Parliament and a Constitution that fully recognises the rights of all Citizens including the right to dual citizenship. In the MDC policy document, it is highlighted that:

Constitutionalism and the respect of the rule of law were the fundamental principles of the party. The MDC also promised to prioritise economic development through a democratic devolved state which gives powers to provincial councils. The MDC also wanted to create structures for broad participation between labour and government. The party also claimed that it would transform the rural areas by initiating pro-poor policies and supporting rural enterprise and agriculture. In short, the MDC vision promised “a modern, healthy, functional, integrated democratic developmental State with a vibrant, socially just, green economy that takes pride at leaving no one behind (MDC Policy Document, 2013: 2).

The party also undertook to advance a violent free political terrain where there was virtual respect of the rule of law and disbanding the youth militias which were instruments of violence since independence. Emphasis was also put on a programme of national healing and integration and community socio-economic empowerment. The MDC

also prioritised the reform of the security sector to become constitutional and non-partisan in operation.

The MDC split several times due to several of reasons. The MDC split in 2005, 2014 and 2018. These splits were attributed to lack of constitutionalism and the use of violence within the party. The 2005 split was more acrimonious as it tore the basic fabric of the party. In 2005, “MDC youths camped out at Harvest House ... and then attacked people after they were fed ethnic propaganda about Welshman Ncube planning to take over the MDC” (Mushangwe, 2018: 16). The 2005 split followed a contentious vote over whether the party would participate in the newly reintroduced Senate. The Welshman Ncube group won the internal party vote to participate which was out rightly rejected by Tsvangirai effectively splitting the party. The 2014 split was engineered by the need for party renewal after the loss in the 2013 elections. Roy Bennet summed up the split as “Mr Tsvangirai has served two terms and he is completing a third. Deep introspection needs to be undertaken by our collective leadership, not for purposes of looking for scapegoats, but for our party to reinvigorate its leadership which reflects the will of the people. Regrettably, some do not wish the democratic will of the people” (ZDI, 2014: 4). The split in 2005 led to the emergence of two MDCs the MDC-T led by Tsvangirai and the MDC led by Welshman Ncube, the 2014 split led to the MDC T and the Renewal Democrats led by Tendai Biti which further split to Renewal Democrats and the Progressive Democratic Party. Thus by 2014 the MDC had morphed into five splinter groups. In the 2018 election the MDC-T split again into MDC Alliance led by Nelson Chamisa and the MDC T led by Thokozani Khupe. The common factors in the MDC splits were unconstitutionalism, factionalism, violence and poor performance in elections.

Violence within the MDC has been rampant against opposing factions. Since its formation the MDC has prided itself as a nonviolent party but

the youths within the party have been used against party leaders. It has been a culture that each party dispute has been settled 'politically' by the members of the youth movement. Makonye (2021) has outlined how the post 2005 MDC has been a haven of violence within. He points out that in 2005, 2018 and 2018 each time the party split violence has been used against the weaker factions. Firstly, intra MDC violence was launched against Welshman Ncube, Trudy Stevenson and others, then against Tendai Biti and members of the Renewal Democrats in 2014 and lastly against Thokozani Khupe in the fight for the control of the MDC-T after the deaths of Morgan Tsvangirai. In an interview with the *Sunday News*, Welshman Ncube former MDC Secretary General lamented that "if this man could do this now before he was in State House, what will he be like if he was in State House commanding the CIO, the police, and the army?" (Mpofu, 2005).

Tsvangirai often used party youths to settle political scores. Even where the MDC National Executive Council issued disciplinary measures suspending the youths involved in the violence Tsvangirai often redeployed them or simply ignored the recommendations as aptly pointed out by Coltart:

The senior member of staff dismissed by the National Council in its June 2005 meeting has been re-employed by the Tsvangirai faction; the youths responsible for the violence in Harvest House in September 2004 and May 2005 expelled from the party by the Management Committee (and endorsed by the National Council) have been re-employed by the Tsvangirai faction (Coltart, 2005a).

The above example exhibits the elements of mafia style organisational management. This was compounded by the godfather status given to Tsvangirai by his supporters. Thus, the national nonviolent values the party espoused were ignored by some members of the MDC. Several commissions of enquiry into MDC internal violence were set up but as pointed out by Welshman Ncube:

To date, we have had several commissions of enquiry into violence within the MDC dating back to 2001 when MDC MPs and activists, including Priscilla Misihairambwi, Gabriel Chaibva, Edwin Mushoriwa and Janah Ncube, were set upon by hired thugs during a Harare provincial meeting. We had another commission of enquiry into the attempted murder of the MDC's security director, Peter Guhu. Another enquiry related to an attack on other senior party officials, including the Bulilimamagwe MP, Moses Mzila Ndlovu. When the findings were revealed, the party expelled some of the youths involved but they were rehired by Tsvangirai (New African Magazine 2007).

This violence was also partly due to the personification of the MDC with Tsvangirai. In a study the "The Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) recorded a high number of intra-political party violence within the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) than in the ruling party ZANU-PF. Prospects of peaceful elections are not guaranteed as there are many tensions between members of the party" (EU 2018: 22).

The violence within the MDC was elite driven while the ZANU-PF violence against the MDC was targeted at the poor in society, those in rural areas and urban townships. The MDC created a party para military wing named the Vanguard. This wing became a party 'disciplinary' wing and a rival to the ZANU-PF National Youth Service. Its duty was to defend the party in principle but in practice it was used against opponents to Tsvangirai. Those who fell victim to it were Trudy Stevenson, Tendai Biti, Elton Mangoma and Thokozani Khupe. There were other silent victims of this group in the districts. The authoritarian nature of colonialism, liberation movements and post liberation ZANU-PF rule reproduced itself in the MDC.

The MDC Vanguard youths' movement operated outside the confines of the MDC party structures. Many in the party lamented the extent of the violence in the party even claiming that:

We have become so accustomed to violence being used as an acceptable political weapon that we have lost sight of the fact that the democratic world has moved on and that such methods are anathema. By a silent and insidious process of osmosis, we have absorbed this disease and tragically we do not understand the extent of the problem (Coltart, 2006a).

While it paled to the state sponsored ZANU-PF violence, the MDC violence became a bigger problem in the democratisation agenda and increased human insecurity to some extent.

The first test to ZANU-PF hegemony was the February 2000 referendum in which the civil society and the MDC campaigned for 'No Vote' against the constitutional commission inspired document. The instrumentalisation of power included the deployment of the security sector to discharge political roles in the state. The main motive of involving the security sector in important matters of the state was to ensure ZANU-PF's self-preservation. There was fear that:

Had ZANU-PF lost power in 2000, senior officials would probably have been held accountable for a range of unresolved issues such as the genocide in Matabeleland, key corruption scandals of the 1990s, and the looting of the War Victims' Fund. Senior officials therefore had a clear interest in retaining power which clearly influenced ZANU-PF's post-2000 strategies. The nature of the state changed considerably during the late 1990s with the co-option of the war veterans and the growing influence of an impatient and radical empowerment alliance (Selby, 2006: 4).

A referendum held in February 2000 led to an overwhelming defeat for the ruling party. Kagoro posits, 'it was a protest vote against the manner in which the constitution-making process had been carried out by the government', and 'an angry protest against the performance of the government and parlous state of the economy' (Kagoro, 2004: 249). This unprecedented defeat of the ruling party by an opposition party (which, according to ZANU-PF, was backed by white commercial farmers and the West) appeared to precipitate the largely state-

sponsored land invasions, political violence, institutional interference and economic decline that were to follow (Hammar, 2005: 4).

What is clear is that from 1997 the government became increasingly paranoid. The challenge to Mugabe by the war veterans rejuvenated the security sector into dabbling in political activities. Military officers were appointed in almost the key sectors of the economy. The war veterans and the youth league became the vanguards of the party. They mainly targeted MDC sympathisers. The aim of the party in securitising the state were probably regime survival to escape from possible prosecution for atrocities and criminal activities committed since independence. Makumbe (2003) drew parallels between the Mugabe government and the UDI government in terms of securitising the state and using the security sector as instruments of power retention.

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme carried out in early 2000 reflected the instrumentalisation of power by the Mugabe regime. The reform programme was carried out in disregard of all the basics of the rule of law. The police were bystanders in the violation of property rights while the war veterans and the youth militia were given free rein on the farms to loot property and displace both the farm owners and the farm workers. In a study carried out by the Research and Advocacy Unit (2010: 19) 4000 farm owners and 1,3 million farm workers were subjected to 8 years of political violence and intimidation and nearly 82297 violations were recorded. The violence was rather systematic in that most perpetrations were carried out during election time which shows that there was a systematic abuse of the farm workers for political gain. The official government position was that the programme was carried out in a peaceful and orderly manner, however events on the ground showed otherwise.

The government professed ignorance of the violence and claimed that if there was any it was carried out by unruly mobs. However, no action was taken by the police against the mobs. The judiciary was intimidated to give favourable judgements on violence related cases brought before them. Judges who were deemed enemies of the regime were hounded out of office, notably the then Chief Justice Anthony Gubbay who was fired for being anti-revolutionary. Court orders were often ignored and sometimes unenforceable. Murder, rape and torture were used to intimidate farm workers who were forced to contribute towards ZANU-PF activities. The war veterans and the youth militia were the major perpetrators of violence while the police and the army provided them with protection.

The government passed laws to support the invaders. Constitutional Amendment No. 17 and the Rural Land Occupiers Act (Protection from Eviction) (RAU, 2016: 36-37) closed the doors for farmers and farm workers to seek recourse from the courts. In fact, it legalised an illegality which showed the complicity of ZANU-PF in the violent invasion of white-owned farms. The Commercial Farmers Union was shell shocked by the callousness of the whole land reform initiative and the violence which followed. Jerry Grant (CFU Director) lamented that:

I'm shell shocked, I can't believe a government can behave in this manner... the word is out that this is punishment for whites rejecting the constitution... it is orchestrated at the highest level... there are government and party vehicles involved in delivering (the invaders)... The police are aware of this and they're still doing nothing about it. They've had an instruction from the top not to interfere. (Mail and Guardian, 2 March 2000).

Violence became a convenient instrument used by those who felt threatened politically to deal with their political opponents to achieve political ends. The MDC has performed fairly well in the elections that it has participated in since 2000 up to 2008 however in the elections

which followed it has declined. In the 2000 general elections the party nearly snatched victory from ZANU-PF. In the presidential elections of 2002, the MDC was defeated by ZANU-PF though it contested the results in the courts. In 2005, it lost the parliamentary elections to ZANU-PF but snatched the 2008 elections.

The year 2000 saw a multi-pronged approach to political opponents by the ruling party. The first victims of the violence were the farm owners and the farm workers. However, the approach to the June 2000 Parliamentary election worsened the political temperatures in the country. The strategy behind the land reform strategy was to weaken the MDC support base through intimidatory tactics. Mugabe labelled opponents of his land seizures enemies of the revolution and neo-imperial puppets of the West. The rural arrears were cordoned off by ruling party youths and the war veterans.

Mugabe issued threats to the MDC and the white community promising to deal with them with equal force and measure. He threatened that people “who try to cause disunity among our people must watch out because death will befall them” (*Daily News*, 17 March 2000). Other senior government officials such as Moven Mahachi the then Minister of Defence and Sydney Sekeramayi the then Minister of State Security promised witch hunts against MDC supporters. Mahachi went as far as claiming that as the defence minister he had the authority to kill using the army. Talent Mabika and Tichaona Chiminya senior officials in the MDC were also petrol bombed by known state security operatives. ZANU-PF would use the names of the two to threaten to unleash further violence against opponents. War Veterans leadership threatened to take up arms if the MDC was voted into office. The Amani Trust (2000: 20) notes that there were over “over 200,000 incidents of political violence in the first half of 2000 which forced the MDC to cease campaigning a few weeks before the election in over 20 constituencies, mainly rural ones.” The level of violence towards the

June 2000 election was one of the worst in the country's electoral history.

The violence was national and encompassed most rural areas of Zimbabwe. The urban centres were spared of pre-election violence. The post-election period saw the deployment of the police and army details to maintain order. Urban centres became the new targets of ZANU-PF violence for overwhelmingly voting for MDC. ZANU-PF leadership issued threats against members of the MDC and all those suspected of supporting it. Stan Mudenge had this to say to civil servants supporting the opposition: "you will lose your jobs if you support opposition political parties in the presidential election. As civil servants you have to be loyal to the government of the day. You can even be killed for supporting the opposition and no one would guarantee your safety" (*Daily News*, 18 July 2001). These threats were followed by violence and complete blackout of the rural arrears for opposition members.

In its policy document in 2000 the MDC proposed to "The creation of Defence and Security services that are fully accountable to the people and the civilian leadership of the nation" (MDC Policy Document 2000: 3). They further note that:

The mission of the MDC government is to transform the Defence Forces so that they are guided by the following: The Zimbabwe Defence Force shall have a primarily defensive orientation and posture. The Zimbabwe Defence Force shall be subordinate to the elected civilian authority. The Zimbabwe Defence Force shall respect human rights and democratic political process. The Zimbabwe Defence Force shall be non-partisan with respect to political parties. The Zimbabwe Defence Force shall endeavour to develop a non-racial, nonsexist and non-discriminatory institutional culture (MDC Policy document, 2000: 245).

These policy measures were meant to depoliticise the Zimbabwe military as evidenced by its close relations with the ZANU-PF party.

One of the most notable and remarkable statements was by the Army Commander Vitalis Zvinvashe in 2002 towards the country's Presidential elections. He remarked that they would not salute anyone without liberation war credentials. The statements were not new but rather a reaffirmation of a known, but a-never-before succinctly articulated position. Mugabe further used the army for the furtherance of his political interests. The army became a key cog in politics through the Joint Operations Command (JOC) whose "role was to advise the President on any issue having security implications, narrowly defined as anything that threatened ZANU-PF's tight grip on power. Closely related to this strategy was the move to ensure that several state institutions were under the control of former freedom fighters or military personnel" (Magure, 2007: 137). In addition to the militarisation of state institutions, the national youth service was revived. The youths were deployed to harass members of the opposition. Furthermore, the graduates of the programme were given preference for employment in the civil service. The invitation of the army in ZANU-PF politics became a common feature.

The MDC faced a two-pronged attack from ZANU-PF which inherently affected the democratic space. Firstly, there was violence in the countryside; secondly the ZANU-PF Party used its two thirds majority in parliament to further weaken the democratic space. ZANU-PF used the legal route to limit the operations of the opposition. Various laws were enacted which greatly affected the MDC and the political space. Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Public Order and Security Act (POSA), Political Parties (Finance) Act, Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), Non-Governmental Organisations Bill (2004) and Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act were all targeted at the opposition. AIPPA was basically used to close Independent newspapers such as the *Daily News*, *the Tribune*, *the Daily Mirror* and Joy TV after it had aired an interview with Morgan Tsvangirai. While this appeared to be a legal route to curtail and close rogue newspapers, the

net effect was that it send a chilling message to journalists to play to the demands of the regime than to oppose the government. AIPPA was used to curtail the freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Thus, the MDC solution was to enact “An Act of Parliament to provide for the establishment, organisation, training, conditions of service and other matters concerning the permanent force and part time reserve. The Zimbabwe Defence Force will refrain from furthering or prejudicing any party political interest and no member of Permanent Force shall hold office in any political party or organisation” (MDC Policy Document, 2000: 246). Thus, the MDC sought to professionalise the defence forces for it to uphold the constitution. These policies were meant to ensure a violence free politics and society. These policies also applied to the Police and the Central Intelligence organisation.

In 2002 the USA, Britain and the EU imposed sanctions on the ZANU-PF leadership, their businesses and immediate families. The USA enacted ZIDERA (2001) “... to support the people of Zimbabwe in their struggle to effect peaceful, democratic change, achieve broad-based and equitable economic growth, and restore the rule of law.” The sanctions were targeted at members of ZANU-PF; these were imposed as a result of gross Human rights violations. Targeted sanctions involve “... the selective use of sanction measures with the intention to minimize unintended negative humanitarian impact by specifically targeting single persons...” (Grebe, 2010: 4). “Targeted sanctions are thought to be useful in specifically identifying the culprits for punishment without necessarily dragging the innocent citizenry into bearing the unpleasant consequences of the sanctions regime” (Masaka, 2012: 54). The sanctions were used by ZANU-PF to drum up support. Mugabe sought support in and outside Zimbabwe focusing more on sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The immediate victims of the imposition of sanctions were the MDC and the white community in Zimbabwe. Mutumbaranzou & Guzura

argued “ZANU-PF declared a political war against the imagined and real supporters of the opposition MDC and in the process destroyed opposition structures that were in their formative stages of development” (Mutumburanzou & Guzura, 2011:346). As a result of the sanctions “the construction of the hegemonic project saw the emergence of revived nationalism delivered in a particularly virulent form with race as a key trope within the discourse” (Mutumburanzou & Guzura, 2011: 347). “The institutionalization of violence as an electoral tool, disregard of the rule of law, and rampant violations of human and people’s rights” (Masaka 2012: 56), became a common feature of ZANU-PF. *The Herald*, (7 July 2011) shows the government’s interpretation of the sanctions as a declaration of war on Zimbabweans. ZANU-PF, as a result declared war on citizens in defiance of Western machinations.

In 2005 Mugabe violently ‘removed’ MDC supporters in the urban areas through the draconian Operation Murambatsvina. It should be noted that from 2000-2005 the rural areas were the most affected by political violence, but in 2005 the government began a clean-up campaign in urban areas. This resulted in the destruction of houses and illegally built structures in urban areas. Operation Murambatsvina (Drive out the Filth) in May 2005 followed the poor showing of ZANU-PF in urban constituencies. “Operation Murambatsvina (Drive out the Filth) cost some 700,000 Zimbabweans their homes or livelihoods or both and otherwise affected nearly a fifth of the troubled country’s population” (African Report No.7, 2005:1). There was wanton destruction of homes without offering alternative settlements to people. Human Rights organisations were not allowed to assist those affected. The affected were forced into rural areas where they were victimised for being MDC members. It was reported that:

Zimbabwean authorities also engaged in a concerted effort to coerce the people displaced by the evictions to leave the cities and move to the rural areas. In different areas across the country Zimbabwe Republic Police threatened, harassed, or beat the Internally Displaced Persons, forcing them

to relocate to the rural areas where many have no homes or family and where social service provisions and economic opportunities are minimal. Fearing further displacement, many have resorted to hiding during the day and only returning to the places of their temporary residence at night, to avoid detection and harassment by the police. In addition, the government tried to compel the relocation by ensuring that international assistance is not provided to those who choose to stay in the urban areas, meanwhile using the food packages as an incentive for families to move to the villages (Human Rights Watch, 2005: 3).

This was one way in which the MDC and their supporters were violently attacked by the government through the using state institutions. Operation Murambatsvina was an attempt to frighten and scatter opposition supporters from towns and cities where they were concentrated.

The operation was mounted to break the MDC urban stronghold after years of ZANU-PF rejection. It was a continuation of the violence against citizens which had been on-going since colonialism. It was an attempt to weaken the MDC structures and punish those who supported it. The findings of the UN team led by Ana Tibaijuka aptly summarised the Operation as follows:

...the Zimbabwe government collectively mounted a brutal, ill managed campaign against its own citizens. Whatever its intent -- the urban clean-up claimed by authorities, or more sinister efforts to punish and break up the political opposition lest resentment explode into revolution - that campaign has exacerbated a desperate situation in a country already sliding downhill for a half-decade. (Africa Report No.7, 2005: 1).

The operation underscores the perpetuation of violence against the MDC. The MDC was powerless to act with equal measure opting for nonviolent resistance. The Minister of Local Government had also violated the constitution by firing an elected mayor and then imposing a Commission to run the affairs of Harare. The government also relied on Rhodesian Legislation to mount the clean-up campaign, in

particular, the Regional Town and Country Planning Act of 1976 that enforced inequalities by segregating against blacks. The use of such laws also shows the limitations of legal reform in independent Zimbabwe. It also gives credence to those who have argued that Mugabe left or refined some Rhodesian Legislation for use against opponents.

Zimbabwe held its harmonised elections in March 2008. These elections were held in a relatively free and fair environment. The electoral commission released the Parliamentary, council and senate results without much hassle except for a few constituencies which were delayed because of verifications. The results showed that ZANU-PF had lost the elections as it had 99 seats to MDC-T's 100 seats and MDC-M's 10 seats. The results of the presidential elections were released 6 weeks later. The Presidential results gave 47.9% of the vote to Morgan Tsvangirai, 43.2% to Mugabe, 8.3% to Makoni. Tsvangirai failed to garner the required 50% plus one to get outright victory. A runoff was therefore slated for 27 June 2008. The net effect of the delays was that ZANU-PF used the 6 weeks period to prepare for a bloody run off. The SADC mediation team led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki did not help matters as he claimed that there was no crisis in Zimbabwe. These pronouncements gave ZANU-PF a subtle legitimacy to attack MDC supporters throughout the country.

The conditions prevailing in the country leading to the runoff were a clear declaration of war on the people. ZANU-PF summoned all its security structures under its control on the people. The army, CIO, Police, war veterans, the youth militia and the traditional leaders were all used in its campaigns. The police, in many instances, refused to arrest perpetrators of violence. In most cases, MDC members who reported violations to the police were arrested for the crimes they reported, the traditional leaders were forced to hand over names of MDC supporters to the ZANU-PF leadership. Those accused of

supporting the MDC were taken to ZANU-PF bases where violence was inflicted on them. According to a Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) report:

[T]he current pattern of organized torture and violence being perpetrated by state agents in the rural areas of Zimbabwe is similar to that documented prior to the 2002 elections. However, the current violence is dramatically more intensive and unrestrained. The level of brutality and callousness exhibited by the perpetrators is unprecedented and the vicious and cowardly attacks by so called war veterans on women, children and the elderly shames the memory of all true heroes of the liberation struggle (ZADHR, 8 May 2008).

The attacks were not limited to MDC members but to people and government officials accused of having facilitated MDC victory in the harmonised elections. Even Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) officers were targeted and arrested for failing to discharge their duties. The targeted violence was such that no one was willing to work for ZEC in the runoff and those willing were mainly ZANU-PF supporters angling to give their party a clean sweep. MDC activists were abducted, beaten and tortured to death. The use of unmarked vehicles in the run up to the elections became a common feature. Prominent MDC leaders were hounded out of the country. Tsvangirai fled to Botswana, while Tendai Biti fled to South Africa and youth leaders such as Tonderai Ndira were abducted and tortured to death.

Compared to the Gukurahundi, the scale of violence during the 2008 run-off was different as it transcended ethnicity and covered the whole country, the intention was to maintain political power at all costs. The state media portrayed ZANU-PF members as the victims of large-scale MDC violence. The police “continued with their long established pattern of arresting, charging and denouncing the innocent” (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2008: 28). The MDC Headquarters, Harvest House, became a home of displaced persons. The displaced persons were not spared from the violence. Solidarity Peace Trust reported that “Over 200

displaced victims of abuse including women and children who had sought shelter at the MDC headquarters in Harare, were in late April arrested and accused of being responsible for burning down homesteads in rural areas” (Solidarity Peace Trust, 2008: 28).

Some observers recounted the horrors of seeing victims of violence. One observer recounted that “what we have heard and seen is shocking. We have heard horrific stories of extreme brutality and seen the victims. We have seen people with scars, cuts, gashes, bruises, lacerations and broken limbs, and bodies of those killed. It is a horrifying picture” (*Business Day*, 14/05/08). The violence was a well-orchestrated and choreographed decimation of the MDC leadership, structures and supporters. Teachers in rural areas were displaced and the schools were taken over by the ZANU-PF militia as bases for political orientation. The Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) reported that:

As the reports on teachers detailed, teachers were seen as prima facie supporters of parties in opposition to ZANU-PF, more especially because the independent trade union representing many teachers, the Progressive Teachers’ Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ), had frequently been in conflict with the government. Furthermore, teachers were usually involved as polling officers in elections, and hence their loyalty (or usually, their independence) became a major issue in elections. Finally, being the more educated members of local communities, their opinions could be very influential in any election (RAU, 2013: 14).

The attempt was to silence all possible areas of dissent. Opinion leaders in rural areas were targets of violence. Some accusations stemmed from longstanding differences which had nothing to do with politics.

The Human Rights NGO Forum (2007) recorded 60 politically motivated murders in the month of June 2008 alone, while the MDC claimed that lost a total of 200 members during the run off period. People in the streets were routinely stopped to recite ZANU-PF

slogans; travellers were stopped at checkpoints where ZANU-PF youth would openly attack those perceived of being MDC supporters. The new slogans chanted by ZANU-PF youth were inciting violence. The commonly used slogan during the campaigns was “27 June Win or War” or “27 June VaMugabe MuOffice (27 June everyone to vote for Mugabe)”. These slogans were an incitement for war and were followed by violence on opponents.

Because of the political polarisation and the continued violence against its supporters, the MDC was forced to withdraw from the runoff. Tsvangirai cited the uneven electoral and political field which had affected his campaign. He had failed to access the rural areas to campaign. Mugabe entered into a one-man election in which he claimed a landslide victory. The international community failed to recognise his victory. The various observer reports claimed that the elections were a sham and failed to meet the minimum requirements of electoral practice. The SADC report found that there was:

politically motivated violence resulting in loss of life, damage to property, and serious injuries sustained and hindering political activities... disruption of campaigning of the opposition party and the regrettable inaction of the law enforcement agencies... did not represent the will of the people of Zimbabwe (SADC Observer Report, 30/08/2008).

Other observers’ reports from the Pan African Parliament and AU condemned the election outrightly because of the violence and the higher levels of intimidation and coercion. They questioned the impartiality of ZEC in the whole election.

After being heavily criticised for the manner the runoff was conducted, ZANU-PF changed the tactic from physical violence to structural violence. Defining structural violence, Lee avers, "it refers to the avoidable limitations society places on groups of people that constrain them from achieving the quality of life that would have otherwise been possible. These limitations... could be political, economic, religious,

cultural, or legal in nature and usually originate in institutions that have authority over particular subjects" Lee (2016: 109). It is, 'the disabilities, disparities, and even deaths that result when systems, institutions, or policies meet some people's needs and rights at the expense of others' Schirch (2004: 22). This form of violence has been described by Galtung as referring to (1969:168) "a form of violence wherein some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs". He goes on to say 'violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisation is below their potential realisation' Galtung (1969;68). See figure 5.1 below

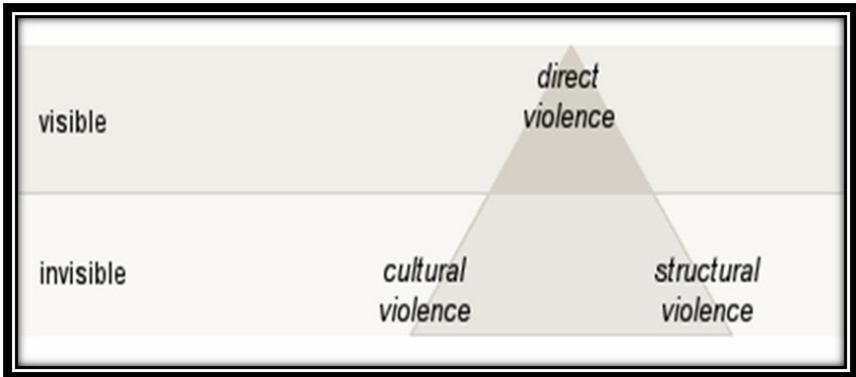


Figure 5.1 Galtung's Violence Model (*Galtung's Triangle of Violence Model, 2004*).

The above depicts shows the mutation of ZANU-PF violence after the 2008 debacle. From 2008, the shift was more on structural violence where the ZANU-PF psychologically threatened the electorate through subtle means. The most common way to cow the electorate was through denial of food hand-outs on perceived supporters of the opposition. In some cases, village heads were used to jot down the names of those who supported the opposition. This form of violence permeated societal structures. As succinctly put by Galtung (1969: 170):

The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal and consequently as unequal life chances. Resources are unevenly distributed, as when income distributions are heavily skewed, literacy/education unevenly distributed, medical services existent in some districts and for some groups only, and so on. Above all, the power to decide over the distribution of resources is unevenly distributed. The situation is aggravated further if the person's low on income is also low in education, low on health, and low on power – as is frequently the case because these rank dimensions tend to be heavily correlated due to the way they are tied together in the social structure.

The ZANU-PF government from 2009 deliberately employed tactics to frustrate Zimbabweans in economic, political and social spheres. The 2013 elections and the 2018 elections were relatively free and fair to the observers. However, within the country, structural violence was inherent.

Election observers for the 2013 and 2018 elections focused on direct violence. This was informed by previous experiences in Zimbabwe from 2000-2008 when ZANU-PF used direct violence against MDC supporters. They focused on direct violence because it is “the most obvious and overt form of violence perpetuated by one or more disputants directly upon those with whom they are in conflict” (Christie *et al.*, 2001: 12). The period after the 2008 elections was one in which legal instruments were used against the opponents of the regime. Various legislations were operationalized against MDC supporters mainly for undermining the authority of the president. More time was spent in the courts as MDC members were accused of various criminal activities. Victims of organised violence had limited opportunities to seek redress in courts. Legislations such as the “the State Liabilities Act Chapter (8.14) that does not permit the attachment of state property in execution of a court judgment” was used to avoid paying compensation in instances of state litigation. This exclusion from government-initiated programs and the protection of state property against court judgements rendered the judiciary powerless to

enforce judgements. Court judgements against the state institutions which were used to advance ZANU-PF interests became academic judgements. “For Zimbabwe, the wider context of the socio-political economy has been the key to determining the nature of structural and personal expressions of violence in which vulnerability and powerlessness of the general public has been evident” (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 2014:16).

The 2013 and the 2018 elections were managed and run by the military on behalf of ZANU-PF. After the 2008 elections, the army was neck deep in ZANU-PF factional politics therefore they were protecting their interests and the interests of their candidate. The Zimbabwe Democracy Institute in its 2018 report advanced the thesis that:

During the 2018 election period, there happened numerous incidents that demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between ZANU-PF and ZEC mounting suspicion within citizens that later broke out into post-election violence. This paper abridges these incidents supporting its main thesis into three clusters of evidence namely: (i) mutually beneficial defensive proclivities; (ii) sacrificial negation of constitutional obligations to donate victory to ZANU-PF and; (iii) employment and/or appointment of ZANU-PF supporters and military personnel to manage the election. (ZDI, 2018: 4).

This probably explains the use of live ammunitions against MDC supporters on 1 August 2018. The conflation of the civil-military relations structurally affected the MDC in challenging the ZEC decisions in court. The appointment of the ZEC acting CEO who was a serving army officer and presided over the shambolic 2008 elections drained the people’s confidence in the electoral body. “Where military elites are involved, unorthodox politics have been practiced. More importantly, blatant human rights violations and electoral violence becomes the common practice in the electoral process” (ZDI, 2018: 7). 2013-2018 was a period of unorthodox politics in Zimbabwe. In all the electoral malpractices and the violence before and after elections, ZEC has been a spoiler because of its bias and lack of goodwill to attain free

and fair elections. The spoiler attitude has led to both direct and structural violence.

This chapter has comprehensively traced the origins of the MDC within the context of political violence and repression. It critically traced the MDC's founding values since its formation and whether the values have been adhered to. Since its inception, the MDC has advocated for democracy and human rights as its trump card. However, the party has failed in internal democracy tests. It has been found wanting in the respect of constitutionalism and divergent opinion. The party members have resorted to violence as a political normative value and ideology against each other while preaching nonviolence externally. The party has also been a victim of violence from state institutions which are aligned to the ruling party. The next chapter will critically examine the methods used by MDC counter violence against its leadership and members.