HISTORY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reconciliation: A false start in Zimbabwe? (1980-1990)

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Abstract: This article analysed the elusive post-war reconciliation policy that the Prime Minister Robert Mugabe proclaimed following his Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party’s election victory in the 1980 multiparty elections. Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) and ZANU-PF antagonistic relations of the pre-independence era and their traditional rivalry over the control and ownership of the struggle for the liberation of the country from colonial rule split into the post-independence era. The deep-seated rivalry of the two liberation parties was predicated on ideological and ethnic factors resulting in turbulence in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands Province. A state campaign against civilians, referred to as gukurahundi, assumed crisis proportions when the government sent the Fifth Brigade to quell supposed ZAPU dissident disturbances leading to gross human rights abuses. This paper addressed how reconciliation was narrowly defined to mean mending strained relations between ZANU-PF and the Rhodesia Front (RF) led by Ian Smith. The policy of reconciliation, indeed, excluded other black nationalist parties that rivalled ZANU-PF prior to 1980 such as United African National ongress (UANC) led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Zimbabwe African National Union Ndonga (ZANU Ndonga) led by Ndabaningi

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Aaron Rwodzi is working as a Senior History Lecturer, Catholic University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe. The author’s areas of research interest include, but are not limited to, social and cultural and political history, race, ethnicity, governance issues and democracy. Contemporary history with a bias towards power politics is another research area the author has so much passion for. This article contributes significantly towards our understanding of the historiographical relevance of the pitfalls of the policy of reconciliation espoused at Lancaster House in 1979. This article also provides a broader picture of the challenges to democratic governance and national identity in Zimbabwe since independence and how they are predicated on international diplomacy. Above all, this article can effectively be used to evaluate issues around reconciliation, justice and peace efforts in African countries that attained independence from their colonial masters through protracted armed liberation struggles.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The Lancaster House Agreement of 1979 that ended war in Rhodesia was influenced by the Cold War confrontation between the “Communist World” and the “Free World”. Post-colonial reconstruction in Zimbabwe after the fifteen years’ war required reconciliation and democracy. The British conciliation efforts at Lancaster sought to preserve white privilege and forestall radical changes that would jeopardize the economic status quo in a nation already racially, historically and ethnically polarized by war. This article illuminates the reconciliation historiography and analyses the historiographical relevance of the pitfalls of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. It shows how the fault lines inherent in the Lancaster Agreement, apart from engendering post-independence hostilities (like the Gukurahundi fiasco), created the Mugabe personality cult. Lord Carrington’s civic nationalism couched in reconciliation was inapplicable in an ethnically and racially fragmented Zimbabwe and so proved worthless for post-colonial nation building.
Sithole and trivialized their significance in postcolonial reconstruction endeavours. It therefore precisely analysed how party rivalries in the 1980 general elections won by ZANU-PF were illuminated in the post-independence discourses primarily because the reconciliation policy focused on black-white relations to the exclusion of other black political rivals. ZANU-PF manoeuvres towards a one-party state after co-opting ZAPU in the 1987 Unity Accord and the enfeeblement of ZANU Ndonga and UANC were discussed. The quest for a one-party state that seemed more likely after the co-option of ZAPU and the reasons for failure are also a key aspect of this work.

Subjects: Contemporary History; Social & Cultural History; Political History

Keywords: Mugabeism; reconciliation; false start; postcolonial; gukurahundi

1. Introduction

The Central African Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland collapsed in 1963 as a result of African nationalism. In Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the dissolution was followed by African independence from Britain in 1964. Events in Southern Rhodesia, where white interests, unlike in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, were paramount, moved in the opposite direction. Ian Smith, who had just assumed the leadership of the Rhodesia Front as a hardliner, imprisoned all nationalist leaders such as Robert Mugabe, Ndabaningi Sithole, Joshua Nkomo, Leopold Takawira among many others and declared white independence popularly referred to as the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on 11 November 1965. The country became known as Rhodesia. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) condemned UDI and imposed sanctions on Rhodesia as its first case of sanctions since its establishment in 1945 (Hove & Chingono, 2013, p. 6).

The decision by Ian Smith to unilaterally declare UDI in response to Britain’s reluctance to grant independence to Rhodesia under white minority rule plunged the nation into a deep crisis that saw ZANU and ZAPU nationalists pitted in an armed struggle with Rhodesian government forces (Mlambo, 2005, p. 148). The fifteen years’ conflict prompted a negotiated constitutional settlement at Lancaster in London in 1979. There was increasing pressure on the Rhodesian government to accept the inevitability of political change from white minority to African majority rule. The Lancaster Conference was premised on promoting dialogue between Rhodesian authorities and leaders of the fighting forces of ZANU and ZAPU and can be argued to have been a culmination of international sanctions, intensified guerrilla insurgency inside the country and mounting international pressure. Of importance to note was the fact that this was all happening in a post-World War II era of the Cold War between the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviets Socialist Republic (USSR) both of which had not participated in the colonisation of African territory but had developed into superpowers. The initiative for decolonisation and democratic rule fell onto these two superpowers. Therefore, the request for negotiations at Lancaster was an attempt by Britain to address a failed case of British decolonisation due to the rebellious Rhodesia Front. A solution to the Rhodesian crisis had to be found in order to restore Britain’s pre-eminence, and that required reconciling the interests of African nationalists with those of the white settlers in Rhodesia.

This research article discusses the fundamental flaws engendered by the Lancaster House Constitutional Talks as precursors to the creation of Mugabe’s personality cult after the collapse of the reconciliation policy. It takes stock of ethnic and racial relations that existed in Zimbabwe after the attainment of independence in 1980. It critiques the policy of reconciliation that was openly declared to bring together former warring parties. It was highly improbable for unity to prevail in a country where groups of people defined in ethnic and racial terms had been fighting each other for fifteen years to quickly realise the need for reconciliation, especially when the
wounds of the war were still fresh and when emotions were also still too high to forgive and forget. This was despite the Prime Minister elect’s statement of forgiveness for past wrong doings and what seemed to be a passionate call for reconciliation between former enemies.

The Lancaster House Agreement provided for a national policy of reconciliation upon the attainment of political independence. This was so in the light of the twenty parliamentary seats the black government that came into power would reserve for the white community whose economic interests were to remain protected under the new dispensation. The Lancaster House Agreement that became the independence constitution in itself, safeguarded white minority interests and entrenched conservatism in terms of property rights. The key discussion point is whether the then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, made the reconciliation pronouncement because it, to him and the ruling ZANU-PF party, was necessary, or there was no choice under the prevailing political and economic order. At the stage of implementation, the concept “reconciliation” was narrowly defined and appears to have excluded other black political rivals from the process. This article examined and evaluated the efficacy of the policy of reconciliation.

2. Background and conceptual framework

Most countries paralysed by war have had to grapple with issues of bringing together social, religious and political organisations that did not previously see eye to eye. Reconciliation efforts in Mozambique between Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) and Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) from 1975 onwards remained inconclusive. Germany and South Africa in this study represent the approaches adopted to bring together populations antagonised by war and conflict over years. For example, Herf (2008) describes how at a public ceremony of reconciliation in Germany in 1985 there was a “sentimental equalization of all victims of the [Second World] war” and states that it was part of a wider rehabilitation of the SS within a narrative of western resistance to [Soviet] Bolshevism. Public rituals such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings in South Africa and the Bitburg memorial service in Germany are regarded as complex mnemonic readjustments designed to defuse political discord by denying the ideological reasons for the initial conflict.

Wilson (2000) focuses his attention on the role of the (TRC) in reconciliation endeavours in South Africa after the apartheid era whose task was to reformulate “justice” and establish a unified and uncontested administrative authority. He intimates that the notion of reconciliation embedded in human rights is the discursive linchpin in the centralizing project of post-apartheid governance (Wilson, 2000, p. 78). In South Africa, the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1994 was mandated to the TRC to investigate gross violations of human rights, defined as “the killing, abductions, torture or severe ill-treatment of any person between 1 March 1960 and 5 December 1993” (Krog, 1998; Sarkin, 1998; Wilson, 2000). The Truth Commission held the dominant view that reconciliation in South Africa, in light of the rainbow character of its diverse population, was only possible if an amalgam of transitional human rights values and a Christian ethic of forgiveness and redemption were employed to deal with post-apartheid development. For this reason, Human Rights Violations (HRVs) commissioners reiterated that all pain suffered during the struggle against apartheid or in defence of it was equal regardless of class, race, religion or political affiliation whether one was white, black, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), ANC comrade or other (Wilson, 2000). Since everyone felt the same pain regardless of the source of the pain, no moral distinction was drawn on the basis of what action the person was engaged in at the time.

The moral equalizing, a strategy used in dealing with the post Nazi political order in Germany, was borrowed and applied to South Africa as well. The strategy is ordinarily adopted in reconciling post war regimes so that public identification with one side in the conflict is avoided.

Of course, this approach has met with its own challenges in South Africa. For example, reconciliation in Boipatong was problematic in the sense that the African traditional neighbourhood court system rejected the TRC’s humanitarian views of human rights and opted for a more retributive view of justice (Wilson, 2000) that derived from their tradition. The US historian, David Blight, in his analysis of the
American Civil War, points out that despite the polarisation it caused to the American society, there was that desire for reconciliation after the war among former adversaries (Herf, 2008). This desire for reconciliation, indeed, fostered apologia and myth more than an honest confrontation with the difficult past (Herf, 2008). Whilst reconciliation is worthwhile in terms of our definitional conception of it or in terms of what the likely benefits from its successful implementation are, it remained hollow in Zimbabwe because it was based on a very hurried Lancaster House Agreement that was converted into a constitution. The mere mention of the word “constitution” to refer to the talks at Lancaster served to give the deliberations an aura of respectability and inviolability, notwithstanding the so many errors of commission and omission on the part of the colonising power represented by Lord Carrington.

In Zimbabwe, voting since the 1980 elections, has remained ethnic despite appeals by key political actors for the electorate to think “nationally.” Zimbabwe came into existence from a protracted armed struggle after the 1980 elections. It had to reckon with issues around identity-making and state-building because of its multi-ethnic and multiracial character. In 1977, Mugabe whilst still in Mozambique, stated that a future independent Zimbabwe was a natural Shona nation whose roots lay in precolonial polities such as Great Zimbabwe, Mutapa Empire and the Rozvi State. Shona-speaking groups were Zezuru, Korekore, Ndau, Kalanga, Karanga, and Manyika. According to Mazanire (2009, p. 1–28), the word ‘Shona is a colonial construct used to describe people who spoke intelligible languages and shared certain cultural traits. Other minor groups included the Sotho, Venda, Chikunda, Xhosa, Sena, Nambya, Hwesa, Tonga, Shangani, Barwe and the Nyanja (Chewa) (Mlambo, 2013, p. 55). Given this diversity, the armed conflict must have sowed seeds of deep racial and ethnic hostility that proved impossible to overcome after independence (Mlambo, 2013, p. 57).

The absence of a national identity in Zimbabwe impeded reconciliation efforts. However, there are many more factors that militated against the construction of a homogeneous national identity and lasting reconciliation. These include the country's ethnic diversity, the colonial legacy of racism, autocratic intolerance of political dissent, a racialized, unequal socioeconomic regime, the armed struggle that tore the fabric of Zimbabwean society for two decades and the land ownership question that remained dangerously unresolved for twenty years (Mlambo, 2013, p. 52). It was through people’s ability to develop that identity consciousness that reconciliation endeavours would find good breeding ground. Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009, p. xviii) lamented that the earlier optimism by the Zimbabwe nationalist leaders that an unquestioned national identity would emerge out of the crucible of the anti-colonial struggle was little more than a fantasy. In the 1980 elections in Zimbabwe, political loyalties fell along ethnic lines and this gave Mugabe a larger base of support than Joshua Nkomo. Mugabe won 57 seats in Mashonaland against Nkomo’s 20 seats in all Matabeleland (Kriger, 2005) a evidence of the polarisation of the Zimbabwean society along ethnic categories broadly defined as Shona and Ndebele. Such practices continue to render Zimbabwe politically volatile to ethnically motivated manoeuvres towards secession as is currently the case of Matabeleland in Zimbabwe.

It stands out very clearly that the people in Matabeleland were either not affected by the policy of reconciliation or they regarded it as nonsense as evidenced by Gukurahundi, which was a state sponsored campaign against PF-ZAPU and its Ndebele support base in as early as 1982 (Coltart, 2016). As Tapiwa Mashakada (26 April 2017) noted in an interview, beyond 1980, the nationalist movement that gained political power had no economic or governance programme to roll out the promises of independence and one area of deficit was governance. He further argues that in the first few years after independence, people still gave the government the benefit of doubt, were still euphoric of independence as evidenced by the policy of reconciliation or it regarded it as nonsense as evidenced by Gukurahundi, which was a state sponsored campaign against PF-ZAPU and its Ndebele support base in as early as 1982 (Coltart, 2016). As Tapiwa Mashakada (26 April 2017) noted in an interview, beyond 1980, the nationalist movement that gained political power had no economic or governance programme to roll out the promises of independence and one area of deficit was governance. He further argues that in the first few years after independence, people still gave the government the benefit of doubt, were still euphoric of independence and did not require to think that the regime was a rogue one (Mashakada, 26 April 2017).

In another interview, Chisi (7 April 2017) critiques the intentions of ZANU-PF soon after independence, and argues that the party’s focus after independence was on consolidating its power and eliminating opposition politics, hence the use of the Fifth Brigade to eliminate ZAPU and its Ndebele sympathisers through a carefully orchestrated Gukurahundi to ensure a one-party state
framework in post-independence Zimbabwe. There were allegations of cheating before elections took place in 1980. Chung holds the view that ZANU-PF cheated when it violated terms of the Lancaster Conference that required that all soldiers had to be put into Assembly Points by keeping half of its well-trained combatants outside in case the Lancaster Agreement broke down (Chung, 30 June 2016). It therefore suggests that the Lancaster Agreement was shrouded in deep suspicion and reconciliation after independence was not an event as portended in a political reconciliation speech by the then Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, but rather, a process to evolve over a long period of time through concerted efforts by all and sundry.

Reconciliation is a process of gradually building broad social relationships between communities alienated by sustained and widespread violence so that over time they can negotiate the realities and compromises of a new, shared sociopolitical reality (David Bloomfield, 2006). By implication, reconciliation is a process that should proceed gradually and cannot be fast tracked. Ingredients of reconciliation are peace, justice, truth and mercy (David Bloomfield, 2006). Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru (2002, p. 79) views reconciliation as a process whereby entire communities begin to reorient themselves from the adversarial antagonistic relations of war to more respect-based relations of cooperation. Mavondo (2009, p. 3) regards reconciliation as a process that reestablishes love and understanding between two or more estranged parties and it requires an honest and earnest reappraisal of the initial cause of the conflict with a view to finding a genuine solution. He identifies two reconciliation models: reconciliation with justice and reconciliation without justice (Mavondo, 2009). This research places Zimbabwe in the latter model where reconciliation failed in the first decade after independence because the colonial structures that perpetrated injustice were retained by the new Black regime and the cause of the long-drawn-out conflict, for example, the land issue, was ignored at the Lancaster House Constitutional Conference.

The author elected to use the word “constitutional” to suggest that drawing a constitution for Zimbabwe took precedence over the causes from which the conflict originated in the first place. Unreconciled relationships built on distrust, fear and suspicion do not provide a firm basis for the practice of democracy and have the potential to destroy or dishonour human rights and democratic structures (Bloomfield, 2006). In a bid to bring about racial reconciliation, Mugabe, in 1987, appointed eleven whites into parliament (Herbst, 1988) and that white representation helped in the sustenance of the existing colonial structures of oppression (Ingham-Thorpe, 1997).

However, it is unrealistic to ask victims and survivors of gross violations of human rights to reconcile in the absence of justice (Raftopoulos & Savage, 2004). It is suggested here that justice precedes peace and that the process itself is not linear but uneven, requiring restraint, generosity of spirit, empathy and perseverance (Raftopoulos & Savage, 2004). This critique used the above criteria to analyse and evaluate the efficacy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe soon after independence.

The current democracy debate in Zimbabwe is strongly linked to a false take-off when the ruling elite presented reconciliation as an event rather than a process. The term democracy operates at two levels: behavioural and structural. At behavioural level it means meaningful completion, [popular] participation and the existence of civil liberties, whereas at structural level it entails a functional or credible electoral system, multiparty organs and an independent legislature and organs (Bratton & Masunungure, 2008). The universally accepted description of a democratic state is that in which there is political pluralism, existence of many parties and workers' unions, fair, open, free and democratic elections held periodically, organized to enable the populace to choose their leaders freely (Obi, 2001). In Zimbabwe, multiparty elections have ever since been viewed as an instrument to effect political change. Bratton's and Masunungure's characterization of democracy was employed to problematize the operation of democracy and the efficacy of reconciliation since independence in 1980. The global definition of the same concept by Obi (2001) was also useful in highlighting the African argument about African democracy which is often at variance, or conflictual, with the global conception of democracy. The colonially inspired historical background
of Zimbabwe, the protracted liberation struggle, its colonial inheritance and the implantation of colonial institutions informed the postcolonial political practices and the degree of open political competition that the ZANU-PF government allowed in the country.

3. Methodology
This is a qualitative research. Data collection was done through extensive reading and analyzing a wide array of existing documents on the subject of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Attempts were made to compare reconciliation processes in different countries such as Zimbabwe, USA, Germany and South Africa. This enabled the researcher to make reasoned conclusions about reconciliation modalities, taking into consideration, the peculiarities in each individual country. Data was also extracted from journal articles, newspapers and publications accessed online and the content was analysed. Oral interviews were held with key political figures from ZANU-PF and MDC and Ministers of government Ministries conveniently selected. Two focus group discussions were undertaken. The first group comprised five academics drawn from The Catholic University of Zimbabwe and the University of Zimbabwe, both from Harare. The second focus group was also made up of five participants who were also conveniently sampled from the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC).

The author chose to have discussions with ZCBZ on account of its involvement in the attempt to create “The Zimbabwe we want” which is the heading of one of its most read handbooks. Another reason is that the Catholic Church has played a pivotal role in exposing the horrors and human rights abuses during the Gukurahundi era and thereafter and also Father Mukonori intervened to persuade Mugabe to resign in 2017 when there was political impasse in Zimbabwe as soldiers and protesters marched into the streets of Harare demanding his resignation in an event described as a military coup.

Reports by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Human Rights groups partly assisted in exposing the shortsightedness of the Zimbabwean 1980 reconciliation pronouncement that lacked so much at the level of implementation especially during the first decade of independence. The data collected was synthesized and analysed thematically around the structured and unstructured questions asked. Some of the insights the author made in this research were derived from participant observation done during data collection. For example, the author was privileged to attend two political rallies in Marondera and Harare by the MDC and ZANU-PF respectively where ethnicity was politicised to the point of war.

4. Discussion and analysis

4.1. Animosity rooted in history
The Patriotic Front (PF) between ZAPU and ZANU was formed on 10 October 1976 (National Archives of Zimbabwe). The stakeholders believed that the alliance would work towards diffusing sources of tension arising from the different ideological orientation and wartime strategic considerations between the two parties and that the revolutionary wings of ZANLA and ZIPRA would be united so that they could be seen as revolutionary wings fighting for a common purpose. Joshua Nkomo was convinced that this was not going to be a marriage of convenience, but that it was a reality of people who once worked together and so had realized that working separately to fight British colonialism could not produce sufficient TNT into this rock to crack it (NAZ). From this development, ZANLA and ZIPRA were placed under a single military command known as Zimbabwe People’s Army (ZIPA). However, the union of the two parties became a truce and short-lived as cooperation from 1975 to 1976 ceased when ZANLA fighters discriminately killed ZIPRA fighters at Mhorogoro and Mgagao in Tanzania (Chung, 2015). ZIPRA and ZANLA guerrillas killed each other when they were placed in the same camps in Libya (Bhebe, 2004).

It must be remembered that ZANU had split from ZAPU in 1963 when the ZAPU youths that included Ndabaningi Sithole, Enos Nkala, Robert Mugabe, Leopold Takawira and Edgar Tekere were all high ranking Shona personalities (Muswira, 2014) who protested against Joshua Nkomo’s leadership, and in particular, his persistent inclination towards constitutional talks with the white...
settler regime that did not yield substantial and positive results for the Blacks. Possible reasons for the split had much to do with leadership wrangles, the most ideal ideology to pursue against the background of a recalcitrant white government and ethnic cleavages within the party (Musiwaro, 2014). Therefore, from 1963, ZAPU and ZANU operated as two separate liberation movements, each with its own liberation army. Right from its inception, ZANU comprising the energetic youths, resolved to engage the settler regime by military means as a result of failed negotiation processes that had happened in the past, whereas ZAPU was still captivated by its firm belief in constitutional negotiations to bring majority rule to Zimbabwe, and that the armed struggle would be the last resort. This was the position of the two parties before Ian Smith, representing the Rhodesia Front that was racist and exclusivist, came to power in 1964. Chikerema, in response to observations on the struggle, intimated that the decision to undertake the armed struggle did not start in 1964 following the detention of nationalist leaders, but rather after the collapse of the 1963 Constitutional Conference (NAZ).

In order to weaken and silence black nationalism, all key members of ZAPU and ZANU were put into detention camps in Gonakudzingwa and Sikombela. The move did not deter meaningful correspondence between and among people in detention and those who remained outside to coordinate clandestine nationalist activities. The acting president of ZAPU in the 1970s, James Chikerema stated that the objectives of the party in sending cadres to neighbouring and sympathetic socialist countries for military training was not for waging a guerilla warfare, but to carry out acts of sabotage considered relevant to bring forth fear and despondency to the white settlers in Rhodesia (NAZ). Information could reach Nkomo in Gonakudzingwa restriction area through the agency of white liberals (Ranger, 2005) who regarded him and his party as less racist that ZANU (Chung, 2015).

The split between ZAPU and ZANU resulted in sporadic factional fights particularly in Salisbury, now Harare. A distinguished journalist, Stanlake Samkange, and chairman of the Highfields high density suburb ZANU branch in 1964, expressed his dismay at the absence of love of one’s fellow countrymen demonstrated by the youths which he regarded as the number one principle of his party because African was murdering African and being proud of it (Ranger, 2005). Each of the two parties sought to portray itself as truly representing black nationalism by outbidding the other. The support base for the nationalist cause were urban areas like Salisbury and Bulawayo where the contest for support took ruthless forms. This was also because ZAPU was strongest in Matabeleland and Salisbury (Keller & Rothchild, 1987). A distinctive depiction of ZANU’s aggressive nationalism was its attempt to obliterate all political rivals and to position itself as the sole guarantor of national goals by labeling ZAPU as a party of traitors seeking to betray the attainment of the so-called national goals. Nkomo was caricatured as recanting, revisionist and recoiling whereas Sithole, the ZANU leader, was hailed as the leader of all patriots before he, too, became a traitor after renouncing the language of negotiation and peaceful transition at a time its rival, ZAPU, had already embraced the idea of war as a practical necessity, and when its members in urban areas especially, were being killed, physically attacked and assaulted for belonging to ZAPU. ZANU as a liberation movement engaged in a Manichean struggle which ought to end in an absolute victory, freedom or death, and

The ZANU attacks on ZAPU supporters in 1965 provided a good example of its patriotic history, where ZAPU was demonized and ZANU was exalted for its love of the country (Ranger, 2005). In ZANU’s booklet “Traitors do much damage to National Goals” ZAPU was portrayed as a club of traitors (Independent, 18 February 2005) and ZANU, the true representative of the black people in the country. The decision by ZAPU to fight a guerilla war could have been necessitated by the realization that ZANU’s use of demonizing propaganda stifled its organisational capacity in terms of recruitment, visibility and legitimacy. It was suicidal for Nkomo to harp on the language of negotiation and peaceful transition at a time its rival, ZANU, had already embraced the idea of war as a practical necessity, and when its members in urban areas especially, were being killed, physically attacked and assaulted for belonging to ZAPU. ZANU as a liberation movement engaged in a Manichean struggle which ought to end in an absolute victory, freedom or death, and
proclaimed the certainty of military victory (Ottaway, 1991). The need for ZAPU military engagement was further reinforced by the failure of the Geneva Constitutional conference in the early 1970s during which time it was brought to the attention of detained nationalists that their fellow comrades were being hanged by Smith at the rate of 5 people every Monday (NAZ). The futility of negotiating with the British made Nkomo to consider negotiating with them in the context of war “... as the only way to eject a thief that had broken into the house.” (NAZ).

On the other hand, the release of Mugabe from prison in 1974 as a result of the détente initiative led by Botha, the South African president and Kaunda, the Zambian president, coincided with a leadership struggle within ZANU. Ndabaningi Sithole, as president of ZANU and under compelling prison conditions, renounced the use of violence in order to salvage his release from prison and this translated to ZANU abandoning its military strategy altogether. The renunciation of violence by Sithole (Laakso, 2003), a revolutionary party leader, and his subsequent release from prison, met with mixed feelings as to make him unpopular with the party that he had presided over since its formative years.

The election of Robert Mugabe to replace Ndabaningi Sithole as president of ZANU has been debated in political circles. Some members were not convinced that Sithole had sold-out by renouncing the use of violence and so continued to regard him as their legitimate leader. The military leadership, not the ordinary guerillas, discarded Sithole as a sell-out and decided to elect Mugabe instead. As Chung (2015) postulates, the importance of the military in fulfilling the role of “kingmaker” was associated with Solomon Mujuru, whose war name was Rex Nhongo, who threw his weight behind Mugabe rather than Sithole during the 1974–5 power struggle. The controversies surrounding Mugabe’s election as ZANU president in Mozambique informed military influence on decisions relating to democracy and power after ZANU-PF’s election victory in 1980.

According to Laakso (2003) thousands in ZANU camps in Mozambique were detained for plotting to overthrow Mugabe in 1978. This suggests that the majority in ZANU and its military wing, ZANLA, did not support Mugabe’s leadership right from the start and continued to view his leadership as an imposition from the party revolutionary leadership. The leadership wrangles in ZANU around 1978 have been linked to the mysterious death of the ZANLA High Commander, Josiah Tongogara, in 1979 on Boxing Day in a car crash. Although no documented sources exist to shed light on the circumstances leading to his death, he is understood to have mobilized ZANLA guerillas against the idea muted by ZANU to break away from PF and to campaign in the 1980 elections as a separate party from ZAPU.

It is intimated that psychological warfare and manipulation of views and perceptions became part of ZANU-PF political culture and the inclusion of the military in the voting for leadership led to the dominance of militarists within ZANU during the war (Chung, 2015). A precedent was set that the army in future would determine who should lead the country and who should not. From the support that Mugabe got from a war general who was only second-in-command to Josiah Tongogara, it was not so surprising that the revolutionary solidarity between Mugabe and Mujuru continued in government until the latter’s retirement from the army. It therefore becomes imperative to critique the role of the military in sustaining ZANU-PF hegemonial power in post-colonial Zimbabwe and in creating conditions that are not conducive for democratic participation of all citizens regardless of political affiliation.

The British government did not take Smith’s UDI lightly and it was under pressure from the UNSC to make him conform to British decolonization policy at the time. It was for that reason that the UNSC imposed its first ever economic sanctions on Rhodesia in 1965 (Hove & Chingono, 2013). In a bid to establish what blacks felt about the political dispensation that was ushered in by the white declared independence, Britain set up a commission later known as the Pearce Commission in 1970–1. The commission was tasked with investigating, through conducting a referendum, whether or not Africans in Rhodesia consented to the constitutional proposals that were calculated to
legitimize Smith’s UDI and entrench white economic and political superiority. The ZANU president at the time, Ndabaningi Sithole, and other incarcerated nationalists, denounced the commission whilst in prison as another fraudulent constitutional proposal requiring African decision (NAZ).

To voice their condemnation of the commission, ZAPU and ZANU, both of which were almost paralysed and politically obscure, temporarily re-emerged as the old ANC under Bishop Abel Muzorewa. ANC successfully campaigned for a “no” vote to the Anglo-Rhodesian proposals because it failed to pass the test of acceptability unless on the basis of one man one vote principle (NAZ). From the foregoing, Muzorewa had his part to play during the struggle in the sense that he united traditionally hostile groups under the name ANC which later on became UANC when both the ZANU and ZAPU leadership could not do so from inside detention camps. Muzorewa was responsible for the recruitment of military cadres particularly in Manicaland around 1975 who would be trained for guerilla warfare in Mozambique, Tanzania and other eastern socialist countries. He became an asset not to be dispensed with in the objective re-interpretation of the anti-colonial struggle and post-independence discourses in Zimbabwe.

The armed liberation struggle intensified and forced Smith to cooperate with moderate African leaders who were within the country. These included chief Jeremiah Chirau, chief Ndiweni, Ndabaningi Sithole and Bishop Abel Tendekai Muzorewa. Smith hoped by this to have sanctions imposed on Rhodesia removed and recognition internationally granted to Rhodesia through an internal settlement in which other black parties inside the country were participants in the 1979 elections to the exclusion of ZAPU and ZANU. This settlement gave birth to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia after Muzorewa’s UANC won convincingly. The results of the Internal Settlement elections gave UANC 51 seats, ZANU Ndonga 12 seats and Ndiweni’s UNFP, 9 seats (Mandaza, 1986). The PF, conspicuous by its absence from the internal arrangement, did not recognize Muzorewa’s government and so continued executing the armed guerilla struggle. The international community did not give legitimacy to the new creation either, but instead piled up pressure on both Smith and Muzorewa compelling them to accept the inclusion, in the all-parties elections, of the fighting parties of the PF as a precondition for finality on the constitutional crisis in Rhodesia. The PF delegation was negotiating from a position of weakness because quite a lot of factors militated against it. For example, Lancaster House was not a neutral venue, worst still for guerillas clad in socialist guerilla combat regalia and ironically had the odour of the outdoor after spending so many years in the bush. Many of them lacked negotiation skills and were intimidated into submission.

The Smith-Muzorewa delegation participated in the negotiations from a position of strength because they were representing a government. Muzorewa was still suffering from the euphoria of his electoral victory of 1979 under the Internal Settlement agreement that created Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. He was the Prime Minister representing his country and he challenged the British government to find out why the PF insisted on fighting even when the country had long since attained majority rule under his stewardship. He argued that the conference should centre around considering lifting economic sanctions that he felt were inconsistent with the new dispensation and acknowledging his legitimacy on the basis of the multiparty elections of 1979. It was easy for
Carrington to threaten the PF delegation, but difficult for him to conciliate with a guerrilla delegation. Save for Nkomo and Mugabe who had gained considerable experience in the art of negotiation in the 1976 Geneva Talks, the rest of the PF delegation lacked these skills. Of significance to note from the three months’ conference from September to November 1979 is that the proceedings were in accordance with Carrington’s constitutional proposals which he successfully defended to secure white settler political and economic interests in a black-ruled Zimbabwe after 1980.

It can be argued that the Lancaster House Agreement victimized the PF into submission as Mugabe admitted that he was forced by Carrington’s arm-twisting and Frontline states pressure and that he would have preferred to win the war on the ground in order to dictate his terms without interference on an outright military victory over the Rhodesian forces (Compagnon, 2000). Based on the knock-out military strategy envisaged by FRELIMO in Mozambique in the struggle against Portuguese imperialism, it was anticipated that ZANLA had the military capacity to induce surrender on the Rhodesian military force given the fact that the greater parts of Mashonaland, which form the bulk of the country, had been declared semi-liberated or liberated zones by the time the Lancaster Conference convened in 1979. These areas were firmly under ZANLA control and were also no-go areas for the Rhodesian military.

ZIPRA military operations were confined to Wankie and their campaigns proved disastrous (Chung, 2015) after failing to match the Rhodesian military might. Internationally, ZAPU was the only party recognized as truly revolutionary and its members such as Rex Nhongo and others got their military training in the Soviet Union in 1968 (Chung, 2015; Shubin & Shubin, 2008). The Wankie debacle led to Rex Nhongo’s defection from ZAPU to ZANU (Chung, 2015). It becomes very important to note that ZAPU, after the Wankie fiasco, realized the futility of escalating an armed struggle against a visibly invincible Rhodesian force. It was not equipped with guerilla tactics but its cadres had mastered the art of conventional warfare, a situation that made it to husband Soviet-made military ware for future use against ZANU in 1979 in what was to be code-named ‘Operation Zero Hour (Chung, 2015). According to this plan, ZAPU was to wait for ZANU to defeat the Rhodesian army through guerilla warfare [because of its inability to execute that kind of warfare] then it would march to take over with a strong Soviet-backed conventional army (Chung, 2015).

The following observations must be made at this stage. Electoral politics in Zimbabwe can be said to have begun in 1979 when blacks for the first time were accorded the opportunity to vote for candidates of their choice in the internal settlement elections that brought about Zimbabwe-Rhodesia under Bishop Muzorewa. Even if the PF of ZAPU and ZANU lambasted the elections, at least the ordinary urban citizenry who participated exercised their democratic right to vote which had been denied them since colonization in 1890. From the conference, it was resolved that ZAPU and ZANU would campaign as a single party under the banner of the Patriotic Front, but ZANU decided to dishonor the arrangement and proceeded to do so as ZANU-PF.

The most possible reason for ZANU’s decision to flout the agreement was that it was clearly visible on the ground in the greater part of the country, and its freedom fighters, ZANLA, had scored a lot of military successes using the Maoist fighting guerilla tactics. ZANU succeeded in making the struggle “a people’s war” as the support it garnered throughout the country far outstripped that of ZAPU. ZANU-PF’s superior support base over all other parties, coupled with a massive guerilla recruitment drive influenced the decision not to want to partner with ZAPU because it was confident of an electoral victory that appeared self-evident. Nkomo’s party became known as PF-ZAPU. This development indeed, confirmed earlier fears played down by Nkomo in 1976 that the PF would degenerate into a marriage of inconvenience.

The multiparty elections of 1980 quickly succeeded the 1979 Internal Settlement elections and PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF undertook extensive campaigns before the election date. Other registered parties in the electoral contest included NDU under Chiota. UNFP under Chief Ndiweni, ZDP under
James Chikerema, UP under AM, NFZ under Mandaza and UANC under Muzorewa. PF-ZAPU was not permitted during the time to freely campaign in Mashonaland for the reason that it did not operate in the area during the liberation struggle (Musiwaro, 2014). Elite cohesion within ZANU-PF came mechanically in a desperate bid to win the 1980 elections, but cloaked the deep-seated ethnic and other latent philosophical considerations that had the potential to expose the inherent cleavages of its party heavyweights. ZANU-PF was also able to sustain its cohesion in the first few years after independence because of their deep distrust of the white political elite and their African allies of the internal settlement (Sithole & Makumbe, 1997).

In terms of the British decolonization tradition, Rhodesia had to be placed in the hands of Britain for it to facilitate a peaceful political transition from white minority rule to black majority rule and Lord Soames was sent as the last British Governor of the country to oversee the process. This move was an acknowledgement that Smith had erred in declaring white independence just at a time when black nationalists in neighbouring Zambia and Malawi had attained black majority rule after the dissolution of the Central African Federation in 1963, thus plunging the whole country in a protracted fifteen-year war that could have been avoided. The UNO also sent its troops to ensure that the campaign trajectory went smoothly and that there was no political intimidation across all contesting parties. The election was characterised by sporadic violence and mutual accusations of intimidation (Smith & Nothling, 1993) reminiscent of the era of the 1960 s. Such mechanisms were imperative for the victor to win international acclaim, and for the losers not to dispute the results of the elections.

Another important consideration was that the original Westminster model, from which the Lancaster House Constitution was drawn, bestowed tremendous or concentrated power in the hands of the president (Compagnon, 2000). The results of the 1980 general multiparty elections were as follows: ZANU-PF (Mugabe) 57 seats; PF-ZAPU (Nkomo) 20 seats; United African National Congress (UANC) (Muzorewa) 3 seats; Zimbabwe Democratic Party (ZDP) (Chikerema) 0 seats; NFZ (Mandaza) 0 seats; National Democratic Party (NDU) (Chiota) 0 seats; United National Freedom Party (UNFP) (Ndiweni) 0 seats (Kriger, 2005).

From the foregoing, the 1980 elections ushered in a unity or coalition government that was predominantly ZANU-PF, although a few other members from PF-ZAPU and the Rhodesia Front were allocated posts in the new government. The naming of political parties that were formed to contest in the elections was indicative of the country’s espousal of democratic practices and participation. It should also be noted that only the PF parties and the UANC appeared to have been representing the aspirations of the black people because all other parties failed to secure even a single seat. In terms of the Lancaster Agreement, the white settler community had twenty reserved seats that were not contested as a result of the determined effort by the British to preserve a special position for the minority white group in the new political dispensation (Ottaway, 1991). However, the Lancaster House Agreement that had made the PF concede to a multiparty political strategy had to contend with the political, ideological, ethnic and factional permutations now loaded into a new era of black government. Under a system of Proportional Representation (PR), all the parties that won seats in the 1980 elections combined to form a coalition government in the spirit of multiparty democracy. PR worked well for the UANC and the former Rhodesian whites because it guaranteed their participation in the new government. Whites were comfortable in the sense that their political and economic interests were protected.

Mugabe, who became the Prime Minister elect, was dreaded by western countries for his anti-western or anti-capitalist rhetoric during the course of the armed struggle for liberation. When the war escalated in Rhodesia by 1977, Mugabe’s portrayal by western countries as a ruthless fanatic is said to have consistently and greatly improved the more he met with American officials (Levy, 1988, p. 3). The US and Britain decided to revive efforts to bring majority rule and independence to Rhodesia by engaging in consultations with leaders of the fighting forces in Rhodesia. Andrew Young, the US Ambassador to the United Nations under the Carter Administration in 1977, was
shocked at discovering that Mugabe was much more like a British School master than a notorious terrorist (Levy, 1988). This sudden positive approach western countries as well as the US had on Mugabe was due to his intellectual and reasoning capacity and that explains the high-level respect these powers had on Mugabe when he assumed office in 1980. It seems they did not want to wrong him that early. However, they were equally shocked about the 20 000 victims killed in the gukura\textsc{hundi} terror campaign orchestrated by the state-led Fifth Brigade between 1982 and 1987 (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace [CCJP], 1997).

In spite of the fact that Zimbabwe became a multiparty state after the 1980 elections, the tendency by ZANU-PF to emulate successful socialist revolutions in countries such as Cuba and Mozambique clashed head-on with political and economic realities on the ground. Implementing socialism or radically transforming an economy that had remained substantially capitalist would impact negatively on the transition process and raise white suspicion with the intentions of ZANU-PF. (Francois et al., 2015) note that in Africa political power assumes a winner-takes-all from respect to wealth and resources, patronage, prestige and prerogative of office. This observation was soon to find expression and meaning in Zimbabwe's inter-party postcolonial historiography. The government had to grapple with a dilemma of balancing its populist strategies, for example, its promise to re-distribute land equally and equitably to the landless blacks, against those of whites who had chosen to remain in the country after Mugabe's pronouncement of a policy of reconciliation. As Dorman (2006, p. 1087) notes, reconciliation showed how a radical state under the stewardship of ZANU-PF could still protect white commercial interests and maintain a privileged economic lifestyle for elites. This same spirit of reconciliation that was nurtured at Lancaster in 1979 can be used to explain why Mugabe preferred to appoint Ian Smith’s Rhodesia Front successor, Chris Anderson, to Ian Smith himself to his quasi multiracial Cabinet (Chung, 2016).

There was also need for the placement of divergent national and self-interests of the new ruling elite, in principle, guided by the socialist philosophy that ZANU-PF espoused at the height of the armed struggle in 1977 (Hanlon, 1984). The view that the western world expected Muzorewa to win the elections and Mugabe’s election victory was least expected (Smith & Nothling, 1993) was based on a complete misreading of the superiority ZANU-PF enjoyed in the bulk of the countryside where the peasant majority resided. Multiparty voting that gave birth to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in 1979 did not involve the rural communities and this made the UANC a less credible party in the eyes of these rural people. Equally significant to consider was the reality that ZANU-PF had actually liberated the greater part of the country before the Lancaster House negotiations took place. However, the 1980 elections smacked of ethnic voting. Lord Soames noted that Nkomo unavailingly tried to cast himself as a national leader but tribalism proved too strong for him (Soames, 1980). Rich as cited in (Musiwaro, 2014) provides the salience of ethnicity during the 1980 elections when he articulates the sentiments echoed by Stanlake Samkange who was then a Zimbabwe Democratic Party (ZDP) candidate, that the elections were clear tribalism and there was no other way of interpreting the election results. He further posited that the Mashonaland people would never have Nkomo and the Matabeleland people would never have a Shona. This ethnic component needs to be problematized in the context of postcolonial Zimbabwean political historiography.

5. The 1980 unity government and national integration efforts

The Lancaster House Constitution provided for a Prime Minister (PM) wielding executive powers and a President with ceremonial powers. Mugabe, the PM, was in favour of a one party state upon assuming power in 1980, but was constrained to declare it by the Lancaster Agreement which entrenched multipartyism (Skålnes, 1993). There was to be free political competition periodically, and the practice, if sustained, would lay the basis for the democratic participation of the citizenry in governance matters. The unity government retained the inherited capitalist economic, political and security institutions and this made the political transition peaceful. Land re-distribution, which had been the rallying point
during the liberation struggle, remained on the drawing board because government had to honour property rights as enshrined in the new constitution (O’Malley & Mtimkulu, 1994).

It must be noted that Smith’s regime had strong state control of the economy to counteract UN sanctions, and this was more akin to the socialist policy of the ruling party government of controlling the means of production on behalf of the historically marginalized black people. Characteristically, the inherited economy was robust, dualistic and primarily designed to serve the little white segment (O’Malley & Mtimkulu, 1994). Above all, the major proponents of a socialist transformation of the inherited economy had to reckon with the incompatibility of socialism co-existing with capitalism when no radical change had been made to the economy that remained substantially capitalist. It was for that reason that the socialist transformation had to be compromised, leaving whites to remain in full control of functioning capitalist economy (O’Malley & Mtimkulu, 1994). It can therefore be argued that the reconciliation policy that Mugabe announced had its origins in the Lancaster Agreement which clearly safeguarded settler privilege (Laakso, 2003) by reserving 20 parliamentary seats for them. Reconciliation is defined by the Archbishop, Desmond Tutu, as:

... a process of addressing the legacy of the past violence ... rebuilding the broken relationships ... addressing the pain and suffering of the victim ... bringing back estranged communities ... to find a path to justice, truth and peace (Bloomfield et al., 2003).

The concept suffered many terminological aberrations. The new black elite in the echelons of power realized that maintaining the existing status quo of production relations would be exceptionally beneficial to them in terms of property and wealth accumulation (O’Malley & Mtimkulu, 1994). Put in another way, it was reconciliation with capital, and the avowed rhetorical commitment to socialism succumbed to the predatory aspirations of capital. Reconciliation entailed the government’s acceptance of existing production relations to ensure continuity of production structures (Raftopoulos, 1992). Continued white control of the economy also meant that most of the Africans would not accumulate capital because they were economically marginalized. Chung (2015) summarised the drawbacks induced by reconciliation as follows:

... the retention of settler security institutions meant that the values, systems and processes that the government embodied, including uncritical obedience to authority, use of torture and violence such that the word ‘interrogation’ meant the use of brute force, lack of respect for human rights including extra-judicial killings, remained an integral part of the inheritance ... colonial laws were now laws of the country ... the Rhodesian CIO led by Ken Flower responsible for capturing, torturing and killing freedom fighters ... were ready to teach the tricks of the trade to the newcomers (Chung, 2015).

The policy of reconciliation provided for the retention of white skills and gave Zimbabwe international recognition as a sovereign state. Mugabe had to moderate his image from a tough talking guerrilla fighter to a leader amenable to the politics of compromise and national unity (Moyo, 1992). This thesis contends that the reconciliation policy benefited the few elites in power and the white settler community to a greater extent, much to the disillusionment of the majority blacks. As Moyo (1992) argues, the threats of South Africa’s destabilization manoeuvres, fear of a coup plot by white Rhodesians in the military, police force and security organs together with the challenges of integrating ZANLA and ZIPRA with the Rhodesian army fostered social conditions that required social domination in order for the governing party to secure legitimacy without sacrificing security and stability. This laid the basis for ZANU-PF’s fears which inevitably made open politics after independence in 1980 impossible. All these conditions worked at cross purposes with the spirit of reconciliation which could only exist in principle and in the fulfilment of elite self-interest. It was generally meant to give the elite leverage to the economy in an extractive manner without necessarily addressing legacies of the past.
The broken relations between blacks and whites as a result of many years of colonial oppression were assumed to have been forgotten with the sheer pronouncement of the policy and so remained a time bomb because the spirit and commitment to it was lacking both from the elite and from the whites. It was difficult to wish away the pains and suffering inflicted on the revolutionaries in one quick blush. Therefore, failure to address to core issues such as negotiating about the violence perpetrated by both sides during the colonial era, bringing the perpetrators to book and chatting a path towards sustainable peace through truth and justice, meant that reconciliation was very fragile and could break with the slightest of shakes. In any case, as Machakanja (2010, p. 10) puts it, the success of any reconciliation depends on the extent to which it is inclusive and consultative of all key stakeholders at all levels of society.

The policy of reconciliation insofar as it related to political rivals of ZANU-PF, particularly ZAPU and UANC that lost in the 1980 elections, was so narrowly defined. It was like indicating left and turning right in terms of policy inconsistences regarding ZANU-PF’s former black opponents as evidenced by events in Matabeleland from 1982 up to 1987, the attack on Ndabaningi Sithole leading to his self-imposed exile in USA on allegations that he solicited arms to overthrow the government and the subsequent confiscation of his Porta farm by government in line with the Compulsory Purchase Powers under the new Land Acquisition Act of 1993 (Laakso, 2003) and the persistent demonization of Muzorewa.

Hostilities were further compounded by the discovery of huge arms cache on a farm alleged in 1982 and this was suggestive of a planned armed insurrection against the government. Consequently, coalition politics ended as Joseph Msika, Jim Ntini and Joshua Nkomo were expelled from the Cabinet (Ndakaripa, 2014, p. 29). Of interest to note is the fact that in the midst of the government campaigns in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands Province to eliminate dissidents who were alleged to have the backing of PF-ZAPU, the British government still pinned its hopes on reconciliation by supporting the Mugabe regime financially and regarding the ZAPU-ZANU dichotomy as an inevitable historical dynamic of very little consequence. The Commonwealth remained silent over the massacres in Matabeleland, and the British government led by the Conservative Margret Thatcher increased its financial aid to Zimbabwe by ten million pounds during that period.

In a surprise burial speech at the funeral of Joshua Nkomo in 1999, Mugabe described the disturbances that had taken place in Matabeleland and Midlands as a moment of madness (Rwafa, 2007). It remains to be understood whether the referred madness by Mugabe was associated with ZANU-PF, the Fifth Brigade, dissidents, PF-ZAPU or the government. After the Unity Accord, gukurahundi was unilaterally declared a “closed chapter” to prevent the Ndebele and other victims of the genocidal conflict from seeking redress and compensation (Manganga, 2014). It is argued that on entering the corridors of power, ZANU-PF did not transform itself into a democratic party: the guerrillas had still not taken off their uniforms nor had they laid down their guns because of its adherence to socialist organisational structures such as the Politburo and Central Committee (Makumbe, 2003).

The Clemency Order of 1988 that came immediately after the ZAPU-ZANU Unity Accord of 1987, indeed, pardoned all human rights violations committed by political parties between 1982 and 1987 (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2002, p. 10). Beneficiaries of the Clemency Order, it can be argued, were ZANU-PF perpetrators of violence and the security personnel deployed throughout the country to unleash unrelenting terror campaigns. It was like giving political impunity to the Fifth Brigade and to all those behind the Gukurahundi fiasco such as Emmerson Mnangagwa, Constantino Chiwenga, Perence Shiri, Sydney Sekeramai and Robert Mugabe himself in their various capacities (Zimbabwe Independent, 29 March, 2018).

The Unity Accord ended the Fifth Brigade presence in Matabeleland. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008, p. 48) intimates, ZAPU was coerced into signing a “surrender document”. This suggests that the unity that prevailed between the two liberation parties was built on false hopes and gave outward trappings of cooperation and reasonableness. In all intents and purposes, it was imposed
unanimity on ZAPU in ZANU-PF’s drive towards a one party state where no opposition would be tolerated. To support this line of thinking, the whites immediately after the signing of the Unity Accord in the same year 1987, were constitutionally politically marginalised and incensed by the withdrawal of the Lancaster House provision that guaranteed twenty seats for them. In effect, the decision to annul this constitutional proviso meant that whites became politically irrelevant, that white economic interests were threatened and that whites had been effectively relieved of their participation in the politics of the country.

The other dimension of the policy of reconciliation policy was the interpretive framework within which it was originally designed to fit. Upon its declaration, the policy had political implications which were taken to mean that fighting enemies would become friends again and co-exist in the spirit of brotherhood and forgiveness. Its economic and social implications were not explored as the new black elite were obsessed with the idea of gaining political power and professing to be Nkrumah’s disciples by seeking to gain political power first so that all else would follow later. As events in the first decade of independence showed, ZANU-PF, far from reconciling with other black nationalist parties, engineered enormous rifts and serious tensions that made nonsense of the policy of reconciliation. The glaring fact was that reconciliation was imposed on the ZANU-PF led government by the Lancaster House Agreement and was initially the result of compromise because the armed war did not produce an outright winner. White sceptics of the reconciliation policy and of the subsequent amnesty to political offenders left the country. Within the same decade, the relations between the ZANU-led government and the white community became polarized. In both these cases, tensions oscillated between racial, ethnic, factional and class struggles which only galvanised the regime’s resolve to safeguard the hard-won independence by consolidating power.

The challenge with regard to the policy of reconciliation was that of convincing Sithole, Muzorewa and Nkomo, all of whom knew from experience gained throughout their encounters and factional and ideological struggles with Mugabe, that the pronouncement of reconciliation lacked sincerity. The history of the nation was given a ZANU-PF rendition that was so narrowly defined, obliterating the autobiographies of other contemporary nationalists that could provide alternative history (Chitando & Mangena, 2015) worth celebrating. It was after independence that truth suffered at the hands of the ZANU-PF regime when it started to create its own history which was driven by a singular identity-based thinking and influenced by political interests (Tarusarira, 2016). Tarusarira (2016) also argues that history ought to be open for revision and plurality in order to become a firm base for socioeconomic reconciliation, and that if it is used as an instrument to serve the interests of one side of the past colonial conflict, post-conflict healing and reconciliation will remain a pie in the sky. Truth telling concerning the injustices committed on all sides such as ZANU-PF, PF-ZAPU, UANC, the Rhodesia Front, ZANU-Ndonga and other smaller organisations and civic groups could have been the best way of establishing the historical facts of prior justice (Machakanja, 2010, p. 10). In Zimbabwe, this was not the case.

Reconciliation as a national policy pronouncement in Zimbabwe after the 1980 general elections meant different things to different people. It was vaguely and narrowly expressed. Given the fact that thousands of innocent people in neighbouring countries such as Zambia and Mozambique, as well as those inside Zimbabwe, died as a result of a protracted war with the white settler regime, the mere proclamation of reconciliation could hardly meaningfully address the legacies of the colonial past, characterised as it was by violence and war. People in rural areas throughout the country had undergone some traumatic experiences that were not so easy to forget and forgive unless a national programme to reconcile all the people using either the bottom-up or top-down approach was launched. For former fighting forces to become friends again required truth-telling as a pre-condition for a genuine re-organisation of society and nation-building endeavours.

Reconciliation did not build confidence and trust among formerly divided people, yet it could have become the basis for the exercise of democracy. There was power sharing in Zimbabwe as
a result of the policy as many skills were drawn from the political divide to assist in designing government policies along socialist lines, but there was no economic justice. To the black elite, reconciliation was interpreted to mean reconciliation with capital to compensate for so many years of commitment to the struggle for liberation. To the white community, reconciliation was construed to mean their continued control of the economy and that the land and other marginalisation issues that were the prime motivators of the armed struggle were war-time rhetoric that was now inconsistent with social and economic realities on the ground. To PF-ZAPU, reconciliation meant having to accept the irreversibility of the election results and acknowledging the political leadership of ZANU-PF in the coalition government. All other opposition parties that had very few or no parliamentary representation on the basis of the election outcome felt ostracised from the emerging political and economic dispensation and remained in fear of political reprisals from the ruling party. In any case, the history of the liberation struggle, and the sporadic factional fights that ensued among the nationalist parties themselves, required a comprehensive strategy to re-unite people divided along racial, ethnic, ideological and class considerations.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

This article argued that Zimbabwe had a false start after the attainment of political independence in 1980. Independence came not as a result of war, nor as a result of compromise negotiations at Lancaster in 1979, but as a result of both. The process of uniting people divided racially and ethnically, and who for so many years had been fighting each other, required not just a pronouncement, but a carefully worked out strategy acceptable to all. Any careful handling of the actual reconciliation process on the ground could have deterred a repetition of situations after 1990 that required some reconciliation again. Failure to address the serious ethnic and racial divisions that the country faced immediately after independence firmly entrenched unreconciled relationships as the events in Matabeleland and Midlands showed in 1982. The Fact Track Land Reform Programme that got fully fledged after the passing of the Land Acquisition Act in 1992 jeopardised black-white relations. The British reneged at the promise to fund the government’s land reform programme. The government had to acquire more land for black resettlement without British money. Third Chimurenga after 2000, with its focus on white-owned farms, was a reversal of the policy of reconciliation and the struggle was racial in its execution. Reconciliation also had to address the issue of economic development and it was unthinkable for the black community in Zimbabwe to be content with an arrangement that lacked the promise of when they would get the land from their former colonisers.

It is never too late to address the major components of reconciliation such as peace, justice, truth, compensation (whether real or symbolic), economic development parity and mercy. The state must not shy away from confronting the events of the past. Only by openly and genuinely accepting our earlier mistakes and committing ourselves as a nation to economic and social progress can the foundations of true democracy in Zimbabwe be laid. Ethnicity and race have been politicised to a point where elections at all levels make reconciliation impossible. This was a precedent set in 1980 when pre-independence ideological and political cleavages were not attended to, only to re-surface through armed confrontation again years after. Future attempts at reconciling societies divided furthermore by elite propaganda during elections ought to take cognisance of the need to eventually establish a political system that espouses human rights and democratic structures that do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity or other such criteria.

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**Authors summary**

The author’s areas of research interest include, but are not limited to, social and cultural and political history, race, ethnicity, governance issues and democracy. Contemporary history with a bias towards power politics is another research area the author has so much passion for. This article contributes significantly towards our understanding of the historiographical relevance of the
pitfalls of the policy of reconciliation espoused by Lancaster House in 1979. This article also provides a broader picture of the challenges to democratic governance and national identity in Zimbabwe since independence, and how they are predicated on international diplomacy. Above all, this article can effectively be used to evaluate issues around reconciliation, justice and peace efforts in African countries that attained independence from their colonial masters through protracted armed liberation struggles.

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