Born powerful? Post-Liberation Politics in Eritrea and Zimbabwe [1]

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In his magisterial account of African Politics, Chris Allen concluded that Zimbabwe and Namibia, despite having won independence through "prolonged warfare" were "following similar paths to those of the peacefully decolonised majority".[2]   Indeed, the similarities to both West African and East African single party states became more visible as the 1990s went on.[3] Yet recent writing on post-liberation politics, drawing particularly on the examples of Zimbabwe and Namibia, has emphasised the similarities between these states, emphasised the impact of the liberation war and at least implicitly suggested their differences from other African states.[4]   But in comparing Southern African states to each other only part of the story is told; adding a country like Eritrea to the mix helps us better understand the political trajectory of Zimbabwe, and vice-versa:

> . …the exceptional case, which stands out from the rest, invites us to explain why it is different *and to reconsider why specific conditions gave rise to the features common to all the other cases*.[5]

The Eritrean case reveals the significance of the negotiated transitions and the inherited state institutions (or the lack thereof), in addition to the history of the armed struggle.

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[1] This paper draws on research conducted by the author in Zimbabwe (1995, 1996-1997, 1999, 2000 & 2003) and Eritrea (2002). This is a first draft. Apologies for the inconsistencies in the footnote referencing, and occasional lack of page numbers. All comments and suggestions gratefully received: sara.dorman@ed.ac.uk.

[2] Allen, "Understanding African Politics", *Review of African Political Economy*, 65, 1995, 301-320. 315; he suggests that Mozambique and Angola would have followed similar paths, but for external intervention.

[3]   See for instance, Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa*, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), ;Cliffe, *One Party Democracy: The 1965 Tanzania General Elections*, (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1967),

[4]   Melber, "From Liberation Movements to Governments: On Political Culture in Southern Africa", *African Sociological Review*, 6, 1, 2002, 161-172;Melber, *Re-Examining Liberation in Namibia: Political Culture since Independence*, Nordiska AfricaInstitutet, 2003b),

[5] Gavin Williams, Brian Williams and Roy Williams, "Sociology and Historical Explanation" *African Sociological Review* 1 (1997), 89. emphasis added.

Liberation War Legacies

Liberation struggles generate a powerful, yet potentially divisive, stock of political actions and imagery. In discussions of African politics, symbolism and rhetoric often only appear in terms of excess and absurdity: Mobutu as *'bon père de famille'*[6]; Banda as Messiah.[7] Less often is the more pervasive 'banal' nationalism given due attention.[8] Liberation wars, however, generate potent and meaningful symbolic politics. Post-liberation states rely on the "situational application of militant rhetoric as a tool for inclusion or exclusion".[9] But in relying on narratives of conformity and unity, they confront the divisions and rivalries generated during the conflict. It is this contradiction that generates the tensions and intensity of relations between states and societies in post-liberation states.

The nationalist movements were forced to move to armed conflict when faced with the intransigence of the settler colonists in Zimbabwe, and the expansionist Ethiopian state in Eritrea. These wars left legacies in the lives of civilians, especially in rural communities, and in the experiences of those who fought in the guerrilla armies, which are increasingly being explored by historians and anthropologists.[10] But the political legacies are less well documented and understood – although in some ways more visible. Are the post-liberation leaderships 'born powerful' or constrained by their wartime experiences and post-war compromises?

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[6].Schatzberg, The Dialectic of Oppression in Zaire, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 71-98.

[7] Muyebe and Muyebe, The Religious Factor within the Body of Political Symbolism in Malawi, 1964-1994, (Florida: Universal Publishers, 1999), esp. 65-79.

[8] But see Lange, "How the National Became Popular in Tanzania", in *National Identity and Democracy in Africa*, Mai Palmberg(Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 1999), 40-58;Cusack, "African Cuisines: Recipes for Nation-Building", *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 13, 2, 2000, 207-225.

[9] Melber, "Limits to Liberation: An Introduction to Namibia's Postcolonial Political Culture", in *Re-Examining Liberation in Namibia: Political Culture since Independence*, Henning Melber(Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2003a), 9-24.; see also, Melber, "From Liberation Movements to Governments",

[10] On Zimbabwean civilian experiences see esp. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe*, (London: James Currey, 1985), ;Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War: Peasant Voices*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Alexander, et al., *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), on the war see Ranger and Bhebe, Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1995b), ;Ranger and Bhebe, Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1995a), ; Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse? : Women and Zanla in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2000), Critical literature on Eritrea is much more sparse, Tronvoll, *Mai Weini*, (New Jersey: Red Sea, 1998), ;Nielsen, "Reintegration of Ex-Fighters in Highland Eritrea: A Window into the Process of State Formation and Its Lines of Social Stratification", Roskilde University, 2002.; Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government: The Eritrean People's Liberation Front*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2001),

Leadership factionalization and conflict

It has been the issue of leadership of the liberation movements, perhaps more than any other, which has distinguished the politics of these states. The parties which took power at independence were the victors of processes of factionalization and fusion. Zimbabwe's liberation movement split into two competing parties (and subsequently armies) in 1963. Despite pressure for them to re-unify during the war, ZANU and ZAPU remained distinct parties until 1987. During the liberation war, ZAPU, lead by veteran nationalist Joshua Nkomo, appeared to have seniority over the younger ZANU, led first by Ndabaningi Sithole, and then by the little-known Robert Mugabe. This situation reversed itself after 1980, when ZANU clinched a majority of seats in the first parliament and went on to increase its domination of the political scene. During the war, ZANU and ZAPU guerrillas had made hostile contacts, and despite attempts to create a unified army, they soon erupted into conflict after 1980. In Eritrea, divisions similarly existed between liberation armies, which led to a bitter civil war between the older sectarian ELF, and the new, secular challenger, EPLF.[11] Unlike in Zimbabwe, however, the EPLF succeeded in winning a military victory over the ELF and forced them out of the field of action. Since independence, the EPLF has dominated the political scene through its successor PFDJ. Both 'successful' parties, however, also faced internal divisions. Zimbabwe's Badza/Nhari rebellion, premised on questions of elite privilege and hardships in the field, was also a critique of the Maoist orientation of ZANU. Both the March 11 movement, and the Zimbabwe People's Army were also ideologically based and seen as threats by the parties' leaderships.[12] In Eritrea, the anti-Maoist 'manqa' raised issues of "increased democratic accountability...and power-sharing" in contrast to Afewerki's expressed preference for 'a guiding role for the leadership and controlled participation through discussion"[13]. Although these internal crises divided the liberation fighters, they also

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[11] Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*, . Esp. 59-104

[12] Sithole, *Zimbabwe: Struggles within the Struggle*, (Harare: Rujeko, 1995), ;White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 2003), Moore, "The Contradictory Construction of Hegemony in Zimbabwe", Unpublished Ph.D., York University (Canada), 1990;Moore, "The Zimbabwean 'Organic Intellectuals' in Transition", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15, 1988, 96-105.

[13] Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*, 78.

enabled Mugabe to consolidate power over ZANU and Afewerki to do the same in the EPLF, creating a "stronger framework of control over internal dissidence"[14] which represented "a victory of a centralist conception of democracy rather than a populist one"[15]. Although the repression of dissent in both cases involved detentions and executions, the Zimbabwean case has been interpreted as a case of 'passive revolution', while the Eritrean crisis is analysed more simply as suppression of dissent, and the emergence of a dominant leadership group.

So, in both cases, the parties that took power at independence succeeded in removing or diminishing alternative claimants to the 'liberation' mantle, and dominating the political environment. In both countries, conventional wisdom suggested that no 'non-liberation' party could ever hold power, such was the power of the nationalist rhetoric. In Zimbabwe, it was long forecast that effective opposition would emerge from within ZANU(PF). Although there have long been schisms and critical voices within ZANU, the only significant opposition party to form around senior ZANU leaders was Edgar Tekere's ZUM, which contested the 1990 elections. The MDC, which has proven a much more successful opposition since its launch in 1999, has few high-profile former ZANU members, although most of its older generation of leadership was at one point affiliated either with ZANU or ZAPU.

In Eritrea, a schism emerged within the leadership of the PFDJ, with very little warning. In 2001, 15 members of the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)'s Central Committee, and the National Assembly, including several generals and ministers, appealed privately to the President, for internal party reform, the implementation of the 1997 constitution, and the holding of national elections.[16] Following a brief period of public discussion, the dissidents, who came to be known as the G-15, were accused of being "engaged in unlawful acts against the sovereignty and national security of the country."[17] Those in Asmara were detained without access to lawyers or their families in October 2001.[18] Although in Zimbabwe, politicians were arrested and accused of treason with very little evidence, their arrests were known and

[14] Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*, 78.
[15] Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*, 77.
[16] Sherifo, *Open Letter to Eplf Members*, asmarino.com, 2001,
[17] "PRESS RELEASE" *ERITREA PROFILE* 13 OCTOBER 2001 PAGE 1
[18] Plaut, "The Birth of the Eritrean Reform Movement", *ROAPE*, 91, 2002, 119-124..

documented, and they were given access to lawyers and other concerned visitors.[19] In contrast, no evidence or charges have been laid against those detained in 2001, although the state has insisted that this will take place in due time.[20] Reported defections by foreign service personnel, journalists, and the former head of the demobilization programme further reveal splits in the regime.[21]

Security and sovereignty...Discourses of sacrifice and suffering

While both Zimbabwe and Eritrea have been the recipients of Korean built monuments to their liberation wars (North Korea in the case of Zimbabwe, South Korea in Eritrea), Eritreans take memorialization more seriously. At national holidays, shop windows are decked out with patriotic slogans and posters and buildings are festooned with 'Christmas tree lights'. Postcards, stamps and tourism posters celebrate not just the ethnic diversity and architecture, but also victories of the wars. Zimbabwe's liberation war iconography has been mainly limited to official monuments, which in Norma Kriger's words "exposed the gap between the political rhetoric of equity, participation, and unity on the one hand, and the realities of an enormous disparity between...leaders and masses."[22] Indeed, the party-political nature of the liberation war discourse, reifying ZANU and ignoring ZAPU, led Werbner to label it 'quasi-national.[23]' While Zimbabwe made great use out of nationalist rhetoric and nation-building, it securely buffered these exhortations with actual material benefits in the form of investment in health and education, especially in rural areas, which dramatically improved the quality of life for many Zimbabweans. The material benefits of independence seem less marked in the poorer Eritrean state,

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[19] See for example, "Muzorewa arrested" *Herald* 2 November 1983, 1; "Why Muzorewa being detained - Premier" *Herald* 4 November 1983; "New grounds for the detention of Muzorewa" *Herald* 5 November 1983, 1; "Bishop's Zaire link exposed" *Herald* 19 November 1983, 1; "Sithole Refused Trial Date in Plot to Kill Mugabe" *Sapa-AFP* 1 June 1996; "Sithole says he is innocent of treason charges." *Independent* 27 June 1997, 1.
[20]   See for example, "Interview with Yemane Gebremeskel, Director of the President's office" *IRIN* 1 April 2004.
[21]   See for example, "Dr Amanuel Mehreteab granted political asylum" *awate.com* 5 January 2004; "An Eritrean diplomat requests political asylum in Sweden" *awate.com* 29 December 2003.
[22]   Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War: Peasant Voices*, 140. See also, Kriger, "The Politics of Creating National Heroes: The Search for Political Legitimacy and National Identity", in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, Ngwabi. B and Terence Ranger Bhebe(Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1995), 139-162.; Who is a hero – ZAPU?" *Herald* 16 September 1982, 7; "Who is a hero" *Zimbabwe Mirror* 23 July 1999.
[23]   Werbner, "Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun: Postwars of the Dead, Memory and Reinscription in Zimbabwe", in *Memory and the Postcolony*, Richard Werbner(London: Zed Books, 1998),

where ideologies of sacrifice, also prevalent in Zimbabwe[24], take on a more commandist tone. During the candle-light services on the eve of Martyrs Day 2002, the power was turned out across the country and the sale of alcohol banned for 24 hours. This was said to facilitate appropriate behaviour on the part of mourners.

Regional politics in the years after independence contributed to the continued saliency of liberation war rhetoric and a discourse in which democracy had to take a back foot to security. Both countries found themselves at odds with powerful neighbours in the years after independence. In the 1980s, South Africa actively tried to destabilize both Zimbabwe and its other neighbours. These efforts included attempts to infiltrate and influence 'dissident' movements in Matabeleland (the so-called Super-Zapu group), recruitment of ex-Rhodesian spies, and covert attacks on ANC targets.[25] Zimbabwe also committed troops to support counter-insurgency efforts in Mozambique, where South Africa financed RENAMO during that country's long civil war. At the time, these events were thought significant because they enabled ZANU to maintain Rhodesian era laws and strategies.[26] Important accounts of this period have emphasised the psycho-social impact of the ZNA's brutal onslaught on the people of Matabeleland, accused of harbouring traitorous dissidents.[27] But the rhetorical impact of this period has often been under-estimated. While those in Matabeleland experienced the harshness of army counter-insurgency techniques, culled from their North Korean trainers, the rest of Zimbabwe was subject to a non-ending public discourse about the need for unity in the face of external aggression.

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[24]   Werbner, "Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun", in;Raftopoulos, "Zimbabwe: Race and Nationalism in a Post-Colonial State", in *Inventions and Boundaries*, Preben Kaarsholm and Ian Hultin(Roskilde: Roskilde University Occasional Papers, 1994), 75-102.

[25]   Joseph Hanlon, "Destabilisation and the battle to reduce dependence" in Colin Stoneman ed., *Zimbabwe's Prospects* (London: MacMillan, 1988); Michael Evans, "The security threat from South Africa" in Stoneman ed., *Zimbabwe's Prospects*; Alexander, "Dissident Perspectives on Zimbabwe's Post-Independence War", *Africa*, 68, 2, 1998, ??

[26]   Weitzer, "In Search of Regime Security: Zimbabwe since Independence", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 23, 4, 1984, 529-557.

[27] Alexander, et al., *Violence and Memory*, ; ZimRights, *Choosing the Path to Peace and Development: Coming to Terms with Human Rights Violations of the 1982-1987 Conflict in Matabeleland and Midlands Provinces*, (Harare: ZimRights, 1999), ;CCJP/LRF, *Breaking the Silence: Building True Peace. A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988*, CCJP & LRF, 1997,

Unity, however, was also seen as essential for 'development' and intra-societal unity was demanded of groups like teachers, farmers, and workers to that end.[28] Crystal is surely correct to emphasize the ways in which an ideology of developmentalism foster the belief that "the state must play the central role in promoting economic growth and that, to that end, individuals and social organisations must relinquish power to it, allowing it the routine, if temporary use of force against enemies."[29] Eritrea's rhetoric, perhaps unsurprisingly given the longer and les promising conditions of their struggle, stays much closer to the security discourse. Development is present, but even more clearly linked to sovereignty. In 1997, for example, Isaias said:

> The national feeling which until yesterday centralized around the imperative of bring about the liberation of homeland is today focusing on protecting and defending it as well as strengthening its structural pillars and making shorter the journey of national development.[30]

The devastating war with Ethiopia, which began in 1998, fed a new intensification of discourse, as ex-fighters were called up, and the young were newly mobilized. Those inside and outside the country who did not fight contributed financially to the war effort. Although a peace agreement was signed in 2000, the continuing tensions with Ethiopia, mean that this rhetoric has only diminished slightly, and broadened to include new targets.[31] In September 2001 just before the detention of the G-15, Eritreans were reminded that it was "incumbent on all citizens to unite their ranks and intensify the struggle to build the new Eritrea without being influenced by divisive elements."[32] Just

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[28] "Create Unity, Mutumbuka urges 5000 head-masters" *Herald* 13 November 1981, 3; "Nhongo urges unity of sexes for progress" *Herald* 27 January 1982, 3; "Breakthrough in abttle to unite all businessmen" *Herald* 28 January, 1982, 1; "Workers told to unite" *Herald* 27 January 1982, 2; "Unite or be disowned, warns top ZCTU man" *Herald* 29 January 1982, 11; "Workers unity is vital" *Herald* 3 May 1982, 4; "Clothing unions' merger 'is valid'" *Herald* 3 February 1982, 4; "Unity vital – Townsend" *Herald* 6 November 1981, 15.

[29] Crystal, "Authoritarianism and Its Adversaries in the Arab World", *World Politics*, 46, 1994, 288, see also 280-281.

[30] 'President Isaias replies to questions on national regional and international issues: part II' *Eritrea Profile* 31 MAY 1997, VOL 4 NO 12 PAGE 3.

[31] See for instance, Ministry of Information, "An axis of belligerance cannot be tolerated" 31 October 2002.

[32] "PFDJ stressed steadfastness, sacrifice in fulfillment of natl. and popular objectives" *Eritrea Profile* 1 SEPTEMBER 2001 PAGE 1

under twenty years earlier Mugabe warned Zimbabweans: "If you show divisionist attitudes the enemy will come among us and will destroy us."[33]

While the threats to sovereignty were real, especially in the Eritrean case, they also served a political purpose, in extending and perpetuating a militarised and securitised discourse, which discouraged criticism and alternative views. As has been written about Cuba's authoritarian state: "...to oppose Fidel meant to oppose national sovereignty, which is the revolution's central legacy.'"[34]

Mobilization – Demobilization – Remobilization

Liberation is assumed to be predicated the success of a mobilized society. It is difficult, however, to assess to what extent and how evenly peasants, urban dwellers, and others were mobilized during the struggle, and what impact that mobilization has on post-liberation relations with the party-turned-state. Nevertheless, we can identify patterns in Zimbabwe consistent with demobilization, and in Eritrea, with continued mobilization.

Demobilization

After independence, ZANU's party membership structures were allowed to atrophy.[35] Despite regular claims throughout the 1980s and 1990s that national service would be introduced for youth, it was not attempted until 2001.[36] The women's and youth leagues of the party were often violent campaigners in elections, but were not significant organizations at other times. Although ex-fighters were sometimes called upon to play significant political roles in the early years, they soon felt themselves to have been sidelined. Norma Kriger writes that although ex-fighters were 'born powerful' they were none-the-less aggrieved by the "lack of material and symbolic recognition of the ex-

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[33] "Division will destroy us, says Mugabe" *Herald* 18 October 1982.
[34] Hawkins, "Democratization Theory and Nontransitions: Insights from Cuba", *Comparative Politics*, 33, 2001, 441-461. 448.
[35] Alexander, "The State, Agrarian Policy and Rural Politics in Zimbabwe: Case Studies of Insiza and Chimanimani Districts, 1940-1990", Unpublished D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1993. See also -123.
[36] Nat serv zim ref

combatants' war services" and that they "resented the distance their former leaders kept from them."[37]   The ex-fighters were only grudgingly allowed to form their own representative organization in 1990.

NGOs, Churches, workers, students and professionals were all expected to work in and through the ZANU(PF) dominated state structures. Yet, this strategy was also relatively pluralist, with relatively few legal constraints on organizations, although this changed over the years. For example, Zimbabwean NGOs operated under Rhodesian era legislation until 1995, with little oversight from the Ministry responsible for them. In 1995, the introduction of NGO legislation was the final step in a series of laws introduced to regulate and control the University students and academics and trades unions.[38] Out of thousands of NGOs, only two have been threatened with closure by the Ministry; both appear to have been cases where the regime coveted the resources.[39] Nevertheless, in the early 1980s, and in the late 1990s, NGOs were increasingly under surveillance, and warned to watch their behaviour in official ministerial speeches.

Zimbabwe's strong economy and relative regional stability clearly enabled the state to provide goods and services which entrenched the belief that the regime was bringing 'development'. It also took advantage of offered donor funds, and tolerated, if not encouraged, the formation of local NGOs. While international NGOs existed, the salient and numerically dominant sector was Zimbabwean. Whether the source was donor funds or other, the regime was also able to take credit for most development projects.

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[37]   Kriger, "The War Victims Compensation Act", *Journal of African Conflict and Development*, 1, 2000, ms p2. see also Kriger, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980-1987*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 175.

[38] Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggles for democracy" 437-8; Nordlund, *Organising the Political Agora*, 184; Ngoni Chanakira, "Academic Freedom in Higher Institutions of Learning in Zimbabwe" *SAPEM* April 1991, pp 30-31; Cheater, "The University of Zimbabwe", 200-203.

[39]   On the AWC case see: Dorman, "Inclusion and Exclusion: Ngos and Politics in Zimbabwe", DPhil., University of Oxford, 2001. On the Savings Development Movement see Michael Bratton, "Non-governmental Organizations in Africa: can they influence Public Policy" *Development and Change* vol 21 (1990), 96-99.

Mobilization

In contrast, the Eritrean state encouraged the formation of the Eritrean war disabled fighters association,[40] although not an association of ex-combatants in the aggregate. Fighters do seem to have maintained some political influence. In his study of the EPLF, David Pool speaks of a 'socio-economic protest' resulting from the non-payment of salaries in the months after the referendum, that also raised issues about democratic accountability within the new state.[41] In a public statement sometime after the revolt, President Isaias spoke only of ex-fighters who "believed they were being abandoned by government…[and] took one of the officers hostage…demanded to speak to the president' [42] Despite this incident, or perhaps as a result of it, ex-fighters remain a relatively privileged and respected group. They have concessionary rights to import cars duty-free, most seem to have been provided with employment, and some are being sponsored for higher education. Questions have been raised about the experiences of female ex-combatants,[43] which have been recognized to some extent by the state.[44]

More generally, in Eritrea, continued mobilization of both the military and civilian variety has dominated society's experience of liberation. The apogee of this has been the emphasis on 'national service'. Seen as a continuation of the selfless giving during the liberation war, many returnees in the years between 1991- 1994 worked voluntarily to re-establish the state. Official national service was implemented in 1994, and written into the 1997 constitution.[45] Since the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia, however, national service has become a permanent situation.[46] 65 000 fighters, mainly veterans of the independence war, were demobilized in 2003/4, but the 'warsay' or

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[40] 'EWDFA holds 2nd congress' *Eritrea Profile* 27 APRIL 1996 VOL 3 NO 7 PAGE 1; 'Eritrean war disabled fighters association: highlights' *Eritrea Profile* 27 APRIL 1996 VOL 3 NO 7 Page 2.

[41] Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*, 173-175.

[42] "The president replies" Eritrea Profile 17 SEPTEMBER 1994, VOL 1 NUMBER 27 pp 4-5

[43] Matsuoka and Sorenson, *After Independence: Prospects for Women in Eritrea*, Unpublished, ;Bernal, "Equality to Die For? Women Guerilla Fighters and Eritrea's Cultural Revolution", *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 23, 2, 2000, 61-76;Nielsen, "Reintegration of Ex-Fighters in Highland Eritrea: A Window into the Process of State Formation and Its Lines of Social Stratification",

[44] "Parking ticket women get rehabilitated" *Shaebia.com* 23 April 2004; "New Jobs for ex-parking ticket collectors" *Shaebia.com* 7 May 2004.

[45] "National Service - the Facts", *Eritrea Profile*, 1, 12, 1994, 4;"Benefits of National Service Stressed", *Eritrea Profile*, 1, 10, 1994, 1;*The Constitution of Eritrea*, 1997, 1997.

[46] ""Nation Launches Warsay-Yikealo Campaign"," *Eritrea Profile,* 11 May 2002, 1.

national service youth, continue to serve.[47] The following explanation of the national development campaign which mobilised 60 000 Eritreans immediately prior to the 1998 war, conveys well the rationale:

> During the armed struggle for liberation it was part of our policy to launch campaigns that involved popular participation. It was such popular initiatives that enabled us finally to repulse large and well-armed attacks. It is not wise to leave everything to the government. Any development strategy should get full-participation from the people who are directly benefiting from it. If we are going to build an economically strong country, free of ignorance and disease and self-reliant, then we have to take it as our duty to participate in its development.[48]

This mobilization also extends into other areas, students entering the university have little choice about which department they are allocated to, and after graduation are allocated to various ministries to work as part of their 'national service'. Those employed in national service are paid a 'stipend' or what the university payroll staff call 'pocket money'. A select group of graduates from each university are sent abroad for further study. [49] Many have not returned, knowing that they face a predictable future of low pay in their continued years of service. Attempts to prevent young people absconding have led to army 'checkpoints' on all roads, and annual 'round-ups' which involve the dispersal of thousands of military police into the streets, checking the IDs of all passers-by, and even, it is reported, seizing young people from houses at the crack of dawn.[50] The atmosphere in these periods is particularly bad, with many of the young staying at home in relative safety. Businesses that had turned to young female staff with the conscription of young men, now find themselves more and more desperate for labour. Eritreans insist that they did not resist conscription before 1998, but that the abuse of women by senior officers was so pervasive that parents are increasingly unwilling to let their daughters serve. High rates of pregnancy and HIV-AIDS among conscripts, many

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[47] "all female NS participants demobilized" *Eritrea Profile*, 28 December 2003, 1; Ministry of Information (Eritrea), "Commission for demobilization and Reintegration program begins distribution of indentification cards" 1 March 2004; Ministry of Information (Eritrea), "The NCRDP commences fiscal remuneration to the first phase demobilized personals." 16 April 2004.

[48] 'A word to the people' *Eritrea Profile* 21 MARCH 1998 VOL 5 NO 2 page 2

[49] For a critical account of this scheme see: Mekonnen and Abraha, *The Plight of Eritrean Students in South Africa*, 2004,

[50] *Intense Nighttime Roundups-"Gffa"-in Eritrea*, Awate.com, 2002, ;*Twelve Killed in Roundup ("Gffa") Clashes*, Awate.com, 2002, ;"Eritrea Sweeps Capital for Draft Dodgers," *Reuters,* 19 April 1999,

of whom have either been raped, or chose to become pregnant as a way of evading service, are alleged to have distressed many families. Exit-visas for travel abroad are also tightly controlled, in order to prevent further brain and brawn drain.

Eritrea has resisted any tendencies towards pluralism. International NGOs have been tightly regulated. After the first post-war NGO was closed down and restrictive new laws were brought in, in the mid-1990s many international NGOs left in disgust, or, by some accounts, were asked to leave.[51] Four NGOs working on mine clearance were 'asked to terminate operations' in August 2002.[52] Local NGOs are few and far between. Three 'social movements' representing the youth, women and workers are the most visible and significant players, although they are not entirely distinct from either the party or the state.[53] In so far as they function to "obstruct the independent organization of social interests", they resemble Kasza's administered mass organizations.[54] The national youth organization precludes the existence of student groups, scout troops, and or sports groups.[55] In 1996, an organization set up to represent and provide services for female ex-fighters was closed down on orders from the President's office because "it duplicated the work of other organizations."[56]

The EPLF's sensitivity to religious divisions has had a particular impact on churches, although the 1998 Constitution enshrines complete religious freedoms. The two of four main religious leaders – the Islamic mufti and the Orthodox Patriarch – are thought to be appointed by the head of state. The other two main churches, the Lutheran church and the Roman Catholics, also have close ties to the state. Jehovah's witnesses, whose refusal to vote or serve in the military infuriated the ruling party, have not been

[51] Connell, "The Importance of Self-Reliance: Ngos and Democracy-Building in Eritrea", *Middle East Report*, Spring, 2000, 28-32., see also, 'NGOs are finding it difficult to work in Eritrea' *Eritrea Profile* 5 APRIL 1997, VOL 4 NO 4, p3 'Another perspective on Eritrea' *Eritrea Profile* 5 APRIL 1997, VOL 4 NO 4, p3; and Rachel Hayman, "Reconciling Ownership of Development and External Assistance: Aid and Nation-Building in Eritrea", MSc, University of Edinburgh, 2002.

[52] "4 NGOs asked to terminate operations here" *Eritrea Profile* 31 August 2002, 1.

[53] On youth see: Dorman, "National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students: Constraints and Opportunities for Organizational Development", NUEYS conference on "Eritrean Youths: post-war Challenges and Expectations" Asmara, Eritrea, December 2002.

[54] Gregory Kasza, *The Conscription Society: administered mass organizations* (New Haven: Yale, 1995), 9.

[55] Dorman, "Past the Kalashnikov: Youth, the State, and Politics in Eritrea", AEGIS Thematic Conference Uppsala, Sweden, May 2004.

[56] Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*, 183; see also, Connell, "The Importance of Self-Reliance",

tolerated.[57]   In 1995 it was declared that churches could not carry out development work.[58]   A limited number of 'evangelical' churches were permitted to operate until May 2002, when they were told to close. In Zimbabwe, churches have been better tolerated, especially when they have engaged in 'development projects'.[59]   In the early 1980s, independent churches were criticised for their anti-modern stance, and rejection of bio-medicine. However, by the time of the 2000 parliamentary election, they were being hastily recruited as 'authentic' supporters of ZANU, and registered en-masse to vote.[60]

Media and freedom of expression

Zimbabwe's freedom of the press has been characterised by self-censorship, and more recently politically-inspired attacks on the press and journalists. The burgeoning of independent newspapers in the late 1990s, at the same time as cell phones, satellite TV and email became wide-spread among the elite further reduced any possibility that the regime might successfully control the media. On the whole, it did not try to do so until the late 1990s, when journalists were detained and tortured[61] the only independent daily newspaper was closed[62], radio licenses restricted[63] and unsuccessful attempts made to

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[57] GOE, *A Presidential Directive on Jehovah's Witnesses*, Government of Eritrea, 1994, ;GOE, "Ministry of Interior, "Statement on Jehovah's Witnesses"", *Eritrea Profile*, 1995,

[58] proclamation issued 15 July 1995

[59] for a more detailed discussion see: Dorman, "Rocking the Boat?: Church-Ngos and Democratization in Zimbabwe?" *African Affairs*, 101, 2002b,

[60] "Apostolic Sect Supports President," *Herald,* 3 May 2001, ;"Vapostori Vote for the First Time," *Sunday News,* 25 June 2000, ;"Tv Evening News," *ZBC,* 18 June 2000, ;"Picture of Border Gezi at Vapostori Meeting," *Herald,* 19 June 2000, 1.

[61]; Mark Chavunduka and Ray Choto, Royal Commonwealth Society Meeting, London, 16 April 1999; see also news reports, Andrew Meldrum, "Mugabe 'Foiled Officer's Coup'" *Guardian (UK)* 11 January 1999, Andrew Meldrum, "Zimbabwe Army Torture Alleged" *Guardian (UK)*, 22 January 1999; "Chihuri admits illegal Act" *Standard*, 19 September 1999.

[62] "Plot to close Daily News" *Daily News* 21November 2000; "War vets besiege The Daily News" *Daily News* 24 January 2001; "War veterans 'ban' Daily News" *Daily News* 27 January 2001; "Press bombed" *Daily News* 28 January 2001.

[63] "Capitol Radio to be launched soon" *Daily News* 26 September 2000; "Moyo warns Capitol Radio" *Daily News* 3 October 2000; "Capitol Radio defies government" *Daily News* 4 October 2000. "A fresh breath on the air waves" *Standard* 8 October 2000, "Moves to extend ZBC monopoly to 2002" *Standard* 8 October 2000; "Freeing of airwaves unleashes scramble for radio licences" *Mirror* 6 October 2000; Dumisani Muleya "New broadcasting law grossly restrictive" *Independent* 6 October 2000; "Capital Radio judgment reserved" *Daily News* 10 October 2000; "Search on Auret's home yields nothing" *Daily News* 11 October 2000; "Latest on Capital Radio" *Independent* 3 November 2000.

control internet access.[64] In contrast, Eritrea was the last African country to gain internet access[65] and cell-phone networks have just begun to operate.[66] Independent newspapers, which had been allowed to publish after 1997, were shut down in 2001.[67]

The parties and economic development

As a new country, Eritrea began independence without any foreign debt, but with few other economic advantages. While Zimbabwe inherited a strong export sector and domestic production (and unlike Mozambique experienced little vandalism) Eritrea had none of these benefits. Although in the 1980s, Zimbabwe limited imports, it did have a significant ability to supply a limited range of clothing, blankets, food, wine and beer, kitchen implements, books, paper and so forth for domestic consumers. In Eritrea, the domestic manufacturing base is weak, despite some remaining Italian-era factories, and few inputs are produced locally. As a result, markets and shops are dominated by cheap imports from Asia and the Gulf. Perhaps because of this weak domestic base, and despite its officially free-market policies, Eritrea's ruling party has increasingly monopolized the economy through PFDJ-run enterprises known as 'party-partals.' These enterprises dominate the limited 'private' market, along with organizations run by ex-fighters and the former EPLF mass organizations, which have also been pressurised into the market economy.[68] The PFDJ-linked corporations have also benefited from access to cheap labour in the form of conscript workers. While ZANU(PF) did create a 'business empire' in Zimbabwe, with links into multi-national deals[69], it has never been a dominant economic force. The white-owned and multi-national corporations were wooed by

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[64] "Communications bill seen as draconian" *Independent* 10 March 2000; Nqobile Nyathi, "ISPs vow to fight Bill gagging email" *Financial Gazette* 23 March 2000; "Supreme Court bars Mugabe email snooping" *Daily Mirror*, 16 March 2004.

[65] Alex Last, "Eritrea goes slowly online" *BBC* 14 November 2000.

[66] Ministry of Information (Eritrea), "Eritrean Telecommunications Corporation to introduce mobile telephone service" 12 January 2004; see also, Ministry of Information (Eritrea), "The Washington Post commits foul play" 22 April 2004; Emily Wax, "Freedom, a Call Away? Control on Cell Phone Use in Eritrea Is Called Tool of Repression" *Washington Post* (USA), 20 April 2004.

[67] "Government places private newspapers under temporary ban" *Eritrea Profile*, 22 SEPTEMBER 2001 page 1

[68] Dorman, "National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students: Constraints and Opportunities for Organizational Development",

[69] "Inside Zimbabwe Inc" *Focus* 19 (September 2000); UN Security Council. Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (2001) 33-36.

ZANU(PF), as important partners in the post-independence state. Attempts by indigenization lobbies to influence political decision-making were limited until the late 1990s.[70]

Remobilization

Zimbabwe's recent destabilization is the result of efforts on the part of ZANU(PF) to remobilise society, directly linked to its electoral fortunes in 2000. However, the remobilisation of Zimbabwean society actually started outside the party, with the war veterans protests in 1997.

The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) had been formed in 1990, in response to the existence of impoverished war veterans "whose plight was not only an embarrassment to the government, but who had also become...potential recruits to ZUM."[71] Indeed, while this group was affiliated to the ruling party, and led by party loyalists, it had the potential to radically critique the government's post-colonial achievements. In 1996, when Margaret Dongo revealed in Parliament that the War Victims Compensation Fund had been looted by senior party and government officials, the Chidyausiku Commission was set up and mandated to investigate. The commission suspended payments to veterans, leading to a series of riots and protests in June-August 1997.

Unlike other protesters they were not regular tear-gassed, dispersed or charged. With apparent impunity, they occupied and looted the ZANU(PF) party headquarters, took over a courtroom—chasing out judges and court officials, disrupted Heroes' Day celebrations across the country and demanded and received meetings with senior party officials and President Mugabe.[72] Ministers holding meetings in Harare were forced to

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[70] Brian Raftopoulos and Sam Moyo, "The Politics of Indigenisation in Zimbabwe" *East African Social Science Review* 11, 2 (1995);

[71] Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggles for democracy" 446; see also, "War veteran's constitution" *Herald* 1 May 1989, 3.

[72] "Meetings with war vets turn nasty" *Herald* 21 July 1997, 1, 8, 11; "Ex-combatants loot ZANU(PF) headquarters" *Herald* 14 August 1997, 1, 9; "War veterans threaten to seize white-owned land" *Independent* 29 August 1997, 12.

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flee, in Bulawayo, veterans threatened to beat up Home Affairs Minister Dumiso Dabengwa, and in Lupane John Nkomo, Minster of Local Government Rural and Urban Development was also forced to flee the fury of ex-fighters, while elsewhere ministers were faced with verbal abuse and shouted down.[73]

The government rapidly conceded to their demands.[74] However, the unbudgeted agreement to provide these 'pay-outs' had an immediate impact on the Zimbabwean economy, with the November 1997 currency crash from which the Zimbabwe dollar has never recovered. Two further repercussions are important: The economic decline of the 1990s meant that there were few resources available to the state which it could distribute to the war veterans. Realization of the limitation led the state to turn to land redistribution, in an attempt to placate this suddenly volatile constituency, endowed with immense symbolic capital. From 1998 onwards, rhetoric over land grew, leading to the inclusion of a clause in the draft constitution empowering the state to seize land without redress. In the aftermath of the February 2000 referendum the war veterans, aided by party loyalists and unemployed youths, moved onto commercial farms and began to claim land. This process was later formalized as the 'fast track' land distribution process.

Over the same period, the white community which had hitherto maintained a safe distance from overt political involvement, began to be participate in initiatives like the NCA, public meetings, and the MDC.[75] This process was not uniform or unambiguous: the government's rhetoric claiming that whites were behind the NCA and MDC was grossly over-exaggerated. The Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), which had been close to ZANU(PF) until the 1998 land designations, wavered between attempting to maintain its position of non-confrontational interaction with government ministries and using the

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[73] "Angry Zimbabwean War Veterans Chase Ministers" *PANA* 20 July 1997.
[74] "Discontent emerging over Zimbabwe's veteran's levy" *PANA* 30 November 1997.
[75] At the September 1999 launch of the MDC, I estimated there were three white spectators (including myself); by the 2000 elections, whites were attending NCA meetings in downtown hotels, and even a few were at the MDC pre-election rallies.

courts to seek redress, reflecting the presence of two camps within its membership. MDC members pressured the CFU to pursue legal action against the unconstitutional land seizures. Other groups of farmers, notably tobacco growers, producing mainly for export, have emphasized the economic realities, and urged the farm community to seek ways of compromising with the ruling party.[76] However, the combination of increased white involvement in politics, along with and through churches, NGOs, and unions generated a much more mobilized and participatory sector, increasingly defining itself outside of ZANU(PF)'s orbit.[77] ZANU(PF) has matched this process, initially by attempting to organize its own NGO sector, along with its own Constitutional Commission.[78] Alongside efforts to re-invigorate ZANU(PF) structures, it has began a controversial youth national service programme[79] and wooed traditional chiefs.[80] Substantial efforts have been made to avoid allegations that land reform is only for elites, doubtless as part of programme to rebuild a rural constituency.[81] In 2004, Zimbabwe remains polarized, but also mobilized.

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[76] Personal Communication, Angus Selby, 30 October 2001; "CFU faces split over withdrawal of charges" *Daily News,* 18 August 2000; Mercedes Sayagues, "CFU opens its chequebook to buy peace in Zim." *Mail & Guardian*, May 19 2000.

[77] Dorman, "Ngos and the Constitutional Debate in Zimbabwe: From Inclusion to Exclusion", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 4, 2003, 845-863.

[78] "Inyika Trust commends Government on proposed Bill" *Herald* 9 May 2001; "Inyika Trust condemns CFU's plans" *Herald* 11 May 2001; "Inyika Trust slams judgment" *Herald* 9 February 2001; "NCA, NDA clash over interests" *Standard* 5 November 2000; "Heritage linked to Jonathan Moyo" *Daily News,* 20 January 2001; "Heritage Zimbabwe refutes daily's story" *Sunday Mail* 26 January 2001; "Heritage Zim hosted Hunzvi mourners" *Independent* 15 June 2001; see also, "State targets colleges, NGOs for crackdown" *Daily News* 23 July 2003.

[79] "Youth service ushers in new citizenry" *Herald* 31 July 2003; "%000 national service graduates get jobs" *Herald* 8 August 2003, p3.

[80] Jocelyn Alexander Chiefs and the State in Independent Zimbabwe paper presented at Conference on Chieftaincy in Africa, St Antony's College, Oxford, 9 June 2001 See also., "Chiefs Get Hefty Allowances" *The Herald* 20 April 2004.

[81] "One man, one farm: President" *Herald* 31 July 2003.

Continuity and Change

Much has been written about the continuity of institutions and ideologies from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, which is attributed to the negotiated transition.[82] Eritrea inherited relatively little institutionally from Ethiopia, and has been at great pains to emphasize the discontinuities of territorial and governmental re-organization.[83] Despite this, similarities to older ways of thinking and organising are occasionally suggested. Clapham for instance argues that 'Eritrean nationalism…appears to reproduce, within the colonial boundaries of Eritrea, a concept of boundary and territory almost indistinguishable from that of both imperial and revolutionary governments in the years before 1991 in Ethiopia as a whole.'[84] However, by taking control militarily, the leaders of the Eritrean state were not required to, nor interested in, negotiating with settled interests. In many cases, ministries appear to have been taken over and staffed with battalions of ex-fighters. As was suggested above, the paucity of large corporations enabled the EPLF to simply repatriate their diaspora trading connections.

In contrast, the negotiated transition in Zimbabwe created constraints, not simply of the institutional form found in the constitution, but generated a different kind of politics. Neighbouring politicians, and his own real-politik, encouraged Mugabe to seek alliances with the former white politicians, opposition blacks, and multi-nationals, incorporating them into his sphere of influence. Stanley Trapido argues that this sort of expanding and contracting web of coalition building is typical of all nationalist movements.[85] And, as Linz argues, competing societal interests can only be balanced in a demobilized society:

> Effective mobilisation, particularly through a single party and its mass organisations, would be perceived as a threat by the other components of the limited pluralism, typically, the army, the bureaucracy, the churches or interest groups.[86]

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[82] Alexander, "State, Peasantry and Resettlement in Zimbabwe", *Review of African Political Economy*, 61, 1994, 325-345.; Michael Drinkwater 'Technical Development and Peasant Impoverishment: Land Use Policy in Zimbabwe's Midlands Province', *JSAS* 15, 2 91989) pp. 287-305.

[83] "Eritrea to Have 6 Administrative Regions", *Eritrea Profile*, 20 May 1995, 1;""Why a New Administrative Structure" Interview with Mahmoud Sherifo", *Eritrea Profile*, 3 June 1995,

[84] Christopher Clapham, 'Boundary and territory in the Horn of Africa' in Paul Nugent and A.I.. Asiwaju eds, *African Boundaries' Barriers, Conduits, and Opportunities* London: Pinter, 1996, 242.

[85] Stanley Trapido, "African and Afrikaner Nationalism" unpublished paper 2001.

[86] Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2000), page 166.

Eritrea, in contrast, with its independence seized at the barrel of the gun, had far fewer forces to balance, and less need to listen to advice. Eritrea's lack of a commitment to 'limited pluralism' has enabled the government been to maintain a mobilized society, in which groups with potentially distinct interests have co-operated, until the demands of mobilization exceeded their commitment. At first only tiny fractions of the population – Jehovah's Witnesses and Islamic political movements – resisted the party/state's agenda. But as larger numbers of people have experienced the coercive side of the state – national service dodgers and their families, elderly mediators and students – discontent has grown. As a former government insider recently said: "The political condition in Eritrea has continued to deteriorate to the point that no Eritrean, including so-called high-ranking officials, can be considered immune from arbitrary arrests."[87]

Post-liberation politics in southern Africa has tended to emphasize inclusionary tactics – although some groups are 'outside', efforts are made to include as many 'inside' as possible. Increasingly exclusionary politics result from the unbalancing of the demobilized, stable post-liberation bargain. The mobilization and privileging of certain members of the coalition weakens the regime's hold over other, former allies. It also opens spaces for alternative accounts of nationalism or other ideologies to flourish. In doing so, it further reflects a diminishing in the ideological or cultural elements of power, as well as the material. This leaves coercive force on its own, in a much weaker position than when justified by rhetoric or resource distribution. There are simply few *incentives* (carrots) for people to support the regimes, instead there are coercive mechanisms (sticks) designed to enforce their acquiescence. As Fred Halliday memorably said about a rather different regime, its weakness was 'reliance on orders and moral exhortation alone'.[88] Both Eritrea and Zimbabwe have been plunged into crisis as they increasingly rely on coercive and exclusionary politics.

Authoritarian politics in Africa is frequently interpreted as either 'politics of the belly' (that is material need or greed) or 'coercion'. Neither Zimbabwe nor Eritrea fit either characterization terribly well, yet both are markedly authoritarian. Though both

[87] Muheidin Shegeb, Transcript of an interview by Awate 9 May 2004 *awate.com*:
[88] Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (Penguin 1979) page 58.

greed and coercion exist in Zimbabwe and in Eritrea to differing extents, these explanations do not engender understanding of their particular state-society relations, and the changes that have occurred within them. The paper has argued instead that authoritarianism in these two cases must be understood as based on a combination of inclusionary tactics – both material and symbolic – buttressed by selective coercion, which generated authoritarian regimes, with a certain amount of stability and durability, despite markedly different approaches to societal mobilization and demobilization. In both cases, however, attempts to maintain mobilized populations under conditions of economic scarcity have destabilized state-society relations.

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