Political violence and faceless perpetrators in Zimbabwe: Reconceptualising a peace building strategy

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Abstract: Pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe has been marred by extreme political violence and gross human rights violations. This ranges from Chimoio and Nyadzonya massacres in the 1970s, the Gukurahundi massacres of the early 1980s and since 2000, unprecedented political violence that characterised elections in the country. Resultantly, Zimbabwe has witnessed peace-building processes and frameworks aimed at ending episodes of politically motivated violence. This paper analyses how peace-building frameworks can ensure lasting peace in Zimbabwe. It draws experience from previous peace processes in Zimbabwe. Data was gathered through interviews and desktop research. Purposive and snowball sampling were utilised for selection of 10 key informants and 50 victims of political violence from six provinces in Zimbabwe. The paper casts doubts on existing peace and reconciliation approaches that aim at achieving a ‘peaceful society’ in a community where perpetrators remain faceless. Instead, the paper discusses an open peace-building process based on unmasking of perpetrators in an open dialogue platforms of victims and perpetrators, reparations and compensation and depoliticizing peace processes. It argues that although there are peace-building frameworks in the country, experiences from Zimbabwe points to opposite results. Calls by civil society,

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
Zimbabwe has been characterised by extreme political violence and gross human rights violations since the 1970s. In response to that, Zimbabwe has witnessed development of peace-building processes and frameworks aimed at ending episodes of politically motivated violence. This paper assesses how peace building frameworks in Zimbabwe can lead to sustainable peace. It discusses and recommends an open peace-building process based on unmasking of perpetrators in an open dialogue platforms of victims and perpetrators, reparations and compensation and depoliticizing peace processes.
community and scholars to resolve underlying conflicts and achieve peace and justice have not translated into sustainable peace. This paper concludes that without an open peace-building process, there would be a danger of false peace and reconciliation.

Subjects: Criminology and Criminal Justice; Development Studies; Politics & Development
Keywords: Faceless perpetrators; open peace-building process; political violence; sustainable peace; Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

As politically motivated violence has become a common feature in Zimbabwe, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), academics and policymakers turn to develop national frameworks for healing and reconciliation so that the country can find lasting peace. In a bid to find lasting peace, Zimbabwe has witnessed peace-building processes and frameworks aimed at ending episodes of politically motivated violence. This paper analyses how peace-building frameworks can ensure lasting peace in Zimbabwe. It draws experience from previous peace processes in Zimbabwe. Given that these processes have remained largely at a political and elite level, with little impact on local communities, what processes can be implemented to confront existing political violence? What challenges of implementation exist and how can they be resolved? Is there a possibility of having a “peaceful society” in Zimbabwe? It is these questions that the paper addresses. These questions are raised against the expectations that the end of Cold War would usher in a peace dividend for Africa. This paper casts doubts on existing peace and reconciliation approaches that aim at achieving a “peaceful society” in a community where the perpetrators remain faceless. They are rather out of tune with contemporary conflict dynamics. There is a blanket disclosure of perpetrators either as a political party or different sectors of the security department in the country.

The history of Zimbabwe is marked by pain and suffering especially among victims of political violence and it is a confluence of several colonial and post-independence conflict experiences. It is argued that, Zimbabwe has an unpleasant reputation for being the most politically violent country in Southern Africa, certainly since the civil wars ended in Angola and Mozambique, and the independence of Namibia and South Africa (Research and Advocacy Unit, 2018). The violence ranges from the Chimoio and Nyadzonya massacres in the 1970s, the Gukurahundi massacres of the early 1980s and since 2000, the unprecedented political violence that characterised elections in the country. Sachikonye (2011) adds that the current political rivalry between the ruling and opposition parties is an extension of the historical pattern of intolerance for political opposition that began during the colonial era. As such, peace-building processes are to be framed with an understanding that there is generational violence.

Since the unending violence reflects the shortfalls of the peace-building processes currently in use, the challenge is to understand how Zimbabwe can employ a sustainable peace process/framework that ensures that the communities are healed. I argue that the Zimbabwean experience reflects that the government failed to address political violence. While previous peace processes have helped to stop some violent acts and managed to keep the community going, providing an open peace-building process is crucial to end political violence among Zimbabwe communities.

My argument is presented in five distinct sections. This section presents the introduction and the subsequent section presents the methodology guiding the study and the sources of data. The third section is literature review highlighting previous peace processes from global perspective to specific cases from Zimbabwe. The fourth sections suggests and discusses an open peace-building process in Zimbabwe. It discusses ways that would transform the current peace-
building processes so that they are sustainable. The last and fifth section concludes the discussion by highlighting the major arguments and findings of the study.

2. Methodology
The data discussed in this paper is based on a study conducted in different provinces in Zimbabwe. The country has a total of ten provinces. For the purpose of this study, data was gathered from six provinces namely Masvingo, Mashonaland, Matabeleland, Midlands, Harare and Bulawayo provinces. Provinces used in the study were purposively selected. Purposive sampling was based on the provinces having encountered different forms of violence. Specifically, Midlands and Matabeleland provinces, the communities were affected by political violence in the 1980s. Masvingo and Mashonaland provinces were selected because these provinces were the ones that experienced political violence during 2002 and 2008 political violence. Harare and Bulawayo Provinces are the largest cities where some of the key informants from different institutions reside. It is in these provinces that the researcher purposively selected the informants who participated in the interviews.

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology which is exploratory in nature. My analysis is based on desktop research and oral interviews conducted among selected individuals in the country. I purposively sampled 10 key informants from among state actors, non-state actors, traditional leaders and civil society organisations. Snowball sampling was used for 50 victims of political violence. Excerpts from the interviews were used to show what the informants were indicating about the issues under study. With regards to document review, the study reviewed existing peace-building processes, journal articles, published and unpublished literature on this discourse. From the literature, the researcher found the supporting literature for which the basis for the discussion was based.

To make sense of the desktop research and interviews, I subjected the data to a thematic analysis. Data were structured in accordance with the themes that had emerged. As such, the open peace-building processes was split into 3 themes namely unmasking perpetrators in an open dialogue platform, reparations and compensation and depoliticising peace-building process. The detailed descriptions, narrative vignettes, and direct quotes from interviews that I present follow these themes.

In keeping with ethical considerations, interview respondents were anonymised. It should also be noted that the nature of data gathered which questions government actions are very sensitive and most of the participants are conflicted as either government employees or community leaders. Victims of political violence are also afraid that the same abuse may happen to them. As such, I assured participants that private information was to remain relatively confidential. I therefore avoided disclosure of sensitive information that matched personal information with the true identity of research participants hence participant names remained anonymous.

3. Contextual background on peace-building approaches and frameworks
In 1992, the United Nations declared the issue of peace building a global policy priority (UN, 1992). Since then, development and security field actors such as Oxfam, CIA, World Bank and other bilateral donors began to incorporate peace building in their policy agendas (Jabri, 2013). Nations across the globe began to formulate and adopt different peace-building strategies. These include among others; interventions by international communities in war-torn communities, signing of peace treaties, reconciliations and building state institutions. However, recent studies revealed that despite increasing international peace-building efforts and innovations, the number of violent conflicts has risen (Pettersson & Oberg, 2020). As such, the peace-building narrative matured into a full-blown discourse where scholars such as Ojendal et al. (2021) admit that peace-building has been subject to permanent reinvention. Similarly for Paffenholz (2021), peace building is envisioned as an ever-developing process manifested in a series of (re-)negotiation of the social and political contract. On the other hand, scholars also attack existing peace building on different
grounds. Jabri (2013) blamed the failure of peace building on the interventionist and ideological premises of the approaches. Paffenholz (2015) attacks the architecture of the practices. Chandler (2015) blamed the failure of peace-building strategies as a result of lack of good will and scholars as Autesserre (2017, 2014) criticized the simplistic and reductive understanding of the existing conflicts. Most recently, Forde et al. (2021) concludes that the peace-building strategies implemented do not match the war and violence existing. These views are important in pointing to the shortcomings of existing peace strategies at global level but, however, such shortfalls should not warrant a dismissal of the previous peace-building strategies.

At international level, peace-building strategies have also been criticized by various scholars. Four challenges have been identified and these are: unwillingness to implement new frameworks by peace-building organisations, donors and UN member states (Novosseloff, 2019), failure to fully understand the sustaining peace agenda and related implications for changing “business as usual” by peace-building enterprise (Connolly & Powers, 2018). Other scholars add that the funding for peace building has restrictive conditions and does not allow the peace builders to be flexible in their operations (Call & Campbell, 2018; Carvalho & Kok, 2016; Mahmoud & Mechoulan, 2018; Sarfati, 2020). Finally, Call and Campbell (2018) also add that at international level, there is also lack of courage by decision-makers and they failed to embrace complexity and uncertainty and find it very difficult to leave their “comfort zones”.

In Africa, for instance, the academia and policymakers also joined the debate through developing new approaches to peace building. In South Africa, Forde et al. (2021) argue that peace building is an ongoing process and as such distributive justice could right past wrongs and address the structural violence experienced daily in large parts of South Africa. Forde and others broadly proposed spatial reparations, such as land reforms, as a way to address structural inequalities. They attacked the traditional approaches that concentrated more on liberal peace. Elsewhere in Africa, scholars blame failure of peace building in Myanmar on ignoring gendered structural violence and injustices (Cárdenas & Olivius, 2021). In Colombia, Nilsson and González (2020) also revealed that the major weakness of peace building is because peace-building actors have conflicting interests and mostly disagree. Peace-building actors are criticised for trying to pursue security and development and resultantly the programmes for security and development will contract each other and block progress and no peace will be reached.

In the study of Kenya, Paffenholz (2021) developed the notion of “perpetual peace building” as a response to violence. Peace building, he argues, must be viewed as entailing continuous negotiations, and re-negotiations of the social and political contract of a society and polity, with pathways to peace marked by opportunities, setbacks, catalysts, fiction and resistance. The scholars advocate for revisions of the traditional peace building which are liberal. Scholars argue that the idea of moving from violence to formal negotiations, leading to an agreement nor drafting a new constitution does not reflect reality (Bramble and Paffenholz, 2020; De Coning, 2018; Hirblinger et al., 2019; Randazzo, 2021). In the case of electoral violence characterising Kenya since 2007, they were several peace negotiations and agreements since then up to 2019. This according to Paffenholz (2021) demonstrates that pathways from violence towards peace are not linear and phases of peace processes are indefinite and occur within various formats. For Paffenholz, these can be argued to be point of departure for further dialogue, change and resistance. The arguments from Paffenholz set the parameters of this current study where I propose to reconceptualise an open peace-building process for political violence in Zimbabwe. Whilst acknowledging the existence of other peace-building processes, this study builds on the weaknesses of the previous peace processes to suggest a new process.

With regards to peace processes in Zimbabwe, the government has implemented several high-level initiatives such as the Lancaster House Agreement in 1979, the Dumbutshena and Chihambakwe Commissions of Inquiry in 1981 and 1983, the Unity Accord in 1987, and the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2008 (Murambadza & Wielenga, 2015). Also, the Organ on
National Healing and Reconciliation and the 2013 constitution provides for a sustainable peace and reconciliation framework by constitutionalisation of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013) and the enactment of the NPRC Act in January 2018. In 2018, the President of Zimbabwe, established the Montlante Commission of Inquiry under the terms of Section 2(1) of Commission of Inquiry Act (Chapter 10:07) to investigate matters of public welfare arising out of the tragic incidents in Harare on 1 August 2018 (Mungwari, 2019). Scholars have suggested that the peace-building process in Zimbabwe should privilege political will and determination, forgiveness and persecutions. For instance, Mashingaidze (2010) argues that Zimbabwe has continually ignored the demands by survivors of the Matabeleland massacres (1980–1987), the post-2000 electoral violence, land invasions (2000–2001) and Operation Murambatsvina (2005), where amnesty provisions were offered to the perpetrators but little or no public acknowledgement was given to the victims with regard to the suffering experienced. Rwodzi (2018) adds that, with Mugabe at the helm of the government during Gukurahundi genocide, there was no state commitment to bring sanity and finality to the discourses surrounding this ethnicised conflict and admission of guilt remained an impossibility on the part of those with control over the instruments of force and coercion. As Montville (1993) argues, for the Zimbabwean society to have a proper national dialogue and reconciliation, there should be acknowledgement and contrition from the perpetrators and forgiveness from the victims. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) also points out that the government failed to set up a framework that allowed victims to solicit justice or compensation, as well as the necessary institutions to offer psychosocial support to the communities that encountered violence. Sachikonye (2011) also adds that aside from inflicting trauma and fear on its victims, the impunity enjoyed by its perpetrators has helped to mould a culture within which personal freedoms and dreams are strangled in Zimbabwe. Protecting the country’s territorial integrity and sovereignty has been more important than holding perpetrators to account (Raftopoulos & Savage, 2004).

Whilst acknowledging that scholars have developed peace frameworks, experiences in Zimbabwe reflect that the Commissions, reconciliation and unities did not produce desired results. Although these recommendations and findings were welcomed by communities and victims of political violence, it became clear that the root cause of violence had not been addressed. This current study need to add to the debate of viewing peace building as an ever-developing process. I seek to propose an open peace-building process based on unmasking of perpetrators in an open dialogue platforms of victims and perpetrators, compensation and reparations and depoliticising peace processes.

4. Reconceptualising an open peace-building process in Zimbabwe

Some recommendations to address the issue of political violence were not taken seriously by the government. For instance, calls by international community to respect human rights to life did not stop the Zimbabwe community from engaging in political violence. While these recommendations and findings were welcomed by communities and victims of political violence, it became clear that the root cause of violence had not been addressed. In the framework of an “open peace building process”, I suggest that there should be unmasking of perpetrators in an open dialogue platforms where victims and perpetrators are present, reparations and compensation, and depoliticisation of peace processes occur. The open peace-building process is discussed below. The open peace-building process is discussed below.

4.1. Unmasking of perpetrators in an open dialogue platform

As scholars highlight challenges to attaining peace as lack of persecution and need for forgiveness, I argue that the realisation of peace in Zimbabwe requires unmaking the perpetrators in an open dialogue platform between perpetrators and victims. The National Peace and Reconciliation Commissions and other peace-building processes in Zimbabwe did not include confessions from perpetrators as part of peace building. Without confession before the victim, peace in Zimbabwe will remain a pipe dream because you cannot forgive a faceless perpetrator. By faceless perpetrators, I refer to a situation wherein individual perpetrators of violence are not made public to the
society. One of the victims expressed her unwillingness to forgive in the absence of confession, “The CSOs, churches and different departments have been preaching forgiveness since the 1980s, but they are not bringing the perpetrators to book or ask them to confess. How can they expect me to forgive when I do not know who killed my husband and why?” (Interviewee 1, Midlands, 10 March 2020). Thus, forgiveness from victims goes hand in glove with confession from perpetrators. The continuous cries from the affected communities and victims of political motivated violence in Zimbabwe reflect that no healing, reconciliation and peace will successfully take place unless wrong doers first confess their acts. In order to reconcile victims and perpetrators there is need for forgiveness which will culminate into peace. This is what Archbishop Tutu alluded to on his appointment as chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa when he said,

I hope that the work of the Commission by opening wounds to cleanse them will thereby stop them from bleeding. We cannot be facile and say bygones will be bygones, because they will not be bygones and will return. True reconciliation is never cheap, for it is based on forgiveness which is costly. Forgiveness in turn depends on repentance, which has to be based on an acknowledgement of what was done wrong and therefore on the truth. You cannot forgive what you do not know.

His emphasis was on “acknowledgement of what was done wrong and therefore on truth”. I argue that this should be the basis and first critical step in finding sustainable peace in any violent situation or country and more specifically in Zimbabwe. Evidence from Zimbabwe revealed that after the “military coup” in November 2017, the new government acknowledged that the grievances of the victims of Gukurahundi needed to be addressed as evidenced by the seconding of Vice President Kembo Mohadi at the end of 2017 to lead the Ministry of National Healing and Reconciliation and spearhead the national healing campaign in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces (uMnthwakazi Review 30 December 2017 as cited in Rwodzi (2018). Soon after his appointment, the current president of Zimbabwe said that “let bygones be bygones,” a statement that referenced politically motivated violence and past human rights violation. Such proclamations have raised many debates among the Zimbabwean community. As one politician who requested anonymity argues, “The government is cunningly refusing to take responsibility for their actions. We expect the government to acknowledge that they have wronged the victims and the community before the victims can forgive. This is the only way to take the country ahead peacefully” (Interviewee 2, Bulawayo, 6 October 2019).

There is need for the victims of violence to have an open platform with perpetrators. In such dialogues, perpetrators need to reassure the victims that they will not suffer the same abuses in future and the relationship can move beyond a cycle of revelation and retaliation to something more positive. One victim of 1 August 2018 political violence lamented that, “the perpetrators as an expression of remorse should take some action to redress the wrongs they have done. These people need to promise the victims and the country that they will not commit the same crime again. This should be done openly so that we may find peace” (Interviewee 3, Harare, 13 August 2019). The story of the victims is that of the same problems of the past, manifesting through lack of acknowledgement from the perpetrators and thus peace building by the Zimbabwe government sounds less practical. Efforts from the Peace and Reconciliation Commissions in Zimbabwe since independence of the country in 1980 have not covered much ground because they speak of forgiveness from the victims and persecution but the perpetrators, as these interviews suggest, remains faceless. The following argument and report explicitly demonstrates how perpetrators of violence have been anonymised in the country. Cheeseman and Tendi (2010) argues that in 2008, Tsvangirai won the elections but instead the “security forces” unleashed violence which led to the withdrawal of the opposition in contesting the June 2008 re-run elections. Montlante Commission report, adds that, the death of six people and the injuries sustained by 35 others arose from the actions of the “military and the police” (Motlante, 2018). The perpetrator is identified as security forces, military and or police. Such
arguments, however, ignore the issue that the perpetrator is identity-less and this impact negatively on peace building. One of the victims laments that,

in Zimbabwe, the perpetrator are often times referred to as ‘security forces’ in form of either the army or police and none of the Commissions reveal the true identity of the perpetrator. To find peace, I need to know the exact person who injured me and killed my brother. If I do not know who wronged me, I will not find peace. Who should I forgive then? (Interviewee 4, Mashonaland Central, 11 October 2019).

This explains that peace building at a political level is necessary but not sufficient for overcoming psychological barriers and restoring peace. To find closure, the victim would love to know the perpetrator who wronged him or her and forgiveness could be done. As earlier noted, the government has apologised at a certain level to the victims but individual perpetrators still believe their acts were the necessary evil and legitimate because they remain faceless. Even if victims want to forgive, there is no one to take the blame for political violence. Unless addressed through introducing “truth and reconciliation Commissions” that emphasise an open peace-building strategy, these shortcomings are likely to compromise the fight to end political violence in Zimbabwe. The missing gap which this paper suggests is the “truth” aspect from perpetrators and open dialogue. Without such a framework, so goes the argument, it is a challenge for the Zimbabwean community to realise peace and move on. In an open peace-building process, the perpetrators of violence need to confess their acts in order to be forgiven by their victims. As argued earlier, the use of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions would allow people to express their emotions, meet those who had committed atrocious crimes and look for answers through sharing their stories.

4.2. Reparations and compensation
In view of the foregoing, for peace and justice to prevail, the wrong doer or perpetrator of violence must also make reparations. Disregarding reparations can be an obstacle to achieving peace. However, the question with regards to who should pay what, to whom and under what circumstances is complicated in Zimbabwe. Instead, the perpetrator is anonymous and this makes it more complex for a society to move on and dialogue. This has been the case since the Gukurahundi issue in the early 80s. There is a heated debate on who should pay for the lost lives and who should receive the payments. As one government official noted, “even if there is acknowledgement that the Gukurahundi victims were wronged, who is expected to pay the victims. Again, who is to receive the reparations because most of the victims are dead?” (Interviewee 5, Masvingo Province, 10 February 2020). In a separate interview, one community member responds to question on reparations to Matabeleland victims saying, “the government should pay the families of the deceased.” (Interviewee 6, Matabeleland South, 15 March 2020). This opposing view is important because it mirrors that peace-building process in the country is riddled with contradictions. Evidently, it is one thing to make it known that either the security forces or others had engaged in extreme torture, killings, burning of house, kidnapping, human massacres among others but it is very difficult to have a consensus. I argue that though the Zimbabwe government is yet to include the concept of compensation in politically motivated violence, it could be highly probable that love and forgiveness without compensation could be an outward act void of meaning. As Sooka (2006) argues, reparation is often the point at which most countries and governments squander the opportunity to restore civic trust by not acknowledging victims through an appropriate reparations program. This is demonstrated in Zimbabwe’s failure to find peace because there are still houses to be rebuilt, properties to be replaced and some people are maimed as political parties unleash terror campaign. For instance, “In 2008 pre-election violence, other people’s hands were cut, either low or upper arm depending with one’s choice. Perpetrators of violence were asking victims if they want ‘long sleeve’ or ‘short sleeve’. That was the popular language during the period” (Interviewee 7, Masvingo, 26 December 2019). Resultantly, if justice is not done to these people, if there are no reparations, it would be difficult to achieve peace in Zimbabwe.
Because of the limitations associated with the existing peace processes, there is need to include the aspect of compensation in order to find lasting peace. As Dixon (2017) argues reparations are among the most tangible, victim-centric, and personal of processes in the transition from violence to peace and symbolizes the recognition that an individual has been harmed and has rights in the eyes of the state or international community. The open peace process thus provides a workable structure where confessions and acknowledgement by perpetrators should thus be followed by compensation. A case in point being that of the Ndebele and Shona people who are never reconciled because the Ndebele still need reparations and compensation for what was done to them during Gukurahundi. Vambe who visited the Gukurahundi victims in five affected areas 15 years after the incident revealed that the victims need compensation. She concludes that, “closure to the issue of genocide in Zimbabwe will be guaranteed when government authorities deliberately develop Matabeleland and the Midlands” (Vambe, 2012, p. 296). The affected communities seem to agree that the content of reconciliation should be tangible. Mueller-Hirth (2021) also adds that delaying reparations for an uncertain time contributes to senses of continuity with the past, which transitional justice seeks to disrupt.

It is important to note that if the peace-building commissions and the government ignored the issue of incorporating reparations and compensation in peace process, the issue would remain a textbook written but would never be put into practice. They would remain paper commitments. The effort to find peace should at least acknowledge the fact that victims of violence need to be compensated to heal the wounds. This is further reflected in moments when the Zimbabwe government seeks to have a national dialogue, all those deep-rooted conflicts arise and therefore achieving peace remains a dream that would never be lived.

4.3. Depoliticising peace processes

An open peace-building process requires depoliticisation of peace processes in Zimbabwe. National Peace and Reconciliation Commissions in the country need not to be aligned to any political party for them to freely exercise their duties. Evidence from previous studies and interviews with victims shows that there is recurrence of politically motivated violence in the country because there is a certain level of hypocrisy exercised by the ruling party. One official from a local Civil Society Organisation (CSO) expressed concern over this, arguing that “the existence of generational violence makes the peace-building process deeply political” (Interviewee 8, Masvingo, 24 August 2019). Another victim of political violence also added that, “peace and justice requires the provision of necessary political support to advance peace building” (Interviewee 9, Mashonaland West, 3 September 2019). Some communities expressed that political actors fuelled political violence in the country, thus it is difficult for political leaders to play a role in brokering an end to conflict and building peace. As one respondent noted, “given that political leaders are promoting, and involved in political violence, they are not providing a conducive environment for peace processes to take place” (Interviewee 10, Masvingo, 24 August 2019). However, in practice, the Zimbabwe severely hinders processes to peace building in ways that delay sustainable peace and the ushering in of a new era wherein political violence is absent. One participant also argued that, “Zimbabwe’s reconciliation is fouled and it is often hindered by political leaders, especially those that come from the ruling party, because of the fear that they are involved, and this will make it difficult for the country to break from the cycle of violence” (Interviewee 11, Matabeleland Province, 10 January 2020).

Past and recent experiences of peace-building processes reflect that the ruling party is not committed to finding ensuring the prevalence of peace since the legally commissions are not allowed to receive corporate or donor funding from anyone outside the ruling government. One official complained that, “although the NPRC is expected to run as an independent body, the authority of the Commission to exercise its mandate remains in the hands of the ruling government” (Interviewee 12, Harare, 23 August 2019). I argue that since the government is financially incapacitated, it should allow Commissions to get funding outside government coffers. Further, peace-building processes should be independent from the state. Terms of reference for peace-
building Commissions and organisations should specify that they are independent from the state and should derive their mandate from the citizens. The Government of Zimbabwe should not interfere in the work of Commissions.

While the government notes in several violence incidents that victims suffer injuries and some even die, it mostly responds to accusations of political violence through counter-accusations. As Masunungure (2009) argues, violence has been part of virtually every election in Zimbabwe since 1980, with anyone who dares to oppose the establishment labelled a traitor whose ambition is to reverse the gains of independence. The state is polarised and individuals implicated in political violence in Zimbabwe are not immune to persecution and thus the country experiences unending acts of violence. As one victim rightly puts it, “the journey to peace and justice has not yet started in Zimbabwe, especially if some perpetrators of violence remain in power to determine the pace of reform” (Interviewee 13, Mashonaland East, 15 November 2019). In their study on Zimbabwe, Du Pleiss and Ford (2009) presented the same dimension of the same issue. The two argued that the Government of Zimbabwe has intentionally paid little attention to addressing past injustices to avoid being implicated. The situation has not changed since independence.

As evidenced by the report of the Commission of Inquiry on the 1st of August 2018 post-election violence, Tendai Biti of the MDC-Alliance party unpacked the long history of political violence in Zimbabwe. This revelation points to the limitations of the Government of Zimbabwe in terms of closing chapters on political violence. Evidence of recurring violence is testimony that the people of Zimbabwe have not found closure. Recently, during the Montlate Commission of Inquiry of 1 August 2018 violence in Bulawayo showed that violence erupted when a witness claimed that the ruling party was responsible for the killing of his parents and an estimated 20,000 people in Matabeleland and Midlands regions in the 1980s (Newsday, 2018). Considering the foregoing, it is worth noting that peace and justice will remain a dream if each episode of violence is left unattended. This is worsened by politicisation of peace processes.

Thus, an open peace-building process seeks to redress these shortfalls. Emotions would continue running deep and the underlying causes would always be prevalent if the Government of Zimbabwe fails to depoliticise peace processes. In an open peace-building process, I argue that there is an urgent need to put an end to politicising peace-building process for political related violence. As argued earlier, peace commissions should be allowed to independently investigate political violence in the country.

5. Conclusion
This paper set to analyse how peace-building frameworks can ensure lasting peace in Zimbabwe. My interest was to discuss an open peace-building process towards peace. This research suggests that although the country has witnessed peace and reconciliation frameworks since the country’s independence in 1980, there are some gaps that need address and redress to achieve sustainable peace. I conclude that the peace-building frameworks remain polarised and thereby affecting effective implementation of recommendations. In all provinces, political violence victims revealed that the existing peace and reconciliation approaches failed to achieve a “peaceful society” because the perpetrators remain faceless. As such, the challenges have perpetuated generational violence in the country. Although there are existing blueprints on peace building, they are deficient when it comes to an open peace-building process.

These findings have significant implications for the framing of an open peace-building process based on unmasking of perpetrators in an open dialogue platforms of victims and perpetrators, reparations and compensation and depoliticizing peace processes. Unmasking of perpetrators of violence will ensure perpetrator’s identification, publicisation and closure for victims. This, I argue, will work towards healing wounds of the victims. The open dialogue platform will provide room for negotiations and improved chances of transition from violence to peace henceforth. The issue of
reparations and compensation justice will also help to heal past wounds as victims will find closure. Lastly, an open peace-building process should be geared towards depoliticizing peace processes. Peace-building processes and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission in Zimbabwe should be independent and ruling party should not interfere in peace processes. Unless addressed through policy interventions, there would be a danger of false peace and reconciliation. The government of Zimbabwe should come up with peace-building specific policies that prioritise political violence victims and respect for human life.

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Notes
1. Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) Section 232e and 251-253 and the NPRC Act.
2. Statement by Archbishop Desmond Tutu on his appointment to the truth and reconciliation commission, 30 November, 1995

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