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Abstract

National holidays are some of the oldest known forms of nation-mythologizing used for managing, producing and reproducing national memories and identities. They are calendrically set aside days free from work where a people pause and reflect on who they are as a nation. A study of national holidays in the Zimbabwean context exposes the malleability, fragility and contestability of 'official' notions of nationhood as imagined by Zimbabwean president and the ruling Zimbabwe National Union Patriotic Front's (ZANU-PF) leader - Robert Mugabe. This article contends that national holidays have been adulterated by Mugabe who, when presiding over them, fuses the personal and national by speaking both as an individual, president of the country and leader of ZANU-PF for politically expedient ends. With this in mind, this article devotes its focus to the study and analysis of Mugabe's speeches on three most cathartic national holidays, namely, Heroes Day, Defence Forces Day and Independence Day, as covered in state controlled *The Herald* newspaper between 2000-2014. This article ~~uses~~ analyses Mugabe's speeches and performances of the nation during commemorations ~~and argues that by subjecting them to~~ and argues that that ~~Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA).~~ The article concludes by arguing that Mugabe has used these commemorations to carve a dictatorial, exclusive, toxic and narrow version of national being.

Keywords: *National holidays, national identity, memory, patriotic memory, commemorative events, public media, patriotic history*

Introduction

National holidays are some of the oldest known forms of nation-mythologizing practices used for managing, producing and reproducing national memories and identities (McCrone and McPherson 2009, Lentz 2013, Willems 2013, Mpofu 2014). They are calendrically set aside days free from work where a people pause and reflect on who they are as a nation. A study of national holidays in the Zimbabwean context exposes the malleability, fragility and contestability of 'official' notions of nationhood as imagined by Zimbabwean president and the ruling Zimbabwe National Union Patriotic Front's (ZANU-PF) leader - Robert Mugabe. This article contends that national holiday ceremonies have been adulterated by Mugabe who, when presiding over them, fuses the personal and the national ~~by speaking both as an individual, president of the country and as leader of ZANU PF,~~ for selfish politically expedient ends. With this in mind, this article devotes its focus to the ~~study and~~ analysis of Mugabe's speeches on three most cathartic national holidays, namely, Heroes' Day, Defence Forces' Day and Independence Day, as covered in the state controlled *The Herald* newspaper between 2000-2014.

The selected period is significant. ~~as it~~ is characterised by political and economic crises that have assumed global prominence, including a tension-filled and shaky Government of National Unity (GNU) between ZANU-PF and the opposition parties between 2009-2013. Even though important, due to space constraints, national holiday celebrations during the GNU period are not catered for in this study and call for a separate study altogether. The intention of the article is to demonstrate the critical role that discursive

practices related to selected national holidays from 2000 to 2014 have played in the consolidation of Mugabe ~~and by default ZANU-PF's~~ stranglehold on power in the face of overwhelming mass dissent, intra-party tensions and socio-political ruptures. In the article I ~~argue and~~ demonstrate that Mugabe is a toxic leader who has contaminated national holidays for his political survival and legitimacy as an individual first and, secondly, for legitimising ZANU-PF's stranglehold on power using its real or perceived accomplishments. This toxicity is informed by what can be called Mugabeism; an appreciation of Mugabe as an authoritarian, chauvinist, liberator and paranoid nationalist (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a; ~~see also Zizek 1989~~). Specifically, the paper attempts to answer the following questions: How has Mugabe manipulated national holidays? To what end has he chosen to celebrate and preside over the performance of the nation during national holidays in such a manner? What do the commemorative speeches mean to the Zimbabwean national identity project? To answer these questions this article uses Mugabe's speeches and performances of the nation during commemorations by subjecting them to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA) one of the theoretical approaches within CDA.

The public media have been central in publicising the activities surrounding the celebrations of these holidays – giving Mugabe and his ZANU-PF a central role in the making of the nation and festivities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009). The coverage of these days is a project worthy of investigation in its own right. This paper limits itself to Mugabe's speeches, usually published in full by the public media which also, interestingly, run some excerpts of the speeches as part of their news coverage a day after the commemorations and usually on the first page. This focus makes this

research path breaking in the context where there has not been an in-depth study on the toxicity of the performances on national holidays and their (ab)use in the construction of national identity in Zimbabwe. However, ~~it is important to add here that~~ this work adds to an already growing body of work literature on nationalism in Zimbabwe. Three important texts that relate to my current research come into mind ~~and these are~~ informative. First is Wendy Willems's (2013) article on the changing meanings, aesthetics and celebrations of Zimbabwe's independence. Like this current article, Willems (2013) is concerned with how ZANU-PF has used the Independence Day celebrations to wage a political 'turf' war against the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Thus the Independence dayDay celebrations transformed from celebrating commemorating the birth of the nation through a bloody war against the colonists into a battle 'through which ZANU-PF sought to justify its own rule [through delegitimising] the MDC as a social force' (Willems 2013, 22). In Second 2009 Ndlovu-Gatsheni wrote a book, *Do Zimbabweans exist?* (2009) wherein he where he questioned questions the prescriptive constructions of the nation by ZANU-PF and concludes ed that Zimbabweans do not exist. He also grapples with the strategies, most of them adulterating the nation, used by ZANU-PF to hail Zimbabweans into an imagined cohesive Zimbabwe. Ndlovu Gatsheni also raises the question of Mugabe's centrality and almost Messianic status in the political matrix of Zimbabwe which he refers to as Mugabeism. This is dealt with later in the article but suffice it to say that Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2009b) text is path-breaking in that it draws from many sources and analyses a number of tactics to demonstrate how ZANU-PF has selfishlyselfishly attempted to construct a nation outside the participation of the masses. Another-Lastly, incisive text by Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems (2009) addresses issues of cultural nationalism, and the politics of commemoration and nation-making through analysing

music galas. The paper addresses the issue of music galas bashes and commemorations, in order to consider the type of nation that was being celebrated, performed and commemorated in the post-2000 period. They use Mugabe's speeches during the holidays to demonstrate the narrow version of citizenship constructed by ZANU PF and Mugabe through the use of public holidays and the 'sell-out' nature of the MDC. This is also raised in this article. This article adds to this already existing literature. citizenship. Besides, There has been a lot of other important and valuable works on Zimbabwe's nationalism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a, Tendi 2008, Kriger 1995 and 2003, Ranger 2004) that have given critical interventions on Zimbabwe's nationalism but few have attempted to give a sustained critique of Mugabe's rhetoric and how he has selfishly used national holidays to give a self-serving narrative that helps preserve his personal and power interests. What makes it unique is that it analyses and subjects Mugabe's speeches during national holidays between 2000 and 2014 to Critical-CDA Discourse Analysis, DHA and Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power. There has been a lot of other important and valuable works on Zimbabwe's nationalism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a, Tendi 2008, Kriger 1995 and 2003, Ranger 2004) that have given critical interventions on Zimbabwe's nationalism but few have attempted to give a sustained critique of Mugabe's rhetoric and how he has selfishly used national holidays to give a self-serving narrative that helps preserve his personal and power interests. Thus this is the entry point of this paper into debates on nationalism in Zimbabwe: the use and subjection to CDA of Mugabe's rhetoric during national holidays between 2000 and 2014 and how these feed into salient themes Mugabe has used to imagine his preferred version of Zimbabwe.

Significantly there is no agreement on the usefulness of national holidays as catalysts for national unity. In a book *National Identity*, Anthony Smith (1991) lists certain artefacts considered important to the construction of national identities and missing from that lengthy catalogue are national holidays. Geisler (2009) argues that national holidays are seen as unstable signifiers hence they need not be taken seriously as enduring signifiers unlike heroes' burial sites, statues, costumes, coinage, anthems, parades and flags among others. ~~Further, national holiday dates are mostly contested and mean different things to different people, as is demonstrated by studies on Western nationalism~~ (Geisler 2009, McCrone 2009, Nyssönen, 2009). ~~What sustains national affections, these studies suggest, are physical, monumental signifiers.~~ However, in a country like Zimbabwe where even the physical monuments are so imposing that they end up emotionally alienating ~~and/or~~ tainted (Mpofu, 2014), where currencies lose value to an extent of being symbols of shame, ridicule, contestation or used as toilet paper, ~~it becomes difficult to appreciate these as national signifiers but as artefacts of ridicule and contestation.~~

In this context, national holidays ~~may be put in the same bracket of importance with these equally important as the~~ artefacts listed by Smith (1991). Thus Lentz's (2013) paper on 2010 independence jubilees in Africa ~~is illuminating as she points out the centrality of national holidays to the nations arguing that. Of particular relevance is Lentz's assertion that~~ the performances of the nation in these days 'reflect the fault lines with which African nation-building has to contend, such as competing political orientations...' (2013, 217). This relates to the performances of the nation in Zimbabwe where Mugabe as a central figure manages the slippery concept of the nation and its discordant contenders (Willems 2013; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009). While the

competing political orientations are silent ~~in my paper here~~, they can easily be intertextually and interdiscursively (~~Titscher and Jenner 2000~~) read from Mugabe's addresses. Lentz's (2013) argument that Independence Day celebrations in Africa are moments of debating the past, present and future and supported by citizens seems not to hold in the Zimbabwean context where holidays are couched as ZANU-PF projects that exclude voices that rail against the dominant discourse set by Mugabe. ~~Masunungure (2005)~~, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a, 2009b), Werbner (1998a and b) and Worby (1998) are some notable scholars who have come close to addressing the toxification of nationalism by Mugabe. Werbner (1998) argues that the performance of these holidays, ~~while much as they are stable in that they occur on set days that have not changed since independence in 1980~~, reveal the fragility of nation formation under Mugabe.

Worby's (1998) research is centred on how power is performed during national holidays and agricultural shows presided over by provincial leaders in the Midlands region. He argues that power, while being performed at the centre by the political elite, is also contested at the periphery - especially by subaltern ~~ethnic groups~~. ~~Worby (1998), focusing on the 1984 Independence Day celebrations, illustrates how Mugabe and ZANU PF used developmentalist and often violent discourses to consolidate their power.~~ What makes my paper's contribution unique is its ~~utilisation and~~ subjection of Mugabe's speeches to CDA and DHA during three holidays at a time when the country is undergoing political, economic and social crises. In addition, this is the time characterised ~~by contested~~ election results and ~~ZANU-PF's~~ intraparty fissures ~~within ZANU PF~~ that recently led to the ~~firing-dismissal~~ of senior party members by Mugabe ~~himself~~ in 2015. This and other violent forms of dealing with difference continues to

hallmark Mugabe's postcolonial nationalist project which can at best, be described as toxic.

The lense of toxicity is also unique to this particular research as it provides a framework to critique the way national holidays have mutated into serving Mugabe's selfish interests. I call [this 'toxification'](#) of national holidays and identities following [American academic](#) Lipman-Bluman's (2011) thesis on toxic leaders. She defines toxic leaders as those who have deliberately harmed their people, organisations and institutions.

Mugabe's behaviour of inhibiting the blossoming of a multiplicity of ethnic, political and social identities to come together in the creation of a Zimbabwean national mosaic could be classified as toxic [along these lines](#). As a toxic leader he is likely to leave the country worse off after his leadership than he found it at independence in 1980, and to in fact reverse the gains the country made in the 1990s.

The itinerary of this article is as follows: it starts by briefly locating Mugabe's speeches and their centrality to 'official' discourse in Zimbabwe. Then follows a discussion on and grounding of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power and CDA and DHA as frameworks. This is [immediately](#) followed by a discussion of the performance of the nation in and during national holidays [by Mugabe](#) starting with Heroes' and Defence Forces' Days, followed by Independence Day [before concluding](#). [The specific focus is on their performances and the textual narratives from Mugabe. Finally a brief discussion on the commemoration of national holidays during and after the GNU ends the discussion.](#)

Presidential speeches

This article looks at Mugabe's speeches as published in *The Herald* newspaper. Media comprise some of the integral institutions as carriers of ideologies in the often conflictual process of national identity construction. Anderson (1991) argues that the formation of Western European nations is inextricably linked to modern developments contingent, among other things, on print capitalism, map, census and museum. This signposts the centrality of the media in the formation and understanding of the nation (Morley, 1992). Elsewhere, Sumartojo (2012, 2) suggests that there are other pre-modern ethnic cultural forms and structural effects linked to national formation such as 'national territory, myths and memories, legal rights and duties, the economy and "a common mass public culture"' where the media cannot be credited with national formation. Zimbabwe's postcolonial nationalism can be said to be informed partly by the collective resistance and subsequent military dismantlement of the colonial system leading to independence in 1980. The capture of the state by Mugabe and ZANU-PF the skewing of the country's history and national identity discourses towards war-centred and patriotism themes.

National holiday celebrations that are the focus of this article are usually addressed by Mugabe in his personal capacity, as state and ZANU-PF president; and also in his role as Commander in Chief of the Defence Forces. Most Zimbabweans cannot make it to the venues and rely on news media like the television, radio or newspapers for reports on what transpired. It is crucial to observe that private media have played an adversarial role in countering Mugabe's dominant narratives – subjecting his speeches, behaviour and rulership to critiques inspired by democracy, human rights and economic liberalisation discourse. This article is concerned with national identity construction as seen through Mugabe's speeches at a time when his political legitimacy faced local and

international resistance, the socio-political and economic of most Zimbabweans was dire leading to mass migration. The use of Mugabe's speeches from *The Herald* suffices for a number of reasons. Mugabe's speeches during these holidays ~~act as~~ are hermeneutical sites for the formation of and amplification of government policy, collective memory and identity. Chang and Hold further suggest that presidential speeches are important rhetorical rituals and 'governing tool[s] since "... presidential speech[es] and action[s] increasingly reflect the opinions that speaking is actually governing'" (Ceaser *et al.*, cited in Chang and Holt 2009, 304). The president, by virtue of the power vested in his office, not only commands the state repressive apparatus, but commands the nation as a whole. In addition, these ceremonial speeches, as shall be demonstrated later, are used to:

strengthen bonds between speaker and listeners and among listeners themselves, building a sense of community. To create a sense of community, they usually create a sense of presence for particular ideas and values. They bring to the forefront of consciousness some value or belief that a group holds but may not have thought much about, which makes people aware that they share important values and beliefs... and draw people together. (Zarefsky 2008: 430)

Language, Symbolic Power and Discourse Historical Approach

This section briefly discusses Symbolic Power, CDA and DHA. Bourdieu defines symbolic power as the power 'to construct reality which tends to establish a gnoseological order; the immediate meaning (*sens*) of the world (particularly of the social world)' (1979, 79). In 1991 he further refined this definition of symbolic power to mean:

A power constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world, and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilisation. (Bourdieu 1991, 170)

The public media and some 'patriotic' scholars have been instrumental in rallying identity debates behind Mugabe's preferred dominant ideologies and, in the process,

producing and justifying the ‘naturalness’ of ‘class divisions among both the dominant and the dominated’ (Girling 2004, 43), where the established socio-politico-economic order is seen ‘as natural (orthodoxy) through masked (and hence misrecognised) imposition of classificatory systems’ (Bourdieu 1979, 82). ~~The~~ ~~you~~ ~~se~~ ~~entities~~ ~~that~~ ~~advance~~ ~~Mugabe~~ ~~and~~ ~~ZANU~~ ~~PF~~ ~~ideologies~~ seem to wield the power of legitimate pronouncement, that is, the power to ‘diagnose, classify, authorise, and represent both individuals and the world, and to have this power of legitimate naming not just taken seriously, but taken-for-granted’ (Loader 1997, 4) by society. ~~Mugabe~~ ~~has~~ ~~attempted~~ ~~to~~ ~~maintain~~ ~~his~~ ~~political~~ ~~legitimacy~~ ~~through~~ ~~the~~ ~~master~~ ~~narrative~~ ~~of~~ ~~‘patriotic’~~ ~~history~~ ~~advanced~~ ~~by~~ ~~patriotic~~ ~~public~~ ~~intellectuals~~ ~~who~~ ~~regularly~~ ~~feature~~ ~~in~~ ~~public~~ ~~media~~ ~~like~~ ~~Sheunesu~~ ~~Mupeperekwi~~, ~~Vimbai~~ ~~Chivaura~~ ~~and~~ ~~Claude~~ ~~Mararike~~ ~~from~~ ~~the~~ ~~University~~ ~~of~~ ~~Zimbabwe~~. ~~There~~ ~~is~~ ~~no~~ ~~variegated~~ ~~debate~~ ~~in~~ ~~public~~ ~~media~~ ~~on~~ ~~Mugabe’s~~ ~~dominant~~ ~~discourses~~ ~~which~~ ~~are~~ ~~rarely~~ ~~contested~~ ~~and~~ ~~have~~ ~~gained~~ ~~a~~ ~~taken-for-granted~~ ~~status~~. ~~As~~ ~~the~~ ~~article~~ ~~progress~~ ~~it~~ ~~becomes~~ ~~clear~~ ~~that~~ ~~Mugabe~~ ~~believes~~ ~~the~~ ~~uncontestable~~ ~~nature~~ ~~of~~ ~~his~~ ~~rhetoric~~ ~~through~~ ~~repeatedly~~ ~~using~~ ~~certain~~ ~~words~~ ~~to~~ ~~describe~~ ~~the~~ ~~opposition~~ ~~or~~ ~~those~~ ~~against~~ ~~his~~ ~~rulership~~ ~~of~~ ~~Zimbabwe~~ ~~for~~ ~~example~~.

~~The~~ ~~DHA~~ ~~is~~ ~~closely~~ ~~related~~ ~~to~~ ~~CDA~~. DHA proposes a multi-dimensional deconstruction of discourse by looking at particular issues in detail, including the historical dimensions and topoi (van Leeuwen 1993, van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). CDA factors in the use of both written and spoken discourse as a form of social practice (Fairclough and Wodak 1997; van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). CDA is used to analyse both “opaque and transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak and Meyer 2001, 2). ~~CDA~~ ~~and~~ ~~DHA~~ ~~These~~ help ~~me~~ ~~one~~ to look beyond the performances and spectacle during these holiday

commemorations, and analyse what their intended net effects are. ~~These three approaches are critical as they position language and communication central to the performances of holiday ceremonies.~~

Defence Forces' and Heroes' Days: Defending and memorialising the nation

The Defence Forces' Day is meant to celebrate the living men and women who serve in the country's security forces while the Heroes' Day is meant to 'remember the gallant liberators who gave up their lives to free this country' (*The Herald*, 11/08/2004). These days are usually characterised by military displays, poetry, sports and music. The highlight is the presidential speech which usually emphasise the history and activities of the defence forces and the role heroes played in liberating Zimbabwe. During the Defence Forces' Day Mugabe gives an overview of their work and ~~future~~ plans. This could be gleaned from a speech in 2004 where Mugabe said 'the Forces have successfully undertaken a number of activities and today's occasion gives them an opportunity to reflect on their past operations as well as come up with relevant future plans' (*The Herald*, 10/08/2005). The 2006 Defence Forces' Day was curious for its theme *Zimbabwe Defence Forces, Safeguarding National Interests*. The subtext is the need to defend the nation from the threat posed by the MDC who, according to ZANU-PF, intended to pawn the country back to the former colonisers. It links with Mugabe's sentiments in the 2004 commemorations ~~where-when~~ he said:

Government will always continue to give priority to the Defence Forces' training and equipment programmes in order to ensure the existence of a credible defence system capable of defending the gains of our hard-won Independence.... ~~The enemy's machinations can never make us forget that we got Zimbabwe after a protracted liberation struggle.~~ (*The Herald*, 11/08/ 2004)

To reiterate, Mugabe has consistently used the discourse of re-colonisation to discredit the pro-democracy movements in an attempt to maintain a stranglehold on power. The suggestion in the extract above is that anyone who challenges ZANU-PF becomes an

enemy and there is an exaggerated sense of danger posed by the MDC hence the need to have a defence system in place. This is strengthened by the narrative that the West is using the MDC to plunder Zimbabwe's gains of independence. ~~Notice how~~ Mugabe subtly clusters the MDCs, the West and the Bretton Woods institutions together as Zimbabwe's enemies:

Since we embarked on redistributing land to the indigenous majority, those who wanted to continue controlling our natural resources not only imposed illegal sanctions against the country, but also withdrew or influenced the withdrawal balance of payments support, and have made every effort to isolate our country from the international community. (Mugabe, 12/08/2007)

The land reform programme was not the sole reason for Zimbabwe's 'punishment' by the West ~~through sanctions~~, but ~~was one of these~~ convenient ones ~~for ZANU-PF's~~ victimhood narrative. It is true that sanctions were imposed on Zimbabwe after the chaotic land reform that largely affected white farm owners and their black labourers but to lay the blame for the country's economic woes solely on the West or sanctions is political expediency. The breakdown of rule of law, corruption, Mugabe's dictatorial tendencies ~~together with the 'targeted' sanctions all~~ also contributed to the country's problems. This is not to rule out intentions by the West to rid Zimbabwe of Mugabe. In 2013 the former president of South Africa said that former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, pressured him into participating in a military regime change project in Zimbabwe. He is quoted as saying:

There were other people saying, 'Yes indeed there are political problems, economic problems, the best way to solve them is regime change. So Mugabe must go'... There is a retired chief of the British armed forces who said he had to withstand pressure ~~... from ... from the then prime minister of the United Kingdom~~ Tony Blair ... who was saying ~~to the chief of the British armed forces;...~~ 'You must work out a military plan so that we can physically remove Robert Mugabe' ... we had come under the same pressure that we need to cooperate in some scheme... even to the point of using military force and we were saying no. (*The Guardian Online*, 2013).

This is not to argue that Mugabe's superintending over a chaotic land reform was done with the interests of the landless majority at heart but it was meant for political survival in the face of a collapsing economy, high inflation, strong political opposition and high

unemployment rates with an increasingly disillusioned populace some of whom actively participated in labour unrests and food riots of the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The Heroes' Day is usually commemorated at the National Heroes' Acre, a controversial shrine that has been contested as having lost its national appeal, as seemingly only ZANU-PF members, even those who did not participate in the war of liberation (Willems 2013) are conferred a hero status and their remains interred there (Mpofu 2014). According to *The Herald*, 'The Heroes' Day was set aside as a public holiday so that Zimbabweans can have a chance to remember the gallant fighters who died during the liberation struggle against white settler rule' (*The Herald*, 10/08/2004). In the same vein it is defined by Mugabe as a day of 'underscoring the centrality, indeed, the inviolability of the liberation struggle in the past, present and future life of our country. *Zimbabwe ndeyeropa! Zimbabwe sayithola ngempi!* [Trans: Zimbabwe was won through the spilling of blood!]' (*The Herald*, 10/08/2004). Further, in 2013 Mugabe said about the day:

[it] is a revered national custom of commemorating and paying tribute to the fallen and living heroes of our liberation struggle, whose blood and suffering brought the cherished one-man-one-vote, the land and independence we call ours. (*The Herald*, 13/08/2013)

The rhetoric around blood spilled during the liberation war connects the living and departed blacks to their destiny and dreams of an independent and democratic Zimbabwe. Besides, the presidential speeches in the period under study demonstrate 'our resolve and pledge that Zimbabwe shall never be a colony again' (*The Herald*, 10/08/2004) and this calls for a militant ~~and aggressive~~ defence of the nation and willingness to shed blood for the cause as did the liberation war fighters. ~~So~~ These days are sites of ~~celebration commemoration, as much as~~ moments to send messages to the country's enemies ~~while~~ ~~and for~~ persuading Zimbabweans to ~~stand behind~~ support

Mugabe in the face of the “colonial masters and their puppets”. In the face of uncertainty and vulnerability, characterised by alternative narratives on democracy and competing political loyalties, Mugabe has not only militarised his regime (Saul and Saunders 2005) but has ~~reworked and~~ appropriated different myths, symbols and traditions and presented these as fundamental to the survival of the nation. Another myth that has gained a taken-for-granted status is that the MDC was working on selling ‘our’ gains of independence to the British hence ‘we’ needed to protect these - leading to the ‘Zimbabwe will never be a colony again’ slogan circulated in the official public sphere. The rituals at the Heroes’ Acre where Heroes’ Day is commemorated are structured in a complex way where at one moment the masses ~~are put on~~ are relegated to the margins and, at another, made to feel as part of the proceedings.

The coerced participation of citizens gives an impression that they are rubberstamping in approval the bureaucratic ways Mugabe and ZANU-PF employ in dispensing state power when in fact their role in the whole performance is that of a captive audience. State power here is performed as a nexus of bureaucracy, ritual and discourse which pretends to be less determined by Mugabe alone but is instead displayed as ‘open governance’ where ‘people’ feel involved in its acquisition and performance. National holidays and monuments like the Heroes’ Acre ~~for example~~ have proven crucial sites for Mugabe’s production of dominant narratives on the nation especially at critical points of political and economic crises. ZANU-PF’s heightened nationalism discourse, hailing Zimbabweans into sacred communion, is accompanied by narratives on the need to preserve ZANU-PF and Mugabe’s legacy and contribution to the country’s independence - itself a convoluted patriotic history (Ranger, 2004) written by ZANU-PF patriotic scholars-for Mugabe’s political survival. Memories of the past (especially

colonial) experiences are therefore important to Mugabe's political survival project as these are recalled for 'Zimbabweans' to make sense of their past, history and future.

The following extract from Mugabe's speech captures the preceding points:

This national shrine [Heroes' Acre], ...is a place of renewal and re-dedication that strengthens our resolve and pledge that Zimbabwe shall never be a colony again. For, as we look at the pantheon of heroes and heroines who make our roll call today, what greater challenge, what greater patriotism is there, than to faithfully and resolutely guard that which cost us tens of thousands of lives to achieve? Where would our honour be if we were intimidated by imperialism's tired trickery into letting go of our scared land? (*The Herald*, 10/07/2004)

Mugabe uses the sacrifice of those who died for the liberation struggle to emotionally connect his listener to the land. Missing from the narrative are the reasons for taking land after 20 years of independence especially considering land was a clarion call for the liberation war. In addition those who died need to be respected and honoured by the living and this could only be done through rejecting the MDC which stands for colonialism and returning the 'scared' land to the whites. Through this remembering, national insiders and outsiders are defined as those who are working with imperialists and refuse to honour the heroes in the way Mugabe admonishes. Mugabe occupies the high moral ground and presents himself as a servant of the people and custodian of national unity. Many of those grovelling for favours from Mugabe have labelled him a son of God – the only one ordained to lead Zimbabwe. Notice how he appropriates the Messianic office and calls the deviants to repentance:

Those who seek unity must not be enemies... Those who would go together with our enemies abroad cannot at the same time want to march alongside us as our partners in the nation-building efforts that are underway. We say no to them, they must first repent. There is room for them to repent, there is room for them to say we were wrong ~~yesterday, we shall not be wrong tomorrow...~~ (*The Herald*, 16/08/2003)

Mugabe is the one who can prescribe the desired code of conduct for belonging to the nation. This is informed by the misleading belief that it is ZANU-PF which was at the forefront of the war of liberation and therefore the rightful party with the title deeds to political power and national destiny. Controversially, ZANU-PF has used patriotic

history and memory to argue that the history of the nation cannot be told without it anchoring the narrative. This is concomitant to Elgenius's observation that '[C]ontrolling the past is very much related to the formation of dominant narratives that help control the present' (2011, 405). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009b, 1) argues that this incontrovertible monologic brand of nationalism enables ZANU-PF and 'its leaders to claim control over the direction of national history; responsibility for the birth of the nation; uncontested right to perpetual power in Zimbabwe' and the constitution of nationhood. The role ZANU-PF has played in the birth of the nation, even though selectively told, justifies the current social, political and economic order and legitimises the political power configurations that suggest that only Mugabe is God-ordained to lead the country. Nothing clearly demonstrates this than the narratives of the liberation struggle that, when not told on the Heroes' Day celebration, find their way into the Independence Day commemorations as discussed below.

Independence Day: victimhood and heroism in nationhood formation

Independence Day commemorations magnify, to a large extent, the Heroes' Day celebrations as they are intimately linked to Mugabe's sometimes militaristic discourses on the constitution of the national identity in perilous times. In 1984 Worby observed the Independence Day celebrations choreography at a time when the decolonisation process was running concurrently with a fully blossoming genocide in the newly independent Zimbabwe. He describes the displays of grandeur and power thus:

For a truly national spectacle, this event was an unmistakable pastiche: the British vehicles of state - an out-sized and curvaceous Rolls - brought forward the figurehead president, Canaan Banana, and behind him in a black Mercedes, the real power, then Prime Minister Robert Mugabe...the army - appeared in brightly coloured uniforms to engage in the kind of stiffly sequenced movements that embodied months of study in the Maoist art of mass performance. ~~Indeed, the distinctly Chinese character of the orchestration was soon confirmed by the slogans pictured by thousands of card bearers in the stands, a kind of instant, vivid graffiti intended to make legible and literal the marching formations, parachute manoeuvres, and spectacular flyovers by Soviet-supplied MIG bombers.~~ The inscriptions that year advertised the virtues and values of socialist reconstruction. I remember watching avidly as the slogans promising Health Care for All, Education with Production, and so on, followed one another with a certain

bemusing magicality - that is until the last mural of cards was thrust up with an abrupt and ominous finality. 'Crush Dissidents', it read. (Worby 1998, 565)

The first decade (1980-1990) is similar in terms of tensions to that of 2000-2014 of Zimbabwe's independence. In both periods Mugabe faced unprecedented and strong political opposition and had no other means to deal with opponents besides violence and vulgar often xenophobic or racist labels. Whereas the Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF-ZAPU) was the enemy then, this position is now occupied by opposition parties, white farmers, Western governments, NGOs and others.

Most of Zimbabwe's independence celebrations are used to propagate a version of history that borders on 'patriotic' history anchored on selective memorialisation of the nation. This 'patriotic' history is not only used by Mugabe to demarcate the nation racially through the use of such binaries as white and black, but also uses the insiders/outside, indigenous/aliens and sell-outs/patriots labels; a clear demonstration of 'the atavistic belief that identities can be maintained and secured only by eliminating difference and otherness' (Benhabib 1996, 3). This version of history departs from the nationalist historiography that Mugabe espoused soon after independence. 'Patriotic' history has been intimately married to Mugabeism[†] and this has been conspicuous especially during commemorative events where Mugabe becomes a 'prominent victim of certain historical developments' (Lentz 2013, 226) like incarceration during colonial times and the interference of the West in Zimbabwe's domestic affairs through the

[†] *Mugabeism according to Ndlovu Gatsheni (2009, 1139-1141) is a constellation of: 'political controversies, political behaviour, political ideas, utterances, rhetoric and actions that have crystallised around Mugabe's political life... a populist phenomenon... marked by ideological simplicity, emptiness, vagueness, imprecision, and multi-class character'.*

MDC including assassination attempts. To illustrate his victim-cum-hero status,

Mugabe asserts:

I lost eleven years of my life in the jail of a white man whose freedom and well-being I have assured from the first day of Zimbabwe's independence... I bear scars of [colonial] tyranny (Mugabe, 2007).

We have heard that Mr Tsvangirai went and planned with some whites to be given US\$500 000 to behead President Mugabe. So do they think if they behead me this revolution would stop? ... I survived many bombs even when we were in Mozambique. Throughout the war many bombs were sent to me through parcels and letters. (*The Herald*, 17/04/2002)

What is clear from the extracts is that the white man is evil while Mugabe is a saint. The white man jailed Mugabe – the highest form of oppression- while Mugabe guaranteed the white man's well-being – the highest form of sainthood. The white man is also willing to bribe blacks into killing Mugabe and the latter has been steadfast in fighting for Zimbabwe as explained in the second extract. Similarly, it is instructive to note that Mugabe's appropriation of 'collective' victimhood is accompanied by the use of nationalist history, cogently diluting it with 'patriotic collective memory' to his advantage. This is clearly demonstrated below:

We also cannot forget the refugees and others - men, women and the children who were cut down in cold blood, often tattered book in hand, at Nyadzonja, Chimoio, Tembue, Mkuushi, Luangwa, Solwezi, where to this day, they lie buried in mass graves. Even in their death, we could not grant them the dignity of a grave each. How could we, given their severed limbs, their bodies burnt and charred beyond recognition? (*The Herald*, 12/11/2002)

Above Mugabe, through pathos, evokes emotive experiences in an attempt to inculcate a sense of collective loss, makes a call for patriotism from citizens and offers what he wishes to be a collective view of the West or those perceived to be associated with the colonial dispensation as the country's enemies. The use of the deictic expressions or first person plural pronoun 'we' 'us' and 'our' in most of his addresses denotes what Wodak et al. (2010, 45) describe as to 'verbally annex and usurp... [where] a speaker can unite himself and his audience into a single "community sharing a common destiny" by letting fall into oblivion all differences in origin, confession, class and lifestyle...'.

This buttresses the notion of indigeneity by pointing the former brutal foe and suggesting ‘him’ to be unchanging while ‘we’ have changed to accommodate ‘him’.

~~More than anything,~~ Mugabe’s nationalism has, over the years, morphed into an increasingly racist and tribalistic brand testifying to his toxicity as a leader (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a; see Saul and Saunders 2005). However, that the white community failed to integrate into the Zimbabwean post-colonial society is not debatable as evidence suggests that after independence white people lived as a separate nation within Zimbabwe through segregated interactions by exclusively participating in what became known as white sports tennis, cricket, bowling, swimming and rugby. They also socialised at sports clubs most of which were exclusively white (see Mpofu 2014 and Fisher 2010).

During independence celebrations, public media juxtapose Mugabe’s narratives of a heroic past hailing citizens not to ‘merely remember but remember triumph’ (Esbenshade 1995, 72) with those of suffering under colonialism. For instance in April 2002, while addressing a pre-independence party for children, Mugabe expressed this triumphalism thus:

They (the British government) used to suppress us and when we fought we were fighting for democracy, they cannot teach us democracy, it is us who taught them democracy, they should shut their stupid mouths. That is why we say let the outsiders keep out and not interfere with our domestic affairs, we are an independent people, all our children are independent and we do not need anyone to tell us what to do and least of all those we pushed out. (*The Herald*, 17/04/2011).

Accordingly, the suggestion in the above sentiments is that since Mugabe helped liberate the country, it is political deviance for anyone to challenge him. Mugabe’s brand of democracy, which here is narrowly reduced to liberating the country from colonialism rejects the conventional democracy characterised by freedom, human rights and justice. Thus Mugabeism exposes its contradictory nature when the narrative of the

nation is reduced to decolonisation and nothing further especially concerning the behaviour of the post-colonial ruling elite. The post-colonial Zimbabwe is one characterised by racism, nepotism, tribalism, anti-colonial discourse, anti-democratic and inconsistent on any policy. Also, colonial memory and patriotic history are used and passed on to children in an attempt to capture and instil in them a strong sense of community. Bodner (cited in Osborne 2001, 9) expounds on this by saying that ‘dogmatic formalism’ of ‘official memory is advanced by the elites who are committed to social unity, the continuity of particular institutions, and the cultivation of loyalty to them...’ Mugabe’s addresses on national holidays besides demonstrating some aspects of toxic leadership help salvage his political legitimacy and maintain dominant narratives on nationhood making both he and ZANU-PF the fulcrum of such discourses.

Besides the victimhood narrative, the president employs triumphalist discourse in an attempt to reclaim his seemingly waning political hegemony in his party and nation. This is done through footnoting of PF-ZAPU and ZIPRA-rival nationalist movement and its military wing respectively and deploying a skewed triumphal discourse attributed only to ZANU-PF and its military wing, ZANLA, a clear attempt at cementing Mugabe and ZANU-PF’s hegemony in Zimbabwe’s body politic. The romanticised accounts constructed under the hangover of nationalist triumphalism fail to pay due regard to the various actors in the liberation war of the country cultivating a sense of entitlement to continue ruling Zimbabwe by Mugabe.

Historical events, especially the war of liberation, are mostly used to bring forth this theme of triumphalism. A number of extracts quoted at length help qualify this assertion:

We use the day to affirm to them that the **same spirit of patriotism, which propelled their valiant sons and daughters to battle, today immanently pervades and guards this nation, quick to chastise any of its citizens who**

dare betray the cause by pawning our hard-won Independence. Dear Zimbabweans, it gives me immeasurable pleasure to be able to tell you that the land which, for over a century and a decade we yearned to recover, has indeed finally come back. It has been delivered back to you who are its rightful owners. ~~It has come back, notwithstanding the obstacles presented at every step of the way, by powerful western interests....~~ **Even our own detractors grudgingly acknowledge the strides we have made in education and manpower development, health and child welfare, horticulture and forestry, mining and infrastructural development.** (*The Herald*, 19/08/2003) (Emphasis added).

Today, we once again celebrate, as free and proud Zimbabweans, our country's anniversary of Independence. We celebrate this 24th anniversary of our freedom with a stronger sense of unity and cohesion at home, and a strong sense of place and identity internationally. We face the future with confidence, hope and dignity... The last four years presented us a number of challenges and real trials for our country. **Yet they have been years also of break-throughs arising from our firm and indomitable stand on matters of national sovereignty and economic freedom, the high point being the fulfillment of our liberation war goal of recovering and regaining the ownership and control of our land, and distributing it to our people.** (*The Herald*, 19/08/2004) (Emphasis added).

This birth followed bitter struggles and wars of resistance waged by our people for nearly a century, struggles meant to dislodge British settler colonialism, which in 1890, had planted itself on our soil through force of arms. (*The Herald*, 19/08/2005) (Emphasis added).

...hard-won Independence and freedom from the shackles of British colonialist and imperialist domination... Government will continue to allocate significant resources to ensure sustained defence of our hard-won Independence, sovereignty and self-determination... resilience... [to have] resisted the brazen attempts of our **detractors, openly working in cahoots with their shameless local puppets, to reverse the gains our Independence through their 'regime change' agenda.** (*The Herald*, 19/08/2007) (Emphasis added).

These summarise most of Mugabe's post-2000 speeches since independence. From these statements, it is evident that Mugabe historicises Zimbabwe's wars at different epochs, praising his supporters and vilifying his opponents. He evokes the suffering of those who fought in the liberation struggle to invoke his listeners' commitment, unity and support to his policies central of which is the land and economic freedom. First, there is the battle to free the country from colonialists; second, the one to repossess the land and third, to ward off threats from former colonisers who want to 'reverse the gains of our independence' through their 'shameless local puppets'. In these statements Mugabe exercises and enacts power through discourse (Fairclough 2001). Mugabe, as a

president, has access to fame, respect and social power which he uses to control the minds and actions of the people (van Dijk 1997) and manufacture consent. Mugabeism is also used here to hail Zimbabweans into the imagined nation through the use of appealing words like 'we', 'our' 'people' and 'dear Zimbabweans'. This subjective positioning of Zimbabweans as a collectivity, as a family, with Mugabe as a father who speaks authoritatively and persuasively about where Zimbabwe, as a family, has come from is met with challenges of other members in this imagined family as he continues to speak strongly against enemies from outside and within. In addition, Zimbabwe is largely defined by the politics of ethnicity and this has defined power relations for a long time. The collective 'we' that Mugabe uses masks this. Appealing to people as a generic 'we' erases especially ethnic boundaries that define Zimbabwean politics helping consolidate national affections pivoted by land and the economy. Much as national holidays are commemorative events in 'time and space' meant to 'reinforce' affections of nationhood, Mugabe has used these to wage 'wars' against his real or perceived enemies within and without Zimbabwe. In the process the discourse is carried out in a belligerent one sided manner displaying little regard to other issues also clamouring for attention such as human rights, economy and development, thus rendering these national days contaminated.

The speeches appear as diversion from the real political and economic issues bedevilling the nation, and as attempts to instil fear of the state's repressive apparatus in the citizenry. Even though the structure of power in the nation is clearly top-down, Mugabe gives people an impression that power lies with them and whatever the leadership of the country does is informed by, works to the benefit of, and is done with the blessings of the 'masses'. In most addresses, Mugabe salutes patriotic Zimbabweans

for being heroic and withstanding the enemy's attempts to recolonise Zimbabwe. The subtext in celebrating the heroic stance of the 'valiant sons and daughters (*The Herald*, 19/08/2003) who participated in the 'bitter struggles and wars ... to dislodge British settler colonialism' (*The Herald*, 19/08/2005) seems to be an attempt at justifying the use of violence against those perceived as enemies of the country so as a way of preserving 'our hard won independence and freedom' and prevent our 'detractors... their shameless local puppets' from reversing 'the gains of our independence' (*The Herald*, 19/08/2007). This, again, buttresses the argument that Mugabe is a toxic leader who picks and chooses, according to the moment, certain behaviours and rhetoric to exhibit and advance for certain political ends (Lipman-Blumen 2005). According to Lipman-Blumen (2005, 19-20) toxic leaders use some tactics such as:

deliberately feeding their followers illusions that enhance the leader's power and impair the followers' capacity to act independently; playing to the "basest fears and needs of their followers and others; "stifling constructive criticism and teaching supporters (sometimes by threats and authoritarianism) to comply with . . . the leader's judgment and actions . . . identifying scapegoats and inciting others to castigate them... and ... ignoring or promoting incompetence, cronyism, and corruption

The dear leader mentality thus cultivated narrows the scope of national identity debates, as is demonstrated by these state controlled and dominated media and rituals that, even though giving an impression of the state-as-people-centred, it remains toxic, elite and aloof. In the process, the vanquished colonial enemy and its 'puppets' are defined, threatened and embarrassed. Fear of re-colonisation is planted into the hearts of ordinary Zimbabweans, and, instead of offering solutions Mugabe perpetuates what Lipman-Blumen calls 'building a totalitarian and narrowly dynastic regime[s]' (2011, 337). Mugabe presents himself as the only entity with solutions to the country's challenges and, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, gives assurance that the country is safe. The following extract demonstrates this:

Cde Mugabe inspected the Guard of Honour after which detachments from the country's security forces forming the guard declared: "Zimbabwe is a sovereign State,

we shall defend it with our blood”, to the delight of the thousands in attendance. Some of the people in the crowd held up banners with messages such as “Zimbabwe has no place for sell-outs” and “Independence and Sovereignty for all times”. (*The Herald*, 19/04/2007)

Ultimately, Independence Day, like other celebrations, not only marks black majority rule but positions Mugabe and ZANU-PF on a higher moral ground as the only central entities to the wellbeing and political stability of Zimbabwe. While relevant and important to any democratic country, the theme of sovereignty gained currency since the early 2000 and this was expediently used to defend Zimbabwe against anyone who questioned Mugabe’s dictatorial style of leadership. These events are used to advance Mugabe’s narrow and politically limited discourse on national identity because they do not allow for the circulation of alternative versions of national identity being felt especially by the minority, marginalised and demonised sections of the broader society. Those who challenge him are labelled ‘sell-outs’ and alien to the nation. This again justifies their humiliation, annihilation and other exclusionary forms that distance patriots and other true Zimbabweans from them.

Independence Day and other mythologies used in nationhood construction in public media make Mugabe a central and celebrated figure—a person of national significance. For instance, Independence Day celebrations are sometimes punctuated by rituals such as ZANU-PF Women’s league leading the crowds in songs that praise Mugabe. One of the songs goes thus: ‘*VaMugabe Ndimambo, shumba inogara yega musango*’ [Trans: Mugabe is a King. He is a lion that lives alone in the wild] (*The Herald*, 19/04/2004). Two extracts from *The Herald* below help to illustrate how the fundamental ideology behind the liberation struggle as per ZANU-PF’s script of national liberation war history is underpinned by Mugabeism. First, the Minister of Local Government Ignatius Chombo, argues that Mugabe is an embodiment of the liberation struggle. The second

assertion buttresses this through suggesting that Mugabe's decision to participate in the liberation war defined the country's destiny:

The venue where we are gathered is significant ~~for a number of reasons...~~ Gwanzura Stadium is adjacent to Zimbabwe Grounds, which we all know was the place where Cde Mugabe made his historic speech in 1980. ~~Furthermore...~~ this place is walking distance from Cde Mugabe's home in New Canaan and ~~so by all means...~~ this is what can be called the cradle of our liberation.... Our leader, His Excellency Cde Mugabe spent 11 years in jail and many more at the forefront of the liberation struggle... (*The Herald*, 19/07/2008)

[T]he turning point in Zimbabwe's liberation was ~~indeed on...~~ April 4, 1975, when Cde Mugabe crossed into Mozambique... to start the armed struggle in a military adventure that finally brought independence to Zimbabwe. (*The Herald*, 18/04/2006)

Between 2000 and 2011, independence, just like other national holiday speeches, presidential speeches were usually laced with war language demonstrating ~~Mugabe's~~ deep seated fears and ~~also a~~ determination in protecting the 'country's sovereignty' ~~'rule of law'~~ and alert the nation to its past and present threats. On these days Mugabe gives an update on the state of the nation calling Zimbabweans to:

remain united and vigilant against threats to its sovereignty manifesting in people and organisations purporting to be champions of democracy. ... We celebrate this 24th anniversary ... with a stronger sense of unity and cohesion at home, and a strong sense of place and identity internationally... The last four years presented us a number of challenges and real trials for the country. Yet [we managed by] ... indomitable stand on matters of national sovereignty and... regaining the ownership and control of our land, and distributing it to our people. (*The Herald*, 21/04/2004).

Here ZANU-PF is portrayed as a party that has safeguarded the country's sovereignty and restored the people's dignity through the land reform. There is no denying the importance of land in agrarian based African communities but in the context of ZANU-PF it is used as a substitute for valid arguments for democracy. The 'report back' sessions by Mugabe are made into moments of collective national pride and reflection. Lentz rightly says the ultimate goal in these 'condensed moments of nation-building and state-making [is to enhance] citizens' emotional attachments to their country' and leadership (2013, 218). They also encourage them to work towards goals determined by the elite especially when the report suggests achievements and also 'sharp self-criticism for opportunities missed and the frustrating shortcomings that continue to punctuate

daily life' (Lentz 2013, 218). Mugabe occupies the role of a servant who is elected, then reports back. Legitimacy here is built not only through displays of repressive state apparatus embedded in pageantry, pomp and fanfare but also through communicating successes, challenges and failures. For Mugabe's continual stay in power to be justified the past (colonialism) is compared with the current dispensation and how good 'we' are as 'we have done much more':

... in the 25 years which have gone by. We have built schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities. We have trained teachers and expanded education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. We have educated our children and with a literacy rate of well over 86 percent.... We have also built health institutions ~~throughout the country and have...~~ stepped up the training of health personnel, albeit against the challenges of induced skills flight. ~~Today, every community has a clinic or health centre...~~ Dramatic gains have been registered in opening up rural areas through greater infrastructural development. From a road and rail network designed to serve white interests, we have expanded the road network to bring hitherto neglected rural areas ... We have expanded rural electrification, covering the far reaches of our country... ~~Our water sector has also enjoyed huge investments....~~ We have built many dams of all sizes in all provinces... ~~we have built schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities and electrified rural areas.~~ (The Herald, 19/04/2005)

The same past 25 years ~~have been~~ characterised by genocide, xenophobia, racism, underdevelopment especially in the Manicaland, Midlands and Matabeleland regions of the country. Thus Mugabe selectively tells a one sided story knowing fully well that he has social power to ~~advance his~~ advance his ideologies so as to coerce Zimbabweans into sympathising with him. Postcolonial development patterns are set against colonial systems that, according to Mugabe, are represented by the MDC and continue to haunt the nation as:

We... paid the price of British bondage for ninety long and arduous years of systematic assault and injury to body and soul as a Nation under occupation. To this day we bear the lasting scars of that dark encounter with colonialism, often described as civilising. (The Herald, 19.04.2005).

This turns independence celebrations into arenas 'of more or less open political campaigning' (Lentz 2013, 218) and vilification of those who express different opinions. Also, 'patriotic' history and memory are used to look back and show how

odious the colonists were compared to the humane Mugabe government. In the process citizens are expected to be grateful to ZANU-PF for bringing about the one-man-one vote democratic system justifying, covertly, the use of violence especially against 'opponents' and their supporters. Mugabe's assertions that: 'The one-person-one-vote we have enjoyed since 1980 is a gain from our liberation struggle. Let it be remembered that it was the bullet that brought the ballot', (*The Herald*, 19/04/05) demonstrate this. True to that, Mugabe has presided over a political system whose versions of democracy remain mysterious ~~and where~~ violence is ~~a tool used~~ to address differences. ~~According to Mugabe Thus~~ the gun (violence), has to protect the vote (~~Blair 2002, and Meredith 2002, Mpofu 2014~~) leading to a narrow definition of democracy as 'one-man-one-vote' something that has been a point of contention between Mugabe and his critics who have pointed out how the party has become increasingly intolerant towards dissent, violently treated its opponents, and disregarded human rights since 2000.

GNU and national holidays

~~The GNU period saw the continuation of frosty relationship between ZANU-PF, opposition and the West. However, there was an improvement in the economy as captured by Mugabe's Independence Day speech in 2011. The GNU was meant to mend the political crisis that arose when ZANU-PF lost the 2008 election but refused to relinquish power to MDC. The solution to the impasse was a power sharing agreement between two formations of MDC and ZANU-PF. National holiday celebrations saw an attempt by ZANU-PF at toning down the events from being party commemorations into inclusive national ones through extending a friendly gesture towards the MDCs. One way of doing this was 'to ban wearing of any party regalia' (Willems 2013, 29). It also~~

saw Mugabe want to re-engage with the West, adopting the rhetoric of inclusivity. In a Heroes Day speech Mugabe said:

Recently, we have sought to re-engage the European Union on the issue of the immediate removal of the evil sanctions that are hurting our people. But no sooner had we started the re-engagement than we realised that the European Union is far from being sincere, as the bloc keeps on shifting goal posts. The European Union and America are keen to have our people continue suffering under the evil sanctions. Let all Zimbabweans unite on this matter, and with one voice, continue to demand their removal. (*The Herald*, 12/08/2010)

The 're-engagement' with the MDCs, hitherto seen as puppets of the West led to ZANU PF's re-engagement with the West—the masters. The extract above suggests the insincerity of the West and by implication that the MDC could not be trusted even in the coalition. This maybe the reason the opposition leaders were not give active roles during national holiday celebrations but resorted to boycotting and issuing statements via their websites and alternative media. Interestingly Mugabe's views of the GNU were not consistent but fractious. The following extracts support this assessment. The first is a quote from Mugabe's Independence Day speech in 2011, and the second extract is from a speech delivered on Heroes' Day in 2013 soon after the controversial elections he won:

The Global Political Agreement, with missed targets here and there, and outright misunderstanding on others, continued to be implemented... it laid the firm foundations for the prevailing political and macroeconomic stability in the country. (*The Herald*, 19/04/2011)

May I also thank you most sincerely for bringing to an end the unproductive Inclusive Government and for restoring your confidence in the ZANU PF government. (*The Herald*, 14/08/2013)

The above illustrates the ambiguity and slippery nature of national identity, imagined by Mugabe during the GNU period. In this period it was clear that ZANU PF was in charge of the country and MDC played a subservient role. The negative labels accorded the MDC were suspended when expedient to Mugabe only to appear unedited after the July 2013 elections. The above statements also bring to question ZANU PF's sincerity in the GNU. The end of the GNU and the winning of the disputed election in 2013 gave

~~Mugabe a chance at political regeneration—another facet of Mugabeism. The West, that is, Britain and America, remained with the label of consistent evil enemies during the GNU. During a Heroes’ Day address Mugabe retorted: ‘we have some mad people in Europe who are defying international law...’~~

Conclusion

In conclusion the article has demonstrated how Mugabe has evoked three classical rhetoric concepts in his ceremonial speeches and these are ‘ethos (presenting themselves as competent public officials and speakers), pathos (creating positive emotions and connotations in the minds of the listeners), and logos (appealing to logical reasoning)’ to affect and connect with the audiences (Sharif and Abdullah 2014, 322). He has used national holidays as some of the most enduring central stimuli to national affections not only meant as sites to ‘govern... sustain established national symbols and meanings’ (Chang and Holt 2009, 305) or amplify government policy but also to carve not a collaborative form of national identity but a dictatorial, racist, exclusive and narrow one. Instead of being days for advocating for unity, progress and diversity these days have turned into policy pronouncements, divisive and agenda setting fora for the rest of the year by Mugabe. Instead of being moments of nation-building and state-making in Zimbabwe they have assumed a toxic nature through the way they have been used for selfish ends with an openly anti-Blair, anti-British and anti-MDC obsession that are not the sole sources of Zimbabwe’s predicament. It is clear from the foregoing that Mugabe’s ‘processes of identity construction, maintenance and transformation are inextricably linked to processes of marginalization, stigmatization and exclusion’ (Mehelj et al. 2009, 41). Through these holidays Mugabe, on behalf of ZANU-PF, has forcefully used colonial memory, toxic leadership tactics and a mixture of staged victimhood and triumphalism to conjure up a history that argues for his legitimacy and

dominance in Zimbabwe's politics. These performances have served a critical function. They have not only of obfuscated what is negative about Mugabe but citizens have been turned property of ZANU-PF and made players in the nation-building process through well-orchestrated and deceptive performances of state power, coercion and modes of address, albeit at the periphery. Mugabe has manufactured a national identity that has 'crystallised around the ideology of [land, war and has sought to] impose [himself] on the Zimbabwean political landscape through a combination of persuasion and violence' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011, 2). The ideology of the liberation struggle is anchored in settling disputes (like the land reform) violently while conveniently calibrating the nation along racial and ethnic lines – suggesting the uneasiness, fragility and unpredictability of Mugabe's imagined Zimbabwe. During the period under study the citizens, according to Bartov writing in a different context, are compelled to 'conform to a definition they might not share, based on categories imposed ~~on them...~~ by a... political regime' (Bartov 2000, 92) instead of 'confirming, contesting and confronting their identities' in a democratic manner (Bechhofer and McCrone 2009, 3). Ultimately Mugabe's ~~use and~~ performance of the nation in these holidays has consolidated his power through commanding the nation and occupying a high moral ground from where he lectures, commands and promises to punish deviating citizens on Zimbabweanness.

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