Abstract: This article examines how the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) sought to inscribe a nationalist monologic history in Zimbabwe in order to prop up its claim to be the progenitor and guardian of the postcolonial nation. Since its formation in 1963, it has worked tirelessly to claim to be the only authentic force with a sacred historic mission to deliver the colonized people from settler colonial rule. To achieve this objective, ZANU-PF has deployed the ideology of chimurenga in combination with the strategy of gukurahundi as well as a politics of memorialization to install a particular nationalist historical monologue of the nation. After attaining power in 1980, it proceeded to claim ownership of the birth of the nation. While the ideology of chimurenga situates the birth of the nation within a series of nationalist revolutions dating back to the primary resistance of the 1890s, the strategy of gukurahundi entails violent and physical elimination of enemies and opponents. But this hegemonic drive has always encountered an array of problems, including lack of internal unity in ZANU-PF itself, counternarratives deriving from political formations like the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU); labor movements; and critical voices from the Matebeleland region, which fell victim to gukurahundi strategy in the 1980s. With the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999, which soon deployed democracy and human rights discourse to critique the ideology of chimurenga and the strategy of gukurahundi, ZANU-PF hegemony became extremely shaky and it eventually agreed to share power with the MDC in February 2009.

Introduction

How can the contemporary political history of Zimbabwe be made sense of, particularly the case of a single political party (ZANU-PF and its president, Robert Mugabe), which claims to be the alpha and omega of leadership of the country through its declaration that it alone has primal legitimacy deriving not from elections, but from active participation in the epic anti-colonial struggle?1 Does this mean that the political trajectory of Zimbabwe went from colonial domination that was highly intolerant of African involvement in governance to postcolonial domination by a single nationalist political party that is equally intolerant of opposition? The reality is that the southern African region, the last part of the continent to undergo decolonization and a region still ruled by political parties that emerged as liberation movements (FRELIMO in Mozambique, MPLA in Angola, SWAPO in Namibia, and ANC in South Africa) reveals, in varying degrees, a common political culture of intolerance of opposition, or what Henning Melber (2008, 2009) terms the “limits to liberation.”

Zimbabwe under ZANU-PF is a leader in terms of intolerance of opposition and deployment of violence against political opponents. At the beginning of 2000 a number of leading members of the party were sanctioned by the
Western powers for their violation of human rights, especially during election times. In 2001 the U.S. Congress passed the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA), whose terms included what became known as “targeted sanctions”/“smart sanctions” directed at President Mugabe and his close associates. During the same period the European Union imposed a similar set of sanctions. These sanctions mainly took the form of travel bans for specific ZANU-PF leaders, but ZANU-PF has taken advantage of them to exonerate itself from any responsibility for the economic meltdown that Zimbabwe experienced after 2000. The Western powers, for their part, have vowed to maintain these sanctions as long as ZANU-PF is not showing any paradigm shift from authoritarianism and violence to democracy and tolerance of opposition (see Masaka 2012). The ZANU-PF leaders have reacted by stating that unless sanctions are removed, they will not cooperate in terms of implementation of the SADC-brokered Global Political Agreement of September 2008 that gave birth to the current inclusive government whereby power is shared by ZANU-PF, MDC-T, and MDC-N.2

This article seeks to provide a historical explanation of the “limits to liberation” that is predicated on an explication of chimurenga ideology and the strategy of gukurahundi as two pillars of ZANU-PF’s drive for hegemony. The term chimurenga was derived from Murenga, a Shona precolonial religious leader identified by the historian Terence Ranger (1967) as actively involved in the 1896–97 war of resistance, who provided desperately needed ideological support to the African fighting forces. While it is not clear whether he worked closely with historically important spirit mediums (such as Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi), Murenga is said to have administered traditional war medicine to the African fighters that would make them invulnerable and immune to white forces’ bullets. When ZANU-PF embarked on armed liberation struggle beginning in the late 1960s, it harkened back to the primary resistance of 1896–97 as it formulated its liberation ideology, sought oracular blessing from the Shona religion, and claimed to be continuing the unfinished liberation struggle that had begun in the late nineteenth century.

“Chimurenga,” therefore, became the rallying cry for ZANU-PF and the foundation for a complex, politically usable narrative in ZANU-PF’s bid to construct a postcolonial nation, unite people, gain popularity, and assume political power at the end of settler colonial rule. It was and is premised on a doctrine of permanent nationalist revolution against imperialism and colonialism; it has involved the harnessing of precolonial and colonial historical moments to formulate an indigenous and vernacular conception of a nationalist revolution that links the resistance of the 1890s to the nationalist struggles of the 1970s. It is constantly renewed by leaders of ZANU-PF, and it is used today to legitimize an increasingly unpopular regime that has presided over Zimbabwe since 1980.

The popularization of chimurenga went hand in hand with the appropriation of African history and constructions of an African identity that was
ontologically opposed to colonialism and imperialism. Such an identity was said to emerge from a series of struggles, described as *chimurengas*. As many scholars have pointed out, a fatal flaw at the heart of the modern African nation-state is, in general, the idea of “a tight correspondence between the nation and the state whereby each sovereign state was seen as a nation-state of people who shared a common language or culture” (Laakso & Olukoshi 1996:11–12). The problem is that this notion of a monolithic nation-state contradicts the realities of an African social existence dominated by multiculturalism, multilingualism, multiple religions, and diverse ethnic and racial groups. Arif Dirlik (2002) notes that many of the identities that today are accepted and taken for granted as national are not only “hybrid,” but also products of prior processes of colonization and resistance and encounters mediated by oppression, exploitation, and even forceful conversion. But the identities that have emerged from these traumatic experiences have ended up being embraced and celebrated as a historical triumph. Zimbabwean nationalism is thus predicated on the assumption that diversity of ethnic and racial identities has to be homogenized into a singular national identity and that successful nation-building and state-making will culminate in eradication of diverse identities and the projection of the identity of the group that dominates state power. The ideology of chimurenga became the nodal point around which imaginations of a monolithic nation-state had to crystallize. Since its assumption of power in 1980, ZANU-PF has popularized the idea of a Zimbabwean identity as born out of the traumatic but heroic chimurenga struggles traceable to the 1896–97 uprisings.

The term *gukurahundi* is derived from a colloquial expression in the Shona language that means “the storm of the summer that sweeps away the chaff” (Sithole & Makumbe 1997:133). It refers to the weather event that clears away the dry, scaly protective casing from cereal grain that remains on the land after the harvest, although at times this early storm also destroys crops and weeds, huts and forests, people and animals, opening the way for a new ecological order. While the strategy of gukurahundi was in use in ZANU-PF as early as mid-1970s to discipline those considered to be wavering, it was officially adopted as a strategy of dealing with opponents in 1979, a year that was declared “Gore reGukurahundi” (The Year of the Storm) (see Sithole & Makumbe 1997). It was also the name for an exclusive Korean-trained ZANLA force (Fifth Brigade) that was deployed in Matabeleland and the Midlands regions in the period 1982–87, leaving more than twenty thousand civilians dead (CCJP and LRF 1997). But the deployment of the gukurahundi strategy in the 1980s against the Ndebele-speaking people, who were accused of harboring dissidents, was only an early manifestation of the culture of violence that today is affecting the whole country. In political terms, gukurahundi has a revolutionary goal of destroying the white settler regime, the “internal settlement puppets,” the capitalist system, and all other obstacles to ZANU-PF ascendancy. Sithole
and Makumbe describe gukurahundi as a “policy of annihilation; annihilating the opposition (black and white)” (1997:133).

To ZANU-PF, Zimbabwean identity is an emergent phenomenon deriving from heroic struggle that was spearheaded by ZANU-PF and as such must remain guarded by ZANU-PF. Part of the answer to why it has been so difficult for ZANU-PF and Mugabe to be removed from power is that since assuming power in 1980, ZANU-PF quickly penetrated the state and nation, making sure that the party was indistinguishable from the state and nation. This was done through selective deployment of history, memory, and commemoration to claim uncontested political legitimacy. On this situation Tony Bennett’s notions (1995:141) of “nationing history” and “historicising the nation,” or Terrence Ranger’s idea of “rule by historiography,” (2005b) are very useful; they explain how modern Zimbabwean nationalism as articulated by ZANU-PF involves a dominant nationalist movement asserting itself as the sole progenitor of the nation while inserting hagiographic accounts of itself into the national history.

The political use of memorialization and commemoration in Zimbabwe dates back to the time of the liberation war, when ZANU-PF cleverly and instrumentally used particular events not only to popularize itself, but also to claim to be the sole initiator of the liberation struggle. The example of how the Chinhoyi Battle of 1966 (in which seven ZANLA cadres were killed by Rhodesian forces) was celebrated annually as Chimurenga Day, marking the beginning of the armed liberation struggle, is a case in point (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Willems 2009). This battle was used ideologically by ZANU-PF to claim the position of the initiator of the armed struggle ahead of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union and its armed wing, the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA). Since the split of 1963, ZANU-PF and ZAPU have competed for space and support at home and outside. The death of Leopold Takawira (the ZANU leader who died in detention) was commemorated annually in Mozambique in the late 1970s. As articulated by Robert Mugabe, ZANU was the carrier of the “burden of history,” enjoying the oracular blessings of Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi as spirit mediums who are claimed to have played an active role in the 1896–97 uprisings (see Mugabe 1978; Chitando 2002, 2005). Another ideological resource has been the official adoption of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism by ZANU-PF in the late 1970s, an ideology that reinforces the notion of the party as the carrier of the “burden of history” bequeathed by the heroes of the 1896–97 risings.

Since 1980, then, the ZANU-PF government has used a combination of chimurenga and gukurahundi to build what Norma Kriger (2003:72–76) terms a “party-nation” and a “party-state” as well as to maintain a hegemonic and monologic narrative of the nation that casts ZANU-PF as the divinely ordained heir to the nationalist revolutionary spirit running from the primary resistance of the 1890s to the mass nationalism of the 1960s.
and armed liberation struggle of the 1970s. The messianic role has received a boost from the notion of a vanguard political party that led the masses and knew what the people wanted (Chitando 2005:223–25). The ideology of chimurenga is used to claim primal political legitimacy by ZANU-PF that needs no renewal every five years via free and fair elections, since the party received permanent oracular blessings from spirit mediums during the struggle for independence (see Chitando 2005:220–39). It was this idea of ZANU-PF’s and President Robert Mugabe’s patriotic “historic mission” that inspired Mugabe to arrogantly tell the electorate immediately before the March 29, 2008, elections,

You can vote for them [MDC], but that would be a wasted vote. I am telling you. You would just be cheating yourself. There is no way we can allow them to rule this country. Never, ever. We have a job to do, to protect our heritage. The MDC will not rule this country. It will never, ever happen. We will never allow it (quoted in Solidarity Peace Trust 2008).

Nevertheless, ZANU-PF’s drive to attain hegemony has been compromised by the fact that it has never at any time been a monolithic political formation free from intraparty dissensions, conflicts, and crisis. This point is well captured by David Moore:

If one goes back, into the history of the liberation war, there is also little unity of a hegemonic sort. The list of tensions is a long one: the split eventuating in ZANU emerging out of ZAPU; the March 11 Movement . . .; the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI, or as some of its detractors called it, the Front for the Liaison of Zezuru Intellectuals); the Nhari Rebellion—and centrally, the Chitepo Assassination . . .; the Zimbabwe People’s Army and Vashandi Movement (wiped out with particular Machiavellian cold-hearts and ideological hypocrisy by the man these young radicals helped into power); the Hamadziripi-Gumbo “coup” in 1978; and the mysterious death of Josiah Tongogara the day after he advised Robert Mugabe to go into the 1980 elections together with ZAPU, with which ZANU was ostensibly allied in the Patriotic Front. The closer one looks at the history of Zimbabwe, the more one wonders how anyone could “imagine” a “community” based on the nationalism exemplified by its political brokers. (2008:32)

Taking note of this argument is very important, since this article can easily be misread as presenting an opposition between singular and plural, monologic and dialogic binaries in Zimbabwean political history, and thus falling into a kind of ahistoricity while it is concerned with history itself. The article argues that chimurenga and gukurahundi as ideology and strategy, respectively, are useful in understanding the dynamics of the temporal span of the Zimbabwean postcolony. However, it is by no means trying to pick only two issues and thus foreclose on the social and political complexi-
ties of each historical moment in Zimbabwe’s political history. Chimurenga and gukurahundi themselves represent key historical processes, recurring occurrences, and conflict-laden moments in the broader history of nationalism and the political journey of Zimbabwe from a colony to an independent state. This article is written at a moment when those who participated in the liberation struggle and experienced postcolonial life are speaking up; an example is Wilfred Mhanda, whose book *Dzino: Memories of a Freedom Fighter* (2011) details how the gukurahundi strategy was used widely within ZANU-PF in exile. Mhanda’s thesis is amplified by a recent book by Zvakanyorwa Wilbert Sadomba (2011), who writes about the stifling of the Badza/Nhari rebellion in 1974.

The article is divided into five sections. The first section explains the politics behind the construction and application of the ideology of chimurenga as a central pillar in ZANU-PF’s reconstruction of national history in partisan terms and its imagination of the postcolonial nation as a successor to the precolonial Shona political formations (see Mudenge 1988). The ideology of chimurenga identifies colonialism as the enemy of every black person and anticolonialism as the rallying point of African unity and the basis for imagining a postcolonial nation. Any black person who does not embrace the ideology is therefore a legitimate target of violence, and Zimbabweans are currently struggling to gain liberation from the ZANU-PF–constructed monologue about the nation.

The second section traces the roots of the strategy of gukurahundi as a central pillar of state-making and tactic of regime security in Zimbabwe. Gukurahundi is defined here as a strategy of annihilating all those opposed to the chimurenga ideology and to ZANU-PF hegemony. It is rooted in the exigencies of the armed liberation struggle, in which violence was embraced as a legitimate tool of resolving political questions and issues. The third section explains the changing articulations of the nation by ZANU-PF under the political circumstances since 2000. Indigenist, nativist, racist, and autochthonic (if not xenophobic) elements of the narration have been intensified concurrently with the ratcheting up of the political language on land reform, renewal of the ideology of chimurenga, and intensification of the strategy of gukurahundi, this time ranged against vocal civil society organizations and the popular opposition known as the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

The fourth section focuses on the equally complex and ambiguous politics of counterhegemonic initiatives. The post–2000 political circumstances have been dominated not only by popularity of post–Cold War values of liberal democracy and human rights, but also by the revival of ideas of “ethnic nations” and calls for national self-determination by those people who consider themselves to be written out of the nation and suffering economic deprivation and state-sanctioned violence (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008, 2009d). The conclusion assesses the impact of the ZANU-PF nationalist monologue on the character of current national politics.
“Nationing History” and “Historicizing the Nation”

The broader context within which the ideology of chimurenga emerged is that of a settler colony in which the colonizers not only violently conquered the indigenous black people, but also dispossessed them of land and denied them citizenship rights, ruling over them as “rightless” subjects. This treatment provoked the spirit of resistance. The early historical work (particularly *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia*, 1967) of the liberal British historian Terence Ranger, who was sympathetic to the cause of Zimbabwean nationalism, provided a narrative of primary resistance that was quickly appropriated by the nationalists for ideological purposes. Ranger’s central arguments were that the uprisings of 1896–97 were informed by the creative strengths of Shona and Ndebele culture; that precolonial religious leaders, especially the Shona spirit mediums Nehanda and Kaguvi, led the uprisings; that these religious leaders provided prophetic and ideological inspiration; and that there were continuities and connections between the risings of 1896 and the mass nationalism of the 1960s (see also Ranger 1968, 1977).

Ranger’s work provided the historical raw materials for the nationalist reconstruction of the ideology of chimurenga. But in 2002 Ranger lamented how his books were being used to construct what he termed “patriotic history,” which he defined as a populist proclamation of the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition spearheaded by ZANU-PF cadres as patriots and the demonizing of all others as dangerous traitors. Such a populist history repudiates academic historiography’s attempts to complicate and question the trajectories of nationalism. Its key trope is anticolonial rhetoric, anti-Western “bogus universalism,” and intolerance of political opposition (Ranger 2004:215). As early as 1975, the names of secular and religious leaders of the 1896–97 risings that Ranger had unearthed from the archives and oral sources were already being used by the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, the founder president of ZANU-PF and first Commander-in-Chief of ZANLA, to motivate them to continue the fight. In 1976 at the Geneva Conference, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who led the moderate and internally based United African National Council (UANC), used the same list to connect the liberation struggle to primary resistance (Ranger 1977:128). On the abuse/use of his academic work by politicians, Ranger wrote, “I recognized the outlines of many of my books but boiled down in the service of ZANU-PF” (2002:60).

During the early development of the ideology of chimurenga, it drew its power from “nationalist historiography,” which, according to Ranger, conceived of the African nationalist movement as “inclusive and even non-racial” and celebrated nationalism as emancipatory (2005:7–9). It was also informed by universal ideas of human progress and modernity; hence it espoused projects of modernization, reform, and even socialist egalitarianism. But among historians “nationalist historiography” matured into what Ranger terms the “historiography of nationalism,” which embraces tenets...
Rethinking Chimurenga and Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe

of critical social theory that sets it apart from uncritical intellectual discourses of “praising” nationalism (see Robins 1996). The “historiography of nationalism . . . raised questions about the nature of nationalism and about the course of its development” (Ranger 2005:8). It also revealed “struggles within the struggle,” traced the roots of rural and urban nationalism, raised questions about nationalist violence and exclusionary tendencies, and articulated concerns about the chimurenga monologue (see Ranger 1999; Raftopoulos 1999; Msindo 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a). Along with Ranger’s later work, the revisionist interventions of David N. Beach and Julian Cobbing on the 1896–97 risings can be said to have inaugurated a critical historiography of nationalism that runs counter to the populist pronouncements of the ideology of chimurenga. Beach, for example, argues that the 1896–97 Ndebele-Shona resistance to colonialism was not “simultaneous” or coordinated, and that there was no religious element providing ideological unity. Rather, the uprising followed the format of chindunduma (a Shona word that captures the image of a situation that spreads through ripple effects from area to area) (1980:107–12; 1979:401–16; see also Beach 1971, 1986). Cobbing argues that a major theme of the risings was “disunity and fragmentation,” with the Ndebele disunited and even fighting a civil war while some Shonas even collaborated with the colonialists (1977:84; see also Cobbing 1976). Beach (1998) went further to deny that Nehanda (whom ZANU-PF projected as the divine inspiration of the liberation) played any instrumental role during 1896–97. Instead, Beach depicted her as an “innocent woman” who was “unjustly accused.”

Eventually, however, Zimbabwe’s national history was rearticulated by ZANU nationalists as a patriotic history constituted by a series of chimurengas. In 1977 the ideology of chimurenga was redefined from a radical Zimbabwe People’s Army (ZIPA) perspective as denoting the ideas of total war against colonialism and capitalism and calling for a complete transformation society and people (see Moore 1995a). As a ZIPA declaration (1977) put it,

The word drives its meaning from the national liberation war, fought by our fore-fathers in 1896–7 uprising in opposition to the British domination and occupation. The 1896–7 armed uprising by the entire Zimbabwe masses was one of the stiffest resistances registered by the African people in Southern Africa to colonial rule and imperial advance in the region. . . . This was a total war to expel foreign capitalists and imperialists from the soil of Zimbabwe. . . . This is a source of inspiration which guides us in our current struggle against the Smith regime. . . . With the defeat of our fore-fathers in 1897 African resistance went underground up to the mid-fifties when African nationalism came to the fore.

The term chimurenga began to be widely used in the 1970s by the nationalists, mainly in the ZANU-PF and its fighting wing (ZANLA), as a vernacular
name for the armed liberation struggle against the settler colonial state. The notion of chimurenga was also used as an ideological thread capturing not only the undying spirit of African resistance to colonialism, but also the present elite-dominated and elite-driven struggles for black economic empowerment that began with the fast-track land reform program that was christened the Third Chimurenga (Mugabe 2001).

Thus in the ideology of chimurenga, the nation was born as a result of two violent struggles of the 1890s and 1970s. While in the 1970s (the First Chimurenga) the concept of chimurenga had found a dignified niche within African nationalist revolutionary politics as an anti-imperial and anticolonial ideology, it was used to justify election-related violence beginning with independence elections of 1980 (the Second Chimurenga) as part of defending national sovereignty (see Kriger 2005). By 2000 the concept had been seriously tarnished by ZANU-PF’s use of violence (in the Third Chimurenga) against members of the MDC. By this point, the ideology of chimurenga was being deployed to justify any form of nationalist violence, even against citizens of the postcolonial state. Every time ZANU-PF is cornered politically by the opposition forces, it tendentiously reminds people that “Zimbabwe ndeyeropa” (Zimbabwe came after a violent war of liberation), asserting boldly that if defeated in an election it would be prepared to go back to the bush to fight another chimurenga (see Sithole & Makumbe 1997).

Blessings-Miles Tendi (2010) sees the Third Chimurenga as a terrain of competing ideas and contestations over national history. He argues that “patriotic history” as the motive force of the Third Chimurenga was not just a “fabrication” or a “polemic” with little relevance to the interests of the people of Zimbabwe, but rather a narrative that incorporates real grievances and “must be taken seriously” (2010:2; see also Muzondidya 2007, 2010). Nevertheless, it is clear that the ideology of chimurenga has also been mobilized to polarize the nation, fragmenting the people of Zimbabwe into patriots, war veterans, puppets, traitors, sellouts, born-frees, and enemies of the nation. The category of patriots and veterans is reserved for those who participated in the liberation struggle (the Second Chimurenga) in general and all members of ZANU-PF specifically. Members of MDC political formations are categorized as traitors, sellouts, and puppets who deserve to die if the Zimbabwe nation is to live.

The justification for attacking MDC supporters and its leadership is that they are not an authentic Zimbabwean political party but rather a creation of the U.K. and the U.S. as part of their neoinperialist agenda of regime change. The MDC was also accused of being a front for white commercial farmers who were resisting land reform. By 2000 the white commercial farmers constituted the worst enemies of the nation, and the Third Chimurenga was popularly dubbed “Hondo Yeminda” (the war for land reclamation). But President Mugabe articulated it more broadly as the “conquest of conquest” marking the triumphalism of black sovereignty over
white settlerism (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009b). This means that the Third Chimurenga was defined by matters other than the land question, which was used strategically by ZANU-PF as a political tool to prop up its waning popularity, especially among peasants and other landless constituencies (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Muzondidya 2011).

The reassertion of revolutionary nationalist tradition was premised on four other issues: namely, obsession with race; bifurcation of citizens into “sellouts” and “patriots;” anti-Western politics; and defense of national sovereignty (see Tendi 2010:1). A core objective of the Third Chimurenga was to displace all political views that did not resonate with those of ZANU-PF. To achieve this goal, ZANU-PF mobilized what Tendi terms “nationalist public intellectuals” and organized them into a kind of priesthood to articulate official patriotic history; for example, they produced such televised programs as Nhaka Yedu (our heritage and national ethos) and Living Traditions (2010:11–42). At the apex of this priesthood were President Mugabe and Jonathan Moyo (an academic turned ZANU-PF spin-doctor who had become the Minister of Information and Publicity). At the end of the day, as Tendi argues, “Nhaka Yedu . . . and Living Traditions were monologues, not dialogues, of ZANU-PF’s cerebral praetorian guards, which attempted to legitimize violent land seizures and state-sponsored political violence against the MDC, divided Zimbabwean society along a good and evil distinction, and employed race essentialism” (2010:42). The ideology of chimurenga as “a doctrine of revolution” (Ranger 2005:8) that was indistinguishable from the strategy of gukurahundi now authorized a culture of violence.

Gukurahundi and ZANU-PF Hegemony

As part of the official implementation of the strategy of gukurahundi, Eddison Zvobgo (Information and Publicity Secretary of ZANU in 1977), drew up a “hit enemies list” in 1979 comprising ranking personalities of the “internal settlement” parties.6 In 2004 ZANU-PF produced another list of traitors and sellouts who needed to be liquidated. The list included Archbishop Pius Ncube, a critic of Mugabe; Trevor Ncube, owner of critical independent newspapers; Geoffrey Nyarota, a journalist; leaders of the MDC including Morgan Tsvangirai, Welshman Ncube, and Paul Thembwa Nyathi; Wilfred Mhanda, leader of the Zimbabwe Liberators Platform that was opposed to the main association of war veterans that had reduced itself into ZANU-PF storm troopers; and critical public intellectuals including Brian Raftopoulos, John Makumbe, and Lovemore Madhuku (ZANU-PF Department of Information and Publicity 2004; Tendi 2010).

While the strategy of gukurahundi was openly embraced as party policy in 1979, it had a long history in ZANU beginning with the formation of ZANU in 1963. Its philosophy of confrontation entailed embracing violence as a legitimate political tool of fighting for independence and the destruc-
tion of opponents and enemies. Zvobgo wrote of the “ZANU Idea,” which he elaborated as the “gun idea” that was foundational to the party’s ideology of confrontation and violence (1984:23). Gerald C. Mazarire, who has been researching the issue of discipline and punishment in ZANLA, demonstrates how the gun was celebrated in ZANU as a tool of restoring order and “cleaning up the rot” (2011:571). The ZANU Departments of Defence and Commissariat promoted ideas of supremacy of the military within ZANU and enforced violent disciplinary measures that included outright elimination of those considered to be failing to adhere to the party line (see Chung 2006).

The deployment of the strategy of gukurahundi within ZANU was provoked by internal crises of the 1970s such as the Nhari rebellion of 1974, which became the first major disciplinary case to be dealt with by the Dare reChimurenga (the military-political council that coordinated the liberation struggle in ZANU-PF) and the High Command (see Mazarire 2011:578). Thomas Nhari and his comrades were executed on the orders of Josiah Tongogara and in contradiction to the trial verdict of Herbert Chitepo (a lawyer, the highest ranking ZANU-PF official in charge of the struggle in exile, and the national party chairman of who had the power to preside over serious political cases), who had recommended demotions and other forms of punishment rather than execution (see Chung 2006:88–95). On the logic of using execution as a form of discipline, Fay Chung (2006:94) argues that the ZANU High Command believed in the “Old Testament version of justice of an eye for an eye, a death for death.” By the 1970s the strategy of gukurahundi, including executions, was entrenched within ZANU. It was deployed not only against ZAPU structures inside Rhodesia (see Moore 1995b; Ranger 1995:203–10), but also against ZIPA cadres within ZANU. The determination to expose sellouts and counter-revolutionaries became a virtual obsession. Camp authorities practiced “a new order of discipline” against ZIPA cadres that included public beatings carried out until the accused soiled themselves (Mazarire 2011:578,580). Pit structures called chikaribotso were dug to detain prisoners underground (Mazarire 2011:580). Robert Mugabe, who took over as party president in 1977, celebrated the violent destruction of ZIPA in these words: “We warned any person with a tendency to revolt that the ZANU axe would fall on their necks . . . ” (quoted in Vambe 2008:1).

Thus, when Mugabe and his party were swept into power in 1980, the state itself had become an agent of gukurahundi deploying violence against those, such as PF-ZAPU and ex-ZIPRA cadres, who happened to be constructed as enemies of the state.7 Matabeleland and the Midlands regions became theaters of postcolonial practice of the strategy of gukurahundi, and an estimated twenty thousand civilians lost their lives as ZANU-PF pushed for a one-party state. Joshua Nkomo, PF-ZAPU and its supporters, and former ZIPRA associates all had to be annihilated for the sake of ZANU-PF’s assertion and consolidation of hegemony and its imposition of one-party rule (see Shaw 1986; Mandaza & Sachikonye 1991).
ZANU-PF has continued to use the strategy of gukurahundi whenever its hegemony is threatened. Military-style operations such as Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Urban Clean-Up) of 2005, Operation Mavhoterapapi (“Where did you put your vote?”) of April–August 2008, and Operation Chimumumu, which involved abductions of opposition and civil society figures, testify to the consistent use of the strategy of gukurahundi against those identified as threatening its hegemony (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a). Stephen Chan argues that Mugabe “refus[es] to allow the Chimurenga to die” because for Mugabe “to fight is more important than to be cleansed.” To Chan this as a sign that Zimbabwe “can never be cleansed because there cannot be an end to fighting . . . ” (2003:183).

Renewing Chimurenga in the 2000s

When the popularity of ZANU-PF reached its lowest ebb in the late 1990s and the beginning of 2000, the regime ratcheted up the ideology of chimurenga and celebrations of gukurahundi, trying to remobilize the populace around memories of the liberation struggle and even boasting that the party and its leaders had “degrees in violence” (Blair 2000). In the 1980s ZANU-PF had celebrated the concepts of reconciliation and unity, development, and nationalism to construct its hegemony. But in the late 1990s and early 2000s the policy of reconciliation was repudiated and the socialist discourse of economic development no longer made sense since the party and the state had failed to deliver services to the citizens. ZANU-PF therefore increasingly compensated for its failure with reinvigorated appeals to cultural nationalism (see Dorman 2001:50; Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Willems 2009d; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011). At another level, while the articulation of the nation in the 1980s had assumed a partisan and ethnic character in which heroism was attributed only to those who had participated in the liberation struggle from the ZANU side and to historical figures from Shona ethnic groups such as Nehanda, the post–2000 nation began to be defined in autochthonic and nativist terms. The idea of “Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans” popularized by Mugabe, for example, included the “Occidentalizing” of white citizens (see Muchemwa 2010:505; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009c).

In 2001 a number of “galas” and “biras” were organized to celebrate the lives of Joshua Nkomo and Simon Muzenda, who had been co-vice presidents of Zimbabwe.8 Ironically, in the 1980s Nkomo, who was forced into exile in 1983, had been represented as the “father of dissidents”; in 2001 his status as “father of the nation” was granted posthumously. The commemoration of Nkomo, known as “Umdala Wethu Gala” (“Our dear old man gala”), emphasizes Nkomo as a symbol of national unity because he signed the Unity Accord of December 22, 1987, which enabled ZANU-PF to swallow PF-ZAPU and for Mugabe to pursue his objective of a one-party state. Muzenda, for his part, is represented as the “soul of the nation” and celebrated in what has become known as “Mzee Bira” (see Moore 2005;
These music galas and parties, though by no means “an inclusive definition of the nation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Willems 2009: 964), are in effect a construction of Zimbabwe as a “party-nation” in the political sense—a situation in which the agendas, symbols, and insignia of a political party are elevated into national agendas, symbols, and insignia, making it difficult for one to separate the party from the nation (see Kriger 2003). According to Moses Chikowero, they epitomize “the public construction and carnivalization of that nationalist project, utilizing the iconography of the country’s departed and living patriars, matriarchs, and heroes as well as the symbolisms of the 1987 Unity Accord and the achievement of independence in 1980” (2008:323). Kizito Muchemwa, by contrast, refers to what he calls the “necropolitical imagination” of the nation (2010:504), pointing to the ways in which the cemetery, particularly the National Heroes Acre, has become “the site from which the Zimbabwean polis is imagined and articulated.” ZANU-PF’s obsession with the deaths of the “patriots” as a crucial definer of political life is also captured by Joost Fontein (2009), who investigates the role of death and the bones of the dead as central aspects of post-2000 memorialization and commemoration.

It is also worth noting that galas and biras were introduced at a time when the society was not at peace with itself—the economy was crumbling and ZANU-PF’s political fortunes were declining. During these celebrations, modern music such as “urban grooves” was mixed with old chimurenga songs with the aim of appealing to the so-called born-frees (all those born after the end of colonialism) and incorporating them into the nationalist project. ZANU-PF thought it was these “born-frees” who supported and voted for the opposition MDC and as such needed to be conscientized as patriotic citizens (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Willems 2009). This argument is further reinforced by the fact that all the galas were staged in urban areas, where ZANU-PF had lost support to the opposition MDC; “the galas migrate from one province to another” according to “pragmatic demands of the electoral moment, targeting those places where either electoral support is waning or there are party factional fights” (Muchemwa 2010:512). Brian Raftopoulos argues that ZANU-PF attempted to “naturalize the unity of the nation by concealing the internal ethnic tensions within the polity and the reality of Shona political dominance” (2007:182). Memorialization and commemoration have thus taken the form described by Guy Debord as “Stalinist,” characterized by “the ruling order’s non-stop discourse about itself, its never-ending monologue of self-praise, its self-portrait at the stage of totalitarian domination of all aspects of life” (2002:8).

In short, by the year 2000, Zimbabwes were being taken back to the 1970s, a time when the ideology of chimurenga had successfully established itself as the popular nodal point around which the anticolonial struggle crystallized and the imagination of a postcolonial nation-state developed. But it was difficult for ZANU-PF to successfully wind the wheel of history
backward and to reappropriate an angry and hungry populace that wanted food rather than doses of chimurenga. The revival of the ideology of chimurenga and the reactivation of the strategy of gukurahundi under the changed political terrain of the 2000s provoked strong counterhegemonic initiatives that could not be ignored.

**Beyond Monologue: Counterhegemonic Articulations of the Nation**

As Brian Raftopoulos’s work on the labor movement in Zimbabwe has shown, the attempt by ZANU-PF to appropriate the labor movement in particular and subordinate it to the nationalist imperatives as defined by the party was resisted by trade unionists such as Reuben Jamela and Charles Mzingeli, who were determined to protect trade union autonomy (Raftopoulos & Phimister 1997; Raftopoulos & Sachikonye 2001). To the nationalists, labor union resistance represented the beginnings of a challenge to their hegemony. Mzingeli and Jamela were vilified as “lackeys of imperialism and stooges,” and there were episodes of violence directed against the unions (see Scarnecchia 2008:112). These clashes between nationalists and labor unionists were one area of early contestation of the emerging nationalist hegemony, which has also come to include a number of women, church leaders, peasant leaders, and students.

Of course, as noted, from the very beginning of its existence in 1963, ZANU-PF itself was never free of internal dissension and conflicts. After independence, one of the first signs of conflict was the expulsion in 1897 of the outspoken Secretary General of the party, Edgar Tekere, who two years later formed the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) which opposed the one-party state agenda. The expulsion of internal critics also included that of Margaret Dongo in 1995, who went on to form the Zimbabwe Union of Democrats (ZUD), and Lawrence Mudehwe in 1996 (Sithole & Makumbe 1997:135). The other internal critic of ZANU-PF was Eddison Zvobgo, who in 1995 openly called for the democratization of the Zimbabwe through a limiting of the powers of the President (see Zvobgo 1995).

There were also internal party contestations in regard to the definition and hierarchy of the “heroship,” including the status and material benefits that accrue to individuals differentially. As noted by Norma Kriger (2006), tensions and contestations over benefits and payments for their liberation war sacrifices were widespread among various groups: the elite nationalists who had spearheaded the war from exile; those who actually handled the guns and operated inside Rhodesia against colonial forces; those who had been incarcerated (ex-detainees, ex-prisoners, and ex-restrictees) inside Zimbabwe; and those who were described as mujibha (male war collaborators) and chimbwido (female war collaborators).

What particularly provoked dissent was the elevation of the nationalists leaders in exile (otherwise known as the “old guard” and including Mugabe) into what Muchemwa (2010:509) terms the “Chimurenga aristoc-
racy.” While most of the county was languishing in poverty, these individuals displayed “vulgar opulence” and dominated the economic and political landscape of the country. These contestations within ZANU-PF itself were exacerbated by the hierarchization of heroism into national, provincial, and district heroes, with the latter two categories accompanied by fewer material benefits (see Kriger 1995). At another level, throughout the 1980s PF-ZAPU protested against ZANU-PF’s dominance in the selection of national heroes through a boycott of heroes’ celebrations (see Werbner 1998; Kriger 1995b; Brickhill 1995). PF-ZAPU and ex-ZIPRA members also initiated their own War Shriners Committee to identify and commemorate its fallen cadres (see Brickhill 1996:166), and a direct challenge to ZANU-PF’s commemorative project was carried on until the signing of the 1987 Unity Accord.

More recently the Heroes Acre, which was meant to be a powerful source of national unity and legitimacy, has become a site of contestation, with two veteran nationalists from Matebeleland—Welshman Mabhena and Thenjiwe Lesabe—indicating before their death that they did not want to be buried at the national shrine. Despite President Mugabe’s glorifying words of condolence following the death of Mabhena (“We have lost a true patriot par excellence”) and ZANU-PF’s subsequently declaring him a national hero, the Mabhena family stuck by his wish not to be buried there (allafrica.com 2010). By contrast, Lesabe was denied heroine status because she had left ZANU-PF to join the revived ZAPU (swradioafrica 2011), as was Gibson Sibanda, former deputy president of the MDC, despite a request by Morgan Tsvangirai that he be declared a national hero (The Zimbabwean 2010). Together, these events indicate that the National Heroes Acres is now more of a ZANU-PF memorial than a national shrine. The exclusion of Tsvangirai was perhaps not surprising. The formation of MDC in 1999 was followed by a declaration from Tsvangirai in 2000 that nationalism was “trapped in a time warp” and had become “an end in itself instead of a means to an end” (Southern Africa Report 2000). This denunciation of the ideology of chimurenga as packaged by ZANU-PF was in line with the MDC’s self-definition as a worker’s party determined to counter ZANU-PF’s elitist appropriation of chimurenga. According to MDC ideology, the liberation war was spearheaded by the working class and then hijacked by nationalist elites (MDC 2000). At the same time, the MDC challenged the ideology of chimurenga and the strategy of gukurahundi as antidemocratic policies that constituted gross violations of human rights.

The MDC encapsulated its vision of another Zimbabwe in the slogans “New Zimbabwe” and “New Beginning,” which became popular with the youth and urban residents (MDC 2007). Thus, since its formation, the MDC has worked ceaselessly to prove to Zimbabweans, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African continent, and the international community that ZANU-PF has become an elite project of wealth accumulation that has abandoned its emancipatory agenda, and that the
MDC seeks to restore economic sanity, democracy, and human rights. As argued by Richard Werbner, “memory as public practice” is “increasingly in crisis” (1998:1).

The resignation of some members of ZANU-PF—such as the former minister of Home Affairs and the veteran nationalist Dumiso Dabengwa—with the goal of reviving ZAPU is another attempt to move beyond the ZANU-PF monologue. ZAPU is trying partly to harken back to the pre-1963 period of nationalist unity and inclusive nationalism while at the same time working toward regaining its Matebeleland and Midlands constituencies through appeals to Ndebele-speaking people’s grievances. It is also trying to extract the nationalist project from ZANU-PF, which it accuses of having retribalized and regionalized the nation, and to reclaim the liberation credentials that ZANU-PF tried to downplay and subordinate to those of ZANU-PF and ZANLA (ZAPU Manifesto 2010).

There are also strong countermessages from Matebeleland, the region that was adversely affected by the postcolonial state-sanctioned violence of the 1980s that claimed the lives of an estimated twenty thousand civilians under the pretext of fighting against so-called dissidents who were said to be supported by the minority Ndebele community (CCJP & LRF 1997; Alexander, McGregor & Ranger 2000). The violence of the 1980s that is remembered in Matabeleland and the Midlands regions as “Gukurahundi genocide” has generated radical politics of secession spearheaded by diaspora-based political formations such as the Mthwakazi People’s Congress (MPC) and the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF), which are fighting for the restoration of the precolonial Ndebele nation as separate from what they call Zimbabwe—the provinces of Mashonaland and Manicaland (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009b). During the celebrations of Independence Day on April 18, 2011, members of the MLF marched through Johannesburg and publicly burned the Zimbabwean national flag as a symbolic statement of refusal to be part of Zimbabwe.

The forces working for the secession of Matebeleland have gone even further, establishing a full-fledged virtual nation known as United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR), complete with a radio station and national flag. Since 2000 ZANU-PF has been trying to ignore the rising tide of secessionist agitation, and to some extent it has been successful, simply because much of it is exercised in cyberspace. But in 2010 MLF organized a rally at Stanley Square in Bulawayo in Zimbabwe where it announced itself as a liberation front aiming at fighting for a restoration of the precolonial Ndebele state as a separate republic to be known as Mthwakazi. The government reacted by arresting some of its members, including the well-known politician Paul Siwela. In a letter addressed to President Mugabe and circulated to a few trusted recipients (including the author), members of MLF also asserted the Mthwakazi’s historical right to exercise their self-determination as a free, independent, and sovereign Republic of Mthwakazi and remarked that the gukurahundi massacres heightened the impetus for independence.
(“Open Letter to Mugabe,” February 24, 2011). There is no doubt that ZANU-PF hegemony entered a serious crisis at the beginning of 2000. And as the crisis has deepened, factions within ZANU-PF, energized by the possibility of Mugabe’s leaving power due to old age, or even the prospect of his death, have further eroded the once seemingly strong political formation.

**Conclusion**

ZANU-PF’s acceptance of a power-sharing arrangement with the MDC in September 2008 through the signing of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the installation of the inclusive government in February 2009 is a clear indication that President Mugabe and his colleagues have realized the limits of the ideology of chimurenga and the strategy of gukurahundi. But within the inclusive government the questions remain in regard to ownership of the nation, control of the state, exercise of power, and the lack of a unifying national narrative. The nation remains polarized into patriots, puppets, sellouts, war veterans, and born-frees as politicized identities, a clear testament to ZANU-PF’s survival through divisiveness rather than unity.

The safest conclusion is that Zimbabwe is caught in a Gramscian interregnum whereby the old ideology of chimurenga and the strategy of gukurahundi are taking time to die and the new politics founded on values of tolerance, plurality, inclusivity, social peace, and human security are taking time to be born. In the interim the old monsters continue to polarize the nation, including top members of the security sector in Zimbabwe who have vowed not to salute any leader other than Mugabe. However, as Raftopoulos argues (2011), the birth of the GPA and the installation of inclusive government, while not fully transforming the coercive base of ZANU-PF’s support, have set the course of change for a new set of political dynamics in Zimbabwe, informed by what Gramsci termed the “passive revolution.” What makes it hard for opposition to successfully remove ZANU-PF from power is partly its deep entrenchment in state institutions and partly its ability to deploy chimurenga as an all-weather ideology that is adjustable enough to accommodate popular issues such as land redistribution.

Yet while ZANU-PF is part of a league of former liberation movements that formed governments in southern Africa at the end of colonialism and apartheid, it seems to be losing popularity more quickly than others. This is perhaps due to the fact that it has never changed its top dog. Mugabe has been at its helm since 1977 and Zimbabwe has not known any other leader since 1980. Other older liberation movements like SWAPO and FRELIMO have provided their nations with different presidents. The ANC, which came to power in 1994, has provided South Africa with four different presidents. Only Zimbabwe and Angola have such long-serving presidents. It seems that Mugabe is now a liability even to his own party. That he was defeated by Tsvangirai in the first round of presidential elections in 2008
indicated his unpopularity, and only the unleashing of unprecedented violence on the electorate forced Tsvangirai to withdraw from running, leaving Mugabe free to declare himself a winner of the presidential runoff.

References


Notes

1. ZANU became ZANU-PF in 1980 during the independence election campaigns when it decided to break ranks with the Patriotic Front (PF) formed in 1976. The PF was meant to unite ZANU and ZAPU. But when it decided to campaign for elections as ZANU, it did not want to completely abandon its association with the Patriotic Front, and hence it assumed the name ZANU-PF. ZAPU became PF-ZAPU, since it also did not want to lose its association with PF. In this article I use the name ZANU-PF throughout for purposes of consistency. See the Appendix for a list of all the acronyms that appear in the article.

2. The Global Political Agreement (GPA) of the SADC (South African Development Community) is a political agreement that was brokered by Thabo Mbeki while he was still the president of South Africa. He was appointed by the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as a facilitator of political dialogue among Zimbabwean disputants, namely ZANU-PF, MDC-T, and MDC-N. It was signed in September 2008 and opened the way for a power-sharing government which in Harare is known as the “inclusive government” and is in power in Zimbabwe today. This government was installed in February 2009. Its mandate was to initiate a process of democratization of Zimbabwe before new elections could be conducted as part of resolution of the Zimbabwe crisis.

3. Thomas Nhari and Simon Badza were young commanders of the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the armed wing of ZANU-PF. While oper-
ating in Rhodesia in 1974, they became disgruntled with lack of military supplies, as well as the apparent indifference to their plight on the part of the leadership back at headquarters, including General Josiah Tongogara, the commander of ZANLA. They withdrew from the front, with the aim of disciplining the leaders responsible for depriving them of military supplies, rounded up the military leadership of ZANLA as they passed through Mozambique, and proceeded to Zambia. Other than arresting the leadership of ZANLA it is not clear what they wanted to do, but their plan was defeated by military moves spearheaded by Tongogara and other military forces (see Chung 2006; Mhanda 2011; Sadomba 2011). Eventually Nhari and Badza were captured and hanged.

4. Zimbabwean nationalism and the liberation struggle were haunted by ethnic divisions that became responsible for the split of ZAPU into ZANU. After the split ZAPU organized its own military wing known as ZIPRA and ZANU organized its own military wing known as ZANLA. ZIPRA was dominated by the minority Ndebele cadres, whereas ZANLA was dominated by the majority Shona-speaking cadres. But attempts to unite these military outfits were still being tried to the extent that in 1976, some Marxist-oriented cadres from ZAPU and ZANU created a new military unit known as the Zimbabwe People’s Army (ZIPA) drawing from ZIPRA and ZANLA. But the ethnic divisions were too entrenched and this experiment in uniting the military forces was short-lived. The deep Marxist orientation of ZIPA cadres made them vulnerable from the so-called old-guard nationalists that included Robert Mugabe, who thought the young men were aiming at dethroning them. So ZIPA cadres became targets of deliberate elimination, particularly in ZANU.

5. Since its formation in 1999 the MDC has been gaining support from white commercial farmers and the Western powers, which see it as a political formation fighting against ZANU-PF tyranny and in support of democracy in Zimbabwe. The support that the MDC has gained from the West has led ZANU-PF to depict it as a front for the recolonization of Zimbabwe. WikiLeaks to some extent confirmed ZANU-PF’s suspicions, revealing how the U.S. and some E.U. countries have supported and worked behind the scenes with MDC to assist it in its regime change agenda.

6. See Sithole and Makumbe (1997:1333); Hudson (1981); Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2006). In 1978 some “moderate” nationalists based inside Rhodesia (Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, Chief Jeremiah Chirau, James Chikerema, George Nyandoro, Chief Khayisa Ndiweni, and many others) negotiated with the Rhodesian leader Ian Smith for what they termed a “less painful decolonization” that did not involve armed struggle. On March 3, 1978, an agreement was reached that led to what became known as the “Internal Settlement.” It was followed by elections in April 1979 that were won by Bishop Muzorewa, who became the Prime Minister of the short-lived “Zimbabwe-Rhodesia” regime. ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU, based in Mozambique and Zambia, respectively, vehemently opposed the internal settlement arrangement and depicted it as an act of “selling out.” The international community also did not recognize the “Zimbabwe-Rhodesia” regime.

7. In 1979, ZAPU became known as PF-ZAPU (Patriotic Front-ZAPU) while ZANU became ZANU-PF. These new names were adopted after the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979 that enabled the decolonization of Rhodesia into Zimbabwe. During the Lancaster House Conference, ZANU and ZAPU had united
into what was known as the Patriotic Front (PF). When they prepared for the independence elections they decided to stand as different entities but each of them did not want to completely abandon the “PF” association. Therefore, they each adopted new name with “PF” as the common denominator.

8. “Bira” is a Shona term for an annual traditional ceremony to commemorate and remember the death of an elderly person in a household.

9. Joshua Nkomo was the leader of ZAPU. But when independence came in 1980 Mugabe moved against Nkomo and his party with the aim of destroying it in order to establish a one-party state. When Mugabe failed to eliminate ZAPU, the two parties (ZAPU and ZANU) negotiated a Unity Accord that came into being on December 22, 1987. As a result of the agreement, Joshua Nkomo became a co-vice president of Zimbabwe until his death in 1999. Simon Muzenda was a deputy of Mugabe in ZANU-PF since 1977. In 1980 he became Deputy Prime Minister. In 1987 he became co-Vice President of Zimbabwe, a position he retained until his death in 2003.

Appendix

The following acronyms appear in the article:

ANC African National Congress. This is the ruling party in South Africa
FRELIMO Front for the Liberation of Mozambique. This is the ruling party in Mozambique.
FROLIZI Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe. This was short-lived, as its members rejoined ZANU. Its formation was justified as part of seeking unity of all liberation movements.
GPA Global Political Agreement. It was signed by Mugabe representing ZANU-PF, Arthur Mutambara representing MDC-M (which is now MDC-N), and Morgan Tsvangirai representing MDC-T.
MDC Movement for Democratic Change. This is the main opposition party in Zimbabwe, though in 2005 it split into two formations-Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and Movement for Democratic Change-Mutambara (now MDC-N).
MPC Mthwakazi People’s Congress. This is a U.K.-based party of diaspora formations seeking the establishment of an autonomous state for the Ndebele-speaking people.
MPLA Popular Movement for Liberation of Angola. This is the ruling party in Angola.
MLF Mthwakazi Liberation Front. This is a small political formation formed in 2010 seeking secession of Matabeleland from Zimbabwe to form a new independent state called Mthwakazi Republic.
PF-ZAPU Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe People’s Union
SWAPO South West Africa People’s Organization. This is the ruling party in Namibia.
UANC United African National Council. This was a moderate, internally based political party led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa.
UMR United Mthwakazi Republic. This is an imagined independent Ndebele State.
ZANLA   Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU-PF  Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZAPU    Zimbabwe African People’s Union. This became PF-ZAPU in 1979.
ZIPA    Zimbabwe People’s Army
ZIPRA   Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army
ZUD     Zimbabwe Union of Democrats
ZUM     Zimbabwe Unity Movement