ZANU-PF A new sense of hegemony

The formation of the Zimbabwean Revolutionary Ideology and its reflection upon the post-colonial identity

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Abstract

This thesis will delve into answering the question of how the revolutionary ideology in Zimbabwe was formed and how this ideology reflected the creation of a post-colonial identity. The ideology that drove forward the Zimbabwean war of independence from 1964 to 1979 was a complexly constructed form of African Nationalism. Through the exploration of this ideology and the flaws that were sown into its structure, reasons behind the issues facing the country today are revealed. A Gramscian analysis of the ‘organic’ intellectual will be undertaken. Through correlating the African Nationalists to a Gramscian ‘organic’ intellectual, the importance of their role in forming the ideology is shown as it is the nationalists who relieve the people of their subalternate position within society and thus, they become the leaders of the movement. From this point this thesis concludes with ideas that whilst African Nationalism as an ideology allowed for a shift in power from the white minority to the black majority, a new sense of hegemony was the result. The ruling party of Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF, thus became the hegemonic voice and again the voice of the people lost its prominence. Insight into the revolutionary dynamics of colonized Africa and the result in a conflicted post-colonial identity due to the unavoidable impact of colonialism, is the core discussion within this analysis.

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List of Abbreviations

ZANU- Zimbabwe African National Union

ZAPU- Zimbabwe African Peoples Union

ZANU-PF - Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

MDC- Movement for Democratic Change

Introduction

A female liberation fighter stated, “In Africa the revolutionary party will never lose”.[[1]](#footnote-1) Having fought as a guerrilla fighter in the war from 1975 to 1980, this liberation fighter revealed the crux of an issue facing many African states today. After thirty-seven years in power, in November 2017, Robert Mugabe was removed from his position as the President of Zimbabwe, being replaced by “the crocodile”, Emmerson Mnangagwa. The spirit of jubilation and relief that overtook Zimbabwe, pasting smiles of joy on every man, woman and child, has rapidly disintegrated, souring the short and sweet taste of freedom they once had. Zimbabwe now faces the fear of returning to a severe case of hyperinflation, human rights abuses, a cholera outbreak, desperate hospital conditions and numerous political abductions. The turmoil facing this country today is better understood through the exploration of the ideology that was employed by Mugabe and his fellow African Nationalists during and after the war of Liberation from 1964-1979. The central focus of this thesis will be to reveal the various aspects that contributed to the formation of the nationalist ideology of African Nationalism as well as providing a critique on the current post-colonial identity of Zimbabwe linking it back to its birth.

Domination over the African people in Southern Rhodesia began in the 1890s with the arrival of Cecil John Rhodes and the British South Africa Company.[[2]](#footnote-2) Accompanying the arrival of Rhodes came white discrimination and the exploitation of the native resources and self-dignity. The Federation of Rhodesia, consisting of Northern and Southern Rhodesia, was a self-governing British colony from 1923 until 1965 when the white minority government, led by Ian Smith, declared unilateral independence of Southern Rhodesia from Britain. In resistance to the oppressive white minority regime, two African Nationalist organizations arose: the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by Robert Mugabe, operating from Mozambique, and the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo, operating from Zambia.[[3]](#footnote-3) In 1974, these two factions would be united under the party of ZANU-PF, (Patriotic Front). The guerrilla fighters waged a war of Liberation, known as the Rhodesian Bush War, from July of 1964 to December 1979. The start of 1980 marked the end of white minority rule and the Independence of Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe and the ZANU-PF party.

The existing literature surrounding the overall idea of African Nationalism focuses on its role in creating unified nation states capable of fighting for decolonisation and self-determination. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Finex Ndhlovu in their book, *Nationalism and National projects in Southern Africa: New Critical Reflections*, state that “nationalist liberation struggles have been articulated by former liberation movements as the legitimate myth of the foundation of post-colonial ‘nation-states’”.[[4]](#footnote-4) Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu highlight the ideological role of nationalism in creating a constructed sense of nationhood identity that drives liberation movements in Africa forward. However, this book is critical of nationalism and reveals the danger in essentializing the people under “one-nation state” as this may lead to authoritarian governments and one-party systems. The dangers highlighted in their book are realized in Zimbabwe and will be further researched in this thesis. Secondary literature written about the independence movement in Zimbabwe specifically, focuses on the guerrilla warfare and the factions within the revolutionary forces, particularly the feud between the two prominent nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU. Terrance Ranger explored the ideas of “petty-bourgeoise” politics, focusing on the role this played in fuelling the factions and the outcome of the Rhodesian Bush War for liberation in his article, “The Changing of the Old Guard: Robert Mugabe and the Revival of ZANU”.[[5]](#footnote-5) Factionalism within the two nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU, will be discussed with the aim of highlighting the importance of the ‘old guard’ and educated classes in shaping the form of African Nationalism pursued. Norma Kriger offers a critique on Ranger’s earlier article, “Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla Warfare in Zimbabwe”, in which she sees great disparity between the demands of the peasants and what the African Nationalists in Zimbabwe actually managed to achieve.[[6]](#footnote-6) Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s article, outlines the consequences of nationalism and the heroizing of the nationalist leaders, concluding that it is through the idealization of the Founding Fathers that the misuse of power is made possible.[[7]](#footnote-7) Homi Bhabha and his critique on the static idea of the nation-state adds an interesting element to the historiography surrounding identity formation in post-colonial Africa. His idea of hybridity is a refreshing lens to look at the idea of nationalism through as he stresses the importance of fluidity in identity formation, highlighting the dangers that accompany a fixated sense of identity. The issues associated with ‘identity formation’ through the notion of nation state is another important debate in which this thesis will be situated. The question that this thesis will address is how the revolutionary ideology that fuelled Zimbabwean Independence in 1980 was formed and in what way has this ideology reflected the creation of a post-colonial identity.

In order to answer this research question, the concepts of Nationalism, the ‘Organic Intellectual’ and a Gramscian notion of hegemony will be employed. Benedict Anderson’s notion of nationalism in “Imagined Communities”, will serve as the starting point for gaining an understanding of the “imagined” and constructed element of nationalism as a concept. It is necessary to go to the roots of nationalism as a theory in order to grasp its use in African liberation movements. Anderson describes the nation to be, “an imagined political community” that is believed to be “inherently limited and sovereign”.[[8]](#footnote-8) Alongside this, he explains nationalism to be “the expression of national feeling; the expression of a radically changed form of consciousness”.[[9]](#footnote-9) It is from this framework that the ideas of African Nationalism presented by Ndlovu and Ndhlovu-Gatsheni will be explored in the first section of this thesis. African Nationalism is the basis of the revolutionary ideology this thesis will investigate and thus a clear theoretical explanation of the concept is necessary. The auto-biography of Ndabaningi Sithole, as well as interviews with Robert Mugabe, all address varying aspects of African Nationalism as their driving force during the liberation struggle, therefore nationalism as a theory, will aid in the reading and analysing of these primary sources.

Following this, Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and ‘organic intellectuals’ is useful in understanding the role of the African Nationalists themselves in the formation of the revolutionary ideology through the awakening of a class consciousness amongst the colonized African people. The concept of ‘organic intellectual’ is applicable to the African Nationalists, such as Ndabaningi Sithole, Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo who were influenced by the African Nationalists in neighbouring countries as well as having been influenced by the United States, Britain, China and the Soviet Union. Thus, the Nationalists possessed an understanding of the hegemonic discourse as well as that of the ‘subaltern’, making their role essential in overthrowing white domination.[[10]](#footnote-10) Gramsci’s theory on hegemony reveals the importance of cultural and ideological domination in exercising political power.[[11]](#footnote-11) He coined the term subaltern in reference to those who were not hegemonic, in this case, the colonized Zimbabwean people. However, with the aid of the African Nationalists, their position within society was realized and thus, a change in the hegemonic discourse was made possible.

The construction of the revolutionary ideology and post-colonial identity will be explored through the close reading of relevant primary sources. In order to achieve a contrapuntal reading of my primary sources, the method of this study will be the application of theories onto the primary sources. The theory of African Nationalism, presented by Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Finex Ndhlovu will be the guiding theory in which snippets of Mugabe’s independence speech from 1980, as well as an interview from 2002, will be analysed against. In addition to this, the second edition of Ndabaningi Sithole’s autobiography, *African Nationalism*, will be used both as a primary source but also as part of a theoretical framework as it this particular book that guided the African Nationalists in Zimbabwe. Gramsci’s concept of Hegemony and ‘Organic Intellectuals’ will also be applied to the autobiography as this concept will inform the way in which the role of ‘organic’ intellectuals played in ideology formation. However, whilst the autobiography provides insight into the formation of ideology from the African nationalists themselves, awareness of their motives and biases as well as the context in which they were written will be cautiously applied. An interview with Wilf Mbanga, the founder of the first ever independent newspaper in Zimbabwe and an interview with a former female liberation fighter will add viewpoints of the struggle from a guerrilla’s perspective as well as from a journalist’s point of view.

The first section will delve into the intricacies of African Nationalism revealing the different ideas of it as well as the criticisms. This will serve as a more in-depth theoretical framework to introduce the revolutionary ideology. As part of this section the role colonialism played in shaping the ideology, particularly analysing how the roots of colonialism remained and how this impacted the Nationalists methods of governing will be examined. The second section, through a Gramscian approach, will focus on the African Nationalists themselves, concentrating on Sithole and Mugabe. Within this section, the role of the ‘organic intellectual’ and the formation of that ‘organic intellectual’ will be analysed, within which the influence of foreign powers will be discussed. Additionally, the establishment of a post-colonial identity will be looked at here.

Chapter 1 – African nationalism and The Impact of Colonialism

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Finex Ndhlovu, explain nationalism as having “unfolded and established itself as an ambiguous and ambivalent ideology informing the protean processes of identity-making, nation-building and state-making”.[[12]](#footnote-12) As this infers, nationalism has featured as the key motivator in establishing a post-colonial African identity, of which the heart of the movement, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu, is the construction of a nation-state and the solving of a national project.[[13]](#footnote-13) African liberation struggles are described to have utilised the nationalist movement to legitimize and establish a strong sense of post-colonial common identity that fights against the corrosive colonial tendencies of the past. However, in the hope of creating a sense of community in which the people and state are connected through common language and culture, opposing the colonial regimes of the past, there is a risk of disregarding the reality. Most African states, in this case focusing on Zimbabwe, were indeed not inhabited by a singular culture but rather by different tribes as well as white settlers, thus, were actually multicultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious. Therefore, in line with Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu’s reasoning, the nation-states created were flawed from the start, embarking on a strict national project that denied the ‘multi’, forcing it into a ‘one nation’.[[14]](#footnote-14) Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu explain the post-colonial state to be an instrument used to “forcibly construct monolithic national unity”, in which the nation-building projects become state-driven from the start, replacing consent amongst the people to coercion, a process later explained in this thesis through the Zimbabwe situation.[[15]](#footnote-15) The role of the African Nationalists in the nationalist movement is imperative. It is the leaders themselves who advertise to the people that it is necessary to eradicate the eclectic group of identities in order to build one singular organic African nation and culture of their own. Ndabanganingi Sithole, in his autobiography, *African Nationalism*, explains that “non-tribalness was inherent in African nationalism” as they aimed for “universalism” as opposed to divisions.[[16]](#footnote-16) Sithole further explains that “there was a growing tendency among the Africans to think of themselves less and less as tribesmen, but more and more as Africans”.[[17]](#footnote-17) Whilst it is important to acknowledge the positives in creating a sense of unity through nationalism, as mentioned above, by moving away from the different tribes, the African Nationalists instilled a monolithic identity that is more open to conflict than allowing for fluidity. In light of these criticisms about nationalism, Homi Bhabha’s notion of hybridity will be explored in the conclusion of this thesis. Bhabha embraces the idea of multi-cultural identities promoting them in order to create a sense of equality within post-colonial states.

Differently from Benedict Anderson, who sees the promotion of Nationalism as a more ‘organic’ assimilation of people, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu define nationalism as the “broader identarian and ideological framework and anchor for struggles that sought to create people-as-nation and people-as-state”.[[18]](#footnote-18) Michael Billig argues that two aspects are associated with nationalism, the first being the process of uniting people across ethnic, religious, gender, generation and class groups into a nation-state. The second is the process of construction of the state as the major institution in which people defined themselves under a legitimate leadership.[[19]](#footnote-19) It is in this understanding that the role of African Nationalism in the creation of a post-colonial identity was crucial, it was under the leaders of the movement that the African people found direction. Ibrahim K. Sundiata in “The Roots of African Despotism: The Question of Political Culture”, explained that, particularly during decolonisation in Africa, the Founding Fathers, of whom some remained in power long after independence, such as Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, became the symbol of national identity for the people.[[20]](#footnote-20) The driving factor behind nation-building according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu is the national project. This is defined as an “encapsulation of ideologies, plans, policies and actions” aimed at creating new institutions and agencies addressing the demands of the people.[[21]](#footnote-21) The national project during the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, under Robert Mugabe, was voiced through the notion of Chimurenga which was a series of nationalist revolutions against imperialism and colonialism aiming at indigenising the economy.[[22]](#footnote-22) In situating nationalism in its global context, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu consider the first signs of African racial consciousness to be during the slave trade. The consciousness matured into nationalism and pan-Africanism in which the African people resisted racism and colonialism.[[23]](#footnote-23) The history of questioning African civilization has been a means to justify conquest of African sovereignty, however, as the roots of nationalism suggest, the African people have not submissively accepted their state of subalternity.[[24]](#footnote-24) Gramsci’s concept of ‘Organic Intellectual’ will reveal the importance of the African Nationalists in awakening the class consciousness of the Zimbabwean people with the hope of breaking the hegemonic, colonial discourse, freeing the people of their subalternate position. The African leaders toiled between the different ideologies of communism and capitalism, prevalent during the Cold War. The national projects of the African states were birthed into a context swarming with ideological competitions between the Soviet Union and US. Therefore, the Founding Fathers were pulled into aligning with particular world powers, influencing the nationalism that was adopted and implemented. It is because of this that Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu suggest that decolonisation did not achieve a complete removal of its colonial past but rather a change in the “content of the language of engagement between Africa and the Western powers”.[[25]](#footnote-25) Ramon Grosfoguel stated that one of the “most powerful myths of the 20th Century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administration amounted to the decolonisation of the world.”.[[26]](#footnote-26) Grosfoguel explained instead that global colonialism moved to a period of global coloniality, in which coloniality includes the continuity of colonial forms of domination that were produced through colonial cultures. Grosfoguel states that due to this coloniality, the constructed ideologies of ‘national identity’ and ‘national sovereignty’ produced only an “illusion” of independence, whilst in reality the Africans position economically and politically remained subalternate in the world system.[[27]](#footnote-27) Furthermore, Basil Davidson advocated that the roots of African Nationalism were founded on the “wrong imagination” based on a “Western template”.[[28]](#footnote-28) In this sense, the ‘Imagined Community’ referred to by Benedict Anderson, was a community not based on African history or experience per se but rather on a “European Westphalian” model which, in terms of identity formation, led perhaps to more exclusion than inclusion. Looking critically at this aspect of African Nationalism, African leaders thus began to see the need for the eradication of tribal identities to create their idea of a united “one nation”. However, in doing so, this justified the formation of authoritarian one-part systems.[[29]](#footnote-29) The survival of the ZANU-PF party that still rules Zimbabwe today, is an example of this.

 A post-modernist critique of African Nationalism predominately focuses on the “essentialisation of identities” and disregard for diversity. Fantu Cheru states that what failed in African Nationalism is the fact that it was an “imperial project that disguised itself as an African project”.[[30]](#footnote-30) Through this disguise, neo-colonialism found itself at the heart of the movement, imposing foreign ideals onto the African populations and removing the opportunity for open participation in government, resulting in a “purely elitist project” detaching itself from ordinary people’s lives.[[31]](#footnote-31)Terrance Ranger highlights the role of factions in the liberation war in Zimbabwe in which the concept of ‘elites’ plays a central role, thus, this aspect of nationalism is an important component of the Zimbabwean liberation ideology.

However, alongside this post-modernist critique of African Nationalism, the necessity of it as an ideology in independence movements in Africa is acknowledged in Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu’s book. Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo raises the point that nationalism addresses the issue of self-awareness and the recognition of self-consciousness, that without the movement and the Gramscian ‘organic intellectuals’, which in some cases represent the elites, the African people’s hope for self-determination would not be possible.[[32]](#footnote-32) Lumumba-Kasongo, states that, a national project was necessary in order to fight against the “political inadequacy, citizenship dislocation and social and structural dysfunctionality”.[[33]](#footnote-33) Although, overall, whilst nationalism was an essential movement on the road to decolonisation and African freedom, the construction of the identities that accompanied it encapsulated flaws that would remain as obstacles on the path to freedom.

Philani Moyo describes that with the aim of gaining self-determination, the African ruling elites were enthusiastically involved in creating national projects.[[34]](#footnote-34) The ideas behind the national projects, according to Moyo, imply a sense of psychological unity and a recognition of the citizen’s desires, together creating a nation-state that shares one common identity. The role of the African elites is central in the unification of the people, inferring a connection between power and authority within the national project. In particular African states, including Zimbabwe, this power and authority was transferred to African political elites or “petty bourgeoise” in which, linking to coloniality, the colonial power structures remained.[[35]](#footnote-35) It is through the formation of the ‘organic intellectuals’ that the marks of colonialism are revealed, particularly through their education and approach to gaining freedom. This thesis will now explore African Nationalism in Zimbabwe, including the impact of colonisation on the ideological formation.

*Impact of Colonialism on the Formation of African Nationalism*

The bitter taste of colonial rule pushed the Zimbabwean Bush War of 1964 to 1979 forward, playing a vital role in the creation of a national ideology. Throughout the colonial period in the former Rhodesia from the 1890s until 1965 (after the white government declared Unilateral Independence), the African people were subjugated into second class citizens, referred to as ‘Subjects’.[[36]](#footnote-36) Under this patronizingly paternalistic categorization, the African people erupted into an armed struggle for their liberation during the 1960s and 70s, led by the two liberation movements, ZANU and ZAPU. An important aspect of this struggle for independence was the deep-rooted racial animosity between the whites and blacks. This was an aspect that was woven into the tapestry of their national-identity from the very beginning and was thus a difficult element to overcome.[[37]](#footnote-37) This racial tension is a wound that is continuously re-opened.

The Fast-Track Land Reform program, implemented after independence in 1980, serves as an example of re-opening this racial wound. In trying to solve and answer the desperate ‘land-question’, white farmers were brutally removed from their homes and farms in order to give back the land to the African people, once stolen from them during colonization. However, throughout the process a clear dismissal of the rights of the African peasants as well as the rights of white farmers was shown, exacerbating the underlying racial hatred that formed part of the liberation ideology and post-colonial identity. In Robert Mugabe’s independence speech on the 17th of April 1980, he stated, “If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interest”, following on with, “I urge you, whether you are White or Black, to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past… as Zimbabweans, trample upon racialism”.[[38]](#footnote-38) From this speech, there is a promising sense of national unity, unity that will overcome the past differences between the whites and blacks. However, by 2002, as revealed by a press conference in Cuba with Mugabe, this sense of unity was diminishing. Mugabe explained that the whites “are not satisfied with that level of authority because they think by virtue of their being British and being white, that they are more divine than anyone else”.[[39]](#footnote-39) As illustrated through this quote, the concept of unity and equality has disappeared back into the pre-independence rhetoric of “us” versus “them”. The issues associated with dismissing the racial diversity and fabricating a “one nation” for all, are therefore shown, problematizing a central component of the post-colonial identity formed in Zimbabwe through the nationalist ideology. The legacy of colonialism and its racial prejudices are therefore revealed to be ingrained in the minds of the Zimbabwean people.

Alongside the issues of racial divisions, the tribal factionalism between ZANU and ZAPU also played a role in the formulation of a national ideology. The leader of ZAPU, Joshua Nkomo led a mostly Ndebele people party whilst Robert Mugabe of ZANU led a majorly Shona people party. The two parties clashed bitterly throughout the liberation struggle, with Mugabe’s ZANU-PF succeeding in 1980 and forcing ZAPU-PF into a ‘Unity Agreement’ in 1987 that eventually “swallowed” ZAPU-PF.[[40]](#footnote-40) Playing into this tribal separation and angst, divisions among classes emerged, slipping further divisions into the national identity and ideology.

As a final point about the influence of colonialism, the notion of Chimurenga and the ‘need’ for violence will be explored, revealing another central aspect to Zimbabwe’s post-colonial identity; power and violence. After years of autocratic domination, colonialism silenced the voices of the African people, generating a build-up of resentment and determination to be heard. As a result of this past subjugation, the leaders were “programmed” into a “default” position which consisted of the use of violence to combat threats as well as an “intolerance for political opponents”.[[41]](#footnote-41) Henning Melber highlights a point of irony very applicable to Zimbabwe and the ZANU-PF party that still rules the country today. There is irony in the fact that the Founding Fathers, who had fought to end colonial injustice, actually conveyed the same sense of repression and authoritarian systems that they had fought to overthrow.[[42]](#footnote-42) Mugabe states in his independence speech of 1980, “Zimbabwe will have become a free, independent and sovereign state” in which “its people have made a democratic choice of those who as their legitimate Government, they wish to govern them and take policy decisions as their future.”.[[43]](#footnote-43) From these statements, there is emphasis on the ideas of freedom, sovereignty and democracy. However, having been in power for thirty-seven years, these promises Mugabe made, amongst cries of jubilation, were soon to be altered in the hope of maintaining political power. During the 2008 elections local institutions in Zimbabwe, according to the Human Rights Watch, identified 2000 cases of beatings and torture, with at least 36 Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opponent’s dead.[[44]](#footnote-44) These figures illustrate a clear deviance from the “democratic choice” of government in 1980. Norma Kriger refers to the notions of Chimurenga and mass killings of the Ndebele people, referred to as Gukurahundi, as the building blocks to achieving a ‘party-state’, maintaining a “hegemonic and monologic narrative of the nation”.[[45]](#footnote-45) Chimurenga employs the idea that ZANU is the “carrier of the burden of history” and is thus “divinely ordained heir to the nationalist revolutionary spirit”.[[46]](#footnote-46) This concept of “divinely ordained heir” reveals the strength of the nationalist ideology in enforcing the idea that ZANU-PF was the sole deserving ruler of Zimbabwe, resulting in the logic of authoritarianism. Part of the Zimbabwean national identity was based around the ZANU-PF party, their distribution of national histories, memory and commemoration established an ideological hegemony resulting in “uncontested political legitimacy”.[[47]](#footnote-47) Gramsci’s concept of hegemony is interesting here as it could be argued that in trying to deconstruct the hegemonic discourse of the West that enforced the subalternity of Zimbabwe, the African leaders, through their authoritarianism, may have maintained the subalternate position of the Zimbabwean people, just under a different hegemony. With this idea, the whole post-colonial identity can be considered to be built upon a position of subalternity from the start, in which a change of government, and thus overall identity, becomes even more difficult.

Chapter 2 – Gramsci and The African Nationalists

A major driving force behind the formation of African Nationalism in Zimbabwe during the liberation war, were the people who brought the ideology to the forefront and mobilized the rest of the African people. Without the nationalists themselves, the revolutionary African Nationalist ideology would not have been formed; and without the ideology, a war could not have been fought.

The Role of the nationalists as the leaders and creators of African Nationalism

Ndabaningi Sithole was first educated in 1932 at the Dadaya Mission School, after which he was awarded a bursary to go a study in the United States at the Andover-Newton Theological seminary, Massachusetts.[[48]](#footnote-48) Having left America after four years, Sithole returned home with the intention of “freeing” his country. Sithole became the Principal of Chikore Primary School in 1959, in which he explained that he should use his “pen to put across the African cause” and became a regular contributor to the local newspapers.[[49]](#footnote-49) Through the case study of Ndabaningi Sithole and his notion of African Nationalism, Gramsci’s theory of the ‘Organic Intellectual’ will be explored revealing the role of African Nationalists in raising the class-consciousness of the African people in order to change their position within society. It is through education that they realize their position within the hegemonic system and through knowing the system, challenging it becomes possible. As Sithole states, “you can learn the tricks of a man by learning his language”.[[50]](#footnote-50)

Antonio Gramsci, in his Prison Notebooks, makes a distinction between two types of intellectuals, the ‘traditional’ and the ‘organic’.[[51]](#footnote-51) The difference between the two groups is based on their diverging positions within society. Gramsci frames the ‘traditional’ intellectual to be part of the educated, professional group of citizens whilst his explanation of the ‘organic’ intellectual is focused less on their actual profession and more on their role in stimulating and organizing ideas within the social class group that they naturally belong to. It is through this distinction between the two types of intellectuals, that Gramsci stresses one of his key aspects behind his theory on hegemony, an aspect vital to the construction of a revolutionary ideology in Zimbabwe during the liberation war. Gramsci sees the ‘organic intellectual’ as an essential part in the “mediating” and organizing of struggle between class forces. For Gramsci the ‘organic intellectual’ has the means to form a relationship with the working class as well as the ruling class, in which they provide a sense of ideology and theory behind the struggle, essentially creating a leadership for those of whom are considered the ‘non-intellectuals’.[[52]](#footnote-52) The ‘organic intellectuals’ of the working class are defined firstly by their role in formulating and organizing a revolutionary ideology and secondly by their active role in leading and directing the revolutionary movement. A political party is then formed assembling the ‘organic intellectuals’ into a group that will then lead the rest of the people towards revolution.[[53]](#footnote-53) Within this thesis, the ‘organic intellectuals’ in Zimbabwe were the African Nationalists. The African Nationalists, sprouting from the rural classes, were the pioneers in spreading African Nationalism as the revolutionary ideology that drove the liberation war forward. As Gramsci has highlighted, the ‘organic intellectual’ is involved in mediating and organizing the masses, and as explained in Sithole’s autobiography, raising the self-awareness of the African people. Sithole explained that the role of the Nationalists was to “cause the masses to become more aware of their miserable plight, to know the cause of their miserable lot, and to kindle in their hearts the confidence and faith that they could remove the cause if only they united against that cause”.[[54]](#footnote-54) Sithole explains in his hand book on African Nationalism that the African Nationalists organized mass rallies throughout Zimbabwe in which they “took every opportunity to detail eloquently the oppression of white rule” in doing so, they hoped to make the African people conscious of their position within the society, breaking the dominance of the hegemonic worldview that had ensconced the African people.[[55]](#footnote-55) Furthermore, Sithole states that it was through these rallies and teaching to the people that the nationalists “emerged as the true leaders of the people” motivating the people to return to their homes, “fully charged with the spirit of freedom and with their hearts burning with a new fanatic zeal to free themselves”.[[56]](#footnote-56) This generation of the nationalist ideology and the cultivation of support through education and rallies unveils the methods in which the ‘organic intellectuals’ gained their prominence, replacing the hatred of white rule to the desire for Nationalist rule.

Gramsci emphasises the historical importance of ideology in “mobilizing the masses” and in creating a “psychological validity” amongst the people.[[57]](#footnote-57) The sense of “psychological validity” is key in creating a ‘nation’, thus, the architects of the ideology form the roots from which the ‘nation’ grows. Gramsci proposes that it is through ideology that people are organized en masse and through this, together they reach a consciousness in which they become aware of their position within society, catalysing a struggle that is fought by all.[[58]](#footnote-58) This point of class struggle is underlined through Gramsci’s concept of hegemony and subaltern. Gramsci wrote, “the foundation of a ruling class, is equivalent to the creation of a Weltanschauung”.[[59]](#footnote-59) In this he refers to a similar point made by Karl Marx, in that the ruling class creates the worldview of ideas at that point in time. Therefore, Gramsci’s notion of hegemony relates to a political leadership that is based on the consent of the people and secured through the ‘popularization’ of the world view of the ruling class.[[60]](#footnote-60) It is thus, only through the growth of ‘organic intellectuals’ from the subaltern classes, that their subalternate position can be realized and this hegemonic, power of attraction, can shift to the newly rising subaltern intellectuals. Gramsci explains that, “a human mass does not ‘distinguish’ itself and does not become independent ‘by itself’ without organizing itself, and there is no organization without intellectuals” as it is the intellectuals who lead the movement.[[61]](#footnote-61) The awakening of a class consciousness amongst the subaltern groups is then credited to the ideological struggle occurring between the two opposing social class groups, in this sense, between the African people and the whites in Zimbabwe.[[62]](#footnote-62)

The ‘organic intellectual’ is described to be a form of ‘specialist’ in a particular aspect of ‘primitive’ activity within the new class the intellectual is aiming to bring to a place of prominence.[[63]](#footnote-63) Thus, whilst the subaltern classes do not contain ‘traditional’ intellectuals in the Gramscian understanding of them, ‘organic’ intellectuals can be harboured within the subaltern classes and it is through these intellectuals that a relationship can be made between the subaltern classes and the hegemonic. From this an opportunity is created, through revolution, for the subaltern to rise up against the dominant voice and class. Sithole gives insight into the initial reaction of the African people to the arrival of the whites during colonisation, it is through this representation that an analysis into the notion hegemony and subaltern can be given. Sithole states that the people referred to the whites as, “two legged gods”, in which he explains that they were “conscious of the magic spell they had cast over the Africans, and they did everything to maintain it”.[[64]](#footnote-64) Sithole’s belief in this “magic spell” reveals just how absorbed the African people became into the culture of the hegemonic white colonialists way of life. Sithole states that the “Africans submitted themselves to the rule of the white man without question” and “soon associated all power, wealth, skills, cleverness, wisdom and knowledge with the white man.”.[[65]](#footnote-65) From this, Gramsci’s concept of the “progressive class” ruling over the people through the power of attraction, is evident here. It is within this hegemonic context that the African Nationalists began to see the holes in the white supremacy that dominated over the Africans. Sithole referred to this as the “cracked myth”, as this “myth” of the “white gods” had been broken down by the ‘organic intellectuals’.[[66]](#footnote-66) Gramsci states that, “the intellectuals of the historically progressive class… exercise such a power of attraction that they end … by subordinating the intellectuals of other groups”.[[67]](#footnote-67) Sithole corroborates this in explaining that “for a time the white man held the stage while his spell bound African Spectators just gazed” and that whilst “all important positions remained exclusively white, the myth held together and cast its magic spell over the African”.[[68]](#footnote-68) Thus, from this point the need for an ‘organic intellectual’, one who comes from the subalternate group but has the means to breakdown the hegemonic hold of the whites, is essential in forming a revolutionary ideology. Sithole proposed that, “African Nationalism in many ways, represented the degree to which the white man’s magic spell had worn off”, as well as highlighting that “African Nationalism was preceded by a tremendous psychological process which resulted in the de-mythicization of the white man”.[[69]](#footnote-69) According to Sithole and in line with the Gramscian idea of raising a class-consciousness, this “process of internal emancipation had to precede that of political liberation.”[[70]](#footnote-70) Therefore, through the ‘organic intellectuals’ and their formation of ideology, the “myth” of the “white god” that allowed for white domination and hegemony, could be broken down, enabling a fight for liberation from their subalternate position.

The *formation* of the ‘organic intellectual’ is discussed in Gramsci’s, Prison Notebooks, and is a key proponent in understanding the formation of the Zimbabwean revolutionary ideology. As explained above, it is through the ‘organic intellectual’ that African Nationalism came about, thus the factors that influenced the ‘organic intellectual’ go hand in hand with those that formed African Nationalism. Sithole states that “the interaction between the West and Africa was producing a new brand of African”. He explains that, “there was a world of difference between the African before the coming of the white man and afterwards”.[[71]](#footnote-71) Wilf Mbanga, the editor of the first independent newspaper in Zimbabwe, the “Daily News”, in 1999, explained in an interview that it was through the British process of “gradualism” that the African people were to be educated.[[72]](#footnote-72) Sithole mentions this concept of ‘gradualism’ in reference to the influence of the Christian Church on the formation of African Nationalism. Sithole reveals that the British missionaries were “blind instruments in the whole process of African Nationalism” as it is because of their education within the missionary schools that the ‘organic intellectuals’ could be cultivated.[[73]](#footnote-73) Sithole writes, “The Christian Church has introduced a new spirit of learning without which no nation can have a truly balanced progress” as it is because of the spread of literacy through it that “present enlightened African political leadership” was made possible.[[74]](#footnote-74) Alongside this, Sithole admits to the positive impact of colonialism in which he shows that it is through colonialism and missionary schools that the teachings of the Bible revealed to the African population that under God all people are equal. This realization allowed awareness of the “strong sense of human injustice” from which the motivation behind African Nationalism was kindled.[[75]](#footnote-75) Sithole wrote, “while African Nationalism was strongly motivated by African consciousness of an oppressed people seeking freedom, Christian consciousness helped it to its feet and imbued it with self-sustaining creativity.”.[[76]](#footnote-76) Having gained the literacy needed to bring about the self-realization of their position, the ‘organic intellectuals’ began to study how to gain back control of Africa. Sithole highlights that within this awakening of a Gramscian sense of class consciousness, “the study of history places very powerful weapons in the hands of many Africans, and historical consciousness was one of the chief factors being African nationalism”.[[77]](#footnote-77) Sithole states, “the educated African was gaining ideas and ideologies that were highly dangerous to colonialism”.[[78]](#footnote-78) Alongside the influence of colonialism through Missionary Schools, the Second World War also played a key role in “awakening” the African ‘organic intellectuals. Being part of a war against expansion and domination, the Africans came to realise their position of subjugation. Sithole states that whilst Europe “fired the anti-domination bullet at Nazi Germany…the same bullet was also, in turn, successfully fired at them”.[[79]](#footnote-79) As Gramsci explained, “School is the instrument through which intellectuals of various levels are elaborated”.[[80]](#footnote-80) This ironic growth of the ‘organic intellectual’ and thus in turn, growth of the revolutionary ideology, was strongly linked to the basis of the colonial regime itself, as the ‘gradualism’ employed by the colonists only aided in creating an intellectual that was aware of their subalternate position under their dominance. The moment this awareness spread into the creation of an ideology, the colonial systems were doomed to implode. The importance of the varying influence on the formation of the ‘organic intellectual’ is essential in illustrating how through understanding the ways of the hegemonic order, a fight for the voice of the subaltern is made possible.

Chapter 3 – The Post-Colonial Identity

Whilst this study discusses the role the formation of the revolutionary ideology played in reflecting the post-colonial identity of Zimbabwe, the focus lies on the formation of the revolutionary ideology and not on the identity itself. However, an outline of this post-colonial identity is necessary to illustrate how the formation of African Nationalism influenced Zimbabwe’s post-independence identity. Towards the end of Sithole’s autobiography he provides a list of “requirements” that should be met post-independence in Zimbabwe. Using these six points as a basis for comparison to the reality of Zimbabwe, flaws within the intricacies of African Nationalism may be revealed, providing a critical glance at the post-colonial identity that has resulted. Sithole states that the very first “requirement” of an “ideal system” should be a system that is purely “people-centred”.[[81]](#footnote-81) He stresses that African Nationalism, worked “persistently to overthrow everything that denied the African people a say in their own country”.[[82]](#footnote-82) The second point Sithole emphasises is the need for free and fair elections, he writes that “free elections are one of the surest ways of assuring a man a say in the affairs of his own country”.[[83]](#footnote-83) Thirdly, Sithole presses the importance of free discussions and fourthly free criticism of the government. His two final points state his desire of having a “flexible system” and finally, the necessity in having a “nation-centred system” and not a “personal-system”.[[84]](#footnote-84)

From these six points highlighted above, Sithole’s vision for the future Zimbabwe is portrayed, conveying the aims of African Nationalism from a nationalist perspective. Mugabe’s first address to the people of Zimbabwe on the 4th of March in 1980 acknowledges some of these points. He starts his speech by thanking the people for their votes, emphasising that the new government is one chosen by the people by free and fair elections, “May I thank you heartily for your votes and support”.[[85]](#footnote-85) However, after Mugabe’s near defeat to the new, popular Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party, in the 2000 elections, the hope of maintaining free and fair elections slowly eroded. According to Global Security.org, a “systematic campaign of intimidation and physical violence against opposition supporters” followed the election process.[[86]](#footnote-86) From this point on, the country faced rigging of elections, intimidation and violence for the next seventeen years. The first elections to be held without Mugabe since 1980 were orchestrated on the 30th of July in 2018. With high hopes for transparency throughout the voting process, many Western states who had previously held sanctions on Zimbabwe due to election irregularities, were preparing to lift these sanctions be the election process fair and untampered with.[[87]](#footnote-87) However, the success of the ZANU-PF party under President Emmerson Mnangagwa continued to fuel distrust resulting in further debates over free and fair elections. It was revealed that during the election process, police raided the MDC headquarters, arresting twenty-seven people, and violently crushed MDC protests.[[88]](#footnote-88) From this breakdown of election processes, a clear disparity between the aims of the nationalists and the reality is revealed, illustrating the post-colonial identity that resulted, one starkly different to the imagined nation-state.

Sithole’s third and fourth aims of free discussion and freedom to criticise is another point of reference that deviates from the reality of the post-colonial identity. It is through the conducted interview with a female liberation fighter that the real sense of fear in criticizing the current government is shown. Her choice to remain anonymous reveals the apprehension that she feels in expressing her current views of the situation in Zimbabwe. She criticises the change in Mugabe’s approach to power, moving from a position of representing freedom to gaining power through fear. The emphasis on fear conveys a total lack of freedom in discussion. Furthermore, the interview with Wilf Mbanga illustrates another aspect of the realistic post-colonial identity. From having spent Sunday afternoons with Mugabe, listening to “Elvis”, to being labelled an enemy of the state years later, Mbanga is a clear example emphasizing the total lack of freedom to criticise the government.[[89]](#footnote-89) The founding of the independent newspaper, the “Daily News” in 1999, resulted in their head offices being bombed, constant following and imprisonment before Mbanga went into exile, having only returned home this year after seventeen years.[[90]](#footnote-90)

Linking to Sithole’s final two aims, Mugabe promises, “My party recognises the fundamental principle that in constituting a government it is necessary to be guided by the national interest rather by strictly party considerations”.[[91]](#footnote-91) Here, Mugabe ties in the aim of forming a coalition with Nkomo’s ZANU faction, thus, inferring that in striving for a national-identity that is fluid and not tied to a particular “personal-system”, the need to move away from tribal conflicts is essential. In analysing this aim for a national-identity through the guise of a critical stance on African Nationalism as an ideology, the removal of difference, be it between tribes or between colour, presents the opportunity for an enforcement of a ‘one-party state’. As stated above by Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ndhlovu, the construction of a one-nation state allows for state control as opposed to the power remaining in the hands of the people, defying the very first principle presented by Sithole.

The above points portray an image of the post-colonial identity in Zimbabwe today. It is through the comparison to Sithole and Mugabe’s initial aims for the country that the short-comings within the African Nationalism pursued are exposed. As Wilf Mbanga revealed in an interview with TRT World, “today’s democrats can be tomorrow’s dictators”.[[92]](#footnote-92)

Conclusion

The above analysis aims at contributing to the understanding of how the formation of African Nationalism reflected the creation of a post-colonial identity in Zimbabwe. The complexities of African Nationalism as an ideology and theory, are dissected, producing a critical approach towards nationalism in Zimbabwe. The difficulty in essentializing a country mixed with different tribes and people of different colours and cultures is highlighted revealing the dangers associated with a “one-nation state”. This breakdown of African Nationalism serves as the basis for the second section of this thesis in which a closer look in the African Nationalists themselves, through a Gramscian perspective, is given. It is through this approach that the importance of the ‘organic intellectuals’ in creating a sense of ideology that inspired the people to fight for a change in their position within the hegemonic structure is highlighted. Additionally, through this investigation into the formation of the ‘organic intellectuals’, a desire to over-run the colonial hegemony is placed at the centre of the African Nationalism pursued. An interesting revelation from this point is that in order to over-run the hegemonic class and move out of the subaltern, a position of hegemony is then reached by the revolutionary party. This position of hegemony that the ‘organic intellectuals’, like Sithole and Mugabe, reached, links back to the flaws woven into the structure of African Nationalism. In order to take over those who dominate, it is illustrated by this thesis, that a position of dominance must be reached by those seeking to over-rule it in the first place. As Gramsci infers there is a position of subalternity and there is one of hegemony, thus in order to relieve the position of subalternity, one must become hegemonic. Following on from this, the role of the ‘organic intellectual’ reveals a form of ‘hero’ complex in which the intellectuals become the saviours of freedom in the eyes of the people. With this elevated position through the power of attraction, their indispensable role in the movement for change forms part of the fabric that is African Nationalism and thus, they become part of the core identity of Zimbabwe.

As a concluding point, this thesis infers that whilst the ‘organic’ intellectuals managed to realize their place of subalternity and fight against the hegemonic colonial forces, their victory over such colonial dominance allowed them the position to become the dominant hegemonic voice themselves. A voice that speaks above the Zimbabwean people. The discrepancies highlighted between the current post-colonial identity and the initial aims for the country serve to heighten the conflict that lies between the binary division of hegemonic and subaltern. As the first section of this thesis reveals, the Founding Fathers or ‘organic intellectuals’ are idealized as the heroes of the nation and in doing so ZANU-PF becomes the face of Zimbabwe. In a sense, against the initial wishes of Sithole, Zimbabwe’s identity directly correlates to ZANU-PF and those who founded it. Through this hegemonic, one-party nation-state of Zimbabwe, the voices of the African people can be considered to have become silent once more. A new dichotomy of subaltern and hegemonic is formed; the state becomes hegemonic and the people subaltern. Sithole speaks of the “white gods” and the “cracked myth” in which the people realize the whites are not gods but oppressors. However, with the Nationalists’ new position of hegemony, the change is not in the removal of a ‘god’ to create equality but rather a change in colour of that god. As illustrated above, the Nationalists become “divinely ordained heir to the nationalist revolutionary spirit” and it is through this understanding that colonialism could be considered to have been removed and put back with the face of a different colour.

In light of these concluding points, a point of reflection and a suggestion for further research will be given. Whilst the findings of this thesis reveals interesting aspects behind the ideological formation in Zimbabwe during the liberation war, a deeper search into Mugabe and Nkomo would have provided a broader and more in-depth analysis of the ideology and nationalists. Furthermore, a closer look into foreign influence on the ideology, particularly the Cold War, would have added another dimension in understanding the complexities of African Nationalism. In light of the recent deaths of Mugabe and several other African Nationalists that drove the revolutionary war forward, it would be interesting to research into whether the party of ZANU-PF, and its actions as the hegemonic state operator, would change with a change in generation. Would the party remain the same or would a new generation of politicians within the same party ignite a change in the post-colonial identity? Whilst Zimbabwe suffers through continuing human rights crises as well as economic pitfalls, the search for the answer to what will create change continues to plague the Zimbabwean people. Is ZANU-PF the face of Zimbabwe or can a Zimbabwe without ZANU-PF exist? Homi Bhabha and his theory of “hybridity” could be used as a means to further research into how embracing multiculturalism could generate a move away from the static concept of the ‘nation state’ and how this would impact the current situation Zimbabwe faces.

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Appendix

Interview transcript from an interview with a female liberation fighter. Throughout this interview, the interviewee requested to remain anonymous due to a fear of the current government.

Date - 20th of December 2019, Harare Zimbabwe

Interviewer: When did you join the war?

Interviewee: I joined the war in 1975. My father was a policeman in Mutare, after the death of Herbert Chitepo in 1975, I was inspired and ran away from home. I walked to Mozambique and joined the ZANU forces there.

Interviewer: How did you feel in 1980 when Zimbabwe gained independence?

Interviewee: We were as happy as a fish in water, I had no idea that things would turn bad. I had fought for a cause I was passionate about and Mugabe offered us all that we hoped for. However, in the 1990s things started to change, by 1987 and 1988we began to realize this was not what we had voted for. The first signs of the Fast Track Land reform were initially seen as a good thing but with the increasing violence, it became clear that Mugabe was beginning to rule through fear.

Interviewer: Why do you think things began to change for the worse in the 1990s?

Interviewee: It was after Mugabe began to fear that ZANU-PF would not win the upcoming election in 2000. This was the first time that Mugabe and ZANU-PF had really faced severe opposition, the MDC was gaining popularity. This was when the new idea of Democracy, that was only introduced in 1980, was beginning to fade. There was no war in Zambia and Malawi but only in Zimbabwe, it is because of this that there can be a form of democracy there and not in Zimbabwe. There was no war there and therefore no revolutionary party.

Interviewer: What do you think will happen to ZANU-PF in the future, in order for the country to change do you think that ZANU-PF should be removed from power?

Interviewee: In Africa the revolutionary party will never lose.

Interview with Wilf Mbanga, the founder of the first opposition newspaper in Zimbabwe in 1999.

Date – 27th December 2019, Harare Zimbabwe

This interview could not be recorded and thus below lies notes taken during the interview but not the exact transcript of what was said.

When asked about how Wilf Mbanga experienced the Liberation War and what he thought inspired the people to keep fighting, Mbanga replied with a long description of various significant incidents during the war. Wilf explained that for him the revolutionary ideology began to be shaped in the 1930s through the trade unions and then following this, through the United Federal Party that fought against white domination. Mbanga stated that it was from these organizations that the African Nationalists were formed. He also stressed that the Nationalists were part of the general program of ‘gradualism’, through which the colonists hoped to educate the African people. The Southern Rhodesian African National Congress, harbouring the African Nationalists, initially did not campaign for majority rule but rather for ‘fair rule’. However, during the change in office from Prime Minister Godfrey Huggins in 1956 to Prime Minister Roy Welensky, the nationalists changed their agenda and began demanding majority rule. After the declaration of Unilateral Independence by Ian Smith in 1965, this demand for majority rule became even more desperate. Smith placed all nationalists in jail, forcing many to move into the neighbouring states. This imprisonment of the nationalists and their move out of Zimbabwe, according to Mbanga, pushed them towards foreign aid and thus, allowed for the influence of the Soviet Union and China. Mbanga explained that the USSR provided arms and training to the ZAPU faction and China to ZANU. An important aspect that Mbanga highlighted was that Russia and China provided different approaches to each faction of guerrilla fighters, influencing the way in which they fought. Russia provided the ZAPU soldiers training in conventional warfare whilst China trained the ZAPU soldiers in guerrilla warfare. In 1974 Mbanga covered a series of profiles on the African Nationalists for “The Star” in Johannesburg, South Africa. Having done this, Mbanga revealed that “Mugabe was different from the others”, he described him to be deeper, more intelligent and the only nationalist who was not bitter or seeking revenge. Mbanga stated that Mugabe was not against the white people but only against the system. However, after independence, Mbanga explained that he became more critical towards the government, leading him to start the first ever independent newspaper in Zimbabwe, The Daily News, it was after this that Mugabe cut off all ties to Mbanga, a previous friend of his. Mbanga stated that the first ten years of independence were the “glory days”, but after the referendum in 1999, he believed that Mugabe saw this as a personal insult and challenge to him, igniting a change. Mbanga ended the interview explaining that change will never come to Zimbabwe without electoral reforms.

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