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Clinging to Power

The Initiation, Reproduction and Maintenance of
Neopatrimonial Rule in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

As is common in African states, the former liberation movement, ZANU (PF) still retains power in Zimbabwe. This essay analyses how Robert Mugabe and his party has managed to remain in power despite an economic and political crisis. Central to the study is the concept of neopatrimonialism which is argued to have been institutionalised in Zimbabwe much due to the nature of the liberation struggle, here discussed as a critical juncture. Using an historical institutionalist understanding of path dependency, this study traces the origins and subsequent reproduction of neopatrimonialism in Zimbabwe. Such an institutional system has been maintained and reproduced since independence using different mechanisms of institutional reproduction. Initially the continuation of the system can be explained by general theories regarding power and legitimacy. However, as events unfold in Zimbabwe, and forces threaten the existence and further practice of neopatrimonialism, the mechanisms that account for its reproduction have been altered, changed and reinforced by expanding neopatrimonialism itself and finding new ways in which to legitimise it.

Key words: Zimbabwe, Neopatrimonialism, Path dependency, power, legitimacy

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1 Introduction

African states have a similar history of struggle consisting of colonialism, liberation, economic development and democratisation. Today many scholars and academics argue that Africa's problems are primarily a problem of governance. Democracy and human rights are still a utopia for the citizens of many African states, and the continent has had its fair share of despots and dictators. Idi Amin, Mobutu, and Kenyatta are infamous for their violent and undemocratic governance. In Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe has risen to a level comparable to these ill-famed leaders. Twenty eight years of power, patronage and misuse of state resources has kept Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) on the political throne. Now in the midst of unprecedented economic decline, hunger, and mounting political opposition, the ruling party retains its grip on power. Like many other African states, the initial liberators have become the country's new oppressors.

1.1 Purpose of Investigation

As is common in Africa, the liberation movement still retains power in Zimbabwe. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how ZANU (PF) has managed to stay in power despite the extent of the Zimbabwean economic and political crisis in the 21st century. Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Wall have argued that "the distinctive institutional hallmark of African regimes is neopatrimonialism"¹. By exploring the degree to which neopatrimonialism has been institutionalised in Zimbabwe, and how such a system is initiated, maintained, and reproduced it is my hope to understand how regimes like the one in Zimbabwe continue to persevere despite tremendous internal and external opposition. The Zimbabwean case is far from unique in Africa, and any insights made by exploring the country specifically could open up for possibilities of understanding why governance in Africa remains such a problematic issue. It is therefore my intention to answer the following questions:

- *In what way does Zimbabwe resemble a neopatrimonial regime?*

¹ Bratton, Michael & van de Walle, Nicolas "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa" p. 458

- *How can we, from an historical institutionalist and path dependent perspective, understand the establishment and reproduction of neopatrimonialism in Zimbabwe?*
- *Specifically, what are the mechanisms that allow for the continuation and institutional reproduction of Zimbabwean neopatrimonialism?*

1.2 Theoretical Framework

1.2.1 Institutionalism

Once practically equated with political science, Institutionalism was then left behind by the behavioural revolution. Institutionalism's focus on formal structures such as constitutions, legal systems and government structures was replaced by the behaviouralists search to explain why and how individuals acted the way they did. The idea that institutions were no more than the aggregation of individual preferences was preached by behaviouralists and rational choice advocates, thus shifting the disciplines focus away from the formal arrangements for representation, decision making and policy implementation².

However, institutionalism has reemerged as a theoretical contender, albeit in a slightly different form. "New institutionalism" has distanced itself from the notion that political institutions ought to be equated with political organizations. Instead institutions are more broadly discussed and understood to involve "recurring patterns of behaviour"³. In addition, new institutionalists also concern themselves not only with the impact that institutions have on individuals, but rather the interaction between institutions and individuals⁴.

1.2.2 Historical Institutionalism

This thesis will primarily use a historical institutional approach. Historical institutionalists concern themselves with how institutions structure choices, and more precisely understand institutions as historical products "which exist anterior and *a priori* to any agents who happens to operate within them at a given moment in time"⁵. Therefore an emphasis is laid on political development as a process and the way "institutions emerge from particular historical conflicts and

² Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry *Theory and Methods in Political Science* p. 90-91

³ Ibid p. 91

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry *Theory and Methods in Political Science* p. 300

constellations”⁶. Previous walls between the historical, behaviouralists and sociological perspectives on institutionalism have been eroded by liberal borrowing and border crossers, and historical institutionalism has for example opened up to the rational choice perception that individuals in fact do have an important role in shaping and sustaining institutions. Similarly, sociological institutionalists have influenced historical institutionalists in embracing a more expansive understanding of institutions as partly socially constructed in the forms of norms and political culture⁷, an understanding that will be used in this thesis.

There are however still substantial differences between the three approaches and in the end historical institutionalists ”stresses that many of the contemporary implications of temporal processes are embedded in institutions- whether these be formal rules, policy structures, or norms”⁸. Historical institutionalists therefore distinguish themselves from the other institutional approaches by emphasizing historical process and conceptionalising institutions as the product of concrete temporal processes. The argument is thus that institutions emerge from and are sustained by features of the broader political and social context, meaning that institutional arrangements cannot be understood or analyzed in isolation from the political, historical, and social setting in which they are in fact embedded⁹.

1.2.3 Path Dependency

Path dependency is a concept that can denote several ideas and does as of yet not have a clear and widely accepted definition. Some authors use the path dependency concept to simply imply “that history matters”, a claim which is as trivially true as saying that everything has causes. However, within historical institutionalism the concept of path dependence has been adapted to analyze social and political phenomena. Instead then of reasserting that ”history matters”, historical institutionalists use the concept of path dependence to analyze the creation, development, and endurance of political, social, and cultural institutions¹⁰. In short path dependence in historical institutionalism explains why particular historical junctures have lasting consequences¹¹.

Kathleen Thelen summarizes the essence of the historical institutionalists approach to path dependency by arguing that political development involves “critical junctures and developmental pathways”¹². This implies two related but analytically distinct claims, firstly that there are certain critical founding moments

⁶ Thelen, Kathleen ”Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics” p. 382

⁷ Ibid p. 386

⁸ Ibid p. 382

⁹ Ibid p. 384

¹⁰ Thelen, Kathleen ”Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics” p. 384, Mahoney, James ”Path Dependence in Historical Sociology” p.507, Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry *Theory and Methods in Political Science* p. 300

¹¹ Pierson, Paul ”Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics” p. 263

¹² Thelen, Kathleen ”Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics” p. 387

of institutional formation, and secondly that institutions continue to evolve in tandem with changing political environments at the hands of political agents but in ways that are constrained by past trajectories¹³. *Critical junctures* denote historical events that trigger a self-perpetuating process, in other words “critical junctures generate persistent paths of political development”¹⁴. The event needs to be analyzed in context of the timing and interaction of ongoing political and social processes. What makes the particular juncture critical is that it demarks the starting point for a process of positive feedback¹⁵.

Although closely related, the two aspects of what constitutes that which is path dependent need to be analyzed each on its own. Pierson and Thelen argue that once a critical juncture has been reached, initial movements in a certain direction encourage further movement along the same path. They claim that “path dependent patterns are characterized by self-reinforcing positive feedback”¹⁶. The idea and theory of *self-reinforcing sequences* helps us understand why a specific institutional pattern or system is reproduced, sustained, and reinforced over time¹⁷.

Where the theoretical work concerning path dependency still needs development is in regard to the “mechanisms of reproduction”. In other words, the mechanisms through which previous patterns are reproduced and sustained. Thelen argues, that in order to understand institutional evolution and the possibilities for change, we need to more precisely specify the reproduction and feedback mechanisms on which particular institutions rest. It is therefore important to explore key issues of “who, exactly, is invested in particular institutions and what sustains these institutions dynamically over time”¹⁸. This allows for an approach which includes both actors and structures. While Thelen and Pierson advocate further theoretical development regarding the definition and function of the mechanisms of reproduction, historical sociologist James Mahoney has attempted to categorize four possible forms of mechanisms of reproduction: Utilitarian, Functional, Power, and Legitimation. For the purpose of this thesis only the two latter will be discussed as I believe these are the most useful in explaining the reproduction of the Zimbabwean system of Neopatrimonialism. The *Power explanation* argues that institutions are reproduced because they are supported by an elite group of actors. And the *Legitimation explanation* proposes that institutions are reproduced because actors believe it is morally just or appropriate¹⁹. However, even though Mahoney’s more general theories regarding reproductive mechanisms carry explanatory power, I wish to take an analysis one step further and explore mechanisms arguably specific to the Zimbabwean case

¹³ Thelen, Kathleen “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics” p. 387

¹⁴ Pierson, Paul “Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes” p.75

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid, Thelen, Kathleen “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics” p. 392

¹⁷ Mahoney, James “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology” p. 515

¹⁸ Thelen, Kathleen “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics” p. 400

¹⁹ Mahoney, James “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology” p. 517

that work individually as well as in tandem to enforce and maintain institutional reproduction.

1.2.4 Neopatrimonialism

There are several theories pertaining to explain why Africa's development lags behind that of other regions, and why African states continue to show overwhelming characteristics of weakness and collapse. Social capital theories claim that the reason for Africa's poor governance and weak state capacity is a result of its low level of civic culture and social capital. Other theories argue that state capacity in Africa is inherently poor due to weak institutions and ethnic diversity which leads to social polarization and sub optimal leaders who represent ethnic groups rather than the nation as a whole²⁰. Such theories however, do not account for the variation of political outcomes across the African continent. Instead I would like to focus on the theory of neopatrimonialism.

Max Weber is generally accredited for coining the term Patrimonialism which he used to describe a system of rule based on administrative and military personnel who were responsible to only the ruler²¹. Neopatrimonialism is derived from Max Weber's Patrimonialism, and as such also denotes its initial meaning. However, while Weber discussed patrimonial rule within the confines of small scale communities, neopatrimonialism has been used to discuss the exercise of power in the context of a modern state. Indeed, several scholars today refer to neopatrimonialism as the "distinctive institutional hallmark of African regimes"²². Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle distinguish three key characteristics of neopatrimonialism. These three characteristics are: "the systematic concentration of political power", "the award of personal favours", and "the use of state resources for political legitimisation"²³. Hence, Neopatrimonialism "as a political system is based on personalised rule and organised through clientistic networks of patronage, personal loyalty and coercion"²⁴. Instead therefore of arguing that African states lack institutions, or that all African states are plagued by ethnic divisions, Bratton and De Walle together with several prominent academics and scholars attempt to explain why African systems of governance look the way they do. States that are categorized as neopatrimonial do not necessarily have to be governed in identical ways. Differences exist between states which account for the variations in neopatrimonial rule across the continent. According to Bratton and

²⁰ Englebert, Pierre "Pre-Colonial Institutions, Post-Colonial States, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa" p. 9

²¹ Swedberg, Richard *The Max Weber Dictionary* p. 195

²² Bratton, Michael & De Walle, Nicolas "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa" p. 458, Ntungwe Ndue, Paul "Restoring Legitimacy to Public authority in Twentieth-Century Africa" p. 5

²³ Bratton, Michael; Van De Walle, Nicolas *Democratic Experiments in Africa* p.63-68

²⁴ Lindberg, Staffan "Building on Neopatrimonialism and International Dependency" p.3

van de Walle these differences are due in part to the “proclivities of individual leaders but, more importantly, to institutional structures that have evolved historically in response to political crisis and needs”²⁵. Further more, they argue that regime variation can also be traced to the political dynamics of the post independence years where different leaders consolidated power in different ways and to various degrees²⁶.

1.3 Methodology

This thesis will use a single country study (Zimbabwe) to examine the different levels and processes involved in a path dependent approach. As with any other methodological approach, the single case study has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. Single country case studies are important in the sense that they provide contextual description, develop new classifications, can help generate hypotheses, confirm theories, as well as account for the presence of “deviant countries”²⁷. However, the main criticism of single country case studies is that they can not claim to make inferences as secure as those made from the comparison of several or many countries²⁸. In other words it is argued that by focusing on in depth analysis of single cases, it is impossible to make generalizations and develop theories that can account for recurring political phenomena. However, it is the combination of several single case studies that allows for an understanding of similarities and differences which in turn can generate quantitative research on which generalizations can be made²⁹.

Considering the scope and extent of my investigation and the space at my disposal, a study which focuses on the close examination of temporal sequences and processes as they unfold in several countries would have been impossible. Instead I will therefore use Zimbabwe as my single case study in order to test the idea of path dependency and how neopatrimonial governance can be explained and sustained as a result of this approach. The importance of national liberation and especially the struggle prior to it, as a starting point for institutional path dependency can then perhaps be reapplied to several other countries and enable a more general understanding of how neopatrimonial governance is initiated and reproduced.

²⁵ Bratton, Michael & De Walle, Nicolas ”Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa” p. 468

²⁶ Landman, Todd *Issues and Methods in comparative Politics* p. 34

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Marsh, David & Stoker, Gerry *Theory and Methods in Political Science* p. 207

²⁹ Ibid

1.4 Material and Disposition

The current political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe has made it a highly debated topic. Media coverage of the country is often highly politicised and information tends to be slanted either in favour of the regime or in opposition of it. Considering the focus of this study is partly historical, I have chosen to use secondary material published as close in time as possible to the events being discussed. I have done this in order to avoid falling into the traps that angled and “constructed” historical publications can create. Propaganda in Zimbabwe has focused a great deal on rewriting or overemphasising historical events, both in favour and disfavour of the current regime. The empirical material used is secondary material published in scientific and academic journals. I have balanced the material in the sense that I have been careful to include publications by both Western as well as Zimbabwean scholar. At the same time, I have to the best of my ability distinguished between sources that can be assumed reliable by cross referencing particularly important aspects with other sources. Throughout this investigation I have focused on maintaining a critical and independent approach towards my empirical material.

In addition to the empirical material on Zimbabwe, this thesis will also use theoretical literature focusing on historical institutionalism, path dependency and neopatrimonialism. As for the theoretical framework provided by historical institutionalism, I have primarily focused on the application of the theory as presented by Kathleen Thelen and Paul Pierson. From historical sociology I have also found it useful to take part of Paul Mahoney’s ideas regarding reproductive mechanisms. These are three acknowledged scholars and are generally regarded as authorities within their fields of study. Finally I would also like to mention Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Wall, whose ground breaking work and theories regarding neopatrimonialism have been invaluable and of critical importance for writing this thesis.

Considering the topic of investigation and its historical nature, this thesis will have a straight forward disposition. I will begin by discussing my theoretical venture points and then continue by applying these on Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean characteristics of neopatrimonialism will be analysed, before attempting to explain and detect the possible reproductive mechanisms that sustain and reinforce neopatrimonialism as an institutional system in Zimbabwe.

2 The Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle as a Critical Juncture

For the purpose of this path dependent study of Zimbabwe, I argue that the liberation struggle is the critical juncture which has sent the country down a path which has then been reproduced, thus creating a path dependent trajectory. The reasons for why I choose the liberation struggle as my starting point, and argue that it is a critical juncture, are twofold.

Firstly, the struggle for liberation from white minority rule constitutes the first and by far most extensive attempt to create and organize a unitary movement of Africans in Zimbabwe since the introduction of colonialism some 130 years earlier. During colonialism, the white supremacist state machinery was an effective tool in exploiting all institutions to maintain their economic and political domination³⁰. In fact, any pre colonial society or state culture was so transformed by colonialism itself that it is hard to attribute it the explanatory power some scholars choose to do³¹. Colonial authorities made sure to establish institutions and mechanisms to erase the traces of pre colonial organization of society, and instead impose a constructed “African culture” which was adopted by tribal elders and village chiefs. Over the years, the colonially constructed version of Zimbabwean cultural history manifested itself as true³². Instead the rise of the liberation movements in Zimbabwe were more influenced by socialist theories advocated by Lenin, Mao, and several prominent African leaders such as Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, and Samora Machel³³. Indeed, it can be argued that the two prominent liberation movements in Zimbabwe ZANU (Zimbabwean African Nation Union) and ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union) were more influenced by the colonial regime than pre colonial Zimbabwean state culture. The Rhodesian regime educated an elite of Africans to be the administrators of colonial power, thus attempting to create civil servants and administrators in line with their own aspirations³⁴. This educated elite would later form the backbone of the command structure of the liberation effort.

³⁰ Foley, Griff “Progressive but not socialist: Political education in the Zimbabwe liberation war” p.5

³¹ see for instance Pierre Englebort in Englebort, Pierre “Pre-Colonial Institutions, Post-Colonial States, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa” p. 9

³² McFadden, Patricia “Cultural practice as gendered exclusion” p.66

³³ Foley, Griff “Progressive but not socialist: Political education in the Zimbabwe liberation war” p.5

³⁴ Moore, David B. “The Ideological Formation of the Zimbabwean Ruling Class” p. 479

Secondly, the liberation struggle gave birth to the future ruling party and individual leaders of Zimbabwe. When Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front gained power in 1962 it crushed all open African political origination and declared its independence from Britain. The Africans responded by launching a guerrilla war lead by two liberation movements ZANU and ZAPU. However, the liberation movements could not focus on the task of independence alone. From the very beginning, the colonial resistance movements were also riddled with internal conflict and personal disputes³⁵. Such infighting surfaced when ZAPU which was formed in 1961 split into two different parties with the breakaway group lead by reverend Ndabaningi Sithole formed ZANU in 1963. "What had begun as a multiethnic, multiregional anticolonial movement became a pair of movements, each with its own regional and ethnic base"³⁶. Through the next few decades, the two rival parties and their military wings, ZANU's Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and ZAPU's Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) fought their common enemy and in 1976 entered a shaky alliance known as the Patriotic Front. Despite this cooperation, which was much due to international pressure, each group remained suspicious and even hostile to the other³⁷. It was this political climate which saw the emergence of the future leaders of Zimbabwe within the ranks of ZANU.

Following the assassination of several prominent ZANU leaders, among them the President of ZANU Herbert Chitepo, ZANU was thrown in to leadership crisis for a few years. When Robert Mugabe in 1976 finally gained recognition as ZANU's leader he was faced with the task to weld a coherent organisation from "disparate groups with distinctive experiences"³⁸. For much of its 13 years history, the party members had been separated in different countries, and many of them had never met one another before. There were divisions between exiled politicians, soldiers, and former prisoners. Mugabe himself had been locked away in a Rhodesian prison for a decade and did not personally know many of the ZANU leaders. There have been theories derived from the South African experience, that because African resistance organisations were banned, they had to operate underground and their very existence depended not only on loyalty but on the ability to follow orders. Lagrou and Chung argue that this is why the ANC developed such a commandist culture which in turn led to amore centralised command structure³⁹. The situation for ZANU is no different from that of the ANC. Most of ZANU's leaders were imprisoned for long periods of time which left the military wing of the party isolated and cut off. ZANU could not discuss policy, strategy and political ideology in open forums, with participants from all ranks of the party. To wage a war from a prison cell thus demanded extreme loyalty and a highly centralised command structure. Influenced by their allies in

³⁵ Sellström, Tor "ZANU and ZAPU of Zimbabwe" p. 154

³⁶ Sithole, Masipula "Zimbabwe's Eroding Authoritarianism" p. 129

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Kriger, Norma "From Patriotic Memories to Patriotic History in Zimbabwe , 1990-2005" p. 1152

³⁹ Ibid p. 1153

the Soviet Union and China, the political organisation of ZANU thus adopted the eastern block format complete with a central committee and politburo. John Makumbe accordingly argues that these are the reasons for why “ZANU effectively became commandist and regimentalist rather than democratic in its operations and management style”⁴⁰. Add to this that Robert Mugabe’s rise to leadership also came at a time of ferocious internal feuding which threatened to tare the party apart⁴¹. Mugabe therefore wasted little time in consolidating his power within the party by hammering home the importance of the “ZANU line” as a moral imperative in which every member must commit to ZANU and its principles, with unswerving loyalty and discipline⁴². Mugabe managed to restore the collapsed chain of command between the party leadership and the liberation fighters, thus increasing his grip on power. As a top member of ZANU stated “the gun cannot lead the party; it is the party that leads the gun”⁴³. With the help of his previous co prisoners, who formed the majority of the ZANU leadership, Robert Mugabe succeeded in fully legitimising his position as the head of both the party and as “Zimbabwe’s Helmsman” as he was termed in the revived party newspaper the *Zimbabwe News*. The same paper later wrote that “At long last the people of Zimbabwe now have, after nearly twenty years of struggle, what they always deserved but lacked - a genuine leader of unquestioned integrity, rare courage and total dedication”⁴⁴.

When Rhodesia was finally forced to the negotiating table, which resulted in the Lancaster House constitution and the first free elections in Zimbabwe in 1980, nothing could stop Robert Mugabe’s ZANU from becoming the first freely elected government of Zimbabwe. The liberation struggle must be considered a critical juncture in the sense that it engineered the commandist structure of ZANU, gave rise to the future rulers of Zimbabwe, and as we shall see remains the most efficient source to legitimate neopatrimonial rule.

⁴⁰ Makumbe, John “ZANU-PF: A Party in Transition?” p. 34

⁴¹ Ranger, Terence “The Changing of the Old Guard: Robert Mugabe and the revival of ZANU” p. 73

⁴² Ibid p. 88

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ ZN “Chimurenga: A Peoples War” July 6, 1977 quoted in Ranger, Terence “The Changing of the Old Guard: Robert Mugabe and the revival of ZANU” p. 86

3 Towards Neopatrimonialism

3.1 The Systematic Concentration of Political Power

After emerging victoriously from the 1980 general elections, ZANU (PF) extended an olive branch to its two main opponents ZAPU and the Rhodesian Front. These two parties had no other alternative but to accept ZANU (PF)'s invitation to be part of a Government of National Unity (GNU)⁴⁵. Prime Minister Robert Mugabe was applauded for his initiatives to unite the war weary former colony. However, what seemed like an arduous but inspiring path towards reconciliation and unity soon turned out to be a nightmare for anyone who dared challenge the ZANU (PF) regime.

With his overwhelming majority in parliament and his newly acquired position as Prime Minister, Mugabe and the ZANU (PF) leadership were very careful and selective in the process of handing out portfolios. It was clear that ZANU (PF) would under no circumstances be willing to share the power vested in the state's coercive institutions. Mugabe assumed the Defence Portfolio himself and made sure that all other portfolios containing institutions capable of using force were firmly placed in the hands of ZANU (PF) ministers, while ZAPU ministers were systematically handed less important portfolios⁴⁶. Mugabe even went as far as removing the special branch of the police from the portfolio of Home Affairs which had been awarded the ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo after he had turned down the ceremonial position as president, and absorbed it into the CIO (Central Intelligence Organisation)⁴⁷. Mugabe continued his plan for national unity by articulating a policy of national reconciliation and the integration of the various military forces into one national military, police force, and air force⁴⁸. ZANU (PF) soon had monopoly over the branches of government and institutions capable of violence and coercion, thus consolidating Mugabe and his party's grip on power. ZANU (PF)'s and Mugabe's political vision of the one party state as an ultimate goal seemed inevitable⁴⁹. Yet, there was still an obstacle to overcome before ZANU (PF)'s grip on Zimbabwe was complete. Joshua Nkomo and ZAPU

45 Makumbe, John "ZANU-PF: A Party in Transition?" p. 35

46 Gregory, Martin "The Zimbabwe Election: The Political and Military Implications" p. 28

47 Stiff, Peter Cry Zimbabwe p.30

48 Makumbe, John "ZANU-PF: A Party in Transition?" p. 35

49 Gregory, Martin "The Zimbabwe Election: The Political and Military Implications" p. 28

might have lost the elections, but nevertheless they were still an opponent to be reckoned with and represented an adamant obstruction to the realisation of the one party state⁵⁰. ZANU (PF) therefore wasted little time in removing the obstacle that ZAPU represented.

The GNU crumbled after only two years of existence when ZAPU was forced out following allegations that they were plotting to overthrow the Mugabe regime, allegations they vehemently denied. Their dismissal took on more horrifying proportions when ZANU (PF) decided to strike down their old political rival once and for all. The military operations in Matabeleland wiped ZAPU off the political map in Zimbabwe and the party was “swallowed” by ZANU (PF) when they were forced to sign the Unity Accord in 1987⁵¹. The atrocities carried out against ZAPU and their members will be further discussed in the chapter concerning the misuse of state resources.

In 1984, Mugabe had further tightened his grip on the party machinery by being appointed head of a new politburo set up to control government policy. Remarkably his position meant he was given the right to choose all of its members⁵². Parliament during this time had become more of a formality than anything else, members and ministers were handpicked by ZANU (PF) and forced to follow the party line. All that was required of them was total obedience. In fact, in order to handle any possible forms of “disobedience” by parliament, the ZANU (PF) leadership had kept Zimbabwe in a state of emergency one six month period after the other since independence. A state of emergency awarded the Prime Minister certain executive powers he would not have had otherwise, and also allowed Mugabe to hold anyone in detention without trial and detain people even when they had been acquitted by the courts⁵³. In 1987, ZANU (PF) and Mugabe solved the problem by amending the constitution which abolished the office of Prime Minister. The amendment allowed for Robert Gabriel Mugabe to assume office as Zimbabwe’s first all-powerful executive President⁵⁴ and “With domination by the executive and without an effective opposition to act as a watchdog, Parliament was relegated to a rubber stamp”⁵⁵. The powers given to Mugabe were immense. As executive President he combined the roles as head of state, head of government, and commander in chief of the defence forces⁵⁶. Further more he was given the authority to dissolve parliament and declare martial law, as well as run for an unlimited number of terms of office⁵⁷. Add to this Mugabe’s control of appointments to virtually all senior posts in the civil service, military and police and what you have is a President and ruling party with a virtual stranglehold on government and “unlimited opportunities to exercise

50 Mpisaunga, Etherton *Zimbabwe: The Next 25 Years* p.91

51 Sithole, Masipula “Zimbabwe’s Eroding Authoritarianism” p.129

52 Meredith, Martin *Power, Plunder and Tyranny in Zimbabwe* p.80

53 Mpisaunga, Etherton *Zimbabwe: The Next 25 Years* p.40

54 Stiff, Peter Cry *Zimbabwe* p.243

55 Ibid p.245

56 Olsson Selerud, Kristian “Human Rights in a Neopatrimonial Society” p. 14

57 Meredith, Martin *Power, Plunder and Tyranny in Zimbabwe* p.79

patronage”⁵⁸. So, as the first ten years of independence passed, ZANU (PF)’s and Mugabe’s dominance was undeniable as was the systematic concentration of political and military power. However, there was one battle that Mugabe did not win: that of the formation of a one party state. Reasons for why the politburo and the high-ranking party officials did not grant him his wish are still vague. However, several scholars attribute it to the fact that Zimbabwe was practically already a one party state, and members of the politburo and ruling party saw no need to make it a *de jure* one party state. Additionally, it is argued that before ZANU (PF) “swallowed” ZAPU “President Mugabe always got everything he wanted from the Politburo; after unity, he did not”⁵⁹.

By 1992, ZANU (PF)’s and Mugabe’s hold on power was virtually absolute. Any political opposition was quickly dissolved, and to maintain its dominance the ruling party amended the constitution whenever a gap appeared that could threaten their hegemony.

3.2 The Award of Personal Favours

The Weberian idea of Patrimonialism suggests that a “patron” in a socially powerful position bestows gifts upon his followers in order to secure their loyalty. These followers or “clients” if you like, are therefore endowed with material wealth and benefits⁶⁰. In a neopatrimonial regime, the patron is often an office holder in state institutions who misuses public funds in order to sustain his powerbase⁶¹. Such practice has been institutionalised in Zimbabwe.

It comes as little surprise that ZANU (PF) would give the vast majority of powerful positions in the new government to loyal party members. However, taking a closer look at exactly who rose to those positions clearly shows that Robert Mugabe made sure that those who helped install him on the ZANU throne were those who received the most upon independence. As mentioned earlier, Mugabe had struggled to take the reins of ZANU, and it took a while for him to consolidate his position. Those who helped him, later termed the “old guard” by Terrence Ranger were well awarded when it came to handing out portfolios following the 1980 elections⁶². Obviously part of the strategy to consolidate power and concentrate their grip on politics in Zimbabwe, ZANU (PF) made sure that loyalty rather than ability was the characteristic most likely to land someone a top job. But loyalty did not come free of charge, and it was soon obvious that by toeing the party line, ZANU (PF) officials would get a share of the infamous cake.

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Sithole, Masipula “Zimbabwe’s Eroding Authoritarianism” p.134

⁶⁰ von Soest, Christian “How Does Neopatrimonialism Affect the African State?” p. 628

⁶¹ Olsson Selerud, Kristian ““Human Rights in a Neopatrimonial Society” p. 15

⁶² Ranger, Terrence “The Changing of the Old Guard: Robert Mugabe and the revival of ZANU”

However, until 1987 when ZANU (PF) dissolved ZAPU, the task at hand seemed to be to consolidate their power. Up till then, very few corruption scandals were detected. “From 1987, however Zimbabwe saw an exponential rise in cases of corruption, from 2 in 7 years to an average of 3-4 cases a year until 2002 when the lid fell off”⁶³. The new elite in Zimbabwe consisted exclusively of ZANU (PF) high ranking party officials, Ministers, members of parliament, as well as those in charge of the most powerful coercive institutions: the Army, the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), Zimbabwean Republican Police (ZRP) and prison services. Not long after independence, this new elite found great pleasure in adopting the lifestyle formerly reserved for whites only. They moved into expensive houses, drove luxurious cars, dined in the finest restaurants, and bought spacious farms, hotels, and successful businesses⁶⁴. The period from 1987 up to 2001 saw no less than 19 corruption scandals involving Zimbabwe’s by far largest corporations and public contracts⁶⁵. Virtually all of these cases involved high ranking politicians who were in fact convicted and sentenced, just to receive a Presidential pardon and then recycled back into the political structures of ZANU (PF). “Involvement in corruption appears to have enhanced their political careers not damaged them”⁶⁶.

Prior to 1987, corruption was of the usual nature, fuelled by greed and made possible by opportunity. However, following the demise of ZAPU and Mugabe’s new won position as executive President, Zimbabwe witnessed the emergence of political elite corruption. From thereon, the leap to patronaged corruption is never a large one. The patronage system worked for all parties involved. Those who wanted to accumulate wealth needed protection, which in turn ensured political loyalty and leverage by the patron in this case the ruling party itself⁶⁷.

With the patron-client network firmly in place, the ZANU (PF) regime systematically bought loyalty, entrenching their position even further and making all attempts to democratise at least parts of Zimbabwe’s institutional and bureaucratic arrangement impossible. The most obvious, blatant, and recognised award for personal favours portrayed by the ruling party came in association with the land reform. The Land Reform had been a standing promise on behalf of the ZANU (PF) government since independence. Initially the Lancaster House constitution had put certain restriction on its progress, such as the willing seller willing buyer clause, but not even after its lapse had Mugabe and ZANU (PF) made a serious attempt to pursue a land reform.

Facing new pressure from so called “war veterans” to pay out higher pensions and a share of the wealth, the Mugabe regime initiated the land reform project in 2000. It also served well to quench and demoralise growing political opposition. In any case, the reform took on violent proportions which ended in the seizure of predominantly white owned land. Land that was taken with no compensation what

⁶³ Dr. G. Shana “The State of Corruption in Zimbabwe” p. 1

⁶⁴ Meredith, Martin *Power, Plunder and Tyranny in Zimbabwe* p.81

⁶⁵ Dr. G. Shana “The State of Corruption in Zimbabwe” p. 2

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ibid p. 3

so ever often resulting in brutality and in several cases the death of the former owner⁶⁸. While some land was handed out to former guerrilla fighters and new black farmers, the majority of the land was used by the ruling party to buy further loyalty.

The land reform once and for all marked the beginning of Zimbabwe's economic collapse. The main cash crop tobacco practically ceased to exist due to the fact that the best farms were now used as vacation homes and hunting grounds by ZANU (PF) loyalists rather than to grow crops on. In any case, the government continued to confiscate not only land, but also several private corporations and hand over the reins to those who swore the ruling party their loyalty. Faced with a growing political opposition, and a plummeting economy, ZANU (PF) grabbed what they could in order to maintain the loyalty of those in powerful positions. "The result was that corruption could now be justified as political strategy and patronaged for political protection from the various camps that were emerging"⁶⁹. In many ways therefore, the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy can be linked to the deterioration of democratic governance, and the need for ZANU (PF) to maintain their grip on power by purchasing the loyalty of the powerful. "In Africa...political power and political patronage are a means to gain and keep economic enrichment"⁷⁰.

3.3 The Misuse of State Resources

To sustain a system based on the award for personal favours, as well as the systematic concentration of power, complete control over and personal use of state resources is necessary and indeed crucial. It is the use of such resources that gives elites the opportunity and means by which to accumulate wealth which is subsequently passed down the clitelistic stepladder, and unopposed concentrate power through complete control of political and coercive intuitions. While ZANU (PF) and Mugabe early on made sure to concentrate political power in the sense that only members of the ruling party were given control over institutions filled with potential coercive power, control over and actual use of are two distinct concepts. It is the misuse of such institutions that demarks a neopatrimonial regime. As we shall see, ZANU (PF) has continually misused Zimbabwe's state resources to further their own agenda. The ZANU (PF) regime has consistently used state institutions such as the army, the police, the CIO, and the media to

⁶⁸ Mpisaunga, Etherton *Zimbabwe: The Next 25 Years* p.103

⁶⁹ Dr. G. Shana "The State of Corruption in Zimbabwe" p. 3

⁷⁰ Ibid

suppress and demoralise its opposition⁷¹. However, the misuse of state resources is not merely restricted to those with coercive functions; just as important is the way in which ZANU has used Zimbabwe's economic resources, and judiciary to strengthen itself and eradicate political opposition.

In order to deal with what the ruling party deemed a revolt following the allegations that ZAPU was plotting against the Mugabe regime, ZANU (PF) deployed the infamous Fifth Brigade. Set up by Mugabe in 1981, the Fifth Brigade was trained by North Korean instructors and took orders exclusively from the Minister of Defence, Mugabe himself⁷². Shortly after its formation in 1981, Joshua Nkomo questioned its existence, and more importantly its role. He accused Mugabe for forming an independent fighting force and meant that the 5-Brigade was "a ZANU (PF) army and not part of the National Army"⁷³. During this time the Zimbabwean National Army had undergone intense training by their British Army instructors and saw themselves more as professional officers than as cadres in a party army⁷⁴. Nkomo's fears were well founded because the fifth brigade carried out horrid acts of violence against ZAPU supporters in Matabeleland during 1982 until the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987. As many as 30, 000 dead have been reported as well as thousands of cases of rape, torture, and assault⁷⁵. The 5-Brigade operation against the Ndebele population was dubbed *Gukurahundi*, meaning the storm that destroys everything⁷⁶.

Unlike the ZNA (Zimbabwean National Army), the other state security institutions: the CIO and ZRP "are widely seen as tools of the ruling party"⁷⁷. Especially the CIO has been linked on several occasions to the disappearance and death of political opposition to the ZANU (PF) regime. The CIO was established under white minority rule, and was left intact following independence. Its efficiency and brutality is well-known, and the organisation is rightly feared throughout Zimbabwe. Among other things, CIO agents shot a ZUM (Zimbabwe Unity Movement) candidate during the 1990 elections. The gunmen were tried and found guilty, only to be freed by a presidential pardon⁷⁸. The CIO has become Robert Mugabe's and ZANU (PF)'s private intelligence service. ZRP are used almost daily to induce fear and demoralise opposition in the country. They are known for their brutality in breaking up demonstrations and for their use of torture on incarcerated victims. In fact, the police has been so effectively used against Zimbabwe's people that they are regarded as ZANU (PF) thugs as they either stand idly by watching war veterans or ZANU youth militias beating up

⁷¹ Sithole, Masipula "Zimbabwe's Eroding Authoritarianism" p.134

⁷² Rupiah, Martin "Demobilisation and Integration: 'Operation Merger' and the Zimbabwean National Defence Forces, 1980-1987" p. 38

⁷³ The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe *Breaking the Silence* p.13, Joshua Nkomo quoted in *The Citizen* Johannesburg, September 1, 1981, Olsson Selerud, Kristian "Human rights in a Neopatrimonial Regime" p. 17

⁷⁴ Sithole, Masipula "Zimbabwe's Eroding Authoritarianism" p.132

⁷⁵ The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe *Breaking the Silence* p. 24

⁷⁶ The 5-Brigade itself is often referred to under the same pseudonym

⁷⁷ Sithole, Masipula "Zimbabwe's Eroding Authoritarianism" p.133

⁷⁸ Sithole, Masipula "Zimbabwe's Eroding Authoritarianism" p. 132

opposition members or they join them in the harassment of civilians⁷⁹. The ZRP, Army and CIO have also been exposed as those who planned and carried out the farm invasion beginning in 2000 as well as the “cleaning out the filth”⁸⁰ operation in 2005 which left thousands of people homeless⁸¹. In short, the ZANU (PF) regime does not hesitate to use its monopoly on violence. The misuse of state resources such as the armed forces, the CIO and the ZRP are ZANU (PF)’s most imperative way to maintain power and control of the country⁸².

However, as mentioned earlier, the misuse of state resources is not limited to those capable of force. Until 1992, the ruling party was almost exclusively financed by public funds channelled through the Ministry of Political Affairs⁸³. This meant that the party received on average \$4 million every year, and even though this was heavily criticized and the Ministry later abolished ZANU (PF) found another way to fill their coffers at the expense of the nation. In 1994, the ruling party passed the Political Parties Act which ensured that all political parties retaining more than 15 seats in parliament were guaranteed public funding. At the time, and until the emergence of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), opposition parties on general had 3-5 seats thus making ZANU (PF) the sole qualifier of the Act⁸⁴. As the economy plummeted, the ruling party has used confiscated resources and borrowed money to maintain its patronage system. Parliament seats were almost doubled for the purpose of legitimising the payment of a higher number of influential individuals, and during elections the ruling party has often used state resources to bribe voters with food handouts and farm equipment⁸⁵.

Also the media is completely controlled by the government, which uses news papers, radio, and television as tools for propaganda. Every news source in Zimbabwe is generally regarded as the mouthpiece of ZANU (PF). The only independent news paper, *The Daily News*, was actually bombed and its journalists beaten, threatened and arrested. Similarly, the privately owned radio station, Capital News was shut down by force using the military and the CIO⁸⁶. The courts have deemed these acts illegal, but following new legislation it is virtually impossible for independent media to receive a licence.

⁷⁹ Hill, Geoff what happens After Mugabe? p.44

⁸⁰ The English translation of the operations official name: “Operation Murambatsvina”

⁸¹ International Crisis group “Zimbabwe in Crisis: Finding a Way Forward” p. 3

⁸² Ibid p. 8

⁸³ Hatchard, John “Funding Political Parties: The Political Parties (Finance) Act, 1992 (Zimbabwe) p. 101, Sithole, Masipula “Zimbabwe’s Eroding Authoritarianism” p. 130

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ International Crisis group “Zimbabwe in Crisis: Finding a Way Forward” p. 14-16

⁸⁶ Ibid p. 11

4 Institutionalising Neopatrimonialism

Zimbabwe thus possesses all the features characteristic of a neopatrimonial state. The liberation war marked a critical juncture as it saw the rise of ZANU and Robert Mugabe. It created the elite that would one day be responsible for Zimbabwe's state machinery. The inheritance of the colonial state and the nature of the struggle are undeniable influences and contributors to the new country's institutional design. The institutions formed during the war against colonialism were subsequently carried into the corridors of power. There they were faced with the previous regimes state machinery already adapted to control, supervise and coerce the population. Mechanisms of force were imbedded in the post colonial state, and a will to use them were institutionalised in the emerging ZANU elite. The institutional pattern that surfaced took on the form of neopatrimonialism.

As discussed above, the self reinforcing sequences are characterised by the formation and long term reproduction of a specific institutional pattern⁸⁷. The institutional pattern that is neopatrimonialism, once adopted in 1980 in Zimbabwe has delivered increasing benefits with its continued adoption. It has served ZANU (PF)'s purposes well in that it has sustained and enhanced their grip on power. Neopatrimonialism as an institutional pattern is reproducing itself, which in turn makes it increasingly difficult to transform.

4.1 Reproductive Mechanisms

While specific institutions and institutional patterns are relatively easy to detect, it is harder to account for why such institutions continue to survive even though better options might be available. The mechanisms of neopatrimonial reproduction in Zimbabwe can in part be detected and accounted for by predominant theories dealing with Power and Legitimation⁸⁸. But in Zimbabwe's case, it is important to acknowledge that while the institutional pattern has been continuously reproduced and reinforced for twenty eight years, the mechanisms responsible for this have overlapped, changed and been replaced. "The reproduction of a legacy, in short, is a dynamic process, and this is not well captured in some of the dominant formulations"⁸⁹. Legitimacy erodes, and elite's

⁸⁷ Mahoney, James "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology" p. 508

⁸⁸ Ibid p. 515

⁸⁹ Thelen, Kathleen "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics" p. 397

change; in order to maintain and reproduce neopatrimonialism, the mechanisms at work also has to evolve.

4.1.1 The Power Explanation

A power explanation for institutional reproduction argues that an institutional pattern is reproduced because it is supported by an elite group of actors. In a power centred approach, institutional patterns can persist even though a majority of actors or groups prefer to change it, provided that an elite that benefits from the existing arrangement has the strength and means to support its reproduction⁹⁰. Mahoney argues that once the institutional arrangement has been developed, it is reinforced through predictable power dynamics. The institution initially empowers a specific group at the expense of other groups; the advantaged group uses its new power to expand the institution further thus additionally increasing that group's power, which in the end leads to a further encouragement of the institutional expansion⁹¹. In other words, Mahoney uses the power explanation to explain the "snow ball" effect that institutional development can have.

Looking at the establishment and development of neopatrimonialism in Zimbabwe, the power centred approach carries substantial explanatory power. The centralisation and concentration of political power, the awards for personal favours, and the misuse of state resources clearly empowered ZANU (PF) at the expense of ZAPU following national liberation. As the centralisation of political power gained momentum, there is a distinct escalation in the development of the other neopatrimonial characteristics. Once ZANU (PF) had initially been empowered at the expense of ZAPU, it used its new position to accumulate as much power as possible by making sure that it controlled all the sources of authority in Zimbabwe (police, CIO, military etc.) before it set out to further expand neopatrimonialism as an institutional framework. Hence the violence in Matabeleland, the striking down of political opposition, and the "swallowing" of ZAPU were steps which could not have been taken were it not for the initial concentration of power. Following the theory behind the power explanation, neopatrimonialism as an institution had a snowball effect in Zimbabwe.

The consolidation of power required more than just physical dominance. To further enhance their grip on power, the ruling party ensured loyalty by establishing a system of patronage. Once established, such a system worked well to empower specific elites whom were rewarded with high public positions, wealth, and influence in exchange for their loyalty. Again, initial steps in such a direction would be reproduced as the patronage system began to gain momentum

⁹⁰ Mahoney, James "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology" p. 517

⁹¹ Ibid p. 521

in all government structures and public corporations. The increase in corruption scandals clearly shows how patronage quickly became the only way for individuals to acquire a slice of influence and wealth. Combined with the centralisation of power, the patronage system made it possible to use state resources for the benefit of the ruling party rather than the nation. ZANU (PF) and Robert Mugabe therefore not only controlled and concentrated political power in the sense of control over institutions, but also controlled those in charge of the entire bureaucracy of the state. It is clear how neopatrimonialism in Zimbabwe follows the power perspective offered by Mahoney. Neopatrimonialism as an institution initially empower ZANU (PF) which used its new power to expand and develop this institutional structure further, thus additionally increasing its influence and dominance. In the end the process becomes self reinforcing as elites gaining wealth, influence and advantages further encourage the same institutional expansion. Neopatrimonialism in Zimbabwe is therefore reproduced because as an institution, it is supported by an elite group of actors. It is this mechanism which ensured that there were no objections or attempts to reform the system from the “inside”.

4.1.2 The Legitimation explanation

Another mechanism that according to Mahoney, can account for the reproduction of an institution is found in the Legitimation explanation. This explanation argues that an institution is reproduced because actors believe it is morally just or appropriate⁹². Mahoney theorises that institutions can be reinforced through processes of increasing legitimation where an initial “precedent about what appropriate forms a basis for making future decisions about what is appropriate”⁹³. As a result, we achieve the familiar cycle of self reinforcement.

In the case of Zimbabwean neopatrimonialism, legitimizing the institutional set up has been crucial in order for the ruling party to maintain its position. The ideas formed during the liberation struggle were carried into the corridors of power, and the notion of a one party state was embedded in the ZANU (PF) rhetoric. It was viewed as legitimate, and as the ultimate goal of Robert Mugabe and the ruling party⁹⁴. The massive concentration of political power and use of state resources for the benefit of the ruling party were thus partly legitimated by the “ultimate goal” to forge a one party state. Within the party, there were no voices of concern, no dispute as to the direction set out by the party leadership. In ZANU (PF)’s eyes, a one party state as advocated by Mugabe was a legitimate

⁹² Mahoney, James “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology” p. 517

⁹³ Ibid p. 523

⁹⁴ Makumbe, John “ZANU-PF: A Party in Transition?” p. 34, Sithole, Masipula “Zimbabwe’s Eroding Authoritarianism” p.133

and righteous system of governance. Initially the Zimbabwean people as well seemed confident that their new government had the right political aspirations. This is illustrated by the fact that despite the atrocities in Matabeleland and the ruling party's massive personal accumulation of wealth, ZANU increased its parliamentary majority by eight seats in 1985 amid voter turnout of about 80 percent⁹⁵.

There is little doubt that both internally and externally, ZANU (PF) and its politics were regarded as legitimate. The system of governance, where whites had been dethroned, and where a black government was consolidating its power was natural in many Zimbabweans eyes. The rhetoric ZANU (PF) used was well received by the public; it was in many ways exactly what they had expected from the new ruling party. ZANU (PF) advocated national unity with socialist tones and the economic advancement of black Zimbabweans, a rhetoric that instilled hope and pleased the population of a country which for so long had been run by a racist and elite regime⁹⁶. Finally, they were in power and finally they would all be able to share in the country's wealth and resources. For decades therefore, neopatrimonialism was reproduced because actors believed it was morally just and appropriate. This mechanism works in two ways: it legitimises the reproduction of neopatrimonialism within the political elite, but perhaps more crucially it also legitimises the institutional structure to the larger public. It ensures that there are no "external" forces capable or willing to reform the system.

4.1.3 Things Fall Apart

The Power and Legitimation explanation accounts for how the formation and reproduction of neopatrimonialism was accomplished during the initial decades of independence. But as Thelen notes, institutional reproduction is a dynamic process, and the reproduction of neopatrimonialism can only partially be explained by predominant theories such as those provided by Mahoney. The reproduction of specific institutions can only be fully explained by specific mechanisms. Until 1997, the ruling party managed to sustain its power through neopatrimonialism, reproduced at the will of an elite and legitimated both within the party and to the broader Zimbabwean and African public as well as the donor community. However, Zimbabwean neopatrimonialism as an institution carried the roots to its own demise, but paradoxically also the mechanisms to avoid such institutional collapse.

The Zimbabwean National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) had been established in 1989 as a welfare organisation aiming to improve the lives

⁹⁵ Sithole, Masipula "Zimbabwe's Eroding Authoritarianism" p.132

⁹⁶ Bond, Patrick "Radical Rhetoric and the Working Class during Zimbabwean Nationalism's Dying Days" p. 8

of some 55,000 veterans of the liberation struggle⁹⁷. In 1997, the organisation's focus took a radical turn, a turn that would prove vital for the ruling party's continued stay in power. However, initially the reasons for the ZNLWVA's radical turn in strategy and tone towards the government threatened to tare the ZANU (PF) regime apart. In 1997, the ever increasing corruption in Zimbabwe as a result to blatant and systematic patronage meant that the fund created specifically for paying out pensions to former liberation fighters was empty. The fund had been looted to the cent by public officials in order to pay for expensive cars, homes, salaries, and to buy the support of an expanding bureaucracy⁹⁸. The ZNLWVA was furious, and in 1997 the organisation held several street marches, demanded compensation for their looted fund, and called for greater state sponsored land acquisitions⁹⁹. In a final show of strength and determination the ZNLWVA started occupying farms throughout the country, and it was clear that this "rebellion" was a critique of the ZANU (PF) regime¹⁰⁰.

Mugabe and ZANU (PF) finally bowed to the ZNLWVA's demands and paid out a considerable lump sum followed by hefty pensions for life to all ZNLWVA's members. The cost to the nation of this decision was estimated to four billion Zimbabwe dollars, a sum so high that it precipitated a national financial crisis¹⁰¹. The economic crisis was worsened further by Zimbabwe's involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in 2000 Zimbabwe and ZANU (PF) balanced on the very edge of bankruptcy. The lack of money posed an enormous threat to the ruling party and their neopatrimonial governance. They had managed to buy back the loyalty of the former liberation fighters, but in doing so they had lost the means to keep other prominent groups and officials on the pay roll. If they no longer had the means by which to uphold the patronage system they so successfully had been implementing since independence, the entire system could collapse. Aware of this, the ZANU (PF) regime realised that the only way to prevent losing power and facing institutional reform was in fact to enlarge, entrench and expand neopatrimonialism.

⁹⁷ Moyo, Sam & Yeros, Paris "The Radicalised State: Zimbabwe's Interrupted Revolution" p. 111

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Kriger, Norma "War Veterans: Continuities Between the Past and the Present" p. 1

¹⁰⁰ Moyo, Sam & Yeros, Paris "The Radicalised State: Zimbabwe's Interrupted Revolution" p. 111

¹⁰¹ Knox Chitiyo, Tapera "Land Violence and Compensation: Reconceptualising Zimbabwe's Land and War Veterans Debate" p. 63

4.2 Changing the Reproductive Mechanisms

4.2.1 The Radicalisation of the State

The expansion of neopatrimonialism came as a reaction to the threat of institutional reform. In other words, to maintain neopatrimonialism, Mugabe and the ruling party were forced to expand it. Ironically, the War Veterans who initially had been a threat capable of dissolving the system became a crucial factor for its continued existence.

As the state and party coffers were near empty, the patronage system so crucial for the preservation of neopatrimonialism was on the brink of collapse. While the economic situation was quickly becoming crisis oriented, the ruling party was faced with yet another challenge. Growing political opposition was starting to eat away at ZANU (PF)'s hitherto dominant position and monopoly on power. Fuelled on by the economic hardship, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and several civil society organisations were gaining momentum. To make matters worse for the ruling party, the opposition managed to shore up enough support against the ZANU (PF) authored constitutional proposal and were victorious in obtaining a “No” vote in a national referendum¹⁰². The following general elections saw ZANU (PF) just narrowly emerging with a win. Things were truly falling apart for Robert Mugabe and ZANU (PF)¹⁰³.

The solution was to use the War Veterans to help substitute cash for land. Just a week following the defeat in the referendum, the War Veterans invaded several white owned farms claiming that they were only taking back that which had been stolen from them by the colonialists¹⁰⁴. Having bought back the War Veterans loyalty, the Mugabe regime effectively used them as shock troops against white farmers and rural opposition strongholds. The War Veterans were funded by the government, to hire unemployed youth, and in state vehicles, carrying state sponsored weapons the War Veterans unleashed a wave of terror and chaos in the Zimbabwean countryside¹⁰⁵. While the police, Army and CIO stood idly watching, the War Veterans beat, raped, and killed the owners and workers of numerous Zimbabwean farms. To aid the process, the ruling party amended the Constitution so that the government was no longer required to pay compensation

¹⁰² International Crisis group “Zimbabwe in Crisis: Finding a Way Forward” p. 3

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ Addison, Tony & Laakso, Liisa “The Political Economy of Zimbabwe’s Descent Into Conflict” p. 468

for land earmarked for redistribution¹⁰⁶. The following years saw the initiation of what the ZANU (PF) regime called “fast track land reform” which effectively meant that the best and most arable land was transferred from their owners into the hands of the government at no real cost.

The radicalisation of the Zimbabwean state in 1997 was a direct result of the negative effects that neopatrimonial rule had built up since independence. The basis for this radicalisation can be found in “the economic, social, and, ultimately, political crisis of the late 1990s, a robust crisis which was organically driven by social forces within and without the ruling party”¹⁰⁷. It was a crisis that endangered the institutional system that had been sustained and reproduced since independence. The radicalisation effectively made sure that the system continued to be reproduced despite the crisis it had generated, in this sense neopatrimonialism was both the source for its own demise, as well as the means by which to circumvent it. Primarily it re-established, strengthened and enlarged the scope of neopatrimonialism.

4.2.2 Re-emergence, Reconfiguration and Expansion of Neopatrimonialism

The “acquisition” of the ZNLWVA and fast track land reform marked a new beginning for neopatrimonial rule in Zimbabwe. It effectively strengthened and expanded the tripod of political power, patronage, and misuse of state resources. The land reform meant that the Zimbabwe regime could rebuild the faltering system of patronage. The land it had acquired was effectively used to replace money as a means by which to buy the loyalty of all powerful members of the party and bureaucracy. In 2003, a commercial farmers group released information regarding the size and location of one thousand confiscated farms. The interesting fact was that concerning the new owners of those farms. Among the new owners of these farms, generally regarded the most successful and most arable, were Robert Mugabe’s close relatives, senior civil servants, military and police officials, CIO members, numerous ZANU (PF) members of parliament, businessmen loyal to the party and leaders for the ZNLWVA¹⁰⁸. “The list of those who were allocated the most fertile farms read like a Who’s Who in the Zimbabwe hierarchy”¹⁰⁹. Hence, the confiscation of land had provided a superb means by which to sustain the loyalty of important political, military, and public individuals, but it also enabled a further escalation in the patronage practiced by

¹⁰⁶ Addison, Tony & Laakso, Liisa ”The Political Economy of Zimbabwe’s Descent Into Conflict” p. 468

¹⁰⁷ Moyo, Sam & Yeros, Paris “The Radicalised State: Zimbabwe’s Interrupted Revolution” p. 104

¹⁰⁸ Campbell, Horace *Reclaiming Zimbabwe* p.272, Olsson Selerud, Kristian “Human rights in a Neopatrimonial Regime” p. 16

¹⁰⁹ Campbell, Horace *Reclaiming Zimbabwe* p.146

the ruling party. Kriger notes that “the party used land as a source of patronage to try to boost its waning power at a time when the depleted treasury limited other options”¹¹⁰. They had also recruited the unwavering loyalty of the War Veterans, which would prove quite useful with respect to the strengthening and rebuilding of political power and the misuse of state resources.

The added bonus of acquisitioning the loyalty of the ZNLWVA was that it would prove to assist the ZANU (PF) regime in further concentrating political power. Like not other civil society group or political organisation, the War Veterans have maintained unique organic links to the rural electorate. The support that the ZNLWVA could garner ahead of parliamentary and presidential elections has proved vital to the ruling party. Using the War Veterans to spread their political discourse across the country, ZANU (PF) was able to harvest renewed rural electoral support. The influences of the War Veterans reaches down to every level of the rural country side, including all prominent figures such as local chiefs¹¹¹. The mobilisation of the War Veteran’s thus earned ZANU (PF) the loyalty and majority of the rural vote and consolidated its position and reputation as a true liberation movement.

However, ZANU (PF) not only used the ZNLWVA as a lobbying organisation to consolidate its rural base. War Veterans were simultaneously used to instil fear and promote violence and disruption on the countryside. There is no doubt that the ruling party is relying heavily on the extra-legal force that the War Veterans resemble. The organisation has been used frequently to break up demonstrations, beating opposition member, and even killing people¹¹². Such atrocities have happened before the eyes of the ZRP, without the latter intervening. In many ways, the War Veterans have become ZANU (PF)’s most important tool in reasserting its political and coercive dominance. They have even been reorganised as an auxiliary force to the army, thus placing them “above the law so they can inflict violence with impunity on any sector of society that opposes the president and his agenda”¹¹³.

4.2.3 Re-Ligitimation and Historical Propaganda

Faced with mounting political opposition and an unprecedented economic plunge, the ZANU (PF) regime was quickly losing its legitimacy and its capacity to govern was being questioned both at a national as well as an international level. The loss of legitimacy could prove fatal for the ruling party’s aspirations to stay in power. For the first time since independence, the ZANU (PF) regime was faced with a political adversary that was realistically regarded as an alternative.

¹¹⁰ Kriger, Norma “War Veterans: Continuities Between the Past and the Present” p. 55

¹¹¹ Moyo, Sam & Yeros, Paris “The Radicalised State: Zimbabwe’s Interrupted Revolution” p. 111

¹¹² International Crisis group “Zimbabwe in Crisis: Finding a Way Forward” p. 7

¹¹³ Ibid p. 8

Neopatrimonial governance was still regarded as morally viable within the party and public bureaucracy, much thanks to the re-establishment of patronage. But it was becoming increasingly difficult to legitimise externally to the broader public as corruption scandals were surfacing and the economy continued to falter. Again, the situation and unfolding of events with regard to the War Veterans would prove decisive as to the restoration of legitimacy as well. For historians, it is obvious how the ruling party has “propagated a distorted version of the history of the nationalist struggle to legitimate its violent confiscation of land and repression of the opposition”¹¹⁴.

Following Mahoney’s theorising in regard to legitimacy, that “precedents about what is appropriate forms a basis for making future decisions about what is appropriate”¹¹⁵ Robert Mugabe and ZANU (PF) began to celebrate and preach “patriotic history” as a form of official nationalism which celebrates the military dimensions of the liberation struggle and marginalises non-violent political activism. Well aware that international legitimation was permanently lost as a result of the violent farm invasions and subsequent brutal handling of the political opposition, the ruling party devised a plan to restore, and if possible, enhance its legitimacy as the rulers of Zimbabwe nationally and regionally¹¹⁶. Thanks to their complete control over television, radio, print media, and educational institutions, the ruling party propagated their version of “patriotic history”¹¹⁷. A constant focus on the heroics of Mugabe and his ZANU comrades in ridding Zimbabwe from white rule finally led to the re-establishment of a “them and us” rhetoric in Zimbabwean politics. Using the white farmers and Western governments as scapegoats for economic distress, and accusing the political opposition for being Western stooges and advocates of neo-colonisation, the ruling party sought to re-legitimate its rule¹¹⁸. The regime did this well and were cunning in resurfacing the land debate. Land reform had been promised ever since independence, but never really acted upon. Now the government managed to integrate the discourses of land and nationalism into a potent rhetorical vision¹¹⁹.

In particular, this engineered and over emphasised version of the past worked extremely well to silence the role of urban people and trade unions (the base of the new political opposition) in nationalist struggles. ZANU (PF)’s radicalised political rhetoric was used to denigrate opposition members as “liberation sell outs” while simultaneously positioning the ruling party as the only viable option to those who did not favour a neo colonisation of Zimbabwe. In fact, one of Mugabe’s most frequently used slogans since 2000 has been the ever recurring

¹¹⁴ Kriger, Norma “From Patriotic Memories to ‘Patriotic History’ in Zimbabwe, 1990-2005” p. 1151

¹¹⁵ Mahoney, James “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology” p. 523

¹¹⁶ Kriger, Norma “From Patriotic Memories to ‘Patriotic History’ in Zimbabwe, 1990-2005” p. 1163

¹¹⁷ Ibid

¹¹⁸ Rich Dorman, Sara “Inclusion and Exclusion: NGO’s and Politics in Zimbabwe” p. 196

¹¹⁹ Ibid p. 197

promise that “Zimbabwe will never be a colony again”¹²⁰. The struggle against the political opposition and western donor community was even referred to as a “second liberation war”¹²¹. ZANU (PF)’s concept of “patriotic history” has helped reproduce neopatrimonialism by re-establishing institutional legitimacy. Not only has the propaganda worked in favour of strengthening the ruling party as the sole candidate to govern the nation, it has worked extremely well to delegitimize the political opposition. The ZANU (PF) regime has made patriotism and liberation war credentials a prerequisite to govern. To further discourage the public to support the opposition, the chiefs of staff (army, ZRP, CIO, air force, and prison service) “warned the nation that they would not cooperate with or salute a presidential candidate whose liberation war credentials were questionable”¹²². The decision to return to the liberation war as a source of political legitimacy has been a very important factor, and indeed a mechanism, for the preservation and reproduction of Zimbabwean neopatrimonial rule.

¹²⁰ Ranger, Terrence “Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History, and the History of the Nation: The Struggle Over the Past in Zimbabwe” p. 221

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Makumbe, John “ZANU-PF: A Party in Transition?” p. 38-39

5 Concluding Remarks

The Zimbabwean liberation war continues to affect the country to this very day. The struggle marks a critical juncture in Zimbabwean history in the sense that it marks the rise to power of Robert Mugabe and ZANU (PF). Upon independence, the former liberation movement inherited the colonial state apparatus, designed to control the population and maintain power with an elite. The nature of ZANU (PF), its organisation, structures, and leadership ideology combined with the power apparatus now in their hands led to the establishment of a neopatrimonial regime. The ruling party has continuously and effectively concentrated political power, they have established a system of patronage build on the award for personal favours, and they have systematically misused state resources to further their own agenda rather than the nations. This institutional system has been reproduced since independence using at first mechanisms derived from the institutional support of an elite group of actors on the basis that the system was generally believed morally just and appropriate. These mechanisms ensured internal as well as external support for the reproduction of neopatrimonialism.

However, a plunging economy much due to the neopatrimonial side effect of uncontrollable corruption, and the consequent loss of legitimacy and mounting political opposition threatened to dismantle neopatrimonial rule in 1997. As a response, ZANU (PF) managed to partly reform, enhance and re-establish the mechanisms responsible for institutional reproduction. By expanding neopatrimonialism to incorporate the War Veterans, the ruling party consolidated its rural base, retrieved land as a means to continued patronage, and secured yet another coercive force that they could use to further the party's rather than the nation's goals. The radicalisation of the state following the economic crisis and mounting internal political opposition further altered the configuration of neopatrimonialism. With its legitimacy crushed by recurring corruption scandals and forceful handling of political opponents, the ZANU (PF) regime turned back to the struggle for independence as a source of legitimacy. Historical distortions and propaganda became a powerful and highly effective way for the ruling party to re-establish its diminishing legitimacy and claim to power. Neopatrimonialism was thus indirectly legitimated by the re-emergence of ZANU (PF) as the only true African nationalist party. Since 1997, neopatrimonial rule in Zimbabwe has continued to be exercised albeit in a slightly different manner. Land has replaced money as a means of patronage and the political elite who wishes to see the institutional system intact and reproduced has been extended to include new groups crucial as for the concentration and consolidation of political power. However, the system is still functioning. Robert Mugabe and ZANU (PF) has successfully altered and reshaped the mechanisms for neopatrimonial reproduction.

However, the end of such an institutional system is in sight. With land used to buy loyalty running out, and a political opposition still gathering strength, the ruling party is struggling to cling to power. At the moment it seems that only the use and threat to use the coercive powers at ZANU (PF)'s disposal is keeping the former liberation movement in power. Having virtually run out of land and other assets with which to buy loyalty, the patronage system might again be on the very brink of collapse. At this time perhaps it is no longer the wish of an elite to remain in power which is reproducing neopatrimonialism; rather it might be the fear of an elite regarding what will replace such an institutional arrangement that ensures its reproduction at every cost? In a way one could say that loyalty is no longer bought materially, it is fuelled on by fear of what will happen to those who have been empowered by neopatrimonialism if the system collapses and a new elite rises to power.

Neopatrimonialism is not simply a Zimbabwean phenomenon. It has been referred to as "the institutional hallmark of Africa" and can be found in several Southern African countries. Perhaps the Zimbabwean case can further illuminate the importance of the liberation struggle with regard to the formation of the coming regime, and the mechanisms that reproduce an initial institutional choice. Further studies are needed in regard to the mechanisms that reproduce neopatrimonialism in Africa.

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