

## Revisiting the Welfare of War Veterans in Zimbabwe

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**Abstract:** The main thrust of the article is to examine the extent to which the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front led government handled the welfare of war veterans since 1980 to the present (2013). Guided by primary and secondary sources the presentation argues that the government ignored crucial but fundamental aspects of the welfare of the war veterans in its post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process. In addition, it asserts that when the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front led government was confronted by a vibrant political party since 1999, it sought the support of war veterans to dislocate all the stakeholders of the Movement for Democratic Change. It concludes that the war veterans made the country insecure as they responded to the demands of the government because they hoped to acquire benefits for their participation and to date the war veterans have violated the legal system of the country without retribution. Therefore, to end these unending demands, it is imperative to conduct a war veteran needs assessment and even set a ceiling on their benefits to curtail the mercenary like strategies they are now using at the expense of the civilians who were central to the conduct of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. Overall, the war veterans posed and continue to threaten peace and security as long as a lasting solution is not hatched on their welfare challenges.

**Keywords:** peace, security, war veteran, welfare, Zimbabwe.

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### INTRODUCTION

Although it is not the focus of this piece of writing, a global picture reveals that incompetent handling of the welfare of war veterans in post conflict environments has the potential to threaten peace and security. In this article, we discuss the case of Zimbabwe where the systematic neglect of the welfare needs of the war veterans endangered peace and security. Research on demobilisation and reintegration has shown that discontented demobilised soldiers threaten the country's security system. In addition, retrenched soldiers find it difficult to assimilate into civilian life and may pose a security challenge in future [1]. The term welfare in this presentation refers to basic needs which were empirically found fundamental to war veterans' socio-economic, psychological and political well-being such as employment, health and land. These constitute major components of the welfare needs of war veterans as enshrined in the contemporary concept of human security and the demobilisation process. Studies on war veterans in Zimbabwe indeed admit that war veterans were marginalised because no whole hearted attempts were made to provide them with economic muscles to help them fit in the civilian society particularly given their limited financial capacity. The Zimbabwe government was reluctant in reintegrating war veterans into the government structures on account of their lack of or low academic

qualifications. In fact, for the ex-fighters to obtain academic and professional qualifications, the same government which set these requirements was obligated to provide material, moral and financial support if it had adhered to the process of demobilisation. In this regard, the failure to provide the necessary supportive educational attainment environment was evident soon after independence when war veterans were requested to produce academic credentials as a pre-requisite for entry into civil service jobs. This was an insult to many war veterans who did not possess the required entry qualifications and were left without an alternative except to be employed as general labourers.

In an effort to salvage themselves from poverty, a significant number of the impoverished war veterans were manipulated by the government in its response to the rise of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Instability and short cuts (for example the payment of unbudgeted gratuities in 1997) became the order of the day as the war veterans became immune to prosecution.

From the year 2000 to the present the war veterans were at the forefront of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. Consequently, they manipulated the opportunities presented to them by the political circumstances where the government sought to defend

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its status quo by appealing to war veterans for support. In this article we do not treat war veterans as a homogeneous rebel group, but as loyal supporters of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), although we are cognisant of the fact that there were radical veterans who held contrary views to the party. We argue that a significant number of the war veterans who supported ZANU-PF were largely driven by the need to get a share of the shrinking national cake. The supposition is that if the land issue had been carefully and tactically addressed earlier the war veterans would have been empowered economically thereby giving them a strong foundation of resisting manipulation for political gains. Overall, the long neglected welfare needs led to insecurity as war veterans took the law into their hands. Given this quagmire it is imperative to conduct needs analysis of the war veterans in a drive to find a lasting solution to the insecurities ignited by the government's failure to provide for their welfare. The stakeholders handling the grievances of the war veterans must be conversant with the major players of the Second Chimurenga so that they will avoid reducing the former fighters into mercenaries due to their unending demands, whilst neglecting the role civilians played during the war of liberation. Admittedly, to prevent the unending demands by the former fighters and increasing dissent between them and civilians, those mandated to conduct needs analysis must set a ceiling of the benefits to be accrued by the war veterans. An open cheque to their demands risks widening the rift between them and the civilians who did not benefit from the obtaining unstable socio-economic and political system which the ex-fighters were largely responsible. Put in a cut version, we discuss the contemporary human security paradigm, the demobilisation process and how it was implemented, the welfare challenges confronted by war veterans and their implication on peace and security in Zimbabwe.

### **THE CONTEMPORARY HUMAN SECURITY PARADIGM**

Human security refers to an up-and-coming paradigm of understanding global susceptibilities whose advocates dispute the conservative notion of national security by arguing that the appropriate reference for security should be the individual than the state. Human security contends that a people-centric view of security is essential for national, regional and global stability where individuals and communities are protected from any socio-economic, environmental and political violence. Buzan (1981) observes that both policy makers and strategists viewed security primarily in terms of national power [2]. National policy makers were and are, mandated by their positions, and the nature of their powers and responsibilities, to take a predominantly national view. State security is mainly concerned with defending the country from internal and external enemies through propagation of arms where human needs are not

practically put into consideration. The concept of human security is premised on the notion that a bottom-up approach model is ideal for sustainable development of peace and security. Human security argues that if nations secure individuals from all forms of abuses and vulnerabilities, internal threats to those in power will be reduced or even removed. Accordingly, where individuals are free from fear and from want the powers that be face limited criticism if any. Indeed in the case of Zimbabwe if the government had protected the war veterans and the civilians in general from the socio-economic susceptibilities through a successful post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration exercise and poverty reduction the security of those in authority might have been secured and stability attained.

Reintegration is an intricate, durable route through which ex-combatants and their dependants are supported to relocate in after-war communities, are involved in political decision-making procedure, get sustainable civilian employment and means of earning a living, as well as adjust attitudes and prospects and deal with their war associated mental trauma[3]. Reintegration schemes are intended to warrant relief aid, capability and the ultimate long-term self-sufficiency of recipients. The schemes comprise: "registration, provision of civilian clothing, cash payments at the time of demobilisation and subsequent intervals, foodstuffs, household utensils, land allocation, agricultural training, inputs and implements, school fees, counselling, legal or entrepreneurial advice, management and technical advice, credit schemes, vocational training, job placement, health support, and referral services." [4]. In fact the DDR processes are supposed to be executed diligently and professionally in order to ensure sustainable and peaceful transition into civilian life by the former combatants.

It must be understood that war veterans were not mere beggars but people who made efforts to salvage themselves from chronic poverty which affected them after independence. As soon as they received gratuities, they made investments but with limited success. A \$27 million loan guarantee was granted by the government to the war veterans association [5]. In 1997, 400 tractors and 950 grinding mills were bought from China through a line of credit provided by a local bank at a cost of about \$55 million. Other equipment bought included medical tools, graders and lorries. The District Development Fund (DDF) administered the operations of the tractors and collected funds on behalf of the owners of the tractors (Ibid). A closer analysis of the items bought by the ZNLWVA revealed that most, if not all, were being prepared for farming as part of the reintegration exercise but a lot of equipment was either abused or looted. To worsen their situation, a lot of the acquired equipment were of poor quality and quickly broke down. In the next section we define the term '*war veteran*.'

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## WHO CONSTITUTES A WAR VETERAN?

The meaning of the term *war veteran* has been transformed in Zimbabwe. Different people masked by their political affiliation refer to themselves as war veterans in an effort to acquire benefits from ZANU-PF. According to Kriger (2003), since independence, veterans, other liberation activists, the media and the party used a discourse about who is an authentic veteran as a political weapon. When veterans criticised the government, ZANU PF labeled them “inauthentic” combatants or questioned their credentials on the grounds that fighters were disciplined and should not challenge the party [6]. This was evident when Zimbabwe Liberators Platform (ZLP) led by Wilfred Mhanda whose *nom de guerre* was Dzinashé Machingura criticised the 2000 amnesty granted by President Mugabe on the premise that it was intended to protect, “ZANU-PF supporters who were used by an unpopular regime that wanted to cling on to power at all costs” [7]. Reacting to the utterances, the then ZNLWVA secretary for projects said, “These people are confused. I do not think they belong to ZANU-PF. Hunzvi leads genuine war veterans” [8]. The working definition of war veteran(s) used in this paper is contained in the War Veterans Act where a war veteran is:

a person who underwent military training and participated, consistently and persistently, in the liberation struggle, which occurred in Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries between 1 January 1962 and 29 February 1980 in connection with bringing about Zimbabwe’s independence on 18 April 1980 [9].

Having charted a definition on who is a war veteran in the Zimbabwean case, we now tackle though briefly how the demobilisation process was carried out.

## THE DEMOBILISATION PROCESS

After the escalation of Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle the country finally gained independence in 1980 after a negotiated peace conference at Lancaster in 1979. A decade of warfare was therefore halted as the fighting parties had to resolve their differences on the negotiating table. The guerrilla parties essentially wanted independence whereas the whites wanted to preserve their economic interests that they felt were at stake in case of a takeover by liberation movements. This consideration made demobilisation a somewhat intricate process which called for the involvement of different stakeholders who participated in various capacities.

Demobilisation is the process that considerably reduces the number of personnel in the armed forces [10]. The process normally entails the release of combatants from military obligations to civilian life. In 1980, war veterans who were not co-opted into the national army were discharged. The

government at first resisted demobilising former guerrillas and finally gave in to discharging them under pressure. At the minimum Mugabe wanted all his fighters incorporated into a new army [11]. In 1980 there were around 65,000 guerrillas from Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZPRA) forces had about 2,000 who became part of the new Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) [12]. Many guerrillas had to be disbanded from military service because the cost of absorbing them in the ZNA was huge. Demobilisation is an inescapable element in post war circumstances but the challenge is that most African countries struggle to incorporate all their former fighters. By and large there was lack of political will. The Zimbabwean situation was difficult because of hostile guerrilla blocs which were mainly divided on ethnic lines-Ndebele and Shona.

It was largely fear or insecurity which adequately explains why Mugabe did not want guerrillas disbanded after independence. They were reciprocated hostilities involving the former guerrilla factions and fighting was highly probable. The Entumbane conflict which led to the engagements between guerrilla groups pointed to the importance of quick action as ZPRA posed a serious danger to the government’s security. The process of compulsory demobilisation started in 1981. Accordingly, the government found it tactical to quicken the demobilisation process. In the conflict that broke out some ZPRA veteran guerrilla commanders including Lookout Masuku were arrested and imprisoned. Resultantly, they never enjoyed independence because they died in prison on charges of treason despite being acquitted by Zimbabwe’s Supreme Court. To worsen the situation, some of the guerrilla forces and armed auxiliaries of Abel Muzorewa’s United African National Council (UANC) and Ndabaningi Sithole refused to go into Assembly Points (APs) and barracks because they doubted and suspected them [13]. It is therefore apparent that despite being obligatory, demobilisation was carried out contrary to the wishes and aspirations of the most crucial stakeholders-the war veterans. More-so, the demobilisation package did not reflect the willingness of the government to cater for the welfare of the war veterans.

Kingma (2000) noted that the demobilised veterans usually received a one off cash payment at the time of demobilisation and a stipend which was paid at subsequent intervals. The package was important in providing ex-combatants with the capacity to adjust into the new society. The ZANU-PF government was trying to accommodate its former guerrillas so that they would not feel neglected but the aim was short-sighted. Had the payments been maintained, the war veterans could not have been more demanding in 1997. Their later demands culminated into the unbudgeted Z\$50,000 gratuities which among

other factors plunged the country into a sudden economic collapse.

Operation Merger was carried out to unite guerrillas and the RSF into the Zimbabwe National Army. General Peter Walls, former chief of the Rhodesian Security Forces was the commander of the united regular and guerrilla forces. The daunting task of integration was complex because of the passing on of ZANLA commander Josiah Tongogara, killed in Mozambique allegedly in a road accident but the cause of his death is deeply contested in contemporary Zimbabwe. It is presumed that Tongogara could have been acceptable to General Walls and to ZPRA guerrillas as Commander-in-Chief of the Zimbabwe National Army [14]. Demobilisation was carried out in the Assembly Points (APs). The disbandment took place in a hostile environment as the new ZANU-PF government deliberated its future security needs while the demobilised war veterans had to face the uncertain future.

The auxiliary militia forces (26,000) initially created as a concealed army of the former Prime Minister, Bishop Abel Muzorewa were disbanded, so were the contentious Selous Scouts [15]. Nevertheless, the formation of a solo combined army had unfathomable political connotations since any endeavours to decrease the size of ZPRA was prone to be met with opposition from Joshua Nkomo who was Mugabe's contender in spite of his existence in the new black government. The Joint High Command (JHC) was made up of General Peter Walls, Lt. Sandy MacLean, Commander of Rhodesian Air Force, Marshall Frank Mussel, field commanders of ZANLA and ZPRA, Rex Nhongo and Lookout Masuku respectively and Secretary of Defence Allan Lope [16].

The High Command was to work under British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT), which was an imperative collaborator in the ruling party's pursuit for an army faithful to the party [17]. Regardless of disorders involved in the establishment of a solo army, as portrayed by most accounts, the job was done successfully notwithstanding the challenges experienced [18]. The British had vast experience in comparable and other connected processes. Accordingly, their existence and participation was a great moral and psychological motivator to the new government.

### HOW DEMOBILISATION WAS IMPLEMENTED

The National Rehabilitation Centre was established in Ruwa in 1981 to rehabilitate disabled ex-combatants. The inspiration for setting up a rehabilitation institute was suggested to the government by the legislative body of The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), a British charity, and Horticultural therapy, which was to assist by providing agricultural projects for the disabled. The whole programme aimed at preparing disabled ex-combatants for education and work [19]. The central agenda was to incorporate war veterans in nearly all sectors of the economy so that they would become industrious and self-reliant. If the government had effectively complimented OXFAM efforts, the disabled ex-combatants would not have landed into abject poverty.

Firstly, in 1980 there was a once off payment demobilisation package of four hundred dollars (Z\$400.00) which was paid to the affected. During this process a demobilisation record was issued to all former combatants and contained the details outlined in *Table 1*.

**Table 1: A record of details captured during the once off payment given to the War Veterans (Source: C. Nyanga)**

Serial No.....

1. Personal number.....

2. Name.....

3. Pseudo name.....

4. Pay Book serial number.....

5. Village.....

6. Tribe.....

7. Chief.....

8. Headman.....

9. Age.....

10. Sex.....

11. The above named bearer of this document was demobilised from service with ZPRA/ZANLA at.....on.....19.....and received a demobilisation grant of \$400.00

Signed..... (Member)

Signed..... (Demobilisation officer)

Official Stamp

This kind of demobilisation meant that the government had shelved a problem which was to dog it years later. In the second phase all war veterans who were officially demobilised were given Z\$185, 00 until 1983 or a lump sum of Z\$4,440. Beyond that there was little government attempt to assert their socio-economic reintegration [20]. The

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money was given after the once off payment demobilisation fund of Z\$400, 00. A demobilisation Identity Card was issued and had the details given in *Table 2*.

**Table 2: A Sample of an ID which was given to the war veterans (Source: C. Nyanga)**

No.....  
Demobilisation Identity Card  
Army No.....  
Rank.....  
Name.....  
P.O.S.B Pay Book No.....

The demobilised war veterans who were issued a demobilisation identity card and were not enlisted into the new army were paid as if they were still members of the new army.

Lack of a broad reintegration method culminated in the futile reintegration of the demobilised members who re-registered under the Demobilisation Programme of 1981. The incorporation process gave birth to a 70,000 force as opposed to the primary projection of 30,000. In response the government formulated a policy strategy to plan and execute the disbandment of the over-manned army. The demobilisation road-map was stipulated in a government policy document titled “*Demobilisation within the Zimbabwe National Army.*” The policy document was merely a statement of intention that was not detailed on the predicted societal roles of the ex-fighters [21]. There were no specific provisions for the rehabilitation and reintegration of exceptional groups such as the physically disabled and psychologically challenged ex-combatants including female ex-fighters who had explicit needs.

Demobilisation being unavoidable, a larger number of ex-guerrillas was excluded from military service. In order to cater for demobilised war veterans, a Demobilisation Agency- the Demobilisation Directorate, functioning under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, was set up to oversee the human transition from war to peace [22]. The Demobilisation Directorate was empowered to manage the provision of further education, technical training, expert employment and entrepreneurial guidance, and demobilisation monthly stipend. As a result of institutional incapacity, socio-economic, political and military challenges the DDR process crumbled. This translated into the absence of an enthusiastic government reintegration policy leading to a profound impact on the independent state’s socio-economic and political configuration [23].

To cap it all, most ex-combatants for different reasons such as lack of confidence in future programmes did not desire to be demobilised. In reaction to a questionnaire disseminated to every Assembly Camp, only 150 guerrillas expressed curiosity in returning to civilian life [24]. Minimum career counselling and guidance on investing money was done and consequently most of the funds were not

used properly. On the contrary, ex-combatants did not look forward to be discharged from their responsibilities because the war-time promises guaranteed a place for each person in the army and well-remunerated occupations. Paradoxically, the political uncertainty was to be confronted with all the boldness it deserved if peace and security were to be maintained. Linked to this, Chiturumani, an ex-combatant, resentfully protested against the demobilisation process. He noted that:

Combatants who include myself were just side-lined as unsuitable to join the Zimbabwe National Army on account of old age or low levels of education. Instead there are cases where those who had not effectively fought or had not fought at all became part of the new army set up. We did not participate in the decision making process leading to a situation where we were forced into civilian life without knowledge about our future especially the means of earning a living. I do not want to mislead you into believing that all the ex-guerrilla combatants did not want to be discharged from the army, but what I just want to share with you is that post Second Chimurenga demobilisation and reintegration was not a voluntary process, since some of us were compelled to leave. We were not even empowered on how we were going to use the little amount of money we were paid such that within a short period of time a significant number were suffering because of poverty [25].

Subsequently, in Zimbabwe by 1990 about 25,000 ex-combatants were going without jobs. The establishment of ZNLWVA in 1989 ensured the presence of a recognized platform to persuade and even coerce the government to recognise welfare needs of the ex-combatants. ZNLWVA is a registered Welfare Organisation [26]. Using ZNLWVA the ex-fighters mobilised each other to achieve at times through brutal means and tactical alliance with the ruling ZANU PF party their economic and political goals. Related to this

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Kruger asserts that the rapport between the ruling ZANU PF and the war veterans has consistently been made up of 'power seeking agendas, their appeals to the revolutionary liberation, their use of violence and intimidation' and their 'simultaneous conflict and collaboration as party and veterans manipulate one another [27]. For example, as a result of the unsuccessful reintegration evident in the deferment by the government of the vital escape corridor in form of a war victims' fund, triggered a volatile environment as the ex-fighters directly confronted the government seeking redress.

The war veterans in Zimbabwe became increasingly aware how they were speedily sinking into poverty while the government cast a blind eye. The ZNLWVA was a major organ which responded to war veterans' wretchedness and growing neglect. War veterans reacted in different ways including demonstrating at key national events. The most memorable was the Heroes' Day demonstration at national shrines in 1997 and the government quickly reacted by disbursing Z\$50,000 unbudgeted gratuities and monthly salaries. The gratuities were "successful" in silencing the war veterans but not in satisfying issues concerning their welfare. In Zimbabwe, the civilian society in which ex-combatants had to reintegrate was not considered in the DDR programmes devised by the government. This contributed to a hostile rapport between the once pivotal civilians (sea during the liberation struggle) and ex-combatants (fish during the war of liberation struggle), particularly after the latter were granted preferential treatment or considered a special group following the government's execution of a war veteran's compensation gratuity.

With the formation in 1999 of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and its indication in its manifesto of the need to purchase land for the landless majority, the ZANU-PF led government felt greatly threatened. In response the government seized the initiative to broaden its political mileage by invading white owned farms without compensation while war veterans were given the assignment of spearheading the process. Sadly, in the process the ex-combatants resorted to use of force and violence in an effort to regain civilian support for ZANU-PF thereby sinking relations to their lowest between them and their instrumental erstwhile partners during the struggle for independence from colonialism.

From the foregoing it can be gleaned that the demobilisation process in Zimbabwe was an imposition, unfair and engulfed by lack of planning especially on the utilisation of funds given to those who were discharged from service.

## **WELFARE CHALLENGES**

Here we examine the impact of war veterans as they responded to their welfare needs with particular

attention on the land issue, peace and security, and the rule of law in Zimbabwe. Central to the war of liberation was the need to address the racially skewed land imbalances. This was used by the main Black nationalists' parties, that is, ZAPU and ZANU to win the support of millions of the land needy and deprived Black people into waging a bloody liberation war against the Rhodesian government between 1964 and 1980 [28]. The utilisation of the *Mwana wevhu/Umntwana womuhlabathi* (child of soil) strategy by Black nationalists as a rallying point for the Black people to cooperate and fight for their land and shows that central to the liberation struggle was the land question [29]. It further indicates that any Government that is to rule the country need to conclude the land challenge once and for all.

It is important to highlight that although ex-combatants did not fight as mercenaries a consideration of their welfare needs was supposed to be taken seriously in the spirit of achieving a smooth transition from war to peace. The components needed in reintegration support programmes include cash payments, health care, counselling, job placement, land distribution and school fees for children to mention but a few [30]. The War Veterans Census conducted in 1993 involving eighteen and a half thousand ex-combatants (18 500) all over the country reflected a very destitute and underprivileged status after the war, and from then on generally poorer socio-economic status was widespread amongst war cadres [31]. The war veterans sank into poverty as the government did very little to address the root causes of the problem.

The war veterans faced various health problems such as HIV/AIDS, mental stress or disorders caused by the war, and other long term ailments also originating from the war. Beginning 1995, a Non-Governmental Organisation called Amani Trust, took the responsibility of rehabilitating mentally stressed victims of the conflict. Traditional methods of consulting traditional spirit mediums such as the spirit of Nehanda at Chikuti in Karoi District of Mashonaland West Province were also used to 'heal' ex-combatants [32]. In 1996, about 15 percent of the 25, 000 examined ex-combatants were reported to have serious mental disorders [33]. The government department of the Zimbabwe National Mental Health Council did very little if any to assist mentally stressed war veterans.

The late chairman of the war veterans Chenjerai Hunzvi stressed that although the government had made efforts to address their grievances, there were some areas agreed to which had not been implemented [34]. The *Statutory Instrument of 1997 in Sections 280-1*, the government had agreed to improve a number of issues such as health, funeral insurance and land in an effort to improve the welfare of war veterans and these, to an extent, had not been implemented hence their disgruntlement [35]. The *Statutory Instrument 280-1*

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stated, “A war veteran and his dependants shall, at the expense of the Fund, be entitled to medical or dental treatment at a government or government aided hospital or institution...shall be payable from the Fund in respect of any deceased war veteran” [36]. Little thought was given to tackling the health challenges of ex-combatants. The rapid decline of the Zimbabwean economy ignited by the gratuities paid to war veterans in 1997, the removal of the credit lines on Zimbabwe by the Breton Woods institutions and the involvement of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces in the DR Congo in 1998 posed serious challenges to the shrinking health sector and the economy at large. Furthermore, the harsh economic environment lowered the living standards of the majority of Zimbabweans including war veterans.

Many ex-combatants suffered and continue to suffer from a range of health problems-both physical and psychological. This demonstrates that welfare is an area that must be given serious priority in the planning of DDR programmes [37]. The reluctance of the government to improve ex-combatants’ health condition endangered their lives and generated budget restrictions for war veterans, as the modest income could not sustain their medical needs. Piece meal endeavours to resolve health challenges of war veterans were evident in 1993 as enshrined in the War Victims Compensation Act. However, the act was not seriously put to use in an effort to solve the health woes faced by ex-combatants. Given this quagmire, war veterans decided to fight for their continued existence even though they should not be unique recipients, especially if one reflects on the composition of the Second Chimurenga war stakeholders where civilians were an important player in the struggle.

At the attainment of independence in 1980, approximately 15, 5 million hectares of land was occupied for large scale commercial farming by about 6,000 White farmers, which can be translated to an average land holding size of 2,600 hectares. Equitable land transfer failed to materialise with many critics citing the Lancaster House Constitution as the main culprit [38]. This was due to the fact that, embedded in the constitution, was a free market approach in which land redistribution strategy was based on a willing-seller-willing-buyer principle, an inclusion that derailed the speedy land transfer from the Whites to the Blacks. The 1979 constitution was resultantly castigated as a strategy designed to ensure continued land domination by the Whites [39]. Accordingly, the land issue was contested in Zimbabwe culminating in its seizure from “white owners” in 2000. One of the major reasons advanced by the critics of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme is that it led to dire food shortages in Zimbabwe. The truth is that it aggravated the situation which was already getting out of hand since the early 1990s due to various micro and macro economic factors. In fact, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme was criticised for its haphazard and violent strategies

which violated human rights. The government was able to acquire 3,6 million hectares of land at market value on willing seller-willing-buyer basis between 1980 and June 2002. In the process 213 000 households were resettled on 14,9 million hectares previously occupied by the Whites [40]. Until 2000 the land reform had failed to redress the colonial land imbalances partly because the process was slow and incremental, a development which justified the war veterans’ choice of violence because they had waited for too long in anticipation to be resettled. Although some of the war veterans needed land the truth is that they were also being used by ZANU PF for its political gains. Yet other people believe that the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme was ignited by the British Labour Party government’s refusal to finance land acquisition in Zimbabwe. This group used the letter authored by the then British Secretary of State-Claire Short [41].

Claire Short’s letter was referred to as a trigger, on the grounds that the politicians in ZANU-PF letter used it as a point of reference to rally the land hungry war veterans to invade farms. This view point can be dismissed on the basis of lack of immediate relationship between cause and effect, especially the linkage between a 1997 letter and the invasions which followed three years later. More-so, if the government banked on this letter as the trigger of the land invasions, it raises questions why the same government sent its police to drive out the people of Svosve who had invaded farms in 1997. It seems largely that the main reason which compelled the government to undertake an unplanned land reform programme was the fear of the MDC which criticised ZANU PF’s failures and saw the electorate desert the latter.

A significant number of conflicts in Africa including Zimbabwe are caused by poverty where either inequitable distribution or inadequate resources have compelled people to take up arms to claim their portion. In the case of Zimbabwe it was the inequitable allotment of land which was central to the conflict. The Government Affirmative Policy gave 20% of the National Resettlement quota to war veterans for agriculture based productivity and settlement. Only 4,000 war veterans were earmarked to benefit [42]. This provision was made in spite of the fact that 70% of unemployed war veterans had opted for agriculture based integration [43]. The land hunger among war veterans and other ordinary people (most of whom had been retrenched during the economic structural adjustment programme 1991-4) in Zimbabwe led them to take part in the chaotic land invasions in 2000 by any means necessary and this resulted in a wave of violence that prevailed unabated as a result of political interference.

### **Threat to Peace and Security**

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We assert that those ex-combatants who found it difficult to adjust into a post-war Zimbabwe posed a serious security threat to the country's stability. The government began to feel the pressure from war veterans' demands since 1997 and the gratuities were clearly forked out to silence their bitterness against negligence. Admittedly, the land invasions of 2000 are closely linked to ZANU-PF's attempt to gain political mileage especially if this is assessed against its timing and execution. When peaceful land acquisition strategies failed the war veterans resorted to Clausewitz's strategy of war as a continuation of policy by other means. Carl von Clausewitz demonstrated that each war had its own character, which was shaped both by its political purposes and by particular means to achieve them [44]. In this regard, ZANU-PF desperately needed a strategy to win the hearts and minds of the people who were deserting it to the MDC. Hence any strategy which could help the waning ZANU-PF to regain its popularity was desired and in this case the war veterans were the machinery authorised to use violent tactics to invade White owned land since the year 2000 to the present. In addition, whenever elections were held the war veterans violently campaigned for ZANU PF violating various freedoms (notably freedom of expression, choice and assembly) which they fought to bring. These hostile campaigns left scores of people dead, injured and/or displaced [45].

In response to their demands the government offered most war veterans access to state resources such as educational support for those who were studying and payment of fees for their off springs. In addition, other veterans were given preferential employment in government departments and the party as a tactic to manipulate them into serving the vested interests of ZANU-PF. It is apparent that war veterans were "co-opted into party shock troops since 2000 together with youths trained in the Border Gezi national service, in reality a coercive brainwashing of youth into militias" [46]. When war veterans complained that their pensions had been eroded by inflation in 1999, the government agreed to raise their allowances by 21%. At the same time the government decided to pay allowances to village heads, ahead of parliamentary elections in April 2000 [47]. More-so, the government was even willing to pay war veterans more salaries than civil servants as witnessed in May 2007 when teachers' salaries were doubled from Z\$3 billion to Z\$6 billion while war veterans' allowances rose from Z\$1,6 billion to Z\$9 billion [48]. One can explain this unfair and yet difficult to justify disparity on the fact that it was a ZANU-PF attempt to cajole the bulk of the loyal war veterans connected to the party by their liberation war umbilical cord. Consequently, war veterans unleashed terror and violence whenever they were instructed to advance a certain decision on a "payroll" basis.

On the basis of pay increase it may be plausible to conclude that the government was willing

to reward war veterans for its politically motivated agendas. There is evidence that the war veterans' allowances before 1997 never overtook teachers' salaries. After 1997 the teachers' salaries were at times pegged below the war veterans' allowances so that they could harass any dissenting voices critical of ZANU-PF. In a drive to have their grievances addressed in July 1997, war veterans charged against three ministers Moven Mahachi, Witness Mangwende and Florence Chituro who were whisked out of the ZANU PF headquarters hall by security details [49]. Added to the above, a female ex-combatant dumped her baby into Chituro's arm challenging her to nurse the baby. The veterans angrily shouted, "You have said nothing...Shut up...Sit down. We want our cheques. We were injured in the war [50]. The ex-combatants demanded compensation for their injuries, and pension commutations. In Bulawayo the war veterans threatened to beat up the then Minister of Home Affairs, Dumiso Dabengwa, accusing him, together with Government colleagues, of neglecting the welfare of the ex-combatants who were reeling in abject poverty. A war veteran called Ndlovu angrily demanded that, "Let Mugabe himself come to us as our patron or else you give us our money now. You are wasting our time. Do not give us reasons to form a Banyamulenge" [51]. Although one might take these statements as mere threats, the truth is that 1997 was a tense year when the war veterans publicised unto the world their plight and this strategy forced the government to unconditionally succumb to their demands. In this regard the discontented war veterans were apparently a threat to state security and they turned out to be a rebellious group ready to crush anyone who tried to stand on their way.

### **The Land Issue**

The era in Zimbabwe when violent land invasions were carried out was called the Third *Chimurenga*, by ZANU-PF. It was used to legitimise the land invasions so that it would mean a continuous process from the previous First and Second *Chimurenga* of 1896-97 and the 1964-79 respectively. The Mugabe administration justified the use of violence on the grounds that colonial social and economic structures remained mainly unbroken in the years after the achievement of independence where a small minority group of White farmers controlled large tracts of the country's arable land. In February 2000 war veterans led to the illegal occupation of White owned farms in the Southern province of Masvingo by the Chiremwemwa people. From March up to July 2000, Operation *Tsuro* ('Rabbit') was initiated. This concerned roughly 1,500 war veterans, 1,000 soldiers of the 5th Brigade, 300 CIO operatives, approximately 200 members of the police, and 5-6,000 ZANU-PF volunteers, including ZANU-PF youth members [52]. It was designed to invade and usurp farms occupied by the 1,600 White commercial farmers, threatening and

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using brutality against recognised or alleged opposition followers to compel them to vote for ZANU-PF.

By the end of 2000 the Fast Track Land Reform Programme had compulsorily acquired some 10 million hectares of land—approximately 90 percent of white commercial land [53]. The land occupation movement was organised and led by the ZNLWVA. This was a profound source of strength, combining militancy on the land question with an organisational structure permeating state and society [54]. According to Alexander (2006) the hierarchy of national to district level war veterans' committees, much strengthened through its mobilisation over claims for land and the distribution of compensation played a central organisational role [55]. The participation of ZNLWVA was in a way to represent the war veterans' community for a share in the national "scramble" for land.

During the land invasions bases were hastily established on occupied farms and war veterans assumed leadership roles, although almost everywhere they were made up only a small minority of the occupiers [56]. In Zaka District, for example, land occupations began in the White farms namely Makondo, Maware and "Peter *Wenhamo*" literally translated from Peter Weinham. War veterans were on the forefront and they were backed by the rural populace. The assumption of leadership roles by ex-combatants heralded a new era in which they sought to reclaim their status as cadres who were supposed to be considered in the nation's priority. In one of the codes of conduct laid by war veterans at Maware farm, there was to be one "heroes acre" for all the people. War veterans possessed the power to decide on who should get and not obtain land. More so, they occupied an important role and they thrived to dominate the socio-economic and political spheres under their self-imposed leadership.

Alden (2002) argues that, "...the outbreak of violence inspired by real and self-proclaimed war veterans in Zimbabwe...serve to underscore the destabilising role played by former combatants who remain outside the economy and society as a whole [57]. According to McGregor (2002) from February 2001 veterans stormed local authorities in districts where the political opposition had strong support [58]. In 2012, ZNLWVA secretary general Shadreck Makombe claimed that independence war fighters were growing impatient because they were still owed about US\$18,000 each from the gratuity deal reached in 1997 and demanded that the inclusive government settle the balance [59]. They alleged that instead of getting Z\$50,000 they were supposed to get Z\$500,000 each. In the United States currency Z\$50,000 was equal to \$2,000 whereas the Z\$500,000 was equivalent to \$20,000 [60]. If the claim is authentic it would imply that the government has a balance of \$18,000 in gratuity to each war veteran. The situation turned grave by the

new demands where war veteran in 2013 demanded to be allocated some diamond fields (this was allegedly a reaction to the behaviour demonstrated by those in leadership in particular in the security sector who were exploiting diamonds for their personal use with Chinese connections) and being given a one off payment of US\$20 000 on the basis that other countries honour their veterans [61].

### Rule of Law

Since 2000 there was absence of the rule of law in Zimbabwe as war veterans became immune to prosecution by the police mainly because the land invasions were politicised. Resultantly, war veterans and their supporters manned "roadblocks" which affected freedom of movement. At the roadblocks travellers were requested to avail ZANU-PF membership cards and those who could not were assaulted and dubbed "sell outs". Additionally, it was considered a misdeed if one failed to sloganeer as expected by ZANU-PF regardless of one's political association. In light of such developments the police watched these human rights violations without recourse and to aggravate the situation the government simply dismissed accusations of police failure to take action as enemy propaganda. Undoubtedly, the inaction and politicisation of the police force became elaborate in January 2001, when Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri, viewed farm occupations as a political matter where the police had no part to play and declared, "I support ZANU-PF because it is the ruling party" [62]. Furthermore, in his threat to the MDC-T secretary General Tendai Biti, the Police Commissioner Chihuri said, "We are part and parcel of the revolution. Those who are thinking of leading this country without respecting those who fought for it must stop dreaming" [63]. It is clear from the preceding remarks by the Police Commissioner that the police was rendered passive and this scenario replicated in the post-election violence of March 2008.

Most war veterans were usually at loggerheads with local authorities especially kraal heads, councillors, and chiefs. In 2007 residents of Ward 21 in Zaka District were invited for *Zunde* (refers to cooperation where by communities in a chiefdom work in the communal owned fields, whose produce was used to assist the poor or for use in drought years) by Chief Chamburukira. Almost all the people went to take part in the Zunde except one war veteran who refused saying, "my own fields needs labour and I can't afford to go [64]." Chief Chamburukira did not take the case seriously but instead referred to the absconding war veteran as "mad". In a related case a war veteran living in Bikita District was apportioned a piece of land by the kraal head, but he declined with the remarks, "Is this, what I really fought for? I need a good piece of land" [65]. His demands were granted. Although such actions by war veterans went unchallenged, locals have gradually observed this with concern. To this end, the

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behaviour of war veterans helps to explain how such behaviours threaten peace. Undoubtedly, war veterans operated above the law because they were immune to prosecution and it appears largely that this was authorised by ZANU-PF.

Discontented demobilised soldiers pose a serious threat to the country's security system if they are not meticulously handled. Most war veterans found it difficult to reintegrate into civilian life because the government did not have a devoted and authentic policy to put in place sustainable strategies which would integrate them into civilian life. A significant number of ex-combatants were engaged at lower levels of employment in the Public Service (35%), security organs of the state, municipal and private security companies. Others got into private business (30%) whereas some chose to go back to school or college to study together with their children [66]. The practical Zimbabwean scenario revealed that many war veterans refused or were unwilling to take jobs as municipal labourers. Ultimately, a sizeable proportion of demobilised ex-combatants retired to their rural homes where they struggled to earn a descent living among ordinary Zimbabweans. The paltry demobilisation allowance did not last long because war veterans argued that it was too little to meet their basic survival needs. The critics of war veterans argue that war veterans did not fight as mercenaries who were to be remunerated after the war, but it is important to note that the reintegration of demobilised ex-combatants entails needs assessment, provision of services such as health care, pre-discharge orientation and counselling [67].

A study by Mada shows that the government was slow paced or rather had no purposeful policy towards ex-combatants but was chiefly concerned with security issues [68]. The government did not take the reintegration of ex-combatants seriously and consequently when the land invasions began there was wide spread violence as ex-guerrillas were in quest for personal benefits even in areas not related to the land occupations. The increasing violence threatened and continues to endanger security in the country at the same time discouraging would be investors with a keen interest to invest in Zimbabwe. According to Bensen Kadzinga whose Chimurenga name was Sadat Kufamazuva there would be continued threats to peace in Zimbabwe as long as 'real war veterans do not hold any meaningful post' [69]. Linked to this one scholar concluded that, 'governments that had failed to properly reintegrate ex-combatants later found themselves with a price to pay, as restive ex-fighters threatened national stability' [70].

#### **THE ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN ZIMBABWE**

The behaviour of the war veterans led to insecurity in a number of areas such as employment, food security and have discouraged investors. There is

need to hatch a quick but well thought out solution to this challenge. Policy makers and implementers should be encouraged to consider the following;

- Conduct war veterans' needs analysis with an aim of establishing a road map of handling their concerns.
- Acknowledge or tolerate the different opinions and groups of the war veterans.
- Use participatory tactics when handling war veterans instead of relying on threats.
- Come up with capacity building workshops for the war veterans in the utilisation of financial and material resources in different areas of the economy.
- Transparently complete the land issue and be realistic that land should be obtained by those ready to produce to feed the nation and export so that the country can earn the needed foreign currency.
- Avoid manipulating the war veterans for political gains or for that matter for violent operations against those who hold different opinions. True liberation fighters should resist being used against their fellow Zimbabweans for the love of monetary and/or material gains.
- Outsource and pay the balance to the war veterans and set a top limit to their benefits so that you avert their unending demands at the expense of other Zimbabweans, some of whom suffered more than the ex-guerrillas during the liberation struggle and continue to face serious hardships in the post independence era. Convey the truth to the war veterans that the war of liberation from the 1960s to 1980 was a multi-stakeholder campaign where the civilians provided for their material, financial and moral needs and security. In addition, the greediness emerging from the war veterans should be exposed and they should be encouraged to cultivate the spirit of hard work which was inculcated into them during the liberation war especially during the period of the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) period.
- Empower the war veterans so that they uphold the sacrosanct values and principles of the liberation war that cover various freedoms (expression, association, choice and assembly among others), egalitarianism, societal justice, reverence for human dignity, integrity and peace. In fact war veterans should defend and not violate the rights of their erstwhile allies during the armed struggle. They should in-fact proliferate traits of defending the rule of law as the precursor of sustainable peace and development in Zimbabwe.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The government set itself a time bomb which can hardly stand the test of time. It is beyond doubt the war veterans are now a force to reckon with. The unfolding of events since 1980 shows that the government was largely neglectful of the welfare of the war veterans. The reintegration of ex-combatants was not given priority except demobilisation funds which could hardly meet their needs. Consequently, as early as the 1980s a reasonable number of war veterans were reeling in abject poverty due to increasing economic hardships. They were marginalised and this realisation invigorated them to threaten their leaders who had moved from grass to grace through self enrichment. It was the formation of ZNLWVA, under the leadership of Hunzvi which paved way for the war veterans to confront the power structures in a drive to address their grievances and alleviate their plight. It is undeniable that faced by a vibrant MDC, the government manipulated the impoverished war veterans for the furtherance of its political ambitions. This became easier given the fact that the security sector is composed of former fighters and their sympathisers who worked in unison with the war veterans. As part of a number of pay back promises the former fighters were privileged because they became immune to prosecution as they contravened the legal system during the period when they fought to dislodge the MDC. These developments saw Zimbabwe decline into a lawless country where the war veterans continue to make unending demands at the expense of their wartime allies the civilians. This scenario cannot continue uncurbed if Zimbabwe is to be peaceful and be able to embark on sustainable development. Therefore, whichever government gets into power there is need to deal with the insecurity challenges to finality by hatching a lasting solution to the welfare of the ex-fighters, but of course mindful of the undeniable fact that the war of liberation was a multi-stakeholder struggle. It is our admission that the ex-fighters must be schooled to recall that they were thousands of sons and daughters who perished or were maimed during the liberation war whose relatives, comrades or friends are languishing in abject poverty 33 years after independence. It would therefore be sensible if development is directed to benefit all Zimbabweans than to continue to provide for the few.

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