

**Public and Diasporic Online Media in the Discursive Construction of National
Identity: A Case of 'Zimbabwe'**

By

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the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Media Studies**



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Declaration

I, Shepherd Mpofu (Student Number: 0706482g), declare that this thesis is my own original unaided work. Where other people's works have been used, this has been fully acknowledged. This thesis is being submitted in the fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities, at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination, or to any other university.

Signed

.....

Shepherd Mpofu

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NB. Some parts of this thesis have been presented in conferences, published as parts of journal articles or book chapters.

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Notes

Quotations from *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* appearing in extracts in *Chapters 7, 8* and *9* are copied as they are. There was no attempt to correct grammatical, punctuation and other mistakes. Where Shona and Ndebele words are used in the extracts from *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* these are translated into English by the writer of this thesis.

Abstract

The post- 2000 period in Zimbabwe has been marked by a major shift in the role of the media in national identity construction. This thesis uses contrasting case studies in the form of *NewZimbabwe.com* and *The Herald* to examine trajectories of national identity construction through the media in Zimbabwe. The research illustrates that various notions of alternative national identity have been constructed in the backdrop of the dominant narratives advanced by the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-Pf), articulated through the public owned and government controlled public media—*The Herald*, while *NewZimbabwe.com*, a diasporic online medium, has been used to propagate alternative discourses on national identity. The two publications were selected because of their different ways of covering issues on and about Zimbabwe. The public owned publication, *The Herald*, acts as a mouth-piece of the government of the day while *NewZimbabwe.com*, despite its changing ideological positions over the years, has constantly allowed for a myriad of views and has been a space for contentious debate. The research data consists of textual material from both *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* between 2000 and 2011. Zanu-Pf, together with patriotic scholars and journalists has managed to use land reform, race, colonial and liberation war memory, national holidays and anti-imperialism as some of the core themes to sustain its narrow formulations of national identity. On the other hand, ordinary citizens have discursively challenged these constructions of the nation ‘from below’ and their formulations of the nation have largely been constructionist, demonstrating the fragility and fluidity of national identities. Besides being a contested terrain, it seems ethnicity has played an important role in disrupting and fracturing the nationalists’ perceived notion of a cohesive Zimbabwean national identity. While Zanu-Pf has used violence and state-induced amnesia to bar debates of the 1980s genocide which has engendered feelings of alienation among some ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, the latter have used genocide memory as a site of resisting the Zanu-Pf formulated version of national identity. These alienated communities have used online media and offline activities to agitate for their own separate state. Zanu-Pf and ordinary people’s constructions of identity are not always at variance. On issues of homosexuality, the thesis demonstrates some forms of ideological confluence. In addition, much as new media are liberating, they remain problematic due to ethical considerations and mirroring repressive hierarchical forms consistent with public controlled media where opinion leaders and not ordinary readers set the agenda on many debates. The research is theoretically and conceptually underpinned by nationalism and public sphere theories. In addition, the interdisciplinary approaches of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA) are used to analyse most national identity debates advanced by both ordinary citizens and Zanu-Pf. The research makes scholarly contribution through this interdisciplinary and multi-theoretical approach to national identity construction. Whereas most scholarship privileges elite constructions of national identity, this research suggests that ordinary people’s voices matter and when not given platforms, they are likely to be innovative and use other spaces like online media. The findings reveal the enabling and central role of new media as alternative digital public spheres used by ordinary citizens to facilitate the discursive construction of national identity.

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ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
BSA	Broadcasting Services Act
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIT	Citizen
DHA	Discourse Historical Approach
GALZ	Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
GNU	Government of National Unity
IDs	Identity Cards
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
LOMA	Low and Order Maintenance Act
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change-Tswangirayi
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MIC	Media and Information Commission
MLF	Matabeleland Liberation Front
MPC	Mthwakazi People's Congress
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NICTs	New Information and Communication Technologies
PF-ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union-Patriotic Front
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UK	United Kingdom
UMR	United Mthwakazi Republic
US	United States
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front

ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZIBF	Zimbabwe International Book Fair
ZimInd	Zimbabwe Independent Newspaper
ZIMPAPERS	Zimbabwe Newspapers Group
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZMMT	Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust
ZTV	Zimbabwe Television
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

DEDICATION:

To my wife

Vera Duduzile Mpofu

and my son

Makabongwe Nathan Gavriil Mpofu who was born towards the end of this journey.

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Chapter 1: Introducing the Study

In Zimbabwe today, it almost goes without saying that a critical history of nationalism is essential: many of the fundamental issues which affect Zimbabwean society arise out of the promises, the disputed character and the failures of nationalism. (Alexander et. al., 2000: 83)

1.1 Introduction

Since 2000, debates surrounding the nation, imperialism, sovereignty, human rights and the land issue have been at the core of ‘Zimbabwe’s’¹ national being. What has come out as the focal point of contestation in these debates is the often less theorised theme of national identity. The aim of this research is to examine in detail how Zimbabweans utilise diasporic² online media as alternative public spheres to discursively construct, perform, articulate and disseminate on various notions of national identity³ that rail against the dominant ones advanced by the political elite. The research illustrates that these various notions of alternative national identity are constructed in the backdrop of the dominant narratives advanced by the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-Pf) articulated through the public owned and government controlled public media. For the purposes of this research the public medium used is *The Herald* newspaper while *NewZimbabwe.com* is a case of diasporic online media where alternative discourses on national identity obtain. These contests of the nation have not been systematically studied in detail in the case of Zimbabwe. This thesis therefore attempts to assess how the media have

¹ It is important to highlight the fact that the term and name “Zimbabwe” is problematic and contested by some non-Shona speaking people especially those from Matabeleland who view the name as a Shona construct that continues to perpetuate Shona dominance and hegemony. Its use in this thesis is not a mere acceptance of it as an uncontested term. It is used here loosely to refer to the current map of Zimbabwe but as the thesis progresses it becomes clear that there is no fixed ‘Zimbabwean’ identity neither do all those inside the country’s borders see themselves as Zimbabweans. (See Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a)

² These are media based in the diaspora. Diaspora in this thesis is used according to the definitions set up by Walter Connor (1994), Judith Shuval (2000), William Safran (1991) and Martin Baumann (2000) below. Diaspora, Connor asserts, is the “segment of people living outside the homeland,” (cited in Safran, 1991: 83). Shuval adds that the diaspora live and act in “host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands” (Shuval, 2000: 41). Baumann further argues that the term diaspora has “emotion laden connotations of uprootedness, precariousness and homesickness provid[ing] explanations for the group’s enduring and nostalgic loyalty to the cultural and religious traditions of the country of origin” (2000: 314).

³ National identity in this context is: “a body of ideas that form the basis of shared loyalties to the nation-state. The ways in which this allegiance is constructed, made concrete, communicated and maintained over time, are the means and ends of national identity. In other words, national identity is often taken to mean a shared structure of feeling, a largely imagined consciousness that is reinforced both through life’s daily routines as well as through ritualised, symbol-laden, celebrations of nationhood”³(Thomas, 1997: Online)

played a central role as enablers in the discursive construction of national identity and fill an existent lacuna of literature in this regard.

The main argument here is that diasporic new media have afforded ordinary⁴ Zimbabweans without a voice in the public media a channel through which alternative notions of national identity are articulated and debated. Firstly, the thesis outlines how the dominant discourses sponsored by Zanu-Pf have been formulated around certain salient themes like ethnicity, sexuality, commemorations, national mourning and material commodities like the land. This lays the foundation for the articulation of alternative notions of identity via *NewZimbabwe.com* as an enabling tool. Secondly, the research uses the *NewZimbabwe.com* website as a case study to follow on certain themes on identity and demonstrate the role new media plays in Zimbabwe's national identity debates.

Academic research on national identity debates tends to ignore the role of media both as technologies/objects and texts that have been important vehicles for people to talk about their nation and their identities (Khalidi, 2010; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). Such research has taken for granted the fact that the media are powerful tools in mediating and influencing identities (Anderson, 1991; Brookes, 1999; Smith, 1991; Singer and Singer, 2001; Wodak, 2009). Studies on national identity have also tended to focus on how the elite and not ordinary citizens utilise the media as catalysts in the mediation of national belonging (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a; Orlova, 2013; Wodak, 2009). In the context of Zimbabwean scholarship on national identity construction, this research breaks new ground in that it privileges voices of the ordinary people in identity debates. This approach respects the power, dynamism and diversity of various contending voices within the nation.

Media comprise some of the integral institutions in the discursive production of complex notions of national identity. Thus, through media, nations define and identify themselves. Anderson (1991) once argued that the formation of Western Europe nations was inextricably linked to modern developments contingent, among other things, on print capitalism, map, census and museum. Thus according to Anderson, the emergence and replication of the daily

⁴ The term 'ordinary Zimbabweans' is problematic especially under circumstances where the profiles of discussants are not known. The term is here used to refer to those without access to contribute to debates in public mediasuch as *The Herald*. These are not necessarily originators of thoughts or debates published in *NewZimbabwe.com*, but those who participate through commenting below main news articles or opinion columns, after being prompted to do so by those thought leaders or newstories. Thought leaders' articles are used to set the contextand tone in which interactants participate in online discourses.

ritual of newspaper reading in these countries pointed to print capitalism's role "in the historical constitution of nations as imagined communities" (Brookes, 1999: 248). On newspapers and their role in imagined community formation Anderson wrote:

Particular morning and evening editions will overwhelmingly be consumed between this hour and that, only on this day, not that...It is performed in silent privacy, in the liar of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands ... of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion (1991: 35).

This shows the central role of newspapers and by extension the media, in the formation and understanding of the nation (Morley, 1992). Elsewhere, Sumartojo (2012: 2) adds that there are other pre-modern ethnic cultural forms and structural effects linked to national formation such as "national territory, myths and memories, legal rights and duties, the economy and 'a common mass public culture'" in other countries where the media cannot be credited with national formation. To reiterate, national identities are not static or fixed, hence they are continually imagined, constructed, contested and reconstituted through communication and other actions. These imaginations, contestations and reconstitutions mean that national identities are enhanced through processes of exclusion and inclusion of outsiders and insiders respectively or by identifying friends and enemies from within or without (Brookes, 1999; Schlesinger, 1991). What is important at this juncture is to highlight that it is not just the media that matter in contributing to national identity formation, but ideologies carried through media content that are important. In addition, not all national identities are constructed through and by the media. Colonial African nationalism for instance was inspired and cemented by nationalists' resistance to colonialism. This does not mean that there was no nationalism in pre-colonial times; it was in existence but communities existed in ethnic or tribal formations. The suggestion is that African nationalisms, just like any other, are as old as "the ancient times" (Khapoya, 2009: 150). Electronic and print media, both private and public, continue to play an important role in forming and mediating various contesting notions of national identity in postcolonial Zimbabwe. More specifically, public owned but government controlled media have been used especially by the current ruling party, Zanu-Pf. The private media, especially diaspora based online publications have played an antagonistic role to Zanu-Pf and have sought to define the nation in terms that rail against and contest those of Zanu-Pf.

Thomas Eriksen observes that the internet has become a “major medium for the consolidation, strengthening and definition of collective identities, especially in the absence of a firm territorial and institutional base” (2007: 8). Marginalised, ostracised, excluded and demonised non-state actors, groups and opposition parties find the internet an effective platform for expression of identities and dissemination of pro-democracy views. The ‘effectiveness’ of new media in Zimbabwe can be deduced from Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe’s expression of displeasure on the ‘negative’ impact the internet has had especially to his government. At the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003, he condemned the way the internet was being used by the “aloof immigrant settler landed gentry, all royal, all untouchable, all western supported” former colonists and some powers, as a conduit

...through which virulent propaganda and misinformation are peddled to de-legitimise our just struggles against vestigial colonialism...to weaken national cohesion and efforts at forging a broad Third World front against what patently is a dangerous imperial world order led by warrior states and kingdoms (Mugabe, 2003).

The subtext of this statement suggests that new media have exposed Zanu-Pf’s increasingly repressive tendencies to the whole world and offered alternative versions of the country’s history, politics and identity. Mugabe’s sentiments do not undermine the role that new media plays in the politics of contemporary Zimbabwe. Instead, they illuminate the problematics of new media as a space where counter-hegemonic ideologies that attempt to upset the Zanu-Pf dominant ones are propagated. Further, new media have created an alternative public sphere in which while people miles apart, are able to follow news from home and deliberate on matters of interest. These forms of distancing have arguably “accelerated in recent years due to improvements in infrastructure, the arrival of wireless technologies and the lower tariffs” in Africa (Internet Usage Statistics for Africa, 2012). Internet penetration in Zimbabwe stood at almost 2 million as of June 2012 accounting for 15.7% of the population compared to Africa’s leading country-Nigeria with 48.2 million users (28.9% of the total population). These statistics suggest the possibility of the homeland population in accessing and contributing to the debates in diasporic online media, specifically *NewZimbabwe.com* (see Figure 1 on page 16). Notice also in Figure 1 that the highest number of hits the site gets is based in the diaspora but this does not necessarily mean that all the readers and story discussants are based outside Zimbabwe.

1.2 Research problem

Since independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has frequently been arrested by political, economic and social problems with the most challenging era being post-2000. Amidst these problems Zanu-Pf, the sole ruler of the country since independence, has ridden roughshod over opposition groups in an attempt to preserve its political hegemony. The party has maintained its hegemony through the use of violence, repackaging of nationalist historiography and collective liberation war memory as well as relying on the support and public media discourses from “intellectuals sympathetic to it” (Miles-Tendi, 2008: 379). National identity has been one of the main tropes used by Zanu-Pf as a mantra for obtaining, retaining and dispensing state power. The party has systematically controlled and (ab)used public media to relay its dominant narratives of national identity, part of which were created by the nationalist movement in the 1960s and later appropriated and advanced by Zanu-Pf after political independence in 1980. In the process it seems national identity, both civic and cultural, has been defined from above by the political elite in the absence of citizens’ contributions. Consequently, the voices⁵ of ordinary people in this regard have largely been ignored. Couldry argues that this kind of marginalisation leads to a “contemporary crisis of voice” (2010:1) in which, as the Zimbabwe case shows, people’s expressions of opinion and perspectives on national identity have been silenced or sidelined from the public sphere. This has led to a situation where Zanu-Pf has dominated the discursive space for hegemonic purposes using narrowly defined and authoritarian narratives of Zimbabweanness. To counter this, Zimbabweans have opted for other platforms to resist the Zanu-Pf formulations of national identity.

Locating the Study: Limitations and gaps in existing studies

Academic research on national identity has been made more diverse and complex by the growth of diasporic and transnational global networks that have also complicated relationships between migrants and their homelands/sending countries (Bernal, 2006; Fouron and Schiller, 1996; Peel, 2009; Safran, 1991). In the Zimbabwean context, the transnational networks’ intervention is illustrated through an explosion of debates that add to the construction of various notions of national identity from below, using alternative diasporic online media as alternative spaces to public media. The exclusion of oppositional and other

⁵ Voice in this instance refers not to the sound generated by a speaker’s vocal chords but politically and more broadly “the expression of a distinctive perspective on the world that needs to be acknowledged” (Couldry, 2010: 1)

non-status quo voices from public media has seen these voices actively deploying alternative spaces like social media, websites, academic articles or books to construct identities from below. Global scholarship abounds with case studies on how technological developments like the internet and its enabling technologies have challenged the notion that territorial integrity of nations equals cohesive national identity (Chan, 2005; Eriksen, 2007; Everad, 2000; Sheyholislami, 2008). Other scholars (Appadurai, 1996; Hobsbawm 1990) have argued that instead of enhancing nationalism, globalisation, i.e. the deepening of modernity which both fragments and homogenises global cultures, will lead to the demise of nationalism. Lack of research in the Zimbabwean context of these issues renders any discussion of national identity problematic.

Four most prominent studies on media and identity in Zimbabwe are worth flagging here as they help lay the foundation for this research. Firstly, Dumisani Moyo's (2007) study that highlights the tactics of societies existing under repressive regimes—forming alternative avenues of expression as tools of subversion—is instructive. Moyo's (2007) article lays the groundwork for this thesis by analysing diaspora based news websites on Zimbabwe and helps

ascertain the nature and extent of their contribution to the ongoing discourse on the Zimbabwe crisis. It looks at the organisational and production aspects of these alternative media, and how these affect their performance as alternative channels of discourse. (Moyo, 2007: 81)

Secondly, another research that is important and links with Moyo's (2009) and intimately relates to the current thesis is one by Last Moyo (2009) on Ndebele politics and construction of identity from the diaspora. Moyo (2009) highlights how identity politics of the homeland are mirrored in a diasporic website, *Inkundla.net* (Inkundla means public space where men gather to discuss issues affecting the community) a website used to create and sustain an Ndebele identity. Moyo's (2009) research demonstrates that the Mthwakazi nation, i.e. a mythic Ndebele nation which is one of the stateless nations i.e. those states that have lost their territories like the Afrikaners of South Africa and Rhodesians of Zimbabwe or dispersed nations like the Tamil of Sri-Lanka, has maintained a large presence on the internet. Moyo concludes that the internet is central in the "[I]nternet-virtual community in the negotiation and re-articulation of identities for the Ndebele communities in the diaspora" (Moyo, 2009: 83). Third, one of the significant studies to this thesis is one by Mano and

Willems (2008). It was prompted by discussions around Zimbabwean nurse, Makosi Musambasi's participation in the *British Big Brother 6* broadcast on *Channel 4* in 2005. This theoretically rich research looks at both how diasporic media covers issues of the diaspora communities and also how the latter respond to this coverage. The paper analyses debates by Zimbabweans in the *NewZimbabwe.com* chatrooms reacting to Musambasi's "shameless ... drunken" (2008: 111) representation of Zimbabwe in the reality show. Besides outlining the growth of the diaspora and new media, the research is alive to the importance of readers in identity construction. The research further demonstrates, through Musambasi's experiences and testimonies in the show, the precariousness of diasporic existence for Zimbabweans in the UK.

Lastly, Peel (2008) has done groundbreaking in-depth and extensive research on diasporic Zimbabwean identities through case studies of identity formation by the British based Zimbabwean communities. Peel's (2008) research demonstrates the 'fragmentedness' of Zimbabwean diasporic digital public spheres used as communicative, socialisation and identity formation sites. It does this through examining mixed race websites (*www.gofal.com*), Ndebele (*Inkundla.net*) White (*thebottomhalf.com*) and the professional Association of Zimbabwe Journalists (*yahoo.comgroup*). Peel's (2008) analysis demonstrates ethnic diversity, political polarization based on personal or group histories, experiences and personal voices in ways that are honest enough to reveal certain tensions and fissures characterising Zimbabwean society and its diaspora. Peel's (2008) coverage of the mixed-race group is revealing as minorities are often ignored in most academic studies on identity and the media. Just like the researches highlighted above, the coverage of the dominant discourses and the bias towards diasporic communities may be considered worrying. There are certain aspects that are 'lacking' in the researches above. This does not in any way negate their relevance in the field and to this research. Neither does this research attempt to discount the above studies and their findings. Having said that, it is crucial to point out the relevance of the current research to existing academic studies.

The above studies do not engage with media and national identity theories in a sustained and in-depth manner. Reader voices are not taken into consideration in the first research and while the other three take these into consideration, this is done in an environment of consonance rather than dissonance. Added to that, the studies do not locate the major national

identity narratives in the context of the dominant constructions of Zimbabweanness propagated by Zanu-Pf. Zanu-Pf's dominant narratives on national identity have calibrated national insiders and outsiders in a racial, tribal and xenophobic manner. The dominant narratives on national identity foregrounded by Zanu-Pf cannot be understood outside four critical moments in history – the pre-colonial, colonial, the nationalist-liberation war and the postcolonial epochs. Scrutiny of these epochs leads to a conclusion that the Zimbabwean identity does not have one authoritative narrative as Zanu-Pf problematically suggests, but multiple and different ones, hence the vibrant and discordant debates on it. The nationalist-liberation war epoch, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) failed to give birth to a postcolonial epoch 'nation-state'.

Contributions of the current study

There are several issues that make this study distinctive and break new ground regarding the research of national identity construction in Zimbabwe. Studies on Zimbabwean national identity cannot be said to be complete without an understanding of the social and political impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) which has become conspicuous since 2000. Research suggests that globalisation has seen the rise of technology based fora that help transmit and foster "fellow-feelings" (Wheeler, 2000: 432) and strengthen national identities through the creation of "fertile conditions for diasporic and transnational identity politics" (Eriksen, 2007: 2). In the Zimbabwean case, there are virtual communities established by diaspora based Zimbabweans (Mano and Willems, 2008; Moyo, 2009; Peel, 2009) and these are either multi-racial or ethnic (Moyo, 2009; Peel, 2009). The strength and uniqueness of this research lies in an empirical study that seeks to demonstrate that Zimbabweans both in the diaspora and homeland use the internet to construct, contest and reconfigure different versions of national identity alternative to the dominant ones promulgated by Zanu-Pf. Whereas the public media are replete with Zanu-Pf's standardised dominant constructions of national identity, constructions of national identity in online media have been diverse but understudied forms of demonstrating identity formation from below. Just like Thomas Eriksen argues, this study similarly argues that the internet has made it possible for "nations to strive in cyberspace" (2007: 1).

Another approach in this study which is different from others is that ordinary citizens can contribute to national identity debates from below using alternative media like

NewZimbabwe.com. The research is unique in that first of all it empirically demonstrates how Zanu-Pf (see *Chapter 7*) has constructed a dominant version of Zimbabweanness. The study then uses this as a stepping stone to reveal how *NewZimbabwe.com* has been used by ordinary citizens to challenge these prevailing versions of identity (see *Chapters 8 and 9*). In addition, unlike most researches on national identity, this thesis demonstrates that heated debates and even flaming (the use of foul language) are ways of expressing complex and differing attitudes towards identities—something concomitant to radical democracy.

The multi-pronged theoretical and methodological approach employed in this thesis makes a new contribution in academic research as it marries media studies, sociology and digital anthropology to arrive at a nuanced understanding of various contests that obtain in the process of nation formation. Thus, the use of the public and national identity theories together with digital ethnography and memory is not only innovative but gives a rich tapestry of the debates and analyses that surround various notions of Zimbabwean national identity. These methodological and theoretical issues have also accommodated the detailed discussion of a broad range of themes and how these have been used to construct the nation by Zanu-Pf on the one hand and how they have been contested to construct alternative views of nationhood by ordinary people on the other. This research is guided by the analytical framework of Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). DHA proposes a multi-dimensional deconstruction of discourse by looking at particular issues in detail, including the historical dimensions and topoi (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). CDA factors in the use of both written and spoken discourse as a form of social practice (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999). CDA is used to analyse both “opaque and transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak, 1995: 204). Under CDA, a “comprehensive study of discourse requires both, linguistic exploration of the content of discourse and socio-political analysis of conventions shaping discourse within a broader socio-political analysis” (Orlova, 2013: 8). The use of the contrasting case studies, i.e. *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* is not only innovative but strengthens this research and makes it different from existing ones in many different ways. It has allowed the researcher to concentrate on two clashing ‘ideologies’ in an in-depth fashion aimed at creating deeper understanding of the dominant and alternative versions of national identity.

While this research focuses on Zimbabwean national identity and contributions of both public and diasporic media, the questions asked, analyses made and conclusions reached can be applied more broadly to the study of national identity formation and the role of public and alternative media in any setting globally. This thesis provides a complex and rich web of issues considered in national identity construction debates such as the role of media, diaspora, ethnicity, homeland communities, commemorations and memory. The thesis demonstrates that the Zimbabwean national identity is fluid, unstable and it is these fractured and fragmented identities that undermine the possibility of a hegemonic perspective on Zimbabwean national identity.

Research Questions

Three main research questions anchor this case study:

- a. What are the dominant versions of national identity created by Zanu-Pf?
- b. How do Zimbabweans imagine their national identity in *NewZimbabwe.com*?
- c. How does the internet make possible the creation of alternative versions of national identity?

1.3 Research Design

The study employs qualitative research to fulfil its goals of understanding how alternative notions of national identity are discursively constructed from below. In qualitative research, more attention is paid to its interpretative nature, with analysis being based on discourse rather than numbers as is the case in quantitative research. This is a digital ethnographic case study research where *NewZimbabwe.com* is the main case with *The Herald* being an auxiliary one. The analysis of the latter helps illuminate the elite constructions of national identity in Zimbabwe which ordinary citizens engage with and construct their alternative ones from below. Data was collected through an interview with the website's editor, judgemental sampling and document analysis. The data was analysed using mainly Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Discourse Historic Analysis (DHA) and thematic content analysis (see *Chapter 6*).

1.4 The chosen cases: *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com*

The use of *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* as contrasting cases in this thesis needs to be justified. *The Herald* is the largest circulating newspaper in Zimbabwe and was established in the 1890s soon after the British South African Company run by Cecil John Rhodes took control of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe's colonial name). According to Wallace Chuma, *The Herald* before 1980 was under the "South African based Argus Press [which] enjoyed a monopoly of the press in Zimbabwe through its subsidiary Rhodesia Printing and Publishing Company (RPP) which operated two dailies and three weeklies" (2007: 80). The media under the RPP stable served white interests and promoted the "cause of white settler colonialism and business interests in South Africa" (Shamuyarira 1981: 5 cited in Chuma, 2007: 80). After independence, Zanu-Pf deployed its cadres especially to the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) to ensure the advancement of the party's hegemony framed along the "national sovereignty, national interest and security" narratives (Chuma, 2007: 81). In relation to print media, Chuma suggests that transformation was largely at "ownership staffing and editorial re-orientation" levels (2007: 82).

At this juncture, the history of the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT) is important as it aids in the understanding of the relationship between the new government and the media in Zimbabwe. The ZMMT was established by government as a not-for-profit organisation run by a Board of Trustees whose duty was ostensibly to run the organisation as an autonomous, independent body with the main aim of "transforming and rolling out the press" (Chuma, 2007: 82). Further, the ZMMT was mandated with overseeing changes in management and operations of the public media so as to reflect and serve the interests of the new political dispensation underlined by transparency, accessibility and non-partisanship (Ronning and Kupe, 2000). The previous ownership model was replaced through a Nigerian government grant of US\$5 million which allowed the ZMMT to buy out Argus shares and the former became the majority shareholder in January 1981. There was no conspicuous change in news coverage as the public media continued to mirror the colonial dispensation where the RPP controlled-media were not critical of the political leadership. The ZMMT was beset with operational and independence challenges since its funding and appointment of board members were determined by politicians who also determined what journalists wrote (Saunders, 1999:7). For instance, the role of the media under Zimpapers (the media enterprise under ZMMT) became that of rebuilding the nation through constructive stories that were

concerned with development, unity, and not critical of the political leadership of the day. Between 1982 and 1987, Zimpapers supported the government's use of force and violence during the Matabeleland and Midlands genocide. The media, according to Welshman Mabheha, the former Governor of Matabeleland South and Zanu-Pf member who fell-out with Mugabe, were basically used for the

dissemination of lies and even editors like Bill Saidi and the then *Chronicle* editor Geoffrey Nyarota supported the government's initiative of sending soldiers to North Korea for training and the subsequent deployment to the region to quell the Matabeleland and Midlands problem. (Interview, Mpofu, 2005: 14).

After the 1987 Unity Accord up to the mid 1990s, the media under the Zimpapers stable played the role of unifying people.

Given the above, *The Herald's* role as part of the public media is that of serving Zanu-Pf's interests and therefore it is a point of reference when one wants to know Zanu-Pf's official position on issues such as nationhood. The newspaper follows state events, especially those where Mugabe and Zanu-Pf feature prominently, thereby becoming the trusted official outlet of government information. This can further be accentuated by former Information Minister Jonathan Moyo's assertion that the functioning of the public media is "guided and defined by law.... We want to see a vibrant [media] that expresses not only our cultural identity and diversity but also expresses our national point of view" ([ZTV 8pm news, 29/04/02] quoted in Gandhi and Jambaya, 2004: 1); which "national point of view" is the one expressed by the leadership of the country (Zanu-Pf). Moreover, the history of the public media in Africa reveals that they always serve the interests of ruling politicians since these media are government sponsored and their board of governors are appointed by the political elite which ultimately compromises their editorial independence (Nyamnjoh, 2005).

The use of *The Herald* in this study is important in the context of the current contested politics of nationhood and citizenship. Zanu-Pf's post- 2000 project of nation-making is under siege mainly from pro-democracy movements within and outside Zimbabwe. Therefore to mount a defence against this onslaught Zanu-Pf has used the public media to protect 'gains of independence' that the nationalists fought for. On the other hand, ordinary Zimbabweans, opposition forces, academics and civic organisations reject the methodologies of reclaiming the nation and current formulations of national identity used by Zanu-Pf as these exclude a multiplicity of political, racial and ethnic groups.

NewZimbabwe.com is chosen as a case study for a variety of reasons. It is a diaspora based online newspaper which caters for both homeland and diaspora based Zimbabweans. Additionally, it might be possible that *NewZimbabwe.com* is more than an alternative platform, meaning that it responds to the official and dominant versions of nationhood constructed by Zanu-Pf, attempts to create a new Zimbabwe while at the same time catering for the people in the diaspora through giving them a platform to engage on issues as part of exercising their citizenship. *NewZimbabwe.com* is one of the biggest regularly updated news websites that cover Zimbabwean-related issues. It has also served as a template for other Zimbabwe-focused websites since it is one of the first Zimbabwean independent online publications to be established outside Zimbabwe by Zimbabwean journalists and business people. The website's average hits are around 20 000 per day. Its professional layout, writing style, varied content and calibre of contributors easily sets it apart from other sites like www.Zimonline.co.za, www.theZimbabwean.co.uk and www.Zimdaily.com. *NewZimbabwe.com*, with the tagline, "The News You Can Trust," sells itself as one of the leading news sites on Zimbabwe. Over the years, it has brought Zimbabwean leaders and citizens together to discuss issues of national importance. This and other factors mentioned above made the site worthy of consideration in a research of this magnitude. The website was launched in June 2003 by five former Zimbabwean journalists. It claims to be:

Zimbabwe's first and only rolling news site updated 24/7 with all the latest news, sports and commentary. It is also a platform for debate and intellectual release with vibrant live discussion forums. The website is designed and run by people who have seen how the dearth of free expression can reduce progressive nations into pariahs where the majority are always at the mercy of the powerful. *NewZimbabwe.com* seeks to expose situations where this takes place, and we make no apology for seeking the demise of such evil edifices wherever they appear. (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 2003)

The website claims to identify itself with Zimbabwean and African identities and democratic aspirations with a "belief that every Zimbabwean and every African with a voice deserves to be heard—including those who have forfeited the freedoms of the majority" (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 2003). Moreover, the name insinuates that there is an 'old' Zimbabwe and the 'new' Zimbabwe which the website is aspiring to participate in building. An interview with the website's editor reveals this:

The idea of a new Zimbabwe is in the *Zeitgeist* inherent in our purpose. As the name says, we seek a Zimbabwe which is different from the one we have now. We seek a democratic, tolerant, non-violent

and a fair state where people compete for opportunities purely on the basis of competence and capacity and not on the basis of ethnic origins. (Mathuthu, Interview, 19.12.2012)

The website is owned by a British registered company, New Zimbabwe Limited. Mduduzi Mathuthu, a former *Daily News* journalist, is the editor of the online version of *NewZimbabwe.com*. According to Dumisani Moyo (2007) the website gets its funding from donors, well-wishers and advertising revenue. However, Mathuthu commented: “all our money comes from adverts and nobody has any say on what we cover” (Mathuthu, Interview, 19.12.2012). In 2008, Gideon Gono, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor allegedly gave Mathuthu some money and it is not clear what it was meant for. Figure 2 (page 18) shows different types of advertisements that the website carries in order to generate revenue. The website has many categories such as: ‘News, Business, Showbiz, Sports, Opinion and Blogs’. In its self-description, the company says: “We boast the finest correspondents and columnists you can assemble in Zimbabwe and abroad. The constant flow of brilliantly presented ideas and strong argument has brought us plaudits, while those who hate our cause inevitably frown upon us” (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 2003).

The organisation of the website, just like any newspaper, is such that it carries articles that seek to speak to the website’s readers. In addition, as Carey (1997: 12-13) argues, news media (in this instance websites) should “support the maintenance of a [communicative] public space ... [and] find ways in which the public can address one another” and maintain this public space through equality and decent communication. Through ‘opinion’ and ‘columnists’ online, media have the “power to set the dominant political agenda, [and take] the lead in establishing the dominant interpretative frameworks within which ongoing political events are made sense of” (McNair, 2000: 30), especially in societies like Zimbabwe where political discourses are narrowed down due to state monopoly in the public sphere.

When the researcher started working at the National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe, he noticed that most academics’ first port of call for reliable Zimbabwean news was *NewZimbabwe.com*. This was partly due to the issues already raised and the rapport it had created with its audiences. The website is updated daily making it possible for readers to keep up to date with the events unfolding in Zimbabwe or affecting Zimbabweans in the diaspora. The choice of the website does not seek to dismiss other websites that concern themselves with Zimbabwean issues, but the arguments proffered above have made the

researcher interested in the website. Choosing many sites may also prove cumbersome and difficult to manage (Yin, 1994). Besides, through this case the researcher will be able to do an in-depth analysis of issues raised. The participatory nature of communication and the ritual of talk in the public sphere espoused in online debates assume that decisions are better made when multiple voices proffer plural arguments and evaluations. However, this does not mean that Zimbabweans can fully evade the power of dominant Zanu-Pf discourses, but while they encounter these they are able to “confirm their own independent subjectivity... through online practice at a specific historical juncture” (Fung, 2002: 185). New media allow these citizens a space to articulate their own versions of identity and nationhood while redeeming their subjectivity and resisting the narrow dominant constructions of identity advanced by Zanu-Pf.

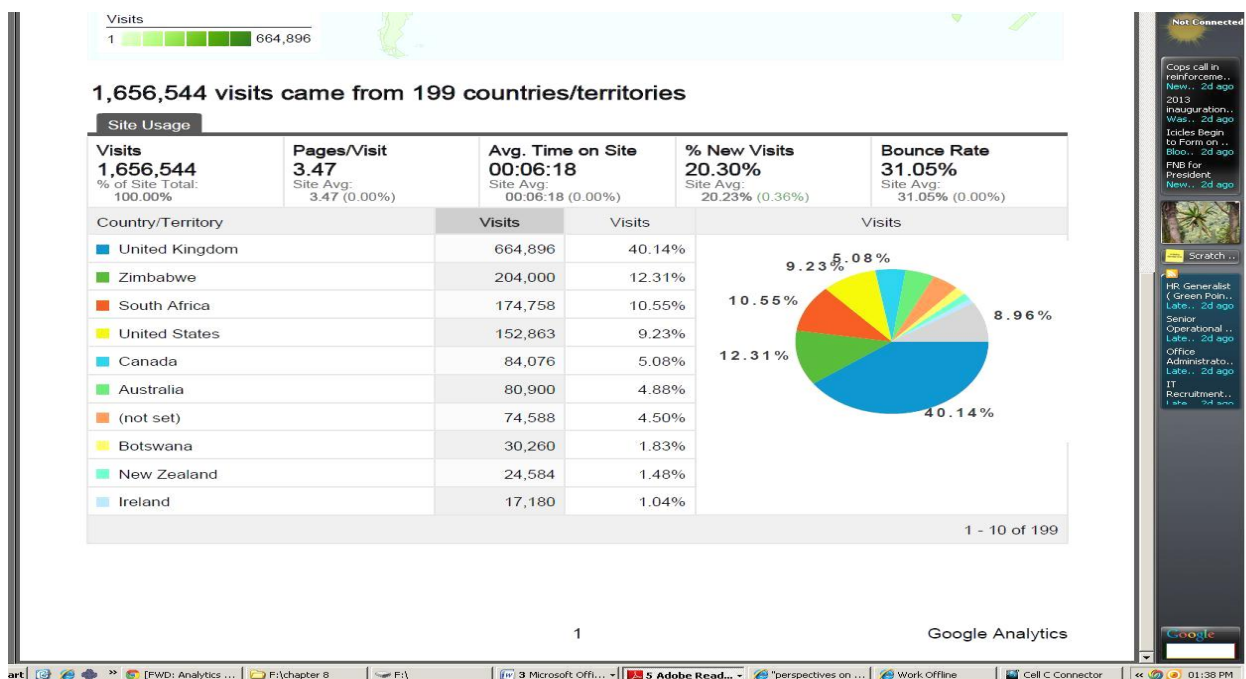


Figure 1: Google analytics map showing website views between 1 March and 12 April 2011

The selection of *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* is informed by a number of factors. Their ideological differences or editorial policies are likely to offer a wide spectrum of narratives about national identity. This allows for the analysis of competing discourses on national identity. Two assumptions are made in this thesis. The first is that *NewZimbabwe.com* is an alternative medium to the official public owned and government controlled newspaper and therefore will cover issues in a way antagonistic to the Zanu-Pf government. But at the same time, its openness as a public sphere makes it possible for other

views supportive of Zanu-Pf to be aired. On the other hand, as intimated above, *The Herald* as a state controlled publication has been used to exclusively propagate the dominant Zanu-Pf narratives on national identity.⁶

As media platforms, both *The Herald*⁷ and *NewZimbabwe.com* cover most of Zimbabwe's political issues and offer readers space to respond to certain stories either through letters to the editor in the case of the former or reader responses under each story in the case of the latter. However, in both scenarios levels of gate keeping differ. Whereas *The Herald* may be deemed conservative on some issues, *NewZimbabwe.com* covers issues that have always been considered taboo in Zimbabwe's public media like the excesses of the ruling party and the contentious 1980s genocide. The 2000-2011 period of study captures key moments which are listed as themes in Chapter 2. In the case of *NewZimbabwe.com*, the analysis ranges from 2003 when the online newspaper was established until 2011. This period falls within the most important period of Zimbabwe since 2000 where nationalism has been a contested terrain in Zimbabwean politics impacting national identity, the economy and social lives of the people in the process. Just like in the case of *The Herald*, *NewZimbabwe.com* has covered important dates in the history of the nation.

⁶ As recently as 2012 the online version of *The Herald* started opening up for public comments under each and every story. It seems there is no gatekeeping as comments inconsistent with Zanu-Pf and public media thinking find their way through to the public domain. This thesis concerns itself with the print version of *The Herald*.

⁷ This research uses the print version of *The Herald*.



Figure 2: A screenshot of the website's home page showing different news categories and advertisements where most of the revenue comes from.

1.5 Thesis overview

The thesis is divided into three sections. Section One comprises *Chapters 1* and 2. The current chapter (*Chapter 1*) introduces the study, provides the aim and research problem, questions and maps out the study. *Chapter 2* offers the context of Zimbabwe and identity debates and locates these within larger global debates. In addition, a brief history of Zimbabwe, its nationalism and media are provided. First, the chapter problematises the Zimbabwe situation and how identities have become relevant under current circumstances. This historical background leads to a discussion of media's role in identity formation at a global scale then in the African and finally Zimbabwean contexts. Later the chapter situates the internet in broader identity debates and how it has influenced identity debates in Zimbabwe.

Section Two comprises four chapters- 3, 4, 5 and 6. *Chapter 3* undertakes a comprehensive survey of main literature on nationalism, national identity and constructions thereof. It starts with a global overview which narrows down to the African context and finally tapers to the Zimbabwean context. This chapter critiques current studies, locating their strengths and weaknesses and how these inform this research. Through weaknesses of existent literature it is easy to notice gaps that this thesis needs to fill. The chapter highlights the fact that studies on national identity and the media especially in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, are gaining currency and the research contributes to the growing body of literature in this area.

Chapter 4 theorises identity and the nation focusing particularly on constructionist and primordial theories. The main role of nationalism, the chapter reveals, is that of constructing and recreating desired nations and identities. Political parties and citizens negotiate different spaces to achieve this. Thus, the main argument in this chapter is that Zanu-Pf has used the public media to construct a rigid primordial version of the nation. On the other hand, the constructionist perspective suggests that citizens have used alternative media platforms to debate and construct alternative forms of national identity that confront those of Zanu-Pf.

The role of the media as a public sphere in national identity mediation is the focus of *Chapter 5*. This theoretical chapter attempts to highlight the central role of the public sphere in mediating identities. This centrality may also be justified by the role the media have played in conflict situations like Rwanda and Kenya, to mention conspicuous African examples. In Rwanda for instance, Dorman, *et al.*, (2005: 12) argue that “state controlled media provided a ‘Twenty-four Hours Hate’ to mobilise the ‘Hutu nations’ citizens,” showing how potent media can be in the construction of a destructive nationalism. The chapter further attempts to apply the public sphere theory to digital media and maps how online news websites have influenced debates on national identity as alternative digital public spheres.

Chapter 6 outlines the methodological considerations of the whole thesis. The thesis is anchored on a qualitative research approach. It focuses on *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* as ideologically different institutions central to the discursive constructions of Zimbabwean national identity.

Section Three just like Section One has four chapters, that is, *Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10*. The section is devoted to data presentation and analyses. *Chapter 7* thematically maps the

constructions of national identity by Zanu-Pf as mediated through *The Herald* newspaper. Various themes help shed light on how Zanu-PF has constructed its preferred versions of national identity. These include Mugabe's graveside speeches during burial of 'national heroes' at the symbolic National Heroes' Acre shrine; national holidays like independence, heroes and national defence forces day celebrations. This chapter acts as springboard to *Chapters 8 and 9* which are the main chapters of the thesis. The latter two chapters demonstrate how the alternative versions of the nation are discursively constructed by ordinary Zimbabweans. They also illustrate the role of new media in contesting and constructing national identities. *Chapter 8* looks at how Zimbabweans discursively construct alternative versions of national identity through various themes such as national holidays, commemorative events and the constitution making process, with special attention on homosexuality. *Chapter 9* deals with the contentious aspect of ethnicity in Zimbabwe. The chapter engages with this theme and demonstrates how the 1980s genocide has been used as an identity marker that is counter-hegemonic to Zanu-Pf's dominant narratives of the nation. Finally, *Chapter 10* concludes the thesis by reflecting on the study's assumptions, research questions and findings and their implications for further research.

Chapter 2: Background and Context

In the Zimbabwean case ... the defining characteristics of ‘‘patriotic’ history’ are the central roles ascribed to land and race, circumscribed by loyalty to the liberation movement in the shape of ZANLA/ZANU. A further dimension has been the affirmation of Zimbabwe’s sovereignty against external interference, especially where the latter has taken the form of selective Western support for human rights. (Phimister, 2012: 27-28)

2.1 Introduction

The post- 2000 constructions of national identity by Zanu-Pf have been characterised by heightened and fierce debates and contest for political power between Zanu-Pf and MDC and these contests have often been accompanied by violence. The period has also seen the radicalisation of the state, amplification of the years old Zimbabwean ‘crisis’ from local to global scrutiny and a contradictory process of normalisation of land seizures through ‘fast-track’—a sanitised land reform programme (Moyo and Yeros, 2007). Post- 2000 period in Zimbabwe has been labelled an era of the Zimbabwe ‘crisis,’ which crisis is characterised by economic and political meltdown, violence and the demise of Zanu-Pf’s hegemony. In addition, the post- 2000 period has exposed Zanu-Pf as a factionalised amalgam of different political hues and actors with differing tactics on how best to maintain a stranglehold on power. David Coltart and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)⁸ Senator and Minister of Education in the Government of National Unity (GNU)⁹ witnesses this by saying there are “divisions within Zanu... [and] they are growing daily and are very apparent in Cabinet...”(*Sokwanele Website*, 2012). This chapter contextualises the study by raising important arguments as to why and how identity debates have become contested in Zimbabwe.. What is highlighted here are some of the many complex themes that have been sites of nationhood contestation. There are many other themes that may be relevant for this research but suffice it to say that those highlighted here serve the same purpose of bringing to the fore critical aspects that have typified post-2000 identity debates in Zimbabwe.

⁸ The MDC was formed in 1999. In 2005 the party broke into two camps, the MDC-T led by Tsvangirayi and MDC led by Arthur Mutambarar and later by Welshman Ncube.

⁹ The GNU was a government formed by the MDC-T, MDC and Zanu-Pf after an inconclusive 2008 plebiscite whose outcome saw no outright winner for the presidential seat. It has to be highlighted at this juncture that even though Zimbabwe has three political parties in government, Zanu-PF conspicuously dominates and controls the public media. Therefore it is expedient for the arguments of this article to make a clear distinction that the mainstream public sphere and media are public owned but Zanu-Pf controlled rather than government controlled.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, it gives a brief history of political and social developments in Zimbabwe and then demonstrates how the media have been important spaces for articulating dominant notions of nationhood in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The rise of the diaspora communities and the birth of diasporic online media are also located within the matrix of postcolonial public sphere transformation. Next, the chapter looks at critical themes beginning with the contentious land reform which has formed the centrepiece of most post-2000 political debates. Other themes that are important and give a solid context to this study are ethnicity and the 1980s Gukurahundi genocide. These are closely linked to the use of ‘patriotic’ history and memory by Zanu-Pf on the one hand and challenging of such ‘patriotic’ history and memory by the opposition and victims of the 1980s Gukurahundi genocide. Another theme that contextualises this research is that of presidential graveside speeches and other performative and commemorative events or national holidays. These events are fora where major government decisions that are calculated to entrench Zanu-Pf’s hegemony in the country’s political terrain are pronounced. The last theme the chapter highlights is the controversial issue of sexuality and identity, specifically looking at the post 2008 GNU sponsored constitution writing exercise. Of interest here is how homosexuality has been used as a definer of national identity by both Zanu-Pf and ordinary Zimbabweans in online debates. Lastly, the chapter positions the dominant discourses on national identity on the Mugabeist/Zanuist paradigm which has polarised academy where there are ‘patriotic’ history scholars and critical scholars who support and oppose Mugabeism/Zanuism respectively.

2.2 Political and socio-economic developments in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is one of the youngest nations in the sub region in terms of achieving self-governance. In fact, it is one of the last three nations in the sub-region (the other two being Namibia-1990 and South Africa-1994) to do so. The country gained majority rule after 90 years of colonial settler occupation and 15 years of a racial, bloody and violent war of liberation which claimed well in excess of 25 000 of mostly black casualties (Kriger, 2003; Moore, 1995). Two years after independence the country’s economy grew by 12 per cent a year and there were high levels of “infrastructural development, job creation, and education and health delivery” (Muzondidya, 2009: 169). Muzondidya dismisses this positive outlook in the country’s economy by writing that “the gains made in the first decade were limited, unsustainable and ephemerally welfarist in nature” (2009: 169). In today’s political climate,

it is difficult not to look into the past to find out where the country is going. Within the same decade drought, high prices of oil, low employment rates and high interest rates affected the country's economy.

Zimbabwe after 1980 is a nation-state haunted by its pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial past. Its antinomies can clearly be seen through the continued use of violence at various levels of social organisation, political parties and civil society movements. These antinomies can possibly be understood as a product of continued use of violence as part of interpellation and organisation to the Zanu-Pf imagined nation. Furthermore, the country did not manage to shed off the burdens associated with colonialism immediately after independence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008, 2009; Ndlovu, 2009). When the new government came into power in 1980, it promised the Southern African region a fresh breath of leadership and hope. The new government had inherited a fairly vibrant economy that had not been affected by the war of liberation and sanctions that were imposed on Rhodesia when its leader Ian Smith proclaimed a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain in 1965. However, this 'residual' economy which was anti-black had to be altered by the new government to reflect the new political dispensation.

2.2.1 The first decade of independence 1980-1990

When Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, the most urgent assignment for the victorious political elite was decolonisation and national reconciliation projects that sought to incorporate both whites as well as blacks into the new Zimbabwean identity (Fisher, 2010). However, this proved difficult as there were questions regarding "white receptivity, their readiness to confront the crisis of identity awaiting them [because] some among the Rhodesia's white educated elite had favoured the continuation of European privilege ..." (Fisher, 2010: 23). The new leadership's extension of a hand of forgiveness and reconciliation to the vanquished white colonial settlers was a demonstration of respect for "past enemies, for minorities and most importantly, as magnanimous behaviour befitting victors" (Fisher, 2010: 29). This was explained by Mugabe who said that there is nothing that could be so mean as "for the powerful to turn vindictive against the vanquished of the victor to press advantage too far" (Shamuyarira, *et al.*, 1995: 41-2).

The first major challenge to Zimbabwe's reconciliation project entailed the state's reaction to and aftermath of dissident activities in the Midlands and Matabeleland regions between 1982 and 1987, where Mugabe deployed an exclusively Shona crack army called the 'Fifth Brigade' to quell dissident activities. According to Laakso (1999: 68) "some ex-guerillas of Zipra, the military wing of Zapu, joined the dissidents or the so called super-Zapu in protest against Zanla leadership in the army" Laakso (1999) locates the dissatisfaction of the ex-Zipra soldiers in ethnic relations that seemed to favour Shona and ex-Zanla soldiers over the Ndebele ex-Zipra soldiers. These dissidents posed a threat to national security and in reaction Mugabe expelled Zapu members from government and tried to "prevent Zapu's activities as a legal political party" (Laakso, 1999: 70). This operation is famously known as "Gukurahundi." Gukurahundi is a Shona term which literally means the 'early rains that wash away the chaff,' in other words, rubbish before the farming season begins. The term is used in two senses; to refer to the Fifth Brigade militia that carried out the atrocities, as well as the era of violence that visited the predominantly Ndebele Matabeleland and Midlands regions. These regions were affected in dissimilar ways and this was informed by the levels of support held by Pf-Zapu in those areas (Msindo, 2012). This genocide¹⁰ left more than 20 000 civilians dead (Muzondidya, 2008, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a; Alexander *et al.*, 2000). This indicated a problematic start for the new nation which has refused to let go of its inheritance of violence as a tool for conflict resolution in the postcolonial era.

The Fifth Brigade, an army trained and 'traumatised' by North Korean soldiers, operated as an independent unit from the structures of the national army and was directly answerable to Mugabe. The Gukurahundi genocide that occurred during Zimbabwe's formative years has probably been one of the most enduring dark periods that still haunts the national identity project more than three decades after independence. The net effect of Gukurahundi was partly the creation of a pan-Ndebele particularism. Msindo further suggests that the Gukurahundi violence:

left lasting impressions, perhaps more permanent than the liberation war, as it was accompanied by wicked, unimaginable activities that shell-shocked the whole of western Zimbabwe The

¹⁰ According to the United Nations' (UN) Convention of the Prevention of Genocide adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1948 (Article 2(2)) "Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

violence suffered by the peoples of Matabeleland forged an inseparable alliance between Ndebele identity and politics. Being Ndebele became both a political and linguistic expression. This creates potential problems for ethnic studies as we struggle to define whether Ndebele is an ethnic group, a regional entity, or a nation. (Msindo, 2012: 228)

The Fifth Brigade was understood as both political and tribal in nature; it was aligned to the Shona group and the two regions they operated in were predominantly Ndebele (Blair, 2002; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2010; Meredith, 2007; Muzondidya, 2009) giving credence to arguments that it was an ethnic political war. Of course some scholars have disputed this thesis, for example, Rwafa (2012). The aim here is not to mystify or demystify these theses but to map how the episode continues to shape national identity debates in the current Zimbabwe. Thus, this violence “considerably affected Shona-Ndebele relations and continues to do so” (Msindo, 2012: 211). One central thesis suggests the genocide was an attempt by Zanu-Pf to create a one party state or as Kriger suggests “a party-nation” (Kriger, 2003: 72). The Gukurahundi episode even though outside the 2000-2011 scope of this research, forms part of the research problem and national identity debates in Zimbabwe. In addition, the net result of this genocide is that it “not only left deep scars among the victims but also intensified Matabeleland regionalism” (Muzondidya, 2009: 177). Björn Lindgren suggests another consequence of Gukurahundi and this is reiterated in the narratives in *Chapter 9*. He says about the long term ramifications of the genocide:

people in Matabeleland responded by accusing Mugabe, the government and the ‘Shona’ in general of killing Ndebele. That is, the period after independence, and especially the atrocities carried out by the Fifth Brigade, heightened the victims’ awareness of being Ndebele at the cost of being Zimbabwean (or, for that matter, of being of Nguni or any other origin). Further, since the publication in 1997 of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace’s report on the atrocities (CCJP/LRF 1997), the discourse on the Fifth Brigade’s violence has been publicly voiced in Zimbabwe to new generations of Zimbabweans, which has both strengthened and spread feelings of Ndebeleness in southern Zimbabwe. (2005: 144)

Besides Gukurahundi, the first decade was characterised by the Lancaster House constitution’s legacy¹¹ which still privileged and protected the economy base of the former colonialists and the beneficiaries from the same system. Despite winning the 1980 elections through a mixture of intimidation and genuine support, Zanu-Pf also managed to establish “a greater political presence in the areas where Zanla had operated, which covered about two thirds of the country” and “violence and coercion remained integral to ... electoral politics

¹¹ The Lancaster House Constitution is a result of the Lancaster House talks that took place in the UK in 1979 and brought independence to Zimbabwe (then known by its colonial name of Rhodesia). The talks were meant to facilitate the transition of Rhodesia from a colonial state to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, an internationally recognised independent sovereign state which was to carry all inclusive multi-racial elections under British supervision for the first time.

throughout the first decade of independence (1985 and 1990 elections)” (Muzondidya, 2009: 177). Despite all these attempts to establish a one-party state in the first decade of independence, Zanu-Pf continued to face strong resistance from its opponents or state organs like the judiciary and its Members of Parliament like Sidney Malunga, Edgar Tekere, Lazurus Nzarayebani, Byrone Hove among others. Tekere was expelled in 1988 and by 1990 he had formed an opposition party, Zimbabwe Unity Movement.

2.2.2 The demise of one-party state 1990-2000

In the second decade after independence, Zimbabwe continued to experience economic and political decline. In September 1990, the Zanu-Pf central-committee meeting refused to support Mugabe’s attempt to install a de jure one-party state in Zimbabwe. The 1990s were generally characterised by discontent from students (1990, 1992), trade unions, workers who often demonstrated or engaged in job stay-aways (1992, 1994, 1996) to express their disgruntlement with the government of the day. The implementation of the IMF/World Bank sponsored Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991 saw the economy perform badly and a large number of workers retrenched while most companies closed down. According to James Muzondidya (2009), unemployment levels were at 44 per cent in 1993. These problems led to a “militant agitation to airgrievances (ibid., 2009: 194).

Laakso (1999) points out that the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 led to the opening up of the political space in the second decade of the country’s independence. This, however, did not make Zimbabwe a true democracy but a deviating one. The new and strongest of opposition parties to contest Zanu-Pf’s de facto one-party state was Tekere’s ZUM in 1990. ZUM was accused of being a Front for Rhodesians wanting to recolonise Zimbabwe (Laakso, 1999: 133). The ZUM manifesto attacked Zanu-Pf’s corruption and economic mismanagement, attempted to emphasise on the role of traditional leaders in society and advocated political unity among all Zimbabweans regardless of race, ethnicity and religion (Laakso, 1999). In spite of this, ZUM did not perform well in these elections as Zanu-Pf made it difficult for it to campaign through state of emergency regulations.

The 1995 parliamentary and 1996 presidential elections were also contested within the formal multi-party framework after Zanu-Pf abandoned its one-party state idea. However, the divisions within the opposition did not make a difference to Zanu-Pf’s hegemony. Two main

parties, ZUM and Zanu (Ndonga) were beset by internal differences and their prospects of successfully challenging Zanu-Pf were limited. This led to the formation of the Enock Dumbutshena led Forum Party in 1993. Eleven parties registered for the 1995 and 1996 elections and six of these were local in scope and reach while the other three did not even participate in the elections (Laakso, 1999). The multi-party framework did not pose a challenge to Zanu-Pf until the formation of the MDC in 1999 which later campaigned for the “No Vote” in rejection of the government-sponsored draft new constitution in February 2000 (Raftopoulos, 2009: 210). The sponsorship of MDC partly by white farmers has led to Zanu-Pf defining the opposition party as the project of the West. This is succinctly clarified by *The Herald* opinion piece which states:

The imperial intentions [of the British] began to manifest themselves when the Government decided to embark on a fast track land resettlement programme.... In order to safeguard the interests of their kith and kin in the country, the British and Scandinavian countries rallied behind the formation of the opposition MDC. Their intention was to install a puppet government willing to bend to their colonial designs and adventures.... However; soon ... the British started showing their real colours by advocating sanctions against Zimbabwe for alleged human rights abuses. But realising the hideous intentions of the British, countries in the Southern African Development Community and the African Union supported Zimbabwe by saying that land was at the core of the problems in the country.... It is not surprising to note that Tanzania, Malawi, Namibia, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa have all refused to succumb to bullying tactics by Britain because they are all aware of its hidden agenda to topple the present Zimbabwean government.... So it is clear that the victory by Zanu-PF in the just ended presidential poll was indeed a victory against imperialism. 'The intention of the British to recolonise Zimbabwe is not an April Fools' joke but is real. Yet as long as Zimbabweans remain united the forces of evil will not succeed' (The Herald, 09.04.2002).

Chapter 7 demonstrates the extent to which this sentiment has informed Zanu-Pf's attitude towards the MDC and Western countries critical of Mugabe's leadership. Ian Phimister and Brian Raftopoulos (2004) argue that this anti-imperialism rhetoric has been used by Zanu-Pf to hide its repression of those who oppose its policies and style of governance.

2.2.3 Political and economic ‘crisis’ – 2000 onwards

Since 2000, Zimbabwe has been confronted with high levels of economic decline and a highly intolerant and authoritarian nationalist state. According to Brian Raftopoulos, Zanu-Pf as the ruling party:

... has since 2000 carried out a series of political and economic interventions, marked by the widespread use of violence (Redress Trust 2004) but conducted through the tropes of anti-colonial redress and an anti-imperialist critique that have found widespread resonance in the region and on the African continent. (Raftopoulos, 2004: viii)

Raftopoulos (2004) adds that Zanu-Pf's revived nationalism has seen the repudiation of the reconciliation project outlined by Mugabe soon after independence in 1980. In 2000, the MDC posed the greatest threat to Zanu-Pf's political hegemony since independence and this led to Mugabe radically restructuring

the terrain of Zimbabwean politics towards the politics of frontal assault that had as its major targets the former colonial power, Britain, the local white population, the opposition ... the civic movement and in general the farm workers and urban populations, among whom the opposition had developed its major support. (Raftopoulos, 2004: ix).

With an array of such enemies Mugabe declared a political war and Zimbabwe has continued in this path of the *Third Chimurenga*¹² also known as *Impi Yomhlabathi/Hondo Yeminda* (isiNdebele and Shona respectively for War for the Land). Between 2000 and 2008, the Zimbabwean political climate was characterised by the chaotic and violent land reform, use of violence to subdue political opposition and dissent, increased use of state patronage to redress economic problems, politicisation of the army, police force and judiciary. Zanu-Pf also employed 'patriotic' history, which is the history intended to advance Zanu-Pf's revolutionary ideologies and targeted at the youth, to advance its stranglehold on power (Range, 2004). 'Patriotic' history also confronts the denialism of concrete realities of oppression and interference into developing countries' political affairs by the developed world especially the former colonialists British and their allies such as the US, Australia, New Zealand and some of the European Union countries.

The political and economic meltdown in post- 2000 Zimbabwe has seen some citizens leaving the country as political, economic migrants while some have left the country to study or establish themselves. Migrations accompanied by technological and global economic developments have altered the traditional understanding of the practice of citizenship (Cammaerts and Audenhove, 2005). Scholars have disagreed on the meanings and configurations of citizenship with some insisting that it is only within the confines of the nation-state boundaries that citizenship can take shape. Others have argued for the 'unbounded' citizenship that has emerged out of globalisation, transnationalisation, advancements in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and transportation

¹² Chimurenga is a shona word roughly meaning struggle or revolution. Its current usage (post-2000) denotes a struggle for human rights, dignity and ownership of the country's land and other resources and means of production. The first Chimurenga was in the 1890s, the second in the 1960s and 70s which was against the Rhodesian colonial forces. The *Third Chimurenga* started around 2000 when the landless masses invaded white-owned land.

systems that have made possible human and economic interactions across borders. The latter developments have considerably undermined the “sovereignty and legitimacy of the nation state” (Cammaerts and Audenhove, 2005: 181). However, these developments have not interfered with the practice of citizenship. Zimbabweans outside the country have continued to practice their Zimbabwean citizenship from an ethnic and national perspective from various places in the world. Online media have been integral in affording these Zimbabweans an opportunity to meet and discuss issues. Most of these media are based in the hosting countries like Britain, South Africa, USA and others. They have made it possible for Zimbabweans to confront and challenge the Zanu-Pf narratives on national identity (see *Chapter 7*) and have discursively constructed alternative ones.

2.3 The Media in Postcolonial Zimbabwe

The growth of private media in the independent Zimbabwe especially between 1990 and 1999 can be credited partly to the liberalisation of the economy through the World Bank designed Economic Adjustment Programme (ESAP), the Windhoek Declaration¹³ and a wave of democratic winds of change sweeping across the continent which saw liberation movements that gained power at independence being challenged by opposition parties (Chuma, 2004). Whereas in the decade of 1980-1990 Zanu-Pf controlled the media, “the post-1990 era saw the state’s authority being challenged by a diversity of competing voices and social interests across a spectrum of race, gender and class” (Chuma, 2004: 132). The 1990-1999 decade saw an escalation of new titles coming into the media landscape. This period was characterised by a somewhat vibrant but epileptic culture of investigative and tabloid journalism which raised the ire of the ruling party.

This period saw the establishment of the *The Zimbabwe Independent* (1996) and *The Sunday Standard* (1997) owned by ZIMInd Publishers; *The Zimbabwe Mirror* (1997) owned by Zimbabwe Mirror Newspapers Group; *The Daily News* (1999) followed later by *The Daily News on Sunday* and four provincial newspapers namely *The Tribune* (Masvingo), *The Dispatch* (Bulawayo) *The Express* (Chitungwiza) and *The Eastern Star* (Mutare). The last four provincial newspapers closed down for business soon after their launch due to financial

¹³ The Windhoek Declaration is a statement that promotes press freedom in Africa. It came in the backdrop of different crises facing Africa since the 1980s and there was need to move towards a more democratic society. This statement was conceptualised by African journalists between 29 April and 3 May 1991 in Windhoek, Namibia. This Declaration was produced at the UNESCO sponsored seminar entitled “Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press.”

problems. The post 1999 period was characterised by the establishment of *The Weekly Times* (2005) owned by Mthwakazi Publishing House; *The Tribune*, *The Sunday Tribune* owned by Africa Tribune Newspapers, and *The Daily Mirror* and *The Sunday Mirror* (2007). The private press played an adversarial role to the state leading Mugabe to comment that “they (private press) are filthy tabloids clearly of the gutter type, and are edited and run through fronts of young Africans they have employed as editors and reporters. In some cases these are also their homosexual partners-and this is true” (Saunders, 1999: 16). Even though the veracity of the President’s statement could not be ascertained, this goes to show the impact that the private press had on the echelons of the state. Further, it showed that the private press had become an alternative forum to a tightly controlled and guarded public sphere which all along had been owned and managed by the political elite.

2.3.1 Media laws: a ‘useful’ colonial legacy for the authoritarian regime – 2000 and beyond

After independence, the repressive laws inherited from colonial dispensation remained intact and these were to be later used to survive the onslaught of investigative media that served “society by informing the general population in ways that arm them for vigilant citizenship” (Schudson, 1991: 156). Zanu-Pf not only kept the colonially inherited laws intact but upgraded some of them and enacted new ones. Post- 2000 Zimbabwe saw a heightened use of the legislation accompanied by intimidation and use of other extra-legal tactics like torture, murder and deportations to curb media freedom. Edison Zvobgo, a ZANU (PF) founder, Member of Parliament and Minister, exclaimed that the media laws introduced post- 2000 were not only unconstitutional but also a “most calculated and determined assault on our liberties” (*The Standard* 2003). These laws were the 2002 Public Order and Security Act (POSA) which was meant to replace the colonial Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA), Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (2002) and Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) (2001).

Following the enactment of AIPPA, a government managed structure called the Media and Information Commission (MIC) was set up to oversee the registration of all media houses and journalists. Members of the commission were appointed by the Minister of Information and Publicity in the President’s Office most of them were loyal members of the ruling party, a trend that has continued. The MIC was headed by Zanu-Pf’s ‘patriotic’ history intellectual, Tafataona Mahoso. The post- 2000 period saw heightened government aggression towards

independent media, journalists, civic groups and opposition political elements as legal and extralegal methods were used to curtail opposition to the increasingly undemocratic Zanu-Pf government. Such aggressions were usually followed by arrests, confiscation of 'pirate' radio stations equipment and the bomb attacks on the offices of the *Daily News* in Harare in 2000 and printing presses in 2001. The bombings have remained a matter of speculation up to date. It will also be prudent in this chapter to emphasize the fact that the private media advocated and campaigned for the opposition MDC during the past elections, thus further entrenching polarity. *The Zimbabwe Independent* for example was expressly anti-Zanu-Pf just before the 2002 presidential elections. Nothing can clearly highlight this than the owner, Trevor Ncube's *Publisher's memo* that seemed to set the tone of reportage on political issues. In the article "*We are prisoners of fear*" (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 22.02.2002) Ncube saw the election in March 2002 as an opportunity for Zimbabweans "to get rid of this murderous regime (Zanu-Pf) and liberate themselves once again." He urged people to do what he called the "right thing" on March 10 (Presidential elections) by voting for MDC. He further claimed that the "election has been rigged already... if Zanu-Pf wins we will perceive this one as a stolen ballot," meaning that the only credible election result would be one in which the MDC won.

These media laws seemed to specifically target private media and journalists as most of them were closed and arrested respectively, for failing to comply with the stipulations of AIPPA. Private press affected through closures and cancellations of operating licences were *The Daily News*, *The Daily News on Sunday* (2003), *The Tribune* (2004) and *The Weekly Times* (2005) among others. The reasoning may be twofold: an economic move to try and lure advertisers to the public media and also to maximise copy sales of the public owned newspapers, while the other reason may be that the government sought to control the media and also to deny the opposition any platform and, in this way, maintain political hegemony.

Besides private media, citizens used other public platforms to discuss issues of the day. These platforms followed the old public sphere stencil as discussed in Jurgen Habermas' conception of the centuries old public sphere where people organised public meetings and discussed issues of public policy and the general politics of the day in salons and coffee houses. These meetings were prevalent mostly in the main cities of Zimbabwe. For instance, in Matebeleland, Bulawayo in particular, meetings were hosted under the aegis of a political civil society group called *Imbovane yaMahlabezulu* and in Harare NGOs held high profile

discussions mostly in hotels. The former seemed to appeal to many citizens. People gathered in the Bulawayo City Hall to discuss pertinent issues affecting them. These issues dabbled with politics but were mainly focused on development and the marginalisation of the region of Matabeleland.

2.3.2 Broadcasting from the sea: Enter diasporic-online media

Since 2000, there has been a high number of people leaving Zimbabwe for other countries like South Africa, Botswana, USA, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand and many others. Migration is not a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe but it has intensified since 2000 due to various reasons such as political, economic and social problems. Most journalists that were part of those who left the country established broadcasting and other online media and practised the profession from outside Zimbabwe's borders. These media include 'pirate' radio stations such as *Short Wave Africa* in London and *Voice of America in Washington*. Online news-media established were *NewZimbabwe.com*, *ZWNNews.com*, *Zimbabwejournalists.com*, *ZimOnline.com*, *ZimDaily.com*, *ZimbabweTimes.com* and *ChangeZimbabwe.com* among many others. The Internet fulfilled Minister of Information, Jonathan Moyo's suggestion that anti-government media should go and broadcast from the 'sea' since he was not going to grant them licences to operate within Zimbabwe. These diasporic media vary in terms of news angles and coverage. However, there is still polarization in online media and sometimes it is impossible for them to verify stories before publication because they operate far from the source.

Lush and Kupe (2005) suggest that once a story happens a long distance from where the journalist or medium is domiciled, it is difficult to achieve objectivity. This claim is invalid considering high levels of connectivity provided for by new media technologies. Be that as it may, there are cases where new media have been found ethically wanting. For instance, there have been cases where diasporic-online media outlets have had to retract some of their stories (e.g. *Zimbabwemail.com* in 2012 where they claimed Robert Mugabe's ill-health had rendered him wheelchair bound and *NewZimbabwe.com*'s story claiming the then deputy president John Nkomo had died in December 2012). This renders questionable some scholars' assertions that tend to celebrate these diasporic online media as alternative forms of democratic participation especially when these assertions neglect a critical engagement with ethics. Nevertheless, various researches have hailed the internet as a tool for democracy especially in countries with ruling regimes that have continued to curtail freedoms of

expression and assembly like Zimbabwe, Haiti, China and keeping transnational communities in touch (Banda, 2010; Moyo, 2007; Navarrete and Huerta, 2006).

2.4 Key themes explored in the study

There are some key themes that have been chosen for this research that help highlight the discursive constructions of identity. These reflect both the dominant constructions advanced by Zanu-Pf and the contesting ones proffered by ordinary Zimbabweans online. The themes chosen are land reform, ethnicity and Gukurahundi genocide, national holidays and commemorations, and sexuality. These are by no means exhaustive but help map out main arguments as far as construction of nationhood is concerned between 2000 and 2011.

2.4.1 Land Reform and the Zimbabwe Crisis

The history of the country's nationalism is inextricably linked with the land question. This is partly due to the fact that the *raison d'être* of the war of liberation was partly about the recovery of the land from the colonial settlers. The rallying call used by the liberation fighters was "*umntan' enhlabathi/mwana webvu*" (translated: son/daughter of the soil), human rights and other related freedoms. Besides being an economic resource, there is something spiritual or ritualistic about land in the Zimbabwean context. When colonizers arrived in Africa between 1880 and 1900, they forcibly dispossessed the indigenous people of their land. To the dispossessed Africans, this was not loss of land *per se* but the stripping away of their dignity as well; the "loss of identity, languages, cultures and spirituality" (Nkosi, 1996: *Online*). Nkosi (1996) further argues that Africans regard the land as a gift from God and ancestors as it was used for economic, social and cultural purposes. Culturally, when a child is born or circumcised the umbilical cord or the foreskin is buried in the ground symbolising a close relationship between that African child and the land. Many other rituals connect Africans to the land and this signifies the closeness they have with the land. For instance, families that are bereaved take some time to mourn and do not partake in activities like farming. In addition, communities set aside some days of the week as sacred days where no farming is done. Last, there is a connection between gravesites and land ownership and blacks have always insisted in living and being buried in their 'ancestral' lands where rituals like kneeling barefooted besides the graves of ancestors and asking them for guidance amplifies the sacredness of land and how central it is to Africanhood, especially blacks.

Fanon (1963: 9) argues that land is important in a postcolonial setting as it is “the most essential value... it is the most meaningful [and] first and foremost ... provide[s] bread and naturally, dignity”. However, at Zimbabwe’s independence, an elite pact between the new black leaders and white commerce sidetracked the agrarian revolution embedded in the liberation struggle. This elite pact was indirectly provided for in the 1980 Lancaster House constitution and set in place a series of compromises where the new government could not expropriate the land from minority white owners (Fisher, 2010). Where agrarian revolution was ignored, the political elite concerned themselves with state construction while neglecting the most important project: nation-building. Curiously, white Zimbabweans’ participation in the country’s cultural and political activities was minimal as evidenced by their apathy in elections and other national activities, choosing instead to participate in white-dominated activities like cricket, rugby and tennis (Fisher, 2010). When it became apparent that Zanu-Pf was intending to repossess land without compensation, whites resurfaced in support of the MDC, but this form of national belonging was problematic. It is during this period that the dormant agrarian revolution mutated into what Sam Moyo and Yeros call a “radical agrarian reform” (2007: 103) characterised by a period of radicalised statehood where land, national identity and preservation of national sovereignty became integral political tools used especially by Zanu-Pf for hegemonic purposes.

Zimbabwean literary writers have contributed to this debate in different ways with the enduring theme being the link between black people and land in the Zimbabwean context. For instance, Hove’s many works have addressed the land imbalance issues. His novel *Shadows* (1991) demonstrates the central role of land to black people of Zimbabwe and criticises the government for not implementing the land reform programme soon after independence. In 2005 Mutasa (2005) wrote a novel, *Sekai Minda Tave Nayo* which is a celebration of land reform. The novel, written in Shona, attempts to make land central to the survival of ordinary Zimbabweans. More importantly, it critiques the chaotic manner in which the land reform was implemented by the Zanu-Pf government leading to the central character, Sekai, going to study for a degree in agriculture contending that there is need for trained people in the country who will drive and make land reform successful. On top of that, the novel exposes the patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society through land resettlement – it is mainly men who get allocated land at the expense of women. On the whole, the novel draws strength in its ability to openly support and critique the government-sponsored land

reform that turned Zimbabwe into a pariah state from 2000 onwards. During colonial times it is fictional works of authors such as Mutswairo's *Feso* (1956) that made land central to the liberation struggle got defined as nationalist texts. Vambe (2011: 17) sums the novel as a "nationalist text par excellence. It emphasises the collective struggles that blacks have engaged in since 1890 to wrestle land from colonialism."

Besides fictional works, the land question has been addressed elsewhere in government websites, revisionist texts, academic journals, books and the media. For instance, the Zimbabwe Embassy website in Sweden suggests that land imbalances "motivated the indigenous black majority to launch the *Second Chimurenga/Imfazwe* (liberation struggle) to free the country from colonial oppression" (Zimbabwe Embassy-Sweden). There is no further need here to underscore the centrality of land in the war of liberation. Suffice it to say that there were a lot of intervening factors that made land ownership or redistribution impossible for the triumphant black government from 1980-2000, chief of which was the Lancaster House constitution referred to above. In 1980, Zimbabwe inherited a skewed land ownership pattern that was originally initiated in September 1890 by settler occupation when a minority of white farmers allocated themselves vast tracts of productive land while indigenous blacks were condemned to underproductive arid areas (Moyo and Chambati, 2013; Moyo, 2011, Scoones *et al.*, 2010).

At independence, the land ownership patterns reflected those of the colonial era; characterised by underutilised land or absentee landlordism where land was left fallow and held for speculative purposes (Mamdani, 2009; Boateng, 2013). Colonists systematically maintained this form of land redistribution through legislature and violence. In order to maintain 'law and order,' the Lancaster House constitution, under section 16 of the Bill of Rights provided for the acquisition of land 'under law', barring any illegal occupation or resettlement on land owned by white farmers. Section 16 was to remain in force for the next 10 years. Where compulsory acquisition was needed, Zimbabwe had to ensure that compensation was paid for that piece of land. Besides, the constitution had a willing-seller willing-buyer clause where land was to be acquired when there was a willing seller. This willing-seller clause made it impossible for the government to pre-plan any land reform programme and the system was too expensive for the new nation and, moreover, was in contradiction to the ethos of the liberation struggle which was "supported by a land hungry population" (Mamdani, 2009: 4) which was growing impatient. However, countries like the

USA, England and other multinational donors committed to fund the land reform making the process 'fair' through promising compensation to white farmers for farms acquired by the government for resettlement purposes.

Between 1980 and 1990, the government embarked on what Sam Moyo calls a "conservative land reform approach" and then after 1990 the country engaged on a more liberal approach (Moyo, 1994: 84). The former model did not help much in the communal areas as these remained overstocked and congested. Where land was available, it was too expensive or simply failed to meet the demand. Since the constitutional amendments were only possible through a 100 per cent parliamentary vote, the Zanu-Pf government had difficulties acquiring this land since the diametric parliament composed of 100 black members and 20 white ones. This means there was opposition to compulsory land acquisition or as Mahmood Mamdani puts it, this arrangement "gave the settler community an effective veto over any amendment to the Lancaster House terms" (Mamdani, 2009: 4). In 1990 and 1992, the government tried to free itself from the prohibitive willing-buyer willing-seller clause through Constitutional Amendment 11 and Land Acquisition Act respectively, managing to designate 1471 farms for resettlement.

In 1996, the British Conservative government undertook to help finance the land reform programme. However, when Tony Blair's Labour Party government came into power in 1997, Claire Short, the secretary of state for International development, wrote what would be a historical landmark letter that changed the trajectory of Zimbabwean politics, economy and land reform. In the letter she argued that Britain had no obligation to assist Zimbabwe any further and her government was "a new government from diverse backgrounds without links to colonial interests" (*New African*, 2007: 69). Either the letter angered the Zanu-Pf government or gave it a convenient excuse to call a politburo meeting where a decision to endorse the war-veterans led project of forcibly acquiring white-owned farms was made. The war veterans and other landless peasants who were impatient with government's delays in addressing the land question meant that Zanu-Pf's non-committal to their cause would change the dynamics of Zanu-Pf's stranglehold on power. The understanding by Zanu-Pf was that the letter from Claire Short suggested that the British government had on reneged from the Lancaster House agreement. Short stated, "we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe" (*New African*, 2007: 69). The corollary was that Mugabe's government's engaged a nativist political narrative that

maintained that white farmers occupying land in Zimbabwe did so by violently stealing it from the blacks. This message was sent through repackaging of Zimbabwe's liberation history into 'patriotic' history supported by some ordinary citizens and public intellectuals. Some have argued that Zanu-Pf over-reacted as the same letter suggests British willingness to assist Zimbabwe. This is demonstrated where Short's letter says, "I very much hope that we will be able to develop ... a relationship with Zimbabwe [and] I hope that we can discuss ... and identify areas where we are best able to help.... We would be prepared to support a programme of land reform that was part of a poverty eradication strategy but not on any other basis" (*New African*, 2007: 69).

From June 1998 sporadic farm invasions by impatient landless masses began around the country leading to the *Third Chimurenga/Hondo Yeminda/Impi Yomhlabathi* (Third liberation struggle) programme. Faced with this scenario and the refusal by the EU and Britain to fund the land reform programme, the rejection of the 2000 Draft Constitution led by the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA)¹⁴ which would have allowed for compulsory land redistribution; and the continued legal challenges by white farmers, the government had no option but to sanitise or as Moyo and Yeros put it, the government decided to "adopt and co-opt" (Moyo and Yeros, 2007: 106) the land occupation movement, renaming it *Fast Track Land Reform*.

The project was characterised by violence, disregard for the rule of law, human and property rights (Moyo, 2011; Mamdani, 2009). Moyo and Yeros (2007), however, find this situation justifiable as the government was confronted with situations where the use of violence was unavoidable. According to these authors, "the imperialist forces, namely the Western states, the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and their domestic allies"¹⁵ posed a threat to Zanu-Pf's hegemony and there was need "to respond and manage these contradictions" even without a clear plan (2007: 104). Yeros (2002) further argues that it is difficult for any postcolonial state to deal with historical injustices in a political climate characterised by neo-colonialism without the use of violence. To solve issues peaceably, Yeros (2002) suggests, there is need to extirpate neo-colonialism first. Despite the reported chaotic manner in which

¹⁴ NCA was formed in 1997 and is a grouping of individual citizens, students, labour force, women's groups, religious organisations and civic organisations. The aim of the NCA is to bring about a consultative, broad-based and inclusive constitution-making process in Zimbabwe. It has campaigned against the 2000 and 2013 constitutions in Zimbabwe as it saw them as not inclusive of the will of the majority of the people.

¹⁵ Presumably NGOs, the MDC, the civic movements, urban populations, farm workers and other opposition parties.

land reform was carried out, it seems there is emerging order obtaining in the land reform programme (Matondi, 2012; Scoones, *et al.*, 2012; Scoones, 2008).

2.4.2 Ethnicity, Gukurahundi and Unity Day celebrations

The word ethnicity has its roots in the Greek word *ethnos*, which means ‘a nation’. According to Bhopal (2004: 441-442), ethnicity is a “multi-faceted quality that refers to the group to which people belong, and/or are perceived to belong, as a result of certain shared characteristics, including geographical and ancestral origins, but particularly cultural traditions and languages.” Bhopal adds that “the characteristics that define ethnicity are not fixed or easily measured, so ethnicity is imprecise and fluid”. Schermerhorn similarly defines ethnicity as:

a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group. (Schermerhorn, 1970:12)

In the African context ethnicity is political and this has prompted Ake (1993) into calling it political ethnicity. In the Zimbabwean context, discussions and celebrations of ethnicity among other things are frowned upon and tabooed by the political elite especially as this is antithetical to the postcolonial elite’s construction of a cohesive national identity modelled along mystified forms of one race, one people, one culture, one past and one future. These previously taboo issues can now be discussed and demystified online without fear as the internet grants ordinary people such an opportunity as shown in *Chapter 9*. It is Muphree (1998: 119) who argued that the political salience of ethnicity in the “developing world generally, and Africa in particular has received significantly differential treatment in the hands of various streams of contemporary academic analysis.” In the Zimbabwean context, this could be true considering the fact that more attention has been paid to the operations of racism suggesting that this neglect is not entirely an oversight but seemingly “a paradigmatic blindspot” (Muphree, 1988: 119) which is ‘ticklish’ or a cause of discomfort to deal with (Mhlanga, 2012). Ethnicity has been a subject shrouded in silence especially within the ranks of the nationalist movement, opposition politics and civil society. In the academy, some scholars have written about ethnicity and tribalism (Lawrence Vambe, 1972; Maurice

Vambe, 2012; Mhlanga, 2009, Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007, 2010; Muphree, 1988; Sithole, 1993; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008, 2009, 2010; Worby, 1994) to varying degrees. Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007: 276) concur with Muphree that previously, ethnicity has been a taboo area in public discourse:

Until recently, Zimbabweans have been conspicuously silent about questions of ethnicity. As in the colonial period, especially during the days of the nationalist liberation struggle, all attempts to discuss ethnic identities, especially their manifestation in the political and economic spheres, were brushed aside. Yet, ethnicity has continued to shape and influence the economic, social and political life of Zimbabwe since the achievement of independence in 1980.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a: 152) observes that the official “approach to ethnicity is that of silence and pretence. Ethnic issues are generally not subject of public debate. They are pushed under the carpet.” This is mainly because in the Zimbabwean context ethnicity, especially Ndebele ethnicity cannot be divorced from the 1980s genocide and this contributes to ethnic tensions. It seems the Zanu-Pf government failed to handle the issue and hurried to find ways of handling the future after the Unity Accord. However the question still remains ‘what are we going to do and how are we going to handle the past?’ To such, Nelson Mandela once commented that “nations that do not deal with their past are haunted by it for generations” (1999: 78). Moreover those preoccupied with ethnic issues, especially the Ndebeles, attest to Ericksen’s (2010: 17) argument that “there can be no doubt that the substantial social contexts of ethnicity differ enormously, and indeed that ethnic identities and ethnic organisations themselves may have highly variable importance in different societies, for different individuals and in different situations.”

Having said that, it is crucial here to highlight Thompson’s (2004) intervention on ethnicity debates in Africa. He observes that while there is nothing wrong with celebrating ethnicity on the whole, the way it has been used in African politics is the one that is problematic. For instance, in some cases ethnicity is found “at the heart of political mobilisation ... frequently used as an auto-explanation of political events in Africa ... frequently portrayed as having been a hindrance to Africa’s political and economic development” (2004: 59-64). Thompson’s response to this is that such ‘accusations’ to ethnicity are “not necessarily warranted” (2004: 24) but there is need for society to negotiate them in a democratic fashion. It is public knowledge in national identity studies that ethnicity has played a major role in the genocide in Rwanda and ethnic tensions in Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and South

Africa. Hence the philosophies of most African nationalists argue that in order for a nation to subsist, a tribe must die. Vail (1989: 1) captures this thus:

African political leaders, experiencing it as destructive to their ideals of national unity, denounce it passionately. Commentators on the Left, recognising it as a block to the growth of appropriate class awareness, inveigh against it as a case of 'false consciousness'. Apologists for South African apartheid, welcoming it as an ally of continued white dominance, encourage it. Development theorists, perceiving it as a check to economic growth, deplore it. Journalists, judging it an adequate explanation for a myriad of otherwise puzzling events, deploy it mercilessly. Political scientists, intrigued by its continuing power, probe at it endlessly. If one disapproves of the phenomenon, 'it' is 'tribalism'; if one is less judgmental 'it' is 'ethnicity'.

Lentz (1995: 303) argues that “ethnic or tribal particularism is not ... specifically [an] African problem it once appeared to be” as ethnicity continues to be used as a political resource worldwide. In Zimbabwe, for example, cases abound where political power and resource mobilisation follow patterns that can partly be explained through ethnicity.

Ethnicity, Unity Day¹⁶ celebrations and the Gukurahundi episode cannot be divorced in any analysis as they are symbiotically related. Zimbabwe commemorates Unity Day because it was born as a result of Gukurahundi and the latter episode had ethnic undertones. Zanu-Pf's dominant narrative on the Gukurahundi episode is replete with contradictions that largely mirror intra-party and ethnic tensions in the country. These tensions have burdened Zanu-Pf's attempts in maintaining political legitimacy and its efforts to build a cohesive national identity. Zanu-Pf's narrative at one point seeks to remember and at another forget the human rights violations of the 1980s genocide creating tension between the state and victims or survivors. What remains however, is that these human rights violations had implications in society especially in increasing Ndebele particularism. Besides, the episode induced fear and

¹⁶ The Unity Accord was signed in December 22, 1987 as an attempt to end further spilling of blood in the genocide. The signing parties were Zanu-Pf and Pf-Zapu — which merged together forming a new party ironically named Zanu-Pf. Joshua Nkomo, the Pf-Zapu leader was made one of the two co-vice presidents (Simon Muzenda was the other). In terms of nationalist politics, Nkomo was more senior to Mugabe but electoral and ethnic factors could not elevate him into being the president (Ndlovu-Gatsheni).¹⁶ His death in 1 July 1999 led to Mugabe speaking on how Nkomo was the founding father of the nation and its liberation struggle, gaining the name “Father of the Nation/Father Zimbabwe,” in the process making Nkomo occupy a contradictory place in Zimbabwean politics. It contrasts, for instance, with the 1980s “Father of Dissidents” tag. A cursory look at the debates of forging the Zimbabwe nationhood reveals that Zanu-Pf has reconstituted Nkomo's image for its hegemonic sustenance, using him posthumously to fight factionalism and keep the two main ethnic groups that make up the party united in the face of some former Pf-Zapu members pulling out to regroup as an opposition party. Accordingly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni claims that Nkomo, after his death, became a saint or icon of the liberation struggle —a selfless man who liberated his people (and one therefore has to question the use of Mugabe in the Heroes Acre mural since Nkomo's life is a microcosmic representation of the struggle) who set an example to be followed by all Zimbabweans.

collective anxiety for different communities, that is to say, individual survivors and Zimbabweans at large. The fear of this violence is still palpable in contemporary Zimbabwe because the violator which was the state is still under Zanu-Pf control.

Historically, violence has been a well utilised and understood political language in Zimbabwe. While remembering can be the basis of soul searching and a way of gaining closure, Zanu-Pf argues that forgetting and the deliberate rewriting of history is the best way to find closure. It is not clear what is being forgotten but what is clear is why is there need to forget. In dealing with Gukurahundi and Unity Day, the state asserts itself as an agent of amnesia. Here the brand of national identity expressed through and during the National Unity Day celebrations tends to crystallise around forgetting to remember and remembering to forget the 1980s genocide—a darker side of Zimbabwe’s postcolonial nationalism. This deliberate amnesia stands in contrast with Zanu-Pf’s obsession to remember the colonial injustices which are graphically described in public events as illustrated in *Chapter 7*. Whereas the colonial memory has been used by Zanu-Pf to consolidate national identity, the narrative of Unity Day alludes to “the process of remembering [and becoming] selective, incorporating acts of forgetting” (Stewart, 2000: 384) and this simultaneously speaks to issues of Zanu-Pf’s fear and insecurity on sustaining its legitimacy amidst intraparty factionalism and tensions. In analysing Renan’s (1990) *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*, Anderson (1991) who coined the ‘imagined communities’ notion, observes that Renan implored his countrymen to forget inauspicious episodes in the history of their nation as this was the basis for constructing a nation.

Unity Day commemorations are underpinned by the narratives of the liberation struggle, conquest and need for unity while ignoring the genocide, its effects and how to gain closure. These commemorations are therefore treated like birthdays in a typically conservative African cultural setting where the graphic details of one’s conception and birth are never addressed. But what is remembered is only the fact that they were born. Zimbabweans are never told how and why they are celebrating Unity Day and that how it came about was after heinous activities in which the state was the aggressor.

2.4.3 National holidays, commemorative rituals and ‘memorialisms’

Since 2000, Zanu-Pf has attempted to advance a syncretised construction of cultural national identity through national holidays like Heroes’ Day, Independence and Unity Days, and commemorative, memorial and/or ritualistic events like national heroes burials that usually take place at the National Heroes’ Acre or other shrines across the country’s ten provinces. The performance, speeches and delivery of these commemorations and memorialisation came in the context of ‘targeted sanctions’, challenge to Zanu-Pf’s hegemony by the MDC political parties and Western governments’ call for Mugabe to surrender power. These events have been used by Zanu-Pf to “simultaneously exist in the past, present and the future, a fact that makes them powerful events and, in turn, helps to mould national identity” (Ben-Amos and Bet-El, 2005: 169) that suits Mugabe (Ben-Amos and Bet-El, 2005: 169). Through these holidays and commemorative rituals, Zanu-Pf has used epideictic oratory, that is, a discourse linked “to the present, thematically to honour and disgrace and functionally to praise or blame” (Wodak, *et al.*, 2009:71) its heroes and enemies respectively (See *Chapter 7*). This oratory is mostly presented through presidential pronouncements and these tend to define and demarcate national insiders, what it means to be a Zimbabwean and how one may achieve this status. The presidential calibrations of nationhood use ‘patriotic’ memory, ‘patriotic’ history, and stateness, that is, performances and displays of state power by state officials, military and police. These narratives of the liberation war are countlessly repeated through public media until they gain currency in society. These performances of ‘stateness’ are particularly informed by the enduring and shifting legacies of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial histories and memories. In 1984, an American ethnographer, Eric Worby observed the Independence Day celebrations at a time when the decolonisation process was running concurrently with a fully blossoming civil war and reign of terror in the newly independent Zimbabwe. He describes the displays of grandeur and power thus:

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

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

What has disappeared from the whole well-orchestrated pastiche and others that Worby (1998) so graphically paints is the 'figurehead president' while the former Prime Minister and now executive president Robert Mugabe remains the protagonist of the show. Whereas Pf-Zapu was the enemy then, this position is now occupied by the MDC, white farmers, Western governments, NGOs and those ideologically opposed to Zanu-Pf.

The army and public media continue to be used to coerce or co-opt the citizens into Zanu-Pf's national project. These commemorations are accompanied by "[P]oets who chronicle the history of the liberation struggle and praises for the role being played" by the defence forces and heroes, the "exciting display of military drills by the soldiers... to impress residents" (*The Herald*, 14.08.2002) and traditional music and dance. The deeper messages embedded in these displays are not critiqued in academia or public/private media. These displays are intended to 'advertise' the violent machinery in the hands of the state and help strike fear into the hearts of the citizens so that they do not deviate from a narrow and particularistic brand of national identity crafted by Zanu-Pf. This monologic brand of nationalism enables Zanu-Pf and "its leaders to claim control over the direction of national history; responsibility for the birth of the nation; uncontested right to perpetual power in Zimbabwe" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009b:1) and the constitution of nationhood.

2.4.4 Sexuality and national identity

Some ordinary Zimbabweans in online media have come out strongly in support of Zanu-Pf's attempt to advance and legitimise a gendered narrative of Zimbabweanness. This narrative is hinged on the country's liberation history, cycles, modes and patterns of patriarchy and heterosexuality. 'Queer' sexual practices are viewed as opposing the 'normal' tenets of heterosexuality and ostensibly attempt to destabilise and risk the 'purity' of Zimbabwean and indeed African cultures. Homosexual practices challenge the rigid heteronormative ascriptions to sexuality by society on gender. Mugabe is famously known for labelling those who get involved in same sex relationships as "worse than pigs and dogs." The narrative weaved throughout *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* is that Zimbabwe is a culturally and religiously constructed nation that cannot accommodate these 'sub-animal' tendencies.

Many problems are posed by such dismissals of queer sexualities as unAfrican or Western perversions when one considers the globalising world's approach to human rights. Those "citizens of an alternative sexual world" (Reid, 1976: 465) are eliminated from the nation by nationalists and those who support their ideologies in an anxious attempt to advance the *amadoda sibili* (isiNdebele for real men) philosophy by wedding masculinity with unquestionable normative standards of heterosexual behaviour. *Chapters 7 and 8* illustrate this assertion. Accordingly, Mugabe's use of *amadoda sibili* is partly informed by the fact that Zimbabwe, three decades after independence, is still fighting against the 'colonisers' who are bent on adulterating 'our pure' culture through the human rights discourse.

Also at stake are the sexual identities and preferences in the nation that Zanu-Pf imagines as fixed and coherent. Zanu-Pf has consistently encouraged hyper-masculine responses by Zimbabwean nationalism to the perceived Western threats (Conrad, 2010) through this *amadoda sibili* philosophy. The description of homosexual orientation as foreign and Western impositions on the African culture by most African leaders like Mugabe, Sam Nujoma of Namibia, the late Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi, the late John Atta Mills of Ghana and many others has been challenged by various scholars who argue that these sexualities were already practised prior to colonialism (Amory, 1997; Anderson, 2007; Conrad, 2001; Epprecht, 1999). Most of these leaders' resistance to Western 'impositions' on African leaders to accord homosexuals human rights in their countries comes in the face of threats that failure to observe these rights will see the West withdrawing aid to offending countries (*The Herald*, 02.07.2012). In the process, developing world leaders challenge and question the double standards the West advocates and applies concerning human rights in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and others or to people like *WikiLeaks* founder Julian Assange and Bradley Manning, an American soldier accused of leaking state secrets to the *WikiLeaks* website. For instance one analyst writes: "we have seen this (beating up of demonstrators in the USA) during the recent protests by the poor at Wall Street. Demonstrators were beaten up with the full support of the government" (*The Herald*, 17.07.2012).

Epprecht (1999, 2004) suggests that postcolonial countries inherited homophobia from colonialism. Epprecht (2004) offers a compelling case for Zimbabwe. He argues that "missionaries, anthropologists, native commissioners, novelists, and psychologists... observed

and described queer behaviour among African men decades ago” (1998: 197) after arrival in Africa. Epprecht uses magistrate court records as his principal primary data to confirm that indeed the practice pre-dated colonialism. He further adds that whenever junior wives in a polygamous marriage were unsatisfied they resorted to “lesbian-like affairs” (1998: 20). Through the use of some cases (Rex v. Jenwa 1921 and Rex v. Mashumba, 1923) Epprecht argues that colonialists introduced the legal instruments to punish such sexual deviances. In other parts of Africa, such laws as the Penal Code of 1886 in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe ostensibly induced homophobia (Ottosson, 2007). Sexuality has been another of many themes and sites for the negotiation of statehood in the 2000-2011 Zimbabwean context.

2.5 Polarised academy, ‘patriotic’ history and Mugabeism/Zanuism

Zimbabwean scholarship has been polarised into ‘patriotic’ and ‘critical scholars’. Patriotic scholars are those supportive of the radical, redemptive and redistributive project implemented by Zanu-Pf post- 2000. Critical public intellectuals (i.e. those critical of Mugabe, Zanu-Pf and ‘patriotic’ history) like Cousins, Raftopoulos, Moore, Makumbe, Sithole and Ranger, have viewed the Zimbabwe situation using lenses that, while showing historical appreciation, have largely highlighted the breakdown of the rule of law, human and property rights abuses, radicalisation of the state, the illegitimacy of Zanu-Pf and its ‘misplaced’ anti-colonial discourse 30 years after independence. The ‘patriotic’ scholars have advanced Zanu-Pf’s master narrative of ‘patriotic’ history. ‘Patriotic’ history contributes to the multi-faceted and complex nature of identity negotiations in Zimbabwe. In summary, ‘patriotic’ history, according to Terence Ranger:

... is intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition. It is an attempt to reach out to 'youth' over the heads of their parents and teachers, all of whom are said to have forgotten or betrayed revolutionary values. It repudiates academic historiography with its attempts to complicate and question. At the same time, it confronts Western 'bogus universalism' which it depicts as a denial of the concrete history of global oppression. "patriotic' history' is propagated at many levels - on television and in the state-controlled press; in youth militia camps; in new school history courses and textbooks; in books written by cabinet ministers; in speeches by Robert Mugabe and in philosophical eulogies and glosses of those speeches by Zimbabwe's media controller, Tafataona Mahoso. It is a coherent but complex doctrine. (Ranger, 2004: 215)

‘Patriotic’ history was accompanied by ‘patriotic’ journalism for an effective presentation of Zanu-Pf’s rhetoric on pertinent national issues like land, human rights and sanctions. During the period of study, ‘patriotic’ historians and intellectuals gained easy access to public media

such as ZBC-TV, ZBC-radio and public press where they consistently and clearly articulated Zanu-Pf ideologies and propaganda. In comparison, Miles-Tendi (2008) suggests that critical public intellectuals have unconvincingly advanced an anti-Mugabe project similar to that of the opposition and most Western nations with human rights as the underpinning trope. These intellectuals, according to Tendi, did not provide a stronger critique of ‘patriotic’ history that they opposed nor did they systematically support the human rights argument they advanced. This failure is attributed to the fact that these critical scholars operate within a donor-funded civic organisations environment with a crop of “activists [that] are anti-intellectual” (2008: 391).

Moyo (cited in Miles-Tendi, 2008: 391) suggests that public intellectuals have “commercialised the struggle for democracy” by inventing a “crisis industry” funded by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), an assertion Miles-Tendi (2008) corroborates in his research. These intellectuals have failed to fight for democratic governance but have concentrated on creating briefcase NGOs or doing consultancy work for NGOs with the sole intention to make money. One of Tendi’s interviewees, a University of Zimbabwe academic, justified the actions of critical public intellectuals thus:

... my children do not eat book chapters.... I do consultancy work for NGOs and I bend my analysis to please them. I tell NGOs what they want to hear. I tell them Mugabe is bad and there is a serious crisis and I say it loudly so they are satisfied... they will come to me next time ... and ... bring new clients (2008: 391).

This division of scholars into camps has produced polarised scholarship and a ‘failed’ critique of the status quo. On the one hand has been the dismissal of Zanu-Pf redistributive agenda as a tired form of nationalism while on the other there has been support for Zanu-Pf’s attempt to make its version of nationalism find residence in the hearts of the people. The articulation of ‘patriotic’ history has effectively supported and underpinned three core philosophies; *Amadoda sibili*, *Mugabeism* and *Zanuism* and these have largely informed the land question and nationhood debates.

Mugabe, in the wake of a strong challenge to his party’s political hegemony, brand of nationalism and politics by the MDC and civil society, has employed rhetoric where he has called for a troop of ‘*amadoda sibili*’, (IsiNdebele for *real men*) to defend the nation. With the army, youth militia, police, public media and undisputed liberation war history, Zanu-Pf

successfully created a highly selective narrative of the nation that fails to appreciate multi-racialism and the role of race in postcolonial Zimbabwean politics. Mugabe's *amadoda sibili* discourse is an attempt at resuscitating of the colonially pulverised African masculinity and dignity with a new ability to struggle and overcome against real or imagined enemies. This brand of nationalism is anchored on the land question as a legitimising and power-building exercise that only *amadoda sibili* can advance. In the process, the *amadoda sibili* philosophy, together with Mugabeist and Zanuist politics, attempts to affirm black Zimbabweans' dignity and humanity.

The Mugabeist and Zanuist politics are respectively informed by Mugabeism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009c) and Zanuism. Mugabeism is a constellation of:

political controversies, political behaviour, political ideas, utterances, rhetoric and actions that have crystallised around Mugabe's political life... a populist phenomenon... marked by ideological simplicity, emptiness, vagueness, imprecision, and multi-class character. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009c: 1139—1141)

This simplicity, lack of grounding and multi-classification stem from Mugabeism's simultaneous representing and speaking about and glorifying of "issues of liberation and oppression; peace and war; reconciliation and retribution; empowerment and dispossession; victimhood and heroism; social justice and injustice; social harmony and violence" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009c: 1141). Mugabe, widely seen as a controversial political figure, both admired and condemned (Mamdani, 2008; Gatsheni-Ndlovu, 2009a; 2009b; 2009c; Phimister, 2009) has been portrayed in *The Herald* (21.07.2005) as "Africa's political grand master", with a grand narrative "of emancipation and enlightenment... a conqueror of colonialism, fighter against neo-imperialists [and] man of action... a just, faithful devout soldier" (*The Herald*, 15.09.2002). Further, Mugabe is "Africa's most loved and famous son," the "nemesis of colonialism, and for any imperialist stooge," (*The Herald*, 13.01.2003). Some people, like the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy and British Foreign Secretary David Miliband have seen Mugabe as a "dictator [who needs to be told that he has] ... taken [his] people hostage. The people of Zimbabwe have the right to freedom, to security and to respect" (*Mail and Guardian Online*, 2008). The crystallisation of the struggle and Zimbabwean identity around Mugabe makes him the sole upholder of the law and keeper of the truth an embodiment of state power who "alone control[s] the law and could, on his own, grant or abolish liberties" (Mbembe, 1992: 7).

Zanuism is identical to Mugabeism. It has an absolutist perception, simplistic expression and imagination of nationalist ideologies that tends to believe that national formation revolves around Zanu-Pf and its leaders. Thus, there is a substitutionalist system in operation within it that deems the party as equal to or synonymous with government and nation, where national institutions are rendered subservient to Zanu-Pf. Zanuism, just like Mugabeism, is riddled with contradictions on issues of victimhood and heroism, empowerment and disempowerment, democracy and tyranny, rewarding and punishment. Zanuism is also manifested in the belief that it is only Zanu-Pf that stands for the people, land ownership and economic emancipation. Contrasted with the opposition's rhetorical inconsistencies on issues relating to the legacy of colonialism, namely land reform and human rights, the consistency with which Mugabe and "patriotic" scholars have expressed this and the land reform programme, however chaotic, has helped Zanu-Pf in its attempt to ideologically mobilise and politically organise citizens into its support base (See the Freedom House's Zimbabwe Open Survey report, 2013).

Both Mugabeism and Zanuism use the *Third Chimurenga* project, a programme "which is designed to give our people economic independence in addition to the political independence which we are celebrating..." (*The Herald*, 17.04.2002), as an apparatus to revive essentialist notions of nationhood. Both are oblivious of their internal contradictions. If the war of liberation was partly about democracy and an end to colonial oppression, both Mugabeism and Zanuism have failed to deliver considering that simple tenets of human rights like 'one man one vote' have not been enjoyed without the use of violence. Also, the context within which Zanu-Pf has ruled Zimbabwe seems to be based on the 'I-liberated-you-therefore-I-can-do-what-I-want' mantra and this disparages those liberal tenets of democracy they fought for.

The argument foregrounded by Zanu-Pf is that 'dying' in the liberation war and having endured jail time during colonial times makes one an *indoda sibili* and qualifies them for state control, and not having these attributes renders one unrecognisable by Zanu-Pf, army generals and the police force. "Patriotic" history and journalism see Mugabeism as "the only tested ideology capable of guarding national sovereignty" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a: 1153) and dwells mainly on the conquest of the liberation movement while ignoring the main tenets of the liberation struggle. The liberation was, among other things, about freedom, democracy and human rights. However, the project of the liberation war is watered down and narrowed

to such issues as land. Ultimately democracy in the Mugabeism and Zanuism narrative is often cast in contradictory terms.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on the historical background and some pivotal themes that help highlight the necessity of the study. These themes have helped highlight the importance of national identity in critical moments of the nation. These moments like the land reform, sexuality and nationhood, commemorative events, ethnicity and genocide, reveal the fluidity of identity as something that shifts depending on the socio-political demands at a given time. What is more important for this thesis is the context that has been set up by new media where ordinary people have access and voice to create and disseminate content thereby being able to speak to power. This is the main agenda of this thesis to illustrate how ordinary citizens use online media to discursively construct their national identities from below, challenging the dominant discourses from above. To help realise these goals, the thesis has to be anchored on certain theoretical and methodological frameworks and such is the agenda of the next four chapters. The next chapter reviews relevant literature and attempts to locate the study within the growing body of literature on media and national identity construction.

SECTION II

LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Intellectual concerns with agency and self-direction have re-energized the study of identification processes. At the level of the collective, scholars are examining the mechanics by which distinctions are created, maintained, and changed... New communication technologies have freed interaction from the requirements of physical copresence; these technologies have expanded the array of generalised others contributing to the construction of the self. (Cerulo, 1997: 385)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature that relates to and supports this study. This literature review pays particular attention to the issues of national identity and the media, keeping in focus the main questions and themes that are at the core of this research project. It is important to state from the onset the importance of Madianou's (2005) assertion that there is need to rethink the role of media in identity construction "in order to understand what role—if any—the media play in the articulation of identities" (Madianou, 2005: 7). Research in media and identity construction has tended to privilege media power over audience agency. This thesis seeks to study audience agency and illustrates how this helps in the discursive construction of identity. In addition, developments in new media have simultaneously simplified and complicated debates on media and identity construction. Besides the concerns of the role of media in identity construction, this research endeavours to fill a lacuna in academic literature where identity construction tends to privilege the views and agency of those in power (Khalidi, 2010 and Kriger, 1992) instead of those ordinary "voices [that] we often do not hear in the historical record" (Khalidi, 2010: xiii). This chapter only presents the literature review while *Chapters 4* and *5* concern themselves with theoretical issues of the study.

3.2 Nation, State, Nation-state, Nationalism and National identity

Before reviewing literature on nationalism, media, diaspora and national identity, it is imperative to define key terms like 'nation,' 'state,' 'nation-state,' 'nationalism' and 'national identity' for clarity purposes. Most of these definitions are significant to the Zimbabwean context. For Gellner (1983), a nation is a construct of nationalism while for Bhabha (1990), a nation's origins are based on its narrativised constructions. Anderson's conceptualisation of a nation as an "imagined community" that is "limited" and "sovereign" is instructive for

understanding the nation in this thesis. It is imagined because its members think of their nation as separated by borders from ‘other’ nations while at the same time being ‘sovereign’ because it is governed through democratic processes like parliamentary institutions. However, it is important to note that Anderson’s argument about nations being ‘imagined communities’ factors in observations that most nations he writes about came into being after the advent of print capitalism. The existence of the nation in this instance was technologically determined, that is, directly linked with the introduction of print technology. This technological determinism exposes some weaknesses in Anderson’s theory as being part of the nation cannot be conceptualised in a Marxist way which suggests that those who own the means of production also determine identity production. Undeniably myths, drama and iconography (Duara, 1996) were not technologically circulated but these were orally circulated and the net effect was the creation of a sense of belonging to a certain nation. In relation to this maybe one has to ask; whose “imagined communities” are we talking about? The citizen is taken as a passive consumer who when partaking in the consumption of print products becomes part of a community s/he imagines replicating the same ritual of reading. One critic of Anderson, Spitulnik strongly argues thus: “The implicit assumption is that, as soon as this mass produced communication form (e.g. the novel or a newspaper) is distributed, it is simultaneously participated in and almost *automatically* produces a feeling of a shared collectivity because of specific textual features” (Spitulnik, 1997: 164 emphasis added). If the ability to purchase a book or a newspaper qualifies one to be part of a nation then it also needs to be questioned what status Anderson installed to those who were illiterate. Were they part of the nation? How did they imagine themselves as such?

Another conceptual weakness in Anderson’s thesis is his insistence on vertical communication of identities at the expense of lateral communication which affords communities leeway to communicate without the interference of media. The imagination of communities by readers ends at that consumption juncture without factoring in the debates that ensue from consumption of literature and newspapers. The hypodermic needle approach appropriated by Anderson sees communication as unidirectional—flowing from the powerful elite to the weak masses without any feedback, thereby weakening the ‘imagined communities’ thesis. In cases like these, lateral experiential reactions, debates and consumption of media contexts need to be taken into account to conclusively derive truths about the existence or formation of a nation.

While Anderson's work in general and the notion of imagined communities in particular has been criticised for being idealistic, homogenising and egalitarian, it remains instructive in providing a model "of a community where members may not know one another but all share an idea of belonging to a collectivity" (Spitulnik, 1997: 163-4). Anderson's argument that print capitalism helped create a community imagined by both producers and novel readers or newspaper audiences applies especially to this research in that the existence of the website, reader participation both as dormant or active and contributing readers, speaks to the reality of the existence of an imagined community worth investigating. These new modes of communication have managed to create a community of readers who have a sense and feeling of being part of a community populated by fellow readers who replicate the rituals of consumption simultaneously on a daily basis. Anderson's views are fundamental in a study of the role of new media in the construction of identities like the current research because they point out how community and identity are "indexically constructed in texts" (Spitulnik, 1997: 164).

One cannot talk of a nation and state in Africa without highlighting tensions between the two. Both make what is called a nation-state. A state simply denotes a legal concept. According to Harris (2009: 39), the state is a "definite territory and denotes an aggregation of political and administrative institutions". A nation-state is a relatively modern phenomenon that is:

characterised by the formation of a kind of a state which has a monopoly of what it claims to be the legitimate use of force within a demarcated territory and seeks to unite the people subjected to its rule by means of homogenisation, creating a common culture, symbols, values, reviving traditions and myths of origin, and sometimes inventing them. (Guibernau, 1996: 47)

From the above it is clear that the nation-state has an objective of creating a common culture, symbols and values for the nation whereas the nation already has those characteristics. The nation and nation-state clash simply because when the nation looks back into the common past, it encounters something that can be held on to such as the historically constructed identity, while for the nation-state, there is no past to look back into because the nation-state is a new phenomenon.

There are two ways to understand nationalism. Firstly, nationalism is a doctrine that states that the "state and cultural boundaries should be congruent," while the second way refers to the "feelings of affection, loyalty, and identification with a politically defined group of people" (Robinson, 2009: 5). Kedourie (1960: 9) expands this further when he gives a composite definition of nationalism as a doctrine that "holds that humanity is naturally

divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government.

Civic and cultural nationalism are the main widely known forms of nationalism albeit with different conceptual cores. Cultural nationalism is described as authoritarian not because its tenets clearly state that but this is a contrived characteristic stemming from the fact that cultural nationalism is also described as “integral, organic, ascriptive, exclusive or radical” (Brown, 1999: 282). The use of the words “political, social and voluntarist” (ibid.: 282) in reference to civic nationalism denotes its liberal nature. However, it has to be mentioned that it is sometimes difficult to describe a certain type of nationalism as distinctly cultural or civic because some of their characteristics conflate; one may find a co-existence of both forms of nationalism. These similarities, for instance, are informed by that while cultural nationalism draws from the belief in myths of common origins validated by shared language and religion, civic nationalism may be found to be doing the same also – drawing from myths and shared commonalities like the past and a preferred destiny. Thus in their mythology and symbolism, both these nationalisms employ what Brown calls the language of the family (1999). The family in civic nationalism is that of marriage where people come together from diverse backgrounds and marry. On the other hand, the family under the cultural nationalism is that of parenthood with the commitment deriving from shared ancestry. However, as argued earlier, most nationalisms contain ingredients of “both civic and cultural forms, so that there is disagreement, for example, among observers of Catalan nationalism in Spain, or East Timorese nationalism in Indonesia or Scottish nationalism in the UK, as to how to characterize them...” (Brown, 1999: 287).

For this research, definitions by Robinson (2009) and Kedourie (1960) are appealing as they make it easier to understand the constructions of various Zimbabwean identities through online media. However, contrary to Western scholarship’s formulation of African nationalism as something new, Khapoya argues that it is as “old as ancient times ... African nationalism predates colonialism” (1998: 150). Many examples abound in support of this assertion. Studies on the pre-colonial Ndebele nationalism for example, suggest that the Ndebele nation and nationalism were already in existence before colonialism (Msindo, 2012). The study of nationalism on the Wolof people under “the great African king, Mansa Musa of Mali ... the Ashanti people of Ghana, the Hehe (and Yao) of Tanzania” and Zulus from South Africa

suggests that “national identity was already in place—and a fierce determination not to succumb to any other authority but their own” (Khaponya, 1998: 150-151). Some nationalisms in Africa solidified through colonial resistance and subsequent liberation wars against colonial regimes. Brown (1999: 296) attests to this by suggesting that African nationalism partly developed as a reaction “against threatening others and [sought] to change the existing structure of states” and reinstall the pre-colonial patterns of existence. Nationalism in African and other developing countries and even some developed countries like England, came as a result of unifying a people against a common enemy. In most cases the enemy was the colonialist.

National identity on the other hand is an abstraction closely related to nationalism but has various definitions depending on who or what is defining it. National identity is variously defined by such scholars as Anderson (1991), Hobsbawm (1983) and Smith (1989) as a dynamic and fluid entity that changes at any time. Hutchinson and Smith (1994) view national identity as a phenomenon rooted in a past shared by individuals in a community. Kang, in a paper on Korean national identities conceptualises national identity as:

...a nation’s way of thinking and talking about nationhood, or its self-understanding of nationhood. This collective self-understanding of nationhood may be different in a given historical context; for instance, France’s understanding of nationhood is state-centred and assimilationist while Germany’s understanding is ethno-cultural and differentialist. (Kang, 2008)

Anthony Smith defines national identity thus:

...‘national’ identity involves some sort of political community, however tenuous. A political community in turn implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community. It also suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong. (Smith, 1991: 9)

Thomas (1997) elucidates the above definitions when he sees national identity as “the glue that binds all citizens to a larger, wider, trans-local sense of belonging to a nation-state” (Thomas, 1997: online). This shows that national identity and belonging to an imagined community is a supra-conscious phenomenon.

The formation of national identity has been partly attributed to the “violence of the oppressors [which] stimulated national consciousness on the oppressed ... where European violence dehumanised, African violence allowed the possibility of becoming fully human by facilitating the creation of the nation” (Carr, 2007: 14). The process of violently forming nations and national identities seems to still haunt most African countries. Nationalisms informed by the liberation wars, according to Brilliant Mhlanga (2010) caused more problems for national identities in the post-colonies because most African societies were ethnicised and therefore identified with their ethnic nations instead of the nation at large. Instead of harnessing ethnic differences as ingredients to “their cause of nation-building,” (Mhlanga, 2010: 120) the nationalists criminalised it. But this criminalisation of ethnicity in the Zimbabwean context has exposed huge crevices in the nationalist project of creating a national cohesion. It has become easier for ethnicity to determine and legitimate political power access and relevance in most African countries, especially in Zimbabwe. Fanon (1963: 148) locates the problems of African nationalism and their failure on the leaders’ “misuse of anti-colonialism for their own self-aggrandisement,” and this explains disagreements on issues of national identity and citizenship in Zimbabwe for example. Here, Fanon foresaw a pattern whereby a certain coterie of former national liberationists or ruling party members would gain “unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period” (Fanon, 1963: 152) such as mines, cars, farms and country houses to the detriment of the nation (Carr, 2007). The net effect of this, Fanon (1963) and Carr (2007) observed, was nationalism lapsing into ultra-nationalism, chauvinism and racism. From the above, it is clear that Zimbabwean nationalism, just like some African nationalisms in general, is informed by conquest, ethnicity and greed, with violence playing a central role.

National identity has been a contentious issue in Zimbabwe since independence. Critics argue that this is so because the nationalists managed to create a state in 1980 but failed to construct a nation to go with it (Masunungure, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). It has especially been contested during the times of crisis like the 1980s genocide, formation of the MDC and violent reaction by Zanu-Pf, post-2000 economic and political melt down, chaotic land reform and other events explained in the following paragraphs. At Zimbabwe’s independence, the country’s political elite inherited a racially and ethnically divided nation in need of healing. In a magazine article, *‘Nation-Building, State-Building and Power Configuration in Zimbabwe’* Masunungure points out that one of the immediate challenges in

postcolonial Zimbabwe “was the contested and not yet fully resolved question of who constitutes the Zimbabwe polity or political community and which people should be members of that community” (2005: 5). However, the project of nation building presented by independence in 1980 was shelved “in deference to the second challenge, that of state building” (Masunungure, 2005: 4). In addition:

At independence, Zimbabwe inherited a functional (though weakened by war) state without a nation. Those who inherited the state sought to further strengthen it before they invented the nation. Zimbabwe has a functional state without a functional nation. This is precisely why the ruling elite, including the state president incessantly complains of unpatriotic behaviour and conduct on the part of many Zimbabweans and in many facets of life. In short, Zimbabwe the state is a reality but Zimbabwe the nation is still a fiction. (Masunungure, 2005: 7)

As stated before, lack of national cohesion saw the country being delivered into a genocide called Gukurahundi soon after independence. The issue of Gukurahundi is discussed in *Chapters 7 and 9*. For now, suffice it to say that it is one event that shapes the national identity project in Zimbabwe. Before and after the formation of the GNU, Zanu-Pf has continued to use violence as an invitation card to people to join its envisaged Zimbabwean national identity project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a). Besides violence, Terence Ranger (2003) adds that Zanu-Pf has used “‘patriotic’ history,’ that is, a narrow form of the ‘old nationalist history’ to coerce people into the national project. ‘patriotic’ history has celebrated “aspiration, modernisation and ... resistance” (2003: 220) while nationalist history has been used as a counter to the globalisation phenomenon and forces operating in opposition to Zanu-Pf’s hegemony both inside and outside the country. Added to that ‘patriotic’ history “resents the ‘disloyal’ questions raised by historians of nationalism ... [or opposition and] ... is antagonistic to academic historiography” (ibid., 2003: 220).

Besides Gukurahundi of the 1980s and further attempts to form a one-party state by Robert Mugabe’s Zanu-Pf in the 1990s, the land reform also stands out as one of the most significant definers of national identity and citizenship. Barnes aptly captures the redefinition of the nation in racist terms that accompanied the land reform thus: “after 1999-2000, the world’s media bulged with sensationalist stories and images of rural white Zimbabweans being suddenly beset by rural black Zimbabweans; of land invasions proceeding on the justification that the whites were not actually Zimbabweans at all” (2007: 634). Whites were therefore

considered outsiders and did not have any legal protection for their property, especially land—and life.

The politics of exclusions from the nation did not only affect white farmers. Most people, especially those who did not support Zanu-Pf were excluded from the nation as had been the trend since independence in 1980. There is new emerging literature in Zimbabwe dealing with various sectors of the Zimbabwean population like diaspora, coloured communities, teachers who were targeted by Zanu-pf aligned war veterans for ‘re-education’ the Zimbabwean crisis, issues of governance and democracy, identity and citizenship (Chiumbu, 2007; McGregor and Primorac, 2010; Moyo, 2007; Muzondidya, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009). This crop of research highlights the challenges of national identity in Zimbabwe.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) author of the book *Do Zimbabweans Exist?* is probably the only historian to grapple with the idea of the ‘Zimbabwean’ identity as an “unstable nationalist construction in the way Chipkin did for South Africa... [and] Wallerstein in his article ‘*Does India Exist?*’” did for India” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a: 356). Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2009a) book lacks relevant ethnographic study that attempts to find out if indeed Zimbabweans feel they do not belong to the nation but uses reports and some organisations that agitate for different states to argue that Zimbabweans do not exist. This is a persuasive argument that could have been strengthened by an empirical study. Besides, Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2009a) book points out that the Zimbabwean national identity has been constructed by the nationalists as if it were primordial when in fact it is not. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) highlights factors such as the use of violence, selective development, ethnically inclined or oriented political parties as evidence of a failed cohesive national identity project. In short it is a crisis of a complex web of historical politics of the “making and re-making of ‘Zimbabwe’ and ‘Zimbabweans’” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a: 356).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) also accounts for the abuse of the nationalist history as a contributory factor in the failure of the political elite to construct a nation. This abuse has entailed failure to use democratic means in preference of violence as an invitation to the various peoples scattered all over Zimbabwe to be ‘Zimbabweans.’ Nations or people-as-a-nation are not creations of liberation struggles but these existed even before colonialism,

hence academic books by Chipkin, Wallerstein and Ndlovu-Gatsheni question the existence of South Africans, Indians and Zimbabweans respectively. By implication, these texts question the flawed nationalist belief that liberation wars or movements created nations.

The crisis of not having the nation-as-a-people in most cases emanated from the nationalists' conflation of nationalism with the state (Connor, 1994). Chipkin (2007) further adds that the conflation of nationalism with liberation can also be the main reason the nationalists missed a point of what 'a people is' especially after independence. Nationalism, therefore, is seen by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) as more about the making of a people and the nation than an anti-colonial phenomenon. This concurs, to a certain extent, with Guibernau's (2007) assertion that nationalism is more about creating a sentiment of belonging to all members of the nation or community. In the African context this could only be possible if the diverse ethno-nations (ethnic groups are more often than not referred to as nations and it will be the approach of this research to treat them as such) are made to feel a sense of belonging to a nation, that is firstly as a people and then secondly, the nation.

3.3 Writing nationalism: celebratory and critical texts

Zimbabwe nationalism and national identity literature is characterised by commemorative or celebratory and critical texts. These are written by pro-nationalist and critical intellectuals respectively. A survey of celebratory and critical literature on Zimbabwean nationalism reveals a "more complex picture of nationalism" (Raftopoulos, 1999: 115). This attests to the argument raised above that since independence there has been confusion as to how the new polity "would set about creating convincing identities for themselves and their citizens" (Smith *et al.*, 1998: ix). Commemorative texts celebrate the nationalist heroic exploits during the liberation war and after independence, while critical texts depart from this commemorative and celebratory tone of writing nationalism. Commemorative literature celebrates the exploits of the liberation movements without questioning the performance of nationalism and nationalist politics during colonial and postcolonial times. Prolific writers of the celebratory texts include Martin and Johnson (1981), Ranger (1967; 1985; 1989), Moyo (2001; 2002; 2007) and Yeros (2002) among others. Some critical scholars like Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009); Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011; 2009a; 2009b), Muzondidya (2010; 2009), Norma Kriger (1992), Masunungure (2005) and later on Ranger (2004; 2003) have been prolific in deconstructing the celebratory history, criticising the postcolonial leadership for its

‘devastating silence’ on certain fundamental issues like the Gukurahundi that has inhibited the construction of an all-ethnic embracing national identity.

Ranger (1967;1985; 1989) stands out as one of the leading, influential and prolific scholars in propagating mythologically romanticised versions of unity and popular resistance of the black liberationists against colonialism that “privileged the role of Zanu in the anti-colonial struggle” (Robins (1996: 74). For instance, Ranger’s book *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* (1967) anchors ‘patriotic’ history and celebrates the role of the mythic Mwari cult, perceived unity among Shonas and Ndebeles and popular resistance as informing the organisation and execution of the mass risings against the colonists without question. In the book, Ranger fails to differentiate the resistance and nationalism strands under colonialism, a fault that leads to scholars such as Cobbing and Beach (in Raftopoulos, 1999) critically denting his romanticised accounts of Zimbabwean nationalism. Phimister labels Ranger’s (1967) work as characterised by “fanciful extrapolations and factual misrepresentations” (Phimister, 2012: 28) of Zimbabwe’s nationalism history. Phimister suggests that *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* “got it spectacularly wrong in every important respect, even to the extent of misquoting crucial documents” (2012: 28). Ranger also fails to highlight the salience of ethnicity in the nationalist politics, something highlighted by scholars like Sithole (1989) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a; 2009b). By implication, Ranger, other historians and nationalists took it for granted that the liberation war delivered a united nation characterised by a homogeneous postcolonial Zimbabwean identity. Cabral dismisses this perception and argues that identities are complex usually with three strands of differences in African nationalism:

- (a) a minority which, even if it wants to see an end to foreign domination, clings to the dominant colonialist class and openly opposes the movement to protect its social position; (b) a majority of people who are hesitant and indecisive; (c) another minority of people who share in the building and leadership of the liberation movement. (Cabral in Alcoff and Mendieta, 2003: 58)

The heroic accounts in the celebratory texts ignore these issues and this has led to an inaccurate version of history being incorporated into Zimbabwean schools’ history textbooks (Robins, 1996). Engagement with historical and contemporary issues confirms some of the misconceptions created by the praise texts. For instance, one celebratory text written after independence by Martin and Johnson (1981) privileged “the role of Zanu in the anti-colonial struggle. In this account, the guerrilla violence was represented as heroic resistance in a

sanitised form that elided reference to the killings of alleged ‘sell-outs’ and witches...” (Robins, 1996: 74).

Martin and Johnson’s (1981) work, with a foreword from Robert Mugabe, the country’s then Prime Minister and leader of Zanu-Pf, comes across as “little more than a hagiography for the ruling party, an unashamed apologetic justifying the coming to power of a section of the liberation movement” (Raftopoulos, 1999: 121). The romanticised accounts constructed under the hangover of nationalist triumphalism fail to pay due regard to the various actors in the liberation war of the country. Equally misleading is Mugabe’s foreword (in Martin and Johnson, 1981) which states that the book is a

historical reality [that traces] the revolutionary process through Zanu’s history. This is unavoidable, because the armed struggle pace of the revolution was set by Zanu and Zanla, while credit must be given where it is merited to Zapu and Zipra for their complementary role. To record these true facts is not bias but objectivity. (Mugabe 1981: v)

A critical analysis of the above shows the divisions in Zimbabwean politics during the liberation struggle and this makes one understand why Zimbabwe continues to face crises of identity, nationalism, citizenship, democracy and development. In 1989 Ranger wrote ‘*Matabeleland After Amnesty*’ an article that focused on the Matabeleland disturbances and in it his sympathies to Zanu-Pf are evident. In the article, he fails to tackle the violence and pain inflicted by the Fifth Brigade. The best he does is lay blame on the dissidents while praising Mugabe, seen as the man responsible for the Matabeleland genocide by many critics. As long as the history of the country is skewed by celebratory and romanticised texts it becomes difficult for future historians and scholars to undo the damage caused. Mugabe and Zanu-Pf have achieved a cult status in Zimbabwean politics because of the praise texts from historians and the public media.

These inaccurate versions of history in celebratory texts led to a radical and passionate call in 1995 by Dumiso Dabengwa (cited in Robins, 1996: 76-77) the then Home Affairs Minister in Mugabe’s government and now leader of a revived Zapu who said:

For too long historians have failed our people because of their timidity, sectarianism and outright opportunism. Conditions should be created in Zimbabwe wherein a new breed of social scientist... can emerge. This class of scholars should be capable of withstanding threats and intimidation and will rise above those racial, ethnic and tribal considerations [and] oppose the suppression of any information... a

complete history of the struggle for national liberation is a long way from being produced and will only be achieved when the chroniclers of the struggle are no longer afraid to confront the truth head-on and openly, and have rid themselves of biases resulting from our recent political past – a past which saw the brutal killings of innocent people in the name of unity, peace, stability and progress. Unless our scholars can rise above the fear of being isolated and even victimized for telling the truth we shall continue to be told half-truths, or outright lies which will not help unite our nation... Anything short of a tradition of selfless inquiry and exposure of the truth will certainly lead to a nation of sycophants and robots who do not possess the power of independent thought which we should all cherish...

Not all academics have taken initiatives to break the silence and re-write history objectively as there are some that support certain controversial positions about Zimbabwe nationalism. Besides Yeros (2002) and Moyo (2011) who justifiably defend Mugabe's redistributive policies based on historical materialism and coloniality perspectives, Vambe (2012) and Miles-Tendi (2012) have unwittingly come across as Gukurahundi genocide denialists. In a critique of the film "Robert Mugabe: What Really Happened?" in *NewZimbabwe.com* Miles-Tendi wrote, "... we are told at the end of the film that Mugabe's legacy is one of genocide. And yet there has never been genocide in Zimbabwe. Gukurahundi ... violated human rights, but to label [it] genocide is to banalise the term into validation of every kind of victimhood" (Miles-Tendi, 2012). Miles-Tendi's assertion contradicts Genocide Watch's (2010) conclusion that Gukurahundi was indeed genocide. Miles-Tendi does not elucidate what constitutes genocide while Genocide Watch (2010) a United Nations respected NGO defines it as such. Hence Jonathan Moyo's draft Gukurahundi Memorial Bill (2006) is informative at this stage when one considers that scholars are supposed to be independent, critical and not "accomplices in producing heroic accounts that become national truths" (Robins, 1996: 74). Moyo's Bill states:.

Any person who—

- (a) makes derogatory or accusatory or inciting Gukurahundi remarks to or about another person or persons; or
- (b) causes to be published or publishes derogatory or accusatory or inciting Gukurahundi remarks;
- (c) is a Gukurahundi denier in that he or she makes or publishes or causes to be published remarks that deny the historical occurrence or existence of Gukurahundi atrocities; shall be guilty of an offence and liable, upon conviction, to a fine not exceeding level fourteen or to imprisonment not exceeding ten years or to both such fine and such imprisonment. (Moyo, 2006: 2-3).

Another controversial text on Gukurahundi that attempts to create a 'national truth' is by Vambe (2012) who claims that Gukurahundi has been forgotten as people, that is to say, both victims and perpetrators, have moved on. Another claim by Vambe (2012) is that Gukurahundi was a civil war and not genocide and it is not only Matabeleland that was and continues to be affected by Zanu-Pf's practised ethno-politics. *Chapters 8 and 9* in this thesis directly address the issue of Gukurahundi, the people's perceptions, how the genocide

informs current socio-political trends and the findings suggest something contrary to Vambe's (2012) opinion. Vambe's (2012) article is also methodologically flawed. For instance, Vambe (2012: 284) suggests that "[T]he research used questionnaires and direct interviews to elicit the changing perceptions of the impact of Gukurahundi on the people concerned." The methodology suggested by Vambe (2012) is both qualitative and quantitative but in his data presentation and analyses the reader is exposed only to the quantitative analyses. The areas where the research was carried out have been contested as having been little exposed to the genocide. Areas that were drastically affected are ignored in Vambe's (2012) research. The current thesis addresses these weaknesses by qualitatively engaging with people's narratives on the episode and how it has impeded the national identity project.

Inasmuch as there has been a continuation of pro-Zanu-Pf texts on nationalism, there are some scholars who have taken the risk of thinking independently and writing against the grain. For instance, Kriger's *Peasant Voices* (1992) is the first non-celebratory text that critiques the war of liberation, nationalism and democracy in postcolonial Zimbabwe. For her efforts, she has been criticised by Zanu-Pf, its ideologues, supporters and the so-called progressive scholars who have dismissed her as a "white South African reactionary" and "sell-out" who betrayed the revolution (Robins, 1996: 77). Kriger's (1992) work is relevant in this research not only because it offers a challenge to rethink Zimbabwe's history, nationalism and war of liberation but also recognises that ordinary people have agency in self-determination.

Kriger focuses on "'voices from below' [seeking] to challenge the 'history from above'" (Robins, 1996: 81). Currently, Zimbabwean national identities are constructed from above by the political and nationalist elite. Kriger's research confirms that historically, Zimbabweans have always had agency towards self-determination and this has always interfered with the nationalists' perceptions, imaginations and methodologies for creating national cohesion. Even though laden with methodological and theoretical shortcomings, Kriger's book deserves a special place as a critical text on Zimbabwean history. It challenges historians and the system of governance in the country, dismissing the use of violence as the only language for political organisation both during and after the liberation war.

Even though Kriger's work marked the beginning of an end of academics' silence on important political matters such as Zimbabwe's nationalism, she was not alone in this enterprise. Ranger later submitted that he had taken a wrong route and saw the need to 'confess' his mistakes and change his approach from celebratory to critical scholarship (Robins, 1996). It has to be made clear that Ranger was coming from a background where he had been involved in nationalist politics, hence his biases towards the nationalists in his writings.

Elsewhere, bold strides are being made in the deconstruction of Zimbabwean nationalism (Masunungure, 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Raftopoulos, 1999; Ranger, 2003). These scholars engage and critique as limited and narrow, the methods used by especially the nationalists within Zanu-Pf to create a nation out of a racially, ethnically and ideologically diverse and polarised Zimbabwean society. The critical scholars have criticised in a sustained manner, the use of the history of the liberation war, violence, ethicised violence, tyranny, land and extralegal tactics by Zanu-Pf and its supporters as effective tools in constructing their version of the Zimbabwean nation. However, these scholars have neglected to include historical materialism and colonial-informed socio-economic and political perspectives in their critiques.

3.2.1 Zimbabwe 'crisis', diaspora and the making of the nation

The Zimbabwe crisis and diaspora are some of the prominent realities that confront one in the study of Zimbabwean identities. Even though this research is concerned about one diaspora based website *NewZimbabwe.com*, it is imperative that the diaspora community be theorised as it comprises the largest population that visits the site. This is so not because the website is based outside Zimbabwe but it also serves their needs. In addition, the diaspora community is an economically, socially and politically integral part of the homeland. This may be explained by the fact that Zimbabwe has over four million people based outside the country and these are kept informed about events in the homeland and there are certain sections in *NewZimbabwe.com* that are dedicated to such events. For example, there are columns on migration issues that directly affect Zimbabweans domiciled, for instance, in the United Kingdom. The diaspora, for this research and purposes, may be defined as "the segment of a people living outside their homeland or any group of people living beyond the boundary of

their perceived homeland” (Levi, 2002: 86). These are important people in the Zimbabwean economy and nation as they sustained their families through remittances when Zimbabwe faced food, foreign currency and fuel shortages (Bloch, 2008; McGregor, 2007).

Debates on the diaspora gained currency in the humanities from the late 1960s-1970s (Baumann, 2000). In an article that addresses the genealogy of the word ‘diaspora,’ Baumann (2000) notes that the term ‘diaspora’ used to refer to the dispersion of Jews and nowadays is liberally used on a grand scale to refer to ethnic collectivities that have been uprooted from their homeland and, therefore, lacking base at their current given polities (2000). Chan (2005: 336) adds that diaspora is now loosely applied as a metaphor to any groups of people “who are a result of population movements, such as expatriates, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, ethnic minorities...” whose collective identity is defined by the relationship and continual support they have with their homeland. Elsewhere, Shuval defines diaspora as migrants residing and acting in “host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands” (2000: 41). She observes that besides the term “diaspora” acquiring a broad semantic meaning in that it covers such people as immigrants political refugees, expellees, guest workers, it includes a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return—which can be ambivalent, eschatological or utopian. Baumann further argues that the term diaspora has “emotion laden connotations of uprootedness, precariousness and homesickness provid[ing] explanations for the group’s enduring and nostalgic loyalty to the cultural and religious traditions of the country of origin” (op. cit., 314).

There is emerging literature in Zimbabwe articulating the diaspora, the Zimbabwean crisis, democracy, identity and citizenship (Chiumbu, 2007; Moyo, 2007; Muzondidya, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009). In addition, there is also a growing corpus of literature that discusses how the Zimbabwean diaspora engages with the current crisis at economic, political and social levels, while simultaneously engaging in identity debates in their complexity (Blair, 2002; Chiumbu, 2004; Landau, 2008; Mamdani, 2008; Masunungure, 2006; Muzondidya, 2008 and Ranger, 2004). As stated in *Chapter 2*, migration is not a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe but it has escalated with the rise of tensions in the post- 2000 period. The diaspora in this research is important in that they are, as stated before, the ones that seem to have high levels of access to the diasporic based and produced online media and they use these to connect with the homeland and other imagined diaspora

based Zimbabwean communities. A study of the Eritrean diaspora by Bernal (2006) showed that Eritrean communities used the cyberspace as a forum for identity construction, struggle for democracy, independence and creation of a new state. Online participation has been theorised as the most vital connection between diaspora communities and the homeland (see Appadurai, 1995).

For the most part, diasporas and their engagements in online media debates on identity and ethnicity reflect the political cleavages of the homeland (Peel, 2010). This is so precisely because the people in the diaspora are as diverse in political affiliation, thought and identity as those in the homeland (Moyo, 2009; Peel, 2010). A cursory look at a study done by Willems and Mano (2009) on *NewZimbabwe.com* reveals the ethnic tensions between Ndebele-Shona nations when the two authors analyse debates pertaining to Makosi's participation in Big Brother UK television programme. The authors conclude that her participation in the show "did not necessarily strengthen collective identities but precisely brought to the fore the fragmented nature of the 'Zimbabwean nation'" (Mano and Willems, 2009: 193).

While Bernal's (2006) work addresses the role of the diaspora in the general politics of the homeland, some scholars have shown that diaspora communities also influence the economic spheres of their homelands. Muzondidya (2008) found that the Zimbabwean diasporic community kept the country going during heightened political and economic crisis post-2000. Through remittances and other "philanthropic" forms of giving, argues Muzondidya (2008), the diaspora helps maintain ties with the home country. In addition, others have maintained connections with the home country through political involvement, demonstrations for action against the Mugabe led government outside foreign embassies in the United Kingdom and South Africa and through other social activities (Peel, 2009). Due to dislocation and nostalgia, the diasporic community participates in these online media; what Appadurai (1995) calls a 'third space' and through a variety of "[C]omplex socio-cultural contexts characterised by diverse interactions through which their identities are formed dynamically as much as through the diaspora—homeland relationship, as in response to exclusion by the host culture" (Bailey and Carpentier, 2008). Further, the diasporic communities seek to maintain cultural connections with their homeland while negotiating a new identity in the host country.

The participation in online media empowers the diaspora and homeland populations by giving them a voice to express themselves in a fora not governed by politicians. Mitra (2001), in a study looking at the Indians in the diaspora, argues that there is not only the decimation of time and costs, but the barriers of lack of broadcast time in television or radio; printing space in the newspapers and magazines disappear as hindrances since space in the internet space is limitless. Writes Mitra (2001: 37), “Virtual voices can be uttered at anytime and can be heard simultaneously.” In the *NewZimbabwe.com* website, people from different parts of the world engage and debate on certain issues and stories anytime of the day, making it a site where there is a culmination of “voices from various speakers,” (Mitra, 2001: 37) rupturing the dominant political players’ hegemony and rendering the political discourse a preserve not meant only for the elite, but also a terrain to be negotiated by a multitude of actors from different walks of life. In participating in online debates on identity, Zimbabweans are “actually wrenching away the locus of identity production from the regime of the dominant... [the Zimbabweans] themselves can now produce their ... identities ... which can often be different from the [narrow] identities produced by the dominant” (ibid., 45) narratives.

Debates on identity have gained currency in Zimbabwe since the escalation and rise to global prominence of what is now mistakenly but widely known as the ‘Zimbabwe crisis,’ starting from 2000. This view is mistaken in that 2000 is not necessarily the year that the crisis started in Zimbabwe. Most multiple and complex crisis moments in the history of Zimbabwe are both pre and postcolonial. For instance, the nationalist movement faced a major crisis in 1963 when it was divided along ethnic and ideological lines. That was the beginning of the many fractures among the black nationalists who were pre-occupied with the war against colonialism (Masunungure, 2005; Muzondidya, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). Another major event that dented the new nation’s progress and became the root of the crisis of postcolonial Zimbabwe was the 1982-87 Matabeleland massacres/Gukurahundi which the Washington Based human rights group Genocide Watch labelled as genocide.¹⁷ Some of the

¹⁷Genocide is a special crime against humanity, because it must be intentionally carried out against a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. The Gukurahundi meets the definition of genocide because it was carried out by the North-Korean trained, exclusively Shona Fifth Brigade under President Mugabe and it targeted ethnic Matabele people. Shona youth militias, the notorious “green bombers,” also participated in the genocide. These militias still exist, like neo-Nazi groups, and conduct terror campaigns against opponents of Mugabe’s ZANU-PF in election campaigns. General Constantine Chiwanga, Commander of the Zimbabwe Army, and Sidney Sekeramayi, Minister of Defense, were senior officers directly involved in the 1983-84 genocide. (www.genocidewatch.org/zimbabwe.html)

national identity debates and conflicts currently obtaining in Zimbabwe owe their genesis from that dark period of the country's history.

The failure of the postcolonial government to fully implement the process of independence presents another postcolonial crisis moment. Arguably, in 1980 Zimbabwe gained flag but not economic or political independence as the country has not experienced sustained periods of political or economic calm. The land reform, for instance, is one process that was delayed and caused a lot of political activity in the country leading to the violent land invasions of 2000 (Hill, 2008; Mamdani, 2008; Meredith, 2007; Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009). The World Bank/International Monetary Fund sponsored Economic Adjustment Programme in 1997, followed by the awarding of Zimbabwean (ZW) \$50 000 gratuities and monthly allowances of ZW\$2000 to the country's former liberation war heroes and the subsequent deployment of the army to help fight rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo (1998) – all compounded the country's socio-political and economic problems and deserve a special mention in mapping the country's crisis moments. These led to dissatisfaction especially by the working class who bore the burden of the two huge expenditures. The workers resorted to mass actions and tensions between the government and trade unions increased, leading to the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

The formation of the MDC in 1999 presented a challenge to Zanu-Pf's hegemony and the latter plunged the country into a crisis as it used redistributive measures and violence to maintain its stranglehold on power, in turn affecting the identity terrain in Zimbabwe. In 2000, land invasions began in protest partly by the landless peasants and were later appropriated by Zanu-Pf for political survival. In short, from 2000-2008, Zimbabwe was plunged into an era of violence, corruption and leadership crisis. The state of lawlessness during this period is succinctly captured by Chikuhwa (2004: 57) who claims that Zimbabwe has become a military and police dictatorship "where court orders are ignored and defied by those sworn to defend and uphold the laws of the country [and this] opens the judicial system to ridicule and contempt.". Such treatment of the judiciary brought about decay in the rule of law leading to arbitrary arrests, detention and enactment of laws that curtailed the freedoms of expression, assembly and association (for example POSA, AIPPA and BSA).

The 'Zimbabwe crisis' has been viewed differently by academics, political commentators and authors. It is interesting to note that there is a huge collection of mostly revisionist books written especially after the 2000 economic meltdown that puts different faces to the crisis.

Most of them tend to locate the crisis within the chaotic land reform and wrongfully view the crisis from the perspective of white farmers and Western countries especially the USA, England, Australia, New Zealand and EU countries. For example, Meredith (2007), David Blair (2003), Holland (2008), Chikuhwa, (2004), Zamponi (2005), and Hill (2003) among others, have written critically about the ‘Zimbabwe crisis’ and in their conceptualisation, the genesis of the crisis is the land reform. Heidi Holland (2008) in *‘Dinner with Mugabe,’* a book that is a psychological journey into Mugabe’s person and psyche, maintains that Mugabe is responsible for the Zimbabwe crisis. Holland (2008) completely misses the point through arguing that Mugabe is solely responsible for the Zimbabwe crisis as the Zimbabwe crisis is a constellation of a myriad of factors. On the other hand, Mugabe is seen by some critics who refute such contentions from critics such as Holland (2009) as a guardian of the nation’s sovereignty, economy and authentic Zimbabwe identity (Mamdani, 2008).

There are many faces of the crisis and these, beyond Mugabe, are “economic difficulties, land occupations, famine, violence, political authoritarianism and international isolation” (Zamponi, 2005: 28). The Zimbabwe crisis, Zamponi (2005) adds, is a complex constellation of various forces at play that implicate even the victims of the land reform programme, that is, white farmers as they are part of the postcolonial elite pact; and not a “simplified picture of a monolithic neo-patrimonial power structure” (Zamponi, 2005: 31) that writers like Holland (2008) would want their readers to believe. It is also interesting that after articulating various facets of the Zimbabwe crisis, Zamponi falls into the same trap of viewing the crisis as having its roots in the year 2000. He writes:

Apparently, the crisis started in February 2000 with the referendum for modifying the constitution proposed by the government and rejected by the electorate and with the subsequent mass wave of commercial farm occupations by war veterans of the liberation war, and by groups of peasants belonging to the most marginalized rural communities. (Zamponi, 2005: 29)

Clearly, what the author accounts for as its basis from previous historical facts, especially the elite consensus of the 1980s where the old status quo in property ownership was maintained, meaning that only the government together with a few black elites played an integral role in the economy. The elite pact had white farmers and business, government and the emerging black businesspersons as its constituents to the neglect of the multitudes or ‘peasants,’ some of whom participated in the liberation war, condemned to unproductive areas.

Also, the land issue played a pivotal role in Zanu-Pf's quest for political re-legitimation. The ruling party, as said earlier, faced legitimacy challenges in the wake of strikes, formation of the MDC, rejection of the new constitution and internal struggles especially from the war veterans who needed compensation for their role in the armed struggle. Zamponi argues that, in order to gain legitimacy again:

...the government dealt with the crisis by means of instrumental use of the land question and by invoking the historical heritage of the liberation struggle. President Mugabe has affirmed that the present policy aims at redressing the ills of colonialism by returning land to the peasantry. (Zamponi, 2005: 30).

After 1997, the political mutation of the Zimbabwean society saw the disintegration of the elite pact and uprising of the landless, causing a threat to Zanu-Pf's hegemony. This crisis of legitimacy resulted in the ruling party trying to use nationalism and regional solidarity to maintain its hold on power. What followed was a definition and redefinition of national identities in the process (Zamponi, 2005).

The land reform policy faced international and national critique pivoted on the abuse of property rights, rule of law and human rights. This led to Zanu-Pf engaging on a discourse cast on a renewed liberation struggle code-named *Third Chimurenga* (third liberation struggle) or *Hondo Yeminda* (War for the land) and disengagement of all diplomatic ties with especially the West. Subsequently, post-2000 elections were premised on the land question and this was treated as the focal campaigning point by both the ruling Zanu-Pf and opposition party, MDC. The Zanu-Pf slogan was 'The Land is the Economy and the Economy Is the Land.' The MDC campaign 'Chinja' (change) slogan sought to show the MDC's mission as one to rescue the country from the abyss as it sought to change the way Zanu-Pf ran the economy and the country in general. In the case of Zanu-Pf, the land and issues of national belonging were intimately linked as the ruling party "repeatedly emphasised the land as the sole authentic signifier of national belonging as defined by selective political criteria of the ruling party," (Raftopoulos in Zamponi, 2005: 38). Since the MDC was partly financially funded and supported by the West and the white farmers who were the beneficiaries of the former colonial dispensation, they were labelled by Zanu-Pf and its ideologues as aliens to the Zimbabwean nation and a "privileged urban minority controlled by whites and foreigners, and 'tainted' with money from 'right wing conservative racists associated with Rhodesia'"

(Raftopoulos in Zamponi, 2005: 37). To a larger extent, Zamponi's research highlights major socio-economic factors that act as a basis for this research while the weaknesses help locate areas that need to be interrogated by this thesis.

Raftopoulos and Mlambo's edited book, *'Becoming Zimbabwe'* (2009) is one of the few seminal publications and pillars of this thesis that deal with the issues of the country's crises in its various forms and at various stages, with identity being one of the central themes. The book traces the pre-colonial—1800s, colonial—1890-1979 and postcolonial—1980-2008 history of Zimbabwe. In the introductory chapter, Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009) argue that the quest by the nationalists to create a unified national identity was to prove explosive. The authors write:

...during the anti-colonial struggle and in the era of postcolonial politics, the movement towards an 'unquestioned national identity' was to prove a dangerous fantasy, one that could not conceal the faultiness of ethnicity, class, gender and race that marked the terrain of Zimbabwean history. The idea of pre-existing unified ideological or political subject that could quickly be mobilized against colonial rule was to come up against the complex process of historical agency in which the nationalist unity and hegemony were always contingent, and were founded on the interplay of different identities, social forces and strategic alliances. (2009: xvii)

The historicisation of citizenship and identity issues in this book helps show that national identity was an important issue to Zimbabweans as a new nation. The book clearly shows the rise of nationalism, competing identity and political claims of the 1940s and 60s between different political actors such as teachers, the church, rural people, chiefs, farmers and workers. Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009) argue that in the pre-colonial era, two nations existed in Zimbabwe, the Shona and the Ndebele nations. After colonialism, three nations existed (White, Ndebele and Shona) even though the nationalists tried very hard to unite the black nations into one so that they may rally behind one clarion call for independence from British White settlers. The white settlers automatically formed their own nation "unified by race and a national identity founded on racialism" (2009: xxiii), excluding the local black majority. Mlambo (in Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009) asserts that the white community was fractured by "racism and cultural chauvinism which emanated mostly from the settlers of British stock, evoking strong reactions from other white groups in the country such as Afrikaners" (2009: xxiii). Thus the history of Zimbabwean national identity is riddled by differences based on race, ethnicity and gender.

While soon after independence some of the former nationalist movement leaders and new political elite in Zanu-Pf gave an impression of a united and homogeneous Zimbabwe, old forms of identity and exclusions that had been created in the 1960s and new ones that were being created in the post-colony, started emerging (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009). The constructions of the nation and citizenship by the ruling elite came with:

exclusions carried out through a combination of the law, the abuse of state institutions, and the state led—and supported violence ... [and] revived nationalist discourse located around a number of themes, namely the centrality of the land, a selective rendition of the history of liberation and the collective branding of the whites, West and the Movement for Democratic Change, and the civic movement and their supporters as ‘enemies of the state’ and outsiders to the nation. (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009: xxx)

This skewed use of history was an attempt by Zanu-Pf to maintain its hegemony and was dubbed by historian Ranger (2009), “dangerously one sided, narrow and divisive ‘patriotic’ history,” (in Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009: xxxi). Raftopoulos adds that the central characteristic of the post-2000 Zimbabwe crisis has “been the emergence of a revived nationalism delivered in particularly virulent form, with race as a key trope within the “discourse” (2009: 160). Just like Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s *‘Do Zimbabweans Exist?’* (2009a) this book also highlights cases of how the ruling party has defined national identity and used violence to force people to subscribe to its formulations of national identity.

As indicated earlier, the author does not address how ordinary Zimbabweans besides academics, journalists and those in civil society contest or support the dominant but narrow narratives of national identity sponsored by Zanu-Pf. Of course, most academics who write and critique Zanu-Pf’s ‘narrow’ definitions of national identity are Zimbabweans and privileged, from the academic standpoint, to debate, contest and reject Zanu-Pf constructs of national identity in various platforms.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) also writes interrogatingly about the (non)existence of Zimbabweans in his book *Do Zimbabweans Exist?* This is a key text that underpins much of this research. Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2009a) seminal book boldly engages with the failures of nationalism as it departs from the nationalist triumphalism and celebratory praise texts of the nationalist leaders offered by scholars like Ranger (1967). As already intimated this literature was characterised by celebrating the conquest of the black liberation ‘heroes’ after independence while maintaining silence on state-sponsored terror and violence. Ndlovu-Gatsheni observes that “nationalist historiographies were increasingly seen as raw materials

that enabled monopolisation of national histories by scrupulous politicians bent on excluding others from the nation” (2009a: 346). The same author adds that the challenge to the existence of Zimbabweans as a nation is laid bare by the fact that there is a crisis of belonging and the country is “far from being a democratic developmental state at a number of levels” (2009a: 364). In interrogating these and other issues, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) neglects how the Zimbabweans themselves, as citizens, negotiate and construct their identities. This is the challenge taken up by this research. Among other things, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a), Jocelyn Alexander et al. (2000) and Raftopoulos and Mlambo’s (2009) works supply the historical material that exposes fault lines on how Robert Mugabe and Zanu-Pf have defined Zimbabwean identities using not only celebratory texts by academics but through the use or abuse of public media.

3.3 Nation building and ‘traditional’ media

The media, church, academia and other prominent institutions in society play an important role “in linking subjects to a common history of origins, continuities and futures. The mass media... play a central role in defining national identity, charting its boundaries and maintaining its presence in the popular imaginations” (Thomas, 2007: online). This explains why sitting governments control the public media because of the need to use these institutions for national consciousness and consensus building. The public media are usually national in content and coverage, and state supported. As such, they carry mostly official pronouncements and views on matters relating to the nation. The media play an important role as a conflation point for culture-as-lived and culture-as-representation. This section of the chapter attempts to review literature that illustrates that there is a relationship between media, culture and identity construction. It also raises critical issues that pertain to the second research question on the possibility of Zimbabweans using media to construct and imagine their own national identities. Globally, there is a growing body of research looking especially at how the media mediate national identity (Anderson, 1991; Billig, 1995; Madianou, 2005; Mano and Willems, 2010; Rosie *et al.*, 2006; Wodak, 1999,).

Media in any given society are socially powerful and may shape society in different ways; for example, towards certain forms of nationalism or a culture of conflict as happened in Kenya and Rwanda where they played an integral role in fuelling ethnic conflicts (Terzis, 2000). The media play a pivotal role in the constructions of national identity because they are the main

vehicles through which multi-faceted societal discourses are transmitted. According to Anderson (1991), they are institutional products of nations and play a critical role in maintaining these nations. Kovačič (2005) asserts that the media are integral not only in the construction of identities but also in national preservation and development. The media do this through telling national myths especially in times of crisis, rapid social change or external threat (Terzis, 2000). In so doing, the media help in the construction of identities as “‘engravers’ of national symbols upon the nation’s memory and presenters of national rituals (elections, celebrations, etc)” (Terzis, 2000: 1).

If national identity is the glue that keeps all citizens bound together, then the media have a role to play in bringing these people in diverse spaces together. Television has been singled out by Abu-Lughod (1993) as “the most popular and ubiquitous public medium, offering diverse fare and available to a wider range of people than print media” (Abu-Lughod, 1993: 509). Further, Wilk’s (2002) study on the uses and influences of television in Belize revealed that television was used as a medium of national healing as it did more “to create a national culture and national consciousness in Belize than forty years of nationalist politics and nine years of independence” (Wilk, 2002: 184). Closer to Zimbabwe, Ives’s research on the role of television in South Africa demonstrates how television was used to maintain certain identities during the apartheid regime while after independence it played a different role (Ives, 1997). Ives observes that public television is the voice of ‘New South Africa’ being used by the leadership “in attempts to construct a nation out of a divided past ... Television produces, performs and contests the post-apartheid South African nation” (Ives, 2007: 153).

Further, Hamilton’s (2002) analysis of the Thai media and cultural identity is instructive. Hamilton (2002) argues that the media influence normative national consciousness. She writes about Thailand:

In Thailand the creation of an “official” national cultural identity has been an explicit project of the Kingdom for at least the past ninety years, and the mass media have been central to the project ... This official version of national identity is promulgated throughout the free-to-air media ... (Hamilton, 2002: 153)

Effectively, nationalists in most postcolonial countries have used the media to help mould progressive nations out of divided pasts through producing and performing the present while contesting the past (Mhlanga, 2010; Ives, 2007). Thus, in order for the media to show

political progress, there is need for them to show the people where the nation has come from and where it is going. In some cases, argues Hamilton (2002: 153), this is done with an intention to show some form of “uniqueness and distinctiveness against an outside world.” In Zimbabwe, for instance, in the early 2000s, the government stopped the local television and radio channels from playing foreign content as a form of preserving and promoting ‘Zimbabwean culture.’ This was effectively a futile fight against globalization. Globalization is not only the flows or influences of culture. It is part of modernization and even the developed nations become part of it without any due control from outside influences or political leadership, (Søndergaard, 2003). This means that it is difficult to impede the flows and effects of globalization especially through media such as dress, internet, satellite television, video and movies or films.

Another key text in this research is Madianou’s (2005) book that looks at the media and identity from the strong media/weak identities or weak media/strong identities dichotomy. The challenge set by this book is the need to rethink media and identity relations, highlighting the fact that identities are “relational and thus can only be investigated as performed” through such social institutions as the media (Madianou, 2005: 27). Among other key issues, Madianou’s research discusses the top-down approach that sees media as strong and identities as weak; and also the down-top approach which sees audiences as powerful in the creation and articulation of identities. Thus the book helps shape the approach of this research in that there is need to question to what extent *NewZimbabwe.com* helps in the creation of identities in a bottom-up approach.

In an informative and critical book on the discursive formations of national identities, Ruth Wodak et al. (2009) assert that national identities are discursively constructed by the political elite, official and oppositional forces using the media. The book uses critical discourse analysis as a framework to locate the discursive construction of national identity both conceptually and theoretically. This thesis benefits from the book as it lays the foundations for understanding the use of critical discourse analysis as a tool to explore the discursive formations of national identity through the media. The media are used in the construction of a “common past, present and future; a common culture, a common territory; and the concept of *homo nationalis*” (Wodak et al., 2009: 187, emphasis in original). One general omission by Wodak et al.’s work is the lack of recognition of the masses as actively participating in their own national identity constructions through the media alongside the elite.

3.3.1 Nation building and the New Media

From the above section, there is a possibility that new media may be used by ordinary people to construct and imagine alternative versions of national identity that rail against the dominant ones. Globally, there is a growing corpus of research demonstrating the role of new media in the mediation of national identity debates (Anderson, 1991; Billig, 1995; Madianou, 2005; Mano and Willems, 2010; Rosie *et al.*, 2006; Wodak, 1999). Internet based media have entered the communicative space as new vistas of liberty, where marginalised and ostracised voices in society are given space to express themselves. New media therefore come into the communicative space as alternative media (Atton 2000, 2001, 2006; Krasnoboka, 2002; Moyo, 2007).

There are some important questions that one has to ask to gauge the role and importance of new media in the discursive construction of identity: Are new media like *NewZimbabwe.com* alternative fora for expression and possible instruments for subverting and countering the political elites' limited and exclusive narratives on national identities, for example? Fogg (2003 quoted in Peel 2009) refers to these media as "citizens' media", "participatory media", "alternative media", and or "radical media" (2009: 35). This researcher will borrow the terms 'alternative' and 'participatory media' to describe *NewZimbabwe.com* because the site offers an alternative space to the Zanu-Pf dominated public media and at the same time, ordinary people may gather and debate issues on this website. According to Peel (2008: 184), new media represent a "microcosm of Zimbabwean diversity which deconstructs the authoritarian nationalism" that has typified Zanu-Pf's rule of over 30 years.

These configurations are accompanied by technological advancements especially in relation to the internet and this has made locations of production of content of these new media irrelevant as new media "mediate ... in national and transnational public spheres" (Bailey *et al.*, 2008: 64) disregarding physical frontiers, space limits and other attendant problems that affect the mainstream media. The removal of these frontiers allows readers to freely debate issues including those that are regarded 'taboo' in the homeland. It is the aim of this research to interrogate reader comments and debates in online discourses and how these enable readers to construct their preferred identities.

Eriksen (2006: 1,4) argues that in a “‘global era’ of movement and deterritorialisation, the Internet is typically used to strengthen, rather than weaken, national identities... and... can be exceptionally efficient in reproducing such identities across vast distances, uniting dispersed populations in virtual communities because it can fully exploit the time-space compression characterizing our era”. He further expounds this role of the internet through reference to websites used by Kurdish, Afrikaner and Moroccan online communities as case studies. He concludes that indeed the internet plays an important role in transnational nationalism, in kindling notions of national loyalty, particularly by the diasporas.

Elsewhere, Moyo’s research article (2009: 82) observes that the “internet is increasingly becoming one of the main cultural public spaces where ... communities across the world celebrate their cultural identities.” Moyo’s research closely examines the mythic Mthwakazi nation of Zimbabwe, a subset of the Ndebele nation, analysing the use of the internet by Mthwakazi people in imagining their homeland. He asserts that the internet is central in the “negotiation and re-articulation of identities for the Ndebele communities.” Further, “[T]he *Inkundla* virtual community appears to provide a space and network through which the myths and ideologies that furnish the Ndebele identity find expression” (Moyo, 2009: 83). Thus, the internet, even though more recent than some myths, helps the spreading of these and does not create them anew.

While Moyo’s (2009) paper looks at the Ndebele ethnic group or nation, it remains pertinent to this research in many ways. These include the relevance and the use of online media, language, myths and memory in national identity construction in the Zimbabwean context. Also, Moyo (2009) demonstrates that identities can be discursively constructed online. As already intimated in *Chapter 1*, Moyo’s (2009) research is one of the few researches including that of Peel (2009) and Mano and Willems (2008) that addresses the issues of ordinary Zimbabweans using new media as alternative fora to debate issues that are interlinked with identity.

Similarly, a research done by Youna Kim on Asian women and diasporic identities revealed that new media do not only provide entertainment and act as social fora but have also

become a key resource and necessity, a sphere of familiarity, which plays a crucial role not merely in providing circumstantial infotainment from home but also in constituting relational networks of meaning and expression of the experience of displacement and the paradoxes of diasporic lives. Its

consequence is not trivial in matters pertaining to one's daily identity or daily nationalism.... (Kim, 2011: 149)

Parallels can be drawn between Kim's (2011) and Mano and Willems's (2006) paper on emerging media and communities. Mano and Willems's (2006) study on *NewZimbabwe.com* and the website's coverage of the participation of Zimbabwean Makosi Musambasi in the UK *Big Brother* reality television show illustrates the centrality of online media in identity debates. Through Makosi's case, the authors look at how Zimbabweans in the diaspora "defined themselves and how they imagined 'Zimbabweanness' in internet chat rooms" (2006: 184). The paper looks at debates generated by readers in the online forums and concludes that the post- 2000 'Zimbabwe crisis' has led to politically charged and "narrowed down definitions of national identity and citizenship" (2006: 184). While this groundbreaking article looks at one case, this thesis expands the parameters by looking at various themes and stories over a longer period and at certain critical moments of heated contestations of sovereignty and political power in the nation. The paper addresses relevant issues that seem to be the main points of contestation regarding national identity and it touches on political, identity and ethnicity issues—subjects that are salient in national identity debates and to this thesis also.

Elsewhere, Peel's (2009) research on diaspora, ethnicities, politics and electronic media is groundbreaking and intimately relates to and adds value to this research in ways that will be highlighted shortly. Peel (2009) writes about the online discursive construction of identities of Zimbabweans in a research mainly concerned with the expressions of identity and consciousness by Zimbabweans exiled in the UK. What makes Peel's (2009) research important is that he studies different Zimbabwean racial and ethnic communities like Ndebeles, whites and coloureds to come up with a myriad of debates on identities in the diaspora. This current thesis is informed by Peel's (2009) thesis and therefore seeks to compliment Peel's research and others by covering gaps that are noticeable. For instance, this thesis seeks mainly to juxtapose the elite and ordinary people's constructions of national identity. Again, the current thesis, by studying how Zanu-Pf has formulated Zimbabwean national identity, lays ground for comparisons between the elite and ordinary people's constructions of identity. Peel concludes that his research has "abstracted identities ignored by other scholars who transcended geographical boundaries, but remained embedded in Zimbabwean historical and social contexts" (Peel, 2009: 289). Peel (2009) also argues that

the websites studied showed some form of re-enfranchisement of diasporic ethnic minority and professional groups. While the white Zimbabwean nation has been edited out of the Zimbabwean body politic by Zanu-Pf (Raftopoulos, 2009), Peel (2009) argues that it (the white nation) does exist in the diaspora (Britain) and it marginalises itself from British identities. Many other nationalisms and identities are expressed in the websites studied by Peel (2009: 295-302). For instance, the coloureds and whites have two separate websites where they articulate their political, identity and social concerns. Issues discussed in these sites range from marriage, regime change and philanthropic gestures like sending medical supplies to the homeland. The latter aspects resonate with Peel's (2009) argument that websites act as homes where online socialisation results in group behaviour where users do not only engage each other conversationally but discussions often lead to philanthropic acts or political, sport and cultural activities in the United Kingdom.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature that relates to the general issues of identity, Zimbabwe crisis, diaspora and new media. The chapter started with a definition of terms and these were intimately linked with the Zimbabwean context. The chapter has gauged the strengths and weaknesses of current literature and tried to position the current research in a manner that allows it to cover gaps and also create new knowledge as stated in *Chapter 1*. The chapter has looked at relevant celebratory and critical literature which captures the polarization of Zimbabwean nationalism scholarship. In addition, there is a glaring gap between the two schools of thought where some scholars neglect certain truths and historical realities in an attempt to advance their preferred positions. For instance, the Zimbabwe crisis and scholarship around this theme have generated scholarship of questionable ethical considerations. In addition, little is said about the ordinary citizens on how they perceive the nation and what it means for them to be Zimbabwean. The only privileged voices are those of the elite. This silencing of the ordinary citizens has led to research papers by Moyo (2009) and Mano and Wilems (2006) taking an initiative in doing digital ethnography on how people discursively construct identities online. This research's attempt to privilege audience discussions over theories of powerful-media-dominating-weak-audiences benefits from this literature which demonstrates the important interventions of new media in making possible conversations on identity across social strata. This research differs from many others on national identity construction in the media in that it does a textual analysis of audience

communication in online media as compared to most researches that have dealt with news content and chat rooms, organisational structures of online media and their influences on content. The next chapter theorises the nation and attempts to grapple with some issues raised in this chapter, grounding them in theories of the nation and identity.

Chapter 4: Theorising National Identity: Primordialism, Constructionism and Ethnosymbolism

The classic debate [is] between primordialist and circumstantialist or instrumentalist approaches. ... Cognitive perspectives allow us to recast both positions and to see them as complementary rather than mutually exclusive... rather than contradicting one another, they can be seen as directed largely to different questions. (Brubaker, 2004: 83, 85)

4.1 Introduction

The understanding of ‘nation’ in the literature of nationalism is almost indistinguishable from that of ethnic group. This therefore means that there is a conflation in theories of ethnicity and nation. Among the most notable universalist theories of nationalism that anchor this research are primordialist¹⁸ and constructionist perspectives. This chapter explores these theories as tools for interpreting identity construction trends in Zimbabwe. These theories are relevant and important as they help in the understanding of tensions between the origins of certain peoples, ethnic groups or races and ultimately their national identity. This aspect of identity in the Zimbabwean context brings into the fore, for instance, the primordial origins of the different kinds of people currently occupying Zimbabwe. More often than not, the debates take a primordial tone or instrumentalist one or an admixture of both (ethnosymbolist) depending on the context of issues being articulated. The assumption in this chapter is that Zanu-Pf advanced dominant narratives on identity are informed by the primordialist perspective on nationalism while alternative discourses advanced by ordinary citizens are anchored on constructionism.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the primordialist view and follows with the constructionist one and ends with ethnosymbolism. Each of these, as is the case in the previous chapter, are critiqued and their relevance to this research thesis located. The chapter follows the discussion of these two contrasting theories with Anthony Smith’s ethnosymbolic approach, a concept that is anchored on the premise that there is “continuity between premodern and modern forms of social cohesion” (Conversi, 2006: 21).

¹⁸ The term ‘primordialism’ has its genesis in the word ‘primordial’ which is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2008) as “of or relating to, or existing from the very beginning of time; earliest in time; primeval, primitive; (more generally) ancient, distant in time” and “constitutes the origin or starting point from which something else is derived or developed, or on which something else depends; fundamental, basic; element” (in Özkırımlı, 2010: 49).

4.2 Primordialist theories of Nationalism

Primordialists believe that group identities are a given while constructionists view identities as flexible and variable according to circumstances (Brown, 1999; Carr, 2008; Hechter and Okamoto, 2001; Kohn, 1944; Madianou, 2005). Hall succinctly captures this when he asserts:

In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation ... In contrast with the [primordialist view, the constructionist] approach sees [identity] as a construction, a process never completed—always in process. (Hall, 1996: 2)

Primordialism “refers to the core, to a sense of community which focuses on belief in myths of common ancestry; and on the perception that these myths are validated by contemporary similarities of physiognomy, language or religion” (Brown, 1999: 282). Primordial identities are “irrational attachments based on blood, race, language, religion, region, etc” (Llobera, 1999: n.p). Geertz (1973) further adds that these ties are ineffable while at the same time coercive. Geertz advances the primordialist view through highlighting that nations come from

... the "givens" - or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' - of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves... (Geertz 1973: 259)

If anything, what is clear is that Geertz’s view implicates ethnicity as a central identity marker or game changer just like a ‘Joker’ is in the game of cards. As highlighted in *Chapter 3*, ethnicity and nation are intimately related as they share a “homogenous centre” (Mhlanga, 2010: 123) contrary to arguments by Ranger and Hobsbawm (1983) and Anderson (1991) who argue that nations exist in the imagination of their constituents, disregarding their tangibility and some notable and important truths and differences between peoples who share the same nation-state. The assertion that nations are imagined discards the valid and lived realities of culture and cultural differences in some groups (Mamdani, 2004; Mhlanga, 2010). Mhlanga further argues that there are different “contextual factors that are influenced by the issues of nativity and ethnicity” (2010: 123) that cannot be dismissed and “relegated into the fringes” of socially imagined and constructed identities. Added to that, Hutchinson seems to suggest that the nation is real, “organic... living... whose individuality must be cherished by their members in all their manifestations” (1983: 122).

Primordialists are backward-looking as they emphasise on the ethnic origins of nations and “ancient roots of the nations and the fixity of identity as a quality given by birth” (Madianou, 2005: 8). This ultimately depicts a nation in terms that give prominence to the “robust qualities of longevity, relatedness, constancy and emotional attachment” (Lawson, 2005:197). The myth of common ancestry, land and its myths, migration, language, culture provides basis for “claims to authenticity and right of collective national self determination” (Brown, 1999: 282). This perspective has led to cultural nationalism being labelled as intrinsically irrational, illiberal and authoritarian (Brown, 1999). This suggested relationship between primordialism and authoritarianism is sometimes imposed rather than argued by the terms such as ‘radical’, ‘organic’, ‘ascriptive’, ‘organic’ and ‘exclusive’ (Brown, 1999). Primordialist views aid and abet the “normative claims of ethnic identity expressed in terms of indigenusness over and above other claims or considerations” (Lawson, 2005: 197).

The authoritarian nature especially of African nationalism can be explained by the genealogy of African state formation. In most cases, African nationalism came up as a response to colonialism in the mid 20th century. This nationalism was based on the freedom aspirations of the nationalists. Thus, the anti-colonial struggles in Africa are usually conflated with nationalism, associated independence movements and creation of nations and nation-states. The anti-colonial movements helped create emerging African states and not necessarily nations. The struggles against colonialism were executed on both racial and ethnic basis and:

each ethnicity or associational group had a vision of the future that could not exist as long as the colonial power remained. In the absence of the colonial power, however, they believed that there would be fertile opportunity to create a new nation. Unfortunately, by attempting to build new nations with ethnic qualifications, that disavowed the reality of constructed colonial identities, Africa has endured nearly half of a century of political unrest and upheaval. (Carr, 2008: 2)

Carr (2008) speaks of a continuum of missed opportunities in African nationalism. After colonialism, these self defining ‘sovereign’ nation-states still struggle or fail to make recalcitrant minorities part of the nation, for example. Nationalists, when their primordialist pedigree gospel is not bought by these recalcitrant groups, respond heavy handedly through such methods as ethnic cleansing and expulsions (Conversi, 2006).

Anthony Smith believes that national identities are sustained by the oscillation of nations around an ethnic ‘core’ that is shaped and transmitted by “myths, memories, values and

symbols” (1986: 15) which members cling to dearly. He further argues that the ethnic ‘core’ has proved to be a “durable identity in which modern nations and nationalism have their roots” (in Carr, 2008: 4). Therefore national identity, according to the primordialist view, is a natural part of the human species in as much as speech, smell and sight are, and nations have been in existence since “time immemorial” (Özkırımlı, 2010: 49). Özkırımlı further argues that this view is the one held by nationalists themselves, and was for some time the dominant paradigm among social scientists, notably the historians. Primordialism also constitutes the laymen’s view of nations and nationalism hence the question of belonging cannot be arbitrarily defined as a domain for academics; there is a wide and varied scope of debate on the issues of identity from different stakeholders (Özkırımlı, 2010). This is the point of entry of this research thesis; the realisation that national identity construction is a multi-participatory way—where the elite and the general population can participate.

There are a number of approaches that explain the primordialist view to national identity. These are the socio-biological, cultural and perennialist approaches. These will be briefly discussed below and a demonstration of how they help in understanding primordialists’ articulation of identity will be done.

4.2.1 The socio-biological approach

This approach to ethnicity, race and nationalism was advanced by its fervent proponent, Pierre van den Berghe who argued that “there is indeed an objective, external basis to the existence” (van den Berghe, 2001: 274) of certain groups. Özkırımlı (2010: 53) further adds that at the same time these groups “are also socially constructed and changeable” (Özkırımlı, 2010: 53). The main premise of socio-biology stems from the question: “why animals are social, that is, why do they cooperate?” (van Berghe in Özkırımlı, 2010: 53). Van den Berghe argues that socio-biology supplies genetic mechanisms that help in inclusivity and kin selection. Kin selection or reproducing with relatives therefore increases closeness and sociality in humans as is the case with animals. Clearly, ethnic and racial groups are an extension of the “idiom of kinship” (Özkırımlı, 2010: 54). Differently articulated, nations, ethnic groups and races are “super-families of (distant) relatives, real or putative, who tend to intermarry, and who are knit together by vertical ties of descent reinforced by horizontal ties of marriage” (van Berghe 2001: 274). Van den Berghe admits that ethnic groups “appear and

disappear, coalesce and break up” (van den Berghe 2001: 274). The constructions, deconstructions and reconstructions, argues van Berghe, are based on the imagined and perceived biological origins of nations. A nation is a socially constructed “political ethnies” (van den Berghe, 2001: 273).

4.2.4 Criticism and relevance of the Primordialist Theory to the study

Having said the above, it is important to point out as a weakness the fact that in its formulations of certain assumptions, the primordialist theory fails to adequately consider history. For instance, Smith’s assertion that primordial attachments explain the readiness for one’s willingness to die for his/her nation tends to discount history which, if used, could help uncover deeper underlying feelings that engender certain group loyalties. Ethnicity cannot be a fixated identity marker which is beyond analysis as per primordialist theory claims. The claim that ethnic belonging and affiliation is a given rather than elected, “immutable rather than malleable...” (Horowitz, 2004: 72-73) makes scholarly analysis of the theory impractical as it does not offer reasons for certain human behaviours like ethnic conflict (Conversi, 2006). However, the importance of the theory lies in that it offers a lens through which to see how identities are debated.

This theory is important as it helps clarify certain narratives of national identity that suggest blood, racial and linguistic ties are important in national identity formation. Primordial thinking has been credited with sustaining an argument that ethnicities (this includes race) are not simply given nor do they change over time. This helps expound and also in the understanding of debates in *Chapters 7 and 9*.

4.3 The Constructionist Theory

This group of theories was first conceptualised with ethnies in mind but some of the conclusions of this theory are often generalised to apply to nations. It “conceives ethnicity as a dependant variable, externally controlled according to its strategic utility for achieving more secular goods” (Conversi, 2006: 16). Constructionists believe that national identities are “flexible and variable; [with] both content and boundaries” of the nation changing according to circumstances (Llobera, 1999: n.p). This theory’s hallmark is that it perceives citizens in

any given homeland as loyal not because of shared ancestry but because the community is progressive and “forward looking,” as its vision is still being formed rather than in the primordial case where the vision of the “community is located in myths of the past” (Brown, 1999: 283). Constructionists reject political and traditional connections and allegiances advocated by primordialists that make it difficult for people from varying backgrounds to belong to a nation. Instead, constructionists advocate a “cosmopolitan rationalist conception of the nation... transcending cultural differences” (Hutchinson, 1983: 122). The main objective here is the “achievement of a representative national state that will guarantee its members citizenship rights (without discrimination)” (Hutchinson, 1983: 124). Therefore under this theory identities are not “primordial, but socially constructed” (Hechter and Okamoto, 2001: 193) and this outrightly rejects the primordialists’ claims that nations are pre-determined, fixed and natural. Constructionists see identities as deriving from discursive practices (see Conversi, 2006).

Just like the primordialist tradition, the constructionist theory is not homogenous as it shelters a lot of other theories under its umbrella. There are three schools of thought under the constructionist nationalism theory and these are identified by the key factors they advance. They characterise identities as influenced by economic, political and social transformations. These factors are discussed below and will be used in the analysis chapters in an attempt to trace which factors influence or harden certain identity configurations in Zimbabwe.

4.3.1 Economic transformation

Constructionist scholars have attributed the rise of some nations to economic transformation. Viera Bacova (1998) asserts that people get attached to certain communities because they stand to benefit economically from such membership. The main basis for belonging is the need for protection of their economic interests and goals. “These bonds of an individual to a community are characterised as cool-headed, formal, intentional, purposeful, requiring conscious loyalty and formed on the basis of choice, but also as vague, temporary, intermittent and routine” (Bacova, 1998: 33). Harris (2009: 57) adds that the economic approach paradigm rose into prominence with the analysis of “postcolonial national movements who were the harbingers of the struggle against imperialism and international capitalism.” On a broader level, Hobsbawm identifies “capitalism as the progenitor of

nationalism” (quoted in Carr, 2008: 8). This echoes Anderson’s argument that nations exist as a result of capitalism, that is, the convergence of print and technology (Anderson, 1991; Harris 2009; Madianou, 2005). This strand of constructionism accounts, to a certain extent, for the perceived rise of African nationalism especially as it was thought to be predicated upon the fight against colonialism and economic exploitation but is scant on the details of the rise of nationalist movements in Europe. For example, Colley argues that British nationalism for instance was an outcome of “England’s wars with France, in both the old and new worlds” (cited in Carr, 2008: 6).

4.3.2. The political approach

This approach was espoused by three main scholars; Hobsbawm (1990), Breuilly (1994) and Brass (1994). This variant focuses on the political transformations like “the rise of the modern bureaucratic state, extension of suffrage, the growing role of elites and their power struggles...” (Özkırmılı, 2010: 83) as ways of explaining nationalism. This approach dovetails perfectly with the current power struggles of Zimbabwe where political legitimacy of both the nationalist Zanu-Pf and any opposition parties are contested, and in some cases, violently so. This will help in the analysis of themes and imaginations of certain identities through online media and Zanu-Pf discourses in public media.

Breuilly’s (1982) thesis on political nationalism states that belonging to a national group or community and the nation is supreme in its stature and survival to its members, necessitating the need to protect its interests and sovereignty through autonomy and sovereign rule. Nationalism is all about “politics and politics is about power and the ‘power in the modern world is about control of the state’” (Harris, 2009: 58). Özkırmılı quoting Breuilly adds that the central task of those studying or using this theory is “to relate nationalism to the objective of obtaining and using of state power” (Özkırmılı, 2010: 85); meaning that there is need for us to study modern nationalist politics to find out why nationalism is so important. Harris expounds:

The relationship between society and the state is institutionalised through citizenship in the form of the nation state. The individual, the state, the legitimacy of the state and the identity of the political community, and thus the ability to pursue the interests of the people and legitimise the actions on their behalf all merge into the politics of the nation state. (Harris, 2009: 58)

The above also brings into focus the problems of the nation and national unity that are currently obtaining in Zimbabwe with the Matabeleland Liberation Front's (MLF) call for a separate state clearly exposing ethnic and political craters in Zimbabwe. The aspirations of the MLF are nothing new if one looks at the separatist nationalisms in the former Yugoslav republics, "or, the autonomy seeking Hungarian minority in post-communist Europe, or the Palestinian struggle for the extrication from Israeli occupation..." (Harris, 2009: 58). Nationalist discourse calls on the citizens to participate in the national project by using emotion or nationalist historiography to "reinforce a sense of common destiny, and therefore a common future" (Harris, 2009: 59). Nairn (cited in Harris) alludes to nationalism as a modern Janus¹⁹ whose "backward glances are looking into the past of the nation to seek joys of victories, recall pains of defeats and appeal to the wisdom of the people who have survived the past and 'must gather strength' for the struggle ahead" (Harris, 2009: 59).

From the above, it becomes apparent that for a nationalist discourse to be effective, there is need for it to tell evocative stories and retell old stories so as to invoke memory and prepare the nation to face new challenges (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems, 2009; Ranger, 2003). Added to that, Harris asserts: "[W]hile this memory-invoking discourse is the staple of nationalist discourse, often, even more effective is a memory creating narrative" (Harris, 2009:59). This is done through public events like the galas in Zimbabwe, media programmes and celebration of national holidays.

Hobsbawm (cited in Özkırmılı) adds to this view of the nation as:

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with a suitable past... and use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion. (Özkırmılı 2010: 94)

This is done in order to engineer collective identity and behaviour through education and technological developments where politics, technology and social transformation intersect in the project of nationalism. Nationalism and nations are therefore dual phenomena, "constructed essentially from above, but... cannot be understood unless also analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary

¹⁹Janus was a Roman god with two faces, one looking forward and one back.

people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist” (Hobsbawm, 1990: 10-11).

A different idea under the political transformation strand is advanced by Brass (1994) who stressed the instrumental form and nature of nationality and ethnicity. Özkırımlı observes that “ethnic and national identities become convenient tools at the hands of competing elites for generating mass support in the universal struggle for wealth, power and prestige” (Özkırımlı, 2010: 88). Constructionists argue that the ethnic and national attachments are not similar to those advanced by the primordialists. Rather, they are continuously “redefined and reconstructed in response to changing conditions and the machinations of political elites” (Özkırımlı 2010: 88). Brass (in Özkırımlı, 2010: 88) further argues that:

The study of ethnicity and nationality is in large part the study of politically induced cultural change. More precisely, it is the study of the process by which elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups select aspects of the group’s culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilise the group, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups. (Brass, 1979: 40-41).

For Brass (1979), there is nothing that is inevitable about ethnic identities transforming into nationalism. However, there needs to exist certain political conditions for these ethnic identities to mutate. Political and economic environments mostly lead to ethnic tensions which are usually meant to serve the interests of the political elite in their competition for state power and control. This “competition also influences the definition of the relevant ethnic groups and their persistence... because the cultural forms, values and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in their struggle for power and prestige” (Özkırımlı, 2010: 89-90). These symbols can easily be used to facilitate the construction of political identity and generate political support. Last, Brass (1979) argues that when one looks at the above, the transformation of ethnic identity into nationalism may be reversed. For instance, depending on the political economy and other circumstances, “elites may seek to downplay ethnic differences and seek cooperation with other groups or state authorities” (Özkırımlı 2010: 90) so as to maintain or gain political power. The Unity Accord of 1987 in Zimbabwe was a step in this direction as it sought to neutralise ethnic differences and promote national unity across ethnic and political divides.

4.3.3 The social/cultural transformation theory

This is the last theory under the constructionist school whose major advocates are Gellner (1983) and Anderson (1983). This theory is considered one of the most important attempts at explaining and understanding nationalism. This is because it recognises people as actively participating in the creation of identities rather than being “mere subjects of change beyond their awareness” (Harris, 2009: 60).

Anderson’s (1983, 1991) ‘imagined communities’ concept is seminal in studies like this one. It cannot be discussed here as justice has already been done to it in *Chapter 3*. Here, it suffices to say that along with Gellner (1983), Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983), Anderson’s (1991) is an influential text in the understanding of nationalism. Anderson’s argument is that nationalism and nationality are cultural artefacts whose genesis may be traced to the invention of the printing press and the decline of Latin as a language for the intelligentsia in Europe.

4.3.4 Criticism and relevance of the Constructionist Approach

The constructionist approach, while helping in the understanding of national identity in this thesis, is wanting in certain areas. The constructionist theories have been summarily criticised for being reductionist as they seek to emphasise one aspect at the expense of others in their explanations of the genesis of nations. Gellner’s (1983) industrialism concept, for instance, is not entirely convincing when considering that some nations emerged before industrialisation. The constructionist theory also fails to account for the ‘irrational’ willingness of people to die for their nation. Nationalism under the instrumentalist thinking is imagined as monolithic and applicable to all situations regardless of the community’s historic, political, social and economic past. Last, the media plays an important role in the constructions of national identities. Civic nationalism seems to assume that people are already in place and therefore ignores the process of nation-building. The ruling out of a cultural legacy or past presents problems for the civic nation. A people may agree to co-exist as a nation based on their differences and future. Ultimately what brings them together in the first instance will, in future be referred to as a cultural legacy or past. Constructionism’s claim to liberalism is weakened by the fact that there is no individual will that is expected to go against the spirit of national identity. In addition, the past shapes constructionist nationalism.

Constructionist nationalists, just like primordialists employ “the language of the ancestry and nature (‘distant forbearers and ‘natural’ character) to refer to their pasts, and not just for their futures, that the ideal-type civic nationalism begins to intertwine with the ideal type cultural nationalism” (Brown, 1999, 293). Therefore when “myths and historical continuity [shape nationalism in a way that nationalism becomes] less voluntaristic” (Brown, 1999: 293). This aspect is not fully accounted for under this theory.

4.4 Ethnosymbolism: the third way

The final instalment under theories of nationalism is the ethnosymbolism approach. This theory is believed to fall between the primordialist and modernist approaches and describes a situation where one nationalism contains ingredients of both the cultural and civic nationalisms. For instance, the Catalan nationalism of Spain, East Timorese nationalism in Indonesia and the Scottish nationalism in UK exhibit characteristics of both constructionist and primordialist nationalisms.

Madianou (2005) argues that ethnosymbolists believe that nations are modern phenomena with roots in “primordial attachments from time immemorial” (2005: 9). This approach has been hailed as underlining the continuity between “pre-modern and modern forms of social cohesion, without overlooking the changes brought about by modernity” (Conversi, 2006: 21). Myths, memories, traditional values and symbols are the bastion of the formation and sustenance of national identities under the ethnosymbolism approach. Of all the myths (descent and closeness) the myth of the ‘golden age’ of past exploits, achievements and splendour is the most important and celebrated. These myths can also be seen being celebrated especially by the state-controlled public media texts and other cultural events in Zimbabwe. The country’s war exploits are celebrated; its spirit mediums and liberation war heroes revered and important symbolic dates and holidays are celebrated as they form part of the country’s golden past.

A historically strong connection is a “prerequisite to the survival of modern nations” (Conversi, 2006: 22) and this connection’s sustenance needs the intelligentsia, media, scholars and artists to establish, through their works, a key connection between the past and the present times thereby re-living the ancient past, making the imagined community vividly popular, clear and awakened” (ibid.: 2006: 22). Smith argues that the intelligentsia and the

professionals play an important role with their capacity to interpret and express “credible national identity” (Conversi, 2006: 22). Television programmes in ZTV like *National Ethos* for instance, were used to define the country’s past, future and the meanings of Zimbabweanness. According to Guibernau (2004), the contribution of this theory lies between the stark constructionist theories that defend the “recent, invented and constructed nature of nations and nationalism” and primordial theories “emphasising the permanence of nations” (2004: 126).

4.5 Conclusion

This section has largely dealt with the theories of nationalism as they will be used in this thesis to analyse dominant and alternative versions of identity construction. The next chapter provides a link on how new media interfaces with identity creation discourses – both primordial and constructionist. The first part of the chapter discussed the primordial group of theories clearly outlining their genesis, different strands and their weaknesses. The second part discussed the constructionist theories and through this discussion of the two main groups of theories, the differences between the two were exposed. This exposure of differences has led to a clear argument for a ‘third way’ theory in the form of ethnosymbolism, a theory that integrates the two theories and fulfils a void either one could not afford to fill. This chapter has discussed the theories of nationalism and has argued that one cannot discuss identity construction in the modern world without reference to new media. According to Cerulo (1997: 397), it is difficult to consider identity debates without reference to new communication technologies (NCTs) as NCTs “have changed the backdrop against which identity is constructed”. New media have helped reframe what the dominant ‘other’ thinks and projects itself to be in relation to his/her lived political realities. Electronic media have acted as, and organised sites of national identity imagination, resistance and creation. Internet has weakened and undermined the power of authorities, destroyed their mystified positions, their imagined power, aura and prestige.

Chapter 5: The Public Sphere

The use of information technology (IT) has brought a new development in the way in which the... Diaspora sustains, expands, and consolidates the... public sphere where its political views are expressed. One may speak of virtual dimension of the public sphere, which coalesces with both formal and informal aspects. Information technology complicates our understanding of the working the public sphere because it provides diverse routes used by the people to communicate among themselves. (Laguerre, 2005: 214)

5.1 Introduction

It has become common knowledge in the fields of sociology, migration, media studies and democracy that media play a central role in the public sphere (Dahlberg, 2000; Gimmler, 2001; Habermas, 1962 and 1989; McKee, 2005; Moyo 2007; Papacharissi, 2002; Sassi, 2001 and Sikka, 2006). Media have also been credited with the power and ability to shape, maintain, reflect and perform identities (Macri, 2011). This chapter theorises debates on the role of media as a public sphere especially in areas that have to do with identity construction in a post colonial society like Zimbabwe with a unique experience of democracy co-existing with authoritarianism (Ronning and Kupe, 2000). This duality has affected processes of deliberative democracy and discursive construction of identities for example. This chapter attempts to adapt the Habermasian public sphere theory to internet studies. It proceeds from the realisation that since the Zimbabwean community in this study is composed of diasporic and homeland based populations, the cheapest, fastest and safest way to congregate is through the internet which has variously functioned as a host for ‘alternative digital diasporic’ public spheres for various reasons.

Firstly, new media in the form of *NewZimbabwe.com* and others are alternative public spheres to the one dominated by the government controlled public media. Secondly they are alternative media in terms of coverage. Whereas the public media offer biased coverage of events and news (Nyahunzwi, 2001; Todd, 2007; Waldahl, 2004) barring certain voices from being heard, new media like *NewZimbabwe.com* promise to offer a platform to those counter-hegemonic, excluded voices (Bailey *et al.*, 2007: xii) and those that perpetrate the exclusions an equal platform to debate issues of common public interest.

The concern of this research therefore is not the public media or the Zanu-Pf dominated public sphere but exilic ‘small media’ in the form of *NewZimbabwe.com* and how these enable communication and debate on national identity among those excluded from the

mainstream public sphere.²⁰ Finally, the diasporic digital public spheres are alternative in that they point “to the need for greater empowerment of the large majority of ordinary people removed and disfranchised from the media and political public spheres,” (Bailey, *et al.*, 2007: xii). The summary of ‘alternative media’ offered here suffices for this research given that the term is elusive and can be differently articulated.

The chapter is laid out in the following order: the first part theorises Habermas’s public sphere concept while the second offers a discussion of the critiques of the theory. The third part of the chapter interrogates the concept of alternative public spheres while the fourth is divided into two specific categories that attempt to theorise the subaltern and transnational/diasporic public spheres. Finally, the chapter concludes the main issues that arise from the discussion and theorisation of new media and the public sphere concept. Ultimately, the goal of this chapter is to implicate the concepts of ‘sub-altern public spheres,’ ‘transnational public spheres,’ ‘digital public spheres’ and ‘diasporic public spheres’, as important concepts in dealing with the diasporic media’s role in Zimbabwe’s identity debates.

5.2 The Public Sphere concept: a historical perspective

Central to this thesis is an endeavour to theorise the role of new media as a tool or forum used by people to discursively construct and debate their various identities. This is done through using Habermas’s conceptualisation of the public sphere and adapting it to the internet; to outline how the web may be used as a host of a diasporic digital public sphere. Arguably, the public sphere concept propounded by German philosopher Habermas is central in media studies and scholarship as it “summarises the media’s normative role in democracy...” (Chuma, 2007: 10) as an idealised social communicative space for critical and reasoned debate. This research proceeds by a critical engagement of the public sphere theory and adapting it to the online media research, illustrating how new media mediates public involvement in key debates.

Habermas’s theory of the public sphere, which at first glance appears outdated in the field of media and cultural studies and democracy, is, however, still relevant and invaluable in studies

²⁰It has to be highlighted at this juncture that even though Zimbabwe has three political parties in government, Zanu-Pf conspicuously dominates and controls the public media. Therefore it is expedient for the arguments of this thesis to make a clear distinction that the mainstream public sphere and media are public owned but Zanu-Pf controlled rather than government controlled.

like this one. The theory, since the translation of Habermas's German book, *The Transformation of the Public Sphere* into English in 1989, has been applied to media with almost canonical reverence as it has been developed, modified, critiqued, discarded, and re-embraced with an enthusiasm verging on faith (Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli, 2009), rendering it a relevant mainstay in media studies debates (Calhoun, 1991; Fraser, 1991; Garnham, 2007; Hamilton, 2009). According to McKee (2005: 4), "the concept of the public sphere is a metaphor that we use to think about the way that information and ideas circulate in large societies..." where individuals are equally granted entry, access and a chance to debate issues. McKee further asserts that the public sphere is:

...where each of us finds out what's happening in our community, and what social, cultural and political issues are facing us. It's where we engage with these issues and add our voices to discussions about them, playing our part in the process of a society reaching a consensus or compromise about what we think about issues, and what should be done about them." (2005: 4)

Similarly, in his magnum corpus, a book which maps the rise and fall of bourgeois participatory democracy, Habermas defines the public sphere as:

A realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body... Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest. ...[it] is a sphere that mediates between society and state, in which the public organises itself as a bearer of public opinion, accords with the principle of the public sphere—that principle of public information which once had to be fought for against arcane policies of monarchies and which since that time has not made possible the democratic control of state activities. (Habermas, 1989: 73-74)

Habermas further captures the reasons for the formation of the public sphere. He suggests that it was:

Conceived above all as a sphere of private people coming together as a public they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and labour. The medium of these political confrontations was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's use of their reason (*öffentliches Raisonnement*). (Habermas, 1989: 27)

The above definitions of the public sphere have four key implications that will be discussed in latter chapters. Briefly, the definitions suggest that deliberation is structured. Second, people have freedom to communicate. The third aspect is the need for universal access to the public space. The fourth aspect relates to the actual talk that takes place in the public sphere

(Tanner, 2001). These are important in the role of media and identity. The next few paragraphs historicize the Habermasian public sphere.

Habermas conceptualised this theory in an era where “the media of the public sphere [were] newspapers and magazines, radio and television” (1989: 73). In the 21st century, the internet may be added as a public sphere as it aids and diversifies dialogic communication globally. The public sphere, according to Habermas’s definitions above, was a place where a public body of citizens met to discuss issues pertaining to society. Thus, to him, public opinion formulation was “a grave and serious responsibility” (Green, 2010: 120) to be taken up by everyone as it had ramifications on democratic governance in the Western societies of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The arenas of the public sphere Habermas (1989) wrote about were books, newspapers/journals, salons, coffee houses and debating clubs that allowed for free and uncoerced discursive deliberations outside the influences of the State and the Church. The public sphere grew out of a certain and specific age in society dominated by the bourgeois who were the wealthy, educated white men, “usually merchants and writers, who were not part of the ruling class...” (Green, 2010: 120), but had time to meet in the coffee houses in London, and salons in Paris and table societies in Germany to read and discuss newspaper articles or political pamphlets with emphasis on the ‘political’ stories and their probable implications for commerce and politics of the day.

Habermas (1989) saw this bourgeois public sphere as an ideal one where democracy would flourish as he claimed that there was equality among members, critical and rationale debate, and political will formation making it easier in early modern Europe for the public to hold the “state accountable to society via publicity” (Fraser, 1990: 58). This, at first, was done through making information about the functioning of the state available to the public and allowing the latter to scrutinize the former through the force of public opinion. Later, “it meant transmitting the considered ‘general interest’ of ‘bourgeoisie society’ to the state via the forms of legally guaranteed free speech, free press, and free assembly, and eventually through the parliamentary institutions of representative government” (Fraser, 1990: 58).

The main thesis in Habermas's seminal book is the decline of the public sphere in the post Enlightenment Europe. Specifically, when the public sphere expanded beyond the original participants, it lost its "social exclusivity" together with "coherence created by bourgeois social institutions and a relatively high standard of education" (Habermas, 1989: 77). Habermas viewed with suspicion, the role of the mass media as a public sphere since they gave in to commercial control. This can be buttressed by his argument that the "mass media is a public sphere in appearance only [and]... the integrity they promise to their consumers is also an illusion" (Habermas, 1989: 171). Additionally, Habermas criticises the commercial influences thus:

Mass culture has earned its rather dubious name precisely by achieving increased sales by adapting to the need for relaxation and entertainment on the part of consumer strata with relatively little education, rather than through the guidance of an enlarged public toward the appreciation of a culture undamaged in its substance. (Habermas, 1989: 165.)

Habermas describes the process by which the public sphere mutates from being the centre of critical rational debate into a debased shadow of its former self. This shift is wrought by the change in the social, economic and political structures in society. In this account, he criticises the mass media and the press for succumbing to control by both political and commercial interests rendering them (media) incapable of being fora for the generation of legitimate public opinion.

Habermas's re-assessment of the media as a public sphere environment came in the background of Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of mass culture and mediated cultures as "ideological domination" because of commercial and state influences instead of being independent public spheres (Butsch, 2007) that are not aligned to the state or commerce but for the people's needs. Habermas saw the media turning from what were once political public spheres for debate into "a medium for commodity consumption" (Butsch, 2007: 4) through operating more as commercial entities rather than fora for public deliberations—they became a market place where advertisers met their customers. Commercialisation leads to "economic self-interest taking precedent over collective interest" (Butsch, 2007: 4) in which ultimately, citizens are viewed as consumers of commercial products. Concomitant to that, Habermas referred to the whole process as the re-feudalisation of the public sphere metamorphosing its function as a "place for public display rather than... discourse and debate" (2007: 4) since power and economic interests had supplanted reasoned debate,

equality and public good. In the end, public opinion and publicity were transformed into “hollowed out versions of their former selves” (Dahlberg, 2000: 49).

5.2.1 A critique of Habermas’s Public Sphere Theory

Habermas has been criticised for variously neglecting or overlooking certain societal aspects in his formulation of the public sphere theory. Most critics agree that his concept of the public sphere remains central to the democratic functioning of society (Fraser, 1991) but differ with him on certain fundamental aspects that this section will highlight and critique. It is impossible to highlight a comprehensive list and review of critiques but suffice to mention that a brief overview will serve the arguments and interests of this research work better.

Firstly, many critics argue that the saloons and coffee houses acted as exclusive spaces meant for a certain section of society only, rendering Habermas’s study narrow (Calhoun, 1991; Fraser, 1991). The ideal public sphere that Habermas envisaged when he wrote his book was flawed in that its constituency was the White bourgeoisie males. His failure to acknowledge and investigate the net effect on the exclusion of women, Black people and the working class shows some major weaknesses in the theory. It creates problems not only for social or historical enquiry but also for theoretical speculation (Crossley, 2004). The bourgeoisie public sphere equates ‘white male’ with ‘public’ and, in the process, creates “all sorts of false and misleading dichotomies” thereby impeding a thorough holistic investigation of the public sphere theory (Crossley, 2004: 11). This can partly be proven by the argument that the rise of the bourgeoisie public sphere coincided with the rise of African slave trade, a phenomenon that dehumanised black people mostly in the hands of White American and European bourgeoisie (Squires, 2002). Arguably, the excluded groups, especially Blacks, utilised separate means of publicising their political predicaments, interests and used their public spheres to attach the inequalities and exclusivity of the bourgeoisie public sphere, where rich men claimed to speak for the entire populations (Squire, 2002). The ‘emancipator’ potential of the counter public sphere phenomena, it seems, is disparaged by the bourgeoisie public sphere (Crossley, *et al.*, 2004).

Related to the above criticism is the exclusionary nature of the White bourgeoisie public sphere which interferes with the promise of equality and consensus. Disparities in economic, social, cultural capital influence who can or cannot speak, and how such interactions are

undertaken (Dahlberg, 2007). Difference, in Habermas's public sphere is seen as a form of disruption in society. It disrupts, as it were, the aspects of rational argument and consensus—the main avenues for arriving at certain political agreements in a discourse. Thus, power disparities in the bourgeois public sphere are not fully investigated or critiqued by Habermas.

The third problem relates to the above, and that is, Habermas's failure to theorise difference as a critical component of achieving democracy. According to Dahlberg, difference is seen by Habermas "as a threat to social stability, to be overcome by rational deliberation aimed at consensus" (2007: 833) whereas rational communication is seen as an end product of rational communication. Rational discussion is idealised, ignoring "the extent to which its institutions were founded on sectionalism, exclusiveness and repression" (Eley, 1992: 321, in Crossley, *et al.*, 2004: 11). Consensus reached in Habermas's ideal public sphere is usually accompanied by an unending "process of coercion and exclusion" (Crossley, *et al.*, 2004: 11).

Dahlberg adds that:

Certainly, not all differences should be respected, specifically those that refuse to accept the existence of other differences and the pluralisation of lifestyles. However, this exception simply emphasizes that respect for difference—the maximising of space for the effective articulation and practice of cultural diversity—is at the very heart of democracy. (Dahlberg, 2007: 833)

The argument above is the one that this thesis advances. This is precisely because Zanu-Pf has tried to use the dominant public sphere to advance its dominant conceptualisations of national identity at the expense of alternative views which the 'marginalised' or subaltern groups try to advance. The latter point speaks to pluralism of lifestyles and democracy which Zanu-Pf seeks to stifle. For instance, homosexuality and a separate Ndebele state are some of the debates stifled in dominant public sphere controlled by Zanu-Pf.

Fourth, Habermas has been accused of elitism and cultural snobbery (see Dahlgren, 1995; Hartley, 1996; Thompson, 1995) for his anxious suggestion that the colonisation of the public sphere by commerce has led to the dumbing down of readers. According to Hall (1980) readers do not necessarily read media texts passively but actively or defiantly as well. Controversially, the market helps finance the media and this in a way keeps government from interfering with the media especially in those democracies where media are mostly private owned.

5.3 Digital Alternative Public Spheres

That the Zimbabwean public sphere faces structural and operational challenges in relation to the ideal Habermasian public sphere cannot be overstated. However, the media continue to play an important role in the “fledgling twin process of democracy and development” (Chuma, 2009: 40) in Zimbabwe. This justifies this academic research, more so when considering that the study seeks to interrogate identity construction in the mutating public sphere. Following the continued contestation of the democratic space, its gradual closure and emigration, the advent of new media has reshaped the Zimbabwean public sphere and identities. There has been a great need of “time—distance ‘defying’ media in this complex and dispersed contemporary society” (Dahlberg, 2009: 828). In such circumstances, the internet has become central as a tool for shrinking time and distance, and promoting democracy, especially in countries with ruling regimes that have annulled and curtailed freedoms of expression and assembly like Zimbabwe (Moyo, 2006). The internet has played host to the alternative diasporic digital public spheres like the *NewZimbabwe.com* website. The reasons why *NewZimbabwe.com* and other sites are alternative public spheres have already been given in the opening paragraphs of this chapter.

The need to theorise discursive construction of national identity using the alternative digital public sphere is a result of the realisation of a democratic struggle between the dominant and subordinate discourses. Dominant discourses by Zanu-Pf are promoted through the dominant public sphere in Zimbabwe in the form of public media. These dominant discourses struggle to achieve resonance with the subordinate discourses that have always been marginalised or even silenced in Zimbabwean politics. Therefore, consensus and deliberations in the Zimbabwean public sphere have been informed by the “asymmetrical power relations and a struggle for domination... [where] consensus is always at least partially a result of hegemony, a stabilisation of meaning aided by cultural domination and exclusion” (Dahlberg, 2007: 835).

The articulation of these disparate identities establishes what Dahlberg (2007) calls a counter-hegemonic front, which leads to an effective contestation and or opposition of dominant discourses. Counter, alternative or subaltern public spheres are those that stand opposite or as responses to the exclusive nature of the dominant public spheres. Subaltern public spheres in Zimbabwe like the *NewZimbabwe.com* website are characterised by the ventilation of,

debates and deliberation on “issues, identities, positions, etc., which have been excluded from, and thus stand in opposition to” the dominant public sphere (Dahlberg, 2007: 837). The counter- public spheres provide a safe haven for the articulation and nurturing of counter discourses as will be shown in the forthcoming chapters where discourses in both the dominant and alternative public spheres are analysed.

Dumisani Moyo’s (2006) research on the diasporic media and their mediation of the Zimbabwean crisis attests to the fact that the diasporic media have created alternative spaces, arenas, texts and mediums where marginalised groups negotiate identity debates. Moyo observes about the Zimbabwean situation:

Restricted democratic space has spawned a multiplicity of alternative public spheres that enable groups and individuals to continue to participate and engage in the wider debate on the mutating crisis gripping the country since the turn of the century...the diaspora are creatively exploiting new media to resist state propaganda churned out through the mainstream media. (2006: 81).

Most journalists that were hounded out of the country found themselves broadcasting and practising their profession from the diaspora through online media such as *NewZimbabwe.com*, *Zimdaily.com*, *Zimonline.co.za* and many others. Thus the internet has become an ironic fulfilment of the former Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo’s snide remark that private media should go and broadcast from the ‘sea’ as he was not going to grant any independent media licences to operate within Zimbabwe. These diasporic media vary in terms of news values, angles and coverage, and they variously contribute in the public sphere.

There are two types of alternative public spheres that will be central to this research. These are the subaltern public sphere and the transnational or diasporic public spheres. The subaltern public sphere has been poignantly advocated by Fraser (1990) who critiqued Habermas’s single exclusive public sphere as inadequate and misrepresentative of the communicative relations in society. Squires (2002: 446) further proposes three types of marginal public spheres which she calls “enclave, counter- public and satellite” for analysing subaltern public spheres. These are important for various reasons that will be highlighted below.

5.3.1 Subaltern public spheres

This section will interrogate the historical rise and meaning of subaltern public spheres. In the process, it questions whether the internet supports Habermas's (1989) unitary public sphere or Fraser's (1992) subaltern one. This section also looks at three kinds of marginal public spheres advanced by Squires (2002) and seeks to locate where *NewZimbabwe.com* belongs as an online subaltern public sphere. The concept of the public sphere in the phrase 'subaltern public sphere' is based on Habermas's conceptualisation while the term 'subaltern' and postcolonial theorisation are credited to Gramsci. Originally, the term 'subaltern' means inferior in rank (compared to the elite) and it was adopted by Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* to refer to those groups of people in society who were held subject to the hegemonic powers of the ruling elite. These classes included, among others, homosexuals, workers, peasants and women. Subalternity therefore is not only oppositional and or passive but is a force that creatively engages with the material world and dominant hegemonic forces.

Said, in a foreword to Spivak and Guha's book on subaltern studies asserts:

[t]he resonances of the word subaltern derive from Gramsci's usage in the *Prison Notebooks* in which ... he shows how wherever there is history, there is class, and that the essence of the historical is the long and extraordinarily varied social-cultural interplay between ruler and ruled, between the elite, dominant, or hegemonic class of the subaltern and, as Gramsci calls it, the emergent class of the much greater mass of people ruled by coercive or sometimes mainly ideological domination from above. (Said, 1988: vi).

Guha, Amin, Arnold, Chatterjee, Hardiman and Pandey were part of the Subaltern Studies group in Asia which produced five historiographical volumes of Subaltern Studies in South Asia (Ludden, 2002). These were a collection of essays that focused on politics, history, sociology and economic affairs of South Asia. The focus of the group was to try and create a balance or a departure from understanding society and social relations using the lenses of the elite. Through studying the 'subaltern,' subaltern studies like this research respond to gaps, silences and exclusions that are conspicuous in the dominant hegemonic discourses that decidedly exclude and suppress the subaltern or counter-hegemonic ones.

Related to that, South Asian scholars like Ludden (2001) and Chaturvedi (2000) were inspired to study the post colonial systems in South Asia and the rest of the developing world, so as "to look at historical approaches from below, focusing more on what happens among

the masses at the base levels of society among the elite” (Zhang, 2006: 42), in a context where previously, society was understood and seen from the elite perspective.

Subaltern studies, according to Zhang (2006) pay particular attention to political acts, rhetoric and discourses – the same issues that the public sphere pays attention to. Therefore, Fraser’s feminist approach to the Habermasian public sphere is influenced by Gramsci and subaltern studies where attention is called to the masses rather than the elite, “on the differences instead of the commons in the public sphere(s)” (Zhang, 2006: 43).

The feminist subaltern public sphere advocated by Fraser (1992) stands out as one of the strongest critiques of the Habermasian exclusive public sphere. The Zimbabwean subaltern public spheres like the one *NewZimbabwe.com* represent responses of ordinary people to the marginalisation they have experienced under Zanu-Pf. Those voices excluded from the dominant public sphere resist the Zanu-Pf hegemonic discourses and create counter-hegemonic discourses using these subaltern digital public spheres. Fraser (1992) questioned, among other things, the accessibility, universality and bracketing of social inequalities in the bourgeoisie public sphere. In challenging Habermas’s claim of accessibility and in an endeavour to argue for subalternity, Fraser states:

Women of all classes and ethnicities were excluded from official political participation on the basis of gender status, while plebeian men were formally excluded by property qualifications. Moreover, in many cases women and men of radicalised ethnicities of all classes were excluded on racial grounds. (Fraser 1992: 118)

What this historical fact exposes is that the bourgeoisie public sphere failed to deliver on the promise of unfettered access. Failure to deliver on the promise of equal access also rendered void the assertion that the bourgeoisie public sphere was an arena where interlocutors’ differences by birth or fortune were set aside or ‘bracketed’ so that they could speak to each other as if “they were social and economic peers” (Fraser, 1992: 118). This, Fraser and other post revisionists scholars argue, was not achieved as there was still a ‘bracketing’ of social structural inequalities.

This observation leads Fraser (1992: 122) to contend that in stratified societies characterised by binary relations of domination and subordination, “full parity of participation in public debate and deliberation” is not within realisation. Consequently, this leads her to ask what forms of institutional arrangements are able to approximate a situation whereby the subaltern

can also speak. She arrives at the conclusion that in order to achieve communication parity in society there is need for “arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of competing publics... [than] a single, comprehensive overarching public” sphere (Fraser, 1992: 122). A single, overarching and comprehensive public sphere is likely to promote and exacerbate disparities between the elite and the subaltern. Also it will birth exclusivity, domination of the subordinated groups and their extinction from the discursive arena as they would have no arenas for visibility and deliberation. In such a situation “they would be less likely than otherwise to ‘find the right voice or words to express their thoughts’ and more likely than otherwise to keep their thoughts inchoate” (Fraser, 1992: 123). These amorphous thoughts would easily lose their individuality and be absorbed into the powerful and yet false “we” that “reflects the more powerful” (ibid., 123).

The above, according to Fraser (1992: 123), gains support from the revisionist historiography of the public sphere. This historiography argues that “members of subordinated social groups—women, workers, peoples of colour, and gays and lesbians—have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics.” Fraser proposes to call these groups ‘subaltern counter-publics’ as they exhibit signals of contesting the dominant discourses and formulate “oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (1992: 123). Fraser (1992: 123) proceeds to highlight the US feminist subaltern counter public with its “variegated array of journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centres... conferences, conventions...” as a striking example of a subaltern counter- public.

Subaltern counter- public public spheres clearly depart from the operations of the bourgeoisie public sphere where people with common interests converge, away from the domination of the elite and speak in their voice, identify themselves and their needs in ways that are best suited for their material existence. Ultimately they aid in the expansion of the discursive space as they come out as a response to the exclusions experienced by the subaltern in the dominant public sphere.

This research argues that the multiplicity of public spheres in a country like Zimbabwe has merit as it helps those excluded from the dominant public sphere to participate in general debates. However, this should not be taken to mean that subaltern public spheres are virtuous as they might be used by powerful subaltern elements for selfish ends. Fraser’s (1992)

conceptualisation of the subaltern public sphere suits this research and applies to the *NewZimbabwe.com* website in many different ways. The website, as argued earlier, stands alternative to the dominant public media which serve the interests of Zanu-Pf. Added to that, subaltern public spheres in the Zimbabwean context help expand the discursive space while at the same time acknowledging the presence and activities of others. Also, subaltern public spheres, according to Fraser (1992: 124) have a dual character where they “function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment... [and] as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics”. This helps the marginalised groups in society to offset, and, as Fraser (1992) asserts, eradicate the unjust privileges enjoyed by the dominant groups in society. These marginalised groups need to have survival tactics in order to satisfy their constituency.

To circumvent dominant “social pressures, legal restrictions, and other challenges from dominant public and the state” (Squires, 2002: 457), subaltern public spheres usually adopt three basic forms of existence. These are enclave, counter- public and satellite (Squires, 2002). However, this typology is not rigid but helps in the understanding of different characteristics and responses of public spheres.

Some counter-hegemonic publics, due to the fact that they are denied self expression or entry into public spheres by dominant groups, are compelled to enclave themselves in an endeavour to hide their ideas, produce discourses from safe havens and “to survive or avoid sanctions, while internally producing lively debate and planning” (Squires, 2002: 448) in order to charter directions for various battles they might be engaging or planning on. A key defining feature of enclaved subaltern public spheres is “the utilisation of spaces and discourses that are hidden” from those in power and the state (Squires, 2002: 448). For instance, in the USA, Black Americans used these public spheres to respond to social segregation in America in the 1960s. In the Zimbabwean context, this might be possible through websites and emailing lists where people qualify to participate after fulfilling certain criteria. For instance, a website, *www.inkundla.net* which is dedicated to “conceptualising responses to perceived problems in Matabeleland and in the Ndebele diaspora, and to resourcing those” (Peel, 2009: 147) can only be accessed through a password or at times accessed through language, which Squires (2002) calls a hidden transcript. *Zvakwana* (Shona for ‘enough is enough’) is another underground organisation that came into being around 2004. *Zvakwana* clandestinely distributed resistance protest material in major cities of Zimbabwe and this comprised of

flyers, graffiti, musical CDs and condoms featuring their logo and protest messages. The hidden transcripts may be exposed either when the publics within the enclave decide to express publicly their enclaved ideas or when the “state or dominant publics reveals these clandestine discourses” (Squires, 2002: 458).

Whereas enclave publics are as a result of intense oppression, deliberate exclusion and domination, counter-publics are a response to a “decrease in oppression and or an increase in resources” (Squires, 2002: 460). This research locates the *NewZimbabwe.com* website under the counter-publics public sphere. The characteristics of the website are such that it has resources to operate from the diaspora and this translates to decreased levels of oppression and availability of resources (Squires, 2002). Counter-publics, unlike enclaves, reject “the performance of public transcripts and instead project the hidden transcripts,” previously reserved for the enclaves, to the dominant public (Squires, 2002: 460). In the Zimbabwean situation, online, diasporic and/or private media are counter-publics as they contest and perform ‘hidden transcripts’ in public. While both the enclave and counter-public public spheres are pitted against and at some point intercourse with the dominant publics, there is another public sphere, the satellite, which pursues a policy of separatism.

Satellite publics create deliberate separatism from wider publics. They are as a result of collectives that see no need to have a “regular discourse or interdependency with other publics” and, in the process, successfully create solid group identities and “independent institutions” (Squires, 2002: 463) only entering into conversation with other publics in times of controversy or friction affecting them (satellite) or when their interests converge with other publics. Otherwise satellite publics stay in their own exclusive orbits. The coloured community of Zimbabwean descent operate a counter-public sphere that may be considered satellite, and it caters for Zimbabwean Coloureds only (see Peel, 2009). This website, *www.goffal.com* was formed to keep the Coloureds from being marginalised and also to create their own community relevant both to the homeland and diasporic identity politics of Zimbabwe (Peel, 2009).

The three typologies outlined above may exist as public spheres located both in the homeland and in the diaspora depending on security afforded these in different locations. If any public discourse is situated both within and without the bounds of the homeland, it creates what is known as transnational or diasporic public spheres. In academic millieux, the term ‘diasporic

public spheres' is preferred, and this research will be no exception. The next section discusses this phenomenon of diasporic public spheres.

5.3.2 The Transnational/Diasporic Public Spheres

New media are part of key global developments that have brought new complications to how the exilic or diaspora manages, sustains, expands, and coalesces in the transnational/diasporic public sphere. One of the precarious definitional and operative challenges that this research confronts is the issue of studying reader comments in the diasporic website, *NewZimbabwe.com*, that are assumed to be generated from outside Zimbabwe. This research's use of 'diaspora' does not necessarily mean that it studies content that comes exclusively from the diasporic readers. This therefore calls for an inclusive definition of the diasporic public sphere. Laguerre provides one that befits this study when he opines about the diasporic public sphere thus:

...the diasporic public sphere is the political arena where the diaspora expresses its political views, discusses its project for the homeland and the diaspora, interacts with the hostland and homeland government officials and politicians, and reflects on its contribution to society.... This sphere... mingles audiences [from the diaspora with those in the homeland]. (Laguerre, 2005: 207-208)

This definition liberates this research from the Habermasian national-Westphalian frame which understands the public sphere as confined within the physical borders of the 'nation,' to one that understands the public sphere as being able to permeate physical borders. In other words, the above definition demonstrates that in the current transnationalised political constellation, it is possible to associate the concept of a valid and rational argument with a public sphere in which "the interlocutors do not constitute a political citizenry" (Fraser, 2005: 1). However, like others, this research remains embedded in the main tenets of the dialogical public sphere concept. The diasporic public spheres are not solely used by diasporic communities; there is an intercourse between the homeland and diaspora based members.

Diasporic public spheres are a response to the complex webs of a need to negotiate, among other factors, hybrid identities, inclusions and exclusions in the hostland and homeland communicative terrains (Bailey, *et al.*, 2007). In addition, they are important in the current globalised world for various reasons. Many scholars (see Fraser, 2005; Laguerre, 2005; Tanner, 2001) have theorised about transnational public sphere and argue that in as much as the diasporic communities are relevant in shaping the political landscapes of homeland

countries, the public spheres are equally central. For instance, in Haiti, the diaspora has been pivotal “in engineering coups d’état...” (Laguerre, 2005: 206) and this helps expose the strength of the diaspora in shaping the contours of homeland political cleavages. This research seeks to find out how the Zimbabwean diaspora used an online based website to discursively dispute dominant ideologies on national identity and, in the process, managed to discursively construct their own identities and memories.

Interestingly, Habermas (2006) seems not fully convinced that the internet is capable of being a public sphere. He argues that of course the internet has positively circumvented censorship from undemocratic regimes but it only serves to fragment audiences into “a huge number of isolated issue publics,” and that:

Within established national public spheres, the online debates of web users only promote political communication, when news groups crystallize around the focal points of the quality press, for example national newspapers and political magazines. (Habermas 2006, 422)

This has led to some scholars arguing that even though Habermas is the one who publicised the concept of the public sphere and is its father figure, it is not up to him to say where it fits in (see Geiger, 2009, Rheingold, 1992, 2009 and Rasmussen, n.d.)

Advocates who celebrate the internet as an emancipatory public sphere base their arguments on the fact that the internet casts off the constraints of materiality and physicality and, in the process, makes possible egalitarian liberalism (Geiger, 2009). In addition, the internet seems to facilitate a rebirth of the public sphere after atrophying for a long time since, within its networked infrastructure is the possibility of an inclusive public sphere (Poster, 1997). This research will conclude whether indeed the internet leads to fragmentation of publics and debates or not. Despite the envisaged positive aspects of online public spheres there still remain some challenges to the perceived achievement of, among other things, the inclusiveness, freedom and bracketing of identities that were fingered as problematic in the ideal public sphere Habermas conceptualised. This is discussed in detail in the next section.

5.3.3 A critique of the Digital Public Spheres

The most obvious critique of the digital public spheres and their democratizing potential is predicated on the access of technologies that make digital interaction possible; both hardware

and software. In addition, one requires education, information and techno-know-how to make use of this technology, and, “importantly, the sense of entitlement... to produce public written statements and to take up social space” (Travers, 2003: 224). The issue of exclusion conspicuously affects especially those in the homeland where hardware, software and connectivity are costly, as is the case with Zimbabwe. Sikka (2006) further contends that the new technologies, much as they extend the public sphere and offer many options, are commercially affected and this creates some limitations to who has a voice, power and control in the cyber-public sphere. ICTs bring with them:

Layers of political inequalities assuming that: there are barriers between social classes; the world is hierarchically structured; the good things are distributed unequally: women and men have different kinds of competence; and one’s life is open to continual inspection. (Winner in Sikka, 2006: 91)

This is not germane to the Zimbabwean context but it is worth highlighting for comparative purposes. ICTs seem, therefore, to perpetuate the existing patterns of inequality and domination. For instance, Travers (2003) argues that men dominate any discussion in cyberspace in as much as they did in the Habermasian public sphere. Even though things are changing now, it might be possible that this domination continues to lead to women experiencing online public spheres as “hostile or unwelcoming or irrelevant because topics of interest to women are either non-existent or fail to survive” (Travers, 2003: 224).

Related to the above is the argument that the language of technology is masculine. Literature on gender and technology reveals that psychological and socio-cultural aspects of access are integral to understanding the masculinity of technology (Wajcman, 1996; Travers, 2003). Therefore computer culture has to be understood as discriminating feminine culture and defacto elite and male domain (Norris, 2001). As Zizi Papacharissi (2002) argues, “online technologies are only accessible to, and used by, a small fraction of the population that contributes to an electronic public sphere that is exclusive, elitist, and far from ideal” (2002: 383). The ways these ICTs are introduced in workplaces or classrooms reinforces the current stratifications of their gendered use. Computers are seen as an instrument for proficiency and part of the male domain. Travers (2003) adds that even most hackers are males. Thus, males have an obsession to control and use technological gadgets more than women.

One advantageous characteristic of the digital public sphere is safety, especially for enclaved publics. If not enclaved, the use of pseudonyms provides equal security for contributors. However, this proves problematic since, contrary to the democratising nature of anonymity, gender remains conspicuous since usernames or user-ids reveal people's genders (Travers, 2003) and gender associated behaviours are conspicuous in online deliberations (O'Brien, 1999).

The internet has been criticised for being "chaotic, misleading, fragmented and includes a range of opinions and superstitions which no commercial publisher would ever consider dignifying in print" (Green, 2010: 122). This has led to Papacharissi (2009, 2004, 2002) and Greg Goldberg (2011) arguing that the internet contributes in the building of public spaces and not a public sphere. The above implies that it creates space for irrational discourse, gossip, slander, tragicomedy motivated by greed, backstage manoeuvres and betrayals (Castells, 1996, 2000). But then, is not irrational discourse to be permitted in the name of inclusivity and democracy in public spheres? A critical discourse analysis and engagement with *NewZimbabwe.com* stories in the next chapters will show the kinds of discourses that obtain in digital public spheres.

5.4 Conclusion

Most scholars agree with Habermas concerning the centrality of spheres for critical debate as a way of creating stronger democracies. Yet there are some who are critical of his specific conceptualisation of the ideal public sphere. Some theorists have argued that due to technological advancements and global flows of humans, money, technology and politics, the public sphere has been transformed. We now speak of diasporic and transnational public spheres. This chapter has attempted to theorise, first the Habermasian public sphere and later the transnational or diasporic alternative public spheres and show that even though they are not physical places in any locality, they seem to be very much part of the countries' public spheres. The chapter has highlighted the main characteristics of the Habermasian public sphere, its crucial gaps and conceptual problems that have been highlighted by critics and tried to transpose these to the cyberspace. This transposition has led to the chapter looking at how the internet has played crucial roles in the public spheres of both developed and developing countries like the USA, Eritrea and Haiti. These trends theoretically mean that there is a possibility of the internet playing an integral role in identity debates in Zimbabwe. However, this research, in an endeavour to investigate how the internet does this, remains

alive to sensitivities towards the broader concept of the digital divide, the political economy of exclusion and inclusion. The research seeks to find out if *NewZimbabwe.com*, as a public sphere where political issues and identity debates take place, may clearly show reconfigurations of what it means to be a Zimbabwean or in Zimbabwe. After discussing the digital, diasporic, alternative and transnational aspects of the new public sphere, the chapter looked at different categorisations of the public sphere into enclave, counter-public and satellite. Theorising these has made it possible to suggest where *NewZimbabwe.com* may be situated. This helps in problematising its relevance and effects as a platform where identities are discussed. The next chapter explores the methodological framework of this thesis which ties and works in tandem with *Chapters 3, 4* and the current one. *Chapter 6* looks specifically at those data collection and analysis methods and tools that are relevant to this thesis

Chapter 6: Methodology and Research Design

6.1 Introduction

The overarching attempt in this study is to understand how audiences have utilised *NewZimbabwe.com* as an alternative public sphere to construct identities that challenge those of Zanu-Pf. This is achieved by researching firstly, how Zanu-Pf has constructed its ideal national identity mediated through the public media, here represented by *The Herald* and how *NewZimbabwe.com* has been used by Zimbabweans to contest and construct new versions of the nation. In order to answer the three main research questions, this work analyses texts from the two ‘mediums’ i.e. *The Herald*, Mugabe’s graveside speeches and *NewZimbabwe.com*. In the former, editorial content such as news stories, opinion pieces and editorial comments are analysed while in the latter not only news pieces, opinion articles or editorial comments are analysed but a further step is taken to include reader comments that appear under most articles published by the website. The reason for this is simply that *The Herald* is largely the mouth piece of Zanu-Pf and it does not publish dissenting views while *NewZimbabwe.com* hosts views of different hues – be they pro or anti-Zanu-Pf. To fully engage with the use of these different media in the construction of national identity, a qualitative study is central as it will assist in the understanding of the intervention of new media in a society like Zimbabwe. The data from *The Herald* is taken from 2000-2011 while the data from *NewZimbabwe.com* is from 2003-2011. This is informed by the fact that by 2000 the Zimbabwe crisis escalated into international importance and while *NewZimbabwe.com* was only established in 2003 *The Herald* was already in existence. The years 2000-2011 cover most of the crisis period which help contextualise most of the contestations on national identity. Before proceeding further, it is important here to justify a qualitative approach in this dissertation.

Qualitative research is more interpretative, dealing more with words rather than numbers as is the case in quantitative research. Compared to quantitative research, qualitative research allows for participant and researcher engagement. Thus its “privileging of subjectivity is [...] seen in the way that the interpretation of the data is influenced by the researcher’s own biography together with their involvement with people in the study” (Daymon and Holloway, 2002: 6). Further, the fact that this work deals with two case studies is meant to allow for a holistic focus on issues pertinent to discursive construction of identity using new media. This

focus allows for the direction of attention to a multiplicity of interconnected behaviours, values and experiences of people depending upon the political, social and economic situations (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). Another strong aspect of qualitative research is its inductive than deductive reasoning. This, according to Daymon and Holloway (2002: 21) works in such a way that “you first get ideas from collecting and analysing the data (that is, you move inductively from specific data to more general patterns and commonalities). You then test these ideas out by relating them to the literature and to your further data collection and analysis (deduction).” This method helps people “make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language, sound, imagery, personal style and social rituals” (Deacon *et al.* 1999: 6). This does not mean the method has no criticisms. It has been criticised for being too subjective, non-replicable and generalisable, and largely lacks transparency since it is not always clear how researchers select samples, collect data and analyse them (Bryman, 2001; Daymon and Holloway, 2002). Be that as it may, the “qualitative turn” in the words of Jensen (1991: 1) has provided for what Carey calls “a process of making large claims from small matters: studying particular rituals... conversations... and myths and gingerly reaching out to the full relations within a culture or a total way of life” (Carey, 1989: 49). The distinction between the two strands is a methodological one. A researcher chooses a methodology that best help answer research questions.

Qualitative research is useful in the discovery of how social meaning and social realities are constructed. Here researchers attempt to get a deeper understanding and meaning of the social world. This method is also anchored on the relationship between the researcher and the topic under scrutiny. Qualitative research on the other hand measures and analyses the causal relationships between different sets of variables. These two differ in their analysis, questioning, data collection methods, data produced, flexibility of design etc. Quantitative research usually produces results that are objective and therefore can easily be trusted while in qualitative research comes with a lot of scepticism. However this could be overcome through such issues as prolonged observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, coherence in the research processes, and confirmability of the research results. The qualitative method is chosen for this thesis to accomplish the overall intentions of this work and answer the research questions posed in *Chapter 1*. This approach has helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of meanings people attach to national identity. Also,

the use of qualitative research in thesis has helped answer the why question which most of the quantitative research approaches fail to answer.

The non-dialogic manner of *The Herald's* presentation of Zanu-Pf's constructions of the nation when contrasted with the dialogic characteristics of debates in *NewZimbabwe.com* shows that the Zanu-Pf conceptualisations of a nation are synonymous with the party's dictatorial, narrow and rigid approach to issues of democracy and identity. With that in mind, this chapter outlines this dissertation's research design and route. It starts with some methodological thoughts on researching new media and identity. Then it looks at the research design and procedure anchored primarily in case study strategy. Data from *The Herald* are subjected to thematic content analysis while data from *NewZimbabwe.com* are analysed using critical discourse analysis. The chapter concludes by discussing these data analysis procedures and some considerations on researching transnational online media especially where the names, sex, age and location of interlocutors cannot easily be ascertained by the researcher.

It is important that I highlight and reflect on the baggage that I bring into this research because of my situatedness and context as a researcher. Vygotsky (1962) suggests that a researcher's situatedness is shaped by the agent (researcher), situation (circumstances and the researcher's role within them) and context (where, when and background). This is largely informed by my ethnicity, nationality, location and class. My ethnicity as a Ndebele from the southern part of Zimbabwe influenced my appreciation of some of the issues under consideration in this thesis. Added to that is being a victim of the Gukurahundi genocide which has largely influenced most political debates in the country. It is possible that sometimes when I look at the Zimbabwe national identity question I view it from the perspective of the excluded and marginalised Ndebele nation. In addition, the Ndebele identity is not only ethnic in Zimbabwean politics; it is also a political identity and this has largely informed my interaction with the debates on ethnicity, genocide and the diaspora. During the genocide, as a young boy, the Fifth Brigade came to our Bankwe rural village in the borders of Filabusi and Mberengwa. Everytime I asked my great-grandmother about the episode (she died in 2011) she cried and did not usually finish narrating the events. The little she told was revealing. According to her, one day the Fifth Brigade assembled the whole village, asked our parents, grandparents and greatgrandparents to strip naked and lie down on the ground while the teenage boys (my uncles and other boys from the village) beat them up.

Some were executed at close range. Young children were made to watch this traumatic event. I was around four years old. One of my grand fathers (extended family) who fought against the colonial regime under Zipra fled the country never to return to Zimbabwe and currently lives in Botswana. He did not even claim his war veteran's grant. This experience, its effects and writing about them brings some form of closure and rehabilitation to me as a Ndebele, researcher and scholar especially considering that there has been more than three decades of silence since the genocide. Also writing from the diaspora and looking at the ideals of the liberation struggle espoused by most nationalists being plundered by Zanu-Pf brings a sense of sadness and hopelessness expressed by those who have left the homeland for the diaspora out of desperation. Having worked as a journalist for a newspaper called *Weekly Times* which was closed by the government under AIPPA also informs the history I bring into this research. On ordering the paper to be closed the Media and Information Chairman (MIC) labelled us a bunch of tribalists for writing among other things, under-development in Matabeleland and the Gukurahundi genocide. I deem this suffocation of debate as antithetical to democracy, transparency and development. Therefore my understanding of Zimbabwe is shaped and influenced by these multiple perspectives. Some of the themes for this research like ethnicity and land reform were pre-selected after a cursory look at the character of the Zimbabwe 'crisis' since it acquired international relevance. The rest came inductively after the researcher immersed himself in the data.

6.2 Digital Ethnography: issues and some methodological considerations

Since this study ventures into the fairly new territory of digital ethnography, it is important to highlight key epistemological issues that have been raised by other scholars who have provided germinal research in this area like Kozinets (2010) Hine (2000 and 2005) and Jones (1999). Hine (2005) argues that the emergence of the internet "has posed a significant challenge for our understanding of research methods" (2005: 1). These challenges may also be mirrored in the fact that ethnography online has many characteristics and it seems there is no one agreed way of carrying out ethnographic research. Hence various scholars have used different names such as 'virtual ethnography', (Hine, 2000) 'network ethnography' and 'cyber ethnography' (Howard, 2002), 'netnography' (Kozinets, 2002), 'digital ethnography' (Coover, 2004) to describe this phenomenon of ethnographic research based on digital technologies. This research adopts 'traditional' research methods and attempts to suit these to

the new context of digital media. Ethnography, strictly speaking, has been a geographic based project “traditionally involving practices of dwelling in physical locations, mapping and understanding practices within these locations and retreating to other spaces to write research reports” (Leander and McKim, 2003: 213). Hence ethnography is defined as “a... method or set of methods [which has] the ethnographer participating overtly or covertly in people’s daily lives for an extend period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions—in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of research” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 1). When the ethnographic field and locale of the research site moves into the virtual realm of the Internet and the ethnographer-subject contact becomes mediated by a monitor, then a number of aspects that pertain to research methodology and analysis shift to incorporate the peculiarities of the non-place based ethnography (Hine, 2008; Murthy, 2008; Poynter, 2010; Garcia, *et al.*, 2009). A balanced combination of physical and digital ethnography may possibly be in clearly demarcated fields unlike this research where the location of the discussants, identity, gender and class are difficult to stratify. In addition, the argument in this research is that the territorial integrity of space/place or the nation has not been affected by the advent of the internet. If anything, the internet, where online Zimbabwean communities have been formed, has helped solidify a sense of the nation — nationalism and national identity.

Mainstream ethnographic research has tended to sideline, ignore or just acknowledge digital ethnography without elevating it to the place it deserves (Murthy, 2008). According to Murthy (2008), scholars like Neuman (2006), O’Reilly (2005), Flick (2006), and Crang and Cook (2007) have largely ignored, advised against or skirted internet research. This trend of sidestepping computer mediated communication (CMC) research does not serve the field of ethnographic research positively as virtually more and more human interactions are now routinely conducted electronically; either on the phone or online. Ignoring this fact would be at best denying the pervasiveness of CMC and ICTs in society where even those who do not use them are affected by that lack of usage. What CMCs frontier-breaking research needs is to do away with laudatory treatment of new media and rigorously engage these on the critical aspects.

Most research available has been done on listservs (Dahlberg, 2000) or chatroom conversations (Sheyholislami, 2008) and e-mails (Peel, 2010). These have caused ethical dilemmas especially when these public spheres are enclaved ones where people gain access

through a password or creation of a profile. Here, researchers need to notify participants, get clearance to research and even have consent forms signed. For instance an ethical dilemma researchers might face may be noticed in Peel's (2009: 124) research where he publishes interaction from one website together with the discussants' email addresses. Besides, online ethnography has been criticised for its lack of interaction with human subjects. This has led to suggestions that researchers need not be lurking in the 'field' but should become participant observers or 'experiencers' in a particular culture they are researching. In addition, suggestions of incorporating offline ethnography into the online one have been proffered. This has a likelihood of offering a stronger methodological triangulation and analysis.

6.2.1 Digital ethnography in *NewZimbabwe.com*: a covert affair

The researcher engaged with *NewZimbabwe.com* from 2004 when he was working as an intern (information officer) at a Harare-based NGO. Internet access was available throughout the day and unrestricted. This was different from other places like universities where it was usually free but slow or offline some times. While on internship, the site became a credible news source for the researcher as was the case with other people both inside and outside Zimbabwe. That time, there was no intention of researching or studying the website. When this project was conceptualised in 2010, the researcher decided to monitor the website regularly for academic purposes.

Researching this phenomenon of new media requires alteration of traditional research methods so as to accommodate social changes (Garcia *et al.*, 2009). In addition, there is a small group of ethnographers who offer guidance on this new field of research (Garcia *et al.*, 2009; and Hine, 2008, 2005 and 2000; Kozinets, 2009). The digital ethnographic engagement and research that the researcher undertook in *NewZimbabwe.com* was non-participatory observation. This entailed the researcher collecting archival material through lurking on the website between 2003 and 2011. This meant that the researcher did not establish online relationships that culminated in offline ones with the journalists, columnists, bloggers and discussants of stories on the website. The only people who were aware of this were the editor, Mduduzi Mathuthu and his brother Mthulisi Mathuthu whom the researcher sent a set of interview questions about the website and its contribution to debates on national identity in Zimbabwe.

There are many reasons that justify the maintenance of an ‘offline’ lurking relationship with the website and its community. Some social phenomena, argue Garcia et al. (2009: 56) may “justify limiting the field to online phenomena”. Thus there is need for researchers to engage with online subjects offline so as to solidify their observations and get explanations and clarity on the issues they are researching. This is especially relevant to ethnographers who are ‘outsiders’ who might be engaging with a phenomenon solely for the purposes of research. Being a passive, lurking observer in a digital ethnographic research environment in a research like this one offers advantages because it is uniquely unobtrusive. This is both a source of attraction and contention (Kozinets, 2002) especially when the act of lurking and its implications on those studied are considered. However, researching *NewZimbabwe.com* may be equated with analysing newspaper editorials since newspapers are public goods where, rarely, researchers need permission to analyse stories or reader contributions, that is, letters to the editor from either the readers or newspaper publishers. Letters to the editor may be equated to reader comments in this research and website, *NewZimbabwe.com*.

In this research, the researcher, with his knowledge of Zimbabwean politics, history and identity debates is better placed to understand discourses and narratives that ventilated the website and will therefore not need an offline engagement which will offer an intertext. In addition, sometimes researchers need to identify themselves and even change their subjects’ names for protection purposes. In *NewZimbabwe.com*, most contributors, especially under reader comments do not use their real names but opt for pseudonyms so that they may not be traced, especially by state agents or political foes. In addition, there is no need for the researcher to identify himself because the website is open to the public; it is not an enclave public sphere. The feared state security agents allegedly have access to the site and the discussants seem aware of this hence pseudonyms are used to camouflage their real identities.

It can be argued that where there is no follow up offline ethnography the veracity of discussions may be questionable especially in an environment where pseudonyms are used and there is no accountability. Again, the researcher’s knowledge of the Zimbabwean environment will help reduce puzzlement in ascertaining the veracity of the discourses be they official, counter-hegemonic or underground, hence there is no great need for offline engagements for clarity. Another hindrance to offline engagements, besides lack of discussants’ contact details, real names and location is the fact that Zimbabweans

contributing to the website are based in the homeland and diaspora which makes it impossible or very expensive to trace them. All this however, does not harm the integrity of this research.

This study therefore seeks to suggest that ICTs and CMC should not be viewed as purely autonomous causal actors “proceeding as if they acted on social life from above” (Dahlberg, 2000: 108) but must be seen as part of the socio-political and cultural realities in life, societally shaped and shaping society. Hine’s (2000) argument that technologies mean different things to different people is instructive as it deviates from a techno-deterministic approach of seeing technology as influencing society. She further argues that ICTs are both culture and cultural artefacts and “to concentrate on either aspect to the exclusion of the other leads to an impoverished view” (Hine, 2000: 64). ICTs therefore are important in researching and understanding society in that they allow for the use of traditional methods in the understanding of virtual worlds.

6.3 Research Design and Procedure

As already indicated above, this is a qualitative research. The study includes analysing archival material from *The Herald* newspaper and *NewZimbabwe.com* between 2000 and 2011 and 2004-2011 respectively. The researcher’s role is that of a dormant participant observer, one whose identity is not known and does not influence the activities that obtain in *NewZimbabwe.com*. For instance, in doing research on the interactions, debates and contestations of national identity and democracy, the journalists, editor, columnists and the readers who comment on stories and columns are not aware of the research going on. Simply put, meaningful actions are studied in their natural settings without researcher influence as is the case in some ethnographic or non-participant observer researches. Qualitative research is descriptive rather than experiential, contextual and purposive so as to understand human experiences.

6.3.1 The Case Study Approach

Over the years, there has been a steady growth in the body of literature on and research that uses the case studies method (Duff, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2007; Gillham, 2000; Hancock and Algozzine, 2006; Meyer, 2001; Peel 2009; Yin, 2009; 1993; 1989; Zaina,

2007). However, what remains peculiar is that as much as the case study method is used in various disciplines like business (Hak and Dul, 2008), education (Bassey, 1999), linguistics (Duff, 2008), media and identity (Peel, 2009) there seems to be disagreements as to what a case study is (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 quoted in Meyer, 2001: 329). This definitional crisis, however, does not mean there have not been any attempts to define what a case study is. For purposes of this study, a few definitions of a case study are considered.

Firstly, the well-known proponent of the case study technique, Robert Yin defines case study as an empirical inquiry that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2003: 13). Similarly, Dul and Hak define case study as “a study in which (a) one case (single case study) or a small number of cases (comparative case study) in their real life context are selected, and (b) scores obtained from these cases are analysed in a qualitative manner” (2008: 4). Stake (1995: xi) sees a case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.” Last, Daymon and Holloway (2002: 105) define case study as “an intensive examination... of a single entity which is bounded by time and place. The case may be an organisation, a set of people... community, an event, a process....”

Case studies are therefore quintessential in that they seek to holistically understand cultural systems of action in situ, that is, the interrelated activities engaged in by social actors in a social situation. The case study used in this research is a comparative multiple case study which is largely exploratory and descriptive even though with some explanatory characteristics. This is so because much as the main aim of this research is to explore how new media in the form of *NewZimbabwe.com* have been useful in contesting and constructing Zimbabwean national identity, there is need to show, through another case, how the hitherto enduring Zanu-Pf constructions of the nation have been done through an auxiliary case study – *The Herald*.

A case study like this one satisfies three important tenets of qualitative research. These are: describing, understanding and explaining (Tellis, 1997). In this research, what is taking place will be described. A historical or intertextual location of certain discourses will help in the understanding of discursive themes people engage in. Finally, the research will offer an explanation of issues. Intertextuality in this instance is important because:

Case studies are multi-perspectival analyses. This means that the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of the actors, but also of the relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them. This one aspect is a salient point in the characteristic that case studies possess. They give a voice to the powerless and voiceless. When sociological studies present many studies of the homeless and powerless, they do so from the viewpoint of the "elite". (Tellis, 1997: online)

As discussed earlier, the *NewZimbabwe.com* website usually covers Zimbabwean news from the diaspora. This does not mean 'voice' is given only to the readers based in the diaspora as there are people in Zimbabwe who access and debate issues on the website. In contesting national identity and democracy, the website and the readers always refer, intertextually, to those actions, pronouncements and announcements that are made by government officials in public media like *The Herald*. The website sometimes copies, with due acknowledgement, stories from *The Herald*.

Case studies have been found to demonstrate characteristic strengths and limitations. The case study approach has been criticised for its tendency "to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions, so that the study therefore becomes of doubtful scientific value" (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 234). Cases studies, critics suggest, "often lack academic rigour and are, as such, regarded as inferior to more rigorous methods where there are more specific guidelines of collecting and analysing data" (Meyer, 2001: 348). There are many reasons for such criticism. Some reasons may be that there is disagreement among researchers on the definition of a case study, reasons for carrying such a research and whether they are design or data collection procedure or research strategy (Meyer, 2001). In addition, Meyer (2001) claims that the purpose for carrying out a case study remains unclear as some scholars believe case studies are meant to be used as supplements to 'other' rigorous studies to be carried out in the early stages of a research or they can be 'stand-alone' strategies. Yin (2003: xiii) adds that the case study has been labelled "a weak sibling among social science methods". Case studies are said to take long and result in voluminous amounts of documents which are difficult to decode or help come up with a good theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). Moreover, case studies have been criticised for their failure to be generalised to other cases, when compared to quantitative methods for example. In an article 'Qualitative data as an attractive nuisance' Matthew Miles (1979) criticises qualitative research (including case study) as "primitive, and unmanageable... less well formulated within-site analysis" (1979: 597-599).

Weaknesses in the case study approach can be overcome, resulting in some strong aspects of the case study strategy. In this instance, the fact that this is a contrasting case study means

that the research not only seeks to understand one particular phenomenon but tries to bring a holistic understanding of media's intervention in national identity construction in Zimbabwe using public and private media. Flyvbjerg (2006) claims that Campbell (2009), Ragin (1992), Geertz (1995) and Flyvbjerg (1998, 2001) "who have conducted intensive, in-depth case studies typically report that their preconceived views, assumptions, concepts... were wrong and that the case material has compelled them to revise their hypothesis on essential points" (2006: 235). Case studies are useful in contextually and naturally examining data. They describe and help explain complexities of real life than most quantitative approaches. Yin (2003) argues that the criticism that case studies cannot be generalised into theory is faulty. He argues that "[T]he problem lies in the very notion of generalisation to other case studies. Instead, an analysis should try to generalise findings 'to' theory analogous to the way a scientist generalises from experimental results to theory" (2003: 38). Duff (2008) says that the voluminous and inaccessibility of the information in a case study report may be overcome when the case study is done well. Once that is done, it makes it readable and leads to analysing phenomena in completeness and depth.

6.3.2 The cases

The discursive constructions of national identity in *The Herald* (2000-2011) and *NewZimbabwe.com* (2003-2011) form the cases in this research work. Reasons for using these two case studies are given elsewhere and there is no need to rehash them here. In addition, the cases are broken down into themes for ease of analysis. This is outlined below. The use of these contrasting cases is informed by Vaughan's (1982: 181) sentiment that they "maximise differences in the contexts of similar phenomenon, so that what is common appears more clearly and its relevance to different contexts, its generalisabilities, can become clear" (quoted in Moyo, 2005: 95). Both cases are instrumental. Instrumental case studies help assess how identities are conceptualised by Zanu-Pf and contested by ordinary people through *NewZimbabwe.com*. Instrumental case studies, according to Stake (1995) deal with a general understanding and gaining of insight into a particular case narrative. Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack conclude that instrumental case study:

Is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, and because it helps the researcher pursue the external interest. The case may or may not be seen as typical of other cases (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 549; see also Stake, 1995).

As instrumental case studies, *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* assist this research to understand how identities are constructed and contested by different players in Zimbabwean politics. Use of themes allows for indepth and contextualised scrutiny of issues.

6.4 Data collection methods

In order to understand how the issues of national identity and democracy on and about Zimbabwe are contested in online media, this study will employ a number of research methods to collect, analyse and interpret the findings. Data collection methods that will be used are quota sampling, qualitative interviews, document analysis and secondary literature. The data collected will be qualitatively interpreted using thematic analysis, which intimately relates to the critical discourse analysis design. Triangulating these methods will not only result in a stronger research design, but more valid and reliable findings in the research. Moreover, inadequacies of individual research methods are eliminated as they will be catered for by the strengths of others.

6.4.1 Judgemental sampling

Generally speaking, sampling is a form of data gathering whereby researchers do not make a direct observation of every individual element in the population under research but use a subset of individuals — a sample — and the results therefrom are used to make inferences to the whole population. In both case studies, this research uses non-probability sampling technique. The goal remains the same: “gaining rich, in-depth information” (Daymon and Holloway, 2002: 159). This is precisely due to the fact that it is not easy to categorise, in terms of dates, any pattern within which certain stories that relate to issues of heroes’ burials, national identity or ethnicity and democracy fall in the two news media selected for this research. There are issues that are of interest to this research that happen and are covered maybe thrice in one month and the next month issues raised may not be relevant. For instance, the elections take place usually within two or one day in a given election month. That month will have a lot of discussions on the way elections and even the campaign messages and promises are carried out in the media. In support of the use of non-probability sampling instead of a probabilistic one, Daymon and Holloway (2002) argue that qualitative researches are mostly “purposeful based on the purpose of the investigation” (2002: 157).

Given this scenario, it is therefore plausible to employ the judgemental sampling technique. This technique is called purposive or relevance sampling technique (Krippendorff, 2004) and it is a “type of convenience sampling which the researcher selects the sample based on his or her judgement,” (Friker, 2008: 200). Krippendorff further asserts that “relevance sampling... aims at selecting all textual units that contribute to answering given research questions... [since] the resulting sample is defined by the analytical problem at hand” (2004: 119). This technique can also be used “in even less structured ways without the application of any random sampling,” (Friker, 2008: 200).

The articles from both publications were selected from online data bases. For *The Herald* newspaper, the researcher subscribed to the website www.iafrica.com which carries news archives from most African newspapers, *The Herald* included. The subscription for 30 days cost US\$25. After that, keyword searches were used so that the targeted stories could pop up. These were then copied and pasted on word and saved in a file that contained that particular theme of stories. For instance, where the targeted theme is national heroes, heroes’ acre, the researcher typed “heroes’ acre”, “hero burial”, and “heroes’ day”, “nationalism,” “Gukurahundi” in the search box. This search box also allows for a delimitation of a certain time frame. For *The Herald* it was 1 January 2000—31 December 2011. This helped in researching and finding stories from the archives of the website. The same technique was used to harvest stories from *NewZimbabwe.com*. However, this differed from *The Herald* scenario since there is no need to subscribe to the latter. For one to get past stories from this website, they have to make use of a search option where key words are inserted – for example, words like “land,” “holidays,” “Heroes’ Acre,” “nationalism,” “Gukurahundi,” “homosexuality” and others. This had hits relevant to this research. A further step was taken in *NewZimbabwe.com* where the main project was to analyse reader comments. Stories have various numbers of reader comments and these were read and analysed to see which theme they fell under. It was possible that under a story about “heroes” one could comment and give a link to the issue of the Gukurahundi genocide. Therefore selected stories and comments were classified as to which theme they fully satisfied.

6.4.2 Interviews.

Interviewing is one of the methods that guarantee adequate information at the lowest possible cost. It involves a researcher asking questions and the respondents providing answers. Interviews vary from face-to-face, telephonic, e-mail and structured or semi-structured. I interviewed the editor of *NewZimbabwe.com* through email. O'Connor et al. (2008) call this type of interviewing 'asynchronous' because it does not take place in real time. The format of an asynchronous email interview is that the researcher, after getting the email addresses and consent for participation from the editor, "sends out an email which contains the interview questions," (O'Connor et. al. 2008: 272). This type of interview takes place over a long period of time. O'Connor et al. (2008) advise that bulky questions be sent in batches so that they do not overwhelm the participants. However, sometimes it depends on the length and number of questions. In some cases, they can be sent at once. This method is advantageous in that it is the simplest mode of online interviewing especially at a time when people are becoming increasingly techno-competent. In addition, participants may respond to the questions "entirely at their own convenience" (O'Connor *et al.*, 2008: 273) making the fast-paced exchange of communication needless.

However, asynchronous mode of interviewing has disadvantages. For instance, lack of spontaneity allows the respondent to rework and re-edit their responses thereby producing what they think is a socially desirable response. This impacts on the richness of data gathered. Probing further is difficult in these situations. The questions sent to the editor will fill in the gaps that may not be filled when analysing reader comments and where there is a need to understand the operations of the website further. As for *The Herald*, a lot of literature on its operations exists and that being the case, it was not necessary to engage the editorial staff.

6.4.3 Document Analysis

There are some documents that are important for this research. Some are official while others cannot be verified. Document analysis includes the analysis and engagement with speeches, policy and legal documents. Notable documents used to engage with the issues of national identity in Zimbabwe in this research are the alleged 1979 Zanu-Pf Grand Plan document, Jonathan Moyo's Gukurahundi Draft Bill, and Welshman Mabhena's 2007 letter to the British Ambassador in Harare.

Added to that, Paul Atkinson and Amanda Coffey argue that “documents do not stand alone. They do not construct ... reality as individual, separate activities. Documents refer – however tangentially or at once removed – to other realities or domains. They also refer to other documents...” (Atkinson, *et al.*, 2004: 66-67). Thus they are intertextual as they can be read together with others that are not necessarily mentioned, in a particular article, for example. These relationships make some documents or texts that might appear in, for example, *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com* meaningful.

6.5 Data interpretation methods

6.5.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

In this thesis, it is appropriate and useful to employ the critical discourse approach to deconstruct the discursive constructions of national identity mediated through the media. What is fundamental here is the understanding that textual meanings are not monolithic; they are multidimensional, complex and slippery. However, the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA hereafter) is important as it engages with texts based on their socio-cultural and political circumstances and production. This will be addressed later. But the main issues to be addressed are the understanding of what CDA is and how it contributes to this study.

CDA emerged around the late 1980s as part of the “programmatic development in European discourse studies” with its main proponents being Fairclough, Wodak and van Dijk among others. According to Henry Widdowson (1995: 157), one of the critics of CDA, discourse “is a contentious area of inquiry” which is riddled with a “good deal of conceptual confusion”; a criticism later dismissed by Norman Fairclough as “superficial” (1996: 53). CDA concerns itself with the relationship between language and the social context within which it is used. Theo van Leeuwen says “Critical discourse analysis is, or should be, concerned ... with discourse as an instrument of power and control as well as with discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality” (1993: 193). According to Fairclough, CDA is defined as:

discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (Fairclough, 1993: 135).

For van Dijk, CDA is a study “of the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2001: 352). Another perspective that aptly captures CDA is provided by Allan Luke (2002: 103) who sees this approach as involving “a principled shunting back and forth between analyses of the text and the social, between cultural sign and institutional formation, between semiotic/discourse analysis and the analysis of local institutional sites, between the normative reading of texts and the normative reading of the social world.” Thus, CDA emphasises “the way the versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds, are produced in discourse” (Potter, 2004: 202). It does so by attempting to make transparent those issues that link discourse practices and social practices, and social structures, connections that might be opaque to the layperson (Sheyholislami, 2008). Sheyholislami (2008) further observes that CDA is a type of analysis that “takes the view that discourse is a social practice... simultaneously constitutive of and constituted by social structures, relations and identities, and it is ideological” (2008: 133). One critical area that relates to this thesis addressed by CDA is the discursive formation of national identity through the media. There are already research efforts by other scholars regarding CDA’s contribution to understanding the discursive constructions of national identity through the media (Billig, 1995; Makombe, 2005; Sheyholislami, 2008; Wodak *et al.*, 1999).

6.5.2 CDA approach to media and identity

If the versions of the world, society and power relations therein are produced and carried through discourse, then the media play an influential role in the discursive constructions of national identity. Chouliaraki (1999: 38) argues that “the institutional forms of communication such as the media do not simply relay or “talk about” a reality that occurs “out there”, but that they actually constitute this reality”. There has been research to this effect. For example, Wodak (2006) looking at the Austrian case study, argues that discursive practices influence the construction and maintenance of national identity. Billig’s (1995) *Banal Nationalism* also outlines how nationalist discourses and ideologies are underpinned by discourse. This thesis seeks to demonstrate the tensions between dominant and dominated nationalisms and how the latter “engages in discursive identity construction to resist the assimilationist and hegemonic discourse” of the dominant nationalism advanced by Zanu-Pf (Sheyholislami 2008: 130).

Further, McDonald (2003: 2) suggests that focus on media discourse analysis is helpful in society as it helps avoid “both the narrowness of semiotic analysis, with its tendency to focus solely on the text, and the broad generalizations that often characterize ideological analysis of media representations”. New media, as argued elsewhere in this thesis, have thrown into disarray the controlled broadcasting of messages from the dominant groups of society to the rest. This is not to promote technological determinism where new technologies are deemed solely responsible for social trends. What needs to be highlighted is the fact that technology is as key as the content and messages it transmits. So, as Madianou (2005) suggests, we cannot do away with the text, that is, message and content, when we are looking at the role new media or media in general play in national identity construction. New media “bars a top-down approach to the impact of media on identity construction” (Sheyholislami, 2008: 131). Since this research seeks to explore how identities are constructed (textually), who constructs them (agency) and for what ends (ideologies), it is important to consider these bracketed aspects as they underpin the main tenets of CDA. At this juncture it is imperative that CDA be deconstructed in order to locate its rightful position in this thesis.

The strength of CDA is that it is critical, by which is meant that its practitioners take a stance in which “they side with the oppressed and unprivileged by investigating and analyzing the discourse of the powerful and making the ideological aspects of these discourses transparent” (Sheyholislami, 2008: 137). The word ‘critical’ in CDA needs to be explained for the advancement of the argument that seeks to prove that CDA is a relevant methodological design to use in this research. ‘Critical’ “signals the need for analysts to unpack the ideological underpinnings of discourse that have become so naturalised over time that we begin to treat them as common, acceptable and natural features of discourse” (Teo, 2000: 12). Being ‘critical’ is a form of departure from a descriptive stance. Therefore, most of the discourses that take place in the pro-government and diaspora public spheres are intertextually located within a myriad of other discourses that might not be explicitly spelt out in those public spheres. CDA therefore looks at the way the media locates itself in the discursive construction of identities. van Dijk further adds that critical discourse analysts are aware of their role in society and they need to satisfy certain criteria to fulfil these goals; CDA addresses social problems, power relations are discursive, discourse constitutes society and culture, discourse does ideological work, discourse is historical, the link between text and society is mediated, discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory and discourse is a form of social action, (van Dijk, 2001: 353). Critical, according to Wodak and Ludwig (1999:

12) does not mean only picking up negative aspects of social interaction but it means “distinguishing complexity and denying easy, dichotomous explanations. It makes contradictions transparent”.

Another important aspect of CDA is ideology. Ideology is defined by van Dijk as a “shared framework of social beliefs that organise ... social interpretations” and life in general (1998: 8). It is not only those in power that hold ideologies which they attempt to use to influence their subjects but the dominated too may have ideologies. Ideology is carried in and through discourse. Althusser (1971) and Gramsci (1971) argued that ideology reinforces and sustains social structures in society. In the process, language becomes an instrument through which ideology is transmitted, enacted and reproduced. For instance, it is through language that the current political elite in Zimbabwe understand, define and articulate on the forces of opposition, diaspora and international community. Through language, the regime has, in a way, launched a defence against the imagined enemies of the state through naming and discriminating them. Similarly, the marginalised Zimbabweans and the opposition have tried to contest these assertions through language. Consequently, through analysing the above, we “unlock the ideologies and recover social meanings expressed in discourse” (Teo, 2000: 11). For instance, nationalism ideologies both by the dominant and dominated groups are carried also through discourse and where the former is concerned, through force.

To analyse discourse, as intimated above, there are three processes that are integral since linguistic and textual analyses, however comprehensive, “cannot ‘do’ CDA in and of itself” (Luke, 2002: 102). Fairclough (1989, 1995) gives a model for CDA with three processes that are linked and three dimensions of discourse, and these include verbal and visual texts, production process and the “socio-historical conditions that govern these processes” (Janks, 1997: 329). To analyse these, one may employ textual analysis (description), process analysis (interpretation) and social analysis (explanation). These can be effectively used in this research to explain the contests that take place with regards to national identity constructions. This approach is important simply because it affords a researcher “multiple points of analytic entry” (Janks, 1997: 329). However, it must be pointed out that for this research, the analysis will be at a macro rather than micro level. Micro analysis deals mainly with analysing the text whereas macro analyses attempt to explain and explicate socio-politico and economic issues surrounding the production of a text. The power of a text in this regard therefore lies in the broader social conditions of the universe. Norman Fairclough’s (1995) CDA framework of a

communicative event graphically captures aspects addressed above (see Fig 1 below). In his analysis, Fairclough (1995) argues that showing a clear link between a text, discourse and sociocultural practices equal discourse analysis.

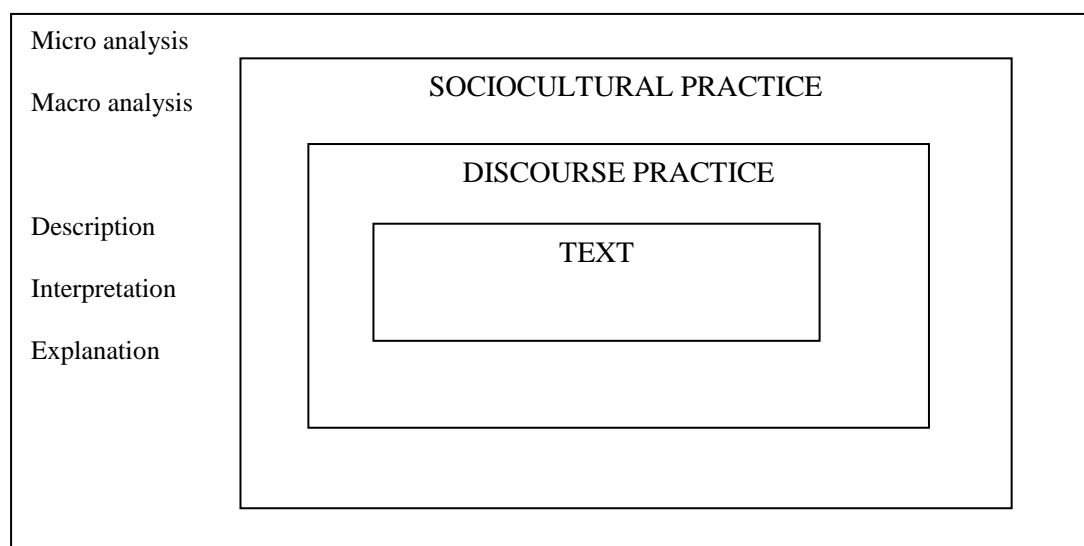


Figure 3: A framework for CDA of a communicative event. Adapted from Fairclough (1995: 25).

In summary, what Figure 3 above shows is that discourse consists of three basic interconnected elements, i.e. text which can be in verbal, linguistic or image form; discourse practice consisting of processes of production, disseminating and textual reception; and sociocultural practices encompassing socio-historical, political contexts and processes of consumption and distribution of texts. Having outlined these, it becomes clear that texts analysed in the two case studies are products rather than processes — products of the processes of text production (Fairclough, 1995). Texts do not carry meanings in isolation. They function in concert and dialogue with other texts and this meaning-making process is called intertextuality. This research will rely on intertextuality a lot. Intertextuality assumes that all texts and discourses are “connected to other discourse and texts, those of the past, those that are simultaneously created and consumed, and those of the future” (Sheyholislami, 2008: 148). Sheyholislami further quotes Fairclough (2008: 148) arguing that intertextual analysis is “an interpretation which locates the text in relation to social repertoires of discourse practices”. The differences between textual and intertextual analysis, Sheyholislami argues, is that the former is descriptive while the latter is interpretative in that:

it attempts to make sense of the findings of textual analysis by drawing on other texts across genres and discursive fields, texts that provide not only meaning-making resources for the text in question but also interpretation resources (e.g. as background knowledge) for the audiences of the text in question. Intertextual analysis is especially important in analysing media discourse because media texts can be viewed as ‘a class of texts which are specialised for moving resources for meaning-making between texts, and more abstractly between different social practices, fields, domains and scales of social life. (Sheyholislami, 2008: 148-149).

Intertextual analysis therefore uses political discourses, commentary, news, history and other communicative resources to make meaning. What is important, ultimately, is the production, distribution and consumption system of media texts as these inform how identities are discursively constructed. CDA, as argued above, will help as an analytic framework of discourses in *NewZimbabwe.com* especially considering that few researches have been done to look at how identities are formed using alternative media. *The Herald* stories will be analysed using content analysis.

6.5.3 Discourse Historical Analysis

Discourse Historical Analysis (hereafter DHA) is used to analyse mostly *The Herald* material and President Mugabe’s speeches in that paper. DHA was developed by Wodak and others (1999) at the University of Vienna in Austria, in a study related to anti-Semitic discourse in Austria in 1986. The main aim of DHA is “to integrate texts of as many different genres as possible, as well as the historical dimension of the subject under investigation” (Wodak, 1999: 188). The attempt here is to firstly locate certain discursive practices within certain historical backgrounds and sources where certain discourses are embedded. Elsewhere, Wodak (2009) clarifies that DHA:

provides a vehicle for looking at latent power dynamics and the range of potentials in agents, because it integrates and triangulates knowledge about historical sources and the background of the social and political fields within which discursive events are embedded (2009: 38).

The attempt in this thesis and analysis of *The Herald* stories and Mugabe’s speeches is to integrate three important aspects of DHA. These are “the content of the data, the discursive strategies employed and the linguistic realisation of these contents and strategies” (van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999: 9). Wodak suggests that in order to understand and analyse a certain discourse, one has to consider the following:

- the *intertextual*²¹ and *interdiscursive relationships* between utterances, texts, genres and discourses;
- the extra-linguistic social/sociological variables;
- the *history and archaeology of texts and organizations*; and
- the institutional frames of the specific *context of a situation* (2009: 38).

Most of these four layers of context suggested here are taken into account in this thesis in the analysis of material from *The Herald* stories.

6.5.4 Thematic Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis in various literature shows that the term has no clear-cut definition and this remains one of its unique features besides having a long history in research. However, attempts have been made to provide an operative definition which this thesis will adopt. Content analysis was used either as a qualitative or quantitative method (Berelson, 1952) but later, according to Berg (2001), it was mainly used as a quantitative research method. Silverman (cited in Berg, 2001: 241) also suggests that content analysis cannot be qualitative because content analysis “is a quantitative method”. According to Berelson, “content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Stempell III, 1981: 119). This emphasises on the counting and coding of texts.

Proponents of content analysis like Smith (1975) (cited in Berg, 2001) advocate a blend of both qualitative and quantitative analysis to be used “because qualitative analysis deals with the forms and antecedent-consequent patterns of form, while quantitative analysis deals with the duration and frequency of form” (Smith, 1975: 218 cited in Berg, 2001: 241). More scholars also suggest the need for content analysis to be qualitatively-oriented as a textual analysis method used for studying mass communication. This view is inspired by the assertion that there is need to focus beyond statistical semantics of political discourse but rather to include qualitative analysis of semiotics (symbolic meaning). Stempell III argues that content analysis “is a formal system of doing something that we all do informally rather frequently, drawing conclusions from observations of content” (1981: 119).

²¹*Intertextuality* refers to the linkage of all texts to other texts, both in the past and in the present. Such links can be established in different ways: through continued reference to a topic or to its main actors; through reference to the same events as the other texts; or through the reappearance of a text’s main arguments in another text. The latter process is also labelled *recontextualization*. By taking an argument out of context and restating it in a new context, we first observe the process of decontextualization, and then, when the respective element is implemented in a new context, of recontextualization. The element then acquires a new meaning, because, as Wittgenstein (1967) demonstrated, meanings are formed in use. (Wodak, 2009: 39)

Consequently, Berg (2001: 241) concludes that “content analysis may focus on either quantitative or qualitative aspects of communication messages”. The qualitative content analysis technique will be used to examine dominant identity construction discourses by the political elite using *The Herald* newspaper. This thesis therefore adopts Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannon’s definition of qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (2005: 1278). The important aspect in this definition is that text and specific contexts are emphasised as integral. Quantitative content analysis as used in mass communication research specialises in counting manifest textual elements at the expense of qualitatively examining meanings, themes and patterns to show meanings that underpin communicative texts. The goal of quantitative research is to use probabilistic approaches to sample, with a goal of ensuring valid and statistically valid results. On the other hand, qualitative content analysis allows for purposeful sampling of texts, texts that can be used to inform research questions, to be used so as to reflect the social world.

In thematic content analysing *The Herald*, the attempt was to follow a procedure where the inclusion or exclusion of content was done according to some deliberately applied criteria of selection (see above on the selection of news stories from *The Herald*). This is similar to some research on how Zanu-Pf has used public media to construct certain notions of nationhood (Ghandi and Jambaya, 2003; Makombe, 2005) where researchers have chosen specific themes. The effect of this is that those stories and materials that do not support the researcher’s hypothesis are eliminated. This complicates the idea of objectivity since being a researcher makes one’s position suspect.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological design, data collection, processing and interpretation techniques to be used in the thesis. What is clear from the foregoing is that qualitative researchers are faced with challenges in achieving objectivity. “To be human in this world is to interpret: to assign meaning to experience and view that meaning as objective” (Bradley, 1993: 433) hence Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) argument that reality is a social construction. This suggests the need for qualitative researchers to implement

methods that make their research work trustworthy. Graneheim and Lundman (2005) and Bradley (1993) account for three of these methods – credibility, transferability and dependability. Through using different methods to collect and interpret findings, it is hoped that this research will be credible, dependable and transferable. The next two data presentation and analysis chapters, and the concluding chapter, are informed by the methodological designs of this chapter and theoretical framework of the preceding two chapters. These are important as they assist, firstly in the critical analysis of how Zanu-Pf, through public media, has maintained an upper hand to dominate identity construction debates in Zimbabwe and secondly, how *NewZimbabwe.com* has provided an avenue for the citizens to contest from below, constructions of identity with those in power.

SECTION III

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Chapter 7: ‘Zimbabwe is Mine, I am a Zimbabwean’²²: Zanu-Pf and the Monologic Constitutions of National Identity

I urge you, whether you are black or white, to join me in a pledge to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget, join hands in a new amity, and together as Zimbabweans, trample upon racialism, tribalism and regionalism, and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society... Let us deepen our sense of belonging and engender a common interest that knows no race, colour or creed. Let us truly become Zimbabweans with a single loyalty. (Mugabe, 1980)

There are two Zimbabweans today and these are, one, a caricature of the British, the White Commonwealth, the American and the former Rhodesian and the other one is the real Zimbabwean. (Jonathan Moyo in Moyo, L., 2009: 64)

7.1 Introduction

The overarching argument in this chapter is that *The Herald* news discourses on identity form part of Zanu-Pf’s political project aimed at influencing Zimbabweans into identifying with limited and narrow versions of collective national identity. It must be stated here that private media played an important and adversarial role in countering Zanu-Pf’s dominant narratives on national identity. For instance, newspapers like the privately owned *The Dispatch* were vocal about the 1980s genocide and other government excesses. In a similar vein, the private media covered the post-2000 Zimbabwean government in negative light, leading to some of them losing their operating licences as the government made it impossible for them to operate. The negative coverage of the land question especially, led to issues being clouded and valid concerns about the historical materialism of land ownership for example, obscured.

Zanu-Pf and “patriotic” scholars have used “patriotic” history, symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1979) and the media to dominate discourses on collective national identity. This chapter is premised on nationalism theories and its major claim is that Zanu-Pf’s constructions of national identity have largely been primordial, limited, xenophobic, racist and exclusivist, underscored by distortions of history. Zanu-Pf’s official and dominant discourses on identity are conspicuous in several of Mugabe’s speeches, election campaigns, commemorative events, government documents and press statements. As stated before, four major events (this is by no means an exhaustive collection) that help shape Zanu-Pf’s discursive constructions of national identity were chosen for this research. These are:

²² <http://www.france24.com/en/20081219-zimbabwe-mine-robert-mugabe-tells-ruling-party->

1. The land reform;
2. Gukurahundi;
3. Commemorative events, and
4. Constitutionalism and sexuality.

These themes offer a glimpse into Zanu-Pf's attempt to contain dissent, maintain a stranglehold on power and carve a hegemonic national identity. Two discursive sites are used in this chapter to amplify the party's national identity agenda and these are the presidential graveside speeches²³ and stories in *The Herald*. Elsewhere, Zanu-Pf has used television debates, music galas, posters and so on to circulate its preferred notions of national identity. The use of Mugabe's speeches together with the graveside eulogies and stories from *The Herald* suffice for a number of reasons. Presidential speeches are important rhetorical rituals and "governing tool[s] since '... presidential speech[es] and action[s] increasingly reflect the opinions that speaking is actually governing'" (Ceaser *et al.*, 1982: 234 in Chang and Holt, 2009: 304). Mugabe's speeches also act as hermeneutical sites for the formation of government policy, collective memory and identity. In addition, *The Herald* gives prominent coverage and access to Zanu-Pf members, 'patriotic' scholars and sympathisers and presents itself as a 'credible' public sphere for Zanu-Pf voices.

The chapter is thematically organised as follows: it starts with the discussion and grounding of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power followed by discussions around the land question and how 'farm invasions', later sanitized as 'land reform' or *Third Chimurenga* were used as an identity marker in Zimbabwe. Next, the chapter looks at the theme of commemorations and national holidays. Here it reports on the performance of power in the highly dramatized commemorative events and rituals which "primarily serve to retrieve the past for... present" usages (Wodak, 2009: 70) and legitimate ways of dealing with the past, by "selecting affirmative elements from the past which are useful for justifying present interests" (Staudinger 1994: 2, in Wodak, 1990: 70). In these performances, the coerced participation of citizens gives an impression of rubberstamping and approval of the bureaucratic ways Zanu-Pf employs to perform and dispense state power. State power here is performed as a nexus of bureaucracy, ritual and discourse which pretends to be less determined by Zanu-Pf only but displayed as 'open governance' where 'people' feel involved in its acquisition, performance or dispensal. The authentic historical nation is juxtaposed and compared to the heretical one,

²³ These are speeches that are rendered by Mugabe at the burial of those declared national heroes. The speeches are usually broadcast on all public radio stations and the sole broadcaster, Zimbabwe Television.

one represented by the opposition and that must be erased from the face of the country. In so doing, Zanu-Pf uses what Mbembe calls the “distinct art of improvisation, by tendency to excess and disproportion as well as by distinctive ways in which identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation” (Mbembe, 1992: 2). This is all in an attempt to create a consistently homogenous Zimbabwean identity. The third aspect of the chapter addresses the Gukurahundi debates where issues of the state as an agent of amnesia are explored. It is within this theme that the knotty activity of national identity making is revealed as it exposes the ethnic and power tensions within Zanu-Pf. Finally, the chapter tackles issues of constitution formation and sexuality as part of performing citizenship and nationhood. This chapter acts as a launch pad to the next one and limits itself to the narratives advanced by Zanu-Pf. The next chapter addresses the mobilisation of various fluid identities that defy the monolithic fictitious society devoid of multiplicities of identity and conflict imagined by Zanu-Pf.

7.2 Language, Symbolic Power and structuration of national politics

Bourdieu (1979) defines symbolic power as the power “to construct reality which tends to establish a gnoseological order; the immediate meaning (sens) of the world (particularly of the social world)” (1979: 79). In 1991 he further refined this definition of symbolic power as:

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

The public media, ‘patriotic’ scholars and some historical texts, have been instrumental in organising national identity debates around Zanu-Pf’s preferred dominant ideologies and in the process, producing and justifying the ‘naturalness’ of “class divisions among both the dominant and the dominated” (Girling, 2004: 43) where the established socio-political order has been seen “as natural (orthodoxy) through masked (and hence misrecognised) imposition of classificatory systems” (Bourdieu, 1979: 82). Those entities that advance Zanu-Pf ideologies seem to wield the power of legitimate pronouncement, that is, the power to “diagnose, classify, authorise, and represent both individuals and the world, and to have this power of legitimate naming not just taken seriously, but taken-for-granted” (Loader, 1997: 4). In a research on ‘patriotic’ history and public intellectuals, Miles-Tendi (2008) observes that Zanu-Pf has attempted to maintain its political legitimacy through the master narrative of ‘patriotic’ history. Through this grand narrative Zanu-Pf:

repackage and propagate the country's liberation history in a narrow and authoritarian narrative [and] relied heavily on intellectuals sympathetic to it, such as Tafataona Mahoso²⁴, Vimbai Chivaura, Claude Mararike, Godfrey Chikowore, Sheunesu Mpeperekwi and Ibbo Mandaza, for the production of this repackaged narrative, called 'patriotic' history' in the public sphere. (Miles-Tendi, 2008: 279)

In Zimbabwe there is no variegated debate in public media and Zanu-Pf's dominant discourses are rarely vigorously challenged and according to Loader (1997) taken-for-granted ideologies that are rarely challenged spread and gain currency. For instance, the argument that has hitherto remained unchallenged in the Zanu-Pf political philosophy is the sell-out nature of the MDC. This is pronounced by the intellectuals as a taken-for-granted fact. Notice Chivaura's assertions on the programme *National Ethos*, (16/03 in Ghandi and Jambaya, 2002:7)

We are asking each other now. Either you are on the side of African interests and carrying a sword, or you are moneychangers ... you are fighting on the side of Europeans. The Europeans have conquered our space ... and Africans are clearing them out of there. On which side are you?

The raw, racist and hateful language used against the opposition has justified the use of violence against those who disagree with Zanu-Pf. In addition, the speakers interviewed in public media give their opinions from a privileged and winning position because state media rarely cater for dissenting voices. This led to Ghandi and Jambaya (2002) concluding that:

...[public media's] conceptualization of national issues was prefixed on racism masquerading as the all-encompassing view of Zimbabwe. What was presented as the national point of view was actually a ZANU-PF perspective designed to suit its policies on land, its presidential campaign and a defence of the election result ... ZBC programming and analysis of topical issues was a well-orchestrated ZANU-PF plan to legitimize its rule as well as to justify its policies such as the fast-track land reform programme, the racist attacks on Whites in general and the British in particular, and the vitriolic campaign against the MDC during and after the presidential election. What better way to do it than to call for the spirit of Black nationalism, Whites against Blacks? (2002: 17-18)

Moreover, Zanu-Pf discourses on national identity are anchored on performance of symbolic power which leads to symbolic domination shown through the way it imposes certain dominant public discourses on the nation which Miles-Tendi has described as "trenchant, strategic and prolific" (Miles-Tendi, 2008: 396).

One of the areas where Zanu-Pf's domination has been critical is during commemorative rituals where 'patriotic' memory and national monuments are utilised in forging dominant

²⁴ Mahoso is former head of the journalism school at the Harare Polytechnic College and current head of the Zimbabwe Media Commission. Ibbo Mandaza runs his own research institute, the SAPES Trust. The rest are academics at the University of Zimbabwe.

discourses on national identity. These discourses are likely to be influential considering the ready and privileged access Zanu-Pf has to the media, music galas, rallies and other spaces of power. National holidays and monuments like the Heroes' Acre for example have proved crucial in service of Zanu-Pf's constructions of dominant narratives of nation-making. It is during periods of national fragility like the first and third decades into independence that commemorative activities have intensified and calls for unity against the enemy more pronounced. These have helped preserve the party's contribution to the country's independence and national identity. Memories of the past experiences are therefore important in the context as they help Zimbabweans to remember and make sense of their history and future. Through remembering, certain aspects are dis-membered and wished away from the nation's memory for its survival. This is addressed later in the chapter.

7.3 'The land is the identity, the identity is the land'

The *Third Chimurenga*/'land reform' process began in the late 1990s with sporadic and often violent farm invasions led by war veterans and landless peasants. This was adopted, formalised and sanitised into the 'fast track' land reform process by the Zanu-Pf government. The land question, instead of solving the colonial imbalances, mirrors or mis-corrects them. The land issue and attendant political and economic chaos have been personalised around Mugabe mainly by Western media and governments, "intended to persuade the public to support an interventionist policy" where Western interests are at stake (Elich, 2002). The overarching net effect of this personalisation of issues around Mugabe has made him both a villain and hero, depending on one's view. It is also instructive to highlight that Mugabe has appropriated the victimhood tag and abused nationalist history, cogently diluted it with 'patriotic' history and 'patriotic collective memory' to his advantage. This assumption of the victimhood mentality may be informed by the reaction of the West especially post- 2000.

Elich (2002) observes that the portrayal of Mugabe as a dictator by the 'benevolent' US and British leaders in the name of human rights and democracy to the extent of imposing sanctions, is deceptive. In the same vein, public intellectuals that support the land reform argue that the targeted sanctions were a punishment by Western governments in response to Mugabe's land reform programme. Elich (2002) comments that "any nation that embarks on a path diverging from Western corporate interests and places the needs of its people over the demands of western capital finds itself the target of destabilisation, sanctions, and

intervention.” This is further qualified by the fact that, historically, Mugabe’s human rights abuse has been unnoticed but became topical after land reform (Moyo and Yeros, 2011). Zimbabwe has been under sanctions since 2000 from countries like USA, England, Australia, Canada and those in the EU²⁵. The West has insisted that sanctions were targeted against Mugabe and his party members and Zanu-Pf has argued that the sanctions were imposed on the whole of Zimbabwe. In an undated flyer addressed to Zimbabweans and distributed in Zimbabwe, Zanu-Pf argues that sanctions are real and

against you and your country...[they] are affecting your lives; ... country and your future.... And they were imposed for a specific reason; to make you suffer so much that you turn against your leadership, become unpatriotic and cause instability in the country. The story of sanctions has its roots firmly on the West’s selfish desire to deny Zimbabweans the right to be in charge of their economy and their destiny... It is about making sure that we are not in control of our own resources, particularly land... We were placed under sanctions because of the hugely successful Land Reform Programme. (Mugabe, 2012)

It is not clear whether sanctions were imposed because of Mugabe’s authoritarianism or as a punishment for Mugabe’s redistributive policies as Zanu-Pf seems to suggest. But what is clear is that sanctions came way after Mugabe’s authoritarian tendencies were clear to all observers. In addition, they were imposed after the 1998 Donors Conference of Land which proved unsuccessful and the impatient landless people took it upon themselves to invade white-owned farms. In 2000, after the 16th amendment of the constitution, Zimbabwe started land redistribution under Zanu-Pf’s manifesto, “the land is the economy and the economy is the land”. In 2001 USA introduced *Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act* (ZDERA) – an act that not only imposed sanctions on the targeted individuals but provided for opposition to Zimbabwe’s requests for loan extensions or debt cancellations from major funding bodies. In 2002, Australia and the EU imposed sanctions on Mugabe and some senior government officials. What has been found as curious by commentators is the timing of the sanctions to coincide with land reform and the sudden metamorphosis of Mugabe into a dictator when before he was a beacon of Southern Africa. Again, it is indisputable that sanctions were imposed on selected individuals so as to encourage democratic reform but the definition of democracy seemed to lie with the sanctioners. The sanctions and anti-land reform sentiments from the opposition and the West have been used as a site of nationalism

²⁵ After the 2013 peaceful and credible constitutional referendum there was a partial lifting of these sanctions especially by the EU. From the original list of 91 people and firms the list was reduced to 10 which included Mugabe and two firms.

by Zanu-Pf arguing, as covered in this chapter, that they are meant to push out Mugabe and support MDC-T for the recolonisation of Zimbabwe.

The effect of the fight against sanctions has been the labelling of opposition and white members of the community as sell-outs and outsiders to the nation. Western governments and their use of economic coercion through regime change heightened national identity debates to an international level where Zanu-Pf canvassed for regional or international allies to support it against Western imperialism and attacks of Zimbabwe's sovereignty.

Zanu-Pf might have had two intentions in sanitizing this land reform programme. First was to address the colonial imbalances and second, an attempt to survive political challenges posed by the MDC. Through the latter, the theme of national identity became intertwined with that of equitable redistribution of land. Hence the Jonathan Moyo coined slogan 'The Land is the Economy and the Economy is the Land' which formed what Raftopoulos and Phimister (2004: 368) call the "centrepiece of Zanu-Pf's strategy" for political survival and national identity formation. The central logical claim of this slogan is that the land was central to economic emancipation (*The Herald*, 23.07.2002). *The Herald* article by Godwills Masimirembwa buttresses this in the following extract when he concludes:

- E1: History tells us that the struggle for land has always been the most powerful driving force in nation building. Without land, there is no nation. So, without control of the Zimbabwean land, with it returned to white commercial farmers by the MDC, the liberation struggle will be rendered meaningless. (*The Herald*, 11.01.08)

Besides being an economic resource, land is an important political and spiritual resource as alluded to by Victor Chimau (E2) in an article in *The Herald* and Yvone Vera (E3) in her novel *Nehanda*:

- E2: What we are witnessing today is a revolution and a class struggle, a struggle not only for economic reason but also for the sake of the preservation of our dignity and the very essence of us as Zimbabweans. (*The Herald*, 23.07.02)
- E2: It is a hard thing to see strangers on your land ... to find a stranger dancing on your sacred ground... How shall we cleanse the soil? We allow him to dig for gold, but the land is not his... [it] cannot be owned...the land does not belong to the living. (Vera, 1993: 23, 42, 43)

The occupation of the land by the colonisers, according to Vera's quote above, upset the relationship and spiritual connection between blacks and their ancestors. A people without access to their land and organic connection with their ancestors are as good as a people

without dignity and the very essence of Zimbabweanness as pointed out by Chimau above. The regaining of this spiritual connection and cleansing is linked to the *Third Chimurenga*. This is evidenced by quotations from *The Herald*'s senior reporter Ceasar Zvayi's opinion piece (E4) and a quote from Robert Mugabe (E5) who argued that the *Third Chimurenga* revolution was about reclaiming the land:

- E4: We must, therefore, rededicate ourselves to the revolutionary trajectory of our nationhood and return to the source of our pride as black people. Let us send a loud and clear message that our country will never be a colony again, whether by proxy or outright occupation. (*The Herald*, 09.07.2004).
- E5: Those who lie here (Heroes' Acre) struggled and died for a cause and that cause is fundamentally the land which must come back; which is coming back and, for the peasant, which has come back in significant quantities. This is the land which until now was being held by the sons of our colonial oppressors at our expense. This is the land which our victorious heroes could never desire to see remaining in the hands of the people they defeated. (*The Herald*, 12.07.2002)

There is a link between the message of land redistribution in Vera's novel *Nehanda* and that of Mugabe; that of land being linked to African spiritual struggles. Mugabe and the heroes want to see and fulfil Nehanda's²⁶ wish of blacks owning the land. The two extracts above therefore speak of the *Third Chimurenga* as the only process to restore blacks' heritage and also defend the soul of the nation which some people have already laid down their lives for. Besides being a source of pride and a heritage, land is a definer of Zimbabweanness. In a paper on agriculture and tourism in Grenada and Dominica, Nelson suggests that farming can be imagined as an economic activity that simultaneously grants citizens pride, dignity, humanity and acts as "an important component in the negotiation of identity" (Nelson, 2010: 219).

The land question which partly defines the postcolonial national question has been central in identifying the known, perceived and/or imagined friends or enemies of Zanu-Pf (usually read the nation). The land reform as argued by pan-Africanist or nationalist scholars (Moyo and Yeros, 2004; 2007; Moyo, 2001; Yeros, 2002; Mamdani, 2008) was necessitated by the colonial legacy whereby much of the productive land was still under the former colonial masters' sons (Mugabe, 2002a) or 'remnants of the Empire's', (Willems, 2005) control. This

²⁶ Mbuya Nehanda was a respected Zezuru Shona spirit medium who was credited with being instrumental in the organisation of the first nationwide resistance against colonialism in 1896-7. This resistance was called First Chimurenga.

was due to the postcolonial elite pact that did not dismantle the economic superstructure soon after independence, thereby creating a resource and economic ownership imbalance in the country. The intensity of this can be gleaned from an article by Kwame Brathwaite in *The Herald*. It reads:

E6: The situation in Zimbabwe is one that pits the legitimate aspirations of the indigenous African masses against foreign settlers who, for generations, have stolen land with the help of their kith and kin in Europe, who turned a blind eye on the racist apartheid policies of the colonialist regime that governed the area known as Southern Rhodesia. (*The Herald*, 22.10.2004.)

In the same vein Victor Chimau, in an opinion article two years earlier than Brathwaite's wrote:

E7: Our land is our basic right and it is not right that an alien minority occupies the largest and its most agriculturally productive sections. The more so when it is clear that their interests and loyalty to this country are highly questionable and purely commercial. Their administration of the farms is detached from the common good and the patriotic needs of the country. One only needs to consider the diversion of arid land from agricultural activities to activities such as game ranching, for example. (*The Herald*, 17.04.02)

Both comments above suggest that the *Third Chimurenga* discourse works at excluding white people as a community that does not belong to Zimbabwe as they relate to this country on commercial or "highly questionable" basis of having stolen land. The two opine that whites are foreign, alien and eternal enemies or agents of the same. Colonial memory here is used to divide the nation into the White and Black nations making Zimbabwean national "identity ... meaningful only through the contrast with others" (Triandafyllidou, 1998: 593). The 'others' here are the evil whites who by virtue of being white are evil and:

E8: blood-sucking neo-colonialists who are not concerned about the welfare, let alone fortunes, of the generality of Zimbabweans. (*The Herald*, 10.13.2009)

Such statements advance the notion that whites are not Zimbabweans. Here, social relationships are organised "through command and commodification of (racial) difference" where the other's discourses on national belonging are suppressed, silenced, excluded and subordinated (Flusty, 2004: 1980) due to their skin colour and the past of their ancestors. The net effect has been to ossify blackness, making it a static identity marker of what is

Zimbabwean and African. The ‘White’ nation is unAfrican and cannot be African because of its difference - they are pathologically greedy vulgar capitalists who are “eternally hungry for more money, more property” (Schipper, 1999: 39) and suffer from a superiority complex which Mugabe summarized as represented by the “marauding... economically and militarily powerful” bullies like the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand whose “human rights precludes our people's right to their God-given resources, which in their view must be controlled by their kith and kin. I am termed dictator because I have rejected this supremacist view and frustrated the neo-colonialists” (Mugabe, 2007).

By contrast blacks, especially those who support Zanu-Pf’s ideologies on land reform, are patriots who are primordially African as they are indigenous and rightful owners of the land. To show antagonism between whites and Africans, the quotations above express the suffering caused by the unfairness of colonialism and its redistributive methods and suggest that this needs to be addressed regardless of social or legal consequences. This is done by situating the land debate in the binaries of ‘us’ the patriotic but landless ‘legitimate ... indigenous African masses’ against ‘them’ the landed white ‘foreign settler’ ‘thieves.’ Brathwaite and Chimau support Zanu-Pf’s establishment of the nation’s ‘outsider and insider’ citizens. This narrative resonates with Mugabe’s sentiments at the burial of Chenjerai Hunzvi, a former leader of the war veterans and the man who came to at once, symbolise the landless and violent appropriation of ‘white man’s land’ at another:

- E9: Land-based *Third Chimurenga*... has become the target of a vicious British sponsored campaign using local and international media and diplomatic channels that seek to preserve the immoral and inequitable land system in Zimbabwe where one per cent owns over 70 per cent of the land in the country... Instead of seeing Hunzvi, war veterans and the landless majority as the victims of, and indeed solutions to the land problem, some sections of the international community, led by Britain, portray them as invaders of the white man’s land, squatters, land grabbers, marauding thugs, rapists whose only interest is to loot the white man’s property with no regard for the law... axe wielding warriors out to strike at ‘vulnerable God-fearing whites living peacefully on their farms. Invariably the white farmer is projected as the paragon of justice and the one responsible for the country’s success story in agriculture and the survival of our economy. (*The Herald*, 09.06.2001)

The solution to Zimbabwe’s land and economic imbalances has been laden with debates and contradictions. Some critics have argued that in an attempt to address these economic imbalances Zanu-Pf has downplayed the importance of democracy, property and human rights (Holland, 2008; Meredith, 2002; Chikuhwa, 2004). The argument presented by this position has been challenged by Issa Shivji as problematic since human rights, the rule of law

and democracy cannot be operationalised in a context where the 'National Question' remains unsolved. He declares:

Human rights discourse has succeeded in marginalising concrete analysis of our society. Human rights ideology is the ideology of the *status quo*, not change. Documentation of human rights abuses, although important in its own right, by itself does not help us to understand the social and political relations in our society. It is not surprising that given the absence of political economy context and theoretical framework, much of our writings on human rights, rule of law, constitutions etc. uncritically reiterate or assume neoliberal precepts. Human rights is not a theoretical tool of understanding social and political relations. At best, it can only be a means of exposing a form of oppression and, therefore, perhaps, an ideology of resistance. If not carefully handled, it cannot even serve that purpose. (Shivji, 2003: 115)

Shivji's analysis is not far from the truth about the dangers and shortcomings of neo-liberal constructions of human rights narrative. There is need for a multilayered analysis of the Zimbabwe problem. In the absence of this balance, Mugabe has always contended that his brand of democracy differs from that of the West specifically because he has sought to free Zimbabweans from Western imperialism while the West has interfered with other countries' domestic affairs and invaded sovereign states like Iraq and Afghanistan. In the case of the USA, for example, Zanu-Pf has accused the USA government of being racist through the neglect of mostly African-Americans who were victims of the 2005 Hurricane Katrina.

Zanu-Pf and its sympathisers have consistently maintained that the West imposed targeted sanctions on Zanu-Pf members and supporters as punishment for Zimbabwe's land reform programme that dispossessed mostly white farmers of their land. This can be gleaned from the extracts below from SADC executive secretary Tomaz Salomao's (E10), Mugabe (E11), and *The Herald* editorial (E13) statements:

E10: ...no other leader could have withstood the demonisation that President Mugabe has been subjected to by the West. [He said] that Zimbabwe's economy was resilient and could speedily turn around once sanctions - imposed after the Government embarked on land reforms to correct colonial imbalances in the ownership of the resource - were lifted. (*The Herald*, 20.07.2007)

E11: How do we requite the goodness of the silent ones? How do we acknowledge their sacrifices? Is it by working with the Blairs and Bushes of this country and selling our birthright? Is it by denying the just gains, rights, possessions and entitlements of our people, principally the land? (*The Herald* 9.07.2009)

E12 ... relations between the governments of Zimbabwe and Britain are at their lowest ebb. It is the British who should be blamed for this. They still think that Zimbabwe is a British colony which they can toss the way they feel. Relations between the two countries should not have been allowed to go to such an extent. The history of the two countries has been inextricably linked and intertwined for a century when Britain occupied, ruled and exploited Zimbabwe.

That left many scars and injustices for which Britain is responsible; hence Britain cannot run away from that responsibility. Zimbabweans know it quite well that sanctions or no sanctions, the land reform program is irreversible and the economic empowerment of the people through land acquisition and apportionment has become key to the success of the country's overall economic emancipation. (*The Herald*, 04.05.2000).

Mugabe's statements stem from the view that the MDC is a Western created and funded party which is used by the former to colonise Zimbabwe again. The above editorial used colonial history to blame Britain for the waves of economic and political challenges in Zimbabwe. The bulk of the sampled articles on land reform from *The Herald* highlight the metamorphosis of nationalism into nativism in post-settler Zimbabwe. Nativism advances the notion that whites are foreigners, thieves and do not belong to Zimbabwe or Africa. This is evidenced by Mugabe's Afro-radical assertions at various fora that 'Zimbabwe belongs to Zimbabweans', 'Africa is for Africans' and 'Europe for Europeans' and "we (shall) keep our Zimbabwe" (*The Herald*, 27.04.2004). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009b) in a paper on Nativism in Zimbabwe and South Africa, painstakingly analyses Mugabe's brand of nationalism and finds it questionable:

Can the ideological behaviour of Mugabe be seen as signalling the dawn of a new nationalism? Is it signalling the revival of the African national project? Does it signal the degeneration or failure of African nationalism, giving way to narrow, xenophobic and racist articulation of the African national project? (Ndlovu-Gatsheni: 2009b: 62).

This Afro-nativism has also taken a racist form. Mugabe's statements at an election campaign near Plumtree in Southern Zimbabwe helps illustrate the xenophobic and racist nature of his brand of nationalism anchored on land reform. He asserted:

E13 The *Third Chimurenga* entails total freedom for the country. The country is still to be totally free because the land is still in the hands of whites. *Amaplazi sizawathatha kuphela siwanike abantu* (we will take the farms and give them to the people)... Zimbabwe is our country. It's not a place for the Rosenfels and other whites who still occupy our country. Who should come first in this country - the Boers, the Rosenfels or the Bothas? No, our people come first. We consider our people first. The black man comes first in Zimbabwe and Africa. This is not Britain. Look, we even have more Little Englands, New Englands and South Englands here than there are in Britain itself. All those filthy imperial names must go, Zimbabwe belongs to the black people.... (*The Herald*, 23.02.2002)

The implication here is that there are those who are supposed to own the land (blacks) and those who are supposed to lose it (whites). Hence land ownership is imagined by Mugabe as a marker of 'total freedom' and by implication Zimbabweanness. Mugabe's imagination of blackness and whiteness is that blacks are primordially African and whites are not. In his

fight against the West, MDC, NGOs and other enemies, Mugabe has managed to clearly demarcate enemies from friends of Zimbabwe, and, in the process justify the use of force or violence against those deemed enemies of the national project. Violence therefore is used to advance a “much more narrow and selective version of the past” (Raftopoulos, 2006: 214). Just like the Zimbabwean nationalism, this version of ‘patriotic’ history dovetails with Zanu-Pf’s categorization of insiders and outsiders, itself riddled with contradictions especially when one considers Mugabe’s magnanimous call for forgiveness and unity soon after independence:

[I]f yesterday I fought as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. (*ZBC Online*, 10.04.2012)

This was later to be betrayed by Mugabe’s increasingly argumentative, intolerant and authoritarian brand of politics especially in situations where Zanu-Pf’s legitimacy was challenged. In the statement above, he gave whites conditions of national belonging like loyalty, serving national interests and becoming an ally and friend with him. The use of the words ‘ally’ ‘friend’ ‘same national interests’ seems not to give whites an option for independent political action or thought. Further, in 2004 Mugabe revisited this narrative of citizenship as regards white members of the country. This revision revealed that while in some cases the white man is an outsider, in others he can be admitted into the nation provided his grooming was of an acceptable nature:

E14: All **genuine and well-meaning white farmers** who wish to pursue a farming career as loyal citizens of this country have land to do so. **To those who want to own this country for Britain, govern it for the British Empire as in the past, we say here on this national shrine that the game is up and it is time for them to go.** (*The Herald*, 22.10.04) (emphasis added)

The nationalist rhetoric on the land issue and identity reveals these contradictions both within the ruling party and opposition movements. However, what is seemingly consistent is that in the face of waning legitimacy and consensus, Zanu-Pf sustained its fight for relevance through violence and land reform which was presented as a continuation of the Chimurenga series of wars of liberation. This counter-narrative helped Zanu-Pf respond to the “widespread national and international critique centred on property rights, human rights and

the rule of law [in the context of] African marginalisation within globalisation” (Zamponi, 2005: 30). This need to defend the country against imperialist forces and their stooges legitimated the state’s use of violence against those ‘unpatriotic’ elements operating in the country.

7.4 Mugabeism, war memory and tabooing state power

The *Third Chimurenga* ideology has been used as an argument to taboo and make exclusive state power access as a sole preserve of those who participated in the liberation war and belong to Zanu-Pf. Joice Mujuru, the country’s deputy president, captures this ideology in the extract below:

E15: People are wasting their time by opposing President Mugabe. It was prophesied way back in 1934, when he was only 10 years old, that he was going to lead this country. How can a normal person challenge such a leader? There is nothing wrong in people having ambitions and discussing political issues with their wives. They should not, however, tamper with the presidency; it is sacrosanct. These positions come from God, they do not just come! ... Our independence did not come by accident. Thousands of schoolchildren died in the name of the party. People sacrificed their lives for this country. Even when Abraham was about to sacrifice his only son, God saw it fit for him not to sacrifice human blood. However, people here paid the ultimate price for this country to be free. (*The Sunday Mail*, 13.01.2013).

Therefore Mugabe cannot be challenged by opposition as they did not fight against colonialism nor have the interests of the country at heart. This is captured in Mugabe’s assertion, in a book comprising his speeches, *Inside the Third Chimurenga* (2001):

...we are the first claimants, the first beneficiaries of Fast Track. After all we carry the majority of the people.... Let MDC supporters get allocated land in Britain where they have been getting pounds.... They cannot benefit from policies they have rejected and even opposed. (Mugabe, 2001: 123)

Here Mugabe imagines the land as meant for rightful Zimbabweans who are invariably Zanu-Pf supporters — the legitimate citizens. In the process, he excludes opposition supporters from being part of the nation as they are supposed to go and settle in England since they are not Zimbabwean enough as “Zimbabwe will be the land for Zimbabweans and no-one else” (Mugabe, 2001: 123). The land question, instead of solving the colonial imbalances, it mirrors them, or mis-corrects them. It has also been personalised around Mugabe who has been described as a hero and martyr. Not only has he been heroic, he has been labelled ‘a gift from God to Zimbabwe by his party, messianic and equated to the Biblical Moses. *The Herald* claims that Mugabe

- E16: will indeed go down in history as a true champion of African liberation who went against the might of the West and risked relegation to a pariah in order to deliver his people to the Promised Land. (*The Herald*, 09.03.2002)

The use of ‘his people’ contextualises Mugabe’s power, invincibility, sacredness of his presidential office and ultimately ‘ownership’ of Zimbabwe through redemption, that is, liberation. Since 2000 he has been busy delivering Zimbabwe from the enemies who:

- E17: directly and indirectly control almost every aspect of our economic life and blame our government for anything that goes wrong. They withdraw aid and impose sanctions in order to stop us from claiming our birthright. (*The Herald*, 17.04.2002).

The party’s women’s league has branded Mugabe a saint, a “God-given gift”, (*The Herald*, 01.03.2008) or according to former Zanu-Pf Member of Parliament Tony Gara, “the second Son of God” (Meredith, 2007: 80) leading a party that according to Godwills Masimirembwa’s opinion piece adhered:

- E18: to God-set values, to a noble and justifiable cause, that sets it apart from opposition political parties which champion issues of immediate, but temporary benefit. The long haul is for Zanu-PF. The long haul is about land ownership, resource ownership, inheritance benchmarking and everlasting sovereignty. (*The Herald*, 04.01.08).

Through the appropriation of religious discourse, Mugabe has made it clear that his power and leadership of the nation are sanctioned by God. On 5 January 1982, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009: 3), Mugabe announced that “as clear as day follows night ... Zanu-Pf will rule in Zimbabwe forever. There is no other party besides ours that will rule this country,” and in 2008 he said:

... never allow an event like an election to reverse our independence, our sovereignty. Only God who appointed me will remove me [from power] - not the MDC, not the British. (*BBC Online*, 21.06.2008)

Even the opposition leader and Prime Minister Tsvangirai once argued that:

Whether you like me or not you should remember that I was chosen (by God), even President Robert Mugabe was selected by God. What you should do is to pray for us as the leaders of the country so that we have the vision to deliver the nation. (*Zimbabwe Situation*, 02.11.2012).

Further, *The Herald* editorial, through the Zanuism and Mugabeist ideologies recognises Mugabe as a nationalist and national hero as he:

- E19: ... has never known fear and has remained determined and unshakeable in his resolve to deliver what he promised to the people of this country. History will remember him for his ability to sacrifice his good name for the sake of the people of this country. (*The Herald*, 09.03.2002)

The personalisation of the land reform programme and other struggles for nationhood around Mugabe has made him both a villain and hero depending on one's analytic lenses. 'Patriotic' history sees Mugabeism as "the only tested ideology capable of guarding national sovereignty" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a: 1153). This national sovereignty is accompanied by a version of democracy that can only be defined by Zanu-Pf; one that dwells mainly on the conquest of the liberation movement and defending the country's sovereignty against imperialism and outside interference through watering and narrowing down the nationalist project to issues that pertain to land reform while ignoring the main tenets of the liberation struggle like freedom, democracy and human rights. The project of the liberation war is reduced to such issues as land.

As shown above, democracy in the Mugabeism and Zanuism narrative is often cast in contradictory terms. 'Patriotic' history centres on Mugabe as a hero of the people who has been an exemplary patriot and unwavering champion of the land reform as stated by *The Herald*:

- E20: Our problems will never be solved by marginalising the land issue so that we can get bread today. Our problems will never be solved by removing President Mugabe as the patriotic and unwavering champion of the land reform programme and replacing him with Tsvangirai, the present day national representative of the settler community and the status quo. (*The Herald*, 17.04.2002)

Besides Mugabeism, 'patriotic' memory has found residence in 'patriotic' history and this memory valorises the struggle and honours its heroes through elaborate commemorative events. For example, at the celebrations of Zimbabwe's 28th Independence in 2008, one Zanu-Pf Member of Parliament said:

- E21: It is imperative to rekindle the memory of the protracted and bruising struggle that brought independence and ushered in democracy. Independence did not come on a silver platter. Many people were massacred by the cowardly Rhodesian regime and the loss of all this blood should not be in vain. We laud the determination of our heroes and admire their courage and pluck. Our leader, His Excellency Cde Mugabe spent 11 years in jail and many more at the forefront of the liberation struggle ... (*The Herald*, 19.07.2008)

This deliberate cultivation and rekindling of past memories and their conveyance through memorials and monuments has led to the development of different strands of collective

memories and collective emotion (Luminet, *et al.*, 2012) which compete and rival each other to an extent that definitions of national heroes and martyrs have become problematic (Werbner, 1998; Cressy, 1994:61). It must be noted that Zanu-Pf has failed to come up with an unproblematised definition of a national hero.

Similarly, it is instructive to highlight that Mugabe's appropriation of victimhood is accompanied by the use of nationalist history, cogently diluting it with 'patriotic' history and 'patriotic collective memory' to his advantage. A case in point is when Mugabe said:

E22: We also cannot forget the refugees and others - men, women and the children who were cut down in cold blood, often tattered book in hand, at Nyadzonia, Chimoio, Tembue, Mkuushi, Luangwa, Solwezi, where to this day, they lie buried in mass graves. Even in their death, we could not grant them the dignity of a grave each. How could we, given their severed limbs, their bodies burnt and charred beyond recognition? (*The Herald*, 12.11.2002)

In remembering the people who died Mugabe evokes memories of the past to inculcate patriotism in the in his listeners and country as a whole. In addition the use of the deictic expression or first person plural 'pronoun' 'we', according to Wodak et al. (2010: 45) is used by speakers to "verbally annex and usurp... a speaker can unite himself and his audience into a single 'community sharing a common destiny' by letting fall into oblivion all differences in origin, confession, class and lifestyle...". While in most cases memory may be used by the weak as a site of resistance against the powerful, in the case of Zanu-Pf, 'patriotic' memory has been used to coerce the powerless citizens into a Zanu-Pf ideologically controlled 'we-group' and point out powerful and yet villainous enemies like the British. This is revealed in a story where Mugabe narrates the experiences:

E23: He chronicled the country's liberation history and the suffering and hardship that most people experienced during colonialism. Cde Mugabe narrated how whites allocated themselves the fertile land in most parts of the country while blacks were condemned to non fertile land in the communal areas. The situation was the same in towns where men were not allowed to live with their families as they were confined to bachelors' quarters where they lived like sardines. "Africans were not even allowed to walk in pavements. Those caught were arrested because the pavements were only reserved for whites..." (*The Herald*, 08.02.2002)

Through sharing the evil experiences under colonialism, Mugabe interpellates his listeners to the Zanu-Pf 'we-group' while at the same time disqualifying the British from commenting about Zimbabwean politics as they have a tainted history as former colonists. This disqualification also justifies certain behaviours by the ruling elite like the use of violence

and patenting state power as Zanu-Pf's. In an attempt to patent state power as the sole preserve of Zanu-Pf, Mugabe has used the memory of the liberation struggle and fear (that the formation and relationship of the MDC with the West are a source of threats to the nation). Zanu-Pf has effectively used victimhood to claim sympathy from some Zimbabweans, regional and international bodies by exposing the West's interference in Zimbabwean politics. This development has led to Zanu-Pf identifying enemies to be expelled from the nation as they are sell-outs, settlers or strangers. In trying to cleanse the nation of these sell-outs, Mugabe comes across as a hero fighting a solitary battle against evil forces and all he needs is support from Zimbabweans. He further self-styles in the following manner:

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

To accentuate his hero status, Mugabe says:

E24: We have heard that Mr Tsvangirai went and planned with some whites to be given US\$500 000 to behead President Mugabe. So do they think if they behead me this revolution would stop? God is the one who looks after all of us. I survived many bombs even when we were in Mozambique. Throughout the war many bombs were sent to me through parcels and letters. (*The Herald*, 17.04.2002)

The quote above illustrates Mugabe's occupation of an important position in the party and country as he is targeted by the MDC and the West. Interestingly, Tendai Biti, an MDC-T member and Minister of Finance in the GNU further reinforces the myth that Mugabe is synonymous with the pith of the nation. He says:

in this country... when he's gone that is when you will see that this man was Zimbabwe... He is a fountain of experience, fountain of knowledge and, most importantly, a fountain of stability. (*The Sunday Mail*, 01.07.12)

Biti's summation complicates the whole concept of national identity formation as something that cannot be defined and determined outside the 'fountain'— Mugabe and Zanu-Pf hegemony. Mugabe here becomes, as Mugabeism suggests, an embodiment of the people's struggles against 'colonialism' and for economic emancipation resisted by Western governments working together with opposition parties and NGOs who pose a threat to the well-being of Zimbabwe. Zanu-Pf has employed a highly selective process of nation-making through appropriating anti-colonial, postcolonial historical discourse and collective memories to construct a preferred political and cultural Zimbabwean national identity. From the above

narrative on land reform, it is clear that Zanu-Pf's socio-political and cultural hegemony cannot be challenged as doing so is deemed selling out and an act of sabotage.

7.5 Configurations of nationhood: national holidays, commemorative rituals and graveside eulogies

Heroes' Day and burial of heroes are intimately linked days that have to do with the country's liberation and independence. While Heroes' Day is set on 18 August annually, heroes' burial days are beyond state control as they are determined by the death of a 'national hero'²⁷ and the Zanu-Pf politburo, the party's top decision making body. The venue for both these events however, remains the National Heroes Acre²⁸ in Harare, a place Mugabe once declared as "... solely for the burial of Zanu-Pf members" and:

... for those who fought for the liberation of the country. It's not a place for everyone; there are a lot of people who did good things, including pastors but they can't be buried here. Those who lead others be it at workplaces, cannot be buried at the Heroes' Acre; we can look for another shrine for them. Those who were buried here were involved in the war to liberate Zimbabwe. (*The Zimbabwe Independent Online*, 30.09.2010)

Even though the monument exudes pretences of gender inclusivity, it remains phallic, masculinised, and militaristic. Also it clearly expresses a personality cult particularly around Mugabe and his Zanu-Pf party. Nothing clearly captures this than the bronze murals which, in the process of representing a romanticised historical narrative of the liberation struggle, show what is clearly an aesthetically exaggerated Mugabe – head towering all the heroes whose profiles are not as clearly defined as the youthful, innocent and determined-looking Mugabe facing ahead in pure leadership style (See *Figure 4*). This imposing portrayal has immortalised Mugabe making him an embodiment of the liberation struggle and a grand teller of the national narrative. Osborne observes that such configurations of monuments

²⁷ The determination of hero is controversial in Zimbabwe as it has been contested by mainly opposition parties.

²⁸ The Zimbabwe Heroes Acre shrine, located on a 57 hectare piece of land and seven kilometres west of Harare was designed, financed and built by North Koreans (Becker, 2010) and acts as a model par excellence for any commemorative project especially in Africa. What makes it unique is its artistic detail, imposing scale and largely "propagandistic rhetoric" (Marschall, 2006: 179). "A tall column, crowned by an Eternal Flame, towers above the monument and is intended to symbolise triumphal victory and the desire for freedom" (Marschall, 2006: 179, see also Werbner, 1998). Central to the shrine is the trademark Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, marked by a colossal statue of three heroic flag-carrying soldiers (See *Fig. 2*) characteristic of "socialist realist monuments" (Coombes, 2011: 206) with a catafalque in the front that is used as a ceremonial resting place for a dead hero's casket during the rituals conducted just before official burial. According to Kurt Piehler, the unknown soldier is venerated by everyone because "the very lack of an individual identity permits almost everyone to claim the Unknown Soldier as his or her own" (Piehler, 1994: 175). (Piehler, Kurt. 1994. *The War Dead and the Gold Star: American Commemoration of the First World War*, in Gillis, John R. (ed.) *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*. 168-185, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

render these spaces as “consensus builders ... focal points for identifying with a visual condensation of an imagined national chronicle rendered in heroic symbolism” (2001: 16). This has led to various analysts arguing that the site is being used for political rather than national purposes. The Ministry of Information imagines the shrine as a place of pilgrimage for the masses intent on creating their own history, designed to

arouse national consciousness, forge national unity and identity... the pride of the people of Zimbabwe. A symbol of bravery and selflessness of those whose remains are laid to rest there. (Ministry of Information, 1989: 3)

Savage (1994: 130) argues that monument and the commemoration of the war dead anchor and legitimate “the very notion of collective memory” as key to national identity formation at the expense, as shall be shown in *Chapter 8* and *9*, of gender, democracy and ethnicity.



Figure 4: Cult: The large imposing iconic carving of Mugabe at the Heroes’ Acre in Harare has immortalised him as the embodiment of the liberation struggle, a grand teller of the national narrative.²⁹

²⁹<http://www.tripwolf.com/en/guide/show/687874/Namibia/Windhoek-and-Central-Namibia/Windhoek/Heroes-Acre>

Besides symbolising national “state narrative” (Osborne, 2001: 15) and unification, the shrine has been a symbol of Zanu-Pf’s tyranny, authoritarianism, control, protocol in national rituals, domination, elitism, top-down decision making and exclusion (Kriger, 1995). It is a discriminating space where some people are deliberately excluded on racial, political, sexual orientation or ethnic grounds. Some of this is informed by its structural presence which scholars of commemoration and heritage studies concur is meant to encode selected historical narratives and memories (Becker, 2011; Marschall, 2006; Werbner, 1998) and not only to preserve memories of the past (Becker, 2011; Connerton, 1989). Opposition politician Paul Themba Nyathi adds that Mugabe “appears to use the funerals (conducted at the shrine) as a pretext for making major policy statements and to rail against perceived enemies” (2004: 66). The late Chikerema, Mugabe’s uncle who differed with the latter’s policies also decried the use of the Heroes’ Acre “for political mileage by Zanu-Pf” (Buckle, 2002: 103) while the late University of Zimbabwe academic Sithole described the process of hero selection and burial as tantamount to “making the Heroes’ Acre a Zanu-Pf grave yard. It is no longer a Heroes’ Acre [for] genuine heroes” (in Buckle, 2002: 103). The marginalising processes of choosing heroes are contested by opposition politicians, academics and ordinary people using online media. *Chapter 8* pays attention to contesting definitions of national heroes and the National Heroes’ Acre as a space for national memory and identity construction.

Evidence suggests that around two thirds of the heroes buried at the shrine are Zanu-Pf and/or Zanla members with many more worthy candidates being ignored (Fisher, 2010). This has led to the contestation of the space and definition of a hero. Mugabe sees a hero as a:

E25: revolutionary who fought oppression... against the resolute will of the unjust and powerful, against the political and economic calculations and the dictates of the oppressor nations of the West.” (*The Herald*, 13.07.2002).

In a speech reported by *The Herald* on the Burial of Bernard Chidzero, a former Zanu-Pf MP and Minister of Finance in Mugabe’s cabinet, at the Heroes’ Acre, Mugabe is reported as having told Zimbabweans to:

E26: examine themselves to see if they are defending the sovereignty and independence of the country, which the heroes died fighting for or toiled to uphold after independence. (*The Herald*, 13.08.02a).

The dead heroes are venerated that Zimbabweans are implored to gain inspiration from the knowledge that they sacrificed their lives for the nation. This is articulated when Mugabe asks:

E27: [I]f Joshua Nkomo were to rise this hour, would you be fit to hold his hand and walk in step with him down the path that emanates from the very sacred shrine and ends in the great future for our country? (*The Herald*, 13.08.02).

Another sign of Zanuism and Mugabeism's internal inconsistencies is shown here. Nkomo and Mugabe were enemies but after his death, Nkomo was elevated to sainthood and celebrated as 'Father Zimbabwe' by Mugabe and Zanu-Pf. Further, Mugabe adds that anyone who does anything contrary to what the heroes (and by extension Zanu-Pf) 'stands' for or opposes its hegemony is:

E28: a willing traitor and second executioner of these heroes, a willing posthumous betrayer of their cause, indeed the eager butcher of the revolution, our heritage and of the future of our children. (*The Herald*, 13.08.02a)

The National Heroes' Acre is more than a burial shrine. It is meant to embody the ethos of liberation war in an enduring form. Its construction out of resistant materials like granite gives the liberation memory longevity and the state's memory locus is naturalised and "its ideals and founding myths are cast as naturally true as the landscape in which they stand" (Young, 1999: 6). Moreover, as reiterated in most memory studies, "[M]emory is elusive and selective: it holds onto what it chooses to hold on to.... Very like a dream, memory takes specific details out of the viscous flow of events..." (Aharon, 2004: v). This memory is therefore open to manipulation and mythologizing of certain aspects of the nation. Zelinsky (in Osborne, 2001: 7) asserts that modern nations like Zimbabwe "could neither exist nor operate effectively without an adequate body of symbol and myth" (1989: 13). The heroes are mythologised as forming the pith of Zimbabwe. This is shown when Mugabe, at the burial of the late vice president Simon Muzenda said the late vice president was

E29: an emancipator of the people;... maker of the nation, it's very throbbing soul ... its guardian, its revolutionary spirit which cruel fate sought to destroy that dark afternoon of September 20, 2003. (*The Herald*, 25.11.2003)

His death therefore was not the end but a continuation of the construction of the nation from another 'world'. Therefore, even after death, heroes are spoken to and hear 'us' since they are immortal. For instance, Mugabe addressed Hunzvi while he lay in the casket thus:

- E30: To you Hunzvi I say: you have done your part, you have fought your struggle... gallantly, staunchly defending your birth right and your revolutionary heritage. You indeed deserve the halo of a national hero. (*The Herald*, 19.06.2001)

Not only that, they watch over ‘us’ and speak to us as do all the others who lie:

- E31: in the eerie silence of this sacred acre, [asking] you and me many questions. What have you done for your country...? What are you doing with your life for your Nation, for your People, for our Children? Or are you negating the very illustrious essence of these proud and venerated men and women of honour we gather yearly to acknowledge? (*The Herald*, 08.07.2009)

The Heroes’ Acre therefore “embodies prescriptions for future behaviour” (Fisher, 2010: 88) where people are urged to uphold the values of the nation as did such heroes as “Leopold Takawira, Chairman Herbert Chitepo, General Josiah Magama Tongogara, Jason Moyo, Nikita Mangena... The Old Man, Tangwena” (08.08.2009). These heroes and those members dedicated to Zanu-Pf are portrayed as paragons of nationalist decorum to be emulated by ordinary citizens. During these rituals of national identity formation, Zanu-Pf speaks and demands respect for the heroes ‘in the interest of the nation,’ calling people to be patriotic and dedicated cadres prepared to defend the nation

- E32: against the resolute will of the unjust and powerful, against the political and economic calculations and dictates of oppressor nations of the West, now the European Union and America. (*The Herald*, 08.08.2009)

Gillis (1994: 3) has argued that the state’s presentation of “bureaucracy of memory gives a “sense of sameness over time and space” by perpetrating what Osborne (2001: 9) calls “systems of remembering and forgetting that ... favour elite memory over popular memory”. As such, the national shrine and burial of heroes form an important site and rituals respectively for Mugabe and Zanu-Pf to advance certain notions of nationhood. What is clear is the consistency in pointing out enemies and friends of the nation, the role of the liberation history and memory in the construction of the nation and expected behaviours from citizens. The latter two are linked to the commemoration of Independence Day and this is addressed in the following section. The celebrations of independence use victimhood and heroism to locate Zanu-Pf in the core of liberation history and postcolonial nation’s survival. The theme of oppression and victimhood that Mugabe usually refers to when speaking about colonialism and the need for Zimbabwe to be treated as a sovereign nation are embedded in the graphics at the Heroes’ Acre. *Figure 5* below illustrates this. The panel shows white Rhodesian forces

attacking helpless blacks. This brutality has been the theme of Mugabe's public talks during certain national ceremonies, rituals or election campaigns.



Figure 5: Oppression and victimhood of blacks under colonial rule is captured on this panel that is at the Heroes' Acre. (Source: Maritz, 2007: 124)

7.5.1 Independence Day: victimhood and heroism in nationhood formation

Independence Day celebrations in Africa demonstrate the importance of the nation-state and national-identity formation. The narratives on Zimbabwe's independence magnify the Heroes' Day celebrations as they are intimately linked and these speak to the need for constituting a cohesive national identity. Most of Zimbabwe's Independence Day celebrations help entrench a version of history that borders on 'patriotic' history (Ranger, 2004). This 'patriotic' history not only demarcates the nation racially but also calibrates the nation into insiders and outsiders, sell-outs and patriots. This version of history departs from the nationalist historiography that Zanu-Pf espoused before the 2000s. The pre-2000s nationalist historiography espoused Socialist egalitarianism, modernism and reform. 'Patriotic' history is usually married to Mugabeism and this is conspicuous during commemorative events like independence celebrations where Mugabe becomes a "prominent victim of certain historical developments" (Lentz, 2013: 226) like incarceration during

colonial times and the interference of the West in the postcolony's domestic affairs through the MDC and a planned attempt on his life by the MDC. For instance, on the country's 24th and 28th years of independence *The Herald* reported that

E33: Bold posters with messages of Zimbabwe's independence such as "Our land is our posterity", "Viva R.G. Mugabe", were pasted on the walls around the stadium," (*The Herald*, 19.04.2004)

E34: Some of the people in the crowd held up banners with messages such as "Zimbabwe has no place for sell-outs" and "Independence and Sovereignty for all times." (*The Herald*, 19.04.2008)

This 'decoration' of the stadium serves to celebrate controversial issues in the Zimbabwean polity, i.e. land reform, Zanu-Pf's brand of democracy and Mugabe's rulership of Zimbabwe which has been seen as 'toxic' as he has ruled through fear, violating human rights and stifling free expression (Lipman-Blumen, 2005). But it is not the toxicity of Mugabe being celebrated here, but the fact that he has become a 'victim' since standing up against the West is regarded as a point of celebration. By the same token, Zimbabwe's celebrations are also a moment to blame the former colonial masters for everything that goes wrong in the postcolony.

During independence celebrations, public media present Zanu-Pf as a triumphal liberation party commanding people not to "merely remember but remember triumph" (Esbenshade, 1995: 72). For instance in April 2002, while addressing a pre-independence party for children, Mugabe expressed this triumphalism:

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

Here, as reiterated above already, the fact that Zanu-Pf helped liberate the country makes it politically incorrect for anyone to challenge it on issues of democracy. Also, colonial memory is passed on to children so that they are able to locate the historical oppressor and victim-cum-victor during colonialism. Bodner (cited in Osborne, 2001: 9) expounds on this by saying that "dogmatic formalism" of "official memory is advanced by the elites who are committed to social unity, the continuity of particular institutions, and the cultivation of

loyalty to them...” Mugabe’s addresses on important days of the nation attempt to sustain Zanu-Pf’s political legitimacy and maintain dominant narratives on nationhood.

Independence Day and other myths used in nationhood construction in *The Herald* make Mugabe a central and celebrated figure—a person of national significance. For instance, Independence Day celebrations are sometimes punctuated by rituals such as Zanu-Pf Women’s league leading the crowds in songs that praise Mugabe. One of the songs goes thus:

E35: “VaMugabe Ndimambo, shumba inogara yega musango” (Translation: *Mugabe is a King. He is a lion that lives alone in the wild*). (*The Herald*, 19.04.2004)

The whole act speaks of the gendered brand of nationalism – patriarchal and phallic nationalism where women sing praise songs for male liberators. Even the way *The Herald* chooses ‘luminaries’ of the liberation struggle is revealing.

Two extracts from *The Herald* help show how Mugabeism is the fundamental ideology behind the liberation struggle and that the listing of heroes in public discourses privileges men. First, the Minister of Local Government Public Works and Urban Development, Ignatius Chombo, argues that Mugabe and other men embody the liberation struggle while in the second case, *The Herald* suggests that Mugabe’s decision to participate in the liberation war defined the country’s postcolonial destiny:

E36: The venue where we are gathered is significant for a number of reasons. Gwanzura Stadium is adjacent to Zimbabwe Grounds, which we all know was the place where Cde Mugabe made his historic speech in 1980. "Furthermore, this place is walking distance from Cde Mugabe's home in New Canaan and so by all means this is what can be called the cradle of our liberation.... Our leader, His Excellency Cde Mugabe spent 11 years in jail and many more at the forefront of the liberation struggle with other luminaries like Cde Chitepo, Cde Joshua Nkomo and Cde Muzenda among others. (*The Herald*, 19.07.2008)

E37: [T]he turning point in Zimbabwe’s liberation was indeed on April 4, 1975, when Cde Mugabe crossed into Mozambique... to start the armed struggle in a military adventure that finally brought independence to Zimbabwe.” (*The Herald*, 18.04. 2006)

Zimbabwe’s independence celebrations help define supporters of Mugabe and expose his enemies who automatically become enemies of the state. This is shown by attention paid to who attends state events by public media like *The Herald*. For example, in 2004 the Nigerian military delegation and the Mozambican Defence Forces commander attended Zimbabwe’s independence commemorations and this was portrayed as a sign of regional and continental solidarity. Failure to attend or boycotting these by the MDC is invariably read as selling-out

or an expression of ungratefulness by those who fail to honour heroes that liberated them. For instance, a fact reported three times in one story is that:

- E38: MDC Members of Parliament as well as members of the white community were conspicuous by their absence. Chairman of the Independence organising committee, Dr Ignatius Chombo, said more people attended this year's celebrations because of a realisation of the importance of nation-building. He said there was a difference between party politics and national issues. (*The Herald*, 19.04.2004)

What can be read from the emphasis in the statement is that MDC and members of the white community are not interested in nation-building. Therefore *The Herald* accentuates Zanu-Pf assertions that white Zimbabweans and the MDC are enemies of the state. Zanu-Pf, by attending and making sure the celebrations go ahead is shown as a dedicated party which prioritises national interests ahead of selfish personal ones. Language used in presidential speeches illustrates this point better.

Between 2000 and 2011, Independence Day presidential speeches were usually laced with war language and this ostensibly showed presidential determination to protect the country's sovereignty and alert the nation to its past and present threats. On the day Mugabe also gives an update on the state of the nation and calls on the nation to:

- E39: remain united and vigilant against threats to its sovereignty manifesting in people and organisations purporting to be champions of democracy. ... We celebrate this 24th anniversary of our freedom with a stronger sense of unity and cohesion at home, and a strong sense of place and identity internationally.... The last four years presented us a number of challenges and real trials for the country. Yet [we managed by] ...indomitable stand on matters of national sovereignty and... regaining the ownership and control of our land, and distributing it to our people. (*The Herald*, 21.04.2004).

In the above quote, Zanu-Pf portrays itself as a party that has safeguarded the country's sovereignty and restored the people's dignity. In these celebrations, the party gives a progress report on what it has done for the country. These report back sessions by Mugabe are meant to be moments of collective national pride and also reflection. The ultimate goal in these "condensed moments of nation-building and state-making [is to enhance] citizens' emotional attachments to their country" especially when the report suggests achievements and also "sharp self-criticism for opportunities missed and the frustrating shortcomings that continue to punctuate daily life" (Lentz, 2013: 218).

Legitimacy here is built not only through displays of violence apparatus in the hands of the state but through communicating successes, failures or challenges and performance of power embedded in pageantry, pomp and fanfare. For example colonialism is compared with how good ‘we’ are as “we have done much more”:

E40: We have done much more in the 25 years which have gone by. We have built schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities. We have trained teachers and expanded education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. We have educated our children and with a literacy rate of well over 86 percent.... We have also built health institutions throughout the country and have stepped up the training of health personnel, albeit against the challenges of induced skills flight. Today, every community has a clinic or health centre. ... Dramatic gains have been registered in opening up rural areas through greater infrastructural development. From a road and rail network designed to serve white interests, we have expanded the road network to bring hitherto neglected rural areas ... We have expanded rural electrification, covering the far reaches of our country... Our water sector has also enjoyed huge investments.... We have built many dams of all sizes in all provinces... we have built schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities and electrified rural areas. (*The Herald*, 19.04.2005)

This development is set against the colonial development system which, according to Zanu-Pf is represented by the MDC. This turns independence celebrations into arenas “of more or less open political campaigning” (Lentz, 2013: 218) where Zanu-Pf justifies why it has to remain in government. In the process, people are indirectly warned that if they vote for the MDC they will be taking the country back to colonialism where development was sectarian — racially biased. Also, ‘patriotic’ history and memory are used to look back and show how odious the colonists were:

E41: We... paid the price of British bondage for ninety long and arduous years of systematic assault and injury to body and soul as a Nation under occupation. To this day we bear the lasting scars of that dark encounter with colonialism, often described as civilising. (*The Herald*, 19.04.2005).

People are also urged to be thankful to Zanu-Pf for bringing the one-man-one vote democratic system. In the process this justifies, covertly, the use of violence especially against political ‘opponents’ and those who vote for the opposition. This is demonstrated when Mugabe admonishes:

E42: The one-person-one-vote we have enjoyed since 1980 is a gain from our liberation struggle. Let it be remembered that it was the bullet that brought the ballot. (*The Herald*, 19.04.05)

Therefore the gun (violence) has to protect the vote (Blair, 2002 and Meredith, 2002). Democracy, narrowly defined by Zanu-Pf as ‘one-man-one-vote’ in this instance has been a point of contention between Zanu-Pf and its critics who have pointed out how the party has

become increasingly intolerant to dissent, violently treated its opponents, and disregarded human and property rights.

Besides the victimhood narrative, the president uses triumphalism in an attempt to salvage Zanu-Pf political hegemony and ultimately sustain the dominant discourses on the nation. Historical events, especially the war of liberation, are mostly used to bring forth this theme of triumphalism. Many extracts help highlight this:

- E43: We use the day to affirm to them that the **same spirit of patriotism, which propelled their valiant sons and daughters to battle, today immanently pervades and guards this nation, quick to chastise any of its citizens who dare betray the cause by pawning our hard-won Independence.** Dear Zimbabweans, it gives me immeasurable pleasure to be able to tell you that the land which, for over a century and a decade we yearned to recover, has indeed finally come back. It has been delivered back to you who are its rightful owners. It has come back, notwithstanding the obstacles presented at every step of the way, by powerful western interests. **The milestone we have achieved through our land reform is not the only important achievement of our twenty-three years of Independence. Even our own detractors grudgingly acknowledge the strides we have made in education and manpower development, health and child welfare, horticulture and forestry, mining and infrastructural development.** (23rd Independence Anniversary, 18 April 2003) (Emphasis added).
- E44: **Today, we once again celebrate, as free and proud Zimbabweans, our country's anniversary of Independence. We celebrate this 24th anniversary of our freedom with a stronger sense of unity and cohesion at home, and a strong sense of place and identity internationally.** We face the future with confidence, hope and dignity. The last four years presented us a number of challenges and real trials for our country. **Yet they have been years also of break-throughs arising from our firm and indomitable stand on matters of national sovereignty and economic freedom, the high point being the fulfillment of our liberation war goal of recovering and regaining the ownership and control of our land, and distributing it to our people.** (Mugabe, 2004, 24th Independence Anniversary, 18 April 2004) (Emphasis added).
- E45: **This birth followed bitter struggles and wars of resistance waged by our people for nearly a century, struggles meant to dislodge British settler colonialism, which in 1890, had planted itself on our soil through force of arms.** (Mugabe, 2005, 25th Independence Silver Jubilee Celebrations, 18th April 2005) (Emphasis added).
- E46: **...hard-won Independence and freedom from the shackles of British colonialist and imperialist domination...** Government will continue to allocate significant resources to ensure sustained defence of our hard-won Independence, sovereignty and self-determination... resilience... [to have] resisted the brazen attempts of our detractors, openly working in cahoots with their shameless local puppets, to reverse the gains our Independence through their 'regime change' agenda. (*The Herald*, 19.04.2007) (Emphasis added).

The above extracts form part of a summary of Mugabe's more than 30 speeches he has given since independence. From these statements, Mugabe historicises Zimbabwe's wars at

different epochs. First, there is the battle to free the country from colonialists; second, the one to repossess the land and third, to ward off threats from former colonisers who want to 'reverse the gains of our independence.'

What can be gleaned from these statements is that Mugabeism and Zanuism are used to interpellate Zimbabweans into being part of the imagined nation through the use of emotionally appealing words like 'we', 'our' 'people' and 'dear Zimbabweans'. Even though the structure of power in the nation is clearly top-down, Mugabe gives people an impression that power lies in them and whatever the leadership of the country does is to the benefit and with blessings of the people. In most addresses, Mugabe inevitably thanks and salutes patriotic Zimbabweans for being heroic and withstanding the enemy's attempts to recolonise Zimbabwe. The subtext in celebrating the heroic stance of Zimbabweans, according to Raftopoulos (2002), is an attempt to justify the use of violence (gun to protect the vote and independence) against the opponents as a form of defence against those aggressors intending to recolonise Zimbabwe. The enemy's intentions to decolonize Zimbabwe and the people's heroic defence of the country can be summed up in Mugabe's statement at the 26th anniversary of the country's independence when he said:

E47: I say thank you to all our people who have stood firm in the defence of our country, in different capacities, and resisted the enemy's repeated attempts to reverse our Independence. (Mugabe, 2006 26th Independence Celebrations, 18.04.2006).

In the process, the vanquished colonial enemy and its 'puppets' are pointed out, threatened and embarrassed. Fear of re-colonisation is struck into the hearts of ordinary Zimbabweans and at the same time Zanu-Pf, through the military, gives assurance that the country is safe as shown in the following extract from a story in *The Herald*:

E48: Cde Mugabe inspected the Guard of Honour after which detachments from the country's security forces forming the guard declared: "Zimbabwe is a sovereign State, we shall defend it with our blood", to the delight of the thousands in attendance. Some of the people in the crowd held up banners with messages such as "Zimbabwe has no place for sell-outs" and "Independence and Sovereignty for all times. (The Herald, 19.04.2007)

Ultimately, Independence Day like other celebrations, is used to mark black majority rule, positions Zanu-Pf as central in the wellbeing and political stability of the nation and Mugabe's centrality in leading the nation as indisputable. In summary, these events help construct a hegemonic identity that seeks to entrench Zanu-Pf constructed notions of the

nation and are an attempt to stave off contestations to Zanu-Pf's use of independence celebrations to cobble a narrow and politically limited national identity.

However, the formulations of nation-belonging seem to apply to blacks and only a certain type of blacks — those considered citizens. Post- 2000 Zimbabwe has excluded hundreds of thousands of people of foreign ancestry who worked mainly in white commercial farms and factories. These “invisible subject minorities” (Muzondidya, 2004: 213) were rendered stateless in 2001 when Zanu-Pf brought in the Citizenship Amendment Act which prohibited dual citizenship. People with dual citizenship automatically lost their Zimbabwean citizenship. The aim of this Act according to Katinka Ridderbos (2008) was to disenfranchise 30 000 white Zimbabweans who also held British passports from voting and supporting the MDC. In addition, white judges in the high and supreme courts held dual citizenship and the Zanu-Pf government capitalised on this amendment to force some of them to resign because they were not giving judgements favourable to Zanu-Pf and the latter did not care whether its move was wrong or justified by law.

The affected people were accused of using their dual citizenship “to discredit the Zanu-Pf regime abroad and bankrolling the ... MDC. People who were opposed — or thought to oppose — Zanu-Pf's rule were seen as enemies of the state who had no legitimate claim to Zimbabwean citizenship” (Ridderbos, 2008: 73). Together with the farm invasions, this amendment also affected approximately 600 000 farm labourers of Malawian, Mozambican or Zambian ancestry, some of whom were second or third generation migrants with no connections in their ancestral homelands. Earlier, these people had been entitled to Zimbabwean citizenship under the constitutional law and Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act.

According to Muzondidya, “[T]he projection of Zimbabwean whites as foreigners with limited rights has also extended to Zimbabweans of foreign descent and others constructed as alien by both colonial and post-independence ideologies” (2004: 226). For instance, besides people of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian descent, Zimbabwe has a considerable coloured and Indian population. These have never been treated as citizens since 1980. Muzondidya cites one critical event in the treatment of Indians and Coloured as outsiders in Zimbabwe thus: “in “1987 a Miss Teen Queen Beauty Contest organised in Bulawayo ended in an uproar when the audience protested because the event was won by two Coloured girls and an Indian girl” (2004: 223). Indians and Coloureds have been excluded from participating

in the nation and economic nationalism through government's deployment of race and ethnicity. It is not surprising that the 2000-2003 land reform programme has also deliberately excluded Coloureds and Indians. Muzondidya cites one interviewee in *The Sunday Mail* (04.04.2001) saying about the land reform:

... some Coloureds have tried to register and be allocated pieces of land like our black counterparts but have been told that they should register with their village headman. Everybody knows we do not have village headman. Is that not a subtle way of discriminating against us? (2004: 228)

People of Malawian, Zambian and Mozambican ancestry have 'A' written on their national identity (ID) documents and this marks them as aliens. A Zanu-Pf member of parliament once said about those of foreign ancestry:

... the definition of an indigenous person is one who has a rural home allocated to him by virtue of being indigenous and (not) a home one has acquired in an urban area because he has either bought it or it has been allocated to him by the state. (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 01.07.2005)

The IDs of the rest of the local black population have district codes and "CIT" which denotes districts of origin and that they are Citizens. In the case of Indians and Coloureds, their IDs are written "00 CIT" which denotes that they do not have a district of origin. A Coloured Zimbabwean academic Clayton Peel once commented:

The Coloureds have 00 CIT at the end, and some people claim the 00 designates them as non-citizens. But that is because many Coloureds do not have districts of origin, or were unable to give their districts of origin. Some people see this as discriminatory and derogatory, but for me the ID is based on information that is on your birth certificate. (2013, Personal Communication).

The above, as Mamdani (2001) argues, illustrates that race rather than citizenship is the main basis that Zanu-Pf has used to define the national insiders and outsiders to be included and excluded respectively.

7.5.2 Gukurahundi and Unity Day: contradictory strategies for nation building

The celebrations of Unity Day³⁰ and the Gukurahundi episode cannot be separated in any analysis as they are symbiotically related. As explained in *Chapter 2*, Zimbabwe celebrates

³⁰ The Unity Accord was signed in December 22, 1987 as an attempt to end further spilling of blood in the genocide. The signing parties were Zanu-Pf and Pf-Zapu— which merged together forming a new party ironically named Zanu-Pf. Joshua Nkomo, the Pf-Zapu leader was made one of the two co-vice presidents (Simon Muzenda was the other). In terms of nationalist politics, Nkomo was more senior to Mugabe but electoral and ethnic factors could not elevate him into being the president (Ndlovu-Gatsheni). His death on 1 July 1999 led to Mugabe speaking about how Nkomo was the founding father of the nation and its liberation struggle, gaining the name "Father of the Nation/Father Zimbabwe" in the process making Nkomo occupy a

Unity Day because it is as a result of Gukurahundi and ethnic tensions associated with it. Zanu-Pf has used Unity Day to silence any dissent or debate on the Gukurahundi genocide. Zanu-Pf's dominant narrative on the Gukurahundi episode is replete with contradictions that largely mirror intra-party and ethnic tensions within the party in particular and the country generally. These tensions have burdened Zanu-Pf's attempts to maintain political legitimacy and build hegemonic and cohesive national identity. The Unity Day and Gukurahundi narrative seeks at one point to remember and dis-remember; and at another, to forget the human rights violations of the 1980s genocide, generating tension between the state (read Zanu-Pf) and victims or survivors. The episode still induces fear and collective anxiety for communities, individual survivors and Zimbabweans at large (see Barbera, 2009) because the violator, Zanu-Pf, still controls all institutions of violence and repression in the country.

Unity Day commemorations are underpinned by narratives of the liberation struggle (an attempt to factor in the Zapu/Zipra contributions), conquest and need for unity while ignoring the genesis of these unity celebrations – the genocide and Zanu-Pf attempt to create a one-party state. These narratives use 'patriotic' history that attempts to celebrate unity while silencing ethnic divisions instituted by Gukurahundi. These commemorations are therefore treated like birthdays in a typical conservative cultural setting where the graphic details of one's conception and birth are never addressed, but what is remembered is only the fact that they were born. Zimbabweans are never told the genesis and reasons of celebrating Unity Days. If the truth is exposed, Zanu-Pf will be seen in a negative light since the state which was under the party's control was an active agent in orchestrating heinous acts of violence against political opponents.

contradictory place in Zimbabwean politics. It contrasts, for instance, with the 1980s "Father of Dissidents" where between 1980 and 1987 Nkomo was demonised as the 'Father of Dissidents', denigrated in public media as a 'big bellied' 'useless Ndebele King' (see Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007b; *The Herald*, 07.11.80 and *The Herald*, 4.07.80) and Mugabe likened Nkomo to a cobra in the house that needed to be crushed (Nkomo, 1984)³⁰ and was an example of what a Zimbabwean was not supposed to be, a position currently occupied by the MDC, homosexuals, NGOs among others. That Nkomo and ex-Zipra combatants were labelled enemies of Zimbabwe justified the violent deployment of the Fifth Brigade to Matabeleland and Midlands to clean out the "chaff" from the country. Nkomo, Zipra, Pf-Zapu and Ndebele people who supported Nkomo were the chaff that the North Korean trained and traumatised Fifth Brigade army sought to exterminate in order to install a one-party system in the country (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007; Moyo Jonathan, Mandaza, *et al.*, 1991). A cursory look at the debates of forging the Zimbabwe nationhood reveals that Zanu-Pf has reconstituted Nkomo's image for its hegemonic sustenance, using him posthumously to fight factionalism and keep the two main ethnic groups that make up the party united in the face of some former Pf-Zapu members pulling out to regroup as an opposition party. Accordingly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni claims that Nkomo, after his death, became a saint or icon of the liberation struggle – a selfless man who liberated his people (and one therefore has to question the use of Mugabe in the Heroes Acre mural since Nkomo's life is a microcosmic representation of the struggle) who set an example to be followed by all Zimbabweans.

While remembering can be the basis of soul searching and a way of gaining closure on the horrors of the genocide, Zanu-Pf argues that forgetting is the best way to find closure as it unites the country. It is important to point out that one cannot forget that which s/he does not remember hence this forgetting advocated by Zanu-Pf is problematic as it is done outside remembering, for example, outside the confines of a truth and reconciliation commission and therefore acts as a 'negative heritage' (Bell, 2006). Maja Zehfuss poignantly sums it thus:

Although remembering and forgetting are clearly opposed to each other in debates over memory, and the former valued over the latter, they are inextricably linked: remembering always already entails forgetting and forgetting is possible only where there is remembering in the first place. (2006: 213)

The failure to remember that which needs to be forgotten has created problems in Zimbabwe's national identity as will be shown in the next two chapters. Zanu-Pf has made remembering and discussing the 1980s genocide a preserve of internal and external enemies of the state. In dealing with Gukurahundi and Unity Day, the state has largely asserted itself as an agent of amnesia. For example, former Deputy President John Nkomo (2009-2013), in a debate about the need for having a dialogue on the genocide suggested that there are certain kinds of people who are not qualified to discuss it. He said:

E49: ... those who talk about it were never victims or were born yesterday and are too young to comprehend what happened and why. President Mugabe came to Bulawayo when we were over that period with the late Vice President Joshua Nkomo and we all went to Brethren-In-Christ Church here in town and he said it was a moment of madness. They agreed with Umdala uNkomo that it should be a closed chapter. It was indeed a regrettable period in our country and people must engage and as the Organ on National Healing, our task is to say how it can be handled because fires are being fanned. [Cde Nkomo said it was important for people to handle the topic in a manner that would not open old wounds. He said people must be made to appreciate that in any political situation, people might lose their lives]. Look at the years we spent in Gonakudzingwa Prison during the liberation war and there are thousands of people who went to war and never returned so who will compensate them for losing their lives? We have to accept that where there are human tribulations, such things happen. Let's engage to build a better present and a better future and always remember that what happened is history and we can't reverse it. (*The Herald*, 23.06.2011)

Here John Nkomo equates colonial abuse to postcolonial episodes of injustices to encourage people to forget and not discuss past injustices they "can't reverse" regardless of who commits them. Official pronouncements on this issue advantage Zanu-Pf in many ways. These comments are made in the backdrop of the genocide having engendered long term fear of Zanu-Pf. The party cannot be challenged on this issue as this fear has affected community cohesion, participation in and networks of protest. The possibilities of such protests or networks have been systematically dismantled to an extent that people fear to be protagonists in major political activities that affect their lives (Barbera, 2009). Further, Nkomo's comments can be understood in the context of Renan's (1990) *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*

Renan implored his French countrymen to forget inauspicious episodes in the history of their nation as this was the basis for national construction. Here the brand of national identity expressed crystallises around forgetting to remember and remembering to forget the 1980s genocide—a dark side of Zimbabwe’s postcolonial nationalism.

This deliberate top-down amnesia regarding Gukurahundi contrasts Zanu-Pf’s obsession with remembering the colonial injustices which are graphically described in public events as illustrated above. Whereas the colonial memory has been used by Zanu-Pf to consolidate national identity, the narrative of Unity Day alludes to “the process of remembering [and becoming] selective, incorporating acts of forgetting” (Stewart, 2000: 384). This simultaneously speaks to Zanu-Pf’s fear and insecurity on how to sustain legitimacy amidst dissent from some sections of society and intraparty factionalism. Official announcements like the one said to have been made by John Nkomo, are meant to warn citizens not to talk or seek redress about the episode as doing so is the sole preserve of those “foreign funded political parties and the media” who want to derail the country’s “march towards complete economic recovery” (*The Herald*, 19.07.2011). However, internal conflict regarding the genocide abounds within Zanu-Pf. This is notable when Emmerson Mnangagwa who was Minister of State Security during the genocide argues, contrary to John Nkomo’s assertions:

E50: The unity accord is a symbol of national unity. It was a profound and decisive initiative meant to reconcile the two revolutionary parties, Zanu-PF and PF Zapu. President Mugabe and Dr Nkomo reached a consensus. There is really nothing that Zanu-PF needs to be open about now because Dr Nkomo was also part of Zanu-PF.... We do not want to undermine efforts by our national leaders to reunite the people. If we try to open healed wounds by discussing such issues, we will be undermining and failing to recognise the statesmanship exhibited by President Mugabe and his counterpart, Dr Nkomo when they signed the Unity Accord in 1987 (*The Herald*, 19.07.2011)

This statement neglects to factor in the healing and the memory of those who were killed. This contrasts with the Rwanda case where the government of the day has created memorial sites where genocide is memorialised and victims remembered. In so doing national cohesion, justice, accountability and unity are fostered (Ibreck, 2009). The temporal process of healing, forgetting and remembering does not only have to be an elite-driven project but has to include the living and the dead, victims and perpetrators (See *Chapter 9*).

To further elucidate tensions within Zanu-Pf informed by the subject of Gukurahundi, one politburo member Jonathan Moyo, whose father died during the genocide, retorted that Mnangagwa's remarks were "irresponsible and unacceptable". He added:

The Gukurahundi issue is not a closed chapter. President Mugabe made a paradigmatic statement in 2000 when he described it as a moment of madness, which it indeed was, but there's nothing that has been done since 2000 to use that very important statement by the President to bring the matter to finality or closure. I strongly believe that only Zanu-PF can lead the process of bringing that matter to closure building on what President Mugabe said in 2000. And the party can do that by being willing to publicly engage the issue in an open, honest and non-defensive way, which has characterised our attitude thus far. That was a dark point in our history as an independent nation which not only involved dissidents who committed atrocities and wantonly destroyed property but also the State whose response to the dissident menace, which clearly had illegal and mercenary support and direction from apartheid South Africa, was so outrageously disproportionate as to cause unnecessary suffering among ordinary people which could have otherwise been avoided. (*The Sunday Mail*, 13.08.2011)

Before then, in 2006, as an independent Member of Parliament for Tsholotsho, Jonathan Moyo wrote but never tabled in parliament the *Gukurahundi Memorial Bill* with, among other things, an intention of establishing a "Gukurahundi National Memorial Board" and Gukurahundi National Memorial shrine meant to "promote lasting national cohesion, unity, truth, reconciliation, stability, conflict prevention and the permanent healing of emotive and divisive wounds" and criminalised any denialism of the genocide. *The Sunday Mail* reacted to this by suggesting that it was a plan:

to divide the country along tribal lines by sponsoring a parliamentary Bill that analysts say is aimed at opening wounds of the political disturbances that occurred in Matabeleland and the Midlands in the 1980s. Said one analyst: "He knows quite well that the Bill will not sail through but he is seeking to reopen wounds of that bad patch by institutionalising the conflict. It is an attempt to abuse the parliamentary system to make up for his weak position as a solitary independent MP." Above all, the Bill is meant to project him as a champion of one ethnic group in the country, hoping to use that as a platform for his political future. (*The Sunday Mail*, 31.12.2006)

John Nkomo who was Speaker of Parliament at that time said about Moyo's Bill:

Even President Mugabe has acknowledged Gukurahundi as a time of madness, which must never be repeated, so that means government is in a position to redress what happened then without having to be bound by any bills... We must be careful when handling such issues because they affect the national unity symbolised by the unification of ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU into the united ZANU-PF we have today. Gukurahundi has always been steeped in tribal overtones pitting the Ndebele against the Shona, and no one wants to revisit such a divisive era. (*Irin News*, 2007)

On top of the statement from Mugabe describing genocide as a 'moment of madness' in 2002, he further said:

E51: Whatever remains were historical differences. These remain as history of our country and we can't bring ugly history into the present affairs and rewrite that ugly history. No. (*The Herald*, 17.12.2002)

What is significant from the above is that Zanu-Pf uses its political domination of the post-genocide era to control debates on national identity. The contradictory articulation of the genocide issue reveals power imbalances in the discourses that surround Gukurahundi and Unity Day within Zanu-Pf. Werbner asserts that buried memory was and still is “Mugabe’s own demand. Ironically, he continues to call for forgetting the past where he most commemorates it” (Werbner, 1998: 96). Those who remember and challenge the Unity Day as a day of mourning are labelled by Mugabe as a “band of Jeremiahs ...reactionary foreign journalists, non-governmental organisations of dubious status in our midst and sanctimonious prelates” (Alexandra and McGregor, 1999: 253).

Even Joshua Nkomo, who was Mugabe’s enemy during the Gukurahundi episode and deputy president after signing the Unity Accord with Mugabe, was disturbed by the publication of the CCJP Gukurahundi Report³¹ and his reaction accentuates political elites’ attempts to overwrite dissent in preference of silence on the genocide. It is said that Nkomo:

...apparently stormed into the CCJP offices demanding that all copies (*of the atrocities report*) should be handed over to him... [He] berated the staff in Ndebele warning them of the danger to national unity of publication. (Italics added, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 9 May, 1997 in Werbner, 1998: 96).

Nkomo’s use of force here is synonymous with Zanu-Pf’s attempts to institutionally dominate the discursive field of national identity and force debates to follow certain trajectories that do not impede the dominant discourses. The suspicion that discussing genocide may make “one become a target of political violence or human rights violations [has] permeated all aspects of life and caused great anguish” (Barbera, 2009: 72) and has promoted silence in Zimbabwe 30 years after independence. This knowledge is accompanied by Zanu-Pf’s clear sentiments on genocide; that people have to forget for the sake of unity and as an expression of patriotism.

Zanu-Pf has made debates on Gukurahundi taboo. To that end, force has been used to silence people, even cabinet ministers. For instance, the Minister of National Healing Andrew Mzila-Ndlovu, an opposition MP, and Father Marko Mnkandla, a catholic priest, were arrested for attending a memorial service for the massacre victims and

³¹ This is a report on the genocide compiled by the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice and the Legal Resources Foundation. The report was written in the 1990s – a period of relative stability in Zimbabwe and offers personal experiences from the survivors and suggests the way forward for the nation.

E52: ... contravening Section 31 (a) (iii) (b) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, Chapter 9:23 (publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to the State)... Mzila-Ndlovu said "Silwane villagers should turn against President Mugabe because most of them lost relatives during the Gukurahundi era and that President Mugabe was silent with the police, CIO, army being used by him and his party to further their political mileage ..." Father Mnkandla contravened Section 25 of the Public Order and Security Act (Posa) by failing to notify police that there was a public meeting. Father Mnkandla spoke strongly about Gukurahundi and the alleged dominance of Shona people in Matabeleland... He allegedly encouraged Silwane villagers to take action against President Mugabe saying victims of the Gukurahundi era in Matabeleland were killed by the Fife Brigade sent by the President. Father Mnkandla allegedly went on to say that he had discovered 52 mass graves of victims of Gukurahundi and that he was going to identify, exhume and rebury the bodies. He said people should rise up against the perpetrators of Gukurahundi era and President Mugabe. He also said the perpetrators were fully running the country while silent about the disturbances as if nothing happened. (*The Herald*, 20.04.2011).

From the above, there seems to be more to the arrests than the laws allegedly contravened. Besides a consistent effort from Zanu-Pf to forcibly make people forget genocide and interfering with memorial services of the genocide, Zanu-Pf is here suppressing ethnic rituals and particularism in favour of national unity. Similar tactics have been used before, for instance in 1997 the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) allegedly stopped villagers from erecting a headstone with victims' names on a mass grave in a memorial commemoration of the Fifth Brigade victims in Lupane (Werbner, 1998b). Due to fear, the community obliged and the only inscription on the headstone at the end of the day was that day's date. In short, people "trapped in the fear of fear" (Ibacache *et al.*, in Barbera, 2009: 75) end up not knowing the demarcations between what is safe and dangerous to discuss and commemorate when 'ticklish' (Mhlanga, 2012) cultural issues are involved.

This fear permeates the whole society as those fearful or those who hold the memory need not be direct victims of the genocide, but as Rojas (1996: 63) argues (in Barbera, 2009), all people (and even those who do not experience violence) "have... been submitted to the terror, the fear, the psychological manipulation, the human transfiguration" and the memory of violence. This is also accentuated by one of Barbera's (2009: 75) interlocutors in her paper on memory in a Chilean Shantytown who says that memory of violence "leads [us] to continue to live in a constant state of internalised fear."

Besides official announcements that on the surface appear as non-coercive 'advice', during Unity Day, Zanu-Pf also employs entertainment to encourage people to forget the genocide. For instance, the Zifa Unity Soccer Cup and the night-long music galas are some forms of

public spheres used for nationhood formation. These might be seen by Zanu-Pf as having a soporific effect on Zimbabweans – capable of lulling the masses into forgetting. These forms of ‘celebration’ do not allow for introspection and debate but come out as digression from the real issues that burden Zimbabwe’s political, ethnic and racial relations. Music galas, besides their entertainment value, are used to send the message to enemies. For instance, the 2006 Unity Gala was themed “Uniting Against Imperialism,” in reference to the Western countries who allegedly work with the MDC in its ‘regime change agenda’. In these galas, musicians like Last Chiyangwa (also known as Tambaoga), Joseph Nhara (also known as Man Soul Jah) sing songs thematically linked to *Third Chimurenga* and whose lyrical content attacks the West. For example in Tambaoga’s “Agrimende,” former British Prime Minister is referred to as “The only Blair I know is a toilet”. The *Third Chimurenga Series*, a series of pro-land reform and Zanu-Pf albums also dominate the galas. Themes of these songs are peppered with racist lyrics, praise-singing for Mugabe and Zanu-Pf and racist language. Racist lyrics reinforce Zanu-Pf arguments that whites are not Zimbabweans. Jambaya and Gandhi (2002: 12) highlight some of these songs:

- E53: The song *Mwana Wevhu* by Bryn Taurai Mteki featured on the album *Mwana Wevhu*, he sings: *Nyika ndeyedu/ ... /Zimbabwe ndeyedu isu vatema*. (*The country is ours/ ... /Zimbabwe is for us black people*).
- E54: Cde Chinx Chingaira in the album *Hondo Yeminda Volume 2...* in the song *Maruza Imi...* sings: *Hona vakauya muZimbabwe vachibva Britain, America .../Nangangowe Zimbabwe havazivi nyika yavatema izere uchi nemukaka*. (*They came to Zimbabwe from Britain, America... They do not know that the land is for Blacks and full of milk and honey*).
- E55: *Zvinoda Wakashinga* by Minister of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation, Elliot Manyika, Minister of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation. He sings: *Kune vamwe vakapanduka/Nepamusana pekuda mari... pekusafunga*. (*There are some people who have become sellouts/because of the love for money/... [and] inability to reason*)... *“Torai vanhu vakadai.../Dzidzisai gwara reZANU/ZANU ndeyeropa”* (*Take such people (sellouts) and teach them the ZANU-PF dogma/ZANU-PF was born out of blood*). [Translation and emphasis in the original]

The lyrical content of these songs also advocates the violent treatment of enemies who refuse to follow Zanu-Pf. While in other narratives Zanu-Pf claims sole responsibility for bringing independence to Zimbabwe (*The Herald*, 01.07.2005), the National Unity discourse re-inscribes Pf-Zapu into national formation, liberation and ‘patriotic’ history as one of the country’s two most illustrious revolutionary parties:

- E56: Zimbabweans today celebrate the 16th anniversary of the unity accord on the background of the numerous gains it has brought to the country. Perhaps the most important gain of them all

is the peace that unity between the country's two most illustrious revolutionary parties-Zanu-Pf and Pf-Zapu- has brought. (*The Herald*, 22.11.2003)

What is conspicuous about the reportage and analysis of the Unity Accord in *The Herald* is lack of historical and contextual background. For instance, an analysis by Caesar Zvayi, 'Unity Forms Base for Development' (*The Herald*, 22.11.2006) fails to provide a background and contextualised history of the day. He writes:

E57: Zimbabweans from all walks of life mark [the] 19th anniversary of National Unity Day, as a public holiday gazetted through Statutory Instrument 156 of 1997 to mark the signing of Unity Accord between the country's two revolutionary parties, Zanu-Pf and Pf-Zapu... The two parties, that represented the entirety of the Zimbabwean populace, put pen to paper on December 22 1987 in Harare ensuring the peace and stability the country revels in today. It was not difficult for the two parties to unite as they shared common ideals and objectives to ensure that Zimbabweans enjoyed the fruits of independence without undue hindrance from outsiders. Indeed, the suffix/prefix PF in the party names denoted a history of shared values that saw them coming together to form the Patriotic Front in the late 1970s... (*The Herald*, 22.11.2006).

The media are powerful in suppressing certain views and this comes out clearly in the above quote. Instead of revealing the historical background of the Unity Day, *The Herald* chooses to frame it within the Zanu-Pf narrative that celebrates unity and in the process ignoring cultural needs of the victims like decent burial, truth and reconciliation so that the dead may rest in peace and the living may find closure. Besides, Gukurahundi is presented by Zvayi as a response by the Mugabe government to white Rhodesian sponsored mutiny in Matabeleland. The article conceals many narratives that will be unravelled in the *Chapter 10*.

Interestingly, *The Herald* has not been consistent in its attempts to frame the Unity Day without reference to the genocide as in 2009 it revealed that the

E58: Accord was signed by Zanu and Zapu in 1987. President Mugabe and the late Vice President Joshua Nkomo signed the Unity Accord in 1987 to bridge the tribal gulf that led to political disturbances in the Matabeleland region soon after independence. (*The Herald*, 22.12.2009)

Those who contest the uses and abuse of the Unity Accord by Zanu-Pf as a cover-up for its "genocide" are labelled:

E59: detractors who are sponsored by the same inimical forces that sustained the dissidents, want Zimbabweans to forget that the dissidents were an Apartheid South Africa and Rhodesian project. (*The Herald*, 22.11.2006)

This is because, as Zvayi's article suggests, Zanu-Pf thinks that the accord was signed on behalf of all Zimbabwean. In addition, the unification of Zanu-Pf and Pf-Zapu rendered Zimbabwe a one-party state. Therefore dismissal of other opinions contrary to those of Zanu-Pf is an attempt to maintain hegemony and Zanu-Pf's ideologies on nationhood. *The Herald's* narratives on the Unity Accord, its relevance and Mugabe's 'unity' independence speeches, fail to capture the essence of Unity Day in the context of the 1980s conflict. The response from Zanu-Pf regarding the Matabeleland massacres reflects the tensions within the former ruling party, a party divided on ethnic and factional fault lines. The only time the discourse in the public sphere gets closer to talking about the heinous nature of the genocide is when it refers to it as 'Matabeleland and Midlands' disturbances, or as Mugabe said 'a moment of madness that should never be repeated' or as reported by *The Herald* while quoting Mugabe:

E60: "Along the way there was fighting. It is regretted," he said, referring to post-independence disturbances in Matabeleland and Midlands regions. "We re-united ourselves and reminded ourselves that we are one people. There is need for us not to let go on the land... (*The Herald*, 8.4.2008)

From the above, it is clear that Zanu-Pf and Mugabe are uncomfortable in addressing the genocide issue in its entirety and this informs the debates that are addressed by *Chapters 8* and *9* where ordinary citizens use social media to dismantle Zanu-Pf's selective use of collective memory in national identity construction. Moreover, *The Herald* and other public media's use of terms like "disturbances" "fighting" etc. is synonymous with Zanu-Pf's de facto official memory of the genocide, hence the need to question assertions by Moyo (2009: 62) that "news is a great myth or ideology maker where journalists unconsciously act as the agents". Not in *The Herald* context. It seems in public media, journalists are conscious about what they are doing, in this case, deliberately supporting Zanu-Pf's versions of nationhood and this is informed by the political economy of public media worldwide. Public media have narrated the story of unity in frames that legitimate and naturalise Zanu-Pf hegemony.

7.5.3 Gender, Sexuality and the constitution: Lamentable practices, queer sexualities³², patriarchy and nationalism

Sexuality has played an integral part in national identity formation in most African countries. According to Oliver Phillips,

sexuality can be defined by referring to a wide range of anatomical acts and physical behaviour involving one, two or more people. We can relate it to emotional expressions of love, intimacy and desire that can take an infinite variety of forms. Or it can be implicated in the reproduction of social structures and markers through rules and regulations that permit or prohibit specific relations and/or acts. In the end, it emerges that these definitions are far from exhaustive. None of them are adequate on their own but that when considered all together they reflect the multiple ways that sexuality is manifest and impacts on our lives, and that above all; these definitions all consistently involve relations of power (2011: 285)

It is this question around power, i.e power to define the nation or contest such definitions using sexuality as an entrance card into the nation. There are two voices contesting the issue of sexuality and identity in the African context. One represented by such leaders as Robert Mugabe whose attempts are to control and legislate who an individual gets erotically involved with. These people attempt to discard any appreciation of Africa and African sexualities as diverse and rich, but seek to perpetuate the colonial stereotype that reifies Africa as a homogeneous entity. On the other hand are those voices that speak of African sexualities “in the plural in recognition of the complex structures within which sexuality is constructed and in recognition of its pluralist articulations” (Tamale, 2011: 2). Specifically, same sex erotic relationships are frowned upon in Zimbabwe and the writing of the country’s new constitution which was adopted in 2013 is testimony to an attempt to govern sexuality in the current Zimbabwe. Homosexuality has seen discursive practices on nationhood condensing “into laws which regulate the social practices of inclusion and exclusion of individuals in the nation based on acceptable sexual behaviour” (Wodak *et al.*, 2010: 31). Resisting and outlawing these sexual practices function as a mechanism for ‘preserving’ Zimbabweanness. Previously, laws like Sexual Crimes and Crimes against Morality for instance were used to outlaw any forms of consensual or non-consensual same-sex erotic relationships during colonial times in Zimbabwe.

³² The use of the term queer in this instance is meant to encompass such words as ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’ and ‘homosexual’ and any other wide range of genders, sexual preferences and alternative identities mushrooming in the postcolonial world context. The term queer might be contested in the activist and academic world but its usage here suffices as it caters for gays and lesbians and other sexualities that do not fall under the realm of heterosexuality. ‘Queer sexualities’ therefore affords the capturing of largest possible community of alternative sexualities.

Heterosexuality has played a key role in the limiting discourse of what constitutes Zimbabweanness. The threats and ill-treatment of 'queer sexual' citizens suggests anxiety and instability of the limiting discourses of and on national identity advanced by Zanu-Pf. These anxieties and instabilities not only use Christianity to find currency but also attempt to address the 'problem' of homosexuality legally or extra-legally. For instance in Zimbabwe, the 'problem' started when the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ), an organisation that caters for the needs of the homosexual community was blocked by the government from participating in the 1995 Zimbabwe Book Fair (ZIBF) whose theme was human rights and justice. Just before the book fair the then country's director of information Bornwell Chakaodza wrote to Trish Mbanga, the ZIBF director, telling her of the government's shock and dismay at GALZ's participation at the ZIBF. He wrote, "whilst acknowledging the dynamic nature of culture, the fact that still remains is that both Zimbabwean society and government do not accept the public display of homosexual literature and material ... please withdraw ... GALZ at this public event" (cited in Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 9). According to Dunton and Palmberg, Mugabe, on the occasion of opening the book fair denounced GALZ by stating that he found it outrageous and "repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organizations, like homosexuals who offend both against the law of nature and the morals of religious beliefs espoused by our society should have any advocates in our midst" (1996: 9). Later, at a Heroes Day rally Mugabe said of homosexuals: "If dogs and pigs don't do it, why must human beings? Can human beings be human beings if they do worse than pigs?" (Hoad, 2007: xi). The understanding of sexuality by Mugabe and many others who oppose homosexuality is that sexuality is "as closely related to one of the most critical of biological processes, namely reproduction" (Tamale, 2011: 2). On the other hand, contemporary sexual practices and scholarship see sexualities "as socially constructed, in profound and troubling engagement with the biological, and therefore as heavily influenced by, and implicated within, social, cultural, political and economic forces (Tamale, 2011: 2).

Mugabe later asserted that he did not believe gays and lesbians should have rights at all since their behaviour was sub-animal. Mugabe gave citizens a right to "arrest" homosexuals and "hand them to the police" as Zimbabwe is no place for such behaviour (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 12-13). Mugabe's reaction has been variously explained through economic hardships, fear of political opposition who are a threat to his stranglehold on power and the

suspicion that he was sexually abused in prison himself (Murray, 1998: 249). Some Zanu-Pf politicians have been rumoured to be gay and these have not openly declared their sexuality as it is frowned upon in Zimbabwe. Canaan Banana, Zimbabwe's first postcolonial ceremonial president was allegedly gay and could not be buried at the National Heroes' Acre when he died in 2003. Despite being described by Mugabe as "a rare gift to the nation" he could not be buried at the shrine because:

Banana set a bad example to youth with his 1998 conviction for homosexual offenses against junior State House staff. They (the politburo) could not accord Banana hero status as a matter of principle. Canaan Banana will be given a state-assisted funeral in his home area befitting a former head of state. (*Mail and Guardian Online*, 18.11.2003)

Zanu-Pf, through public media like *The Herald* has advanced a notion that homosexuality is a Western sexual practice alien to Zimbabwean culture and that being the case, homosexuals do not belong in Zimbabwe. The debate has been more conspicuous especially in the country's constitution debates in early 2011. The constitution serves not only as a document for the country's governance but also identity. Discourse on sexuality and the constitution has been found invariably welded to nationhood, neo-colonialism, land and identity. Few extracts from *The Herald* suffice:

- E61: Comm-Gen Chihuri [police Commissioner] took a swipe at homosexuals and said the practice is not welcome in Zimbabwe because it is a sin against God. "Tell lesbians and gays that it is a big sin, unAfrican and an abomination to God.... Homosexuals are misusing God's design. He does not make errors and He is not a God of mistakes." (*The Herald*, 11.06.12)
- E62: Truth of the matter is homosexuality has always been a big no in the African culture. It is not that President Mugabe made anti-gay sentiments popular, but that he spoke out against cultural imperialism by Western countries. It is not just African culture that rejects gays, but many other cultures and religions. Throughout history, Jewish and Christian scholars have recognised that one of the chief sins involved in God's destruction of Sodom was its people's homosexual behaviour. The natural sex partner for a man is a woman, and the natural sex partner for a woman is a man. Our very own Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai has not been left out in this outrageous nonsense, his interview a while ago advocating for the inclusion of gay rights in the new constitution was met with outrage from Zimbabweans across the political divide. Of course, Tsvangirai dances to the tune of whoever is paying his air ticket at any given time and at that time supporting gay rights in a BBC studio after the announcement by British PM that he would be withholding aid and loans to any African government which does not recognise gay rights, came as no surprise. Donor funding is the fuel that runs the MDC leader's engine. After Cecil John Rhodes' desecration of our religion by sitting on our spiritual headquarters and being buried at a place of worship, are we as Zimbabweans going to go further and embrace his homosexuality desecrating again the land?... The American constitution does not recognise gay rights. And yet here their Secretary of State stands trying to force feed the nations of the world a practice that even her own constituency does not accept or

tolerate. It is only South Africa in Africa that has laws legalising homosexuality, South Africans need more done to improve their (black people's) lives than to be heralded for giving same-sex marriages "respectability". (*The Herald*, 24.05.2012)

- E63: Let us be clear from the onset, the practice of homosexuality is neither human nor right. To equate deviant sexual behaviour then with the rights of women, children, minorities and other sectors of humanity who have struggled to be afforded certain unalienable basic human rights is nothing short of diabolical. Homosexuality is one's choice, not something that one has no control over. Being born a man or a woman is not a matter of choice, engaging in homosexual practices is. Engaging in homosexual acts is a departure from God's blueprint for sexual intimacy (Genesis 2, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:18, 25, 27, 32). Homosexual behaviour is no different to any other behaviour that is outside of God's will. This does not mean that we must persecute homosexuals, on the contrary, they matter to God and they must matter to us. Many Christians must repent of the hatred that they show towards homosexuals. (Manhanga, *The Herald*, 23.11.2011)

From the above, it is clear that "citizens of an alternative sexual world" (Reid, 1976: 465) are eliminated from the nation and this speaks to the nationalists' and their supporters' anxiety to advance the *amadoda sibili* philosophy explained in *Chapter 2* by wedding national belonging to unquestionable normative standards of heterosexual behaviour. At stake are the sexual identities and preferences in the nation that Zanu-Pf imagines as fixed and coherent. These all attempt to advance a certain notion of African purity anchored on perceived cultural uniqueness and stereotypes meant to reflect and continually amplify an imagery of an untainted African cultural identity. The three cases above pose many problems for such formulations of national identity.

These dismissal of queer sexualities as unAfrican (in this case African culture is treated as homogeneous and not problematised) or Western perversions have been challenged by scholars like Epprecht (1999, 2004) and Anderson (2007). That colonialism induced homophobia and homosexuality predated colonialism seems to be an unacceptable version of queer sexualities in the African narratives of sexuality and identity. Hence the argument by most African leaders like Mugabe, Sam Nujoma of Namibia, the late Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi, the late John Atta Mills of Ghana and many others that homosexuality is a foreign and Western imposition on the African culture. This view has been challenged by various scholars who argue that these sexualities were already practiced prior to colonialism (Anderson, 2007; Amory, 1997; Conrad, 2001; Epprecht, 1999). Epprecht (2004) offers a compelling case for Zimbabwe when he writes: "missionaries, anthropologists, native commissioners, novelists, and psychologists ... observed and described queer behaviour

among African men decades ago” (1998: 197). Epprecht continues to use magistrate court records as his principal primary data to confirm that homosexuality pre-dated colonialism. Through the use of some court cases (Rex v. Jenwa 1921 and Rex v. Mashumba, 1923), Epprecht argues that colonialists introduced the legal instruments to punish such sexual deviances in an attempt to discourage them. He further adds that whenever junior wives in a polygamous marriage were unsatisfied they resorted to “lesbian-like affairs” (1998: 20). Elsewhere, Ottosson (2007) adds that the colonial Penal Code of 1886 in Portuguese colonies such as Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe induced homophobia.

Western powers have tried to coerce African states into granting homosexuals freedoms to practise their preferred sexualities. In the Zimbabwean context, this has led to debates between Zanu-Pf and its ‘enemies’ as to what democracy really means. Some African leaders’ resistance to Western ‘impositions’ to accord homosexuals human rights comes in the face of threats that failure to observe these rights will see the West withdrawing aid from offending countries (see *The Herald*, 2.7.2012). Mugabe reacted to such a threat by Britain in the following manner:

E64: It becomes worse and satanic when you get a prime minister like [David] Cameron saying countries that want British aid should accept homosexuality.... To come with that diabolic suggestion to our people is a stupid offer.... Do not get tempted into that [homosexuality]. You are young people. If you go that direction, we will punish you severely.... It is condemned by nature. It is condemned by insects and that is why I have said they are worse than pigs and dogs. (The Herald, 23.11.2011)

In all of this, leaders from the developing world have pointed out the double standards the West applies concerning human rights in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and treatment of people like *WikiLeaks* founder Julian Assange and Bradley Manning, an American soldier accused of leaking state secrets to the *WikiLeaks* website.

Christianity, as shown in E63, is also used as an argument against homosexuality in Africa. Commentators and nationalist politicians base their arguments on the Bible which labels same sex relationships unChristian and ungodly. Bishop Trevor Manhanga argues that Biblically, homosexual depart from God's blueprint for sexual intimacy. What is curious in this instance is the debate that seems to deliberately neglect some important facts and creates a conundrum in logic. In arguing against white ownership of the land, some nationalists argue that whites introduced religion to steal land. Christianity, a foreign concept, is used to dismiss

homosexuality which is also labelled a Western cultural practice. Christianity is closely linked with an undefined brand of ‘Africanness/African values’ as seen for instance in E65 where political analyst Mr Goodson Nguni told *The Herald*:

E65: We believe in the rule of law and until our laws are changed, the police will do their work without any fear of favour. We are an African country and we have our African values. We hope that the Americans appreciate that we do not support homosexuality. It is anti-Christ and Anti-African. (*The Herald*, 17.08.2012)

Pro-Zanu-Pf intellectuals and political commentators like Nguni have been consistent in arguing against intimate same-sex intimate relationships unlike the opposition has been. From the above comments it is clear that some African leaders see nation building as incompatible with many different kinds of sexual ‘transgression’ or what Deborah Posel (2011: 139) calls “unruliness of sex”. From such a standpoint, the leaders see a stable national identity being born out of disciplining sexual activities and energies of their citizens. Sexuality and African values, as John Mbiti (Mbiti, 1989) suggests, meet at the point of marriage and subsequently reproduction. It is every community member’s duty to participate in the activity of reproduction hence those married couples who could not procreate had a heavy burden of trying to find reasons for their predicament. Judith Butler, writing about homosexuality, marriage and kinship in the US context, argues that “we hear not only that marriage is and ought to remain a heterosexual institution and bond, but also that kinship does not work, or does not qualify as kinship, unless it assumes a recognisable family form” (2002: 14).

Besides religion, culture or nature is also used to argue against accepting homosexuality in Zimbabwe. Homosexuality in this case represents the decay of culture and the familist narrative of the nation. Violence and strong abusive language used against those outside of the mainstream sexual practices form part of Zanu-Pf’s rhetoric of enhancing and sustaining its perceived political legitimacy within the Zimbabwe polity. Also such rhetoric stages heterosexuality as a qualifier for citizenship in the post-colonial or in Mugabe’s Zimbabwe. Therefore it seems incumbent upon the nationalist Zanu-Pf party to enforce heterosexual, patriarchal or phallic nationalism of *amadoda sibili* through helping determine the acceptable code of sexuality that shares the aspirations of a Zanu-Pf imagined national identity. The opposition parties are attacked as sell-outs and British sponsored for supporting gay rights as human rights when Zanu-Pf and its advocates state clearly that homosexuality is neither ‘human nor right’ and therefore cannot be enshrined in the constitution as a ‘human right’.

Through covering the debates in such a narrow way, *The Herald* supports the Zanu-Pf limited ideological constructions of national identity. Instead of challenging certain notions on sexuality or abuses that the state seems to promote, as a watchdog, the newspaper fails to argue for a multiplicity of fluid identities that may be assumed by people without coercion.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter concludes that *The Herald* and Zanu-Pf's conceptualisation of the nation betrays Mugabe's unity promised in the quote that opens this chapter and is largely primordial, based on race more than anything. Two races are conspicuous in national identity formulation by Zanu-Pf and *The Herald* – White and Black. This simplistic categorisation neglects an opportunity to present a composite history of Zimbabwe and the nation in general. While Blacks are portrayed as primordial, owners of the land and reactive to White evil machinations, Whites are portrayed as evil, thieves, invaders and non-African. By portraying Whites as non-African, the assumption by Zanu-Pf is that all blacks are Africans. This is a weak argument that fails to explore the different strands of African identities. Not all Africans share the same historical or colonial memories and experiences. This simplistic presentation of 'Africanness' conflated with Zimbabweanness exposes a lacuna in Zanu-Pf's narrow and simplistic calibrations of a Zimbabwean national identity. However, through symbolic power and access to the public media, Zanu-Pf has managed to limit an array of voices that could challenge its commentary. Ultimately, its version of national identity 'triumphs' in public media and this version does not in any way imply that it is popular among Zimbabweans. *Chapters 8 and 9* testify to this. However, it must be mentioned that the use of *The Herald* by Zanu-Pf speaks to theoretical issues of media power – where the media have the potential to control readers' minds but not their actions. In other words, despite the pervasive symbolic power of the media, audiences have the final interpretation of the text and how to act in relation to the message. The social power of Zanu-Pf and its supporters is evident in *The Herald* through the way these actors are granted access to the newspaper and how they set the agenda. The private media that have and still operate in Zimbabwe do so under restrictive circumstances. The mediascape is characterised by officially registered and pirate radio or television stations. Between 2000 and 2011 private media operating legally and illegally within Zimbabwe included *Vop*, *SW Africa*, *The Daily News*, *The Dispatch*, *The Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Daily News on Sunday*, *The Mirror*, *The Weekly Times*, *Radio Dialogue* and others. The *Zimbabwe Independent* for example

challenged Mugabe's narrow constructions of the nation. The following examples suffice to illustrate this point:

Apart from the bigotry of a leader who declares a whole community to be second class citizens on the basis of race and poisons the minds of children with such wicked notions, President Mugabe should have taken up his call for younger citizens to be taught a correct view of history. (The Zimbabwe Independent, 02.05.02)

Mugabe ... wants to portray himself as a victim of an imperialist conspiracy to re-colonise the country. This is clearly designed to weaken the West's moral authority in calling the government accountable for its acts of economic sabotage and human rights violations. The other dimension... is to portray himself as a revolutionary fighting to roll back the frontiers of colonial encroachment on the African continent by appearing to champion the cause of the whole developing world." (The Zimbabwe Independent, 22.02.02)

Elsewhere, other media exposed the government's discriminatory policies towards 'aliens' for instance. *The Daily News* (14.10.02) criticised Mugabe for calling the MDC supporters from Mbare "undisciplined, totemless elements of alien origin". *The Daily News* (12.07.02) further gave coverage to minority voices to expose the xenophobic policies of Zanu-Pf. Bertram Tabbett a Coloured member of the pressure group National Association for the Advancement of Mixed Race Coloureds is quoted complaining about the ill-treatment, disdain and contempt Coloureds face in some public offices. In addition, alternative spaces were created by an NGO, Bulawayo Dialogue, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) and others. These held public talks at the Bulawayo City Hall for instance, where various political issues were discussed.

This chapter has argued that Zanu-Pf has used its state power or performance thereof to try and legitimate its preferred version of a Zimbabwean identity on the Zimbabwean landscape. In performing state power through commemorative and ritualistic events, state protagonists coerce ordinary people to buy into the Zanu-Pf dominant construction of national identity. In addition, Zanu-Pf has manufactured a national identity that has "crystallised around the ideology of Chimurenga [and has sought to] impose itself on the Zimbabwean political landscape through a combination of persuasion and violence" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 2). The ideology of Chimurenga advocates violent settling of disputes and through colour calibrations of the nation. *The Herald* justifies Zanu-Pf's use of violence in correcting historical injustices regardless of economic repercussions. Through association with White people, the MDC has been vilified, insulted and seen as unfit to rule the country. Mugabe is therefore presented as the God-chosen leader for Zimbabwe who should not be challenged.

The chapter has also shown how through memory and forgetting, the state helps construct national identities. The somber postcolonial years of 1982-7 are significant in understanding the country's identity politics and how Zanu-Pf has used the episode to constitute a national memory whose goal is the sustenance of Zanu-Pf hegemony. The assertion that the "processes of identity construction, maintenance and transformation are inextricably linked to processes of marginalization, stigmatization and exclusion" (Mehelj, *et al.*, 2009: 41) fits the Zimbabwean case. During the genocide years, citizens experienced what it meant to be Zanu-Pf's foe or friend, compatriot or non-patriot as people were, according to Bartov writing in a different context, compelled to "conform to a definition they might not share, based on categories imposed on them by a... political regime" (Bartov, 2000: 92). This abuse of national memory has shown some clear crevices within Zanu-Pf. It has also exposed government's failure and unwillingness to address issues of ethnicity directly. Rather, it continues to do so covertly with dire consequences to the Zimbabwean national identity it seeks to make. Zanu-Pf has also used colonial memory for its convenience. The media have played a significant role in mediating this memory. *The Herald* has advanced the Zanu-Pf strategies of manufacturing identities of in-groups through distinguishing and differentiating black and white races (Downing and Husband 2005; Triandafyllidou, 1998).

Benhabib's (1996: 3) assertion that "the atavistic belief that identities can be maintained and secured only by eliminating difference and otherness," continues to define dominant political discourse regarding insider and outsider configurations in identity studies. This dominant discourse has been predicated upon the rigid and limiting dualistic binary oppositions of 'us' and 'them' where 'we' are insiders and 'they' are outsiders; where 'we' are 'indigenous' and 'they' are aliens; where 'we' are patriots and 'they' are sell-outs and 'we' are black and Zimbabwean and 'they' are white and European (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009; Raftopoulos, 2007; Ranger, 2004) and therefore 'they' do not belong. Further, race has supplied Zimbabwe, to borrow from Gilroy (2004: 9) "a foundational understanding of natural hierarchy on which... social and political discourses are formulated". Race has been at the core of justifying and legitimating Zanu-Pf's attempts at correcting historical injustices through redemptive and redistributive policies undergirded by Afro-radicalism and nativism. This brand of nationalism is critiqued by Fanon for its failure to be "all-embracing [leading to the] crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people [but turning out to be] an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been" (1963: 148).

The theme of sexuality as a basis for national construction has come out strongly in this chapter. It is clear that Zanu-Pf has attempted to construct its own version of ‘patriotic’ manhood as “icons of nationalist ideology through the gendered places for men and women in national politics” (Nagel, 1998: 242). It seems the discourse against same sex marriages or romantic relationships is targeted mainly at men and this suggests that men are important in the construction of nations. The Tswana proverb, “A woman has not tribe” may even be stretched to suggest that a woman has no nation hence, as in other contexts, in African settings “nationalism has ... sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope” (Enloe, 1990: 45). Women are then relegated to minor roles or as spoils of war as what happened to other nations’ women when the Ndebele nation moved from South Africa up north across Limpopo. More light on this is shed in *Chapter 9*. The use of sexuality to construct the nation in the Zanu-Pf context excludes those who are homosexuals as without honour, patriotism and duty towards the nation since these sexual practices are considered Western and taboo in the African context. Words like ‘African culture’ ‘African’ and ‘unAfrican’ are used by the political elite to discourage same-sex intimate relationships. Under CDA, these words, even though contestable and at times meaningless, are embedded with power meant to entice men to be patriotic, nationalist and militant even sexually-where being penetrated as a man in a sexual relationship is seen as demeaning and emasculating.

This chapter has laid the basis for the understanding of a plethora of issues that inform Zanu-Pf’s understanding of a primordial national identity. This primordial sense is anchored on desperate loyalty to Africanness, culture and unalterable sense of Zimbabweanness. The assumption in most debates in this chapter is that Zimbabwe has primordial roots in as much as Africa has. What is emphasized here is the resilience of what Gertz (1963) calls primordial bonds such as bonds of blood, race, language, religion and custom. The assumption in this primordial modeling of the nation is that territorial integrity induces in people a sense of togetherness and common aspirations for the future. Hence Chivaura’s argument that “[A]ll African languages are similar. The way they recognize reality is similar. The differences are simply varieties, stylistic ... but they see the world exactly the same way” (cited in Jambaya and Ghandi 2001: 9). Primordialists, according to Sheyholislami “believe that language is the most silent marker of identity, be it individual, ethnic, or national...” (2011:114). This primordial construction of the nation is problematic as it downplays different ethnic groups’ particularisms, social location and tensions informed by the same, hence arguments that there

is no unitary Zimbabwean national identity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a). The next chapter builds on these issues and explores how Zimbabweans use alternative media to contest Zanu-PF's monolithic and rigid versions of national identity.

Chapter 8: Alternative Digital Public Spheres and Construction of Alternative National Identities

Cyberspace...

Reflects the struggles of ordinary people to participate in national debates, narrate history, define legitimacy and articulate a moral order... websites have fostered the emergence of counter-publics and spaces of dissent where unofficial views are voiced and alternative knowledges are produced. These spaces of creativity at the margins are perhaps all the more important given the pervasive reach of global capital, media conglomerates and regulatory authorities of various kinds. (Bernal 2006: 176)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter and the next identify *NewZimbabwe.com* as one of the multiple sites where a number of discourses competing with Zanu-Pf's dominant ideologies are expressed. The chapter seeks to analyse how *NewZimbabwe.com* has been used to resist Zanu-Pf official discourses on Zimbabweanness. Thus, the main argument fore-grounded in this chapter is that ICTs have made it possible for ordinary Zimbabweans to discursively imagine, contest and articulate their complex versions of national identities 'from below'. The chapter uses CDA methodological approach to examine the discursive strategies and linguistic devices employed by Zimbabweans to construct these competing versions of national identity within the context of political decline and transnationality, multimodality and interactivity.

Martin (1995) suggests that it is through language that similarities or differences and ultimately identities are constructed in society. If communication makes human relations possible, then language lies at the very core of identity construction and expression. Through theories of alternative public sphere (Dahlgren, 2005; Squires, 2002; Papacharissi, 2002) and constructivist theories of nationalism (Conversi, 2006; Hutchinson, 1983; Özkirimli, 2002) this chapter demonstrates that national identity is socially constructed through discourse, signalling the multi-facetedness and ambiguities that characterise the meaning of Zimbabweanness.

The most prominent aspect of Habermas's (1963) public sphere concept is its participatory or discursive nature and this is mirrored online as the internet allows for a diverse timeless exchange of views at the fastest and cheapest possible cost even to those actors previously ignored or denied access in traditional media (Barber, 1996; Dahlgren, 1991). Ordinary

citizens previously relegated to the passive role of consumers as shown in *Chapter 7* can simultaneously be active producers and consumers of content on the internet. This status as ‘prosumers’ (i.e. producers-cum-consumers) has given them freedom, power and a voice to speak to authority (Mitra and Watts, 2002) and generate content. This is echoed by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995: 509) who declare that “meaningful democratic participation requires that the voices of citizens in politics be clear, loud, and equal. In engaging with the tasks above, this chapter sets to answer the following research questions: a) how do Zimbabweans in various localities imagine their national identity through a diasporic medium, *NewZimbabwe.com*? b) how does the internet make possible the creation of alternative versions of national identity?

In this chapter, narrative texts, i.e. news items, opinion pieces, blogs and reader comments are subjected to CDA method to explore:

often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices are, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor of hegemony. (Fairclough, 1993: 135)

The analysis of the text is both historical and intertextual. Historicity and intertextuality are important as they help lay the foundation and context for certain claims on issues of identity; ethnicity, belonging and political power for example. Themes examined in this chapter are:

1. The Diaspora and National identity;
2. Heroes and National Heroes’ Acre contestations;
3. Human Rights and the New Constitution: Homosexuality, and
4. Land Reform.

These themes more or less relate to issues raised in the previous chapter and this makes it possible to find common centres of national identity contestations in *The Herald* and *NewZimbabwe.com*. The themes were deductively chosen from the sampled stories and in an attempt to satisfy the objective of unearthing ordinary voices that contest dominant narratives on national identity. The chapter argues that through these themes, ordinary Zimbabweans challenge and offer competing narratives to the problematic official grammars of nationalism perpetuated through public media such as *The Herald* newspaper.

The chapter first outlines the discursive strategies employed by the discussants in *NewZimbabwe.com*. Then it locates the diaspora within transnationalism and national identity debates. This helps to make sense of the diaspora community and the website. The latter is a product of the post- 2000 migration patterns, i.e. the founders of the website had left Zimbabwe during a time of political and economic challenges. Second, it looks at how Zimbabweans have debated identity issues through the commemorative events, especially the Heroes' Day celebrations, burials and rituals particularly at the National Heroes' Acre. Third, the chapter critically analyses debates around human rights, citizenship and the constitution making process during the GNU period. Here, human rights issues, especially with regards to same sex relationships, are explored. The chapter then discusses land debates where it reports that there has not been a vibrant discussion of the land issue as has been the case with other themes. This might be informed by the fact that white people whose land was possessed are not part of the discussants on the website. Another explanation is that most discussants feel marginalised by the whole land reform process and therefore it does not add any value to their perceptions of nationhood and citizenship. It may also be possible that lack of interest in the land reform is a rejection of Zanu-Pf's methods of attempting to 'buy' political legitimacy using the land. Lastly, before concluding, the chapter attempts to answer the third research question of this thesis: how does the internet make possible the creation of alternative versions of national identity? This question is further answered in *Chapter 9*.

Together with *Chapter 9*, the current chapter argues that the public sphere concept which operates on the notion of liberal rational deliberations and consensus exhibits a different and opposite dimension when debates are conducted online. Debates in the digital public sphere thrive on and are marked by antagonism, irrationality, difference and dissent. These characteristics are associated with radical democracy. Radical democracy tends to define the political in terms of incessant conflict, contestation and antagonism (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Radical democratic principles therefore manifest themselves in online media's "discursive, technical, and institutional practices" (Pickard, 2006: 190). Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) conceptualisation of radical democracy also celebrates difference in political subjectivities and identity formations; focusing on discursive formations of power. Accordingly Cohen and Fund (2004) highlight the importance of deliberation – "broader participation in public decision making" (2004: 23). They further argue that for democracy to function satisfactorily "citizens should have greater direct roles in public choices or at least

engage deeply with substantive political issues and be assured that officials will be responsive to their concerns and judgements” (Cohen and Fung, 2004: 23-24). In Zimbabwe where representative democracy is used, those politicians elected by the people make laws and policies on behalf of the people as the current political system does not encourage down-up political communication. Citizens therefore resort to new media in an attempt to practise their responsible citizenship where ordinary people win “the battle for emancipation” and “appear in new roles as both producers and actors in the news” (Hermes, 2006: 296).

8.2 Discursive strategies used in *NewZimbabwe.com* debates

Textual analysis of the corpus from *NewZimbabwe.com* website is informed by the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach developed by different scholars that include Fairclough (1995), Van Dijk (1993) and Wodak et al. (1995). The attempt in this chapter is not to analyse the linguistic structure of discourses per se but to help in the understanding of certain social situations. As highlighted in *Chapter 6*, CDA is premised on the assumption that language as a social practice is central to social life and “hence it analyses discourse in relation to the social context in which it occurs” (Hernández, 2008: 227).

De Cillia et al. (1999) suggest what may be informative strategies involved in the discursive construction of national identity and these will help inform this section and subsequent debates in this chapter and the next. Three macro-strategies are suggested by De Cillia, et al. (1999: 160) and these are (a) constructive strategies (b) perpetuation and justification strategies (c) transformation strategies and dismantling or destructive strategies. Constructive strategies are linguistic strategies that seek to “establish a particular national identity” (1999: 160). The net result of these discursive practices is the formation of an imagined national ‘we-group’ through particular reference for example using the pronoun ‘we’ in reference to Zimbabwe. The basis of this, according to De Cillia (1990: 160) is that it appeals “directly or indirectly to national solidarity and union.” In some cases, this national solidarity presupposes intra-national homogeneity. In the extracts used below, for instance, especially in relation to debates surrounding Zimbabweanness and education, renowned newspaper columnist and *NewZimbabwe.com* blogger, Lennox Mhlanga in his blog uses words like ‘we’ and ‘Zimbabweans.’ In a comment Mhlanga’s blog, discussant *Rodolfo Hernandez (E6)* uses a word that suggests affinity to Zimbabwe when he uses the phrase, “many of our luminaries.” The use of the words ‘we’ ‘Zimbabweans’ and ‘our’ as linguistic devices clearly

identify Zimbabwe as the national ‘we’. In addition, it helps invite Zimbabweans to identify and be in solidarity with the ‘we-group’ imagined by most diasporas debating on Mhlanga’s blog. Mhlanga and some interlocutors under his blog unhesitatingly take for “granted that there exists a homogeneous we-group with a shared mentality and that the traits of industriousness and conviviality would characterise each single member” of the imagined national community (De Cillia *et al.*, 1999: 162). While it highlights national singularity, this strategy shows how positive self-representation and negative other-representation works. National differences are highlighted through stereotypically generalising ‘Zimbabweans’, ‘us’, and ‘we’ as hard workers and educated and by inference, other countries’ citizens as not all that educated and hardworking, resulting in the assumption that when Zimbabweans go back home, other economies will collapse.

‘We’ also represents a particular subnational group. For instance, the diaspora is a sub-group of the Zimbabwean nation and an extract from *Tbos* (E14) poignantly suggests this. *Tbos* uses similar words like ‘we,’ ‘us’ to refer to those members of the diaspora who do not care about Zimbabwe. In addition, those in the homeland also become a different (main) group and the use of we differs from the two ways (national and subgroup) and assumes another meaning and community. Thus the addressee exclusive ‘us’ is used by *Machisi* (E15) who criticizes members of the diaspora community for their superiority complex. The other strategy used by online discussants is the dismantling strategy which seeks “to de-mythologise or demolish existing national identities or elements of them” (De Cillia *et al.*, 1999: 161).

Comments by *Ponkison* (E1) and *Busi* (E2) under Lenox Mhlanga’s blog on the Zimbabwean education system, attempt to dismantle the notion of Zimbabweanness as synonymous and inherently underlined by superior education and hard work. The following extracts illustrate this:

- E1: I used to have the same mentality as well, thinking that Zim education is the best, I was proven wrong. But if you say Zim syatem is good at teaching you to reproduce, I will applaud you for that. To be honest with you, western edu (education) like the US is well ahead, at least if you are going to a good university as the one I am going to. Here, they teach you to think, criticize and innovate. Reproducing texts will result in a D grade. [*Ponkison*]
- E2: Busi Zimbabweans are literate not educated. none know or knew our own constitution or how our parly system worked b4 we came abroad. If we were educated we would have stopped or realized Bob's shit. [*Busi*]

The comments above put in doubt the aspect that Zimbabweans have a superior education. The suggestion is that it does not make them any better since it did not make them realise ‘Bob’s shit’, that is, Mugabe’s political and economic mismanagement. This strategy is further explored in *Chapter 9* where issues of ethnicity and alternative identities are explored. The third aspect, the transformation strategy is not relevant to the discussions and therefore cannot be explored in this chapter. Suffice it to say that these alternative discourses have helped highlight some important aspects in the discursive construction of national identity in the discussion of issues that pertain to the diaspora and Zimbabweanness.

8.3 Transnationalism, diaspora and national identity

Transnationalism, diaspora and national identity operate in a complex network of cross-border connections at a global scale and together these three concepts are not separable, particularly in a research like this one. Transnationalism, according to Faist (2010: 9) is narrowly used to denote “migrants’ durable ties across countries and—more widely to capture, not only communities but all sorts of social formations such as transnationally active groups and organisations” (2010: 9). As alluded to in *Chapter 1*, post- 2000 Zimbabwe has been characterised by an increase in the number of people leaving the country as economic or political refugees or in search of better educational or business opportunities. These people have created transnational networks of interaction underlined by “some perception of common identity” (Vortec, 2001: 573) and have, in the process, maintained connections with institutions in Zimbabwe be they state, political, economic or familial.

The concept of diaspora worldwide is problematic as this community’s dual-anchoredness and or dual allegiances have been classified either in negative or positive terms. Depending on their contributions, diasporas have been characterised as either good or bad to the homeland. Baser and Swain (2009) highlight some contentious issues about diaspora thus:

In fact, it is not so simple to tag any diaspora group with one of the labels. Assuming that one diaspora group has one common point of view is problematic since diasporas are not homogeneous groups, and they have their own factions. However, this has not deterred some from perceiving diasporas as irresponsible and unaccountable long distance nationalist groups, with more marginal ideas than homeland policy makers, and that they are stubborn when it comes to making compromises on sensitive issues. (Baser and Swain, 2009: 45)

In the last decade (2001-2010) there has been growing scholarly attention to the Zimbabwean diaspora especially in Britain, paying attention to different strategies of survival employed by

Zimbabwean migrants (Bloch, 2008; Mbiba, 20012; McGregor, 2007; McGregor and Primorac, 2010; McGregor and Pasura, 2010; Pasura, 2013, 2010, 2008). Most Zimbabweans who left their homeland for Britain in the early 2000s were absorbed into the care industry because this industry “faces serious staff shortages, not only of health professionals and social workers, but also of unskilled and semi-skilled carers” (McGregor, 2007: 801). Zimbabweans in the homeland including President Mugabe, have caricatured those who leave Zimbabwe to subject themselves to dirty, undignified, demeaning and feminised jobs (McGregor, 2007: 802). Derogatory jokes are shared among Zimbabweans both in the diaspora and homeland about the carers “joining the BBC” (British Bottom Cleaners), ‘bum technicians’ ma.dot.com (dot implying dirt) (McGregor, 2007: 802). Some Zimbabweans in the UK have taken these jobs in smaller towns so that they are not seen by fellow Zimbabweans doing ‘shameful’ and ‘embarrassing’ jobs (McGregor, 2007; Mbiba, 2005, 2004). An interviewee in McGregor’s (2007) research on the ‘Bottom Cleaners’ said about her work:

I work in a dementia unit in a care home . . . the work is very demanding . . . I just accept what I’m doing, there’s no choice, we’re in a foreign land . . . in Zimbabwe, this kind of work, it’s not really acceptable in our culture. My mother and son, they won’t accept it is what I do, I can’t tell my son, it might affect him . . . But I enjoy the work, I want to help people. (Interview 9, 2007: 808)

The above extract also reveals that while in some cases some migrants may lose their dignity due to care work, they sometimes find it satisfying as it acts as a stepping stone to more decent work or some gain satisfaction from helping people while others have found it helpful in terms of giving them money to support family and relatives in Zimbabwe.

In the context of Zimbabwe’s economic and political challenges, the diaspora has been largely influential in massive remittances that help sustain families in the homeland (Bloch, 2008, 2005; McGregor, 2007; McGregor and Pasura, 2010; Peel, 2009;). In some instances, cash remittances have been channelled through unofficial processes (black market) making it is difficult to gauge the correct amounts that have been remitted to Zimbabwe. For illustration, even without confidence in the banking system, remittances increased by 32.9 per cent from US\$198.2 million in 2009 to US\$263.3 million in 2010 (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 30.01.2011). Besides, the diaspora has also contributed to Zimbabwe through “non-monetary remittances and support [like] clothes ... books ... electrical goods... medicines ... cars” (Bloch, 2008: 299-300).

The Zimbabwean diaspora can also be credited with the establishment of alternative transnational discursive spaces where dissenting opinions find accommodation. It is not easy to tell where people who participate in online debates are domiciled but suffice it to say that as the Google analytics on the graph shown *Chapter 1* suggests, there are a lot more people who access *NewZimbabwe.com* from the diaspora than from the homeland. This suggests that most Zimbabweans who consume and debate issues are based in the diaspora, hence the ‘diaspora’ component in the title of this thesis. In addition, the argument in this chapter is that diaspora communities do not lose a sense of belonging or affinity to the homeland, they carry national pride and hope to return home someday. Those who do not want to return are viewed negatively as they contribute to the country’s brain drain. For instance one reader comments in *E3* below:

- E3: Unfortunately that has become the norm in Zim [short for Zimbabwe]. We have people who were born in Zim, grew up in Zim and got educated in Zim by Zim resources but they now turn their backs on Zim and claim foreign countries as their countries of origin. Chirwere chapinda mumusha! (Translated: Some people are now sick). (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.03.2010)

There is also evidence that contradicts the sentiments above. This evidence suggests national pride on the part of the Zimbabwean diaspora communities and this may be gleaned from the way they discursively construct Zimbabweanness in *NewZimbabwe.com*. A case in point is a debate that obtains under Lenox Mhlanga’s blog entitled ‘Zimbabweans make the world go round’ (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.03.2010). Mhlanga argues that Zimbabweans make a difference wherever they are and they have contributed to the economies of their new homes worldwide. He opines:

- E4: We learnt our lesson very well. Scattered in all four corners of the globe, Zimbabweans are performing miracles wherever they are. Everywhere you go, you find Zimbabweans excelling in whatever they are doing from rocket science to mowing the lawn. What we touch turns to gold, though we also have opened ourselves to the most insidious forms of exploitation. Because we work harder than everyone else and commendably too, we are victims of xenophobia and petty jealousy. The reality is that if God wills Zimbabwe’s troubles to go away, and we are all able to go back home to friends and family, some economies I know will surely collapse. (Mhlanga, 11.03.2010)

What is interesting is the volarisation of Zimbabwe’s education system. It seems the education system has instilled in some Zimbabweans a sense of achievement and national pride. Few extracts will help magnify this assertion:

- E5: I think Lennox has a point Zimbabweans wherever they are, are very useful in their varied occupations. The reason is, even though their education is not in the level of the West, the British left a legacy of education which Mugabe (before he fell from Grace) complemented by building many secondary schools during independence and left education accessible to a majority of Zimbos [slang for Zimbabweans]. I remember they were initially called upbertops even though they were poorly equipped. In these institutions Zimbabweans were taught to think in critical ways over any subject. This is the reason why at the height of violence in Zimbabwe, there was no room for war. If there was anyone who contemplated war, that individual had to convince a good number of Zimbabweans about the benefits that they would have from that war. [Sydney].
- E6: That day I was at UNISA (University of South Africa) to register my daughter for postgraduate degree, one South African Senior Lecturer openly agreed that Zimbabweans are extremely intelligent. She showed me marks from at least five different courses, and guess what the best students were all Zimbabweans. She believes that could be the trend in almost all other departments. That was joy to me. Look at the adverts in the Sunday Times, several of them have zimbos as contact persons, meaning they are senior members of the organisations. I therefore would agree with you Lennox that some economies may suffer should all Zimbos be rounded up (ofcourse, willingly) for their motherland. Unfortunately for Zim, many of our luminaries have been granted citizenships or permanent residency and they may not be willing to relocate back home. [Rodolfo Hernandez]

These assertions about Zimbabweans and the superiority of their education system act as a point of patriotism. Thabisani Ndlovu (2010: 124) also suggests that the Zimbabwean education system, has been a site of pride and “alienation both at home and in the UK.” This is due to what Ndlovu calls the “poverty of colonialism” (ibid.) and the post-2000 socio-political and economic conditions of the country that led to some educated people migrating to countries like Britain, USA, Botswana and South Africa where some educated people got menial jobs not commensurate with their educational status. Also, the “educated such as teachers and nurses [were] persecuted by Zanu-Pf government for alleged support of an opposition party with imperialist British ambitions” (Ndlovu, 2010: 124). According to Conover and Felman (1987: 1), patriotism is “a deeply felt affective attachment to the nation”. Similarly, Kosterman and Feshbach (1989: 271) see patriotism as a “degree of love for and pride in one’s nation”.

Besides economic and political challenges that have reduced Zimbabweans into doing jobs below their educational qualifications, the legacy of Zimbabwe’s education suggests the imagination of Zimbabweanness as brand that carries an intrinsic value that cannot be found in non-Zimbabweans and this enhances a sense of attachment to the homeland. This attachment is underpinned by a longing to go back home. E7 and E8 help illustrate this point:

- E7: Why make the world go round? Surely we should make OUR country go round instead. How long we gonna be economic refugees. Making other countries rich. Humility u got it wrong. If u share knowledge with a fellow Zimbo they dont credit you 4 it. Instead they want to be seen

as the source. At least white man will put his hands up and say thanx, maybe even show u a trick or 2 u didnt know!! [SDA]

- E8: Well, well, well we Zimboz really work hard. Although we are willing to return home, we are faced with the problem of going to start all over again, another life style, looking for jobs or business opportunities and new friends. We will rather return home after retirement. [Luxson Ngwenya]

An analysis of a plethora of articles in *NewZimbabwe.com* reveals various ways of negotiating dislocation and transnationalism on the one hand and with citizenship on the other. Zimbabweans abroad negotiate their immigrant statuses in different ways, depending on their levels of training, qualifications, race, gender and education. In addition, there have been some networks established in the diaspora that seek to assist them to find jobs, places of study, or starting businesses (Bloch, 2008; Pasura, 2013). In a study exploring the economic, political, social and cultural activities of 500 Zimbabweans living in the UK, Bloch (2008) discovered that some Zimbabweans were willing to contribute to the development of Zimbabwe through sending money to the responsible authorities. Some expressed lack of faith in the current political leadership and therefore were unwilling to contribute. However, what Bloch concluded was that Zimbabweans have strong economic, developmental and social ties with their homeland.

NewZimbabwe.com is one of the most crucial meeting places for diasporic Zimbabwean communities. For example, it acts as a market place where people can sell and buy or an informative site with news. It also acts as a social place for chatting, dating and sharing gossip. It has blogs written, among other professionals, by lawyers with an intention to assist Zimbabweans with legal advice and information regarding migration issues. Taffy Nyawanza and Rumbidzai Bvunzawabaya for instance, are some of the lawyers who write on migration issues. One article by Nyawanza (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 01.02.2011) addressed issues of work permits and citizenship in the UK. These issues highlight the precariousness of living in the diaspora for most Zimbabwean communities as testified by one reader *Tinashe*, who asks Nyawanza for advice:

- E9: i have ILR (Indefinite Leave to Remain) and settled status on 15/09/08. i was due to apply for my citizenship after a year of acquiring my ILA. Due to lack of adequate finance, i was unable to apply for my citizenship promptly after the one year qualifying period. on 15/04/10 i was done for drink driving and ban for 2 years. i believe this offence will show on my CRB. Could you please advise if this offence committed after the one year of my ILR will affect my application for my citizenship. thank you in anticipation of your advice. Cheers.

An analysis of diaspora patterns demonstrates that the portability of national identity among diasporans (Sassen, 1998) has made it possible for some of them to acquire citizenships of other countries. Considering the above comments that relate to education and a need to return home, the issue of acquiring citizenship in the UK cannot simply be read as abandonment of the homeland but an attempt to ease the migrants' stay and work in the UK. Transnationalism gives people an experience to exist both physically and psychologically at different habitats and "experiences gathered ... accumulate to comprise people's cultural repertoires, which in turn influence the construction of identity – or indeed multiple identities" (Vertovec, 2001: 578).

The 'Free UK Zimbabweans From Limbo' and 'Strangers Into Citizens' marches that took place in London in 2008 after Zimbabwe's disputed presidential election may illustrate this point of existing in different transnational social fields with an outlook of going back home. In a statement, the marchers argued that Britain could not deport failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers as it was not politically conducive for them to return. Marchers said in a statement:

E10: Britain can best help Zimbabwe in its dark hour by enabling its future leaders to acquire the skills to rebuild the country when the opportunity comes. ... Instead, thousands of Zimbabwean exiles in the UK live in limbo – de-motivated and de-skilled.
(*NewZimbabwe.com*, 2008)

The argument here is that some members of the diaspora community are not in the hostlands for ever as they look forward to returning to their homeland. To further accentuate this idea, the then British Home Office Minister, Beverly Hughes said in 2003:

Globalisation has meant that individuals are increasingly mobile—many working in other countries for a few years before returning home. The Government welcomes those who come over to the UK through proper channels who can play a full and productive part in our country and society. We are committed to expanding schemes which enable us to attract unique talent to the UK and plug skills gaps in the labour market, while ensuring that we continue to take firm action against those who break the immigration rules. (cited in Kofman, 2005:458)

Zimbabweans' current existence in the diaspora however, has far reaching consequences as it continually undermines the state's assumed function as a vessel that rigidly controls and contains the social, political and economic processes. As Beck argues (2000: 11), transnationalism alters the sovereignty of nation states leading to them being "crisscrossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks".

In this, regard the sending state is argued to have a role in shaping transnationalism, and particularly transnational identities. This suggestion is articulated in Nyíri's (2001) examination of the central role played by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the reproduction of Chinese identity outside the country. Nyíri argues that after 1978, the PRC "moved to (re-)legitimise, by both institutional and discursive means, allegiance to China in established overseas Chinese communities ... *celebrating migration as a patriotic and modern act* ..." (2001: 635). In the Zimbabwean context, there have been mixed reactions by the GNU towards diaspora communities. While on the one hand they are encouraged to send remittances, invest and buy property at home, the government of the day has denied diasporans the right to vote as most of them are deemed unpatriotic. Jeff Madzingo, the New Zimbabwe Media Limited CEO argues that the government of Zimbabwe needs to recognise the diasporans and suggests the formation of a ministry for diaspora since those based outside the country are still 'Zimbabweans'. He writes on his blog in *NewZimbabwe.com*:

E11: ... one then wonders how all the parties in the inclusive government came up with 32 ministries and completely disregard the desperate need for Diasporas inclusion. For a senior figure in the GPA (Deputy Prime Minister in the GNU Arthur Mutambara) to then come to the Diasporas almost two years later and argue the need for a Diaspora Ministry is simply laughable. The lack of a clear policy, constitutional or otherwise, is tantamount to exclusion. On the one hand, there is a lot of rhetoric in the inclusive government about the need to engage the Diasporas. At the same time, one cannot help but notice that the other fundamental elements in the power sharing government would rather declare everyone non-resident non-Zimbabwean. The advocates for Diaspora disenfranchisement seem to be more steadfast and resolved and seem to be winning the tussle. (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 06.08.2010)

Madzingo wrote a follow up article (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 19.08.2010) and both were a response to an attempt by the GNU (specifically the two Deputy Prime Ministers Arthur Mutambara and Thokozani Khupe visited the UK to speak to the diaspora on behalf of the government) to engage Zimbabweans abroad on a number of issues that sought to demonstrate that the diaspora was relevant to Zimbabwe and vice versa.

The act of reaching out to the diaspora may be read as a main shift from Zanu-Pf government's denying migrants "institutional or discursive participation in the practice of citizenship" (Nyíri, 2001: 648). This shift of terminology and attitude towards the diaspora community by the government of Zanu-Pf is attested to by a discussant to Madzingo's second article:

E12: Diasporas were called sellouts in public and at rallies. The call changed to 'Come back home' now its 'We dont force you to come back home, make your own assessments and decide'

With sober approaches and justifiable arguments as Jeff's I see any Gvt succumbing to good sense. After all we are now in a virtual global village. Let's go for it. [*manyange m*] (19.08.2010)

This attitude towards the diaspora is not peculiarly Zanu-Pf's. Equally, it is not true, as some readers of the site based in Zimbabwe think, that people living outside Zimbabwe are not patriotic. Two vignettes are chosen from an article "Why are some diasporians out of touch" written by Lenox Mhlanga (*NewZimbabwe*, 14.05.2010). Firstly, Mhlanga argues that there are many reasons why people in the diaspora do not get a clear picture of Zimbabwe. He writes:

- E13: Their sources of information range from the precious few minutes on the phone with relatives who want to paint a picture of desperation so as to solicit some more valuable dollars, or from the very fertile grapevine or pavement radio fed by a wily network of gossips. There lies an opportunity for an information gap that needs to be filled. Bringing online news to the burgeoning Zimbo community abroad is a challenge for the taking. Online radio stations that are popping up everywhere should step up from merely being the purveyors of groove to information hubs about what is really taking place at home. (Mhlanga, 2010)

In addition, online media like *NewZimbabwe.com* tend to sensationalise news and in some cases, report falsehoods (like the alleged death of Vice President John Nkomo) in an attempt to be first to break the news. This is highlighted in *Chapter 2*. In response to Mhlanga, some discussants argue in a similar vein similar as Zanu-Pf as highlighted earlier in this thesis:

- E14: eta, lennox, my old teacher ... most of us are out of touch because we want to be out of touch with zim, who cares about zim, no one other than Zanu-Pf, infact no one cares about zim, i think Zanu-Pf hates zim more than everyone, so why bother. the rest of the world sure donot give a damn about zim.i hated zim when i was still there man, i hate it now even more.no one cares man. [*tbos*]
- E15: it is sad about this truth. People, we have to accept it ... It reminds me of a friend. Setting foot in Europe he did not like to use vaseline at all. He told me I was backward, since nivea was the best. But he grew up using vaseline. Even the Europeans use it as well. Brain-washed nut! ... Politicaly he is just like a cabbage in a society. [*Machisi*]

Tbos, in reference to an imagined community (through his use of 'us' we') that has been driven to hate Zimbabwe by Zanu-Pf, suggests that what has obtained in Zimbabwe shows that neither Zanu-Pf nor the people are patriotic enough to love Zimbabwe. On the other hand, Machisi's (*E12*) analysis reveals that living in the diaspora gives some migrants a superiority complex to an extent of forgetting their roots. This is magnified by the analogy of Vaseline petroleum jelly versus Nivea lotion.

After the formation of the GNU the state, its institutions, symbols and political elite attempted to engage the diaspora with an intention of encouraging them to economically invest in Zimbabwe. There were multiple responses for and against government's attempts to incorporate the diaspora into the nation. The following citations illustrate this point:

- E16: The message is clear: we are Zimbabweans when it's time to build the Zim-financial- base but, o0o0ps; we suddenly don't qualify when it's time to be heard for decisions that make our country's identity and future. The right to vote, (the extent to which a Government avoids curtailing it) and engagement of all classes/sections of citizens in decisions are inalienable human rights, and indeed PRACTICAL democracy. This is unpardonable hypocrisy of the Unity Govt; all of them. [*Chenjerai Makudo*] (06.08.2010)
- E17: Mp (Member of Parliament) for Diaspora is a joke ... this is the duty and responsibility of Ambassadors only if we had such for zimbo's with zimbas at heart. but those who have been to an embassy in their respective countries would confess the nightmare and dis-order at these places ... its pathetic we sustained Zimbabwe for yonks (years) but now dual citizenship is like equipping MDC not zimbo's in Diaspora .This myopic thinking is what the diasporans are being burnt for. u are only considered as far as u can sent yo mama some cash /buy a house ie oil the economy. [*franko*] (06.08.2010)
- E18: I think this is a very good approach but unfortunately Zimbabwean politics is still rooted in colonial politics where everything foreign is viewed with suspicion. Unless the ZANU-PF govt strip itself of the colonial victim mentality and work to harness resources (foreign or otherwise) Zimbabweans will continue to slide backwards economically. Your proposal makes sense in that Zimbabweans in SA and Bots for example easily make up at least five constituents (by population) and yet not a single vote of theirs count!! ... I think Zimbabwe now need to go back to basics; respect for human rights, national laws and understanding that not having similar views does not translate to being enemies! [*Mandela_MG*] (19.08.2010)
- E19: This is really a very powerful instalment from a true Zimbabwean patriot with a sober mind and interested in the socio-economic development of our country. I appreciate your very important visionary ideas of bringing awareness to all concerned about the Diaspora issue. However, I am requesting you to go a step further and mobilize resources to set up a lobby group that will work with the government as well as try to reach out to the people in the Diaspora for their contributions ... All what is required is the will-power to mobilize and the political will from government to engage Diasporans. When engaging them, just remember there is a lot of anger among this group and one needs to tread carefully and patiently. All hope is not lost after all! [*Fanuel Chirombo*] (19.08.2010)

The above discussions are evidently from people based outside Zimbabwe and they can easily be analysed as coming from people who are patriotic to Zimbabwe but not to the political system. In *Chenjerai Makudo's* (E16) comment the use of 'we' suggests the shared experiences by the diaspora community. In addition the comment addresses issues of disenfranchisement of the diaspora as members of this community only become 'Zimbabweans' when it suits the political elite. The treatment of diaspora communities by embassies as highlighted by *Franko* [E17] suggests that national attachment of migrants is affected by the officials who are not 'zimbas' (Zimbabwean) at heart, bringing into the fore arguments that people serving in government do so for corrupt and not patriotic ends.

The state seems to be reaching out to the diaspora and encouraging them to create transnational links with the homeland. Again the tenets of good governance suggested by *Mandela_MG* (E18), like respect for human rights, national laws, tolerance of different political views, are seen as pillars of democracy and encourage patriotism to the country. This is in contradiction to what Zanu-Pf discourses on national identity entail – valorization of violence, playing the race card, manipulation of ethnicity and political affiliation as part of political and national identity organisation.

Some of the comments above attest to the argument that migrants do not have a sense of acceptance and recognition by the political elite at home, an important ingredient in shaping discourses of belonging. They have been made, instead, to feel as if they are violating the dominant narratives of belonging fore-grounded by Zanu-Pf. It therefore seems a natural reaction for the diaspora to suggest that the government attends to certain democratic citizenship laws before the migrants respond to the call of participating in nation-state construction. Through these discourses, the diaspora “constitute knowledge, situations, social roles as well as identities” (De Cella, *et al.*, 1999: 157). In other words, since discursive rituals are socially constitutive, they inform the production and construction of certain notions of identity. In so doing they resist, perpetuate or justify constructions of identity advanced by the status quo. The next section attempts to use discourse analysis strategies to deconstruct some of the arguments in the themes outlined above.

8.4 Contesting identity: Heroes’ and commemorative days

In addressing the narratives to do with commemorative rituals and public holidays, *NewZimbabwe.com* and its columnists engaged in issues rarely raised in *The Herald* newspaper. The website offers alternative voices that seek to upset dominant ones advanced by Zanu-Pf in public media. While Zanu-Pf has forcefully harnessed colonial memory that tends to privilege its position as a nationalist party for the purpose of nation building and identity construction, debates in *NewZimbabwe.com* rail against this (ab)use of colonial memory, patriotic journalism and history journalism. For example, in a challenge to Zanu-Pf’s dominance and control over the National Heroes’ Acre and liberation memory, one of the website’s bloggers, Chofamba Sithole argues that the constructions and definitions of heroes can be made by Zimbabweans “apart from Zanu-Pf pronouncements” (Sithole, 2011). The discussion that follows concerns the contests and meanings of the National Heroes’ Acre as a space and definitions of whom/what is a hero. This is done through analysing the

symbolic meaning of heroes, the death and burial of Zanu-Pf's preferred candidates at the Heroes' Acre. In addition Zanu-Pf has denied that some 'heroes' be buried at the shrine while others have outrightly rejected burial at the shrine through relatives or public pronouncements well before death. Also of importance are holiday commemorations which bring about the performance of power, authority, control, nationhood and stateness.

8.4.1 Even the Pope cannot be interred there³³: National Hero definition and the Heroes' Acre as a contested space

As stated in the previous chapter, the construction of a national shrine, the National Heroes' Acre in Harare is probably the most "crucial early part of construction of a national identity in the first decade of (Zimbabwe's) independence" (Onslow, 2011: 4). While the shrine is a potential site of national unity and identity, it has been conspicuous as a contested space especially in social and private media both within and outside Zimbabwe. As revealed in *Chapter 7*, Mugabe has used the shrine to reward and punish his loyalists and enemies respectively, at the expense of fostering national unity. The contested valorisation, commemoration and celebration of heroes demonstrate the precariousness associated with nationalism.

Theorists of nationalism stress the importance of national heroes as spiritual ancestors, definers and unifiers of the national community (Hutchins, 2011; Smith, 1999). These roles are determined "not by their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson, 1991), hence the contested nature of the subject among critical intellectuals and ordinary citizens. The definition of a hero is disputed in Zimbabwean nationalist politics. Hutchins (2011: 649) posits that beyond their nationalist leadership roles, national heroes "retain power long past their lifetimes as symbols incarnating national values and character ... often ascribed (quasi-) divine roles and devotion in the national consciousness". Some of Zimbabwe's heroes, as can be gleaned from the previous chapter, dedicated their lives to the liberation of the country hence serve as concrete human forms of national myths, reminding future generations how Zimbabwe came about and how they need to preserve that legacy.

³³This was said by Robert Mugabe at a funeral of Zimbabwe's ambassador to DRC. (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 2013)

Be that as it may, like all other myths, the “pantheon of heroes and the meanings attributed to them are subject to on-going renegotiation and reinterpretation” (Hutchins, 2011: 650). The intensity of these largely depends on the country’s political situation. These renegotiations and reinterpretations also relate to the meaning(s) of National Heroes’ Acre as a shrine and national space, and the choice of heroes to be interred at this place. In post- 2000 Zimbabwe, these negotiations have taken place mostly in online media. For ordinary Zimbabweans, the “information society” has played an integral role in salient national discussions on heroes and nationhood as “[T]here’s no Brother big enough to stop the truth ...” (Sithole, 2011) on the internet as is the case in the government controlled media in Zimbabwe.

The internet as a safe and alternative platform allows for expressions that would not usually see the light of day in the public media like *The Herald* as shown in the previous chapter where dissenting voices are silenced. However, it must be highlighted that in Zimbabwe some citizens have been arrested and taken to courts of law for online activities deemed illegal under Zimbabwean law. For instance *Vikas Mavhudzi* was arrested on February 24, 2011 for writing the following comments on Morgan Tswangirayi’s facebook wall:

I am overwhelmed, I don’t want to say Mr. or PM what happened in Egypt is sending shockwaves to dictators around the world. No weapon but unity of purpose worth emulating, hey. (*SW Africa*, 04.03.2011)

This statement was seen as a call for an uprising against the leadership of President Mugabe long accused of being a dictator by the opposition, civic organisations and international community. Many competing alternative views on heroes have been proffered in *NewZimbabwe.com* debates. These include suggestions to come up with a satisfactory operative definition of what a national hero is. MDC finds the current system of hero selection:

E20: nonsensical Zanu-Pf monopoly [carried out by a] group of forsaken men and women ... [who] call themselves the Zanu-Pf politburo. [*Moyo*]

The proposition by the MDC-T for instance, is that there be assembled:

E21: ... an all-stakeholders' body with no single subjective interest in the conferment of such national status on any individual ... an inclusive national policy with set parameters and clearly defined yardsticks [to determine who qualifies to be a national hero]... not only

politicians qualify to be national heroes [as] Zimbabweans have produced the best minds in business, in sport, in music and in the arts in general” and these people must be recognised as nation builders. [Nkathazo]

The suggestion in this statement is that Zanu-Pf needs to change the criteria for conferment of hero status because observations by politicians and academics suggest that Zanu-Pf has used the shrine to selectively reward Mugabe’s or Zanu-Pf’s loyalists and not ‘national loyalists’. This contest of the space also questions the definition of the nation which needs to be all inclusive and expand to different fields of achievements as there are Zimbabweans who have raised the country’s flag in different activities like sport. This, to a certain extent, links with the way the diaspora place a high premium on formal education as shown earlier in this thesis, to a point where education has become a defining feature of Zimbabweanness especially to those in the diaspora.

Despite the contestations from the MDCs, Mugabe is quoted by *NewZimbabwe.com* as contending that the National Heroes’ Acre belongs to Zanu-Pf and:

E22: only members of his Zanu-Pf party will be buried at the national Heroes’ Acre in Harare and ... those unhappy with the development were free to establish separate shrines for their own heroes. [NewZimbabwe.com, 26.03.2011]

One critical public intellectual, Ibbo Mandaza argues that the decision has to “be made by the people of Zimbabwe... [as] national hero status is a national issue, it goes beyond family... it goes beyond individuals...” (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 09.06.2011).

Zanu-Pf’s criteria for national hero conferment are peculiar in as much as they are controversial. Three instances may help highlight this. Firstly, when Mugabe’s cousin James Chikerema, one of the founding fathers of the country’s liberation struggle died, Mugabe insisted on burying him “KwaZvimba” (Mugabe’s rural home) as Chikerema:

E23: betrayed his comrades when he joined up with Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Ian Smith as part of the internal settlement ... [and ignoring party policy of] consistency and persistence... [which are] key to our definition of national hero. [NewZimbabwe.com, 18.09.2010]

Second, when Thenjiwe Lesabe, one of the founders of Pf-Zapu and a former Minister and member of Zanu-Pf died in 2011 she was also denied a national heroine status. Lesabe had

credentials of a national heroine as she fought in the country's liberation war and after the signing of Unity Accord she joined Zanu-Pf. In 2009:

E24: she decided to go back to her roots to re-join the revived Zapu and was elected chairperson of the Zapu Council of Elders at the party's 9th congress held in Bulawayo in 2010. [Ngwenya]

According to Zanu-Pf's secretary for administration Didymus Mutasa, this act obliterated Lesabe's chances of being conferred with the national heroine status. Chofamba Sithole quotes Mutasa as saying:

E25: We could not confer to her a national heroine status, which was her rightful status, because she was not consistent when she joined Zapu led by Dabengwa. ... Zapu members are still part and parcel of Zanu-Pf because of the agreement that we signed and nobody should go against that agreement. [Sithole]

Third, with reference to one of the founders of Zanu-Pf, Edgar Tekere, *NewZimbabwe.com* (09.06.2011) reported that there were certain "boxes on the criteria used by Zanu-Pf to pick national heroes" that are ticked. For Tekere, he ticked most of the boxes

E26: but his dalliance with opposition politics could be seen as falling short of a standard ... that heroes must have 'pursued and promoted the ideals of the liberation struggle consistently and consistently, without deviating from the same, right through to the bitter end'. (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 09.06.2011)

Later, Tekere rejoined Zanu-Pf and was therefore declared a national hero. Clearly the principles upon which one may be declared a national hero are not those that the war of independence was fought for. From the foregoing, practicing the right to belong or form a political party that challenges Zanu-Pf nullifies one's status as a national hero and contribution in the country's nationhood. Sithole (2011) criticizes this as an act of "monopolising the conferment of national hero status and reducing the criteria to party activism rather than national service."

In monopolizing the shrine, some glaring inconsistencies in the way Zanu-Pf chooses heroes appear. Some heroes buried at the shrine stood against the very principles of democracy and good governance. A case in point is Solomon Tavengwa. He is mostly remembered for maladministration and presiding over a corrupt Harare City Council during his tenure as Harare Mayor. He however was honored and respected as a hero because of his loyalty to the party. The Tavengwa example is not isolated. The shrine also hosts the remains of undistinguished guerillas who participated in the violent *Third Chimurenga* like Cain Nkala,

Chenjerai Hunzvi and Border Gezi, people whose war credentials have been queried in various platforms (*NewsDay*, 15.07.2012).

Zimbabweans have reacted to Zanu-Pf's monopolization of the national shrine by defining heroes themselves and not waiting for Zanu-Pf to make the decision:

- E27: Most profoundly, many Zimbabweans have now come to recognise heroism apart from Zanu-Pf pronouncements, and whatever Mugabe and his Politburo say of those with whom they do not agree politically, if people see them as heroes, then heroes they will forever be. [Sithole]

Tsitsi Maguvaz remarks, showing impatience to the Zanu-Pf system of hero selection:

- E28: What qualifies a hero in Zimbabwe, is there some kind of criteria or a panel that decides this? If not there is a need for one or let the people decide. A hero is definitely to the country and not to the politicians. Let us not all get tangled up in politics and give the respect to our heroes. I do not think it is fair for someone to deem a hero based merely on their personal, emotional opinion or affiliation. [*Tsitsi Maguvaz*]

In essence online public deliberations help rescue the national memory from being 'owned' by a single memory group – Zanu-Pf, a party that dominates the grand narrative of the liberation struggle – and opens up the possibilities of participation to ordinary citizens. Besides, as Kassau and Hunger (2008: 3) suggest, the interactions the diaspora and homeland communities have using alternative media help keep certain topics on the “public agenda in the host country or even beyond”. Citizens' participation in identity debates using alternative spaces “illustrates that ordinary people have strong, long-standing opinions about the future of the nation and national identity and will express their opinions when an outlet is provided to them” (Kaftan, 2013: 167). *Tsitsi Maguvaz* accentuates this assertion when she says there is a need for 'people' to choose who a national hero may be instead of letting the process be politicised. It is important to note that the people, 'we', 'our', and 'us' in the above quotation are different from the ones used by Zanu-Pf in *Chapter 7*. In this context, *Tsitsi Maguvaz* speaks not from a position of power or authority but that of an ordinary community member not interested in politics but 'our heroes' and country.

Fourth, it seems that heroism is sometimes thrust upon individuals depending on their relationships with the former ruling Zanu-Pf officials. For instance, Mama Mafuyana (Joshua Nkomo's wife), Sally Mugabe (Mugabe's first wife) and Julia Zvobgo (wife to Edson Zvobgo, Zanu-Pf member and former Minister of Justice) were buried at the national shrine and what is conspicuous about them is that they became heroines because they were spouses to the country's liberation war founders. There is scant scholarship on these issues but it is sufficient to suggest that this highlights the problematic nature of Zanu-Pf's determination of heroes. The 'rewarding' of the spouses of the liberation war heroes has 'Zanunised' the shrine and institution of heroes in Zimbabwe. This, to a certain extent, has made the shrine fail to arouse national pride, belonging and consciousness as it has become a contested or at times rejected site. Ultimately it has failed to foster national unity and identity.

The use of this space has been contested since 1980s, first by Pf-Zapu—the main opposition at that time until after the Unity Accord, then later in the post- 2000s by MDC, human rights NGOs and critical public intellectuals. The general agreement among opposition parties and critics of Zanu-Pf is that

E29: Heroes' Acre ... is now a true reflection not of the history of our liberation, but of the betrayal of our Independence ... it has become a place where those true heroes are forced to witness the destruction of what they struggled to achieve. ZANU-PF has appropriated Heroes' Acre, turning it into a cemetery for the human instruments of murder and corruption and oppression through which they have stolen Zimbabwe from the Zimbabwean people. [Sokwanele]

Finally, even though not currently widely debated in Zimbabwe, evidence from online debates suggests that ethnicity plays a critical role in hero selection. This also feeds into the myth that Pf-Zapu and Zipra did not contribute much in the war of liberation hence the suggestion in *Chapter 7* that Zanu-Pf reinscribes Pf-Zapu and Zipra for purposes of political hegemony. This is also shown through one *NewZimbabwe.com* discussant's assertion:

E30: if truth be told which war did zapu and anc fought. zimbabwe ws liberated by zanla and south africa's independence thru the pen. we kno the real zapu is stil merged in Zanu-Pf. [Nicol]

The myth advanced by Zanu-Pf, according to Kriger (1995) is that “during the war... Zapu was withholding guerrillas from the battlefield” (Kriger, 1995: 151) and after independence withheld them from joining the army hence they operated as dissidents which the Gukurahundi operation sought to eliminate in the 1980s.

Ethnicity has made national hero determination debates more complex. For instance, if the Matabeleland genocide was influenced by ethnic tensions as Judith Todd (2007) suggests, then on similar basis, some scholars argue that ethnicity also influenced the denial of a hero status to Lookout Masuku, a former Zipra military commander (Kriger, 1995) believed to be one of the architects of the dissident insurgency in the 1980s. Joshua Nkomo's assertion that "political and ethnic grounds" (Kriger, 1995: 153) were used to deny Masuku a hero status lends credence to this argument. Further, there is a belief that the grand narrative of the liberation struggle privileges the Zanu-Pf and Shona ethnic group's versions of events together with the myth that it is Shonas and Zanu-Pf who liberated Zimbabwe. This feeds into the testimony that the 1963 Zapu split left nationalist politics embedded in tribal and ethnic politics (Kriger, 1995).

Ake (1963: 3) argues that nationalism in most African countries mutated into "... political ethnicity when the nationalist movement, which was united mainly by common grievances, started to disintegrate on the verge of independence as its leaders manoeuvred to inherit power" (1963: 3). However, these ethnic groups do not have intra-group cohesion at all as they are further breakable into sub-ethnic groups. The Shona, just like the Ndebele ethnic groups for example, is riddled by sub-ethnic group tensions between the Karanga, Manyika, Ndaou and Zezuru, partly contributing to what Sithole (1979) labelled "struggles within a struggle". In the absence of a larger body of scholarly writings, many interpretations of how ethnicity informs national heroism are discussed in *NewZimbabwe.com*. Even though the veracity of some discussions cannot be ascertained it is important to consider discourses from general citizens as a cognitive prism through which citizens discursively define their national belonging from below.

Ethnicity is one of the criteria that Zanu-Pf allegedly uses to confer a hero status on people. Even though contestable, a few cases suffice to highlight the arguments that validate this assertion. Methuseli Moyo, a revived Zapu spokesman wrote after the death of Thenjiwe Lesabe:

E31: Lesabe's passing-on also brought into perspective Zanu-Pf's slide back to Gukurahundi mode, which says there can be no heroes in Zapu, worse if they are Ndebele like Thenjiwe Lesabe... Zanu-Pf demonstrated this through denying Lesabe heroine status. [*Methuseli Moyo*]

In response to Methuseli Moyo's opinion piece regarding the hero selection system in Zimbabwe *JJ* said:

- E32: is partisan and tribal. ZAPU is the first political party to be brave enough to openly talk about this... [there is need for] condemning the privatizing of the national heroes system in Zimbabwe...if you want... guarantee [of] being a Zimbabwe national hero, you have to be in no order;1-Shona, 2-ZANU, 3-A thug. The most important of these is being a Shona Ofcourse. [JJ]

The line of argument pursued by *JJ* is that ethnicity and political party loyalty are the only credentials that are used to determine who can be buried at the national shrine. Further, *JJ* alludes to the observation by Nkomo (in Kriger, 1995) and Todd (2007) on issues of ethnicity (discussed in *Chapter 9*) and the fact that some heroes at the National Heroes' Acre are known for violence even against fellow Zimbabweans. Joshua Nkomo points this when he argues that the postcolonial Zanu-Pf government exceeded the colonial regime in creating a military state (quoted in Kriger, 1995).

Further, *JJ* argues that Zanu-Pf has adulterated the definition of a hero based on ethnic lines:

- E33: Mai (Mrs.) Lesabe is not the first national hero who fits the criteria NOT to be a Zimbabwean national hero. The criteria NOT to be a national hero in no specific order is that 1-You have to be part of ZAPU; 2-You have to be Ndebele. Being one of these is bad, being both GUARANTEES that you are not a national hero. There are countless examples of this; Gibson Sibanda (zapu & ndebele), Lookout Masuku (ZAPU & Ndebele), Thenjiwe Lesabe (ZAPU & Ndebele).. The list is too long. [JJ]

From the foregoing, *JJ* addresses some taboo and sensitive issues that have to do with ethnicity and these are rarely discussed in Zimbabwean public media. Being Zanu-Pf is also associated or conflated with being Shona by some Ndebele discussants like *JJ*. Again the commentary's use of words like 'you' has a different meaning from the way *Tsitsi Maguvaz* uses 'our' 'we' and 'us'. The 'you' in *JJ*'s is not any ordinary Zimbabwean but it is specific to the Ndebele ethnic group or subnational group. By being selective to cases that help illustrate Zanu-Pf's tribalism, he picks a few Ndebele heroes who are not buried at the Heroes' Acre. Even in online debates, some discussants like *ben bown* argue that some things should not be said because they are divisive. For example in a comment directed to *JJ*, *ben bown* says:

- E34: @JJ, Can you stop talking about Shona and Ndebeles in such different lightthese are people who are country men and women. Jesus! I have looked at each one of your postings and its all about how bad the Shonas are, please spare us! Why not talk about imminent issues like sanctions on Zimbabwe, Tsvangirai, Mugabe etcthat is less divisive. (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 08.03.2011)

ben bown here suggests that ethnic particularism and institutionalisation of differences perpetuates conflict and divisions. This suggestion to speak about issues that affect Zimbabwe rather than ethnicity seems to suggest that since ethnicity is constructed it can be

reconstructed into new shared ‘consociational forms’ while overlooking the extent of such reconstructions (Nangle and Clancy, 2012). Besides, one interactant, *Cde Jongwe Raora* (E35) dismisses the argument that Zanu-Pf and its heroes are the sole liberators of the country in a rather vulgar manner as he responds to a post by *Omugabe*:

E35: @MUGABE.. I didn't even bother reading your post in full cos as as a zanu (pathetic faggot) supporter it's all guaranteed to be vacuous mantra parroting the same vaginal discharge that your shefu (chef-Mugabe) spews every time when he's supposed to eulogise over his dead cocksuckers. zanu is on the wane, beyond repair despite yours and other fellow CIOs vain attempts to neutralise opinion on cyber platforms. zanu yakarohwa nematsotsi (Zanu-Pf is a sick party) just like the majority of your top brass. It's only a matter of time exsir! The mere fact you recite 'Zimbabwe will never be a colony again' when in fact it is currently a zanu fiefdom shows how much of a saskam you are!..continue tilling that looted land. at this rate, it's fair to conclude that real freedom fighters' blood was spilled for nothing as cowards like yourself who never saw action are now tarnishing their image! [*Cde Jongwe Raora*]

This quotation brings to the fore the dictatorial rulership of Mugabe and the fact that Zanu-Pf has intensified issues of nationhood in order to save the party from ‘dying’. Far from Healey’s (1996) argument that cyberspace or the internet enhances homogeneity rather than diversity, what one can decipher from the comment above is that politically diverse views populate cyberspace. In addition, the vulgar manner in which *Cde Jongwe Raora* puts his arguments across may be attributed to the safety and freedoms of speech the internet affords online interactants. What *Cde Jongwe Raora* disputes here is the positive role and relevance of Zanu-Pf in postcolonial Zimbabwe. His sentiments are laced with insults to show anger at how Zanu-Pf has run the country. When one reads between the lines, the insults refer also to the “chef” country’s president (who eulogises at the burial of heroes) and his ‘cocksuckers’ like army generals, ministers and academics who are his praise singers—something that cannot be easily said within Zimbabwe. The respondent seems acutely aware of the security cyberspace offers as CIOs cannot neutralise opinion on cyber platforms.

In contesting the exclusivity of the National Heroes’ Acre, another discussant, *perickles* makes an observation that since the Heroes’ Acre:

E36: is a closed area for those who held political office in zanu or held a gun during the battles for majority rule, If so will we close the place when that generation is gone. [*perickles*]

Zanu-Pf has not only made the Heroes’ Acre a place where Zanu-Pf loyalists are buried but its website through the use of the statue of the Unknown Soldier suggests that those who died

during the war are more or less Zanu-Pf supporters and the national shrine is property of the party (See *Figure 6*) below. The comment in *E36* suggests that the shrine has lost meaning as a national symbol which needs to be dismantled, symbolically, in future.

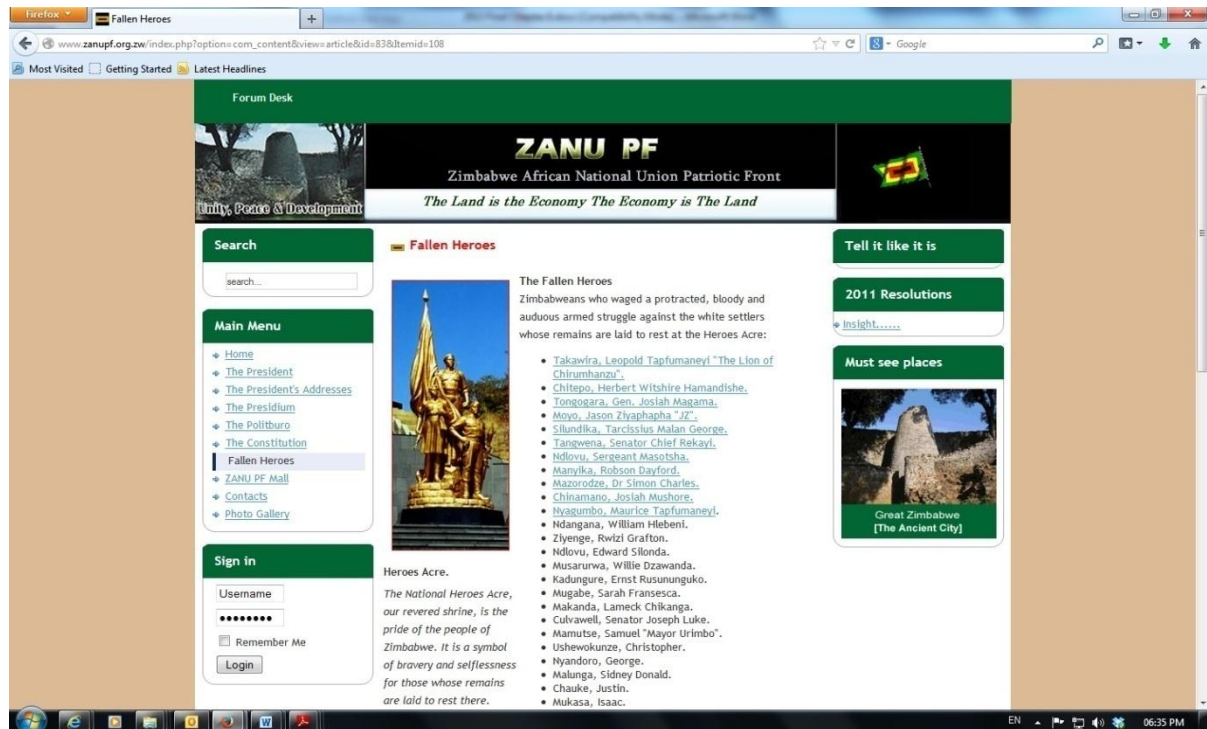


Figure 6: Appropriation of the Heroes' Acre as a Zanu-Pf burial site.

8.4.2 Contesting and rebuffing the Heroes' Acre

The Heroes Acre has not only been a contested space but some heroes and their families have rejected the 'honour' of having their remains interred at the site as it has been described as a space for crooks and thieves. While 'insiders' to the country's liberation war and nation making process have rejected the 'honour' of being buried at the shrine, 'outsiders' or opposition parties have clamoured for inclusion both in the hero selection and even burial at the shrine. Kriger observes that between 1980-1987 Pf-Zapu, then an opposition party, "persistently challenged Zanu-Pf national government's project concerning national heroes," contesting the government's right "to make state and national decisions about national heroes by attacking the partisan nature of its decision making process and its actual selection of national heroes and by being conspicuously absent from national heroes' burial ceremonies" (1995: 154). During this time, Pf-Zapu pleaded with the Zanu-Pf government to confer

national heroes' status upon its dead members because they viewed the national shrine as belonging to Zimbabwe and not Zanu-Pf. This is evidenced by Nkomo's argument at Lookout Masuku's burial in 1986 when he argued that Masuku "contributed so much to the liberation of this country ... [but today fails] to find himself a place among our national heroes" (in Kriger, 1995: 153). Notice that Nkomo, even though part of the opposition and 'outsider' to the nation according to Zanu-Pf, uses the possessive pronoun 'our' in reference to Zimbabwe. This expression and the act of the hero of giving "so much to... this country" shows a sense of belonging and patriotism to Zimbabwe as a nation.

The case of Masuku is not an isolated one as Pf-Zapu continued pleading with Zanu-Pf to confer hero status on its dead members who participated in the liberation war. In the case of Jason Moyo, Pf-Zapu forwarded his name to Zanu-Pf for consideration for burial at the Heroes' Acre in 1981. Also when Pf-Zapu's Ruth Nyamurowa died in 1983 she was given a state assisted funeral and not a national hero status. According to Nkomo, this was because the decision could not be made in the absence of Mugabe who was travelling. On the contrary, the then Minister of Information, Nathan Shamuyarira said that "the decision had been taken before her funeral not to honour her as a national hero" (Kriger, 1995: 152). Nkomo protested arguing that "Ruth is a hero of the people of Zimbabwe... We in ZAPU claim her as such ..." (*The Herald*, 16.08.1983). Zapu's countless other heroes were not buried at the National Heroes' Acre for various reasons but Mugabe's assertion that "heroes are of a different kind: some are more heroes than others" (ibid.:) is illuminating and gives credence to suspicions of favouritism, use of ethnicity and loyalty to Zanu-Pf as key to determinants of a national hero status than one's genuine contribution to the birth of a liberated Zimbabwe.

The same trend of requesting from Zanu-Pf that an opposition party member, or in the post-2009 Zimbabwe, a GNU-party member, be declared a national hero has continued in Zimbabwe. One prominent example is that of Gibson Sibanda, the deputy President of MDC and GNU cabinet minister who when he died in 2010 both MDC and MDC-T parties requested Zanu-Pf to have him declared a national hero. The request by the parties speaks to the recognition of the shrine as a national institution central to national identity formation especially in times of the GNU where the national politics were polarised and the prospects of reconciling ethnic tensions were high. Briefly, what qualified Sibanda as hero according to both MDCs is that he was imprisoned and detained for three years for his role in the

liberation struggle and was instrumental in postcolonial opposition politics and formation of the GNU government in 2008. Hence MDCs argued:

E37: he was a critical cog in the liberation struggle... instrumental in creating the ZCTU... played a pivotal role in the formation of the power sharing government... [and] kept true to his principle of 'Zimbabwe first' and if there's anyone who deserves to be called a national hero, then it is him." [*NewZimbabwe.com*, 24.08.2010]

This assertion contests the limited definition of a hero preferred by Zanu-Pf. For Zanu-Pf, Sibanda does not qualify as a hero as he stood against the liberation movement's principles by forming an opposition party. What can be read from the quote above is that heroes are not only those who belong to Zanu-Pf and fought the liberation war, but those who have continually struggled for the birth of a fair, just and democratic Zimbabwe even after 1980. In response, Mugabe's spokesman Charles Charamba, writing under the pseudonym Nathaniel Manheru argued that the National Heroes' Acre is:

E38: ... not a facility for bleaching darkened political souls. It is a site and recognition of honour: honour irrevocably achieved and thus honour which cannot be reversed or undone through subsequent transgressions. Zanu-PF, the sole creator of that Acre ... sole author of rules of entry to that shrine, relies on death for this irrevocability. [*NewZimbabwe.com*, 28.08.2010]

Thus a 'darkened soul' seems to be the one that does not belong to Zanu-Pf. Regardless of that darkened soul's contribution to the fight against colonialism or tyranny in postcolonial Zimbabwe, it cannot gain entry into the Heroes' Acre, a space Zanu-Pf appropriates as its own.

Alex Magaisa, a well-known Zimbabwean political commentator, former Kent School law lecturer and Tsvangirai's chief of staff in his column entitled 'Cry not for Hero Status' (2010) makes a critical interjection that seeks to neutralise the National Heroes' Acre as a pivotal monument in national identity construction. He expresses shock that:

E39: the MDC sent the petition at all and secondly, the collective reaction by the two MDCs of shock and disgust at the rejection (of Sibanda). Did they really expect anything positive? [*Magaisa*]

Magaisa further delegitimises the centrality of the shrine to nationhood by arguing that its elitist and privatised nature is not only used to exclude opposition politicians but it is also sexist and 'classist' as:

- E40: There are only six women buried at the National Heroes' Acre and all of them except one were spouses of the male political elites. The other one recently buried there was President's sister. Yet it is true that thousands of women played major roles in the liberation struggle. Thousands went to the front and fought alongside their male counterparts. Thousands more have played diverse roles in nation-building since independence. How can it be that only six of them (and those six who are connected to male political elites) were deemed worthy of national hero status? [*Magaisa*]

Magaisa dismantles the elitist and partisan constructions of heroism and national identity as insufficient to contribute to the construction of national identity in Zimbabwe. The institution also acts in favour of men "as a black, male, political, party biased elitist project" (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 26.08.2010) which, when it decides to include white people, they have to be male. To undermine this system, Magaisa suggests there is a need to devise "novel ways of honouring citizens" just like Zapu did before signing the Unity Accord with Zanu-Pf.

Besides boycotting national heroes holidays, burials, and openly criticizing Zanu-Pf for its "sectarian process of selecting heroes" (Kriger, 1995: 151), Pf-Zapu established the Zipra War Shrines Committee whose task was "to locate the grave sites of Zipra freedom fighters, both inside and outside the country... and marking them with gravestones and building shrines that contain the names of the fallen heroes" (Kriger, 1995: 154-155). At the burial of Lookout Masuku, Judith Todd quotes Joshua Nkomo as saying:

- E41: But they can't take away his status as a hero. You don't give a man the status of a hero. All you can do is recognise it. It is his. Yes, he can be forgotten temporarily by the state. But the young people who do research will one day unveil what Lookout has done. [*Todd*]

Together with opposition parties, Zimbabweans have undermined the Zanu-Pf method of identifying and honouring heroes by celebrating these 'heroes' especially in alternative digital public spheres regardless of the former ruling party's stance. Burial of these heroes has formed sites of protest where competing narratives of the nation alternative to Zanu-Pf are produced, circulated and reproduced (Sumartojo, 2012). For instance, at the burial of Gibson Sibanda, Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirayi said "[T]oday we are burying a national hero whose works speak for themselves" (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 30.08.2010). Moyo (2011) writing about Lesabe's burial argues her heroine status was attested to by the number of people who turned up for the funeral and this is given as a challenge to Zanu-Pf's definition of a hero. According to Sithole (2011) "if [we] see them those not chosen as heroes by Zanu-Pf as heroes, then heroes they will forever be."

Moreover, it does not need Zanu-Pf to declare one a hero as revealed at the funeral of Welshman Mabhena, a former cabinet minister and Governor of Matabeleland South where his brother Norman Mabhena said,

E42: As a family, we insisted that we would follow the Mabhena rituals in his burial. Mabhena himself was clear about this, he said when he dies he should not be buried in Harare. No person was going to change that. We are in our own right veteran politicians. We don't apologise for that and whether you recognise it or not that does not change. (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 10.10.2010)

According to this report, the hero status needs not be politically declared by Zanu-Pf for it to carry weight but the person's life and contribution to the country testify their heroism. Takura Zhangazha a blogger in *NewZimbabwe.com* reiterates the same sentiments when he asserts that heroes remain heroes regardless where they are buried:

E43: my firm conviction [is] that Sibanda was a hero well before he died; and that he was not a hero by the narrow definition of Zanu-Pf's central committee. That his colleagues wrote a letter to President Mugabe seeking to have him interred at the National Heroes' Acre baffles the mind. This is because that particular resting place of most of the leaders of the liberation struggle has been appropriated by the Zanu-Pf cultural and political hegemonic project. To be clearer, the National Heroes' Acre is an institution that serves the political and power narratives of Zanu-Pf and not the nation. (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 01.09.2010)

Thus the burial space of these three 'heroes' in this instance does not matter in contributing to their hero-status but their works and the respects shown by general Zimbabweans make them heroes. Zhangazha also discounts the National Heroes' Acre as a credible shrine for national consciousness as it has been tainted by Zanu-Pf's cultural and hegemonic project. It has been used as a space "explicitly designed to impart certain elements of the past – and, by definition, to forget others" (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004: 350). The contest of space and national identity narrative shown above attests to Bhabha's assertion that national identity narratives must speak to issues of multiplicity, flexibility and hybridity (Bhabha, 1990) and not of rigidity and exclusivity.

(Ab)use of the National Heroes' Acre has led to some nationalists rejecting being buried at the shrine, labeling it a place of 'crooks.' Welshman Mabhena's case helps highlight this sentiment:

E44: THE family of Welshman Mabhena said the late national hero died a bitter and frustrated man and made it clear he would not want to be buried with "thieves and crooks" at the National Heroes' Acre in Harare. (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 10.10.2010)

Mabhena fell out with Mugabe after he called the president to quit politics and relinquish power. Thus his challenge was taboo and tantamount to unmaking Mugabeism – an ideology that anchors Zanu-Pf’s personalised politics revolving around Mugabe as the eternal leader of the party and country. This call was in contrast even to sentiments expressed by a five-year-old Chegutu girl Joshmy Magwizi who said in a poem:

E45: Our heroes shed their blood to free us from mental slavery and their blood shall not rest until we liberate ourselves... Cde Robert Mugabe, we thank you for introducing the land reform programme and for working hard to give it (land) to its owners... Cde Robert Mugabe, you cannot leave us now. People are still suffering without jobs and shelter and they still need you. (*The Herald*, 10.07.2004)

From the above, it is difficult to believe that a five-year-old can conceive and convey such politically loaded sentiments. Further, Mabhena’s call was contrary to what is illustrated in *Chapter 7* where both *The Herald*, Zanu-Pf and opposition parties seem to agree that Mugabe is divinely appointed and is the pith of the nation.

Another hero to refuse burial at the National Heroes’ Acre was Edgar Tekere. Ultimately he was ‘forcibly’ buried at the National Heroes’ Acre despite his wishes “not to be buried” at the shrine. A hero does not determine his destiny and this is revealed by Ibbo Mandaza, the author of Tekere’s biography who argues that the status of a hero is national neither personal nor family-related. (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 07.06.2011).

This complicates access to the Heroes’ Acre as personal wishes of the liberators are selectively ignored (compare with Welshman Mabhena for instance). By comparison, Tekere whose “great heroic deeds in his younger days as a youth activist and guerrilla leader fighting to end white rule” was awarded the hero status despite his inconsistencies that parallel those of Thenjiwe Lesabe for instance. The fact that the latter was denied the honour to be buried at the National Heroes’ Acre while the former got this honour has been a point of contention and speaks to Zanu-Pf’s inconsistencies in honouring heroes which greatly informs the knotty process of national identity formation.

The response to Zanu-Pf’s dominant narrative of having the National Heroes’ Acre as the ultimate definer of a hero and symbol of nationhood can be captured in Dinizulu Macaphulana’s (2010) assertion in an article, ‘*The Heroism of Gibson Sibanda*’ when he argues:

E46: It shouldn't matter where [a hero's] remains are interred—it can be on an anthill, it can be on a mountain, on a plain surface or in a river-but that spot where he is buried is now a monument and a shrine. [Dinizulu Macaphulana]

The National Heroes' Acre is mythologised as the sole "Official ... monument... [that plays] a unique role in the creation of national identity because [it] reflect[s] how political elites choose to represent the nation publicly" (Forest and Johnson, 2002: 256). This officialdom and narrow representations of national identity are undermined by ordinary people's online contestations that dismantle spaces and institutions that act as sites of identity making.

8.5 Human Rights and the new Constitution: homosexuality and contesting the nation

As shown in *Chapter 7*, homosexuality has been a taboo word excluded from public debate in Zimbabwe where society views intimate same-sex relationships as moral decadence. The only time this was given prominence in public discourse was when the ruling elite was engaged in a war of words with the West. However, the post 2008 GNU Zimbabwe has been engaged in the new constitution making process where this taboo subject was raised, leading to many questions and opening up the debate about dominant ideologies of nationhood and sexual orientation.

The constitution making process, in particular the issue of sexuality, saw the country attempting to construct the nation as an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) based on heteronormativity, excluding and discriminating against homosexual, bi-sexual or those communities unwilling to conform to monosexual standards. For Bourdieu (1991) those who do not conform are subject to symbolic domination as their rights are suppressed for the greater good of the nation. There are probably few instances where Zanu-Pf, its usually dissonant partners in the GNU and general Zimbabweans find consonance on certain political issues. The issue of 'gay rights' in the new constitution seems to be one that brought agreement between the MDC parties, Zanu-Pf and the general public both inside and outside Zimbabwe.

The article '*Mugabe, Tsvangirai slam homosexuals*' (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 26.03.2010) records that Mugabe and the MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai struck a rare chord as they vowed that they would not support gay rights in the new constitution. Mugabe is quoted in the article as saying:

E47: *[T]hose who engage in homosexual behaviour are just crazy. It's just madness. Insanity... We can't do it or the dead will turn in their graves. [I]n Britain and the United States, I saw an archbishop blessing a gay wedding ... I want to see how they will procreate. If they manage, then I will admit that I don't know ... (NewZimbabwe, 26.03.2010)*

In the article Mugabe argues that homosexuality is uncultural and destroys the fabric of the nation which hitherto remains undefined by Zanu-Pf. In addition, since it defies procreation laws, he would not allow it to happen in Zimbabwe. Here “symbolic power is misrecognised (and transformed and believed to be) legitimate power” (Bourdieu, 1991: 170) by both the politicians and general public. Daniel Molokele, a South African based Zimbabwean and human rights lawyer responded to Tsvangirai and Mugabe’s assertions with a blog “Gay rights are human rights too.” He argued that these

E48: two men’s views represent one of the most outrageous attacks on the sanctity of freedom and democratic values and norms that they both purport to represent and stand for ... [through] retrogressive and anachronistic attitudes on the national agenda. (Molokele, 01.04.2010)

Much as new media offer alternative public spheres of expression that liberate homosexuals and heterosexuals alike, also offer a platform of oppression especially to the homophobic Zimbabwean population in the diaspora and homeland. To better understand the constructions of identity around sexuality, this section will benefit from destruction and construction strategy by De Cella et al. (1999) and Bourdieu’s (1991) key concept of habitus.

Habitus is defined as “the set of dispositions, or learned behaviours, which provide individuals with a sense of how to act and respond in the course of their daily lives” (Blackledge, 2002: 69). In relation to sexuality, habitus therefore becomes the ways that have been inculcated into Zimbabweans through patterns of behaviour of “the group in its history, culture, language and other norms” (Blackledge, 2002: 69). According to Bourdieu, the habitus of a person obtains in a field where the person acts; a field being “a social arena in which negotiations take place” (Blackledge, 2002: 69). In this instance, the very act of participating in the constitution making process gave Zimbabweans a sense of belonging and in that process, they used the constitution as a legal document that helps define national identity hence the issue of sexuality became important in the context of human rights and tensions between heterosexuality and homosexuality globally. With regards to the issue of sexual orientation, the habitus of individuals may or may be at variance with cultural expectations.

Whereas the political leadership makes it clear where they stand on issues of sexuality both in *Chapter 7* and again in this story, new media offers a space where ordinary people can respond to the matter of homosexual rights in the constitution. The advantage of new media is that people have leverage to disagree with popular ideologies without fear. For instance the following three extracts exemplify this point:

- E49: No black person should discriminate against gay people. Given our history, I cannot understand why anyone with common sense fails to see that gay people are unfairly discriminated against and marginalised. The parallels with racism are staggering but then again you are too dumb to see it . *[tom tom]*
- E50: You all speak nonsense. Fortune is right. You all deserve the oppression you get from Mugabe. May it always be like that as long as you dont seek to understand gay pple. Long live Mugabe. Give them hell . *[Bhekilizwe B Ndlovu]*
- E51: gay rights are in fact rights too. not for debate sake but wat is a constitution thaat marginalises people because they are a minority? let it be countermajoritarian who cares? not you because you are not gay anyway. then let there be no constitution at all. were is the constitutionalism if some people do not enjoy the same benefits of the law? if the same law shall stigmatise them? i think gays deserve that right. when i become president they shall enjoy equal protection and benefits of the law . *[bubbles]*
- E52: I believe in equal rights whether you are gay or not. We should be discussing human rights and the issue of whether you are gay or not should not arise. Like What the prime minister said who are we to judge gays. *[Olindah Chawora]*

Whereas the constitution is meant to habituate a Zimbabwean identity whose local principles seem to sit uncomfortably with universal ones, the above extracts reveal dissatisfaction and disappointment over the attitude of Zimbabweans towards the constitution. Hence, as suggested by De Cellia et al. (1999) the comments are an attempt to dismantle the cultural notions that are being condensed into laws “which regulate the social practices of inclusion and exclusion of individuals in the form of fixed,” in this case, sexual behavioural practices (Wodak, et al. 2009: 30).

Participants in the debate, as exemplified by E49, suggest that black people went under much oppression during colonialism hence there is no need for discrimination considering that blacks intertextually understand the intensity of discrimination having experienced it under white rule. *E51* and *E52* suggest the importance of the constitution as serving both the majority and the minority. The reference to homosexuals as the ‘minority’ here suggests the precariousness of same sex relationships in Zimbabwe and that the new constitution, if it ignores equality, exacerbates this marginal feeling. In public sphere deliberations, it is argued

that civility and politeness are key but Lyotard (1984) repudiates this. Together with Papacharissi, Lyotard (1984) argues that democratic deliberation needs to be “robust and heated” (Papacharissi, 2004: 259) and even anarchist at times (Lyotard, 1984) as “anarchy, individuality, and disagreement, rather than rational accord, lead to true democratic emancipation” (Papacharissi, 2004: 9). This anarchy also means that deliberations get personal as the ‘speakers’ also attack not only the idea presented to the public but also the ‘speaker.’ This follows Schudson’s thinking that “conversation needs to be more robust, rude, and self-absorbed” (in Papacharissi, 2004: 259). Molokele is personally referred to as gay:

E53: My Friend, after having read your previous article when you were praising Sodhindo Banana, and mentioning that you used to go to his house in MP. I am now convinced you are gay, its high time you just come out in the open and not hide behind constitutional debate. I dont care your views about freedoms I say TO HELL WITH HOMOSEXUALISM ... I thought you wr an SDA (abbreviation for Seventh Day Adventist) I have lost all respect for you!

The inference in this statement is that being gay is something to be ashamed of. Besides, debates here also have admixture of rational debate and anarchy, agreements or disagreements, selfishness/individuality and selflessness—all these characteristic of diversity that the public media seem to deny the public.

This varied range of approaches is clearly expressed particularly by those in disagreement with certain sentiments. For example, *RobK* addressing a fellow discussant under Mhlanga’s (2011) article suggests that there is need to have etiquette in the *NewZimbabwe.com* digital public sphere as failure to do so amounts to behaving like Mugabe:

E54: Tinashe, the essence of a mature debate is when people are able to air out their views freely. In pursuance to this interchange will be conflicting views for and against a view point. I have read your response to Think Tank which has degenerated to name calling. You are exhibiting Mugabe's tendencies whereby if he can no longer sustain a debate he will resort to name calling. Let us show restraint and let our points and facts argue for us. I need not over-emphasise the fact that we are all Zimbabweans, we can never wish that away.... We all have a common enemy which is Zanu-Pf, why don't we close ranks and fight this common enemy than concentrate on side shows. [*RobK*]

The following extracts reveal a variety of comments that are emotionally embedded and clearly seek to exclude members of the same sex community from the nation-building project. Besides rabidly hateful, hostile and intolerant comments, some disagreements seem to be based on rational reasoning. *E55* is most likely the unemotive and well-reasoned contribution:

E55: Mr Molokele, I have enjoyed reading your previous contributions to this website but I am afraid that I beg to differ with you on the issue of gay rights, based on my convictions as a born again Christian ... The Bible is against gay and lesbian practices and counts them as sin. I am not sorry to say that your views are anachronistic to the word of God no matter how high sounding and well-reasoned they may seem. Our only standard for what is right and wrong as Christians is the undiluted and uncompromised word of God. I am not sure if your Biblical role models in the name of Jeremiah, Daniel and Paul would agree with you on this one. In fact, it was Paul who declared that homosexuality "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 6:9; 10). To be honest with you brother, I personally think you have gotten off the rails on this one. You need to go back to the word of God. Your article is misleading a lot of people who will come to believe that it is right to be gay when in fact it's not. [*Finex Ndhlovu*]

Biblically grounded narratives are systematically appropriated to strengthen arguments against same sex marriages/relationships. Christianity is a popular religion in Zimbabwe and in this instance its 'symbolic power' is clearly illustrated as it provides the grammar for speaking and imagining the nation. The imagination of the nation encourages selecting certain narratives and ignoring others. As stated in the previous chapter, the connections between colonialism, Christianity and homophobia in Africa are not problematised in the constitution and same sex debates. The following extracts help to highlight this deficiency:

E56: I think there should be nothing as 'gay rights' in Zimbabwe. people should just accept that whats wrong is wrong. we are not Europeans and should not just accept to be used like that ” [*Pungwiros*]

E57: God created ADAM and EVE not Adam and Steve. Guys Im shocked how cud you change your life deprive your culture in sake of being a western .” [*Nkalanga*]

What stands out in online debates is that people attempt to cultivate “social cohesion and group identity above the fulfilment of individual desires” (Freelon, 2010: 1180) by attempting to group together ideologically. The above anti-homosexual sentiments’ contribution establishes the ‘us/them’ dichotomy where ‘we’ straight people have to defend the nation against ‘them’ the homosexuals whose desires are ‘individual’ and foreign and therefore should be suppressed in the interests of a homogenous heterosexual collective.

This promotion of the ‘homogeneous heterosexual collective’ argument resonates with the main discourse that homosexuality is a western culture that does not have a place in Africa as “we are not Europeans....” In addition, this adds to the fact that “we are a Christian” nation and they that practise homosexuality are not godly and therefore belong to the devil. Given that, some Zimbabweans feel that their country cannot allow such rights to be included in the constitution as *Tobaiwa* says, “Let's have vote and I am sure the majority of zimbabweans

will vote NO, simple as that. We are a christian nation and our founding principles are based on that, end of quote.” Also

E58: ...engaging in, condoning & promoting the perverted homosexual BEHAVIOR is definitely not allowed "here" in Zimbabwe & Africa. Maybe "there" in decadent Europe; but not "here" in Africa! The perverted homosexual BEHAVIOR IS A HUMAN WRONG. It is a choice, a wrong choice. Since you may be "at a loss" with a statement in the previous post, I will clarify: There is a state BEING/FEELING homosexual! And then there is the homosexual BEHAVIOR, which comes about by ACTING WITH ANOTHER on the homosexual being/feeling. The being/feeling homosexual may be a BIRTH DEFECT, which is not a choice. One may have also been born healthy, but one was sodomized, victimized, confused & 'converted' to homosexuality by an evil homosexual when one was an innocent child victim. It is the ACTING on the being/feeling of homosexuality with another pervert that is CHOICE [Jukwa emphasis original]

It is instructive to engage with the above excerpt (E58) as, linguistically, it says much. The use of capital letters shows points of emphasis and lexical choice speaks to the passion Jukwa has on the debate. The passion might be interpreted two-fold – the hatred of homosexuality and love for one’s country. Africa is presented here as a morally upright continent and Europe is ‘decadent’. This suggests that Europeans want to impose their BEHAVIOUR “here”. Jukwa, without an attempt to understand what brings about “BEING/FEELING homosexual” authoritatively suggests that it is a defect and WRONG. Here the minority are not only othered but described in a way that excludes. This exposes the homosexual identities as fragile subjectivities. Further, Christianity is used as a moral standard upon which to measure and secure the country’s ‘cleanliness’ as argued by *Dingumuzi Masuku*:

E59: ...Zimbabweans please no homosexuality allowed in our clean country. If we truly believe in christianity then this sickness can never be allowed in our society what! even dogs can not do such abomination its totally sick and disgusting yak. [*Dingumuzi Masuku*]

Dingumuzi Masuku’s lexical choice is informative. He describes homosexuality as dirty and not allowed “in our clean country”, a “sickness” an “abomination” and “disgusting”. The ‘our’ suggests the togetherness of the imagined community that wants a clean country and by implication the ‘them’ are those pro-homosexual organisations and the West. The debate is couched in an anti-Western culture/human rights and pro-Christianity narrative as shown in the following five extracts:

E60: We do not accept the recognition of any sin through the guise of human rights; never. If USA, Britain, South Africa etc accept this, that is not a reason for us to succumb to the devil and recognise any sin in Zimbabwe. The only solution to overcoming sin, homosexuality included is to seek Christ. [*Master Terenz*]

E61: brothers and sisters we can debate till the next decade but one thing for sure gay pple has no right in Zimbabwe... I cant imagine my child being gay that is so sick. NO GAY rights in ZIMBABWE, we are sick and tired...GODBLESS ZIMBABWE . [*Nkalanga*]

- E62: If westerners introduce imperialistic retrogressive, dirty sickening filth in the name of human rights are we supposed to just follow like sheep. We are human beings with brains not everything tht comes from th west is right Daniel....[*Bushwcker in Birmingham UK*]
- E63: no no no no no we Zimbabweans dont tolerate that nonsese yakadaro (*nonsense like this*) i (*it's*) mental issue they need to be locked mumahospital (*in hospitals*) all gays (translation researcher's). [*Mampofu*]
- E64: We can not sacrify our cultural heritage because of a few misguided, insane borrowers of rotten Western culture of madness. To hell with your article, go f**k the ass of your fellow mentally deranged gays there! [*Jimmy Jimalo*]

The rhetoric of expunging homosexuals from the society serves the imagination of a traditional African family that rigidly comprises the father, mother and the children. Intimate sexual relations in this traditional familial context are understood as serving reproductive purposes. According to Epprecht (1998), crude rhetoric used by Zimbabweans to discourse homosexuality out of the body politic of society cannot be said to be homophobic. He argues that Zimbabweans cannot be homophobic when “many have only the vaguest notion of what homosexuality is” (1998: 633). Thus the African culture in the Zimbabwean context imposes keeping certain appearances “that might compel a literal, destabilising naming of fact” (Epprecht, 1998: 633) out of the public domain. This fear of confronting and naming fact has seen certain cultural practices being employed to maintain “tradition.” For instance, in a marriage, the appearance of being fertile is important and if a man cannot have children he is not doing his duty towards the nation and community. To avoid shame and preserve “tradition,” a custom that allows another man (*kupindira* in Shona) is employed. This informs the labelling of deviant sexual behaviours as abominable homosexuality ‘a sickness and sign of mental imbalance’ which leads to a homophobic construction of the nation that fails to confront the issue of homosexuality from historical and cultural perspectives. As already highlighted, homosexuality was common in most African societies before colonialism and if the debate were to be approached from that perspective, comments above could have been different.

Be that as it may, the constitution making process seems to be a narrative of power and assertion of African “culture” in confrontation with Western ideals. It might appear as if the rhetoric in these debates is in the service of the Zanu-Pf’s political project but a thorough reading of the arguments suggests otherwise. The fact that globalisation more or less is synonymous with Westernisation has been seen as imposition of so-called Western lifestyles like homosexuality on Africans. Anti-homosexual debates are therefore used as resistance to Western cultural imperialism. Martin (1995) suggests three pillars of identity narratives and

these are central in understanding the debates surrounding national identity defined within the paradigms of sexuality. Martin (1995: 8) suggests three poles that are used to organise narratives on national identity and these are: “relationship to the past; relationship to space; relationship to culture”. Summarily the three poles are clearly used in the narrative of constitutionalism and same sex romantic relationships where the past, history and space have been used to organise society altering culture by emphasizing certain traits over others, privileging certain discourses and suppressing others.

8.6 The Land Reform

Chapter 7 showed the centrality of land reform to national identity debates, as positioned by Zanu-Pf. On the contrary, findings from online discussions on the land issue suggest that Zimbabweans did not engage on the issue in a sustained and critical manner befitting national identity issues. This might be informed by the founding of other online media sites that cater for the white community (King, 2003; Peel, 2009). See also *Chapter 9* for a further discussion on how Whites have regrouped in online enclave public spheres based outside Zimbabwe. The representation of issues is not as balanced or diverse as it is with the case of ethnicity in the next chapter where contending debates about belonging and national identity are vigorously debated among the two main ethnic groups in Zimbabwe—the Shona and the Ndebele.

The land reform themed discussions have been promoted by Zanu-Pf officials like Jonathan Moyo (13.03.2011; 21.03.2011; 10.05.2011; whose articles appear in the *NewZimbabwe.com* website. Stories in the website have dealt with how bad, corrupt, disastrous and chaotic the land reform system was or in some cases what researches say about the success/failure of the land reform. For instance the following headlines may help illustrate this argument: ‘Tsvangirai on Zimbabwe's food crisis’ (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2009), ‘Clumsy Zanu-Pf propaganda on farms won't work’ (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2009), ‘Zimbabwe beef shortages: a man-made crisis’ (11.12.2009) ‘Matonga harvests, loots neighbour's farm’ (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2011), ‘Minister returns looted Kondozi pumps’ (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2011), ‘Mutasa tells banks to shun white farmers’ (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2011). Jonathan Moyo, in an article ‘Indiginisation; The Last Chimurenga’ (13.03.2011) suggests that the land reform has been successful and there is need

for the country's economy to be in the indigenous (black) people's hands. *Ndazy* and *Tendai Chisho* respond to Moyo thus:

- E65: While I agree in principle with the need for indigenisation I am concerned with the framework within which it will be attained. Looking at our recent history, in particular the '*Third Chimurenga*' the so-called youth did not benefit. I see the ZPF drive for indigenisation as being insincere and motivated by the need for votes. Granted that is what all political parties are after but here I am against Moyo trying to appropriate a genuine agenda for selfish and narrow ends like what happened in the land reform programme. Interesting Moyo and ZPF do not tell us how a young man from Mahusekwa will benefit from this. [*Ndazy*, 13.03.2011]
- E66: The indigenisation programme is as noble as it is necessary, however unless and until ZanuPF can clearly articulate how I as the ordinary Zimbabwean, without enough know how or money to buy shares, can benefit, it will not have the necessary broad based support to be a success. The Land Reform was a resounding success because it is obvious how the ordinary man can benefit from it. ZanuPF must explain to the man on the street how this will benefit him or come up with schemes that empower the poor. small 1000 dollar loans, employee ownership schemes as part of pay, an empowerment bank for the youth etc tangible benefits not lofty rhetoric. [*Tendai Chisho*]

The suggestion in this vignette is that Zanu-Pf politicised the land reform and excluded the youth from benefitting from the process. It seems therefore that the manner in which Zanu-Pf has attempted to create the nation is through excluding the youths whom since 2000 it has sought to entice and coerce into subscribing to its ideologies. Besides the exclusion of the youth, it seems the land reform as a national identity constructing tool did not find support among online discussants. Mukanya and Musande Mutasa make the following assertion in the extracts below:

- E67: When Mugabe says the crisis started in 2000 due to the rejection of the land reform programme by Britain and its allies he is not telling the truth. Many in his government and party know that the crisis started on August 16 1997 when the compensation for veterans of the liberation war became an economic albatross to the fiscus. It is also a widely known fact that the demands for a new democratic constitution started well before 2000. Indeed, the MDC itself was formed before 2000. If the truth be told, the 2000 land reform programme was itself a hasty, brutal and chaotic response to serious national problems that were already present. It was not a sustainable policy action. That brutal and chaotic response was more about Mugabe's political survival than about redressing historical injustice (exact words of Jonathan Moyo before rejoining Zanu-Pf in 2008). [*Mukanya*]
- E68: Third, Mugabe need'nt rely on the british. Zimbabwe became an independent country. If we were a nation that prided itself with human resource we could have taken the plunge in 1980. So Mugabe has no courage. The land issue was an emotional out burst which has destroyed the country. It will take 15 to 30 years for the country to recover from the madness driven by Robert. he knows it even in his sleep. [*Musande Mutasa* 12.04.2010]

This does not mean that the land reform did not find support among some discussants in *NewZimbabwe.com*. In a response to Mthulisi Mathuthu's (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 12.04.2010) blog post 'The real villains in Zimbabwe crisis' *Mr K* and *Kuthula Matshazi* supported the land reform thus:

- E69: It isn't simply that 'Mugabe had help', it is that the 'opposition' is treasonous, and helped draw up financial sanctions against Zimbabwe, for the purpose of doing maximum damage to the economy and the country. Obviously, they are not being held to account for this in the international media. However, what would anyone in the MDC have thought the effects of economic sanctions would be? What would the effect of destroying the Zimbabwean currency by putting the government on a credit freeze be? This is revenge for land redistribution, the only successful land redistribution exercise in postcolonial Africa. It is the fear that this exercise would be successful, that it would lead to the same process in South Africa, Namibia (the world's most unequal economy, placing it number 1 on the GINI index), as well as Botswana, Kenya, etc, that made it imperative for neoliberals and neocolonialists that an alternative to their own model must fail. [*MrK*]
- E70: We must understand that the genesis of the current situation in Zimbabwe is the land reform programme which the Western countries opposed for several reasons. First, by embarking on the popular land reform programme, Zimbabwe challenged the privilege and superiority of the Anglo-Saxon establishment and Caucasians in general over Black people. The idea that fuels this position is that the former group is entitled to privileges over other peoples of the world. Secondly, we must understand that land is the basis of capital and it is, therefore, important that capitalists own and control it since it is a central means of production. The underlying idea is that if people retain ownership of land then they would not have to heavily rely on food or products manufactured by big businesses. Also, people will not have to sell their labour at knockdown prices if they have an alternative means of livelihood. People can also control the price of goods and products that they manufacture or grow to the detriment of the capitalist profiteering system that could be held at ransom by ordinary people who want to make a decent living. Thirdly, if Zimbabwe were allowed to successfully undertake the land reforms then they would influence other countries in the region and the world where land ownership structure is skewed towards the Westerners. Granted, there might have been problems within the programme but this is inevitable in such huge undertakings. It is important that should the current government remain in office that they fix the weak areas. On the other hand, other governments have not dared challenge the Anglo-Saxon supremacy or they have simply been co-opted to this imperial liberalism order. It is dangerous, therefore, for Zimbabweans to think that their problems are unique and more dangerous to imagine that the West is driven by benevolent considerations in ousting President Robert Mugabe. They do not care what President Mugabe does to Zimbabwe but rather what he is doing to thwart Western capital of a chance to take over business opportunities in Zimbabwe. [*Kuthula Matshazi*]

Both vignettes attest to the need for land reform given the land ownership patterns that favoured Whites and disadvantaged Blacks. However, the above analysis seems to speak about political, economic and food security issues and not issues of identity per se. Identity

issues may be inferred in some of the comments like *E70* where ownership of land translates to one's dignity and identity as suggested in *Chapter 7*.

Zanu-Pf's attempts at safeguarding what they call the country's sovereignty have not been entirely opposed as this narrative has found support from some discussants in *NewZimbabwe.com*. *ZimStyle* (*E71*) for instance, supports the view that the MDC formations are foreign funded and have no interests of the nation at heart:

E71: We need to make things clear here, that this country is not for sale, whatever the price! So all idiots who have set-up their little foreign-illegally funded market stalls in the form of MDC-T and MDC-N, the message is clear here, dismantle Your little stalls because, WHATEVER IT TAKES FOR THE SOVEREIGN AND SECURITY OF THIS COUNTRY WE WILL DO! WHATEVER IT TAKES! BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY WE WILL GUARD OUR HARD-WON INDEPENDENCE! TOMORROW WE CELEBRATE OUR INDEPENDENCE AND WE WILL FOREVER GUARD THAT INDEPENDENCE. SECURITY OF OUR COUNTRY IS PARAMOUNT! [*ZimStyle*]

E72: It is UNTHINKABLE for the AFRICAN OWNERS of African resources to be paying the CRIMINAL EURO INVADERS for the repatriation of African resources. If murderous & thieving & raping criminals invaded your home, would it ever be legal & acceptable for you to pay the criminal FOR YOUR OWN PROPERTY? Among which people is the PAYMENT TO CRIMINALS for return of STOLEN LOOT, acceptable? Zim Patriots, Asian RELIABLE FRIENDS have REAL MONEY! The pale devils HAVE MONOPOLY MONEY; because they are LIVING SOLELY ON CREDIT! In addition, Asians HAVE ADEQUATE TECHNOLOGY for African mines. So, oh "Bones of Nehanda", pay no attention to the LIARS & PROPAGANDISTS who will say that Zim can't make it without their historically racist ENEMIES! Truth is: Africans MUST make it without the pale devils! IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO AFRICAN Self-determination, Self-development, Self-reliance & Self-sufficiency: 'Look Inward' & "Look to the enlightened East"! In the wicked West, ARE ONLY ENEMIES OF AFRICANS! Omugabe Remember, Zim Patriots, Oh Bones of Nehanda, your evil euro enemies ARE EXPECTED to say nasty things about you! The racist enemies of Africans ARE NOT EXPECTED to say nice things about Africans. However, matters not what the historical enemies of Africans say or do, as long as they froth at the mouth IN EUROPE. And whether the devils kill Nehanda or spread rumors that Magnanimous Mugabe is dead, it matters not; because Nehanda's alive or Nehanda is dead, Matibili is alive or Matibili is dead, THE CHIMURENGA CONTINUES in success! And the good & INNOCENT peoples of Africa WILL ULTIMATELY be freed of the pale plague that criminally invaded from europe. Those unfortunate & misguided Africans who cast their losing lot with the criminal & racist rhodies, shared the defeat at the hands of The Bones of Nehanda. So too will they experience only defeat, those who are STILL Mindlessly Deluded by Colonialists (MDC) [*Omugabe*]

The above comments illustrate the tensions the land reform and the formation of the MDC have had on Zimbabwe's politics in general and national identity debates in particular. The labeling of the MDC as 'market stalls' of the West or 'idiots' not only marginalizes the opposition parties from the nation but also justifies their persecution. *Omugabe* has consistently referred to the White people as 'CRIMINAL EURO INVADERS ... murderous & thieving & raping criminals'. What the above quotations illustrate is that the 'identity

reform' in Zimbabwe cannot happen without dismantling white hegemony through destroying 'white agriculture' which serves as a reminder of colonialism.

According to Yeros (2002: 4), agrarian white capital held Zimbabwe hostage and (white capital) "insisted on extending its colonial occupation into the nationalist period". Both extracts above endorse the use of violence in addressing these colonial land imbalances. According to Bull-Christiansen (2010: 421) the uses of violence in Zimbabwean politics "are part of a political discourse of legitimacy". The comments are in tandem with how Zanu-Pf has perceived the post- *Third Chimurenga* Zimbabwe; a country always at war against the West, especially former colonists Britain and their "little foreign-illegally funded market stalls in the form of MDC-T and MDC-N" (*ZimStylE*, 17.04.2011).

This state of affairs then, allows Zanu-Pf to engage in the politics of protectionism; a state that permits the party to use violence in order to defend the 'gains of independence'. The justification of the use of violence against those who are perceived to be enemies like the MDC lies in the discursive strategy employed in public media where the opposition have been portrayed as violent sellouts. "In this discursive context, the arrest and torture of leading MDC politicians in 2007 was accordingly depicted as the government's commitment to end violence and protect the people from the violent excesses" (Bull-Christiansen, 2010: 432). *Omugabe* and *ZimStylE's* sentiments above concur with Zanu-Pf's strategies of using violence to counter the threats from the MDC and criticism from the West and local donor funded NGOs.

8.7 The internet and alternative versions of national identity I³⁴

This section summarises the role of the internet in the discussion of national identity and argues that the internet has been effective in facilitating the construction of alternative national identities. Together with globalization, the internet has helped facilitate the discursive and alternative versions of national identity through "undermining the (Zimbabwean) nation-state and its territorial power" (Carrier and Rembold, 2011: 361). Carrier and Rembold suggest that the spatial turn within the field of humanities and social sciences has "exposed transnational, postcolonial and global aspects of identity constructions beyond the narrow borders of the nation and all things national" (2011: 361). This

³⁴ This section answers the third question of this research. Section 2 will be in chapter 9 and, again, that section serves to answer the third question of this thesis.

undermining of the nation-state and its bounded territory does not render national borders irrelevant. National borders continue to be relevant to the diaspora communities for the purposes of self-reflexivity. Research elsewhere has demonstrated that the diaspora are important players in the homeland's political, economic and social life (Bernal, 2006; Laguerre, 2005; Parham, 2004; Tettey, 2009). The same can be said about the Zimbabwean diaspora who have also set up transnational communicative networks where identity issues are discussed, showing the extent to which they are emotionally invested in the homeland (Mano and Willems, 2010; Peel, 2009).

The internet has offered a space where ordinary Zimbabwean converge to interact, debate, socialize and discuss issues that relate to their national identities. This public sphere is characterised by the following: (i) access, (ii) freedom of speech, (iii) structure for deliberation and (iv) the public use of reason. These have made it possible for the internet to have a positive impact in the construction of national identity. The question of access is determined by the availability of hardware and software accompanied by the technical know-how of operating a computer. Thus *NewZimbabwe.com* as a digital public spheroid is easily accessible to anyone who has a computer and internet. The political economy of the host countries affords diaspora communities high levels of access than is the case in the homeland. Internet access in Zimbabwe is affected by some economic and legal challenges that currently obtain in that country. Under Zimbabwean laws for instance, the government may spy on people's online communications through the Interception of Communications Act of 2007. As highlighted elsewhere in this chapter, the government has arrested and prosecuted or threatened to do so, those deemed to have committed a crime on the internet. Another most conspicuous barrier to access of online digital public spheres in Zimbabwe is economically influenced, given that bread and butter issues are more pressing than informational ones. The internet also offers freedom of expression to ordinary citizens. This freedom is important based on the country's strict media laws that tend to suppress freedoms of communication and expression thereby encouraging censorship and discouraging vigilant citizenship.

Participating in online media has been safer of late as people use pseudonyms to discuss pertinent issues. In addition, it is impossible for state security agents to trace their locations. *NewZimbabwe.com* also offers a convenient structure for its readers to participate in online debates. This structure, especially in relation to translocated websites and citizens, has ruptured or eliminated the state's hold on these translocated citizens and communicative

spaces (Tettey, 2009). Previously, the bounded nature of citizenship, government's centralised control and gate keeping in mass media constrained information production and dissemination by citizens. New media's intervention is that it allows for robust debates to take place in real time unlike newspapers where people have to write letters to the editor if they want to contribute to any issue. The internet allows people to contribute anytime and there are no inhibitions caused by censorship, gate keeping or shortages of space. However, it is possible that state agents also participate in the debates in order to push certain lines of argument (Tettey, 2001). As revealed in the analyses of this and the next chapter, this structure of deliberation has been host to both cordial and acrimonious debates. The debates have been characterised by both reasoned, ethical and fair debate on the one hand and acrimonious and unethical debates on the other.

Given these characteristics, what one gleans from online debates in this chapter is that there have been positive contributions of the internet towards the discursive construction of alternative Zimbabwean national identity debates. As argued by Cammaerts and van Audenhove, "technological ... transformations have led to the development of alternative notions of citizenship that go beyond the classic understanding of its relationship with the nation-states themselves at a transnational level ... questioning the democratic legitimacy of other ... actors" (2005: 179). Online public spheres have facilitated the formation of public opinion and the creation of collective memories (Tanner, 2001). Through these opinions and memories it is possible for a research to deduce the discussant's position regarding certain debates on identity. As demonstrated above, politically active discussants have contributed to various debates that have challenged Zanu-Pf's hegemonic narratives on national identity. This very act of writing against and challenging the Zanu-Pf dominant discourses speaks to the creation of alternative identities. Contrary to Cammaerts and Audenhove's (2005) argument that only bounded citizenship has rights, accountability and duties are well defined, it seems Zimbabwe's unbounded citizens have played an important role in the homeland through remittances, political activism and challenging the current political elite through debates online. The latter may be problematic but it is possible that the political elite follow debates and contribute articles to these online websites like *NewZimbabwe.com*. In addition, the internet also creates a sense of imagined community among the participants and this helps in the forging of alternative identities especially where people's views align when they encounter those of Zanu-Pf. The substance of this chapter demonstrates that the internet plays a pivotal role in facilitating debates and expressions of national identity and nationalism.

8.7 Conclusion

The CDA of news stories, blogs and reader comments between 2003 and 2011 in *NewZimbabwe.com* allows for the drawing of some informative conclusions about the discursive construction of national identity in Zimbabwe. This chapter has illustrated that the diasporic medium, *NewZimbabwe.com* has been used as a site of multi-vocality and expanded identity divisions in society contrary to Münch's (2001:1) assertions that "[M]odernity has brought about the nation state as that social unit which predominantly holds together people in civil ties based on civil, political and social rights to citizenship. In doing so the nation state has homogenized ethnic, cultural, religious, regional and class-based differences". More than this, modernity as carried through transnationalism, globalisation and new media seems to have enhanced multi-identity awareness and difference among Zimbabweans. Ironically, culturally rooted discussions around the new constitution and sexuality reject modern ways of seeing society. In this instance, society casts sexual behaviours in stone – where deviance is dismissed and conformity encouraged and rewarded.

This chapter has also highlighted salient issues about the diaspora and national belonging. From interactions above, the diaspora community makes it clear that deterritorialisation is not synonymous with loss of national identity as it provides another possible organisational basis for the mobilisation of national identities enabled by the internet and informed by experiences in new localities. As shown in the previous chapter and again in this one, globalisation as a phenomenon has not eliminated nor lessened the importance of national boundaries in the discussions of national identity. Rather, it has made it possible for people to speak to power from below using new media and new bases which offer security and opportunities for citizenship participation.

The discussions around the definition of heroes, conferment, burial and the Heroes' Acre as a space, has revealed that identities in territorially bound places are not monolithic as suggested by arguments from nationalists in *Chapter 7*. These identities are complex and fluid. The fact that MDC formations in government contest the space and processes eliminates imaginations of homogeneity. For the ordinary citizens with no access to political power, social media offers a platform for the expression of divergent views unlike the public media where identity debates always conform to the imaginations foregrounded by Zanu-Pf. In relation to this, Hermes observes that "[N]ew ICTs are not necessarily producing new citizens but they do

provide for new citizenship practices” (2006: 306). In the process, this incidental and unstructured performance of citizenship through online debates does not only expose temporary feelings of belonging that are experienced only during online debates but “underscores a deep need for community and the exchange of ideas and interpretation that the people do have” (Hermes, 2006: 306). This may be informed by the fact that political leaders can actually ignore suggestions proffered in online debates unless these take up a formal offline character (as is the case with some websites researched by Peel, 2009) and confront political leaders in the form of petitions or mass action.

From the corpus of data analysed above it is clear that the affirmation of faith in the Zimbabwean nation is a central theme. However, this brand of patriotism cannot be said to be wholly informed by the support of grammars of debates on the nation espoused by the dominant discourses. Sentiments in these debates are at variance and this suggests that patriotism varies from individual to individual and cannot be imposed institutionally. The rejection of Zanu-Pf’s heroes and Heroes’ Acre as a space does not necessarily mean the rejection of Zimbabweanness. Neither does ‘deviant’ sexual orientation mean an easy surrender of one’s national identity. The chapter therefore shows that differences and multiplicity of identities characterise society and these cannot be politically or violently imposed or wished away. This also relates to issues of ethnicity as shall be seen in the next chapter. Ethnicity defines the country’s politics on nationhood and Zanu-Pf has illegalised and discouraged discussions around the subject considering the role of ethnicity in the 1980s genocide.

Land reform has not been as intensely debated as other issues highlighted above. Very little material in support or theorising national identity debates and linking them to the land question, is available. Instead, what is available are news stories that highlight the problems that have been caused by the land reform process. In addition, some blogs especially by opinion leaders have attempted to engage with the land question from a political economy perspective but most of the arguments have been about the issues of property and human rights on the one hand and historical materialism on the other. The former argument does not factor in historical narratives on the land imbalances where minority rule rendered Zimbabwe’s land distribution unequal (Addison and Laakso, 2003) while the latter advocates for the addressing of the land question without any due attention to liberal political and civil rights (Yeros, 2002). This latter argument that suggests disregarding liberal political and civil

rights and has been supported by scholars like Moyo (2001) who say that the enforcement of liberal rights in the context of Zimbabwe will not help solve anything as this will perpetuate the marginalisation of people's lived socio-economic realities. Moyo argues that the violence was to be expected and "that such effects will be relatively short term" (2001: 325). Critics of this position have maintained that accompanied by violence, the whole land reform process not only violated human and property rights but was meant to maintain Zanu-Pf's hegemony in the face of a strong opposition sponsored among others, by white farmers. Violence and the national identity rhetoric have been consistently used by Zanu-Pf to counter opposition and 'interference' by the international community in the domestic affairs of the country. As demonstrated in the foregoing analyses, while online media are seen as alternative fora for the discursive construction of alternative identities—dominant identities also find expression meaning that not all online participants are against Zanu-Pf's ideologies. The next chapter addresses issue of ethnicity and how this has been used to define national identity.

Chapter 9: Ethnicity, Memory and Nation-Building in Online Media

I also believe that ethnicism as a means of tribal identification is not a problem. Our leaders can only effectively fight tribalism by first acknowledging that it exists big time and being seen not to practise it and dealing with those who practise it. Today in our beloved country many well-known members of minority tribes who are shameless enough to stand up and say their tribesmen are lying that there is tribalism, are more often than not rewarded for that in one way or the other. Look at the governors and government political appointees in Matabeleland as a case study. How popular are they with the people? (Silent Observer, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2009)

9.1 Introduction

This chapter complements *Chapter 8* by expanding on the subject of discursive construction of alternative national identities in *NewZimbabwe.com*. The chapter empirically unpacks and magnifies the themes of ethnicity and memory as some of the ingredients that influence configurations of national identity (some of which are intimated in the epigraph above) in contemporary Zimbabwe. This is true especially of the context of the Ndebele nation³⁵ that makes up part of the minorities of the Zimbabwean population. Their migrant status and history in Zimbabwe since 1839 has been a vault of controversy, conflict, rich memory and peculiar identity as a distinctive nation “within a predominantly Shona speaking country” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009c: iii). Specifically, *NewZimbabwe.com*’s debates on ethnicity suggest that ethnicity plays a major role in determining access to political power in general, state insiders and outsiders, regional development and as a site of resistance and memory. Most of these debates are informed by myths and distortions of race/ethnicity, nationhood and citizenship. Some flourish because of the silence of the ruling political elite who have an option of confronting them as a way of mending existent rifts. For instance, the government stance on issues related to ethnic relations and the Gukurahundi genocide are fuzzy in the psyche of most people. At best, evidence suggests that the government has criminalised discussions around ethnicity and memorialisation of the 1980s genocide. The best people could do is speculate and ventilate the public sphere with ethnic relations myths and stereotypes which solidify as truths at the end of the day not because they are truthful but because they have been repeatedly circulated without alternative narratives challenging them. New media have opened up a platform where subjects that have been concealed and

³⁵ It is important to highlight, as will be demonstrated later, that the Ndebele have seen themselves as a nation in the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial epochs of Zimbabwe.

considered taboo for so long are openly discussed away from the control of Zanu-Pf. Most of the debates are underlined by a plethora of myths discussed later in this chapter.

This chapter argues that ethnicity and memory have reinforced Ndebele particularism which has been underlined by historical factors such as pre-independence violence against the colonialists, pre-independence ethnicised Zimbabwean nationalist politics which later solidified in the postcolonial setting through the Gukurahundi genocide and current realities of marginalisation from the rest of nation. In the process, Ndebeles have used their ethnic particularism as a tool to deconstruct and reject the notion of Zimbabweanness advanced by Zanu-Pf in *Chapter 7* and fellow discussants in this chapter. In the same vein, this particularism has been used to challenge perceived Shona hegemonic and authoritarian nationalism. This defiance has been underlined by secessionist and at times devolutionist rhetoric which “draws on the history of the region, especially the recollections of a powerful Ndebele state whose demise came through the entrenchment, by deception and then by force, of European settler rule in what is now Zimbabwe” (Peel, 2009: 146). The Matabeles of Matabeleland and the Midlands region have created a virtual Mthwakazi state, an imagined space of self-governance which has pre-colonial historical roots but cannot be achieved in the contemporary Zimbabwean context. Last Moyo’s (2009) research on the virtual Mthwakazi state and *inkundla.net*³⁶ website reveals a strong need by the diaspora based Ndebeles for a separate Ndebele (Mthwakazi) state and self-governance for Ndebeles in Zimbabwe. Following the mould of the previous chapter, this one chapter analyses news stories and conversations on and about ethnicity, secession, memory and national identity in a diasporic digital public sphere, *NewZimbabwe.com* and attempts to further locate transnationalism and new media as important in the furtherance of shared histories and memories that transcend locales and cultural boundaries.

This chapter also unravels how ethnicity and genocide debates (Gukurahundi) have exposed weak links in the nationalist narratives of the nation, chief of which is the misconceived notion that the liberation war automatically created a nation out of ethnically diverse societies most of them characterised by simmering possibilities of tribal outbursts (Carr, 2007; Mpofu, 2013). With more than three decades after independence and contrary to Maurice Vambe’s

³⁶*Inkundla* is a Ndebele word for public sphere – a place where Ndebele communities gather to discuss important issues of the day. This website has live radio services and covers issues from Matabeleland, attempts to act as a site where Ndebeles may fellowship, network, exchange and try to foster cultural, business, professional and family life traditions of Ndebele people in the diaspora.

methodologically and contextually problematic research paper where he alleges that “both the victims and the perpetrators (of the 1980s genocide) have moved on with their lives” (Vambe, 2012: 296) there still seems to be simmering ethnic tensions between Ndebeles and Shonas of Zimbabwe. These tensions challenge Vambe’s arguments which are similar to those espoused by some members of Zanu-Pf where genocide debates are tabooed as they risk reminding people of past memories and opening up supposedly healing wounds. The argument is that such debates negatively affect the nation-formation project. In this chapter, a different approach is taken where online debates dismantle these arguments through counter-narratives, counter-memories and counter-commemorations. This is concomitant with Sachikonye’s diagnosis of the nation-building project who writes:

[T]he popular social base of the nationalist movement was therefore fractured as a consequence of the strong desire by the movement’s petit-bourgeois leadership to monopolise political power and decision-making. The potentially integrative force of nationalism was thus forfeited as were the pan-ethnic and urban-rural solidarities that had been salient character to the character and strength of an earlier phase of the nationalist movement. As the different fractions of the petit-bourgeois contented openly and earnestly for power, splits symbolised their narrow ambitions. In those power struggles, ethnic and regional particularisms were often mobilised and utilised. The nationalist movement, previously led by a pan-ethnic leadership in the 1950s, was to be riven into Ndebele and Shona factions under Zanu and Zanu respectively in the 1960s” (Sachikonye, 1996: 139)

Whereas in *Chapter 7* ethnicity and Gukurahundi debates were championed by the political elite privileging forgetting, suppression and criminalisation of their celebration or memorialisation, here a different approach is taken. This chapter illustrates how the architecture of the internet opens up the possibilities of discussing taboo topics. In this context counter-memory overtakes the obsessions of commemoration and forgetting (Mpofu, 2013: 115).

9.2 The Ndebele nation: A brief history

The Ndebele nation was founded by Mzilikazi Khumalo who migrated from South Africa’s Zululand during the 1820s Mfecane³⁷ period and finally settled in the South Western parts of what is currently Zimbabwe’s Matabeleland and Midlands regions in the late 1830s. During the intervening migratory years and subsequent settlement north of Limpopo, Mzilikazi and his army raided neighbouring nations like the Sotho, Nguni, Tswana, Rozvi, Kalanga, Nyubi, Venda and Shona, taking away among other things women and livestock. This was informed

³⁷ According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009c: 51) Mfecane was “characterised by violence, migration, and the failure of some earlier Nguni and Sotho political formations, and the rise of some new ones.”

by the Ndebele nation's desperation to replenish the numbers of their livestock and followers as "they lost [some followers] especially the Sotho and Tswana who decided to remain behind as the Boers pushed the Ndebele out of Transvaal" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009c: 64). After settling across Limpopo, they continued the state-formation project under the rulership of the Khumalos. The formation of the Ndebele state was therefore violent, moreso especially towards those who attempted to resist incorporation. During those days, communities used to raid and pillage each other leading to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009c: 64) observing that "issues of human rights and democracy took a back seat as some individuals, groups, and communities fought wars of resistance against domination while others fought for dominance as well as freedom".

In 1893, the existence of the Ndebele state ceased as King Lobengula, despite his heroic resistance, was deposed by the British colonial regime which had already occupied the Mashonaland regions of Zimbabwe. Despite this, the Ndebele people continued to resist the then new colonial administration and even campaigning to be included in its structures and in some cases using some of their remaining institutions like chieftaincies to rise against colonists. This testifies to their enduring national and political consciousness, and a desire to exist as a separate state. By the 1920s, the colonialists had managed to conquer the Ndebeles. Nevertheless, the latter remained defiant, calling for the formation of a separate Ndebele homeland. This particularism continued until "the time of the rise of the mass nationalist movements" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a: 175), which were themselves burdened with ethnic tension especially after the 1963 breakup of Zapu.

Postcolonial Zimbabwe has continued to witness these ethnic and other tensions and Ndebele particularism especially, leading to Mhlanga (2012) calling it a 'northern problem' that gives headaches to the ruling Shona elite. Mhlanga clarifies the meaning of the northern problem thus:

[T]he 'northern problem' as a metaphor refers to the existence of a disgruntled group claiming a particular history and a particular identity that is different from that of the dominant 'ethnie' in a state. It does not necessarily mean refer to the geographic location of those forms of disenchantment with a nation-state. Rather, it indicates the attendant challenges to the national question that give impetus to calls for a revision of systems of governance or session. (Mhlanga: 2012: 206)

The northern problem speaks intimately to the politics of the day and it is a fulcrum to the feelings of those groups that are marginalised, ostracised, silenced and excluded from

participating in the various rituals of the nation such as development, cultural expression, resource allocation and acquiring an education.

9.3 Ethnic stereotypes, myths and debates

It is instructive here to highlight some of the myths that characterise Zimbabwe's political environment and then later on explore them in various narratives on ethnicity in the *NewZimbabwe.com* website. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011) lists and discusses what he deems eight 'dangerous' myths on tribal relations circulated among Zimbabweans. The first myth is that "Shonas originated in Zimbabwe ... [and are] the only authentic natives and owners of the country". The second one is that "the Ndebele are unique human species, blood thirsty destroyers of human life" and violent invaders/foreigners to Zimbabwe who survived through despoliation of Shona communities. Third is that "Shona were a unique human species, weak people, peace-lovers, who never engaged in raiding and conquest who were mere victims of aggressive Mfecane refugees from South Africa such as ... Ndebele". The fourth myth is that Zimbabwe is currently populated by two hostile and contending ethnic groups "the Ndebele and Shona". Fifth "Zapu was reluctant to confront the Rhodesian colonial state violently and that this reluctance led to the split of 1963 that gave birth to Zanu". The sixth myth is that Zanu-Pf and its military wing, Zanla were the only "authentic revolutionary-liberation force that fought" against colonialism. Seventh "...in the 1980s there were politically-motivated, organised and armed Ndebele-speaking dissidents that were sponsored by Pf-Zapu and supported by the people of Matabeleland and the Midlands regions who sought to dethrone the legitimately elected Zanu-Pf government". Finally is the myth that the 1980s genocide was carried out by the Fifth Brigade—a violent mainly Shona speaking, North-Korean trained and traumatised army—with the blessings of "the entire Shona-speaking community that was launched into Matabeleland and Midlands regions to eliminate every Ndebele speaking person".

The following paragraphs attempt to engage with some of these myths as discussed by participants in various news stories and opinion articles on the website. It must be stated that the goal here is not to determine the veracity of arguments but rather, to analyse myths and narratives expressed in alternative public spheres on Zimbabwean national identity as they are presented by those marginalised from the mainstream discourses. To argue that these

myths have been sustained through official silence and misrepresentations of history by Zanu-Pf and patriotic scholars cannot be far-fetched. History suggests that some political leaders have dealt with post-genocide eras in politically expedient ways. For instance the political elite in Turkey have sustained their genocide denialism through “deliberate propaganda, lying and coverups, forging documents, suppression of archives, and bribing scholars” (Cohen, 1995: 13).

Three opinion articles on political power configurations in Zimbabwe from *NewZimbabwe.com* published in 2008 are used here to help demonstrate tensions associated with some tribal and ethnic myths outlined above. The first article *The Ndebele President*, written by Mduduzi Mathuthu (2008) is an attempt to start a debate on the possibilities and readiness of Zimbabwe to have a Ndebele President. This article was written after the USA elected Barack Obama as its first black and minority president. The second article, *Ndebele President: Minorities should not cease to dream*, was penned by Itayi Garande (2008) then editor of a rival and diasporic online publication (*TalkZimbabwe.com*) as a response to Mathuthu’s. Garande’s piece has no reader comments under it. The third piece *Ndebele President: the secret of fear* written by the MDC’s Deputy Secretary General Priscilla Misihairambwi-Mushonga argues that Zimbabwean politics is influenced by ethnicity. Besides the ‘unofficial’ and general observations Misihairambwi-Mushonga’s argument may be informed by her experiences when she was part of the united MDC that split in October 2005, allegedly on ethnic grounds³⁸ rather than ideological ones (Whiz, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 19.08.2009).

Readers reacted differently to these articles. The following extracts reveal an array of different hues of thought about discussing ethnicity in Zimbabwe:

E1: Ndebele president *kuita sei* (translated from Shona: what for)? Its people like you, who are in a position of power, i mean media who continue to divide the country. [*Madhobha*]

³⁸ The reports quotes Peter Guhu who was MDC security director alleging that there was an anti-Ndebele tribal clique from Masvingo consisting of people like Isaac Matongo (chairman), Lucia ³⁸Matibenga (Women’s Wing National Chairwoman), Gandhi Mudzingwa (director of presidential affairs), Dennis Murira (coordinator in organising department), Ian Makone (chairman elections committee), Tichaona Mudzingwa (secretary for security) and James Makore which “strongly believed that the president (Tsvangirai) would be convicted (of treason charges), leaving a leadership vacuum which in their view must never be filled by a Ndebele person” (Whiz, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 19.08.2009).

- E2: This is an important soul searching topic. First, by labelling Mdu tribalist we are already refusing to deal with the question which is there a likelihood of a Ndebele president in Zimbabwe. Anyone who says Mdu should not talk about this is denying reality. These are the issues that are affecting our nation they should therefore be raised and it is the role of the media to keep watch on society and raise these pertinent issues. Keep this debate going on do not be affected by those bad comments. We should also not lie and say we will vote for anyone no matter where they come from. Those that are saying that are denying the political realities on the ground. On the ground the question of tribe is very high and we should not ignore it or bury it. [*Sophie Zvagera*]
- E3: I am regular visitor of the *NewZimbabwe.com* newspaper. I must congratulate you for writing such an inspired and well thought out piece of work entitled The Ndebele President ... I am not Ndebele and I always wish I was an Ndebele... tribal lenses are only within the echelons of power. I agree that politics to a greater extent defines they were people look at each other but I am pretty sure that in Zimbabwe, the general population are not so concerned about being Ndebele or Shona as evidenced by an increase in cross marriages. I and you and the rest of Zimbabweans in Zimbabwe and around the world have a lot of work to do not to change this supposed mindset but to change the leadership and have our own Zimbabwean to rule our country. [*Gomo Douglas*]

Also the following extracts under Misihairambwi-Mushonga's opinion article are informative:

- E 4 [We] basically come from the same mothers ...ndebele [and] shona same same. [*Zim*].
- E5: Priscilla, this emotional outburst is not commensurate with your position at national leadership level. It is poorly reasoned, and presents opinion as fact. In a country such as ours, which is plagued by tribal fault lines, responsible leadership entails that you find practical means of curtailing tribalism amongst all the races. Your article fans tribal hatred and engenders feelings of hatred amongst Shonas & Ndebeles. Such a terrible let down. Reflects badly on the kind of people we have in leadership positions at national level. [*Musevi*].

From the five extracts it is clear there is a wide array of views regarding debates on ethnicity and politics in Zimbabwe. Masipula Sithole, one scholar who confronted ethnicity in his work could not have been further from the truth when he said about the political resourcefulness of ethnicity in 1995:

As long as politics is about power, advantage and disadvantage, ethnicity will be one of the resources political gladiators utilise to gain it. The task is to moderate and manage the use of this resource by consciously accommodating it in structures of power. Until we accept and firmly grasp this idea, democratic stability, and thus economic development will remain elusive (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a: 153).

Differing views are given above. Some extracts (*E1, E5*) suggest there is no need to associate ethnic issues with political power as doing so is an attempt to subvert national cohesion. Just like in the Rwandan case, these sentiments allude to what Buckley-Zistel (2006: 145) calls "pretending peace" where people are not honest with each other on issues of genocide but play "hide and seek". On the one hand, there is a call to liberate the discourse from politicians' control and address the issues as citizens.

EI needs special attention. There may be two interpretations to this statement. First it seems to suggest “playing hide and seek” where “[M]utual suspicion leads to a separated way of life” (Buckley-Zistel, 2006: 145). Second, the call for responsibility of the media raises awareness of the role the media played in the Rwandan genocide for instance. Kingsley Moghalu (2005: 16) sums up the role of the media in the Rwandan genocide in the following way:

These ominous events were fuelled by the influence of anti-Tutsi hate propaganda spewed by the *Radio Television Libre des Milles Collines* (RTLM) and *Kangura* newspaper, and the militarisation and transformation of youth wings of the main Hutu political parties into militias. In its broadcasts, *RTLM* claimed that the RPF’s agenda was to restore Tutsi hegemony and wipe out the benefits of the 1959 social revolution. It called for attacks against all Tutsis in Rwanda, who were branded accomplices of the invading RPF.

With this in mind some Zimbabweans and scholars have accused some diasporic websites of advancing ethnic causes. Dumisani Moyo points this out:

NewZimbabwe.com has been openly campaigning for the pro-senate faction of the MDC, while *Zimdaily.com* has been championing the cause of Morgan Tsvangirai and his anti-senate group. So antagonised are the two websites over the split of the MDC that the debate has deteriorated into an ethnic fight, with *NewZimbabwe.com* being labelled an Ndebele mouthpiece, while *Zimdaily.com* is said to be promoting Shona interest (2007: 102)

This can further be demonstrated by a lengthy exchange between Zimbabwean journalists in the diaspora when one of them, in an enclave site meant for exiled Zimbabwean journalists, accused *NewZimbabwe.com* and Mathuthu of following in the steps of *RTLM* and *Kangura* by fomenting tribalism through publishing issues that show especially Ndebele disgruntlement with the government. The following quotes from Peel’s (2009: 246) doctoral dissertation exemplify this, and the tensions associated with ethnicity even among media professionals who are expected to be impartial and objective in all issues in society:

mmathuthu:

Someone has helpfully told me that a writer on your network has passed comment, drawing parallels between New Zimbabwe.com and some Rwandese Radio Station during the genocide. You will no doubt accept that this is strong comment. I therefore ask to join your network, and I would be eternally grateful if you sent through some of the contributions so that I can at least present the other side.³⁹

Makusha:

I was one of several commentators on Mdu’s article. My comment, which is still my feeling, was that I was surprised he published that piece of trash, or the rantings of a rabid tribalist. I think it goes against all ethics to publish one-sided opinionated articles purporting to contain facts that malign individuals and organizations. As the person was making such strong allegations, and Mduduzi was obviously not oblivious to the implications, we can only assume that these

³⁹ ‘Rwanda’, thread started by **mmathuthu**, message 585, 3 November 2005. Available at <http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/associationofzimbabwejournalists-uk/message/585>

were his scrawlings and that he has an axe to grind with Tsvangirai. But as we know him not to be having any personal reason, we can only assume that he was or is fighting a tribal war.

mmathuthu:

Makusha, yours is an open and shut case! You come here pretending to be some reasonable journalist, and want to market yourself as a custodian of integrity, ethics and fair practice. Only charlatans will be fooled by your false jacket of impartiality because you are writing from a position of involvency and advocacy ... You have gone head and toe into the bootlicking and fear of authority that has pulverised your movement.

Thankfully, there are journalists who retain their independence and who are answerable only to their readers and not politicians. It is useful that before you engage in such debates, you declare your political association.

You claim that I wrote the opinion piece on our front page today. For someone who pretends to seek only the truth, I think you have a cavalier attitude to facts. When I do have an opinion about your party, I will write it Mr Mugabe and never in my life have I hidden behind a pseudonym, unlike some cheese-eating-surrender-monkeys running riot around here claiming to be media heroes and proponents of good governance.

I think your accusation of tribal bias exposes your own fears, whatever they may be. There is no scientific measurement of tribalism, and may I take this opportunity to accuse you of the same? What makes you think you have a monopoly of labelling others? It is clear to me that your criteria of a tribalist is someone who is Ndebele, who has an opinion about anything, and whom you wish to silence so that only your voice, and that of your political demi-Gods can be heard. Why should every Ndebele be labelled a tribalist Mr Mugabe?

Your suggestion that I should be castrated on what I say and what I don't say confirms the above. You only want to hear and dance to your voice. Good luck mate, and your Rwanda project!

sandra:

You guys now see how serious such stories can be. I have seen people like William Bango⁴⁰ have since been copied our discussions. Mduduzi on the other hand has also heard through third parties (I did not know he was not part of this forum) - of course we are journalists and that is what we do best. I just wanted to underline what i said and probably before anyone else says anything, retract the Rwanda reference i put in my earlier remarks - they were not made in the context of *NewZimbabwe.com* but the article in question for i feel it is very tribal. i sincerely hope you guys did not take it to mean i was likening *NewZimbabwe* to the Rwanda radio station. I'm sorry if i offended anyone and if u thot that was what i meant. Let us all work for a united Zimbabwe, it's not going to be easy but i feel we as journalists can make a big difference.

While the tribal/ethnic tensions between Makusha and Mathuthu are palpable, Sandra's contribution into the debate advances an argument that both Ndebeles and Shonas are one nation and there is no need to speak about ethnicity or past conflicts, but a need for a better Zimbabwe. Sandra suggests that journalists may use their influence in the media to advance the forgetting of uncomfortable truths at a collective level. This collective social amnesia seems not to help in forgetting the past but helps to eclipse it. This mode of denialism is seen through a process whereby:

a whole society separates itself from its discreditable past record. This might happen at an organised, official and conscious level – the deliberate cover-up, the rewriting of history – or through the type of cultural slippage that occurs when information disappears. (Cohen, 1995: 13)

⁴⁰ Bango at the time was Morgan Tsvangirai's personal assistant.

This is concomitant with Zanu-Pf's process of rewriting and distorting history in order to unite Zimbabweans. Also Mugabe has said that 'there is one Zimbabwe and one Zimbabwe only' (quoted in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 148) and in a way closes the debate as if oblivious to the ethnic question that burdens Zimbabwean politics as suggested by the three articles and claims by Sachikonye (1996) and Sithole (1993) above. It is not clear how genuine this statement from Mugabe is considering that he is responsible for the Matabeleland atrocities and has not been seen to be proactive in terms of healing wounds caused by the genocide which still define the contours of ethnic relations in the contemporary Zimbabwe. Through Sithole's (1993) and Cohen's (1995) assertion, one can conclude that these are politically expedient calls which serve parochial party/personal interests.

9.3.1 National Belonging: Outsiders and Insiders

Some of the distortions about tribal relations mentioned in the preceding sections have been most informally spread through oral culture and formally through novels and history books. The high school history curriculum, public media and paramilitary youth camps are contaminated with 'patriotic' history (Kriger, 2006; Ranger, 2003) masked in hegemonic agendas of Zanu-Pf and fails to present a credible account especially of the Pf-Zapu and Zipra's contributions to the liberation of Zimbabwe. To a certain extent these accounts have influenced national belonging and identity.

One of the most telling works is Lawrence Vambe's book, *An ill-fated people* (1972), an account of Zimbabwe's history from the author's personal perspective where evidence is overly reliant on oral history. It describes the European settlers in similar terms used to describe the Ndebele i.e. deceitful, arrogant, violent and brutal. Specifically *Chapters 5 and 6* of the book are littered with expressions like 'the bloodthirsty,' 'military minded' in reference to the Ndebele people. In this book, Vambe offers a contradistinction between Ndebele and Shonas where the latter's virtues are extolled as they are peculiar by "their love of peace, their nonviolent ethos and by their innate faith in the intrinsic goodness of man" (1972: 97). The Ndebele King, Lobengula, is depicted as a tyrant, lunatic, foolish, vain and delusional; a man who sold the country to the Europeans. The way Vambe describes the Ndebele raids is instructive and is worth quoting:

The Ndebele ... came in and out ... as they pleased. Usually they arrived at dawn or in misty conditions when their intended victims were least prepared ... [the Ndebele acted] as if they were hunting animals, they rushed forward and attacked men, women and children, including domestic animals using assegais, guns, knives, and other lethal weapons ... when they had enough of this orgy, they embarked on a systematic destruction of huts by battering them and burning them down, until the whole place turned into a spectacle of flames and clouds of smoke and a heart-rending cacophony of the voices of dying men, women, and children ... they combed the surrounding countryside, searching and prodding every bush, thicket, cave and rocky fastness for signs of human life.... It was savage, jungle-animal relationship because it was completely devoid of any of the finer feelings ... normally associated with human beings. (Vambe, 1972: 78)

This finds resonance in some myths expressed in *NewZimbabwe.com* debates today. Two myths that relate to those presented above are presented by Vambe (1972) here. These are the foreignness and violent nature of the Ndebele people. This has been used as a point of reference in most online debates and, in the process it poses problems for the history of Zimbabwe in general and ethnic relations in particular. The major issue that one may mention here is the claim that there existed a place called Zimbabwe in the 1830s primordially occupied by Shonas which Ndebeles invaded.

A number of comments in online debates suggest Ndebeles violently occupied the country from South Africa as alluded to in the following extracts in response to Misihairambwi-Mushonga's article:

- E6: Ndeveres [derogatory for Ndebeles] are not Zimbabweans as they say.... [Jonah moyo]
- E7: My history tells me that original ndebeles are not Zimbabweans, to be quite precise, they are the cowards who fled from neighbouring South Africa and were led by Lobengula/Mzilikazi. [Wasu]
- E8: you were lucky that we didn't throw you out back to your South Africa ... Zimbabwe will never be yours. [Amasalad24]

Vambe's (1972) assertion that Ndebeles came to the Shona territory as fugitives from the violence of the Boers establishes Ndebele foreignness which is further accentuated through the above extracts. The 'we' in this instance are the Shonas who, according to *Amasalad24*, are autochthonous to Zimbabwe and the 'you' are the Ndebeles who migrated from South Africa. What the myth fails to appreciate is the fact that while Shonas occupied Zimbabwe first before Ndebeles came does not translate to Shonas claiming aboriginality, i.e. primordially belonging in Zimbabwe. Chikuwa (2004) claims that Shona people arrived in Zimbabwe in about AD 850 from East Africa. Prior to that, the earliest known inhabitants of the land were the Khoisan. Similarly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 2011) states that Shonas originate in the Benue Cross Region in the Niger Delta. Linguistic and archaeological

evidence, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 2011) argues, confirms this. The argument that Shonas are autochthons in Zimbabwe and Ndebeles are immigrants sets in motion multifaceted and complex debates premised on the dichotomy of insiders and outsiders to the nation.

Omugabe, a regular discussant on the website contends Chikuwa and Ndlovu-Gatsheni's arguments and maintains that Shonas are primordially Zimbabwean and Ndebele's criminally invaded what was a Shona territory:

- E9: To suggest that Shona people are not indigenous to the Zimbabwe area, is to play the same DECEPTIVE & DEVILISH game that ignorant & delusional criminal invaders & warmongers like to play when seeking to justify their criminal invasions. But such asinine attempts at justifying criminal invasion, will only get by ignoramuses. This deceptive move to magically transport Shona people to "Benue Cross Region", using so-called "linguistic & archeological evidence" is foolish. "Linguistic & archeological evidence" MAKES FOR AN HYPOTHESIS OR THEORY! The fact that Shona CANNOT PRACTICALLY BE PLACED OUTSIDE OF ZIM, carries a lot more weight than QUESTIONABLE "linguistic & archeological evidence". There is DIRECT EVIDENCE, not theory, that warmongers fleeing the murderous Shaka criminally INVADDED Shona. INVASION IS ALWAYS A WRONG! [*Omugabe*, emphasis original]

Concomitant to Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2011) debunking of the myth of Shona indigeneity to Zimbabwe are counter-narratives that suggest Shonas do not belong as they are also immigrants to Zimbabwe. One discussant responds to *Omugabe*:

- E10: @mgabe ... tshonas (Shonas) came to now called zimbabwe from east africa, you must balance the story not to be one sided because of your twisted history from mgabe and Zanu-Pf college, you came to zimbabwe as asylum seekers there and the fact that you claimed asylum before Ndebeles invade does not make you the real citizen or owner of zimbabwe period !!you may now have been given to many children and which makes you many in numbers but still you are not the real owners of the country, bark morning till evening the country belongs to the bushmens{amasili} noma ongibone bonele ngaphi (Translation: bushmen) zilima (Translation: Fools) stop all this your rant and deceit and idiotic history from this your idiot serial killer mgabe ,correct everything not only about the good people Ndebeles fools mazezulu ndini haaaa mpthuuuuuuuu (Translation: foreigners). [*Yimi Engikhulumayo*]
- E11: ... there is also the issue of Ndebele's being foreigners ... We may not want to trace the genesis of our neighbours in the country [Shonas] ... they have a lot to lose. [*Josh Mhambi*]

Another issue that is central to the Ndebele-Shona ethnic relations debate is the violence the former administered to the latter when they arrived from South Africa. This has been used in some debates as an argument to defend the Gukurahundi (see *The Grand Plan* document). It is alleged to have been some form of revenge for what Ndebeles did to the peaceful and vulnerable Shona communities. Two extracts below from comments to Misihairambwi-Mushonga's (2008) article address the issue of violence, one against the Shonas and another

attempts to dispute and negate history taught in school as inaccurate and serving Zanu-Pf agendas.

E12: If we were learning the true history of Zimbabwe, we were going to see that the Ndebele people were divisive, very tribal, cruel and hated the shonas. I wonder why people start to learn about what happened yesterday instead of talking what causes the actions that happened yesterday. The ndebele people when they arrived here in Zim being led by Mzilikazi, all they wanted was kill every male and take every loot they find. They considered the Mashonas dogs and people with no brains. The ndebele people never expected that one day the shonas will go to school and also learn to fight, (because when the ndebele people came, the shonas were caught unaware, because they were the people who focused on social, economic and political developments without the use of violence and wars). Now that the shonas are the masters of their own destiny the ndebele people are left with no one to rob and take the loot and are now crying foul. I think we should learn the truth and not just part of the truth. [*ZimChaminuka*]

E13: @Chaminuka- I have taken the general principle of questioning everything ZANU has ever written in our history books and maybe you need to do the same. In every book I have ever read about Mzilikazi and Lobengula both in South Africa and England, the writers always highlight the fact that the colonial settlers always tended to exaggerate the extent of Mzilikazi and Lobengula abuse of the MaShona and the BaTswana in order to ferment anger amongst us for the purpose of dividing us. Today, this tactic is still being used on us by Zanu-Pf. We need to be nation building, not using the questionable history that the Brits and now ZANU want to use to divide us. [*JJ*]

The above is a contest of Zimbabwe's history and awareness that in its processes of state and nation-building project, Zanu-Pf has deliberately attempted to marry liberation histories and credentials of Zanu-Pf and Zanu together with their artefacts into national history. This has increased Ndebele particularism and rejection of the invitation to be part of the 'Zimbabwe' nation. This postcolonial feeling is palpable in George Mkhwananzi's opinion piece in *NewZimbabwe.com* (05.06.2010) where he writes:

E14: Since the attainment of the so-called independence in 1980, the Mthwakazi nation has been thrown into a state of confusion and paralysis which has seen various forms of satanic brutality being visited upon the people. Zimbabwe, as a new colonial power over Mthwakazi, has abused the numerical advantage of the Shona people to effectively exclude Mthwakazi nationals from any meaningful participation in the country's political and economic affairs. [George Mkhwananzi]

This narrowly defined history has not only misrepresented Zipra and Pf-Zapu but it has misrepresented ethnicity and ethnic groupings (Ranger, 2004).

9.4 Online discussions of the taboo: ethnicity and genocide

As already intimated in *Chapter 2*, some of these myths flourish because of the silence of the ruling political elite who have an option of confronting them as a way of mending existent rifts. For instance the government stance on issues relating to ethnic relations and the Gukurahundi genocide are fuzzy in the psyche of most people. At best, as discussed in *Chapter 7*, evidence suggests that the government has criminalised discussions around

ethnicity especially the memorialisation of the 1980s genocide. People are left no option but to speculate and circulate unofficial narratives on ethnic relations myths and stereotypes which solidify as truths at the end of the day not because they are truthful but because they have been repeatedly circulated without alternative narratives challenging them. New media have opened up a platform where subjects that have been concealed from public scrutiny and considered taboo for so long are openly discussed away from the control of Zanu-Pf. Most of the debates are underlined by a plethora of these myths.

9.4.1 Gukurahundi, memory and ethnicity

The rejection of official chosen amnesia (Buckley-Zistel, 2006) and embracing of Gukurahundi collective memory has acted as both a unifying solidifying force of Ndebele particularism. This memory has been used as a site of resistance against the current political status quo. The genocide debates are shrouded in contesting myths including the assertion by some Ndebeles that the genocide was all Shona versus all Ndebele conflict. Ethnicity is probably the most hotly and emotionally contested theme on the website. Curiously, the original version of the *NewZimbabwe.com* website had a permanent link of the 1997 *CCJP Gukurahundi report* which readers could access (see *Figure 7* below), a clear sign of memory and remembering being institutionalised through popular culture (Kuhn, 2010). The website's editor argues that the links were used in order for "the whole thing [genocide] to come out and be on the agenda in the international politics and now that Genocide Watch has recognised it as genocide we feel that we have achieved something and we can now cover it not on a campaign basis but like any news item" (Interview, December 12.19.2012). In some cases discussants 'smuggle' the Gukurahundi memory into other debates regardless of its relevance to the matter under discussion.

Even though it may seem parochial from a distance, Gukurahundi has been used as an auto-explainer not only for stunted development in Matabeleland, but also political harassment and other 'unfair' practices or behaviours by the government and its institutions towards the people from the region. *Think Tank*, in a reaction to fellow online discussants makes a similar observation:

E15: There are genuine concerns about Gukurahundi but to use these as an excuse to hate everything Shona is not right. [*Think Tank*]

As stated above, the myth that Shonas are responsible for the genocide also characterises most online interactions. The following extracts aver:

E16: When the Fifth Brigade was butchering in the Midlands and Matabeleland you called us dissidents. When your Gukurahundi hyenas were cutting pregnant women's wombs open with bayonets you were happy. When our fathers and brothers were thrown into mine shafts you ululated. What kind of people are you guys. But when Mugabe's cannibal Hutu militias ate your eyes and tongues after they killed you, you cried foul. What is good for the goose is good for the gander!! It is time you Shona ZANU-PF types accept that the Ndebele are there and they too like you have right like you, you have no right whatsoever to marginalize us. Remember that "what goes around comes around and bite you in the arse". Mucha mama chete!! [Translated from Shona: You have to/shall suffer severely as well][*Mzilikazi*]

E17: *JJ*Gukurahundi was carried out by those in power with the aid of some Ndebeles as well..! ... if Most Shona speaking people were against gukurahundi, then it would have never happened. Everybody knew about gukurahundi because it was on tv, radio and press everyday...[*JJ*]

The pronouns 'you' 'your' 'you guys' conglomerates all Shonas and claims they acted in concert and therefore 'they' are collectively guilty for the Gukurahundi atrocities. The 'us' 'our' refers to the Ndebeles collectively. In response *Jockerjj1* under an opinion article by Brilliant Mhlanga (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 01.03.2011) dismantles this position by stating that:

E18: Not all Shonas like Gukurahundi, you know exactly who did it, go and confront him....

The 'him' referred to here is Mugabe and this claim is supported by many discussants on the website. Critics of some Ndebele activists suggest that Ndebeles are "cry babies with selective memory of history" (Magaisa, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2009) who forget the violence and suffering the Ndebeles administered to the Shona as they migrated from South Africa and established a Ndebele nation across Limpopo.



Figure 7: The Old *NewZimbabwe.com* site had a ‘permanent link’ on the Gukurahundi genocide

In some cases a third dimension on the debates appears. It comprises narratives that are not necessarily on the victimhood of the Ndebeles or innocence of Shonas but deliberate celebration and glorification of genocide. *Maswerasei*’s comment to Brilliant Mhlanga’s opinion piece attests to this:

- E19: Ndebele academics and pseudo political leaders [are] very nauseating. I am now completely fed up with these cry babies and tribalists, if you think you want to start a war with the Shonas then be our guests. I wonder why Gukurahundi did not wipe out the likes of these useless authors and those of their ilk ... These many Ndebele pressure groups mushrooming are just a hub for tribalists hell bent on polarising the nation. I have got a warning to those misguided Ndebeles, if you continuously provoke the Shonas, one day you will get a reaction. [*Maswerasei*]

That *NewZimbabwe.com* offers both Ndebeles (who claim victimhood) and Shona’s (who are homogeneously labelled perpetrators by some Ndebeles and resist collective guilt) a platform where their arguments may be presented cannot be overemphasised. Online discourses however, suggest that far from rehabilitating ethnic tensions, online media interactions simply congeal parochial ethnicised and tribalised identities. It can be said of the Zimbabwean context that the “ubiquitous use of ‘ethnicity’” as an auto-explainer of ethnic relations “has contributed to its reification and naturalization” (Lintz, 1995: 305).

9.4.2 Memorialisation and criminalisation of memory

Since the signing of the 1987 Unity Accord which ended the Matabeleland and Midlands atrocities, the government has not come up with mechanisms to address the effects of the genocide. People have attempted to find meaning through memorialisation and remembrance of those who went missing or were killed by the Fifth Brigade. According to Veale (2009: 197) “memorialisation helps those who experience the death of a loved one to fight through the stages of the grieving process, providing a means to express deeply felt emotion and to honour the deceased”. These acts of remembrance may also be primed to provoke dialogue with Zanu-Pf, a party responsible for the atrocities. In response, Zanu-Pf has criminalised the memorialisation of the genocide in its various manifestations like erecting gravestones, art and reburials.

This criminalisation of memory has been a conspicuous and symbolic form of suppression, erasure and denial of right to memory. This has not relegated the memory of the episode into archival or historical narratives. On the contrary, the genocide memory is very much part of the lived realities of the Ndebeles and remains contentious between the government and the victims/survivors today. While memorialisation is traditionally done through such artefacts as “granite, marble or bronze memorials in cemeteries, requiring physical visits” (Veale, 2009: 196) art has also been used to relive and memorialise the pains, losses and experiences of the past. A case in point is the story *Police shut down a Gukurahundi exhibition* (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 29.03.2010) which reinforces the sensitivity the Zanu-Pf-dominated government has towards the issue of genocide and the extent to which they would go to suppress its memorialisation. According to the news report:

E20: Artist Owen Maseko collected family photos of missing people, images of mine shafts where bodies were believed dumped and reports of up to 20,000 civilians killed during an army-led crackdown on Mugabe’s opponents.... Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai... said such exhibits were part of a campaign for national healing called for under the coalition deal brokered by neighbouring South Africa. [*NewZimbabwe.com*, 29.03.2010]

The exhibition to commemorate and remember the victims of genocide through their pictures and art works by Maseko constitutes using these artefacts as sites of contestation in politics of memory in post-conflict situations (Robins, 2012). This production of counter-memory contests the cohesive national unity and identity instituted through and symbolised by the

Unity Accord which most disgruntled Ndebeles and pressure groups representing their interests have dismissed as a “surrender document where the Pf-Zapu politicians threw in the towel and allowed Pf-Zapu to be swallowed by Zanu-Pf” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 48). Kuhn suggests that survivors of genocide take an initiative like Maseko’s where memory work is used as “an active practice of remembering that takes an inquiring attitude towards the past” (2010: 186). The (re)construction of this past through memory resuscitates a controversial issue that was ‘dealt with’ in 1987 as articulated in *Chapter 7*. Remembering those who died and disappeared through such an exhibition posed a challenge to the Zanu-Pf dominated government and its swift response to this call for dialogue was to close the exhibition and arrest the artist.

While the country’s Prime Minister argued that such exhibitions are part of a campaign for national healing and nationhood, the arrest taboos and criminalises discourses on genocide making it difficult for people to express themselves in an attempt to understand, find closure and heal from the dark past and its attendant experiences. Maseko’s performance and institutionalization of memory through cultural acts embodied in the use of private family photographs and paintings, shows that while memory may be individual and private, it has social and cultural resonance and therefore “remembering is more than just a personal act” (Misztal, 2003: 6). In this context the memory of Gukurahundi becomes collective memory for all Ndebele people of the Matabeleland and Midlands regions. This gels in well with Stuart Hall’s argument that identities are constructed within discourse and are understood “as produced within specific historical and institutional sites within discursive formations and practices” (1996: 4). Thus collective memories and collective identities are triggered by events whose historical links stimulate certain forms of relationships based on ethnicity in the case of the Ndebeles (Gillis, 1994).

Besides art, there are other forms of online memorialisation where expressions of personal testimonies on different platforms are found. The link reminding people of the genocide on the older version of the *NewZimbabwe.com* website is a good example of how the internet may serve as a repository to notify the world and remind future generations of conflicts that define the nation. This practice helps memory practitioners to inquire, interrogate, pass on the memory to future generations and attempt to understand the past so that they may inform the future and better perform their identities. Some people from the Matabeleland and Midlands regions have employed collective memory based on the genocide experiences largely as a site

of resisting the Zanu-Pf brand of national identity and Shona domination. Film is another art form for preserving memory and enhancing identities in post conflict situations.

In 2007, Zenzele Ndebele released a film *Gukurahundi: A Moment of Madness* and launched it in South Africa in fear of the country's intelligence operatives. He was quoted as saying "there is no way I could show it (documentary) in Zimbabwe" (*The Zimbabwean*, 19.11.2007). Ndebele's production was both a form of finding the truth and trying to provoke debate about the genocide. He argued:

It is an episode you never hear brought up in conversation.... Twenty-seven years after independence, people are still afraid to bring it up. But it was very hard to find anyone who would open up. Of those who agreed to talk, several changed their minds afterwards-they would call and ask me not to include them in the footage. So I had to cut the film from 45-25 minutes I am not going to make a penny off this documentary, but if it generates some dialogue I'll be happy.... (*The Zimbabwean*, 19.11.07)

There are many theories articulated in the documentary as to why the Gukurahundi project was instigated. The first theory advances the myth that Gukurahundi was an attempt to wipe out Ndebeles from the face of the nation. The second is that Mugabe wanted to revenge against the Ndebeles because his father left his mother for a Ndebele woman and the third argument is that Gukurahundi was planned before independence to resolve political differences between Zanu-Pf and Pf-Zapu. Last is that Shonas were revenging their forefathers' deaths in the hands of Lobengula and Mzilikazi when the latter occupied Zimbabwe from Zululand. What is important to point out about the documentary is that it is presented by a Ndebele and likely to pursue a subjective line of argument. Oddly, Urbert Rwafa (2012) argues that this is a limitation which could have been overcome through interviewing people behind Gukurahundi. This assertion ignores the practical political situation on the ground and certain conventions of both documentary filmmaking and national identity construction which are underlined by subjectivity. National identity construction is a highly selective process and, equally so, is documentary filmmaking. This subjectivity is informed by the artist's ethnicity, security issues on the ground and the need to create conversation.

Criminalisation of the genocide memory within Zimbabwe does not only apply to artistes or ordinary citizens but extends to the 'former' opposition politicians serving in the GNU. A case in point is the story *Minister Arrested over Gukurahundi Memorial* (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 15.04.2011) in which the Minister of the misnamed National Healing and Reconciliation ministry, Moses Mzila-Ndlovu and a Roman Catholic priest, Father Marko Mabutho

Mnkandla were arrested for attending a memorial service for genocide victims in Lupane. The arrest accentuates Zanu-Pf's insecurities about open discussion of the country's dark identity marker. Criminalisation and repression of memory and other tactics of memory erasure employed by Zanu-Pf have made it impossible for people in the homeland to discuss or hold cultural memorial rites pertaining to the episode. This is not only preservation of national unity but hinders cultural beliefs and denies surviving relatives "a permanent place ... to connect emotionally and spiritually" (Veale, 2009:197) with the spirits of those who died.

The creation of the Ministry of Healing and Reconciliation by the GNU has not been effective as there were disagreements concerning its mandate and the episode of violence they were meant to deal with. This failure can be gleaned from *E21* below:

E21: ...there is a very urgent need for national healing and reconciliation ... this programme can be undertaken right away while some wounds are still bleeding.... One only becomes nervous about the effectiveness of the programme when the people who are supposed to spearhead the programme begin to utter very irresponsible statements likely to incite violence.... Apart from just creating a whole ministry of national healing and Reconciliation, what other practical steps have been taken by the same ministry to actually deal with the national healing issues? If there has been anything at all, why is it taking long to publicise it so the nation may know? I am one of the people who believe very strongly that if nothing is done now in terms of national healing, as a matter of urgency, it will not be long before we are visited upon by a "storm"!!! [Sharif Simba-Ameer]

In his blog entry '*Zimbabwe at 29 a nation in need of healing*' Magaisa writes:

E22: ... the biggest shortcoming is that Zimbabwe has never gone through a process of what may be referred to as 'national healing'. National healing defies easy definition; indeed, it is one of those phrases that are used so often on the assumption that everyone knows what it means ... It could mean so many things to so many people ... Our politicians got back home and locked skeletons in the cupboard hoping that no-one would discover them. In doing so, a bad precedent was created. Over the years, more and more skeletons have been added into more and more cupboards. That's because perpetrators have long known that there is no accountability for wrongful actions or omissions. They have the mentality of the jungle creature which survives simply because it is the fittest and can trample upon the weakest, with no reason whatsoever to account for its actions. Not surprisingly, over the years, the house of stones has become a house of skeletons.

Responses to Magaisa's article reveal that people do not have faith in the GNU to adequately address various episodes of human rights abuses including the 1980s genocide. A few extracts help shed light on this:

E23: I agree. There has been so much suffering in this country and there has not been any room for any of the victims to talk about the pain, the loss and the suffering so they can move on. The victims are still at some detour and they can't continue with their lives. There is need for national healing for them to move forward. [Sophie Zvagera]

E24: please correct me if i am wrong- do you really believe this organ of national healing set up in zimbabwe headed by those 3 ministers will get to the bottom of anything and bring culprits to book. please wake up mr and smell the coffee here. [*so sad*]

The above extracts bring to the fore questions on the possibilities of national healing and therefore a cohesive national identity to the nation with such an ugly birthmark that no one is willing to look at. This has led to Ndebele particularism as most Ndebele people feel ostracised and traumatised by Gukurahundi as demonstrated in their online and offline activities and performances of identity.

9.5 Political power configurations and national development: Ethnic inclusions and exclusions

Arguably one enduring myth characterising Zimbabwean politics is that there are certain political positions reserved for certain ethnic groups. When Zanu-Pf won the elections at independence in 1980, this was read as the victory and capture of the state by the Shona hegemony. The losing party, Zapu, remained dominant in the Midlands and Matabeleland regions in subsequent elections until the 1987 Unity Accord. This postcolonial set up partly defined the country's politics along ethnic lines. This is not to say that ethnicity became a new issue soon after independence but, as Comaroff (1997) suggests, there are a number of historical factors that help construct ethnicity and the configurations of the Ndebele nation as it moved from Zululand to Limpopo solidified throughout the ages leading to a deep seated sense of Ndebeleness before, during and after colonialism. Since capturing the state, Zanu-Pf has intelligently manipulated the nationalist struggle and used selective memory to cement its (and in a way what some people read as Shona) hegemony.

In her revealing article, Misihairambwi-Mushonga (2011) declares:

E25: The MDC (Led by Welshman Ncube) is a thorn in the flesh of Shona supremacists because both in its form and content, it challenges the basic notion that the only group of people with the legitimate right to decide on the fate of Zimbabwe are Shona's. In fact both Zanu-Pf and MDC-T in its choice of negotiators had made that clear. Of the four negotiators, all were Shona, for MDC T they made this clear by ensuring that whilst they originally had deployed a Ndebele, Lovemore Moyo, as a negotiator, mid-stream he was unceremoniously replaced by a Shona, which in fact meant that outside Welshman Ncube, the crafters of the Global Political Agreement both at principals' level and at the negotiators' level would all have been Shona. [*Misihairambwi*]

Misihairambwi-Mushonga is a former member of the united MDC and her account on subjugation, suppression, exclusion and marginalisation of the Ndebele ethnic group in this

instance may be authoritative considering her political participation, experience and observation at party and national levels. *Vulindlela* argues that tribalism is not peculiarly Zimbabwean as it shapes political office occupation in Africa, an assessment similar to the one advanced by Murphree (1998):

E26: If you look at many countries in Africa, including Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Angola and many others, you will realise that tribes have determined the presidency – its not about performance, effectiveness, intelligence, vision or anything... [*Vulindlela*]

In the same vein, *NewZimbabwe.com* columnist Ndaba Mabhena (2007) highlights the role of tribalism and ethnicity in Zimbabwean politics when he posits that:

E27: Zanu-Pf is a party that is founded on splitting Zimbabwe into two tribal groupings, i.e Shona and Ndebele, whereby Shonas must provide national leadership. Zanu-Pf, usually ... has always had in their leadership deck Shonas taking up key leadership positions with a lacing of Ndebele apologists ... to paint a picture of a government of national unity ... The Ndebele apologists were to behave like gagged guests at this party -- 'make no key decisions and above all don't raise questions about the development of the other half of the country. [Ndaba Mabhena]

Former Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo who was at one time expelled for engineering what became popularly known as Tsholotsho Declaration in 2004 (Moyo re-joined Zanu-Pf in 2009) concurs with Mabhena's assertions that politics in Zimbabwe are organised around ethnicised or tribalised patterns.

The Tsholotsho Declaration project was Moyo's brainchild which sought to make sure the "top four leadership positions of the party (Zanu-Pf) should reflect the regional diversity and ethnic balance of the country as a whole" (Moyo, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2009) thereby politically empowering all ethnic groups. After his expulsion from Zanu-PF, Moyo accused Zanu-Pf of tribalism. He wrote:

E28: I am standing as an independent candidate in Tsholotsho as a statement against tribalism, against the politics of patronage, against the personalisation of national unity by an increasingly selfish, arrogant and unaccountable old guard and for sovereignty, democracy and development at local, provincial and national levels. [Jonathan Moyo]

Just like Misihairambwi-Mushonga's assertions concerning the break-up of the combined MDC in 2005, Moyo's statement is particularly instructive regarding the performance and

silence on ethnicity in Zimbabwean politics. Just before the 2005 elections, Moyo suggested that “If ZANU-PF gets two-thirds and given that we are talking about a dangerous ZANU-PF that's being run by a tribal clique, that would be unwise, very unwise” (quoted in Sithole, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2009).

What can be deduced from the foregoing is that Zimbabwe is clearly tainted by the bi-modal ethnic tensions whose violent eruptions in the 1980s inform the ‘Matebeleland problem’ or ‘northern problem’ and a host of other inter or intra-ethnic sour relations. As argued in *Chapter 7*, ethnic tensions within Zanu-Pf have helped undermine national identity and unity projects that the party has been advancing. What these national projects have done is silence debates on ethnicity while performing ethnicity through the ruling party’s deliberate allocation of government and party positions that advantages the Zezuru ethno-linguistic group of the Shona tribe within Zanu-Pf over others (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). These socio-politico-ethnic issues and tensions are evident in the factions within Zanu-Pf and online debates. It is also interesting to note that Jonathan Moyo had to get out of Zanu-Pf and use diasporic online media, the same fora used by ordinary Zimbabweans, to articulate disaffection about systems that marginalise Ndebele, and ethno-linguistic Manyika and Vitori⁴¹ within Zanu-Pf. The persistence, power and omnipresence of ethnicity and tribalism cannot just be wished away and has to be engaged with at all levels of society. The vacuum created by Zanu-Pf’s silencing of this debate has found life in *NewZimbabwe.com*. Some comments by readers on the Ndebele presidency perpetuate the myth that Ndebeles are foreigners and therefore cannot rule a country that is not theirs while others dispute this claim by suggesting that all Zimbabweans are equal and therefore anyone can be president of the country. In some cases, there have been calls for secession or devolution of power so as to give especially Matabeleland and Midlands residents, territorial control and power in their regions.

Mathuthu (2008) introduced the debate about ethnicity and political power thus:

E29: New Zimbabwe.com today boldly opens a debate that has so often tended to incite rather than provide insight, and invites readers to dispassionately and critically interrogate this most emotive of subjects that lies at the very core of the soul of our young nation. To set the ball rolling, *NewZimbabwe.com* editor MDUDUZI MATHUTHU provides a historical context of the framing of ethnicity in Zimbabwean politics.

⁴¹These are ethnic groupings that comprise the Shona language group together with others like Korekore, Zezuru, Nda, Venda, Karanga and Shangaan

Mathuthu locates the imbalances of ethnicity in access to political power by critiquing Mugabe's statement in the early 1980s quoted in Simpson and Smith (1981: 187):

Look Lord Soames ... I'm not new to this game, you know. That's my part of the country, Manicaland, that's mine. The fact that Nkomo can't campaign there is down to the fact that I control it, I've had a cell there for five years. Is it surprising that people don't turn out there for Nkomo? Would I go to Nkomo country (Matabeleland) and expect to raise a crowd there? Of course I wouldn't.

Mugabe's statement led to Mathuthu assessing the postcolonial ramifications of the same thus:

E30: Whatever Mugabe meant, it is clear in his mind he had a picture of a political landscape defined by tribe. The logic of his argument... justified the use of violence against Nkomo's supporters, was that a Ndebele leader's political ambitions should be contained within the boundaries of Matabeleland, and by the same token a Shona leader should only seriously mobilise in Mashonaland. Tragically, Mugabe's segmentation of Zimbabwe into "Nkomo country" and "Mugabe country" still holds, and will remain political currency for a while. For that reason, the miracle of the American election – translated in Zimbabwe to mean the election of a President from a minority tribe – is ... distant

In a comment suggesting the impossibility of political power occupation based on merit one discussant argues that there are broader advantages for being Shona than Ndebele in Zimbabwe as

E31: people of non-Shona heritage who have had to carry the cross of being born of non-Shona heritage and this has curtailed their opportunities in life within Zimbabwe. [JJ].

Nicol commenting on Misihairambwi-Mushonga's article writes:

E32: why are you fighting for a ndebele president when even the Ndebeles know that the only position they can occupy is deputy in death cde nkomo in the after life will be a deputy to cde Mugabe .

Sophie Zvagera summarily captures this widely circulated political myth that Ndebeles are meant to be deputies:

E33:the political landscape in Zimbabwe is so tribally defined that in all political formations all that Ndebeles are rewarded with is a Deputy... position.... If a Ndebele seeks leadership beyond... [that] they are ostracized. The genocide... was a clear message that Ndebeles should never challenge a Shona leader and they have continued to pay with lack of development and denial of access to the national cake ... [*Sophie Zvagera*].

Ndumiso Ncube locates the problem as lying with the Ndebele political leadership in Zimbabwe. The comment suggests there is fear of leadership roles amongst the Ndebele. He argues:

- E34: ...leaders from Matabeleland have lacked the courage that Joshua Nkomo had. I was disappointed in Welshman Ncube and Gibson Sibanda failing to be courageous enough to lead the so-called Mutambara faction. They had to go to Mashonaland to look for a leader.... Again Dumiso Dabengwa early this year walked into white city stadium [during a rally] to introduce Simba Makoni as a candidate to be voted for by the wise descendents of the great Ndebele Nation. Why didn't the men have the courage to aspire for the Presidency??Why? [*Ndumiso Ncube*]

The fact that he does not elaborate on this fear does not mean the assertion is unfounded. It seems the myth is believed by some Ndebele leaders. Senior Ndebele politicians especially Welshman Ncube and Paul Themba Nyathi have previously argued that Ndebeles cannot be leaders in Zimbabwe because of their ethnicity (ironically Welshman Ncube became president of MDC after its congress in 2011). George Mkhwanazi in an article in the *NewZimbabwe.com* website reacts to the two leaders' arguments as insults to

- E35: fellow Ndebele-speaking people.... The man said he was unqualified to become MDC president on the basis of ethnicity as Ndebeles cannot make national leaders in Zimbabwe. To illustrate this point, the professor alluded to the case of Joshua Nkomo and PF-Zapu who could not govern Zimbabwe on account of this tribal qualification... As if this was not enough, Paul Themba Nyathi, spokesman of the MDC, reiterated Prof Ncube's criteria for leadership eligibility in Zimbabwe in the *Chronicle* of 27 July 2005 by saying: "There is no way Matabeleland can produce a national leader in this country."

What is not apparent in Nyathi's argument is the role of tribal myths that seem to have gained currency in society. What this suggests is that ethnic identities are performed in tandem with certain myths that have gained currency in the two main ethnic groups (Shona and Ndebele) in Zimbabwe.

9.5.1 Ethnicity and Ndebele (dis)qualification from power

Were Ndebeles to be given political power, some interactants argue, then they must be deputies or make some concessions and promises not to revenge the Gukurahundi genocide whose memory informs the pursuance of ethnic particularism "in their fight for survival, dignity and identity" (Fosse, 1997:443). These suggestions are problematic on different fronts, one of which is the misguided and dangerous assumption that all Shonas are guilty of the Gukurahundi genocide by ethnic association and therefore Ndebeles will revenge against all Shonas once they gain power. An analysis of some debates exhibits sentiments of fear of Ndebele rulership and their perceived violent nature expressed through their occupation of Zimbabwe and anger at Zanu-Pf-government sponsored genocide. This experience is used to

disqualify Ndebeles from national political leadership positions. This is magnified by the following extracts in reaction to Mathuthu's article:

- E36: Ndeveres are not zimbabweans as they say, everytime you see a ndebele out of zim they say we are southafricans so why do they need to lead a foreign country. Patriotism first and then be a leader. [*Jonah moyo*]
- E37: And we have to correct such misrepresentation of CRIMINAL INVASION! Your so-called "migration" takes place when one is INVITED OR ACCEPTED in the space of others. When you are in the space of another UNINVITED to murder, rob, rape, kidnap, enslave, FORCED ASSIMILATION, etc, etc. That we call CRIMINAL INVASION! Yes? You know; if criminals should invade YOUR HOME to murder, rob, kidnap & rape your females, you would say the criminals 'migrated' into your home? Would you? We have to accept the fact that Ndebele did INVADED UNPROVOKED! We also have to accept the fact that such an act is criminal. Therefore Ndebele can't expect to claim... Zim...? [*Omugabe*]

According to *Omugabe*, there is every reason for the Shona to fear Ndebele presidency. The deliberate use of capital letters and exclamation marks in *E37* underlines the interactant's emotional reaction to the issue and emphasis placed on the narrative of violent occupation. In a study of affect recognition from text messaging and online communication, Neviarouskaya et al. (2007) argue that the use of exclamation marks repeatedly or capital letters is "considered as an emphasis of the communicated emotion" (2007: 145). In the performance of his/her identity, *Omugabe* emphasises some of the myths that he believes, such as the primordality of the Shona and the violent nature of the Ndebele people.

Omugabe seems to ignore certain historical facts. Communities then, Shona included, survived on invading and pillaging other communities nearby. Thus in *Omugabe's* formulation of the Shona nation, some myths and historical events are being remembered, deliberately forgotten, used and ignored. In performing his perceived Ndebele identity and disputing *Omugabe's* assertions above, *Yimi engikhulumayo* disputes some historical accounts and opines:

- E38: @mgabe you only wrote about the Ndebeles you hate and fear so much but forgot to say how tshonas [derogatory Ndebele term for Shona] came to now called zimbabwe from east africa, you must balance the story not to be one sided because of your twisted history from mgabe and Zanu-Pf college, you came to zimbabwe as asylum seekers there and the fact that you claimed asylum before Ndebeles invade does not make you the real citizen or owner of zimbabwe period !!you may now have been given to many children and which makes you many in numbers but still you are not the real owners of the country, bark morning till evening the country belongs to the bushmens{amasili} noma ongibone bonele ngaphi [Translated from IsiNdebele: Bushmen] zilima [Translated from IsiNdebele: fools] stop all this your rant and deceit and idiotic history from this your idiot serial killer mgabe ,correct eveything not only about the good people Ndebeles fools mazelulu ndini [derogatory IsiNdebele term meaning useless Shona's] haaaaa mpthuuuuuuuuu (curses).

What the discussant contests here is the imbalance in historicising issues and thus directly addresses *Omugabe* on these challenges. Ndebeles share sentiments that Zanu-Pf has over the years misrepresented Zimbabwe's history to advantage Shona nationalism and hegemony. This can be gleaned from the extract below proffered in a different article by Mhlanga (2011) where *Truth be told* writes:

E39: People need to get your facts straight use you brains zimbabwean history has been distorted. Matabeleland where King Mzilikazi was said to have invaded and settled and chased away the shona tribe is the most multi-tribal province in zimbabwe from the Vendas Sothos in the south the Kalangas in west to to the Nambiya and Tonga in the north each of these people speaking their tongues in large areas of the promise and unable to speak fluent Ndebele so for some one to tell me the Ndebele speaking people came from South Africa and chased away the shonas from that province and took that land is truly ignorant, stupid ... [*Truth be told*]

E39 in a way addresses the multiplicity and therefore suggests fluidity of Ndebele identities when s/he argues that Matabeleland is multi-tribal giving a possible impression that there might have been people who became Ndebele through naturalisation, captivity or marriage processes. This discounts the puritanical idea that one can be purely Ndebele or Shona. According to Kahari (1990) (cited in Thabisani Ndlovu, 2010: 117 Shona "is an artificial term used by linguists to refer to an agglomeration of mostly but not completely, mutually intelligible dialects found within and outside Zimbabwe". They comprise 80% of the population while the Ndebele account for 15%. In as much as online interactions afford discussants to emotionally express themselves, they also afford interlocutors to directly address each other as if in a physical town hall, coffee shop or salon as envisaged by Habermas (1982).

Besides the myths that Ndebeles are South African, violent and invaders, is another, that they 'sold' out the country to the colonialists and therefore cannot be trusted with running it. Again what is ascribed to the Ndebeles here is that they are 'guilty' by association—being the descendants of Mzilikazi. One discussant states in his post to a column written by Misihairambwi-Mushonga that Ndebeles are:

E40: ... direct decedents of a certain king who sold our beloved country to colonialists for a lump of sugar. [*Mtambanengwe*]

In another extract *Maswerasei* lumps together and advances the violence and sell-out myth thus:

E41: the Ndebeles have to pay for the raids and looting of Mashonaland by their forefathers as well as make them pay for their King Lobhengula who sold our country to Rhodes. [*Maswerasei*]

The assertion by *Maswerasei* has been used by some people to explain away Gukurahundi genocide as some form of revenge for the raids and looting when the Ndebele nation arrived in Zimbabwe. Discussing the genocide episode which has not been addressed three decades after independence induces fear among some discussants that once a Ndebele occupies political power they will violently revenge the genocide. *Vulindlela* captures the memory of this episode thus:

E31: Ndebele tribes are still bitter about the Gukurahundi massacres and no apology was made ... What assurance do people have, that if a Ndebele president come into power he will not cause atrocities against the participants of Gukurahundi? [*Vulindlela*]

Under David Coltart's (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 18.04.2011) opinion article, *GushungoI* further advances the issue of anger and violence inherent in Ndebele people and these could visit Zimbabwe were a Ndebele to lead the country:

E32: No matter how much you bitch and moan, the truth is if Ndebele's had been allowed to rule the country, unspeakable horrors would have been visited upon Shona people. Zapu fighters where already killing innocent shona people and thats what necessitated Gukurahundi. [*GushungoI*]

Besides, the sell-out tag not only applies to the way Zanu-Pf labels opposition but the myth that Ndebeles are generally sell-outs since 'their King' sold out still prevails even outside Zanu-Pf. Before the MDC split, its then Secretary General Welshman Ncube, according to the MDC commission report that investigated the split, was seen as

E33: a sell-out... too ambitious [and] 'arikutengesa msangano' [Translated from Shona: He is selling-out the MDC to Zanu-Pf] [Whiz, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 19.08.2009]

From the foregoing, it is clear that a discourse of difference underpins most debates where discussants express their Shona/Ndebele identities. This is concomitant with DeCellia, et al. (2009), Wodak et al. (2009), Martin's (1995) and Anderson's (1983) arguments that identities are generated, emphasised and reproduced through discourse. It is through these discursive practices that ethno-national uniqueness and differences are expressed (Hernández, 2008). In addition, boundaries are fostered through these discursive practices and in the process ethnicity is naturalised and becomes politicised and articulated when a group is under attack (Yuval-Davis, 2006). It seems natural to view political parties led by Ndebeles or with large support bases in Matabeleland as regional or tribal in Zimbabwe. This refers to the characterisations of Pf-Zapu before 1987 and the MDC led by Welshman Ncube post- 2005.

For instance, in 2011 Tsvangirai told a French Magazine that Welshman Ncube's MDC is a regional party (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 05.08.2011). Wellington Mbofana (12.03.2008) provides an incisive observation in his article about the ethnic and historical adulterations by Zanu-Pf and cultural commentators in reference to Joshua Nkomo soon after independence:

On the eve of Independence in 1980, Elijah Madzikatire led his band in singing the song Viva Makamarada which went: "*Tinotenda vaSamora vakasunungura Zimbabwe. Tinotenda vaNyerere vakasunungura Zimbabwe. Tinotenda vaMugabe vakasunungura Zimbabwe. Tozotendawo vaNkomo sahwira wedu muhondo*." [Trans: We thank Samora for liberating Zimbabwe. We thank Nyerere for liberating Zimbabwe. We thank Mugabe for liberating Zimbabwe. We also thank Nkomo for collaborating during the struggle]. From the first day of our Independence, Robert Mugabe was cast as the liberator of Zimbabwe, more equal than all the others who had, before him and with him, struggled for the country's Independence and Joshua Nkomo who hitherto had been cast as Father Zimbabwe was reduced to a war collaborator, a mujibha! (*The Zimbabwe Independent Online*, 2008)

This neatly fits in with the portrayal of Welshman Ncube, the leader of the small faction of the MDC by MDC-T Secretary General and Zimbabwe's Finance Minister, Tendai Biti. Biti's Facebook post about Welshman Ncube's presentation at the June 15 "extraordinary" summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), on Zimbabwe reads:

Perhaps the most marvelous thing was the tag teaming and complementarity between MT and Proff Welsh Ncube. I have seen Welsh in court and on countless times we have fought on opposite sides (of course he always lost). Today the man from Vungu fought like a lion. Whilst MT was the godfather speaking like a statesman, Welsh was a bull terrier flooring Zanu with erudite legal submissions.

The comparisons between Tsvangirayi (MT) and Ncube (Welsh) are interesting. 'Welsh' is always a 'loser', he is a village politician 'from Vungu' who lacks diplomacy as he 'fights like a lion' while MT is the 'godfather' and diplomat as he speaks like a 'statesman'. At face value, Biti's post might seem ethnically neutral but critical discourse analysis of the same reveals many ethnic stereotypes. These expressions are indeed reminiscent of Mugabe's declaration that Nkomo's Pf-Zapu was a tribal regional party leading to Mugabe and his supporters "openly disparaging [him-Nkomo] as the king of Ndebele" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 187).

Discussants engage the myth that Tsvangirai advances (that political parties formed by Ndebeles are tribal and regional) with some pointing out how it negatively affects ethnic relations. The following extract sheds more light on this:

E34: It is a shame and strange that Morgan Tsvangirai has labelled MDC led by Welshman as a 'Regional Party'. This form of conduct was experienced when R.G. Mugabe's ZANU-PF labelled PF ZAPU as a 'Regional Party' dividing Zimbabweans on tribalism. [*Masithandaneni*]

- E35: Earlier the lost leader of the MDC-Traitors described the beautiful African people of Matabeleland as being "indisciplined". Now that same divisive Zim Traitor, and mindless political prostitute of the pale devils, is labeling as "regional party", those whom the citizens of Matabeleland chose as their leader. Great Zimbabwe II is a WHOLE nation! There can be no childish, foolish & RECKLESS talk of regional this or regional that. Please note how a wise, virtuous, intelligent, courageous & MAGNANIMOUS African leader operates: Magnanimous Mugabe, the UNIFIER... went out of his way to include in the highest level of national government, those citizens of Matabeleland who might have felt 'left out' & anxious on account unfortunate past national friction. Traitors are always selfish & self-absorbed. Traitors are not in a habit of ensuring the best interest of the nation. Zim Traitors are more interested in pushing the sinful sanctions of Africa's racist & evil euro enemies. [Jukwa]
- E36: I think most of these comments are being posted by people in diaspora who cannot vote. Most people in Matabeleland won't even read what Tsvangirai said. All they know is that Tsvangirai *ndiye akaunza "mari inotenga"(us\$)* {Translation: He is the one who brought a viable currency}. Go into rural areas and they will tell that "*Dai pasina Tsvangirai uyu hameno kuti tingadai tichiita sei, dai pasina Tsvangirai anozivana ne varungu uyu tingadai tichiri kutakura mari mumabhara*" (Translation from Shona: If Tsvangirai was not in the GNU we would be in deep economic trouble. If he did not have good relations with the white men, we would be carrying money using wheelbarrows.). [munashe58]

Besides engaging with the divisiveness of the myth, discussants also repeat the Zanu-Pf master narrative that Tsvangirai or opposition politicians are 'traitors' 'mindless political prostitutes' controlled by the West while Mugabe is celebrated as a "a wise, virtuous, intelligent, courageous & MAGNANIMOUS African leader ... Magnanimous Mugabe, the UNIFIER". This demonstrates that *NewZimbabwe.com* carries various hues of opinion regardless of where they come from. In the same vein, the myth has been seen as an explainer of Ndebele exclusion and together with Gukurahundi memory this has fossilized Ndebele particularism. E36 addresses the issues of digital divide and argues that people who vote in Zimbabwe mostly do not have access to technology to read such stories and they will continue having faith in Tsvangirai. Most people disparaging Tsvangirai's statements the discussant argues, are in the diaspora and their opinions do not matter. What matters is the fact that people know Tsvangirai as the one who brought stability to the country's socio-economic space.

While in *Chapter 7* there is a clear attempt by Zanu-Pf to present Zimbabwe as a unitary nation, online debates challenge such notions and, in the process, complicate Zimbabwe's national identity making process. Besides, there are other schools of thought represented in the debates in *NewZimbabwe.com* that depart from the exclusive us/them dichotomies. These discussants see themselves not necessarily as falling under the Shona and or Ndebele 'nations', but rather, see 'us' as 'Zimbabweans' and this is an expedient denial or suppression

of ethnicity. This magnifies the constructionist perspective to national identity construction which anchors this chapter. Many examples abound. Fanuel *Musarira* speaks to this:

- E37: Whether you are ZANU-PF or MDC it matters not the important fact is you are a ZIMBABWEAN. I don't believe in tribal nonsense, my mother is a Mukorekore from Dande Kwa Nyandoro my father is Mumanyika ku Nyautare Nyanga. It is real that I was born by both so I am a pure what? I can only be a pure Zimbo bro [slang for Zimbabwean brother]. [*Musarira*]

Thus for some readers the nation is not constructed in the dichotomies of Ndebele/Shona, outsider/insider, patriots/sell-outs, peaceful/bloodthirsty but all ethnic groups belong to Zimbabwe. Debates in *NewZimbabwe.com* are littered with these sentiments of 'sameness.' In this vein any discussion of ethnicity, secession or irredentism is frowned upon and dismissed as divisive. *Humphrey Moyo*'s contribution to a discussion started by Mabhena's (2007) article demonstrates this:

- E38: ...much as I accept the leanings of this site towards the MDC (which i happen to support) , I actually feel that articles such as the one on the Zezuru issue actually polarises and destroys already fragile relationships between the different ethnic groups in Zimbabwe... Mabhena article was at best poorly researched and poorly written, and at worst ethnically devisive, tribalist and works very well in dividing and not uniting the opposition against the current state of tyranny in Zimbabwe!!! [*Humphrey Moyo*]

The focus of some assertions is that ethnic differences need not be made major issues. Instead, the main issue is to foster ethnic coherence and a Zimbabwean national identity as 'we' are all Zimbabweans. Extracts below illustrate this. *E39* is a comment in response to Mathuthu's blog and *E40* and *E41* are responses from *madzibaba* and *MUGABE* to a story about "Matabeleland separatists" burning the Zimbabwean flag (this is addressed later in this chapter):

- E39: We are different and as such we should embrace our differences and learn to live with each other but acknowledge that we are different... but we are all decedents of the Ndebele nation. You do not necessarily need to speak Ndebele to be a Ndebele [*Buqhawe*]
- E40: We are all Zimbabweans be it u ndebele/shona etc the prob wif other Ndebeles is u think u mo superior to the shona buh hell on No#1Be proud to be Zimbabwean not to put our beloved country on the spotlight fo the wrong reasons kmt.[*Madzibaba*]
- E41: @AT EVERYONE HERE: HAPPY EASTER ,WE ARE ALL ZIMBABWEANS .WE DEBATE ON THE FORUM TO ENRICH EACH OTHER AND FOR THE BETTER OF ZIMBABWE .[*MUGABE*]

9.5.2 Development, exclusion and the politics of Ndebele particularism

Young (1976) argues that the end of colonialism elevated developmental nationalism as key to defining nationhood and identity. However, the politics of development in Zimbabwe when understood within this context reveal the misapplication of developmental nationalism, to one with paradigms and political cultures defined mainly by ethnic contours. Similar trends may be seen more prominently in other parts of Africa where people converge for common political action based on ethnicity. The “us” and “them” dichotomy presented in most debates above reveal the experienced realities of alienation, exclusion, marginalisation and domination of the Ndebele people who have continually agitated for a separate Mthwakazi state. This is the precolonial state which attempts to accentuate Ndebele nationalism where the Ndebele nation exists separate from the rest of what is currently Zimbabwe. The Ndebeles have always been a nation on their own since migrating across Limpopo as “a population with its own language, cultural traditions, historical aspirations, and, often, its own geographical home” (Young, 1976: 100). Ndlovu-Gatsheni captures the postcolonial condition of ethno-relations thus:

While the victorious nationalists manning the postcolonial state wanted to create a false picture of African national identity, the reality is that nationalism led to further re-tribalisation of politics and reinforcement of Ndebele-Shona ethnic divisions. (1999a: 177)

Besides the exclusion of Zapu, Zipra and Nkomo from the narrative of founding the new nation in 1980, Ndebeles also feel that they have been excluded from the nation especially where developmental issues are concerned. This marginalisation is located in the system of governance established in 1980 when the marginalisation of the Matabeleland and Midlands regions became evident and violence was used as a means to subdue political opponents from these regions in an attempt to create a one-party state. Through this, ethnicity has been acted out (but not spoken about) by the elite advancing what Vambe (2012: 286) refers to as the continuation of “silent genocide” to people of Matabeleland and Midlands. This silent genocide has been used as a point of reference to explain the levels of underdevelopment in Midlands and Matabeleland regions and the marginalisation of its people from central government.

These perceptions of exclusion from the nation are also informed by the controversial and authorless xenophobic document popularly labelled ‘*For Restricted Circulation: Progress Review on the 1979 Grand Plan*’. The *Grand Plan* document as it is popularly known, has

exacerbated sentiments of alienation and classification of the Ndebele and other non-Shona peoples of Zimbabwe as second class citizens. Without ascertaining the veracity of the *Grand Plan* document as a Shona supremacist or Zanu-Pf project, the document manipulates deep tribal, ethnic and national identity debates, primordialising them to pre-colonial Zimbabwe. The document purports to instil Shona hegemony in Zimbabwe while celebrating postcolonial genocide by declaring that “Ndebeles had no legal claim whatsoever upon Zimbabwean sovereignty”. On the genocide issue the document states:

For many years both the Ndebeles and Europeans were living under a shameful illusion that the crimes of their forefathers had been forgiven and forgotten. This was not to be as R.G. (Mugabe) the illustrious son of the Shona people ensured that the two groups pay dearly for the evil deeds of their ancestors. Is it possible that such heinous crimes as those committed by these people against the Shona can just be swept under the carpet because it is political expedient to do so? (1979)

It also disparages Shangaans as:

...a thoroughly confused group despite the modification of their identity to drift closer to Shona under the guise of a language called Ndau, generally accepted among the ignorant as a dialect of Shona. The truth remains – they are foreigners, unwilling to advance our cause as they huddle around and cling childishly to the ‘Ndonga’.⁴²

Development patterns that seem to be informed by ethnicity have been used to advance arguments for a separate state or secession of Matabeleland and Midlands provinces into a separate pre-colonial-times state, thereby undermining the nationalists’ aspirations of a united Zimbabwe. On the other hand, activists and politicians have called for an evolution of the current centrist form of governance to one characterised by devolution of powers. These two forms of governance have been advanced mainly by Ndebeles as the most disgruntled ethnic group in Zimbabwe. Organisations like UMhlahlo Wesizwe SikaMthwakazi, Mthwakazi People’s Convention and Mthwakazi Liberation Front’s agenda is to fight for a return to what they call the “pre-1923 arrangement” (Mhlanga, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 03.01.2011), that is, a call for the mythic Mthwakazi state (Moyo, 2009) where Mashonaland is separated from the Midlands and Matabeleland provinces (See *Figure 8*).

In May 30, 2007, Welshman Mabhena, together with the pro-autonomous Ndebele nation pressure group UMhlahlo WeSizwe SikaMthwakazi wrote in a letter to the British Embassy in Harare:

⁴²The document ‘For Restricted Circulation: Progress Review on the 1979 Grand Plan’ circulated in Zimbabwe in the 1990s. It is not clear who authored it. However, it managed to tap into ethnic debates and give an impression that Gukurahundi was premeditated by Zanu-Pf before independence.

Your Excellence you may be surprised to hear that I usually get lost when I come across people who mix up my country Matabeleland with Zimbabwe, because Zimbabwe is a former British Colony which was colonized in 1890 and granted independence on 18 April 1980. While my homeland Matabeleland is a territory which was an independent Kingdom until it was invaded by the British South Africa Company (BSA Co) on 4 November 1893, in defiance of the authority of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Actually in terms of the Moffat Treaty of Peace and Unity of 11 February 1888 between Queen Victoria and King Lobengula, Britain and Matabeleland were allies, and due to our respect to our late King we have not renounced his vow.... It is therefore a painful reality that during the past 114 years we the people of Matabeleland have remained without a break under the brutal regimes up to this day. We are convinced that our oppression is still proceeding without any hope for mercy from any source To that effect Your Excellence, I am under pressure from my countrymen that since the death of Dr. Joshua N. Nkomo they regard me as the remaining leader of Matabeleland. And that I must deliver them from slavery and take them to the land of milk and honey. They constantly refer me to their pattern of voting since 1980 which reflects their separate nationhood. (Mabhena, 2007, emphasis added).

Together with “34 others (as representing the KINGDOM OF MATABELELAND)” Mabhena filed “a notice of an intent to file an application for the review of the verdict of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the Land Case of Matabeleland on 19th July 1918” that had argued that “*The Ndebele Sovereignty had been broken up and replaced by a new, better system as defined by the Matabeleland Order-in-Council of 1894*” (emphasis provided). Mabhena further argued that after independence, the British wrongfully ceded control of Matabeleland to Mashonaland with the “status of Republic of Zimbabwe.” In this case Mabhena acted as the leader and guardian of the Ndebele nation’s interests in the absence of Joshua Nkomo who died in 1999 who was assumed a Ndebele leader.

This socio-historical understanding of the Matabeleland secession becomes conspicuous in the analyses of online debates in the post-2000 period. First, a list of some concerns from a civic group calling itself U-Mhlahlo Wesizwe sikaMthwakazi, a group whose mission is the eradication of oppression and suppression of people from Matabeleland on tribal bases, is in order:

- a) Marginalization of the Elected MPs of Matabeleland.
- b) Instituting the Reign of Terror in Matabeleland.
- c) Perpetrated ethnic cleansing against the People of Matabeleland.
- d) Translocation of the Economic Resources of Matabeleland to Mashonaland.
- e) Reserving Key Jobs for the Shona People in Matabeleland.
- f) Depriving Education Opportunities to the People of Matabeleland.
- g) Retarding the Cultural Identity of the Inter-Cultural Society of Matabeleland. (Chari, 19.04.2011)



Figure 8: The current map of Zimbabwe (left) and the proposed Mthwakazi state (right)

Land redistribution, employment opportunities in main tourist areas, mining and agricultural sectors have allegedly benefited non-Ndebeles in the region (Mhlanga, 2010: 107-108). The net effect of this besides feelings of alienation among the Ndebele people is that it has negatively affected the 1987 Unity Accord and Zimbabwe's shaky nationalism.

As shown in point (d) above, calls for secession are premised on the crystallised belief that material and financial resources from Manicaland, Matabeleland and Midlands are used to develop Mashonaland regions. The following extracts from some discussants in response to Ndaba Mabheba's article (11.12.2009) attest to this:

E42: If we are to be honest with ourselves, the under-development in Matabeleland can ONLY be explained by TRIBALISM really. I am Shona myself, though I prefer to be called Mbire. Didn't Mugabe say "we will isolate Tsholotsho if you vote Jonathan Moyo". Some areas in Zimbabwe are under-developed because of who they vote to Parliament. Did I hear someone say Chipinge!!! TRIBALISM IS ALIVE AND KICKING IN ZIMBABWE - JUST BECAUSE THEY DO NOT TELL YOU - LET US NOT PRETEND IT DOES NOT EXIST.
[Fanuel Nhamo Musarira]

E43: I am a full-bloodied Shona ...Fow ay too long the Ndebele people have been marginalised.
[Masakadza].

However, Alex Magaisa (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2009) argues that it is problematic to analyse the marginalisation of Matabeleland through the lenses of ethnicity. He argues that both Shonas and Ndebeles are victims of the same government and therefore it is not incumbent upon Ndebeles to monopolise victimhood from the government of the day.

Sithole (1985) highlights some hypotheses that are conducive for ethnic salience and in a way these put the Ndebele ethnic group's feelings of alienation in perspective. The first is that when economic growth declines, ethnic identity becomes salient. When the economic downturn started after the introduction of Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in the early 1990s, the Matabeleland and Midlands regions suffered more and this saw companies relocating to Harare or closing down. Second, the mobility of Shona speakers to work and

even own property in Matabeleland has been considered an invasion of the Ndebele territory by Shona speakers and this has increased ethnic tensions. Consequently, Ndebele marginalisation has increased Ndebele particularism, radicalism and nationalism that contest the whole idea of a unitary nation called Zimbabwe, hence calls for a separate state by various Ndebele pressure groups mentioned above. In response to Magaisa's article Kuthula Matshazi (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.2009) argues that notwithstanding Magaisa's assertions,

E44: THERE has been some tendency to deny or trivialise the marginalisation of the people in Matabeleland when the issue is discussed. Carefully crafted ideological arguments have been deployed to shoot down the plight of a people who are suffering in their home country. Some have said that it is not the Matabeleland people only who are suffering this marginalisation; other provinces and districts are marginalised too. Sure, but they have the right to speak out about their own circumstances and get recourse. It should not be wrong for the Matabeleland people to express their marginalisation just because they are supposedly not the only people in the predicament. [*Kuthula Matshazi*]

Compounding this marginalisation is the failure of the central government to develop key and strategic areas of the Matabeleland region. Mhlanga observes:

The fact that heavy industries in Bulawayo are gradually relocating to Harare has increased the economic isolation of the region of Matabeleland and reduced employment opportunities. The relocation is linked to the failure of central government to commit itself to the finalisation of water projects like the Matabeleland Zambezi Water Project. Shortage of water affects manufacturing and heavy industries and deters potential investors. This has increased unemployment and outward migration of those in the economically productive age group into neighbouring areas and countries. (2010: 107)

Such experiences have informed calls for a separate state by secessionist groups as mentioned previously and this has negatively affected the nationalists' dream of a hegemonic Zimbabwean national identity. This is supported by the following E45 from *Mbanjwacharya* who, responding to Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2011) article on debunking the tribal relations in Zimbabwe, posits:

E45: Prof. Gatsheni ... While you have every right to contextualize your notion of "nation-building" within a unitary geopolitical territory called Zimbabwe ... many of us residents of Matabeleland strongly believe the time has come for us to transcend "Zimbabwe" and construct a CIVIC STATE, NOT "NATION-STATE" (in the traditional understanding of that term), which will champion our old ideological UBUNTU values ... Liberal values are at the core of Ndebeleness. [*Mbanjwacharya*]

The formation and revival of Zapu-2000 and Pf-Zapu after Nkomo's death speaks to a need for a different brand of politics especially in Matabeleland, a region that has been marginalised by successive Zanu-Pf governments since 1980. Mashonaland and Harare are nicknamed 'Bambazonke' (Translated: Catch-All) by people from Matabeleland. This means that Mashonaland is a region that 'catches all' the opportunities, resources, developmental projects that could be shared equitably to develop other marginalised regions in Zimbabwe like Masvingo, Matabeleland and Manicaland. However, because power resides mostly with

Shonas the development and resource allocations are suspected to be concentrated in Mashonaland regions. Related to this, Mhlanga (2010) proposes devolution of power instead of secession as a way of dealing with sentiments of ethnic marginalisation. Mhlanga supports devolution of power in the following way:

...economically, the region (Matabeleland) continues to experience serious poverty despite sharing borders with countries (South Africa, Namibia and Botswana) with viable economies amassing the highest amount of currency ... the centralisation of Zimbabwe Revenue Authority in Harare poses a challenge because data links with border posts and computer systems are first routed to Harare for processing all transactions.... Industries in Bulawayo are gradually relocating to Harare [and this] has increased the economic isolation of the region of Matabeleland and reduced employment opportunities ... locals in Matabeleland also complain of being sidelined in the limited employment opportunities that are available in favour of people from Mashonaland.... Devolution of power thus becomes a possible solution to the Zimbabwean situation as a way of managing the 'northern problem' – that is, Matabeleland and other regions such as Manicaland. (Mhlanga, 2010: 107, 109).

The advantage with devolution is that as a form of power decentralisation, it gives regions or provinces control over the day to day political and economic running of their areas thereby increasing sense of responsibility and belonging. Many politicians have preferred devolution but Mugabe argued saying:

E46: We don't want to divide the country into small pieces because it will cause disunity among our people. Those things are done in big countries, not a small country like ours. We once had this, under the Federation which included Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi). Some are talking about separating Matabeleland region to become a country; that is impossible we don't want that.

This rejection of devolution by Mugabe has accentuated the Bambazonke tag on Mashonaland and Harare and increased a sense of marginalisation to other areas. Mhlanga (2011), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008, 2009a, 2009c) and Masunungure (2006) accuse nationalists of failing to cobble a national identity that appeals to all citizens. Instead, the nationalists have sought to use violence as mortar for constructing this elusive cohesive national identity.

The use of violence in post- 1990 Zimbabwe is a clear symbol of the failed national identity project and crisis of legitimacy Zanu-Pf has faced. Thus, the use of violence as a form of political and national organisation “partly contributed to lack of consensus before and after independence [and] has compromised the prospects of building a happy nation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a: 191). Mhlanga (03.01.2011) says nationalists “recklessly sought to construct a national identity out of a plurality of competing ethnic groups – with a naive mantra ‘... for a nation to live the tribe must die’” This has rendered imaginations of plurality of ethnic identities and celebration thereof taboo in the current Zimbabwe. Artist, Styx Mhlanga for example, was arrested for criticizing a poem written by a Shona poet about

heroes, challenging the poet “on why only liberation war heroes from Mashonaland and none from Matabeleland were highlighted in the poem” (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 07.03.11). He was charged for “uttering words ... with the intention to engender, promote or expose to hatred or contempt or ridicule ... to a class of persons in Zimbabwe solely on account of their tribe” – a charge probably many people would face were these debates publicly aired in government dominated public spheres. To this end Mhlanga (2010: 106) proposes a positive outlook on “aspects of openly celebrating ethnic identities” without criminalising them.

9.6 Ndebele nationalism and offline performances of identity

The various performances of identities by the Ndebeles magnify the problematic and knotty processes associated with the construction of a cohesive national identity in Zimbabwe. These performances of identities directly speak to two main fundamental debates that have characterised scholarship on ethnicity: the primordialist versus constructionist as mentioned in *Chapter 4*. The primordial school sees ethnicity (whether Shona or Ndebele) as a frame of identity where loyalties to a particular ethnic group are neatly woven by bonds of biology—blood (Cohen, 1974). The 2011 arrest of Paul Siwela, John Gazi and Charles Thomas of the Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF), an organisation advocating a separate Ndebele state was based on a charge of conspiring to overthrow the government by distributing subversive material meant to incite the public to revolt. The arrest provoked Ndebele particularism as it was viewed as suppression of Ndebeles at large by the Shona dominated government (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 16.03.2011). The charges against the three further highlighted the delicate nature of ethnic relations in Zimbabwe which the postcolonial political dispensation has not made provisions to address. The presence of online and offline Ndebele pressure groups like the Mthwakazi People’s Congress (MPC), United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR) in the UK, all advocating a separate Ndebele state, are some of the creative ways employed by suppressed groups advocating a Matabele homeland.

As stated above, calls for secession are informed by the collective feeling of neglect and exclusion—where economic and infrastructural development is concerned, of the Ndebele people and their regions by the government of the day. At one MLF demonstration in Johannesburg in 2011 more than 500 exiled Ndebele members of the group (see *Figure 9*) symbolically burnt a Zimbabwean flag claiming it was

- E47: ... a symbol of oppression and discrimination against ethnic groups in Matabeleland province a clear signal by the secessionists that they don't want to be part of Zimbabwe anymore. (Thabo Kunene, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 21.04.2011)



Figure 9: MLF demonstrators burning the Zimbabwean flag in Johannesburg.

The burning of the flag was not an empty action as a flag is a symbolic artefact in the discursive construction of the nation. It symbolically delineates the national imagined community (Anderson, 1983; Hogan, 2003). It represents the spirit and power of the country and identity. The act of burning it was a symbolic rejection of Shona domination and symbols such as the Great Zimbabwe bird. However, this act was seen as contradictory by Dumisani Moyo, a Zimbabwean living in Johannesburg who when interviewed for the story commented:

- E48: The burning of the flag by the secessionists could increase repression against our people by Mugabe's government. The same people who burnt the flag are still using Zimbabwe government passports - why did they not burn their passports too?

This partial rejection of nationhood and continual use of Zimbabwe passports might be explained by the fact that anyone visiting or migrating to South Africa is required, by law, to have a passport. However, the expressions shown through burning the flag largely speak to the rejection of a Zimbabwean identity and a desire to adopt a mythic Mthwakazi one. Just like the Shona ethnic group, the Ndebele ethnic grouping consists of other sub-ethnic groups and these do not necessarily feel the same way about Ndebele nationalism.

- E49: ... if Ndebele want their own state, Kalangas we will want ours too. The kalanga people we will oppose your Mthwakazi state. We are not the dissidents of mzilikazi or Lobengula. Zuma is in power so you guys, could easily negotiate to be moved back to kzn. Matebelelnd belongs to the Kalanga people. [*Mandla*]

Mandla (E49), who claims to be a Kalanga discussant in the website contests and exposes craters within Ndebele nationalism when he argues that as a Kalanga, he feels his people want their own state, separate from the Ndebele one. Msindo argues that historically, the Kalanga have always resisted Ndebele domination and extinction of their language and culture (2004:73). On the whole, Ndebeles' expressions of difference are anchored on the memory of Gukurahundi, whose memory is used as a site of resistance, resentment and expression of multiple grievances towards Shona triumphalism, domination and national identity. These performances of identity can be gleaned from ritual events like memorial services, artistic material such as documentary films, and art exhibitions. This is pursued below.

In 2010, when South Africa was hosting the soccer World Cup, the North Korean team was meant to have a pretournament training camp in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, a part of the region where the massacres took place. Online media were used by activists not only as sites of resistance and collective memory but to plan to disrupt the training camp and even the team's stay in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Nkululeko Sibanda, a Ndebele activist sent out an email protesting this training camp in Zimbabwe arguing that the relationship between Mugabe

E50: and North Korean[s] was cemented by the blood of our kin. Symbolically, this is the best chance in more than 20 years we have had to defend our dead and our blood. [Nkululeko Sibanda]

Zapu spokesman, Methuseli Moyo also commented:

E51: In as much as Zimbabwe desperately needs to be part of the FIFA 2010 South Africa showcase, ZAPU feels hosting the national team of a country associated more with the emotive and evil Gukurahundi exercise, than for its footballing reputation, has nothing to do with tourism. It is simply a glorification of Gukurahundi, and an act of provocation to the victims of the military operation against unarmed, defenceless and innocent Ndebeles. ZAPU calls on those behind bringing the North Korean team to Zimbabwe to think seriously about the implications of this, and politely ask the North Koreans to go elsewhere. They are not welcome at all in Zimbabwe. [*Methuseli Moyo*]

Notice that in Moyo's sentiments, North Koreans are not "welcome at all in Zimbabwe" and not Bulawayo or Matabeleland. This brings in the conflicting beliefs in secession and devolution of powers that different movements from Matabeleland advocate. Besides, part of the precise reason for the protest is captured in a comment from Brilliant Mhlanga who asserts in the same story cited above that: "We cannot allow them to train and merry-make in our environment when the scar caused by the genocide continues to bleed to this day." This

comment insinuates that there has not been healing as the scar “continues to bleed to this day” some 30 years after independence. This vacuum has been filled by diasporic media like *NewZimbabwe.com* which have not only been used as sites of resistance especially of Zanu-Pf hegemony but have made it possible for people to openly discuss the issue without the risk of arrest or sanction. Art and the web have enlarged the scope of memorialisation hitherto hidden in the privacy of families and individuals. The use of online media has also had offline effects. One notable event involves the use of new media by Matabeleland activists to resist Zimbabwe’s attempts to host North Korean football team for the 2010 World Cup tournament hosted by South Africa.

9.7 Towards a cohesive national identity?: Justice and closure

There is need to reflect how the website is also used as a forum to offer solutions to the violent past and, in the process, assist in the discursive construction of a cohesive national identity. In a study on social media and ethnicity in Zimbabwe, Mpofu (2013) argues that disagreements and a multiplicity of arguments demonstrate a departure from Zanu-Pf’s imagination of the nation as cohesive and the centrality of debate in a democracy. Some discussants on the website call for forgiveness of the past and a fresh start to the nation while others reject this offer until Mugabe is held accountable for the 1980s atrocities. Political activist and columnist Jethro Mpofu claims that Gukurahundi will never be forgiven

E52: ...or forgotten either by the victims or by all men and women in the globe who oppose crimes against humanity. Gukurahundi will not be forgiven because the perpetrators have not apologised or shown any remorse. Instead, they have displayed arrogance and defensiveness that stinks.... Recently, Nathan Shamuyarira, a seasoned politician and spokesperson for the ruling clique, indicated that government does not regret the genocide, since it was an operation meant to protect Shona-speaking civilians from the Ndebeles. Such a defence of the genocide, coming from such a powerful politician in the ruling clique, is clear in its implication that the genocide was an operation that the perpetrators can repeat any time. They have no single measure of regret. Gukurahundi will not be forgotten because the victims of the genocide are still suffering the effects of the mass human slaughter. In Matabeleland today, there are hundreds of thousands of young people who have failed to attend school or get formal employment, because they have no birth certificates and no national registration cards, as a result of their parents being killed and buried without burial orders and death certificates during the period of the massacres. These young people have no passports.... so they cross the Limpopo river, daily, challenging crocodiles, some of them being killed, as they go seeking general hand employment in South Africa. These victims of the genocide amount to more than two million Zimbabweans, surviving as undeclared economic refugees in South Africa. Gukurahundi will also not be forgiven or forgotten because it was not a political accident, but a properly planned military incident. A reading of the primitive fourteen page tribal manifesto, authored by the ruling clique, explains how it was planned, how the Ndebele people were to be marginalised and expelled from Zimbabwean mainstream economic and political life. [*Jethro Mpofu*]

This statement gives reasons for not forgiving and forgetting and suggests conditions for this to obtain. It rails against arguments proffered by Maurice Vambe (2012) and John Nkomo in

the previous chapter that Gukurahundi is a closed chapter that was overridden by the Unity Accord. This may be true to a certain extent as suggested by Milton Takei (1998) who argues that ethnic identities are socially constructed and it is believed that members have a common culture, but it might be true that some people within the group might not share the same identity. Mpofu contends that the “so-called unity accord was used to blackmail victims of Gukurahundi into silence ... the perpetrators mistake this silence for peace and calm” (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.12.09). What is peculiar, he argues, is that “the perpetrators of Gukurahundi are so eloquent and poetic about how “old wounds should not be opened” and how we should “treasure our national unity”. The victims have been “silent and absent” (Mpofu, 11.12.09). This also insinuates that there is a failure to reconcile with the past hence the unwillingness of the Ndebele ethnic group to be part of the Zimbabwean community.

The debates on genocide also encapsulate issues that have to do with justice and a need to address and find finality to the issue. Reactions to a story from *WikiLeaks* website (an expose of the US diplomatic cables) on the repentance of Perence Shiri who was an army commander during the genocide confirm this (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 07.11.2011). The cable claimed that Shiri had repented from the role he played during the genocide. However, some readers feel there is a way in which his remorse could be shown besides information from a leaked cable. An extract from *Umfundisi* reveals this:

E53: Mr Shiri repentance demands confession. Prove yourself, stand up and own up. If you were brave enough to do the crime be brave enough to stand up and face the people you wronged and ask for forgiveness. dont do it from the office, but come down to us, face us, pleade with us. Come let us reason together. Woza ndoda sikhulume (Translated from IsiNdebele: Come man let's talk). Woza (Come). [*Umfundisi*]

In addition, readers try to offer solutions that include allowing for repentance/dialogue or to punish the genocide architects and participants. The extracts below demonstrate this:

E54: He [Perence Shiri] deserves to die & nothing more.... This guys has blood on his hands just like his master. A bullet in his head will justify the role he played in Gukurahundi massacres. The hour is at hand. Wait & see. Lybia is a good lesson for all to see but these myopic minded politicians pretend they are in a world of their own. Such arrogance will do you no good. You are digging your own graves & the happiest hour. [*Joe Rug*]

E55: The only way our country can move forward is having people like these who reform and regret their past deeds and move on with times. I wish the rest will follow suit and Zimbabwe will once again be a nation for all Zimbabweans. [*Kulwant*]

- E56: Yes every man is capable of repentance Shiri included. What we wait to see is Shiri's deeds to the people of the Midlands and Matabeleland not only to Dabengwa and we need to hear from his own mouth *ukuthi (that)* he has repented. that includes him telling us who gave the orders, who killed who *yonke lenyakanyaka (everything that happened)*. [Mokoena]
- E57: ... why Ndebeles hate Shonas. The answer is here: When the gukurahundi was deployed in Matabeleland provinces, Zanu-Pf meticulously convinced the victims that they were killed only because they are Ndebele and the victims believed that their only sin was that they are not Shona. This is popular in Matabeleland and i see it as the main basis of hatred. Again, some Shona are convinced that Ndebeles are their enemy number one hence the hatred becomes a two way traffic. Without any form of healing i see this going down from generation to generation. It is us who must address the problem than perpetuate it. As they say, History repeats itself, none stands to benefit from 'Hatred' except the devil. [Nkunzimalanga Analyst]

The inclusion of opposing voices helps show a convergence of differing views in a public sphere where anyone is free to air their views as well as hear others. Habermas's ideal public sphere was one where participants could assent to the force of the better argument instead of being coerced by the ruling elite. The contributions clearly speak to the need for dialogue about the genocide so that there will be closure on the issue and have the country "move on with the times" (E57).

Another suggested solution is coming out in the open, through a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and addressing the past as happened in Rwanda and South Africa to refer to examples closer to Zimbabwe. From the foregoing, it is clear that this taboo topic of tribalism/ethnicity is easily engaged with using only pseudonyms that engender honest expression of opinion as discussants know that they are safe from legal or extra-legal repercussions that befall those who discuss taboo issues in the open within Zimbabwe. In this vein, the realities of the struggles that the people from the Midlands and Matabeleland regions engage with daily are informed by memories and experiences of genocide. Memory affects identities and this informs and carries conceptions of both the past and the future. The past events bind the people of Matabeleland together as they collectively perceive themselves as victims and refuse to forget and forgive based on the failure of perpetrators to ask for forgiveness and perform cultural rituals to cleanse the killers, affected families and appease the spirits of the dead. This counter-hegemonic challenge to the status quo has led to criminalisation of ethnicity by Zanu-Pf, especially because it destabilises national cohesion. It seems the only way Ndebele ethnic and national identities can be celebrated in Zimbabwe is through re-invoking memories of the past and the wrath of Zanu-Pf.

9.8 The Internet and alternative versions of national identity II

This section links with *subsection 8.6 of Chapter 8* and summarises the role of the internet in the construction of national identity through the discussions of ethnicity. The overarching argument here is that the internet has been effective in facilitating debates on ethnicity and national identities. Whereas in *Chapter 7 The Herald* portrayed the Zimbabwean national identity as primordial and fixated (Blacks only are Zimbabweans) this chapter has confirmed Barker's claim that "identity is not a fixed universal but a description in language" (2005: 100).

Discussions of ethnicity have divided the Zimbabwe nation into three sub nations – Shona, Ndebele and Whites. As argued in *Chapter 8* and elsewhere in this chapter, the White nation has established e-mail and website forums not entirely welcoming to black people, where they try to preserve, prolong and maintain their Rhodesian nationhood albeit in a mental space unlike the Shona and Ndebele who have physical homelands to refer to (King, 2003). The internet, in this case study of *NewZimbabwe.com* has exposed various ways of nation-making used by the Shona and Ndebele nations. While Dahlberg (2001) argues that sincerity and openness of identity has helped maintain respectful deliberations and low levels of deception among participants in the Minnesota e-Democracy website, it seems the opposite obtains in *NewZimbabwe.com* where uses of pseudonyms and flaming have helped people to maintain high levels of security from danger posed by discussing the taboo issue of ethnicity. In addition, the debates are characterised by "dogmatic assertions of pre-set positions, where participants are unprepared to revise their positions in the light of what others post" (Dahlberg, 2001: 625). For instance, both advocates of pure Ndebele or Shona identities have maintained certain myths that are not entirely true. Research however, as highlighted above, suggests that Shonas are not primordially Zimbabwean neither is there anything like a pure Ndebele nation with untainted Nguni blood. By rejecting some of these historical facts, both Ndebeles and Shonas illustrate that there are certain myths that have to be rejected and others to be appropriated so as to make an argument about certain identities.

From the discussions of ethnicity in this chapter, Ndebele sentiments have come out strongly in challenge of the perceived Shona hegemony in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, Ndebeles have "simultaneously celebrated and repudiated (the homeland of Zimbabwe) so as to create and sustain ways of 'imagining' the mythic Mthwakazi nation within what is constructed as a

repressive and alienating Zimbabwe” (Moyo, 2009: 66). The Ndebele use Gukurahundi as a definer and marker of the irreconcilable mythic differences between their nation and that of the Shonas. The victimhood, collective suffering, common destiny and cultural uniqueness of the Ndebeles are prefigured in the deployment of Insider/Outsider or Us (Ndebeles) and Them (Shonas) binaries in the narratives on the website and these are used to resist the dominant narratives of nationhood espoused by the Shonas whom Ndebeles lump together with Zanu-Pf.

The website has also given the Shona nation some representations where certain myths are rejected, new ones constructed and debated. For instance the myth that all Shonas are responsible for Gukurahundi seems to have gained currency in most narratives advanced by Ndebele people both inside and outside the debates in *NewZimbabwe.com*. As suggested by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011) and some discussants in the extracts analysed in this research, this is just a myth. What the myth does is help unify Ndebeles against Shona hegemony and enhance the victimhood mentality and collective memories. Moreover Ndebele interactants have failed to adequately address the violent nature with which their ancestors dealt with the Shona nation in the 1900s. However, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011; 2009a) argues that there was nothing extra-ordinary about Ndebeles invading Shona areas as this was a norm. Notice how he illustrates this point in an article about the Ndebele-Shona myths in *NewZimbabwe.com*:

E58: This takes me to the question of whether the Shona were a unique human species that was weak and always victim to the Ndebele raids. In the first place, it must be remembered that state formation among the Shona just like among other African groups took the form of raiding and conquest of weaker groups as well as assimilation and incorporation into new state. No wonder that Mutapa meant *pillager* and Rozvi meant *destroyers*. General Tumbare of the Rozvi was a great fighter and raider. A group known as the *Dumbuseya* was a renowned Shona raiding community. In short, the various Shona groups raided each other as well as the Ndebele. What sparked the Anglo-Ndebele war in October 1893? It was a Shona raid on the Ndebele conducted by Gomini and Bere’s people. When the Ndebele forces conducted a punitive counter-raid, the white settlers resident in Fort Victoria intervened on the side of the two Shona chiefs and used the incident (Victoria incident) as a pretext to destroy the Ndebele state.

Despite some of the rational representations from academics and thought leaders that write blogs on *NewZimbabwe.com*, some myths have resisted debunking. While digital public spheres have been lauded with encouraging rational engagements (Dahlberg, 2007) it seems possible that debate may be fragmented and characterised by disagreements and even exchanges of harsh words, threats and formation of extreme views. As such, there is need for caution lest the emancipator power of the internet is exaggerated (Fung, 2002). The internet does not necessarily deliver to the citizens the real Habermasian public sphere characterised

by the ideal speech situation where dialogues are not dominated by class, political, or economic power. Discussants who participate in the debates on the website are already caught up in a power relationship and struggle. A relevant example is that issues discussed emanate from the bloggers who by virtue of writing a blog set up the agenda. All the same, debating issues has also meant that the readers have power to discursively construct alternative national identities. Readers have used the website to memorialise and resist dominant Zanu-Pf narratives on the nation. Specifically, in relation to the Gukurahundi genocide, some discussants have come up with ideas as to how the wounds and injustices of the past may be healed for the sake of a cohesive Zimbabwean national identity. The important point in this section is that the internet has gifted Zimbabweans their sense of themselves as particular and special; able to use this medium for the construction of alternative notions of selfhood and nationhood.

9.9 Conclusion

Just like in *Chapter 8*, this chapter has illustrated the centrality of new media as alternative fora through which alternative notions of identities are constructed, expressed and disseminated. Although it is impossible to locate the causal relationship between technologies and identities, technology is seen here as enabling rather than determining various processes of cultural and political identity formations (Madianou, 2002). This chapter has dealt mainly with ethnic identities and from the analysis it is clear that ethnicity plays an important role in the politics of identity in Zimbabwe. The chapter has attributed ethnic tensions as expressed online, to the fact that when Zimbabwe gained independence or after the signing of the unity accord, there was no post-conflict transformation. Instead of granting everyone the right to memory and remembrance, Zimbabwean authorities, as shown above, have sought to violently erase the genocide memory through arrests and detention of those who seek to recall the event through offline activities like cultural rituals. What is important here is that while certain memories may not be necessarily crucial for the whole nation, they can, however be necessary for the identity of certain groups and these groups are even willing to derail certain national projects (Reading, 2011).

The internet has made it possible for disgruntled people to voice their concerns about issues they have previously been unable to; commemorate events that are integral to their history and identity, and debate issues of importance regardless of the ruling elite's feelings. The

internet has decentred the arena of identity making—wrestling it away from the political elite and opening it up to the people. As also demonstrated in *Chapter 8*, the internet can be said to be a public space for deliberation as it identifies four characteristics of a public sphere. These characteristics are “access, freedom of communication, structure of deliberation and the public use of reason” (Tanner, 2001: 383). The internet, in the context of Zimbabwe as demonstrated by *Chapters 8* and *9* has made it possible for both the expression of public opinion and “the formation of collective or popular memories” (Tanner, 2001: 384).

The internet may be credited with creating spaces where Zimbabweans can debate thorny issues like ethnicity. It has made it possible for the “expression of both popular and unpopular constructions of identity and belonging, in a fashion unimaginable in public media” (Mpfu, 2013: 119). Evidence from the foregoing demonstrates that just like the joker in a card game, ethnicity is a political game changer whichever way one looks at it, as it can be introduced seamlessly into various ‘games’/debates. What is evident from this chapter is Ndebele particularism’s domination in most of the debates despite *NewZimbabwe.com* being a counter-public sphericule open to different ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, in contrast to enclave public spheres (Squires, 2002) like *www.inkundla.net* which is strictly targeted at the Ndebele ethnic group.

Evidence from this chapter further illustrates that where populations are alive to governmental suppression of genocide debates they (the people) make it incumbent upon themselves to remember and commemorate the tragic pasts at the expense of government sponsored unity. In other words, Zanu-Pf imagined that it consolidated Zimbabweans’ national identity and patriotism through the unity accord but in actual fact it seems the permanent stains of Gukurahundi are a constant remainder of the painful past and act as points of resistance for the Ndebeles (Mpfu, 2013; Worby, 1998). The innovativeness of new media has offered ostracised communities what the subaltern theory scholar Chatterjee calls a chance to produce identities “imaginatively without the apparatus of a state” (1993: 225). New media have been used by ordinary Zimbabweans to make a lucid call towards dialogue and national healing. Forced amnesia has only enhanced Ndebeles’ use and appropriation of “victimological memory” (Hoffman, 1999: 302).

Through CDA and constructionist theory of identity, this chapter has shown the importance of voices from below in the discursive construction of national identity. Where the discursive

construction of identity takes place in a free environment, discourses take different tones and approaches—people are open and share ideas without fear of being reprimanded. For instance name-calling, racism, ethnic differences are tackled regardless of consequences. From the debates above, *NewZimbabwe.com* seems not to tackle, largely, issues of race, especially the white race who were ‘victimised’ by the Mugabe regime when landless peasants occupied their commercial farms and subsequently ‘officially’ repossessed by the government for land reform. The only reference in the stories analysed that has been made to white Zimbabweans is when they are being vilified for colonising Zimbabwe. For example, reacting to Rejoice Ngwenya’s article about minority rights one interactant *Jukwa* labels white people “destructive & FOREIGN rubbish of the pale devils” (*NewZimbabwe.com*, 11.28.2011). This does not mean the white community does not participate in constructing their own Zimbabwe or Rhodesian identities (see Peel, 2009 and King, 2003). This elite diasporic based Rhodesian nation is older than the current diaspora of mainly blacks which grew exponentially just after 2000. The Rhodesian diaspora consists of white people who left the country in the 1980s and 1990s and these had skills and financial support that allowed them to easily settle in their current hostlands. This Rhodesian identity owes its genesis to the development of the British Empire and it drew strength from the Empire

as a comforting umbrella where the isolated Rhodesians could feel as though they were not alone in the world ... Rhodesian identity developed in opposition to Africans and Afrikaners.... The threat of physical violence by Africans served to knit together the small settler community, and magnified the hostility the settlers felt towards the African majority.” (King, 2003: 181)

This ‘elite’ diaspora (King, 2003) uses alternative sites like the Indaba and Rhodesians Worldwide websites to keep in touch and cultivate a sense of community (King, 2003). Tony King’s (2003) study on the Rhodesians in cyberspace revealed that white people from Rhodesia and those born after 1980 congregate online to develop and proclaim their identities in exile—strengthening them in “reclaiming or carving out a sovereign, political entity, as opposed to simply keeping in touch” (King, 2003: 179). The *Indaba* website for instance restricts access only to whites and “contains huge amounts of content which the Zimbabwean authorities would classify as defamatory to the state” (King, 2003: 178). These websites give the scattered and isolated Rhodesians a sense of home and imagined community after losing both the British Empire and Rhodesia as physical entities.

Theoretically there is interplay of the primordial and constructionist perspective to the Shona and Ndebele nations. The Shona nation is presented as primordially Zimbabwean while the Ndebele nation is constructed around migratory lenses. The post- conflict aspirations of some discussants are that there be a cohesive Zimbabwean nation based on forgiveness and healing of wounds from the past. This variation of viewing the nation either as primordial or constructed is important in that it helps show the visions of different communities either as rooted in perceptions of common ancestry or focused on continual integration of new members from varied backgrounds. This helps in the understanding of political and ethnic tensions in society and how they can be circumvented. Considering the exchanges above, this is especially true and relevant to policy makers and political leaders if they are to preside over a united nation.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Identity is both a complex and a fascinating phenomenon. At a basic level, identity is about who we are, and who and what we identify with. However, identity is also about who we want to be, and how we wish to be seen by others. (Douglas, 2009: 11)

10.1 Introduction

This thesis has invested in illustrating the enabling and central role of new media as alternative digital public spheres used by ordinary citizens to facilitate the discursive construction of national identity. This is in the backdrop of Zanu-Pf's use of traditional media like *The Herald* to broadcast its dominant narratives on nationhood. New media's entry in this nexus has been as fora for those views that contest dominant narratives. The research firstly demonstrates how the state under Zanu-Pf's control has used complex state dominated practices, rituals, bureaucracy and coercion to advance exclusive notions of identity. Secondly, the research argues that the advent of new media has made it possible for ordinary people without access to state dominated media to create and disseminate content that demonstrates discursive constructions of identity from below. To do this the thesis drew on national identity and finely tuned public sphere theories undergirded by triangulated qualitative methodological design anchored mainly by case study approach, digital ethnography, DHA and CDA. This helps bring to the fore various contesting positions on national identity advanced on the one hand by Zanu-Pf and contested on the other by ordinary citizens using alternative media. From the onset, the main agenda of this work has been to answer the following three main questions:

- a. What are the dominant versions of national identity created by Zanu-Pf?
- b. How do Zimbabweans imagine their national identity in *NewZimbabwe.com*?
- c. How does the internet make possible the creation of alternative versions of national identity?

In the process the thesis has discussed core and sub-themes in the construction of both dominant and alternative narratives of identity so as to come out with a holistic picture of what Zimbabweanness means. Zanu-Pf's constructions of identity presented in *Chapter 7* indicate how national identities can be rigid, limiting and exclusive if politicians are to decide who are national insiders and outsiders. In addition, an analysis of various ritualistic events like burials of 'heroes' and celebrations of holidays in *Chapter 7* illustrates tensions within

Zanu-Pf's dominant discourses on nationhood, especially where the theme of ethnicity is concerned.

The research has demonstrated that there is ethnic discrimination in the way the narratives of the liberation war and memory, and the conferring of national hero status is done. Evidence in the research suggests that having contributed in one of the country's three Chimurengas, being Shona and loyal to Zanu-Pf guarantees one the honour of being a national hero. This is highlighted further in *Chapters 8* and *9*. Broadly speaking, these discourses suggest that Zanu-Pf's constructions of the nation have largely been primordial, effectively catering for its racist discourse against white farmers and Western governments who are perceived to be against Mugabe's economic redistributive policies that have prejudiced their 'kith and kin' (Mbeki, 2013). Ordinary Zimbabweans without access to means of access and content production in public media like *The Herald*, have used *NewZimbabwe.com* to advance a mixture of constructionist, primordialist and ethnosymbolist narratives of the nation. Most importantly, these contending constructions of nationhood discussed in *Chapters 8* and *9* demonstrate the central role of technology vis-a-vis national identity. According to this study technological advancements that have accompanied globalisation have led to transnationalism and subsequent de-territorialisation of nation-states and this has not translated into the "demise of nationalism and the nation" (Sheyholislami, 2011: 1). David Morley (1992) and Martin Barbero (1988) buttress the argument that communication technologies are integral in promoting national consciousness to dispersed imagined community members. Morley asserts:

... the construction and emergence of national identities cannot properly be understood without reference to the role of communications technologies. These technologies allowed people 'a space of identification': not just an evocation of a common memory, but rather 'the experience of encounter and of solidarity'. Thus, the nation is to be understood not simply as an abstraction, but as a lived experience made possible by ... technologies. ... (Morley 1992: 256)

Of course the above was in reference to television technologies but this can be adapted to the internet as a new form of communicating in an increasingly globalising world. New media have also made it possible for Ndebeles especially to commemorate or remind the world and future generations of the government atrocities that took place soon after independence as outlined in *Chapter 9*. The importance and rise of new media in the Zimbabwean public sphere may partly be attributed to the diaspora community. The attachment this displaced community displays to the homeland is demonstrated through remittances and political activism like picketing for democracy in various embassies in South Africa and Europe.

10.2 Summary of arguments and main findings

Media and National Identity

This thesis has demonstrated the centrality of media in the negotiation of national identity. This demonstration foregrounds the public sphere theoretical framework as important in defining the role media have played in this complex process of discursively constructing the nation of Zimbabwe. The present study indicates that Zanu-Pf has effectively used *The Herald* as its mouth piece, ready to demonise, dehumanise and vilify voices of its opponents in support of the nationalist party's preferred notions of nationhood. Zanu-Pf has presented the ideologies and myths of the nation as cemented by blood and soil and has used "fiery exhortations" to make people "rally behind the flag" while demanding total devotion and self-sacrifice from the masses as the party did the same for them before independence (Tamir, 1999: 69). The definition of Zimbabweanness in *The Herald* not only defines who or what a Zimbabwean is but also sets the boundaries of thinking about and finding solutions to the country's identity problem. With this in mind, Last Moyo argues that *The Herald* plays the role of 'narrativised ideology' "through the formulaic articulation and naturalisation of the discourse of the nation so as to frame nationalism as the only answer to the Zimbabwean crisis" (2009: 62).

Mugabe's privileged social status as the country's president "is the one who primarily defines Zimbabwe's political reality, the nature of the threat to the nation, and the nature of the commitments that are needed to deal with the threat" (Moyo, 2009: 62). In the end his views, definition of the nation and Zimbabweanness are sacrosanct and unquestionable hence their privileged position and treatment by *The Herald*. This favourable coverage of Zanu-Pf positions is informed by relationship between *The Herald* and Zanu-Pf as explained in *Chapters 1, 2 and 7*. The blurred lines of distinction between the ruling party and the government of the day have led to Zanu-Pf deploying its preferred 'cadres' to run the media to serve its interests rather than a multiplicity of interests held by different Zimbabweans.

It comes as no surprise therefore, to note that the newspaper's journalists like Caesar Zvayi are embedded within the Zanu-Pf narratives and myths on nationhood and unquestioningly advance its ideologies. *The Herald* has seen Zanu-Pf and Mugabe as the sinned against and not sinners, as cult-like heroes demonised by the West for heroically standing up for the masses and as martyrs willing to die for Zimbabwe. Hence Moyo (2009), Allan (2004) and

Koch (1990) argue that news is one of the great myth-makers is society in whose construction journalists unconsciously participate. This defeats the role of journalism as described by John Turner who writes:

The journalist occupies a pivotal position between those who make and implement important decisions and those who are often forced to comply with such decisions. Any democratic system depends on people being well informed and educated about politics by a media which give a full and accurate account of news, encompassing a wide and varied range of political opinions. (Turner, 2006: 164)

Instead, patriotic journalism displayed by Zvayi and other journalists confirms a clear lack of commitment to truthful service to the public and this undermines basic journalism tenets like accountability to the public, independence from economic or political influence, and responsibility. This ultimately “undermines the credibility of (a journalist) as amoral agent” (Day 1991: 156).

There is the problem of public media journalists being ideologically embedded with Zanu-Pf (Moyo, 2002; Jambaya and Ghandi, 2002). Notice how Jambaya and Ghandi conclude their research on ZBC:

The broadcaster presented ZANU-PF and Robert Mugabe in particular, as the only answer to the ills inflicted on Blacks by Whites. Even the music that dominated ZBC in the period sampled sought to reinforce ZANU-PF’s standpoint that land rightfully belonged to Blacks and that Whites had robbed them of this primary resource.... In overall terms, ZBC programming and analysis of topical issues was a well-orchestrated ZANU-PF plan to legitimize its rule as well as to justify its policies such as the fast-track land reform programme, the racist attacks on Whites in general and the British in particular, and the vitriolic campaign against the MDC during and after the presidential election. What better way to do it than to call for the spirit of Black nationalism, Whites against Blacks? (2002: 18).

The Herald has also employed hate journalism to silence those who oppose Zanu-Pf. Through hate journalism, Zimbabweans have been divided into patriots and sell-outs, while the rest of the world has been characterized as supporters of Zanu-Pf’s revolution and imperialists. This ‘us and them’ pattern of framing in news reportage has, according to Madianou (2005: 89) led to the “simplification of a significantly complex situation.” In this context, private media have been accused of “pandering to the whims of the gay gangsters they are in fact saying ‘come and defile us and our Africa, come take our land and rape our women’” (Ranger, 2005: 13). The state of affairs outlined above has made the role of internet based media like *NewZimbabwe.com* critical as disenfranchised, marginalised and dispersed members of the community use this medium to amplify their voices and advance their political standpoints.

Brookes (1999) and Hall (1992) argue that identities are contingent in process and are potentially contradictory and not fixed and unified (Brookes, 1999: 248). New media have brought about the “politics of living identity through difference ... all of us are composed of multiple social identities, not of one ... we are all complexly constructed through different categories, of different antagonisms” (Hall, 1991: 57). These complexities are denied by the dominant narratives advanced by Zanu-Pf whose symbolic power is derived from identifying the nation as a single cohesive unit bereft of any contradistinctions. New media bring forth these denied variations of differences and make possible for a wide array of identities to be presented, debated and explored. It is possible that there might be some form of control imposed by the editorial team on what may or may not be debated. In addition, as a commercially driven website *NewZimbabwe.com* relies on advertising for funding and it is not easy to rule out advertiser and even political influence on its editorial choices and policies. Also, the website has shifted ideological positions over the years as from its formation till 2005 it was sympathetic to the united MDC and after 2005 it seemed biased towards the Welshman Ncube led MDC.⁴³ *NewZimbabwe.com* as an alternative public sphere presents issues in a hierarchical manner just like *The Herald*, where leading opinion makers or newsmakers write opinion or blog columns and ordinary people are left to comment. Thus the agenda is not set by the ordinary readers of *NewZimbabwe.com* but by these opinion makers. Nonetheless, the credibility of the website as a public space lies in that it acts as a confluence point for a tapestry of varying ideas representative of different political standpoints in the Zimbabwean society. Another dilemma highlighted in this thesis regarding new media is the issue of ethics. Journalism ethics are universal and apply to any journalist. Ethical norms “are safeguards designed to guide professional journalists in their duties of information gathering, story writing and dissemination” (Heinderyckx, 2009: 236). *NewZimbabwe.com* has had ethical lapses as mentioned in *Chapter 8* and this has posed credibility challenges not only for *NewZimbabwe.com* but for new media in general since it is difficult for the government to legally control these media.

Despite these challenges, new media have been integral in helping marginalised voices ‘claim’ their citizenship through giving them an avenue to amplify their voices in the rituals of debate. Tettey (2009: 158) points out that “the ability of the internet to allow for subjective

⁴³ As explained in *Chapter 9*, the original MDC separated into two MDCs, one led by Arthur Mutambara and later Welshman Ncube and the other led by Morgan Tsvangirai. It is widely believed that ethnicity contributed to the breakup of the original MDC.

narratives of history is significant enough; but its capacity to bring alive images that are ubiquitous, accessible to a myriad of people, (re)generate passions, and contest particular versions of history, makes it a very powerful tool for identity politics” The extant literature engaged with in *Chapter 3* demonstrates the growing realisation that new media are pivotal in the articulation of citizenship, nationhood and belonging by the previously marginalised members of society based in the homeland and diaspora. The analysis of diaspora debates especially in *Chapters 8* and *9* suggests that the imagined community (Anderson, 1983) is not only characterised by descriptions of common geographic descent or cultural similarities but also “bound together by mutual obligation” (Nordberg, 2006: 529) towards the homeland. Shared histories, according to Nordberg (2006), are also important as they help cement certain aspects of collective memories and belonging. There is no place where this is succinctly expressed in this thesis than *Chapters 7* and *9*. The two chapters demonstrate how Zanu-Pf, as the powerful player in the country’s politics has used liberation war and colonial memories to maintain its hegemony while the Ndebele have used postcolonial genocide as an anchor of their collective memory to resist Zanu-Pf’s constructions of nationhood.

Finally, Madianou (2002) suggests that theories that advocate powerful media or powerful audiences are not adequate “insofar as they tend to essentialise culture.... What is needed is a dialectical perspective on identity and the media” (2002: 256). This research has focused on the power of new media in enabling ordinary people to discursively construct their identities. The focus on ordinary people realises that the elite already have other fora where their opinions on the nation are privileged and unchallenged. This departs from the perspective that assumes strong media effects versus weak audiences where media shape identities. The argument in the present study is the one privileging powerful audiences resisting top-down constructions of identity. Therefore this research factors a dialectical perspective suggested by Madianou (2002) through engaging in a critical analysis of how people discursively construct their identities. In so doing identities are not approached as complete rigid wholes but as fluid and notions that can be described, re-described or constructed and re-constructed.

The Internet as a public sphere

The internet has ruptured the bounded extent to which the state has a hold or control on its local citizens within national borders. The thesis had demonstrated that the transnational communities who also participate in the online discourses are emotionally invested and believe that they have a part to play in Zimbabwean politics despite their being physically

dislocated from the homeland. Diasporic new media have also made it possible for individuals to construct their own identities in a communicative space outside government control and influence (Cunningham, 2001). However this is done under the fear of surveillance especially from the intelligence and security organs of the state hence the use of pseudonyms. For example *Pasinamugabe* (Down with Mugabe) expresses this fear when s/he suspects that “[M]ost of the posts here are put by people who are paid to do so (CIO) in their attempts to divert attention from real issues” (*Pasinamugabe*, 15.04.2011)⁴⁴. Similar fears are further expressed by another discussant *JJ* commenting under Misihairambwi-Mushonga’s article:

As usual, I expect there will be a herd of tribalists, ZANU loyalists and CIOs using this forum to attack and assassinate Priscilla's character, attack Ndebeles and attack the real MDC but completely ignoring the matters being debated, mark my words (*JJ*, 14.01.2011)

This has given people freedoms to utter sentiments that they would not normally express in a public space within Zimbabwe. From what the interactants say above, it is clear that diasporic media have supported homeland and diaspora communities in their quest to participate in homeland politics despite their (diaspora communities) non-physical presence and unbounded nature. Papacharissi (2008, 2004 and 2002) argues that the internet is burdened by many issues that make its characteristic as a public sphere problematic. She argues that the internet may only provide a public space and not a public sphere. Papacharissi (2008: 239) argues that “while political use of new media is vast, it does not fit the mold [sic] of the Habermasian public sphere”. Papacharissi declares that “we are left with a set of online digital media that do not revive the public sphere, but inject a healthy dose of plurality ...” (2008: 240).

The current research has demonstrated that the internet acts as a facilitating infrastructure for transnational interaction where citizenship is modified not only to be exclusively a legal subject bounded within the welfare state’s boundaries but to include communities of interest (especially those in the diaspora). Here the thesis has argued that transnational communities commune from the safety of hostlands and freely discuss pertinent issues that have to do with identity using the internet as a facilitating medium. The use of pseudonyms as intimated above has been critical for security purposes even though it creates problems of authenticity for researchers. The use of pseudonyms ensures the realisation of security and freedom perceived to define the internet as a medium used by transnational and local citizens of

⁴⁴Central Intelligence Organisation is the country’s feared intelligence arm believed to be working to serve the interests Zanu-Pf (and not state).

Zimbabwe. Various subaltern groups such as pressure groups mentioned in *Chapter 9*, dominant groups and others with different agenda have found a meeting point in *NewZimbabwe.com* and have also expressed their positions in relation to a Zimbabwean national identity in the same medium, sometimes accompanied by offline activities. Hence Squires (2002) has categorised public spheres such as *NewZimbabwe.com* which are not exclusive to homogenous views as counter public spaces since they are characterised by “increased public communication between the marginal and dominant public spheres” (2002: 460).

Besides, those voices that contest Zanu-Pf’s constructions of identity are not themselves monolithic. They are characterised by internal incoherencies which make new media more complex than public media. This characteristic of *NewZimbabwe.com* leads to a conclusion that is contrary to Dave Healy who argues that: “[T]he internet ... promotes uniformity more than diversity, homogeneity more than heterogeneity” (1996: 62). If this was so, then aggression, flaming and insults will be minimal. The internet has led to agonistic pluralism and continued contestations of identities. The assertion that transnationalism, globalisation and technological advancement will lead to the demise of the nation and the death of nationalism (Appadurai, 1996) is not a valid one and research from elsewhere suggests that some nations and nationalisms like the Afrikaner of South Africa and Rhodesia of Zimbabwe among others have found expression on cyberspace (Eriksen, 2006) or have been mediated through technology (Anderson, 1983) or education (Gellner, 1983). Cyberspace therefore becomes a convenient terrain where existent and nations in waiting struggle for recognition. Also, nation-building and long-distance nationalism is enabled and strengthened rather than weakened through new media technologies.

Commemorations and Identity

As stated in previous chapters, the post- 2000 Zimbabwean setting has made the issue of identity central in most political, economic and social debates. Politically, the formation of strong opposition movements has posed political challenges for Zanu-Pf’s hegemony and this has heightened its rhetoric on nationhood. Zanu-Pf’s rhetoric on nationhood which has included erecting an anti-imperialism and anti-Western interference barrier in Zimbabwe and indeed Africa’s domestic affairs, has found support both regionally and internationally. The discourse of nationhood is located in the international character of Mugabe’s attempt to

redress colonial injustices through land reform—a process that left many white people without land and most landless blacks became land owners (Scoones *et al.*, 2012).

Mugabe's critics have centred their critiques on his authoritarian rule, abuse of human and property rights and the rule of law. The discourse of nationhood and pan-Africanism has been employed by Zanu-Pf to defend Zimbabwe's redistributive policies and also expose the neo-colonial agenda of the West. Economic decline since the mid-1990s heightened public displeasure against Zanu-Pf leading to the formation of the MDC allegedly sponsored by White farmers and Western governments. To counter this, Zanu-Pf partly used the fast track land reform programme as an end to political survival and hegemony. This was accompanied by the use of patriotic history and journalism both of which presented Zanu-Pf as progressive and indispensable force to defend the country from re-colonisation by the West through the use of their stooge—the MDC (*The Herald*, 20.02.2004). The Western solution or retaliation against Mugabe's redistributive programmes has been summarised by Phimister and Raftopoulos as “clumsy ... intervention” (2004: 386). The patriotic history and journalism narrative was reinforced by race and declaration of war against real and/or imagined enemies by Mugabe. *The Herald* (09.04.2002) reported that the British had intentions “to recolonize Zimbabwe [and this was] not an April Fool's joke”. *Chapter 7* specifically engages with the Zanu-Pf nationalist construction of national identity while *Chapters 8* and *9* demonstrate how the dominant discourses are challenged by ordinary Zimbabweans online.

Zanu-Pf has not presented the land question in a monochrome manner. The narrative has largely hinged on presenting Zanu-Pf as a victim of the nation's enemies who want to reverse land reform and at the same time as the heroes of the Zimbabweans for giving them land. This can be seen in the way *The Herald* (20.02.2002) presented the diplomatic misunderstandings between Mugabe and Western leaders. The paper argued that “[T]he imperial intentions [of the British] began to manifest themselves when the Government decided to embark on a fast track land resettlement programme”. Of course the land reform programme was meant to normalise the abnormal land ownership patterns in Zimbabwe, but the rhetoric, chaos and violence that undergirded the programme led to complex debates on human rights, property rights, democracy, sovereignty and identity. In the process, Zanu-Pf embarked on another of its Chimurenga series, the *Third Chimurenga* also popularly known as *Hondo Yeminda/Impi Yomhlabathi* (War for Land), with a net effect of achieving the

elusive cohesive national identity predicated on the land question and shaky 'patriotic history' ideologies (Ranger, 2004).

Material culture, like land ownership cannot be overemphasised. The contextual emplacement of land underpinned by its history and need for it to be owned by the landless blacks has been pivotal in sustaining patriotic history. This patriotic version of Zimbabwean history has been simplistic, vituperative and rigid due to the fact that it is predicated upon the inflexible and limiting dualistic binary oppositions of 'us' and 'them' where 'we' are insiders and 'they' are outsiders; where 'we' are 'indigenous' and 'they' are aliens; where 'we' are patriots and 'they' are sell-outs and 'we' are black and Zimbabwean and 'they' are white and European, and therefore 'they' do not belong (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a; Raftopoulos, 2007; Ranger, 2004). In *Chapter 7*, Zimbabweanness as envisaged by Zanu-Pf has "crystallised around the ideology of Chimurenga (and Zanu-Pf has sought to) impose itself on the Zimbabwean political landscape through a combination of persuasion and violence" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011: 2). Zanu-Pf has constructed its preferred notions of Zimbabweanness in narrow, limited and exclusive terms. Despite their shortcomings these are given positive coverage by the public media. Zanu-Pf's version of nationhood as Benhabib (1996: 3) suggests, is also underpinned by "the atavistic belief that identities can be maintained and secured only by eliminating difference and otherness" and this elimination of difference continues to inform dominant political discourses on nationhood that are intolerant of opposition or alternatives.

Since the early 2000s, Zanu-Pf has consistently resurrected and used colonial memory to inform postcolonial identity narratives. In *NewZimbabwe.com* there has not been sustained and vigorous debate against land reform. This means that the role of land reform on national identity has not been debated extensively like other cases such as ethnicity, heroes, elections and others on the website. This might be explained by the fact that white Zimbabweans have alternative online digital public spheres where they converge and discuss issues (Fisher, 2010; King, 2003; Peel, 2009). *Chapter 8* demonstrates that the debates on land are advanced by opinion makers both pro and against land reform with discussants arguing that the land reform excluded the youth (who might be the majority of people in the diaspora with access to *NewZimbabwe.com*) or suggesting the chaotic manner in which the land reform was done and that it was a politically motivated exercise. However, private media covered the land reform and what one deduces from the framing is the chronic failure by private media to

objectively historicise the status quo and then the need for land reform in Zimbabwe. The land issue and Mugabe's need for political survival are merged, giving a convoluted analysis that seems to deny the land imbalances inherited at independence. Instead, most reportage emphasised on human rights.

Besides land reform, this thesis has used the salient theme of commemorations as an integral site for national identity contestations. Both Zanu-Pf and alternative voices have sufficiently articulated their preferred notions of identity based on commemorative events and days. Since 1980, Zanu-Pf has taken charge of all national holidays, commemorative festivities and national hero-burials and this has given the party different spaces to articulate its narratives on nationhood and to perform state power constantly throughout the year. On the other hand, *NewZimbabwe.com* debates on the same holidays, commemorations and government statements and actions have challenged state power and configurations of Zimbabweanness advanced by Zanu-Pf. The thesis reveals that rituals and spaces for their performance are contested sites that reinforce collective memories and formally or informally advance narratives that attempt at constructing particular versions of national identity that serve different purposes. Thus alternative versions of nationhood explored in *Chapter 8* suggest that monuments like the Heroes' Acre and holidays like Heroes' Day, Unity Day and Defence Forces Day "rather than being sites of consensus building ... [have] become contested terrains" which are not passive visual statements but active "elements in a public discourse definition" (Osborne, 2001: 17, 18). These contestations have led to definitions and redefinition of what it means to be a hero or Zimbabwean, for instance. Those national heroes who reject burial at the national shrine or people honouring 'any' place a 'hero' is buried as a monument, demonstrates these contests. Another problem that compounds the national identity narrative is that there is no clarity on the operational definition of a national hero in Zimbabwe. As shown in both *Chapters 7* and *8*, these conflictive views have created fertile ground for counter-hegemonic discourses on national identity to subsist.

Commemorative rituals have largely worked to advance and enrich Zanu-Pf's version of the nation which seeks to win the support of ordinary Zimbabweans, regional leaders or groups and developing world countries. Through these events Zanu-Pf has forcefully used colonial memory to construct patriots and sell-outs or enemies and friends in an attempt to gain loyalty especially from citizens. These rituals have served a critical function not only of obfuscating what is negative about Zanu-Pf but citizens have been linked to the state and

made players in the nation-building process through these well-orchestrated performances of state power and rituals. Ownership of land for instance, is testimony to Zanu-Pf's project of addressing colonial imbalances and delivering on the clarion call of the war of independence.

Ethnicity, Memory and Identity

This work has also touched on the stubborn question of the salience of ethnicity in Zimbabwean national identity debates. Ethnicity is read in this thesis as that which conceals deep-seated social, economic and political tension and not merely as a form of representation. In *Chapter 7*, evidence suggests that Zanu-Pf's silence on the issue has been politically expedient. Scholars have argued that silence is as much a part of discourse as any other text (van Dijk, 1991; Foucault, 1978). Foucault points out that silence is part of communicating when he writes:

Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies.... There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (1978: 27)

Therefore what is left unsaid by Zanu-Pf in relation to ethnicity reveals much more. *Chapter 7* and *9* particularly address this issue. Even though ethnicity in nationalist politics began to matter more after the 1963 break-up of Zanu along “inter-ethnic ‘nationalist’ coalitions” (Welsh, 1996: 478) and ideological lines, the postcolonial narrative as shaped by ethnicity has been different. What makes it different is that Gukurahundi, the Unity Accord and Unity Day holidays have been turned into sites that have enhanced ethnic particularism and national identity contestation rather than unification as intended by Zanu-Pf.

The thesis subjects the oft-ignored issue of Ndebele particularism to deeper scrutiny so as to unravel how perceived marginalisation, exploitation and other hidden ethnic dimensions impinge on cohesive national identity formation leading to subaltern groups advocating a separate state. *Chapter 7* unpacks how Zanu-Pf has been apprehensive about discussing ethnic issues especially where power, memory, Heroes' Acre and celebrating Unity Day are concerned. The Unity Accord, evidence suggests, was a form of silencing the past and compromising towards national cohesion rather than confronting demons of the past so as to find a lasting solution between the two major ethnic groups in the country. Gukurahundi still scars Zimbabwe and, as pointed out in *Chapter 9*, there would not be closure and forgiveness for and from some Ndebele sections of society unless a truth commission is set up. This

suggests that there can never be an all-inclusive Zimbabwean national identity forged. As indicated elsewhere in this thesis, people's voices are important and the suggestions of setting up a commission might not be urgent for politicians who seem to believe that the Unity Accord was enough to bury the ugly past. The aim in this thesis has not been to ascertain the veracity of the claims brought out by the discussants in their online debates but to demonstrate the limitless and liberating aspects of the internet in giving the marginalised a voice regarding expressing alternative notions of the nation, associational life, belonging and identity. At the same time, what is presented in the discussions cannot be simply dismissed as without merit. "The ability of the internet to allow for subjective narratives of history is significant enough" (Tettey, 2009: 158). This supports the centrality of the internet's ability to carry views that might not be unanimous or popular. What is important is that these and other images are brought into many people's notice and create a powerful forum for competing renditions of history and identity.

There is emerging debate in Zimbabwean scholarship on the relationship between history and memory (Lipton, 2009; Maclean, 200; Phimister and Raftopoulos, 2004). This thesis by way of exploring some salient issues on history, memory and identity contributes to this debate. *Chapters 7 and 9* engage with the issue variously and this illustrates the importance of memory to ethnic bonding and particularism for Zanu-Pf and those opposed to it. Memory is either used in active remembrance or in purposeful forgetting. Zanu-Pf narratives on the nation use memory to actively remember how bad the colonial system was. This utilisation of memory in the Zimbabwean context exhibits one of the most complex relationships of memory and national identity. Zanu-Pf has used colonial memory to cleanse the country and reject any colonial cultural legacies and some international symbols or tenets like human rights in preference of its own in the construction of the nation. On the contrary, in the Gukurahundi memorials dead body politics plays an important role in resistance to Zanu-Pf's imagined community. Here, images, mass graves and remains of the dead are used as important statements, monuments and political symbols in a context where survivors want redress and point to the failure of Zanu-Pf to address the past as a reference of marginalisation from the nation based on their ethnicity. The expression of identity through memorialisation of Gukurahundi calls attention to the psycho-social state of those who lost loved ones; they are in perpetual mourning as they are haunted by pain of failure to bury and say goodbye to their deceased relatives or at least know where their loved ones were buried. Reading debates in *NewZimbabwe.com* reveals that most wounds have not healed despite

suggestions by Vambe (2012) and John Nkomo who argue that both the victims and perpetrators have moved on with their lives. “The fact that many still suffer from this massacre today, makes the task of mourning unfinished. This leads on to the trauma getting passed on to the next generations. The children of the victims identify with them and their parents remind them of this trauma everyday” (Selerud, 2009: 18). Online debates such as those in *NewZimbabwe.com* and the Ndebele orientated ‘enclave public sphere’ website *inkundla.net* serve as digital archives to be accessed and inform future generations’ memory.

Gukurahundi and ethnicity have tended to be understood as informing lack of development in Matabeleland and Midlands regions. This is one of the issues that have increased ethnic salience in Matabeleland. Sithole (1985) suggests that “if the rate of economic growth declines, ethnic identity will become more salient” (1985: 185) as shown in *Chapter 9*. As evidenced in *Chapter 9* also, most debates on ethnicity seem to qualify the argument that “the violence suffered by the people of Matabeleland forged an inseparable alliance between Ndebele identity and politics. ‘Being Ndebele’ became both a “political and linguistic expression” (Msindo, 2012: 228). However, Matabele secessionists’ arguments use history to suggest that being Ndebele is neither a political nor linguistic expression but one of nationhood since there has been an enduring Ndebele nation before colonialism. Unlike in *Chapter 7*, where nationalism is clearly primordial, national identity narratives in *Chapters 8* and *9* suggest a largely constructionist perspective to the construction of nationhood peppered with ethnosymbolist and primordial views. The latter comes out strongly when the Ndebele/Shona dichotomy is addressed with Shonas claiming primordialism in Zimbabwe and Ndebele clamouring for their own separate state to which they argue they are primordial. The blanket idea that new media and the alternative “spheres” that come with it are necessary post-nationalist, transcendent of ethnic or national identities is not true in this instance. Indeed the paradox that comes out in Ogola’s (2011: 365) conclusion in the research on identity in Kenya is that the “[I]nternet as a transnational social space tends to both transcend but also reinforce parochial identities”. From the online debates one may deduce that there is fragmentation of national identity and magnification of ethnic identities through the production and preservation of ethnic memories that seek to challenge those of the nation-state. Ultimately, through these interactive ‘challenges’ and alternative constructions of identity, the nationalists’ aspirations of a cohesive Zimbabwean national identity has failed to be dominant.

The white Zimbabwean community is largely silent on some of these debates especially the land question which affects most of them. This is precisely because, besides having their own websites and facebook pages, the white community has always lived as an exclusive nation within Zimbabwe since independence. The refusal by the new dispensation to recognise as heroes those who were deemed by Rhodesians as heroes might have fuelled the feelings of alienation. This created friction moreso when the ruling regime expected the white community to participate in national transcript (through being part of commemorative events) as a sign of transformation and warming up into a new history. Whites continued to congregate at exclusive country clubs during the weekends and participated in mainly white sports like cricket, hockey, rugby and tennis and some of them saw themselves as “endangered species” (Fisher, 2010: 177). Again, while the land issue brought about Zanu-Pf’s international condemnation and contributed to the country’s political and economic decline, mostly black interactants did not strongly speak against the land reform probably because they realised that it was addressing some historic injustices. The predicament of the white community therefore did not become a pre-occupation of most debates in *NewZimbabwe.com*.

Sexuality

Gender and sexuality have also enlightened the debates on national identity. Contrary to Dunton and Palmberg’s (1996) assertion that most Zimbabweans are much more tolerant of homosexuality than Zanu-Pf, results from this research suggests otherwise. This theme is interesting for this research because it is where Zanu-Pf and ordinary people’s perceptions of Zimbabweanness converge. However, both parties have different reasons for protesting against homosexuality in the new constitution. Various narratives and myths are used to justify the treatment of those in same-sex romantic relationships as outsiders to the nation. Just like in other national identity narratives, aspects such as Africanness or Zimbabweanness are not clearly defined and certain cultural practices are not historically verified too. For instance one argument by both Zanu-Pf in *Chapter 7* and ordinary people’s debates in *NewZimbabwe.com* identifies homosexuality as unAfrican. The thesis reveals that this is against historical evidence that suggests otherwise. The convergence of views between Zanu-Pf and ordinary people does not translate to the latter supporting the former’s policies. Rather, the common ground here is the objectification of the continuous, static, bounded and distinguishable ‘African’ and ‘Zimbabwean’ cultures (Engelke, 1999). Homosexuality is seen as both a Western and demonic imposition on the Zimbabwean society and Mugabe has stood

as a custodian, defender and champion of what is African against all that is Western—homosexuality included. The debates suggest that these cultures are superior to human rights and when human rights practices conflict with culture then the latter is upheld. The Women's League of Zimbabwe's statement in support of Mugabe's stance against homosexuality is revealing. They said:

We are Zimbabweans and we have a culture for Zimbabweans to preserve. As mothers and custodians of our heritage, we stand solidly behind our president and leader on his unflinching stand against homosexuality. Human rights should not be allowed to dehumanise us (cited in Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 12)

Mugabe has become a spokesman for anything that is African and Zimbabwean and has challenged the Western views and cultural practices in a convincing manner that has won him many regional and international supporters. In addition, sex is a very private issue in Zimbabwean and indeed African societies and speaking about homosexuality in these societies does not only infer a sexual identity but as Judith Butler (1997) argues, it has a power of its own. She writes "the words 'I am a homosexual' do not merely describe; they are figured as performing what they describe, not only in the sense that they constitute the speaker as a homosexual, but that they constitute the speech as homosexual conduct" (1997: 107). Using this argument or line of thinking has made it possible for homosexuality to be proscribed as morally and culturally bankrupt. Thus the cultural argument might form a genuine argument for the confluence of Zanu-Pf and ordinary people's views on homosexuality.

Christianity is used by both Zanu-Pf and ordinary people as an argument against homosexuality. The Bible makes it clear that homosexuality is ungodly and this is used by Zanu-Pf and some certain sections of the Zimbabwean society to frame discourses on national belonging. Mugabe further suggests that animals which are less intelligent than humans, know that they should engage in sexual relations with those of the opposite sex and therefore for humans to do otherwise is worse than pigs and dogs and such people cannot be part of the Zimbabwean community. There is also a politically hegemonic strand to this narrative of nationhood. Zanu-Pf has crafted what can be called a "fixed a national essence" (Handler, 1988) "in which there is no room for Zimbabwean homosexuality" (Engelke, 1999: 299). Defending and practising homosexuality is seen as a challenge to Zanu-Pf and an unpatriotic act. This convergence of ideas does not suggest that *NewZimbabwe.com* readers

support other Zanu-Pf perceptions on the nation. In the same vein, it has to be stated that despite the perception that new media discussants are anti-Zanu-Pf, there are some who support Zanu-Pf genuinely and some who do so because they benefit from the current political and economic chaos presided over by Zanu-Pf. The above demonstrates that in situations of crisis just like the one Zimbabwe finds itself in members of the public and the political elite become “unambiguously nationalistic” (Handler, 1988:24).

10.3 Contributions, relevance of the study and the way forward

This research makes a contribution to literature on the role of media in the discursive construction of national identity from below. The unique entry point of this research is the positioning of new media, diaspora and homeland communities in this complex ritual of discursively constructing and contesting different notions of identity. Despite the digital divide, this study has demonstrated that new media are central in the construction of identity. This obtains in the backdrop of an increasingly transnational Zimbabwean community which has seen the boundedness and territorial integrity of Zimbabwe compromised. Ultimately, this has led to questioning whether under such circumstances there has been a functioning and unifying national identity. The diaspora community’s interconnectedness and transnational behaviours have contributed to the transformation of Zimbabwean public sphere and nationalism.

Further, this research’s treatment of reader comments as central in national identity construction breaks new ground in Zimbabwean and global scholarship where in some cases, historically, elite debates have been used as sites of national identity construction. This has created a lacuna as most researches are preoccupied with elitist debates. This thesis is timely as it covers this lacuna. The research has managed to link the public sphere and national identity theories to make a contribution to major debates on national identity. In addition, while the objective was to study how national identities are constructed from below, the research has managed to create a solid base for the alternative versions of nationhood by highlighting the dominant ones as shown in *Chapter 7*. There has rarely been any scholarship in Zimbabwe that has built arguments as done in this regard. Be that as it may, research by Pasura (2008) and Peel (2009) which study the Zimbabwean diaspora in the UK have been central in shaping this study. Pasura’s (2008) is a revealing research which focuses mainly on the experiential and lived realities of the Zimbabwean diaspora in the UK while Peel (2009) labours on Zimbabwean identities looking at professionals, whites, coloureds and the

Ndebeles domiciled in the UK. The current study tries to stretch participation in identity contestation and construction of the diaspora across borders and continents as it is not located in a particular country or continent but looks at Zimbabweans' participation in critical debates from different global locations including the homeland, a hitherto ignored section of the population.

The research has confronted a hitherto itchy (Mhlanga, 2012) subject of ethnicity and identity. Where the political elite shy away from the debate arguing that it is divisive and a project sponsored by those who want to destabilise Zimbabwe, the research demonstrates that ordinary people have engaged each other on the subject in search of a better Zimbabwe. Whiteness in the context of Zanu-Pf narrative means 'enemy' of the state and the people of Zimbabwe. Otherwise Fisher (2010), Peel (2009) and King (2003) do splendid work in unravelling issues of national identity in relation to white Zimbabweans demonstrating how they have failed to be part of the nation since 1980 until after the land reform. In the current study, there is not much representation of white voices in *NewZimbabwe.com* and *The Herald* as these have their own websites where they discuss and articulate their identities (King, 2003; Peel, 2009).

The thesis has been innovative in locating the alternative narratives of national identity by basing these within the dominant discourses and using different themes for a holistic understanding of the complex ritual of nation formation. The research has used other sites of mediating identity but what has been maintained as central here are media in various forms; traditional media in the form of newspaper and new media in the form of websites. This has not only strengthened the argument that media remain integral in national identity construction but that developments in technology that influence media bring about new ways of discussing identities. This thesis has shown that new media are important in memorialisation—memories can now be archived and passed on to next generations through new media for different effects like enhancing certain forms of identity particularism as is the case in the discussion of Ndebele nationalism and Gukurahundi in *Chapters 7 and 9*.

The use of digital ethnography in the thesis has helped demonstrate that "media studies and audience studies in particular can benefit by opening up to other disciplines" (Madianou, 2002: 264). For instance, a largely anthropological research method (digital ethnography) is used here as an appropriate method of investigating the role of media in mediating and as a

site for the discursive construction of identity. Madianou then suggests that this opens up the possibility of a “new sub-field of media anthropology” (2002: 264).

The study also shows that Zanu-Pf’s attempt at minimising influences of globalisation through the creation of national youth training centres and use or teaching of patriotic history and journalism at colleges has not withstood the influences of technology and satellite television. Thus the study reveals how communities from and under dictatorial rulership use alternative communicative spaces for counter-hegemonic purposes. Interestingly, for the purposes of rigorous debates and democracy denied in the homeland, these counter-hegemonic sites permit the infiltration of dominant and hegemonic ideologies like those of Zanu-Pf ideologies in a way that seeks to promote “a different culture where patriots, sell outs, stooges whatever you call them find space to discover the best in both themselves and in others without feeling the need to destroy each other” (Mathuthu, Interview 12.19.2012).

Weaknesses or gaps in this study may be used as a starting point for other researches. The study has shown how Zimbabweans debate national identity issues from the homeland and diaspora using a multiplicity of themes. Based on the Google Analytics graph in *Chapter 1* it is clear that the highest number of the website’s readers is based outside Zimbabwe. Some important themes like the 2008 elections, gender and *Operation Murambatsvina/Operation Drive Out Rubbish*⁴⁵ beckon some serious studies in relation to Zimbabwe’s national identity project. The research omitted these for lack of space but had they been included this study could have revealed many different dimensions on nationhood. It seems not easy to point out males from females in the debates. But the use of names and indigenous Zimbabwean languages like Ndebele, Shona, Manyika and Kalanga may reveal a lot about Zimbabwean identities unlike what has been done in this thesis where the use of vernacular has not been problematised. Such a study may help illuminate some aspects on national identity construction.

Online interactions cannot be easily verified and trusted especially where pseudonyms are used and when website administrators censor some material. While this might be for public good or as *NewZimbabwe.com* editor says “[W]e retain the characteristic of a family paper and so we make an effort to cover all issues in line with the universal family values ... seek to

⁴⁵ This was the uprooting of about 700 000 families in the winter of 2005 in what the government said was a slum clean-up of the cities. However, as highlighted in Chapter 9, this is believed to have been part of Zanu-Pf’s plan to disenfranchise suspected MDC supporters who were believed to be living in towns and cities.

share constructive views ... make an effort to block any insulting messages and when they filter through we delete them” (Mathuthu, Interview 12.19.2012), there is need for more research in the ethics, control and gatekeeping in new media based on the argument that new media are democratic and allow for conflicting opinions to be expressed. It has been argued in this thesis that in as much as the use of pseudonyms protects the discussants it remains difficult to gauge the veracity of their contributions. This brings in another dimension to reader participation in new media in Zimbabwe. Newspapers like *The Herald* have, in their online versions, made it possible for readers to comment. Interestingly, some comments are against the status quo. One wonders whether there is any form of gatekeeping or not. Naturally, critics would expect *The Herald* to delete those sentiments critical to the state. A separate research in this regard is important. In addition, there is need to study the political economy of especially diaspora based Zimbabwean online media as this informs their stance on issues like national identity and politics and *NewZimbabwe.com* cannot be taken as a wholly independent medium without political influences. The political and economic influences and environment of the homeland have affected the publication’s stances that have shifted over the years.

In conclusion, this thesis has demonstrated that de-territorialisation, globalisation and transnationalisation do not negatively impact on nationalism. The advent of the internet has not threatened nationalisms but has seen strengthened nationalism and debates thereof while it has also seen some nations like the Afrikaner and Rhodesian ones whose physical spaces no longer exist, finding space to express themselves in cyberspace. The research has also revealed that new media are integral as sites for the discursive construction of alternative versions of national identity in societies where local public spheres are dominated by the political elites. The research has made use of various themes both from *NewZimbabwe.com* and *The Herald* to present a balanced view of alternative and dominant discourses on the nation so as to locate an entry point for arguing for the relevance of new media in the discussions of identity. Themes that have been tackled, even though not exhaustive, reveal that national identity is a complex and contested phenomenon especially at critical moments of the nation. These critical moments of the nation have seen Zanu-Pf’s hegemony challenged by actors from both within and without Zimbabwe. The main issues of contention have mainly been around Zanu-Pf’s authoritarianism, human, property rights abuses, political clientelism and land reform. It seems the latter attracted a lot of interest and reaction especially from some Western countries who began labelling Mugabe a dictator, tyrant and

murderer (Powell, 2003) leading to sanctions being imposed on Zimbabwe by Western countries. In response, Zanu-Pf completed its land reform programme and engaged in a diplomatic offensive where the narratives of race and anti-imperialism defined the relationships between the West and Zimbabwe. Racial identity, demonization of the opposition and the West ultimately became connected to other discourses of national identity appropriated by Zanu-Pf to defend its positions on many aspects of Zimbabwean nationhood that were under attack from the enemies within and without—real or imagined.

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