

A Comparative Study of the Nexus between Modes of Liberation and Regime Survival: The Case of Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

Regime change politics has dominated political discourse in Southern Africa in the neo-liberal era. It has mainly been characterized by regime change agendas hatched and championed by neo-liberal forces and domestic actors seeking to replace southern African revolutionary nationalist governments with pro-western democratic governments. This paper is a theoretical analysis of the politics of regime change in post-colonial Zambia and Zimbabwe. The paper explores the downfall of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) regime in Zambia and the persistence of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) regime in Zimbabwe. While acknowledging that a multiplicity of factors influenced regime change politics in both Zambia and Zimbabwe, the study argues that the demise of the UNIP regime and the survival of the ZANU PF regime are rooted in their revolutionary pasts. The former was a pure political movement that achieved independence through political struggle while the latter was a politico-military movement that obtained independence through armed struggle. This difference in identity and mode of attaining independence shaped and influenced the manner in which the movements responded to regime change agendas.

Key words: Regime Change, UNIP, ZANU PF, Regime Survival, Liberation Movements

Introduction

The independence of Zambia in 1964 and Zimbabwe in 1980 paved the way for the ascent of the UNIP and the ZANU PF regimes respectively. The new sovereign states experienced periods of robust economic growth but within a decade per capita income started to fall. For a while both

governments, which had adopted authoritarian modes of governance and emphasised state controls in both resource allocation and investment could not resist international finance. They adopted the IMF and World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes which became a pathway to a host of socio-economic and political problems that were to visit the countries and threaten regime security. As a result of a combination of external shocks and domestic policy failures in 1991 the UNIP regime was swept from power in Zambia. In Zimbabwe, thirteen years into the new millennium the ZANU PF regime persists despite experiencing almost similar external and internal shocks and stresses from the mid-1990s. This presents contrasting fortunes for two of some of Southern Africa's post revolutionary movements.

This paper explains why the UNIP regime fell from power while the ZANU PF regime survived regime change agendas. It begins by giving a brief historical background on the origins of both regimes. Thereafter the discourse explains the contribution of the liberation struggle to the survival of the ZANU PF regime and how the absence of armed struggle accounts for the demise of the UNIP regime. The study acknowledges that a multiplicity of factors explain the demise of the UNIP regime and persistence of the ZANU PF regime.

It however elects to focus on the modes of liberation as it perceives them as central to change and continuity in post-liberation Southern Africa.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

Calvert (1987) refers to a regime as the name usually given to a government or sequence of governments in which power remains essentially in the hands of the same social group. To Fishman (2001) a regime is the formal and informal organization of the centre of political power, that includes the state's institutions, administrative structures, bureaucracy and other elements. This definition aptly captures the idea of a regime as the core of political authority. It can be in the form of a set of political structures, or set of rulers or even a specific ruler within a political system.

It is important to make a distinction between regime, state and government. The state should be perceived as an inclusive concept that covers all aspects of policy-making and enforcement of legal sanctions. According to the Montevideo Convention of 1933 a state should possess the following qualifications: a permanent population; a defined territory; government; and capacity to enter into relations with the other states. The government is simply the

agency through which the state acts in the political community. A regime is more permanent than a government but less permanent than the state. Governments succeed one another and regimes come and go but the state endures (Lawson 1993).

Regime change should therefore be perceived as a change in or abandonment of the principles and norms governing the nature of the regime while regime survival should be viewed as the persistence of the same. In a regime, the hegemony or dominant power sets up a hegemonic system that determines the basic principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures of the system. The strength and prestige of the dominant power and the hegemonic system established play a crucial role in the persistence or change of a regime. Generally, for a political regime to survive, it needs to either have a strong mandate from its people, or a strong military might to suppress dissent from its populace or external forces. Political regimes that fail to have one or both of these eventually give way to new political regimes.

Gramsci's theory of hegemony is employed to explain regime change and survival in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Gramsci defines hegemony as the ability of a social group to

direct society both politically and morally. The hegemonic group acquires authority through the intellectual, moral, and cultural persuasion or consent of the governed population without applying violent, political or economic means of coercion. Nevertheless, coercion is always latently used in support of its hegemony. In order to become a hegemon, a group must unite the features of coercion and consent through the notion of a 'dual perspective' (Iseri, 2007:2).

Gramsci argues that a social group, which intends to become the hegemon or the leader, can either use the means of coercion or the means of consent by persuading society to accept and assimilate the norms and values of its own prevailing world-view. However, coercion does not always mean domination, but may equally mean consent or the acceptance of the hegemon's leadership (ibid). The paper argues that the ZANU PF regime in Zimbabwe and the UNIP regime in Zambia and groups opposed to them sought to dominate and exert control over the citizenry either coercively or consensually. Regime change agendas are viewed by the paper as manifestations of hegemonic struggles.

Creation of the UNIP and ZANU PF Regimes

For an understanding of the origins of the UNIP and ZANU PF regimes in Zambia and Zimbabwe respectively it is important to look back in history. The discovery of minerals in South Africa in the 1890s made British pioneers believe that richer mineral deposits could be found beyond the Limpopo and Zambezi and thus colonised Zimbabwe in 1890 and Zambia in 1889. When mineral resources were not initially found in abundance the settlers decided to inhabit the land and farm the rich soils of the land that they came to refer to as northern Rhodesia and southern Rhodesia. In these territories the British established brutal white minority colonial administrations characterised by the exploitation of Africans.

After the Second World War African nationalism became invigorated, there was an upsurge in resistance to white minority-rule which led to the formation of political parties in Northern and Southern Rhodesia. In the 1950s the Federation of African Welfare Societies in northern Rhodesia metamorphosed into the African National Congress (ANC) under the leadership of Mainza Chona, Harry Nkumbula and Kenneth Kaunda among others. This was the first African political party

that challenged white colonial domination in Zambia. Nkumbula soon took over leadership of the ANC but, a major split occurred within the main nationalist movement resulting in one faction being led by Kaunda and the other by Nkumbula. In 1961, Kaunda was jailed for leading violent street protests and when he emerged from prison he was a national hero and became leader of a new political movement, the United National Independence Party (UNIP). In October 1964, Britain organised independence elections which UNIP resoundingly won and power was peacefully transferred to Kaunda who became prime minister (Chikulo and Sichone, 1996).

In Zimbabwe the 1950s and 1960s became a period of mass mobilization beginning with the formation of the Southern Rhodesia African Nationalist Congress (SRANC) and ending with ZANU which was formed in 1963 (Bhebe:1989). The SRANC was replaced by the National Democratic Party (NDP) in 1960. The NDP was militant. It engaged in civil disobedience and demonstrations resulting in a government ban on December 8 1961. By 1962 the NDP had been reconstituted under the name Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) amongst its membership were Joshua Nkomo,

Robert Mugabe and Ndabaningi Sithole. Ideological and tribal differences within ZAPU led to its split which resulted in the formation of ZANU in 1963 (Bhebe: 1989).

In November 1965, Ian Smith's Rhodesia Front party unilaterally declared independence (UDI) from Britain in a bid to prevent regime change. According to Smith (2001:65) Rhodesia was no longer responsible to Britain the colonial power with ultimate legislative responsibility for Rhodesia. The new regime went on to introduce a new system of government likened to an extension of apartheid system of South Africa. The rebellion against British rule set the stage for conflict between Africans nationalists and the white minority government.

The situation in southern Rhodesia was different to that in northern Rhodesia where the small white population was insignificant to rebel against British rule. This permitted African nationalists to pursue independence through the channels of the constitution rather than through the barrel of the gun in contrast to movements in southern Rhodesia. In order to push the British to the negotiating table African nationalist movements in northern Rhodesia engaged in civil rights protest with sit-ins and demonstrations, strikes and other forms of civil disobedience.

These actions opened the way for negotiations between African nationalists and the British government that eventually led to independence being granted to Zambia under UNIP regime in 1964. Strategies employed by African nationalists in northern Rhodesia did not succeed when they were employed by southern Rhodesia's African nationalists. Frustrated by the intransigence of the Smith regime the major nationalist political parties in southern Rhodesia resolved to engage in armed struggle after realising that the white minority regime was not interested in African independence especially in the wake of UDI. This forced nationalist movements to mutate into politico-military movements. Out of the political party the Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union (ZAPU) a military wing the Zimbabwe Peoples' Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) was born and out of ZANU a military wing the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) was created. For thirteen years the two parties fought the Rhodesia Front government until a cease fire was declared at Lancaster, London in 1979. The talks in London paved the way for general elections in 1980 in which Mugabe emerged victorious giving birth to the ZANU PF regime in Zimbabwe.

One notes that different liberation methods were practiced in each

country to achieve independence. From the onset in Zambian nationalism, a policy of non-violence was implemented. While not always followed precisely, the level of violence never reached even a tenth of what occurred in Rhodesia. UNIP and Kaunda relied on protest and the eventual intervention of the British Colonial Office when it came to achieving their aims of majority rule. ZANU and ZAPU did not have that luxury when confronted by the intransigent settler state in Rhodesia. Only after a long and bloody struggle did the Smith's white minority regime give in to international and internal pressure to negotiate the Rhodesian Front party out of power.

Change in Zambia and Survival in Zimbabwe

ZANU PF has survived regime change owing to the close relationship that exists between it and the security sector - the army, air force, police, secret service and war veterans while UNIP fell because of the weak bond that existed between UNIP and security forces. Raftopoulos (2006) states that in the integration of ZIPRA, ZANLA and the Rhodesian Army to form the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), ZANU PF took advantage of flaws in the integration system to put forward its factional forces as

the national force. ZANU PF therefore transformed the security sector and virtually turned it into an extension of their security arm. As a creation of ZANU PF the army has at crucial times thrown its weight behind the ZANU PF and ensured its survival.

The army that Zambia inherited at independence in 1964 was basically a part of the British Army. After independence UNIP made strides towards the Zambianisation of the military through the recruitment of more Africans and their elevation to senior positions in the army. Despite this the army essentially continued to be modelled along British military lines of administration and remained largely detached from UNIP. UNIP did not fight a war of liberation, because of this it was not able to win the hearts and minds of the civilian population in the same fashion that ZANU PF managed to win them in Zimbabwe. The fact that no liberation war was fought in Zambia robbed UNIP nationalists of an opportunity to bond with the army and to look to it for salvation in critical times. The Zambian army operated professionally and remained shielded from any partisan politics which explains why it did not lift a finger to save Kaunda's regime when it lost to the MMD when multi-party politics was reintroduced.

During the liberation war ZANU PF's political arm and military wing worked closely to apply pressure on Smith's regime. The intimate relationship between the military wing and the political arm of the liberation struggle was not broken with independence. The security sector- formerly military wing - has been highly interwoven in the political structure of the state. A number of security personnel have served at party and government level. Some have been members of the party's Central Committee and Politburo while some were even appointed to political and governmental positions, such as provincial governors, cabinet ministers and diplomats. Apparently, while in these posts the officials have put ZANU PF interests ahead of state interests.

According to Muzondidya (2009) the military and other state security organs increased their encroachment into civilian space from 1980 onwards and by the time of the formation of the government at the beginning of 2009, the Zimbabwe military had come to direct the affairs of both the state and government. For instance, the government in 2005 established the National Security Council to oversee the economy. The Council, although chaired by the President himself and included his two vice-presidents and the governor of the

Reserve Bank, was dominated by officers from the army, the air force, the police and intelligence. Muzondidya (2009) further reveals that nine departments were created by the council to manage all sectors of the economy therefore converting the Council into a *de facto* cabinet.

Security forces through an elaborate patronage system own some of Zimbabwe's important means of production like farms and mines. As an important interest group in the political and economic governance of the country the security sector has tended to defend the ZANU PF regime. This is because in the event that ZANU PF is ejected from power it is likely that new political structures may have a destabilising effect on their political and economic power. Through the patronage system ZANU PF also managed to keep the army leadership loyal and close to them by making them beneficiaries of the lucrative mining contracts and beneficiaries of the land reform programme.

The situation between the military and the UNIP regime in the face of economic challenges at the end of the eighties decade militated against UNIP's ability to reward the security sector and other officials around it. This compromised the efficiency and strength of UNIP that had since independence depended on a functional patronage system for

survival. This perhaps explains why Kaunda partially blamed UNIP's electoral loss on civil servants that he accused of conniving with the Movement for Multi-party Democracy to rig the 1991 elections. For survival, the ZANU PF regime has heavily relied on the security structures to mobilise support, campaign and organise elections. Military and para-military units have been particularly integral to ZANU PF's electoral successes in the new millennium. The military launched Operation *Makavhotera Papi* (Where did you put your X) to reverse ZANU PF's March 2008 first round presidential election defeat to the MDC. The campaign involved the intimidation of the rural population and the unleashing of violence on opposition supporters in the June 2008 presidential run-off elections. Coercive tactics originating from its liberation legacy such as re-education camps, propaganda bombardment, and all-night *pungwes* were revived. The operation led to the withdrawal of the MDC presidential candidate from the run-off race paving the way for Mugabe to emerge victorious with 85% of the vote and therefore ensuring the survival of the ZANU PF regime. In the July 2013 elections it is alleged that ZANU PF staffed the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission with former military personnel and members of the secret service sympathetic to ZANU PF.

The creation of the Zambian Army did not involve the integration of an African army to the colonial national army as Zambian independence was not obtained through a guerrilla armed struggle like was the case in Zimbabwe. Although the Zambian Army was also interwoven into Zambian politics, the army remained generally neutral and professional in the performance of duty and displayed commitment to democratic ideals. It did not stand in the way of democracy and peaceful transition from UNIP rule to MMD rule when Kaunda was defeated by Chiluba in the 1991 elections. The army was a product of independence and not the nationalist revolution and therefore did not share the same nationalist revolutionary history, goals, vision and identity with UNIP.

Kabwe (1995) points out that the commanders of the armed forces did not interfere in political processes. They were pleased with the fact that Kaunda was gracefully willing to cede power. The commander of the Zambian National Army had the following to say "Zambia will forever remain a proud nation because of Kaunda's exemplary personal conduct and untiring efforts to improve the dignity and welfare of mankind" (Kabwe 1997). This is in contrast to Zimbabwean army commanders and politicians who declared that the "bullet was mightier

than the pen" implying that the military would not accept an MDC electoral victory as its leader Tsvangirai had not participated in the war of liberation.

Furthermore, statements by the service chiefs on the eve of elections in the new millennium stating that they would not accept any president without liberation war credentials was a tacit way of saying that they would not embrace any candidate other than Mugabe. The late Commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces General Vitalis Zvinavashe in 2002 issued a threat of a military coup in the event of an MDC victory:

Let it be known that the highest office in the land is a straitjacket whose occupant is expected to observe the objectives of the liberation struggle. We will, therefore, not accept, let alone support or salute anyone, with a different agenda that threatens the very existence of our sovereignty, our country and our people (Moss and Patrick: 2006).

This apparently had the effect of demoralising and mortifying the electorate who probably so no need to participate in an election that securocrats could determine. Moreover, ZANU PF aligned war

veterans have promised a return to the bush in the event of a ZANU PF loss to the MDC. This threat of war largely swayed the rural population still haunted by horrific memories of the liberation war into voting for ZANU PF and peace.

The UNIP regime was led by Kaunda a veteran nationalist of the independence struggle and founding father of the state of Zambia. His regime was overthrown because economic crisis diminished his capacity to remain popular. The patronage system that Kaunda had relied was also corroded by economic vicissitudes that visited his country when the country's main export copper fell on the world market and SAPs introduced to alleviate the dire economic situation only served to worsen it. This weakened the backbone of the UNIP regime paving the way for regime change.

The ZANU PF regime is led by a veteran of the liberation struggle. Despite political and economic crisis Mugabe has used his unquestionable liberation war credentials to remain popular and remain in power well into the new millennium. During the liberation war Mugabe identified with leading Shona spirit mediums like Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi, and Chaminuka to add religious sacredness to his leadership and the liberation mission of ZANU PF. This

strategy endeared ZANU PF more to the peasants who still strongly believe in the power of traditional African religion with its oracular shrines. Thus, by identifying with the conservative and traditionalist rural folk Mugabe was able to garner important support from a demographically significant constituency in Zimbabwe and ensure the persistence of his regime. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) in the areas where ZANU PF's military wing ZANLA operated the population was mentally captured by guerrilla propaganda during night vigils (*pungwes*). These *pungwes* left peasants with a very deep memory of the liberation struggle. In the 2013 elections ZANU PF revived the idea of *pungwes* and managed to recapture the minds and hearts of the rural folk which perhaps explains the huge support it received from rural Zimbabwe during the elections which enabled it to resist regime change. To underline the importance of the military to ZANU PF, Mugabe during the lifespan of the Government of National Unity (2009-2013) rejected calls to reform the security sector as this would have eroded his regime's power base.

In sustaining itself in power ZANU PF has used various strategies amongst them nationalist rhetoric based on its role in the war of liberation and independence thereby

gaining the support of not only of the majority black Zimbabweans, but also from many leaders in developing countries. Bond and Manyanya (2003) concur that Mugabe reacted to the threat of the MDC and the British by reviving its dormant leftist rhetoric. Mugabe's rhetoric touched on emotive issues that appealed to the Zimbabwean population such as projecting land and liberation war atrocities committed by whites as an historic injustice.

Regime change was made possible in Zambia because Kaunda and his right-hand men were fatigued and lacked the fighting spirit. According to Chikulo and Sichone (1996) many of Kaunda's fellow nationalists were now old men who wanted to retire from politics peacefully and they lacked the soldiers' 'never -say- die attitude' that could perhaps have been cultivated had UNIP been involved in armed struggle. These men were different from Mugabe's nationalist colleagues, hardened veterans of the liberation struggle who were martial and war like. They were of the conviction that regime change agents were seeking the re-colonisation of the country. These men reactivated their liberation war machinery to defend the ZANU PF government from falling into what they believed were imperialist hands. Having lost the first round of the March 2008 presidential elections the nationalist

apparently sanctioned the use of violence to win the June 2008 election run-off. These differences in attitude between UNIP and ZANU PF old guard perhaps explains why UNIP collapsed and ZANU PF survived.

Under pressure from internal and external opponents Kaunda opened up democratic space he ended the state of emergency that had been in place since 1965. He also granted greater liberties to civil society and opened the door for a multi-party political system in 1990 yet it was in order not to lose power that UNIP had imposed one party participatory democracy in 1972. This contrasts with ZANU PF which closed democratic spaces and moved towards a strong centralised government in the face of regime change. It passed legislation such as Public Order Security Act (POSA). This ACT provided the state with immense repressive capacity that encouraged it to use authoritarian solutions to political and social problems. POSA curtailed the people's freedoms and blunted the activities of opposition groups. Under POSA civil society meetings were categorized as political gatherings making it difficult for civil society to make a big impact on the way people voted. It became difficult to campaign for the opposition owing to the subjective interpretation of the law by partisan security forces thus lending ZANU PF an advantage in election campaigns.

Food riots in July 1991 in Zambia forced the government to decontrol maize prices forcing the UNIP government to restore subsidies and cave in to a host of opposition demands that weakened Kaunda's authority. This victory by the population over the government revealed the regimes weakness in the face of mass protests. In Zimbabwe in 1998 food riots in Harare and Chitungwiza were brutally dealt with by the military, thus sending a strong message to the population that the ZANU PF regime would not curve in to threats and lawlessness. The heavy handed manner in which the government suppressed food protests killed any future ideas of rebellion by the Zimbabwean population against the state.

It is also important to note that the survival of the ZANU PF regime and the collapse of the UNIP regime can be explained by the philosophies adopted by the two parties. The philosophies can be traced to the manner in which struggles for independence were prosecuted. UNIP espoused humanism a nationalist-socialist philosophy advanced by Kaunda that believed in human goodness mutual aid, trust and loyalty to the community predicated on basic African value systems under the direction of centralised state largely because the struggle for independence was not

characterised by much violence allowing humanistic avenues of attaining independence to be pursued. ZANU PF has espoused Mugabeism, (Ndlovu-Gatsheni: 2009) which is a confrontational pan-African redemptive ideology opposed to all forms of imperialism and colonialism and dedicated to a radical redistributive project predicated on redress of colonial injustices. This philosophy was nurtured by the experiences of the war of Chimurenga which was characterized by violence, untold suffering and the loss of over 30 000 lives over a 13 year period (Moller: 2001). Mugabeism has found resonance not only among the suffering masses of Zimbabwe experiencing deprivation owing to the colonial legacy but also among oppressed people of the Third World who view development challenges as embedded in unequal relations between the North and the South. These constituencies have given massive support to the ZANU PF regime therefore enabling it to resist regime change.

Conclusion

The discourse has revealed that on the one hand UNIP was a pure political movement that achieved independence through political struggle which did not permit it to establish intimate relations with the

military thereby making it vulnerable to regime change. On the other hand, ZANU PF was a politico-military movement that obtained independence through armed struggle which allowed it to establish a strong bond with the military which has been crucial to its survival. This difference in identity and mode of attaining independence shaped and influenced the fortunes of the two parties and the regimes they established in the face of regime change agendas. ZANU PF's experience with war and UNIP's lack of it explains the survival of the ZANU PF regime and the demise of the UNIP regime in the post liberation era.

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