

# LAND, INDIGENISATION AND EMPOWERMENT

## *Narratives that Made a Difference in Zimbabwe's 2013 Elections*

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### ABSTRACT

*The 2013 harmonised elections held in Zimbabwe after the termination of the SADC-facilitated Government of National Unity elicited unprecedented comment following another resounding 'win' by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF). This article reflects on the election and argues that while competitive authoritarianism contributed significantly to the party's 'landslide victory', it is slipshod to ignore the centrality to its electoral success of Zanu-PF's populist stance with respect to land, indigenisation and empowerment. The article also examines the significance of hate speech as a negative campaign strategy employed by Zanu-PF to portray the main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in the most negative light. It concludes that the election was reduced to 'fantasies of salvation' by President Robert Mugabe as a charismatic leader, primarily because the electorate was seduced into viewing Zanu-PF as the most credible party to pull the country out of the economic quagmire through its land, indigenisation, empowerment, 'pro-poor' and anti-Western policies. These policies resonated well with the growing numbers of wage-less youthful voters,<sup>1</sup> who constitute more than 60% of the country's population.*

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<sup>1</sup> A wage-less youthful voter is someone between the ages of 18-25 who does not have any reliable source of income. What distinguishes this group from the rest of the population is that it is generally 'preoccupied with finding its role and station in life, seeking gainful employment, looking for decent housing and starting up families' (*Zanu-PF Manifesto 2013*, p 26).

## INTRODUCTION

President Robert Mugabe's controversial re-election in July 2013 for a sixth term as president and seventh term as head of government has drawn renewed attention to the issue of competitive authoritarianism in Zimbabwe and the populist discourse surrounding it. The election elicited unprecedented comment from both within and outside Zimbabwe.<sup>2</sup> Whether by hook or crook, the fact is that in 2013 Zanu-PF, as a populist party, gained a sizeable share of the vote and, by extension, power, much to the fascination and chagrin of political observers and the majority of the opposition parties and their supporters.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) Mugabe won 2 110 434 votes, or 61.09% of the votes of about 3.48-million registered voters, compared to Morgan Tsvangirai's 1 172 349 (33.69%). While Zimbabwe boasts a very high literacy level (above 90%) compared to the rest of Africa, 206 901 people were assisted with their vote, according to official figures released by the ZEC. A total of 304 890 people were turned away for various reasons. Both figures are unprecedented in Zimbabwe's electoral history and the question is: how can this be explained?

While not directly relevant to the present analysis, it is interesting that in the small town of Chegutu in Mashonaland West province about 500 abandoned identity cards were found in various locations a few days after the election.<sup>4</sup> Many people from surrounding resettlement areas are reported to have failed to vote, primarily because they could not locate their identity cards. These developments indicate the extent to which the election may have been marred by irregularities.

John Godfrey Saxe's classic Indian adage of a proverbial elephant touched by six blind men, whose account of its structure differed significantly depending on where they touched it, parallels the different constructions of this plebiscite by academics, political analysts and pundits. This article refers to the Indian folktale in its endeavour to complement the seemingly dominant narrative that Mugabe won the election through well-orchestrated and oiled rigging machinery put in place by a shadowy Israeli security company called Nikuv International Projects Ltd. Its thesis is that while competitive authoritarianism indeed contributed to Zanu-PF's 'landslide victory' it is naïve to ignore the centrality to its electoral success of the

2 While a special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39(4) dwells on politics, patronage and violence in Zimbabwe in general, it also analyses the 2013 election in greater depth.

3 A sombre mood enveloped the nation as the results of the election began to trickle in. Surprisingly, supporters of the supposed victor were shell shocked to hear how 'resoundingly' their party had won, to the extent that to this day there have been none of the serious celebrations that usually characterise any small victory by Zanu-PF. The party's propensity to turn molehills into mountains became a thing of the past. The party was simply not in a celebratory mood. Why was this so? (Interview, Trymore Mamombe, 5 August 2013).

4 This author was in Chegutu when the identity cards were found and witnessed the development.

party's populist stance vis-à-vis land, indigenisation and empowerment and to conclude that Mugabe's 'victory' was the result of a combination of interrelated factors that acted in concert to secure a parliamentary majority for Zanu-PF and attendant control of the executive arm of the government (see also Raftopoulos 2013a and Raftopoulos 2013b, pp 971-972).

It is against that background that this article seeks to provide a complementary and alternative narrative of why and how Zanu-PF resoundingly 'won' the 2013 elections. The focus of the analysis, therefore, is on the centrality to the party's electoral success story of land, indigenisation and empowerment. The article also sets the stage for a debate about the strategies employed by Zanu-PF to metamorphose miraculously and survive without losing political popularity in an era characterised by harsh free market policies, unemployment and increasing inequality.<sup>5</sup>

This author contends that from the start of the government of national unity facilitated by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) by means of the Global Political Agreement (GPA), it seems that Zanu-PF never lost its focus on regaining total control of the levers of political power by reversing the March 2008 electoral defeat at the hands of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which was the result of a phenomenon known as *bhora musango* (kick the ball off the playing field), instituted by a faction of sitting Zanu-PF legislators in the 2008 election who urged party supporters not to vote for Mugabe as president to punish him for, among other reasons, refusing to relinquish power and choose a younger presidential candidate. The 2013 election presented a different scenario altogether in the sense that a united Zanu-PF (Raftopoulos 2013a)<sup>6</sup> was guided by the values of *bhora mughedhi* (forward with winning elections as a united and patriotic front)<sup>7</sup> while concomitantly rewarding its supporters through empowerment measures.

The article consists of six main sections. The first analyses clientelism and populist mobilisation in semi-peripheral polities, the second and third sections examine how Zanu-PF empowered the electorate through 'Maussian Gifts' of land, indigenisation and empowerment policies. The centrality of hate speech as a negative campaign strategy employed by Zanu-PF against the opposition is addressed in the fourth section. The fifth refers specifically to the role played by the Zanu-PF commissariat in rejuvenating the party's structures as well as mobilising

5 This construction is based on the blurb on the back cover of Demmers, Fernández Jilberto & Hogenboom 2001.

6 The central thesis of the edited volume *The Hard Road to Reform: The Politics of Zimbabwe's Global Political Agreement* is that the Government of National Unity (GNU) rejuvenated and gave Zanu-PF a new lease on political life. Related arguments advanced in this paper build, *inter alia*, on this book and the special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39(4) mentioned in footnote 2.

the electorate. In the final section an attempt is made to show how Zanu-PF abused the country's nationalist historiography for electioneering purposes.

#### CLIENTELISM AND POPULIST MOBILISATION IN SEMI-PERIPHERAL POLITIES

It is worth pointing out from the outset that the twin strategies of clientelism and populism lie at the very core of this present inquiry, that is, how they structure and reconfigure state-society relations bearing in mind the blurred distinction between government and party in Zimbabwe. It is instructive to note that when populism and clientelism are defined generically they tend to lose their heuristic value and utility (Mouzelis 1985, p 342), hence this analysis attempts not to fall into that trap. This article demonstrates that political inclusion premised on these two notions can potentially lead to notable changes in state-society relations. As Sorauf (1960, p 28) argues, 'patronage is best thought of as an incentive system – a political currency with which to purchase political activity and political responses'. To that end, one of the chief functions of patronage is to attract voters and supporters.

Following Levitsky & Loxton (2013, p 108) this article argues that Zanu-PF's populist stance with respect to land, indigenisation and empowerment was the 'primary catalyst for the emergence of competitive authoritarianism' in Zimbabwe that found its concrete expression in the outcome of the 2013 elections. Competitive authoritarian regimes create uneven political playing fields detrimental to opposition forces by subverting and politicising formal democratic institutions (for example, the judiciary and electoral bodies) in order to gain unfair advantage during elections.

Given that basic definitions of populism are usually contested (Weyland 2001, pp 1-22) there is a growing consensus about embracing the notion of populist mobilisation as a new and nuanced theoretical approach to the study of populism (Jansen 2011, p 81). Jansen (2011, p 82) argues that populist mobilisation is

any sustained, large-scale political project that mobilizes ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publicly visible and contentious political action, while articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people.

In essence, people are politically mobilised to support, as De la Torre (2000, p 1) suggests, 'redistributive, nationalist, and inclusionary state policies'. Leaman (2004, p 319) summarised the four features of populism as: 'an us / them discourse, a saviour leader, a coalition of emergent elites with masses, and a relationship with democracy that emphasizes inclusion but not liberal procedures.'

De la Torre's notion of populist seduction, which is similar to populist mobilisation, is worth mentioning, given that it consists of elements of extreme economic, nationalist and authoritarian thought by a political entity struggling to secure political legitimacy. In the case of Zimbabwe, a wage-less population (defined by Denning [2010, p 79] as 'those without wages, those indeed without even the hope of wages') reeling under economic hardship became susceptible to 'populist seduction' (De la Torre 2000, p 1) and attendant 'fantasies of salvation' (Tismaneanu, 1998) from economic problems; fantasies encouraged by Zanu-PF elites.

It should, however, be noted that this article is not suggesting that Zanu-PF populist supporters are gullible – far from it! This is so because, as De la Torre (2000, p xv) argues, 'populism as lived is liberating and empowers the poor and the non-white as the essence of the nation'. What is clear from the outcome of the 2013 election is that Zanu-PF did a cogent politico-economic analysis of a shifting social class that informed the party's populist economic and campaign policies.

I argue here that the deep economic malaise that engulfed the country between 2007 and 2008 contributed significantly to the entrenchment of both populist seduction and competitive authoritarianism in Zimbabwe. Available evidence suggests that during that period a number of populist initiatives such as Basic Commodities Supply Side Interventions (BACOSSI) and provision of farming inputs and equipment as part of post-resettlement support were launched by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ). The idea was to spruce up the party's bad boy image and project the Zanu-PF government to the electorate in a good light, as caring and responsive to the needs of the poor majority. In order to understand how both populism and clientelism become modes of mobilising and incorporating people into political affairs (Mouzelis 1985, p 331), the next section draws on Marcel Mauss's idea of the *Gift* in order to make sense of state society relations in Zimbabwe.

#### LAND, INDIGENISATION AND EMPOWERMENT AS 'MAUSSIAN GIFTS'

In recent years a number of political anthropologists and other interdisciplinary scholars have demonstrated a keen interest in appropriating Marcel Mauss's idea of the *Gift* when explaining contemporary social and political phenomena (see, for example, Kiernan 1988, pp 453-468). This paper also draws on Mauss's approach to exchange, derived from his classic anthropological text entitled *The Gift*.

According to Carrier (1991, p 123), Maussian gift transactions are obligatory in a special way – a conception that deviates from the Western academic view that when a gift is voluntarily given the giver must not expect compensation. What is suggested here is that gift transactions that take place in the context of

political relationships, especially in Africa, are governed by mutual obligations or indebtedness (Carrier 1991, p 123). For Schwartz (1967, p 8) gifts impose a form of identity on both the giver and the recipient and exchanges of gifts are governed by the norms of reciprocity. For example, in the case of Zimbabwe, beneficiaries of the Zanu-PF-driven land reform programme are called new farmers-cum-small-scale miners and a majority of them are identified as Zanu-PF supporters. Thus political developments in Zimbabwe are in line with the universal nature of the norms of reciprocity that, for example, demand that: (1) 'people should help those who helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them' (Gouldner 1960, p 171). In a way, gift exchange also generates a sense of eternal indebtedness on the part of the recipients, who are morally obliged to return a favour. As summed up by Adloff & Mau (2006, p 100), gifts 'establish and perpetuate relations of mutual indebtedness' and attendant binding obligations.

Political clientelism underlines the fundamental character of Zanu-PF as a political party. The hallmark of political clientelism is the distribution of material resources on a *quid pro quo* basis to party supporters. Ordinarily the development prompts political parties to promulgate public policies that will, potentially, boost their votes. Zanu-PF, as a predominant party, applies a dyadic exchange of resources (for example land and broadcasting licences) in return for political support, especially votes.

The party generally favours its supporters with respect to state-led empowerment schemes in return for votes and financial kickbacks (see Mugabe 2001, p 123).<sup>7</sup> Thus, redistributive policies become a new election-winning formula for the party, among other unorthodox strategies such as intimidation and violence. For Eisenstadt & Roniger (1980, pp 49-50) patron-client relations act as a vehicle for structuring the social exchange of resources, be they 'instrumental, economic or political (support, loyalty, votes, protection)'. Relations between political patrons and their clients are, as stated above, based on the norms of reciprocity and promises of solidarity and loyalty. Drawing on policy developments in Zimbabwe since 2000 with respect to land, indigenisation and empowerment as gifts, this article essentially vindicates Downs (1957, p 137), who argues that:

7 For example, Mugabe once said: 'Let MDC supporters get allocated land in Britain where they have been getting pounds and politics. They cannot benefit from policies they have rejected and even opposed.' What is telling about populism and clientelism in Zimbabwe is its often exclusionary nature. Zanu-PF's pursuit of identity politics is anchored on an essentially Manichean-style narrative that relies on the patriots and sell outs / heroes and villains distinction. It seeks to exclude opposition sympathisers and, as a result, people seeking to benefit from Zanu-PF policies have to demonstrate their patriotism by supporting the party that played a role in liberating Zimbabwe.

Political parties in a [pseudo] democracy formulate policy strictly as a means of gaining votes. They do not seek to gain office in order to carry out certain preconceived policies or to serve any particular interest groups; rather they formulate policies and serve interest groups in order to gain [political] office. Thus their social function – which is to formulate and carry out policies when in power as government – is accomplished as a by-product of their private motive – which is to attain the income, power and prestige of being in office.

'Maussian Gifts' of land, indigenisation and empowerment doled out by Zanu-PF to the electorate created binding obligations. As a result, beneficiaries of land reform, indigenisation and empowerment deals have become vital cogs in the party's re-election bids since 2000. Constructing a theory of government action without acknowledging the ulterior motives of those in power must be regarded as 'inconsistent with the main body of economic analysis' (Downs 1957, p 136). From the point of view of economic theory, political parties carry out social functions such as gift-giving primarily to attain their own private ends, such as income, prestige and power. Downs (1957, p 136) further stresses that:

Every agent in the division of labour [including political parties and governments] has both a private motive and a social function. For example, the social function of a coal miner is removing coal from the ground, since this activity provides utility for others. But he is motivated to carry out this function by his desire to earn income, not any desire to benefit others.

Be that as it may, the state-owned media conveniently ignore the private motive and give prominence to the social functions of political parties. It is against this background that the media become a very powerful vehicle for selling the party policies of their choice and also of shredding the policies of political rivals in a manner that significantly determines electoral outcomes. In other words, party-aligned media play a central role in the electoral agenda-setting process for political parties they want to see in power. Evidence of agenda-setting by the media in foreign affairs, moral code, economic and social policies found concrete expression in the way the state-controlled print and electronic media in Zimbabwe covered the 2013 election, as the fourth section of this article demonstrates.

The Zimbabwean case reveals that mass media driven by technocrats are also a powerful political agenda-setter in pseudo-democracies. The power of the media, conjoined with technocracy, leads to what Centeno (1993, p 308) calls the 'scientification of politics', which often inadvertently begets authoritarianism.

The role of technocrats in the Zanu-PF 2013 manifesto is evident. It is clear that the party's manifesto and an attendant economic blue print, dubbed *Zim Asset*, were crafted by parties deeply knowledgeable about public policy and project management issues.<sup>8</sup>

The author(s) of the manifesto seem to have read and comprehensively mastered Charles Lindblom's 1959 science of 'Muddling Through'. One of its key features is an emphasis on the centrality of dwelling on policies that slightly or marginally differ from the status quo, or, in Lindblom's own words, 'the branch method – continually building out from the current situation' (1959, p 81). The 'branch method' contrasts sharply with the 'root method', which involves 'starting from fundamentals anew each time' (Lindblom 1959, p 81).

What is being suggested here is that Zanu-PF did not deviate from policies that had been its core campaign tools since 2000, rather it went on to add more sweeteners to the land question that came in form of policies 'meant to empower indigenous entities to hold 100 percent of equity to start up or take over strategic enterprises across the economy' (*Zanu-PF Manifesto* 2013, p 8). This article contends that the 'diversification' of the empowerment process from agriculture into other sectors of the economy such as banking and mining was meant to buy votes (see also Magure forthcoming). In the next section I seek to understand the salience of land, indigenisation and empowerment to Zanu-PF's controversial electoral victory in the 2013 elections and why it is arguable that party-driven economic empowerment policies opened up new channels for vote-buying in Zimbabwe.

#### HOW ZANU-PF EMPOWERED THE ELECTORATE

In this section I seek to answer the question: did Zanu-PF empower the masses? In other words, were the party's ideals of indigenisation, empowerment, development and employment realised in practice? If so, how? It is worth pointing out from the outset that the discourse surrounding the centrality of land, indigenisation and empowerment in Zimbabwean political affairs must be located in the negative legacies of settler colonialism. British colonialism gave rise to a path-dependent process of political and economic development in Zimbabwe that legitimately saw Zanu-PF seeking to address colonially- induced inequalities in the ownership of the means of production.

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8 Jonathan Moyo is likely to have played a leading role in drafting the manifesto – the politician taught a course called Theory and Practice of Public Policy at the University of Zimbabwe in the 1990s. In his book, *The Politics of Administration: Understanding Bureaucracy in Africa*, Moyo essentially argues that the crisis of the African state can only be remedied by technocratic interventions. See also *Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim Asset) 'Towards an Empowered Society and a Growing Economy'* October 2013-December 2018



Given that the legacies of settler colonialism continue to shape state-society relations in Zimbabwe, attendant emotive issues such as land can only be legitimately addressed by means of a raft of affirmative action policies. This state of affairs accounts for the controversy and intense politicisation often associated with indigenisation policies in many settler colonies (Andreasson 2010, p 425). The politicisation of indigenisation and economic empowerment was also a direct consequence of the economic decline that followed the collapse of productive sectors of the economy.

Accordingly, Zanu-PF's resounding 'victory' cannot be explained by reference to the three classic predictors of voting behaviour – ethnicity, class and religion – but by economic factors tied to material deprivation and the attendant 'salvation' from it. While both gross economic mismanagement by the Mugabe government and the economic structural adjustment programmes inspired by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund collectively damaged the once vibrant and diversified economy, it is outside the scope of this paper to disaggregate their contribution.

But what is telling about Zimbabwe's economic collapse as a result of these factors is that it provided Zanu-PF with an opportunity to appropriate successfully the discourse of economic empowerment in return for votes, to lure the youthful wage-less population to the party. As indicated below, the MDC participated in the 2013 election with meagre campaign funds in comparison to Zanu-PF's vast resources. It is on that basis that I argue that the development made it easier for the party to lure youths to vote for its candidates. While the evidence is not conclusive, I argue that money was a very important factor in this election and, accordingly, votes were sold to the highest bidder – in this case, Zanu-PF.

It is noteworthy that many people became heavily involved in the informal sector, especially after a spate of company closures in 2007 that accompanied the introduction of price controls by the Zanu-PF government (Magure 2014, pp 1-17). Some people tried farming in order to deal with the economic quagmire in which they found themselves – a development that increased the demand for arable land. According to Moyo (2011, pp 506-507) the Zimbabweans' hunger and demand for arable land was a response to rising unemployment and a decline in wages as a result of the economic structural adjustment programmes of the 1990s.

The land issue and deepening poverty presented Zanu-PF with a golden opportunity to use the populist rhetoric of indigenisation, empowerment, development and employment to lure, particularly, youthful first-time voters.<sup>9</sup> 'Team Zanu-PF' claims that it used the demographic stratification approach

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9 The composition of the population categorised by age group and sex presented in the Zimbabwe National Population Census 2012 report (by province) confirms that Zimbabwe's population is very young and the population pyramids by province are all 'bottom heavy'.

to address the empowerment needs of the youth, who make up 60% of the population, and that close to a million youths who had not reached voting age in 2008 voted in 2013 (*The Herald*, 8 August 2013).

This article does not suggest that there is something wrong with indigenisation and economic empowerment but simply reiterates the fact that the country's economic challenges were a boon that paid huge political dividends to Zanu-PF. That observation is in line with Downs's argument that every government promulgates policies with a view to maximising its electoral support.

Economic challenges wrought by mismanagement and the reckless implementation of neoliberal policies made Zimbabwe's wage-less population susceptible to populist mobilisation and attendant economic millenarianism. This economic millenarianism, which inspired the voting behaviour of poverty-stricken Zimbabweans, was also, in part, a positive response to Zanu-PF's propaganda, which claimed that targeted sanctions imposed by America and its Western allies at the instigation of the MDC destroyed the economy. Through its ostensibly people-centered economic policies, Zanu-PF was therefore duty bound to 'save Zimbabweans' from the perceptibly racist and imperialist West, which sought to demonise Zimbabwe for correcting an historical injustice wrought by settler colonialism (Interview, Jones Mutasa, 5 August 2013).

Millennial thought, especially of an economic type, became an endemic feature of Zimbabwe's body politic following the unprecedented economic decline of 2008. In any case, 'who does not want to take over a strategic enterprise in the economy or own a business following the loss of a job or having never worked after finishing elementary school?' (Interview, Memory Sithole, 29 July 2013). Thus, the objective reality is that Mugabe's populist rhetoric struck a chord with voters who subscribe to nationalistic values and the mantra of patriotism espoused by Zanu-PF as a party.

An analysis of the content of the state-controlled print and broadcast media after the 2013 election results were announced reveals a nuanced picture of the centrality of land, indigenisation and empowerment to what was said to be one of the most hotly contested elections in Zimbabwe's history. The state-controlled media were adamant that Zanu-PF's indigenisation and empowerment programme resonated with poor people and had paid huge political dividends. Paul Chimedza, who was elected on a Zanu-PF ticket, even went as far as claiming that '[o]ur victory was always guaranteed' (*The Chronicle*, 2 August 2013). In short, President Mugabe's support is tied to the electorate's perception that Zanu-PF is responsive to its needs.

What is interesting about policy development in Zimbabwe is that Zanu-PF has always created crises through a cycle of policy blunders that have often led to economic dead ends. For example, the BACOSI facility, driven by the Reserve

Bank of Zimbabwe, was introduced in 2007 to provide vulnerable Zimbabweans, especially in rural areas, with affordable basic commodities in the formal market in light of runaway inflation and price controls (Gono 2008).

But in no time, the central bank of Zimbabwe became severely under-capitalised following sustained periods of engaging in quasi-fiscal activities intended to sustain the Mugabe regime (Magure 2012, p 75). These quasi-fiscal activities were sustained by the massive printing of local currency, among other unorthodox macroeconomic management practices that fuelled hyperinflation. This was eventually remedied by the dollarisation of the economy. Strangely enough, in its 2013 election manifesto, Zanu-PF claimed the introduction of the multicurrency system as one of its achievements and policy measures intended to alleviate the plight of the poor, conveniently ignoring why the local currency was dumped in favour of the USA dollar in the first place!

The presidential agricultural input support scheme launched in 2007 is another quasi-fiscal activity that became a vital cog in Zanu-PF's militarised patronage machinery and was disguised as empowerment. The centrality of the provision of post-resettlement support to boost declining agricultural productivity on nationalised farms forced the ruling party, through the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, to unveil a five-phased Farm Mechanisation Programme earmarked for both communal and commercial farmers. This genre of agro-based economic empowerment involved the distribution by the military of ploughs, combine harvesters, tractors, planters, disc harrows, agricultural chemicals, fertilizer, seeds, fuel, scotch carts, portable fumigation tanks and cultivators through Zanu-PF structures in an operation codenamed *Maguta*.

Some of the ox-drawn farm implements were imported from China under the auspices of Zimbabwe's Look East policy. The millenarian component of Zanu-PF-led economic nationalism that found its concrete expression in the party's 2013 election manifesto demonstrates how populist politics is built around a saviour leader – in this case, Robert Mugabe. Zanu-PF propagated the myth that Mugabe was on a divine mission to empower the people who had been disadvantaged as a result of settler colonialism. A cursory look at the party's 2013 manifesto reveals a disturbing picture of Mugabe as the saviour of poor Zimbabweans. Four presidential initiatives were detailed in the manifesto: the presidential agricultural input support scheme, the presidential scholarship programme, the presidential youth initiatives and the presidential chiefs support programme (*Zanu-PF Manifesto 2013*, pp 105-106).

It is noteworthy that, at its 11<sup>th</sup> National People's Conference, held in Mutare in December 2010, and titled Total Control of our Resources through Indigenisation and Empowerment, Zanu-PF resolved to accelerate and broaden the indigenisation and empowerment programme. Thereafter, calls for speedy implementation

of the employee and management share ownership scheme in foreign-owned companies under the auspices of the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act grew louder. The arrangement was meant to ensure that local employees and managerial staff own and control key productive sectors of the economy.

Among the companies that have implemented the share ownership schemes are Schweppes Zimbabwe, which disposed of a 51% stake to employees and management, and Meikles Limited, whose employees received a 20% stake in the company (Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation News, 30 November 2011). Similarly, on 8 October 2012, South Africa's *Business Day* reported that British American Tobacco Zimbabwe had offered a 21% stake to its employees and local groups in compliance with the indigenisation policy.

Another way Zanu-PF ostensibly empowered the electorate is through community share ownership schemes. According to the state-controlled *The Herald*, as at September 2013 Mugabe had launched 59 such schemes around the country (*The Herald*, 18 September 2013). Section 14B of the Economic Empowerment (General) Regulations of 2010 provides that local communities whose natural resources are being exploited must receive shares in the business entities that are exploiting them. Prominent examples of community share ownership schemes countrywide are the Zvishavane Community Share Trust (Mimosa Platinum Mine), Chegutu-Mhondoro-Ngezi Zvimba Community Share Ownership Trust (Zimplats Mine) and the Tongogara Community Share Ownership Trust (Unki Mine).

There is no doubt that such schemes have transformed the lives of people located in places where natural resources are found and the transformation is linked to Zanu-PF in a manner that often translates into political support. In its manifesto the party stated that it sought to give people sovereignty over their natural resources with a view to bringing development closer to the people.

Clearly those scholars and MDC supporters who argue that Zanu-PF rigged the election cannot be oblivious to the fact that the same people found in mineral rich areas were also probably beneficiaries of the land reform programme. Thus the community share ownership scheme worked in favour of the party primarily because in some areas development was finally brought to resettled people who were disgruntled about the party's failure to provide schools, clinics, roads and boreholes.

In a way, service delivery became an electoral issue, particularly in those natural resource endowed rural areas where, for a long time, Zanu-PF has battled to bring development to the people. The new development initiatives bankrolled by mines located along the mineral rich Great Dyke of Zimbabwe inadvertently became conduits for sprucing up Zanu-PF's image as a party responsive to people's needs. For instance, in Shurugwi, the construction of a school, a mortuary and

a maternity ward, refurbishment of roads and the drilling and refurbishment of boreholes were funded by the Tongogara Share Ownership Trust (*The Herald*, 18 September 2013). The initiatives made it easier for Zanu-PF parliamentary candidates in mineral rich areas to campaign for votes, given that they were talking about empowerment through land reform and share ownership, with which people could readily identify. In other words, there was tangible evidence of indigenisation, empowerment and development. It is noteworthy that all these developments began while the inclusive government was still in power. As stated above, Zanu-PF's campaign did not start on the eve of the election but began after its humiliating defeat in 2008 and gathered momentum during the constitution-making process.

According to Moyo (2011, p 502), the land reform programme also opened new avenues for income generation such as small-scale gold mining, since it entailed the 'liberation of mineral resources, which had been hidden under the monopolistic LSCF [large scale commercial farms]'. While in certain areas, such as Chegutu, there were intermittent clashes between new miners and new farmers, both parties were united by the umbilical cord of empowerment.

Moyo's salient observation that much more was gained from redistributing land, primarily because it also led to increased access to other natural resources on the same land, is noteworthy. It is suggested that this dual access to land by both new miners and new farmers also boosted Zanu-PF support in both rural and peri-urban areas. As Saunders (2008, p 76) argues, 'the mining sector became a critical battleground for the hearts, minds and pocketbooks of key business and political constituencies related to Zanu-PF'. A number of new land barons and Zanu-PF local structures made representations to the police to 'stop undermining the country's indigenisation and empowerment process by arresting artisanal gold miners' (Interview, Tinotenda Madhochi, 29 March 2013). Previously, small-scale gold miners were forcibly evicted by police from both state and privately owned land but during the period of the government of national unity evictions were stopped. In the new free-for-all dispensation, well-planned syndicates involving Zanu-PF leaders, small-scale gold miners and the police looted Mother Nature in the name of indigenisation and empowerment.

It can therefore be concluded that the Zanu-PF government constantly shifted goal posts when it came to small-scale mining, be it diamonds or gold, in response to the prevailing political environment. Its ambivalence towards small-scale gold or diamond panners can be attributed to powerful and contradictory interests within Zanu-PF as a party. For politicians vying for office in areas with natural resources, minerals became a powerful patronage tool and, by extension, a conduit for getting votes.

For example, Nyamunda & Mukwambo (2012, p 148) argue that 'state actors

encouraged free mining for all inhabitants of Marange and surrounding areas in 2006. They espoused a discourse of indigenisation and black empowerment in search of votes.' In other words, political expediency explains why politicians tacitly approved free-for-all mining of diamonds in Chiadzwa. In a sense, what was once defined as the illegal exploitation of mineral resources prompting military operations such *Hukudzokwi Kumunda* (Operation You Would Never Go Back to the Diamond Fields) (Magure 2012, pp 144-145) became legitimate, particularly during the course of the unity government.

An independent newspaper (*Newsday*, 16 January 2012) aptly summed up the existing state of affairs as 'official [sanctioned] lawlessness'. A highly publicised case of such lawlessness is that of a gold rush that took place between December 2011 and January 2012 in the Sherwood Park farming area in the city of Kwekwe, located along the Great Dyke. Zanu-PF loyalists made claims of ownership of the gold rich area, based on the flimsy reason that it was the party's military wing, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), that had liberated the country from settler colonialism (*Newsday*, 7 January 2012). *Newsday* (7 January 2012) further reported that Owen 'Mudha' Ncube, the provincial security officer of Zanu-PF Midlands, directed that: 'Only the sons of Midlands will be allowed to enter the [gold] fields and they will [only] do so through party structures, those that are not known within the party will not have access [to the gold fields] and those from outside the Midlands will not be allowed here.' To that end, a register was compiled of card-holding Zanu-PF members who were eligible to enter the gold fields. The development saw the Zanu-PF Kwekwe District office selling a whopping 3 500 party cards within a space of two days (*Newsday*, 12 January 2012). All these developments indicate how the narrative of land, indigenisation and empowerment undoubtedly resonated well with the growing population of wage-less Zimbabweans.

It is noteworthy that the party heavyweights and their relatives were prime beneficiaries, while supporters distantly connected to the party were secondary beneficiaries of the militarised patronage machinery. Zanu-PF also empowered its leaders, who all had reasons to campaign vigorously for the party in 2013. The aspiring legislators demonstrated to the electorate how sweet Zanu-PF-driven empowerment was and what it meant to be empowered. For example, 2011 saw corporations aligned to Zanu-PF being given preferential treatment by the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ). The authority gave the first two commercial private radio licences to former Affirmative Action Group (AAG) president and ZBC news anchor Supa Mandiwanzira's<sup>10</sup> Zi Radio and

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10 Mandiwanzira contested and won the Nyanga seat in the 2013 election on a Zanu-PF ticket and President Mugabe recently appointed him Deputy Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services.

to Zimpapers' Star FM ahead of applicants not linked to Zanu-PF (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 25 November 2011).

Musician Oliver Mtukudzi, who applied for one of the two commercial radio station licences, was passed over in favour of the Zanu-PF-linked companies. In a public lecture Supa Mandiwanzira (2011) conceded that not everyone would benefit from the indigenisation policy. The former journalist said Hobbesian egoistic psychology is the norm when it comes to issues of indigenisation. Consequently there would be losers and winners given that:

There is no democracy in business, to be able to get into business, you need to be clever and wise, possess the ability to work very hard, to be strong such that you are able to rise again if you fall. There is no democracy in business because it's highly competitive thereby it's individualistic in nature. We shall not lie to people that everyone will benefit from the 51% policy because there is indigenisation; it is only the clever ones that are near the opportunities and have the knowledge of the companies that will benefit.

The fact that in the same lecture Mandiwanzira predicted that the MDC president would lose votes in the 2013 elections because 'his supporters are eager to benefit from the [indigenisation] Act' (2011) bears testimony to the centrality of land, indigenisation and empowerment in the election. The warning statement by the former AAG president was also indicative of the way the MDC was slandered not only in the media but in Zanu-PF campaign rallies and structures as being against the empowerment policy.

However, economists; the country's former central bank governor, Gideon Gono; and the MDC, led by former Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, were on record as saying they were not against indigenisation *per se* but believed that a one-size-fits-all approach to all economic sectors would potentially scare away much-needed foreign direct investment. Gono's stance on indigenisation deeply angered his political rivals in Zanu-PF, leading to public spats in the media between him and the then minister responsible for indigenisation and empowerment, Saviour Kasukuwere.

It is worth noting that at the time of writing the new minister responsible for indigenisation and empowerment, Francis Nhema, is now also saying a one-size-fits-all approach will not work (*The Herald*, 14 October 2013) despite the fact that it was the MDC's stance on the issue that prompted Zanu-PF to claim that the MDC was against the empowerment of indigenous Zimbabweans and was making frantic efforts to derail the programme.

It should also be pointed out that two months after the election Zanu-PF

backtracked on the promise contained in its manifesto that it would create 2 265 000 jobs in five years. The party's secretary for Youth Affairs, Absolom Sikhosana, told the media that the government will not be able to create the jobs because of the economic sanctions Western countries have imposed (*Newsday*, 3 October 2013). These bait and switch strategies are indicative of the populist and chameleon-like elements inherent in Zanu-PF as a party.

The next three sections of this article analyse the role played by hate speech, the abuse of collective memory and the rejuvenation of party structures in enhancing the party's electoral victory.

### THE CENTRALITY OF HATE SPEECH

Hate speech is '[t]he use of words which are deliberately abusive and/or insulting and/or threatening and/or demeaning directed at members of vulnerable minorities, calculated to stir up hatred against them' (Waldron 2012, pp 8-9). Noriega & Iribarren (2009) identify false facts, flawed argumentation, divisive language and dehumanising metaphors as constituting four types of hate speech that engender a climate of fear and prejudice in a given population. *False statements* are used to validate a political player's point of view and to promote favourable public opinion. Simple falsehoods, exaggerated statements and decontextualised facts are used to promote a favourable public opinion of the collective 'we'.

*Flawed argumentation* includes 'ad hominem attacks, guilt by association, appeal to fear and misrepresentation of an opponent's position' with a view to gaining cheap political mileage. *Divisive language* entails placing social agents in a 'Manichean' framework that creates binaries of 'us' and 'them'. The use of *dehumanising metaphors* involves dominant players evoking warfare, enemies, biblical characters (eg, Judas Iscariot), criminality, corruption, evil, animality<sup>11</sup> and conspiracy to draw sharp contrasts between the target and values and positions the perpetrators espouse.

In this regard, since 2000, Zanu-PF has continually focused on issues that are advantageous to it as a party such as sanctions, gay marriages, land, indigenisation and empowerment, whereas opposition parties, led by the MDC formations, were, by and large, forced to respond to the issues Zanu-PF raised. Since 2000 the opposition parties and Zanu-PF have constantly engaged in parliamentary and media debates over these policy issues both during and outside election campaign periods.

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11 An article in *The Herald*, for instance, proclaimed that: 'While Zanu-PF did their homework and studied voting trends so as to target areas where their vote was low, he [Tsvangirai] was busy chasing teenagers like a horny toad on steroids' (*The Herald*, 5 August 2013).



It is noteworthy that during the tenure of the inclusive government Zanu-PF continued to behave like a wounded buffalo – it launched a media offensive that sought to denigrate the two MDC formations as Western lackeys, while endlessly sprucing up its image as liberator and saviour. The Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe documented numerous instances of Zanu-PF disrespecting democratic procedures and the rights of political rivals. While the use of extensive quotes is seen in a bad light in some scholarly circles, this article will unapologetically do so because a content and interpretive analysis of election manifestos and newspapers articles<sup>12</sup> is a *sine qua non* for pinning down the subject under consideration.

These quotations indicate the hegemonic constructions of ‘Team’ Zanu-PF mouthpieces in Zimbabwe’s public discourse. When one examines the content of Zanu-PF manifestos and official party documents as well as the writings of columnists and the general content of the state-controlled print and broadcast media it is abundantly clear that they are all framed in terms of hate speech directed at the MDC formations.

What emerged from a qualitative content analysis of news items in the state-controlled media is that Zanu-PF successfully manufactured the consent of the population to vote for it by creating folk devils and moral panic. Identity formation tied to moral panic intended to instil a deep sense of fear in people (McRobbie 1994, p 199) was harnessed through recourse to attacking perceivably alien practices like homosexuality and gay marriages, which are allegedly supported by the MDC.

Allied to moral panic is the social construction of a group or class of people as folk devils. Goode & Ben-Yehuda (1994, p 28) define a folk devil as ‘the personification of evil’. Similarly, Cohen (1972, p 9) defines it as a person or group of persons who are deliberately painted ‘as a threat to societal values and interests’. This perception of the threat posed by folk devils demands that ‘something should be done’ (Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994, p 30) to rectify the situation.

By and large, a threat may be manufactured, or the actual threat may be exaggerated with a view to engineering social control, as was the case with characterising MDC supporters as sell-outs who dined with imperialists and sabotaged the agrarian reform programme. Moral panic and the attendant folk devils arise when a dominant group’s political power is threatened by

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12 The revolutions in communications technologies shape and reshape society and, by extension, data collection techniques. Many newspapers and magazines have gone digital and some carry a commentary section after every story. The online debates that follow some newspaper headlines offer an invaluable window on public opinion, as do social media such as Facebook and Twitter. In a few instances I draw on online debates that follow some headlines about Zimbabwean politics carried by both domestic and international online newspapers. This technique was used successfully, for example, by the anthropologist James Ferguson (2006) in the piece ‘Chrysalis: The life and death of the African Renaissance’, in a Zambian internet magazine. Good (2009) eloquently defends the same method.

the opposition. In its 2013 manifesto, couched in soccer terms – Team Zanu-PF portrayed the MDC formations negatively as ‘[t]hreats to winning the goals of the people (*Zanu-PF Manifesto 2013*, pp 43-53). The next sub-section presents a sample of statements made by Zanu-PF loyalists in support of their party policies. Some of the statements bordered on negative campaigning and, by extension, constituted hate speech.

*In their own words*

**Zanu-PF as saviour and MDC as villain**

Martin (2004, pp 449-550) argues that negative campaigns mobilise voters, especially when opponents are painted in the worst possible light as threats to a society’s way of life or economic position. A recurring message in Zanu-PF campaigns during the periods between elections since 2000 has been that the MDC wants to reverse the land reform programme and has promised former white commercial farmers that they will get back their farms once the party is elected as a government. At a rally Mugabe said: ‘That promise is what we want to prevent. We should defend our land and sovereignty’ (*The Voice*, 30 March-5 April 2007).

We know that there are certain elements in the MDC formations that want to reverse our gains from the empowerment initiatives and we should guard against that by ensuring that Zanu-PF and President Mugabe win the [2013] elections’ – Bright Matonga.

*The Herald*, 9 April 2013

The black [economic] empowerment revolution is now at an irreversible stage and the imperialists are desperately pushing for the protection of their interests through advocating an impossible MDC victory.

*The Voice*, 30 March-5 April 2007

The solution to Zimbabwe’s current [economic] difficulties can only be found inside Zanu-PF. That solution can only be built on the consolidation of the land reform programme [and] economic indigenisation.

*The Herald*, 26 March 2008

We can deliver to the people the benefit of our policies. We delivered land to the people through the land reform programme and using that experience we are delivering the economy to the people.

*The Herald*, 6 May 2013

Zanu-PF is people's party driven by the needs and dictates of the people hence its unwavering stance in relation to the empowerment of Zimbabweans.

*The Voice*, 23-29 December 2007

### **On the new Constitution**

In 2009 the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (COPAC) was mandated by the unity government to come up with a new constitution for Zimbabwe that would replace the 1979 Lancaster House Constitution. When Parliament adopted the draft constitution, which took four years to be completed, political parties started to educate their supporters about the contents of the draft. Both Zanu-PF and the MDC mobilised their supporters to endorse the draft constitution in a referendum that was eventually held in March 2013. During their rallies Zanu-PF convinced their supporters the draft constitution was 'more of a Zanu-PF baby' (*Manica Post*, 15 February 2013).

Zanu-PF National Secretary for Women Affairs, Oppah Muchinguri:

This constitution is ours because 75 percent of the content came from Zanu-PF contributions. We want to say well done to our members for this remarkable achievement. We also want to hail members of the Copac select committee that were seconded from our party for working tirelessly in representing the party's interests.

*Manica Post*, 15 February 2013

Former Justice Minister, Patrick Chinamasa:

I urge you to be united and endorse the draft because it safeguards the values of the liberation struggle and states that we should be masters of our destiny.

*The Herald*, 10 February 2013

*Zanu-PF Manifesto* (2013, p 67):

The Party was vigilant throughout the constitution-making exercise to guard against treachery and to protect the process from being hijacked by foreign or regime change interests. More importantly, and specifically, Zanu-PF ensured that the New Constitution enshrines the following provisions that not only guarantee that Zimbabwe will never be a colony again but which also protect the values and dignity of the people against such evils as homosexuality.

Muchinguri's statement insinuated that representatives of the two MDC formations on the COPAC select committee were there for ceremonial reasons. It can also be interpreted to mean that they did not have the political clout to advance their parties' contribution ahead of that made by Zanu-PF members. When the party mobilised for a 'Yes' vote in the constitutional referendum that spin took centre stage – 'vote yes because this is a Zanu-PF product and like we indicated to you when we joined the unity government – Zanu-PF as a party is the one in charge' (Interview, Jones Mutasa, 5 August 2013).

This article claims that the new Constitution adopted in 2013 and the Zanu-PF 2013 election manifesto are conjoined like Siamese twins. There is overwhelming evidence that Zanu-PF as a party simply plagiarised and regurgitated the contents of the new Constitution in its manifesto. The development must not be misconstrued as a technocratic glitch or oversight, rather it was intended to serve a political purpose. The idea was to demonstrate that the party is in charge politically. The major issues that went on to become the cornerstones of Zanu-PF campaign message were found in the new Constitution. These are clauses relating to economic empowerment, the land reform programme, the welfare of war veterans and war collaborators and the non-recognition of gay and lesbian rights.

While it is beyond the scope of this article to delve deeper into gay rights, passing reference is made to the contentious issue insofar as it is presented in a manner that constitutes hate speech against the MDC. For instance, section 78(3) of the Constitution provides that '[p]ersons of the same sex are prohibited from marrying each other'. It is important to note that the general representations of homosexuality in Zimbabwean public discourse are that it is totally unacceptable, un-African and un-Godly. The state-controlled media ensured that the portrayal of the MDC as a sell-out and pro-gay party become so entrenched that it became difficult to challenge the notion in the deeply polarised and conservative society that is Zimbabwe. The flip-flops and gaffes made by MDC president Tsvangirai when interviewed by the international media about same sex marriages did not help the situation.

### **Foreign direct investment-driven job creation**

Zanu-PF realised that it would be impossible to create jobs overnight against a backdrop of unprecedented industrial decline and capacity underutilisation. In addition to its promise to create 2 265 000 jobs, Zanu-PF also pledged to empower the wage-less population immediately by ensuring that they received a major stake in existing companies. A Zanu-PF legislator, Jaison Passade, summed the party's efforts up this way: 'The party's empowerment drive has won us this [Mount Pleasant] seat. The people of Mount Pleasant chose to be empowered ahead of being promised jobs' (*The Chronicle*, 2 August 2013). Zanu-PF chided

the MDC formation led by Morgan Tsvangirai for emphasising a job policy predicated on foreign direct investment. According to Zanu-PF, the MDC was convinced that Zimbabweans are 'jobs people and not investors or a people capable of running businesses' (*The Herald*, 30 May 2012). The MDC manifesto and economic blueprint, titled JUICE (Jobs, Upliftment, Investment, Capital and the Environment), was equated with a poisoned chalice by Zanu-PF loyalists, particularly Jonathan Moyo and other party-aligned public intellectuals:

They spent the last four years in Government thinking about themselves, they are buying expensive cars, houses and are doing nothing about the lives of millions of Zimbabweans. They are more concerned with salaries and positions for themselves. They came up with their programme JUICE and no-one is drinking it because it is poisonous.

*The Herald*, 6 May 2013

While evidence abounds showing how Zanu-PF has and continues to address poverty, inequality and unemployment through the land reform, indigenisation programme and various other strategies aimed at making the black man the master of his own resources, the MDC-T has on the other hand premised the revival of the economy on the creation of jobs precipitated by foreign direct investment.

*The Sunday Mail*, 30 June 2013

Who told the MDC-T that a tenant is better than his landlord? What makes these people think driving a car is far much better than being the owner of the same? What joy is there in being a farm worker when the chance is there to own the farm? ... the MDCs need to put themselves together and seek lasting solutions to the problem of jobs, not the piecemeal job creation project they have anchored on foreign investment ... Without having to work for someone, if Zimbabweans heed Zanu-PF's message, they can organise themselves into groups to run successful businesses which can help shore the country out of poverty.

*The Sunday Mail*, 6 December 6

From the examples detailed in this section, it is clear that the MDC's electoral prospects were severely compromised by the way the party was represented, particularly in the state-controlled media – as sellouts and, by extension, as an imminent threat to Zimbabwe's sovereignty, land reform and indigenisation

programme. This article is suggesting that while the MDC might have been able to counteract Zanu-PF hate speech it was never given a platform in the state-controlled media from which to do so. It is therefore evident that language can be a powerful hegemonic tool used by political elites to influence societal thinking, attitudes and ideologies. The propaganda against the MDC was used to indoctrinate part of the electorate and this process was successfully carried out using rejuvenated Zanu-PF structures, as detailed in the next section.

#### THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSARIAT IN MOBILISING THE ELECTORATE

Zanu-PF used the period of the inclusive government to rejuvenate its structures and also took a collective decision to contain factional rivalries, which had cost the party significant votes in the 2008 elections. The party also came up with a revamped election-winning formula sensitive to the prevailing macroeconomic conditions in Zimbabwe. For instance, unemployed urbanites were promised controlling stakes in the economy through the indigenisation policy, while a government directive ordered that outstanding utility bills be slashed.

There was something for everyone as the party sought to seduce the electorate. For example, Tendi (2013, pp 969-970) refers to what he calls Mugabe's considerable campaign largesse, which made it possible for Zanu-PF to hand out regalia emblazoned with the party's campaign message: 'indigenise, empower, develop and employ'. Tendi (2013, p 965) also contends that Zanu-PF's commissariat department was a vital cog in the election campaign directed by the military and intelligence personnel, who played a central role in reinvigorating 'party structures and a quiet but intensive programme of registering its supporters on the voters' roll', especially in the run-up to the constitutional referendum.<sup>13</sup>

As Raftopoulos (2013b, p 974) observes, the large voter turnout that characterised the constitutional referendum indicates the extent to which Zanu-PF mobilised and encouraged its supporters to register in preparation for the 2013 general elections. Traditional leaders, who are appendages of Zanu-PF, also worked tirelessly with grassroots structures to deliver the rural vote, in exchange for continued development services and material goods doled out by Zanu-PF (see Bratton & Masunungure 2011, p 30).

Murisa (2009, p 340) tells how Zimbabwe's fast track land reform programme dramatically changed rural social organisation and the agency of beneficiaries. According to Murisa, the state was actively involved through land committee functionaries such as 'local government ministry officials, traditional leaders,

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13 Normally those who need to register to vote are first-time voters or those who have changed their constituencies; all other people only need to check whether their names appear on the voters' roll. Thus it can be concluded that the voter registration exercise mainly targeted youthful first-time voters.

the ruling party, security organs and war veterans' (2013, p 263). These local structures went on to become political mobilisation platforms for Zanu-PF and, as Murisa (2013, p 252) further notes, beneficiaries of land reform are united in their common need to defend their newly found access and right to arable land.

Chaumba, Scoones & Wolmer (2003, p 589) assert that a number of occupied farms were not only militarised by Zanu-PF-aligned war veterans who declared them their party territories but were also no go areas for MDC formations, or any other opposition party for that matter. According to Chaumba, Scoones & Wolmer (2003, p 599), Zanu-PF committees are usually tightly disciplined, autocratic and hierarchical. They are also powerful vehicles for transmitting alarmist Zanu-PF campaign messages that, as stated above, border on hate speech directed at the MDC formations.

As indicated above, beneficiaries of many empowerment programmes are expected to demonstrate their unwavering support for Zanu-PF. With respect to the land reform programme, Human Rights Watch (2002, p 4) was probably correct in concluding that Zanu-PF essentially created 'infrastructure for rural violence and intimidation that subordinates development plans to political ends'. Come election time, voters who were suspected of being opposition sympathisers were forced to feign illiteracy, injury or blindness and were assisted to vote, in total violation of the secrecy of the ballot. A polling officer at a resettlement area in Kadoma remarked that he heard many assisted voters whispering '*paMasvingo*' (I'm voting for Zanu-PF) (Interview, Mike Banda, 1 August 2013).

By acting against the letter and spirit of the SADC-brokered GPA President Mugabe demonstrated to his supporters that he remained at the helm of Zimbabwean politics. His flagrant disregard for the GPA was a clear indication that the other members of the coalition, the two MDC formations, were nothing more than junior partners. According to one interviewee:

Mudhara Bob ndiye ane matomu kwete zvimbwasungata zveMDC [Mugabe is the one in charge not the MDC puppets]. What we wanted to see in the Constitution is what is there. The new Constitution equals Team Zanu-PF manifesto. It does not enshrine gay rights but indigenisation and empowerment through land reform and majority stakes for indigenous Zimbabweans in all foreign-owned businesses. While the new Constitution protects our rights as resettled farmers it is not enough because if the MDC wins the coming election they will have a two-thirds majority that allows them to change the Constitution with a view to reverse the land reform programme. That puppet party is dangerous to have in the corridors of power – it spells doom and gloom for Zimbabwe.

Interview, Tinotenda Madhochi, 29 March 2013

In an editorial, an independent paper, *The Standard*, had this to say about Zanu-PF's election strategy:

Zanu-PF began to reconnect with the masses during the constitutional outreach programme. The March 2008 harmonised elections had shown them they had lost the masses' support. During the outreach they spelt out policies that resonated with the people while the MDCs concentrated on abstract issues such as international best practice in drafting constitutions. Zanu-PF spoke to the people's desire for a piece of the national cake; land and indigenisation resonated with the people's needs and the party impressed upon them that all these could only be secured if the country's sovereignty was secure. They were able to whip up anti-West sentiment, which translated into an anti-MDC feeling because the MDC was portrayed as an agent of the West.

*The Standard*, 9 April 2013

The themes of economic empowerment and land reform<sup>14</sup> and how the MDC ostensibly wanted to derail these, featured during many state functions, party meetings and speeches. On every occasion the state-controlled media and party leadership reminded the population that it was Zanu-PF that had brought in the multicurrency system (*The Herald*, 29 July 2013). Zanu-PF also took advantage of the opinion surveys (see, eg, Booysen 2012) that had revealed an increase in the party's popular support in sharp contrast to a decline in support for the MDC.

During meetings held at cell, ward and provincial levels, there was an emphasis on the outcome of the opinion polls – that Zanu-PF would win the elections as a result of its people-centred policies (Interview, Luke Jesa, 29 July 2013). According to the Zanu-PF national chairman, Simon Khaya Moyo, 'Even the United Kingdom media has predicted victory for Zanu-PF, these are informed people who do [cutting edge] research and I can assure that we are winning these elections' (*The Herald*, 29 March 2013). The objective reality is that Zanu-PF was visible on the ground, especially in rural and peri-urban areas, where marathon daily meetings were held in various cells, wards and provinces. The countless indoctrination meetings held during the period preceding an election are part of the strategy employed by Zanu-PF since 2000 to make its presence felt, especially in rural areas.

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14 See, for example, 'Address by his Excellency president RG Mugabe on the occasion of the official opening of the 5<sup>th</sup> Parliament of Zimbabwe', 30 October 2012.



As Aldrich & Griffin (2003, p 240) note, the strategies candidates 'choose in an election campaign and what they emphasise and what they ignore have important effects on vote choices and therefore on outcomes'. This author adds a voice to Zamchiya's salient observation that during his rallies the MDC president generally neglected political issues relating to indigenisation, targeted sanctions and the centrality of the war of liberation, all of which took centre stage in Zanu-PF's campaign (Zamchiya 2013, p 958).

Be that as it may, any party's campaign agenda must be premised on political issues that promote its strength and avoid issues that undermine its political standing. For example, while the issue of participation in the liberation war was not a strong campaign point for the MDC it could have done better on indigenisation by spelling out the need for affirmative action that is not premised on a one-size-fits-all pattern. From an issue theory point of view, 'voters identify the most credible party proponent of a particular issue and cast their ballots for that issue owner (Be' langer & Meguid 2008, p 477). This probably led Raftopoulos (2013b, p 971) to conclude that the MDC's emphasis on democratisation and Western-backed neoliberal programmes 'was always found wanting, against the redistributive logic of ZANU (PF)'s land reform process, the ideological legacies of the liberation movement, and the discourse of state sovereignty'.

Tsvangirai and his party also failed to counter other elements of Zanu-PF propaganda, for example, that the party's representatives in COPAC had tried, unsuccessfully, to smuggle a provision for gay rights into the new Constitution. The MDC was also portrayed as unfit or not credible enough to lead Zimbabwe, with Zanu-PF alleging that the labour-backed party had failed come up with a homegrown election manifesto. There is also a sense in which Zanu-PF as a party gained electoral mileage because the political and economic gains of the inclusive government were attributed to it, despite the fact that the MDC was in charge of important but troubled ministries such as health, finance and education.

As a result, Bratton & Masunungure (2012, p 8) concluded that in a way the MDC-T 'failed to get out a message, or to convince diehard supporters of the old regime, of its own contributions to better governance under the IG [inclusive government]'. This takes us back to the issue of closely-knit Zanu-PF structures when it comes to campaign issues and the attendant positive portrayal of the party as the saviour of Zimbabwe. Given that the war of liberation took centre stage in Zanu-PF's campaigns and in the constitution-making process, the next section examines how its ideological legacies were used as a campaign tool in a manner that was detrimental to the MDC.

## ABUSE OF THE NATIONALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

Collective memory relating to land dispossession and the liberation struggle is central to the construction of political discourse as elites invoke it in contemporary power struggles to galvanise political support (Magure 2010, pp 100-103). Collective memory gains currency or sinks into oblivion in response to the power dynamics of the societies in which it circulates. In its 2013 manifesto Zanu-PF celebrated the fact that the new Constitution institutionalises the obligation of any future president to be guided by the legacy of the liberation struggle, with section 90(1)(b) providing that 'The President must recognise and respect the ideals and values of the Liberation struggle'.

The important political changes that occurred in Zimbabwe following the emergence of the MDC led to a vast change in celebratory styles and meanings of independence for Zanu-PF as political party. As indicated above the changed political landscape led to a Manichean-style struggle between Zanu-PF (as representing good intentions for the country) and the opposition MDC (personifying evil and neo-colonial intentions) in a battle that has deeply polarised Zimbabwe. For Zanu-PF independence was to be defined not only in political terms but in terms of sovereignty over economic issues such as land, minerals and the ownership of the means of production.

The party's maintenance of a stranglehold on the rural vote can be attributed to collective memory relating to the war of liberation that was fought in the countryside for, among other things, equitable land distribution. The majority of rural class forces were totally opposed to settler colonialism, primarily because the system was not only brutally repressive it also led to increased levels of abject and dehumanising poverty wrought by land dispossession (Phimister 1987, p 53). This colonially induced land hunger enabled Zanu-PF and Mugabe to use land, indigenisation and empowerment consistently and instrumentally to connect with the rural electorate, particularly after 2000.

More often than not, Zanu-PF used the narrative of brutal colonial land dispossession to make gratuitous comparisons between the party and the MDC and its alleged Western political allies. The subtext of Zanu-PF's comparisons is that the MDC is guilty by association, while the erstwhile colonisers are guilty of human rights violations that far outweigh any accusations of human rights abuses levelled against Mugabe and his party.

It is against this background that, in 2011, a shadowy group of Mugabe party loyalists, called the Fallen Heroes of Zimbabwe Trust, intensified its drive to exhume and re-bury the remains of individuals allegedly killed by the Rhodesian Forces and buried in shallow graves across Zimbabwe. For example, in 2013, Mashonaland Central province, a Zanu-PF stronghold, was targeted by the party to demonstrate the brutality that spurred the liberation struggle. One highly

publicised exhumation and reburial took place in Mt Darwin at Chibondo mine, where, *The Herald* sensationally claimed, '... over 2 000 bodies came from one of the shafts and with five more shafts yet to be ripped open, Chibondo exudes an aura of the brutal killings of blacks by the Rhodesian Selous Scouts' (*Herald*, 17 April 2013).

As Fontein (2010, p 423) argues, bones of fallen heroes and ordinary people (politics of the dead) play a central role in discourse surrounding political loyalties and struggles in Zimbabwe's postcolonial milieu. In the final analysis collective memory, conjoined with Gramscian cultural hegemony, demonstrates how Zimbabwe's nationalist historiography was abused for electioneering purposes with a view to undermining the MDC as a social-political actor. The strategy cost the party a significant number of votes.

## CONCLUSION

This article has sought to provide a complementary and alternative account of why and how Zanu-PF 'won' the 2013 elections resoundingly. It argues that while the rigging thesis is equally plausible, the discourse on land, indigenisation and empowerment was an electoral boon for the liberation-based party. In a nutshell, the article does not totally dismiss claims by some observers as well as the opposition MDC leadership and its supporters that Zanu-PF used its well-oiled competitive authoritarian structures to rig the 2013 election in its favour. What it essentially does is go a step further and suggest that Zanu-PF's dream of seizing total control of the country's resources through indigenisation and empowerment, though marginally achieved, was welcomed, especially by a wage-less population desperate for some form of 'salvation' from economic challenges.

Thus the 'fantasies of salvation' that underpinned the party's campaign message – 'indigenise, empower, develop and employ' – resonated with huge segments of impoverished and unemployed Zimbabweans who were eager to become masters of their own destinies, courtesy of Zanu-PF's 'people-centred' policies. What is telling about the party's campaign messages is that they were couched in terms of hate speech against the opposition as personifying evil and neo-colonial intentions.

In the final analysis it can be concluded that other factors outside the scope of this article, for example, the continuing legacy of Zanu-PF's competitive authoritarianism, the challenges and limitations of the political opposition, as well as the regional and international influences on the elections,<sup>15</sup> acted in concert to give Zanu-PF an electoral advantage over its main opposition, the MDC.

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15 Raftopoulos (2013b, pp 971-988) examines some of these factors in greater depth.

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