

Youth Unemployment and the Question of Insurgency: A Case of Zimbabwe.

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Abstract

When Zimbabwe experienced its worst economic melt-down in its history between year 2000 and 2009, there was a massive human exodus for greener pastures especially South Africa, Botswana, Britain, Australia and New Zealand amongst others. The crisis affected all sectors of the economy and society including the youth. Resultantly, the youth also flocked out in search of survival and hope. During the process, they met political wisdom, reformation and enlightenment which they can now employ in search of their freedom. Precedence has already been set in South Africa by Julius Malema who has shown that the youth are also capable of effecting political change. It is therefore imperative that a critical analysis be made of the Zimbabwean youth who are in the Diaspora, ascertaining their propensity for insurgency recruitment and demand for political reformation in their favour. This paper looks at the Zimbabwean youth both in and outside of the borders, their problems and grievances and their potential for an unexpected political change in governance systems. (165)

Key words: Youth, Unemployment, Insurgency, Crisis, Political Change and Grievances.

Introduction

From the time when Zimbabwe attained its independence, its economy gradually began to decline due to a number of factors, chief amongst them; the incompetence of a young government; the fact that the young economy was now expected to cater for over seven million people contrary to the minority whites who previously enjoyed the whole cake and the ill-informed adoption and implementation of Bretton-Woods prescribed economic policies like the 1991-95 Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). Naturally, employment levels have also over the years gone down to unprecedented levels of over 80%, ZPAS¹. This situation has exposed the Zimbabwean youth both inside and outside of the borders to extremely high risk of possible recruitment for sinister tasks. Human Rights Watch (1994) aptly noted that the most vulnerable category of youth or children for potential recruitment for insurgency is that of the socially isolated, unemployed, deprived of basic needs and lacking parental love. Richards (2003) posit that violent conflicts involving youth are manifestations of a rational expression of a youth crisis. Richards added that the Sierra Leone terror during its war was a plea for attention from those who thought had been forgotten.

Theoretical Framework

The discussion will be against the backdrop of the three general hypotheses; the higher the level of youth unemployment and poverty, the higher the propensity for youth violence; local political parties believe in violence as a best conflict resolution mechanism and low academic achievement directly corresponds with violence. The paper will be guided by the Youth Bulge theory by Gunnar Heinsohn, (Beehner 2007). The theory argues that as the youth population increases, their demand for resources also increases and failure to avail the resources exposes the youth to delinquency especially armed rebellion and insurgency.

Definition of terms

Youth: in this paper, youth will be taken as any person between the 10 and 35 years age group, politically active and exposed to political abuse.

Unemployment: This will mean lack of formal engagement in some form of work that generates income and has job security.

¹ Zimbabwe Poverty Assessment Study is conducted by the Department of Labour and Social Welfare.

Insurgency: This is an attempt to unconstitutionally remove the government in power through violent means.

Zimbabwe's Historical Background

The Youth

Youth are human beings who are however, traditionally considered less important in society in all matters even when they also affect them. They are taken to be parent's parcels and deemed to be painless and without concerns and interest. Societies the world-over seem to overlook the fact that these ignored youth also have concerns and interests that affect their tomorrow and determine the kind of adults they can be before they show their leadership styles. It is against this background that this discussion tries to critically analyse the gravity of unemployment in Zimbabwe vis-à-vis the threats of insurgency thereto. The paper will also make reference to some African situations that are similar or close to the Zimbabwean crisis for easy appreciation of the problem. Previous studies have indicated that Africa has an active youth population which has proved its capabilities and strength through its participation in some recorded insurgency cases, criminal escapades and several other productive efforts.

The Zimbabwean liberation war was largely waged by the youth who had either left school or had failed to secure employment. Reports have also shown that several other wars elsewhere are supported by these youth mostly in their adolescence periods. During adolescence young people often try to foster their identities and go through a confusing period of change. During this time the youth are susceptible to several influences which require engaging them and integrating them into mainstream society. Failure to harness their potential at this period especially from the ages around 10 to 30 exposes them to juvenile delinquency (trying drugs, venturing into sex, joining gangs, and trying to express their social independence). It is however important to note that the youth can be categorised as either urban or rural youths or educated or non-educated. This distinction helps understand the level of literacy, level of modernity and the level of morality within these youths. In developing economies and Zimbabwe in particular, urban communities are known to have diluted traditional cultural values because of the mixture of cultures and value systems. Giddens (2001) defined culture as the ways of life of the members of society or groups within society which has the following aspects; dress, marriage customs and family life, patterns of work, religious ceremonies, leisure pursuits and goods created. However, Robertson (1987) summed up what culture is by simply describing it as all the shared products of human society. It is therefore evident that urban youth are exposed to some 'new or foreign' culture which is devoid of 'unhu or ubuntu'. Rural youths are considered to be guided by their traditional cultures, values and extended family systems and the general unhuism complimented by the following tenets; respect for life, friendly attitude to each other, hard working, respect for elders, assistance during times of hardships and respect for the property of others, avoiding pre-marital sex, shunning drugs and alcohol and putting on acceptable dress (Makuvaza 1996).

Therefore, their perspective of life is somehow different from that of the urban youth. The other classification along the levels of education also helps understand the depth of the youth's appreciation of what is good or bad for them and their gullibility to incredible and unreasonable falsehoods. For easy appreciation of the analysis and discussion, it is imperative that the following terms be defined appropriately; youth, insurgency and political reform. In this paper, youth will be defined according to the Zimbabwe National Youth Policy as outlined in the Zimbabwe Youth Council Act (chapter 25: 19) of 1997, which describes as any young person between 10 and 30 years old. It is basically a process of transition from childhood to adulthood. Insurgency will mean any rebellious attempt at overthrowing a legitimately elected government in power while political reform will be defined as deliberate measures put in place by any party or government to rectify political irregularities in Zimbabwe.

Causes of Unemployment in Zimbabwe

Poverty and colonialism-effects saw a lot of able-bodied people particularly the youth going overseas or simply across the borders in the case of Zimbabwe, into South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique and others either to study or work. This also saw labour reducing in Zimbabwe in particular and Africa in general. Similarly, those that left their countries began to shun their culture and traditions so much that development had to drag slowly. Poverty and economic maladministration also sowed the seeds of hatred and enmity amongst the tribesmen and fellow countrymen due to witch-hunt as to who had played what part in the economic melt-down. Tribes and families were separated, religions were split while cultures were split and diluted. Civil wars like the Infamous Great Lakes region pitting the Hutu against the Tutsi, The Congo and the DRC and the Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia crises let alone the Zimbabwe internal strife have left the countries deteriorating and underdeveloped.

This scenario has further worsened the dependence of African countries on the people who caused this poverty and wars. Situation of Youth (SoY) (2003) observed that the youth in Zimbabwe, like in any other developing nation face a variety of challenges like poverty, displacement, disability, poor infrastructure, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, child manipulation, lack of vocational skills, early marriage and crime. Once the youth are left out in matters of governance in any society, they tend to ignore all other activities which the elders expect them to undertake and go wild even to an extent of being insubordinate and arrogant to the elders. It is from this point that they can opt to form groups that can start thuggery activities and military rebellions. African Agenda (2008) cited the xenophobic attacks in South Africa in May 2008 that claimed 62 lives and displaced over 50 000 African immigrants. The majority of the joblessness and vagrancy was a result of foreign workers taking their jobs.

According to the Zimbabwe Assessment Study, the Zimbabwean government initiated policies meant to address the problem of unemployment and poverty but also failed dismally. The policies are; microeconomic policies, decentralisation, education and training, employment, land reform, poverty alleviation and the present indigenisation policy. However, a closer analysis of Zimbabwe's economy reveals a variety of weaknesses and gaps which negatively impact on the possibility of employment creation. Some of the weaknesses include a severe microeconomic instability and an unfavourable investment climate especially in view of the Indigenisation Law which seeks to give majority shareholding in all foreign-owned companies to locals. This analysis has also shown that the Zimbabwean population pyramid is bulging towards the youth and that the economic and social infrastructure has badly deteriorated to a level that is unable to generate employment for the bulging youth group. It is also sad to note that the policy environment in Zimbabwe is characterised by inconsistency and reversals. Therefore, any attempt at addressing that anomaly is countered by lack of data on the appropriate labour and market requirements. The problem of poverty and unemployment in Zimbabwe has been exacerbated by the following reasons amongst others;

- The disbursement of unbudgeted hefty gratuities to former liberation combatants in 1997 resulting in free-fall inflation from 17% to over 70% overnight.
- A noble but poorly implemented land reform policy in 2000, which left over half a million people jobless and homeless.
- The currently implemented Indigenisation of the economy programme.
- Slow rate of economic growth aggravated by poor economic management.
- Low export growth and lack of balance of payment support that has (2002-09) led to a critical shortage of foreign currency.
- High population growth.
- Massive expansion in education and training so much so that the infrastructure is now unable to absorb the swelling educated youth.
- High rural-urban migration.
- The general effects of globalisation or automation.
- The noticeable mismatch between youth skills and labour market expectations.
- Corruption and nepotism in the labour market.
- Social attitudes and cultural influences.

Motivation for Violence

Youth violence the world over is motivated by a variety of reasons. However, motivation for youth violence in the developing world is also caused by some peculiarly similar reasons as alluded to above. In the case of the Zimbabwean youth, over the years, have been motivated by lack of formal employment, poverty, divorce, out-of-wedlock births, single parenthood and political ideology. This must be taken in reference to the fact that Zimbabwe's youth constitute about 43% of the entire estimated 14million people and yet they only take up about 15% of the total working population, ZimDaily (2011). Elsewhere, in Nigeria with a population of over 158 million, over 50 million youth are jobless. This scenario explains the present street running battles between the government and the idle youth over subsidies on fuel. These and several other grievances by the youth could serve as a clear motivation for possible insurgency. Lack of employment opportunities for the youths especially those that would have graduated from tertiary institutions really angers the youth and erodes their confidence in the government administration to an extent of being impatient with their leadership.

This is evident in the youth group of Mbare suburb called Chipangano. The group, which is affiliated to the ruling ZANU PF party is controlled, funded and nurtured by the local party leadership. Its role politically is to unleash terror on any known or suspected members of the opposition or even deemed opponents of the reigning leadership within the party. The group was formed around year 2000, the period when the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)² was formed and caused sleepless nights to ZANU PF during the February 2000 Referendum, the June 2000 General elections and the subsequent Presidential elections of year 2002. Idle youths are also easily mobilised for violence and other riotous activities. In 1998 during the food riots that were organised by the labour movement, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU), it was the idle youths in both the central business area and the surrounding suburbs that destroyed shops, looted groceries and other wares and broke in surrounding residences.

Poverty in the communities where the youth live is another factor that pushes them out for any tasks no-matter how dangerous it may be. Presently, Zimbabwe's youth unemployment rate stands at 80% in 2010 from 70% in 2009, ZimDaily (2011). The formal job market in Zimbabwe started to shrink in 1999 when the ZANU PF government sanctioned the illegal land seizures by the war veterans and the idle youths. Most of the farms that produced food and their subsequent down-stream industries began to either close or relocate to the neighbouring economies thus leaving over 700 000 people jobless. Similarly, the youths were affected before poverty crept into their lives. This then opened an opportunity for the youths to either join civic-militant vigilantes for both ZANU PF and MDC parties or migrate outside of the country for better pastures.

Traditionally and from an academic perspective, it is generally believed that children raised by a single parent tend to run short of some basic moral traits which shape up 'unhu'. Therefore, the question of divorce in the Zimbabwean society also plays an important role in as far as the bringing up of the child is concerned. Closely akin to the above is the question about morals of children born out-of-wedlock. These children are believed to lack adequate parental guidance from both parents. Lack of parental guidance has generally forced most of the youth in Zimbabwe to join politics which is characterised by violence, prostitution and thuggery. These youth have also been negatively affected by the movements of their families in search of better jobs and more economic opportunities. During the family movements, children tend to meet completely new friends with different characters and behaviours. It is through these new relationships that they are contaminated.

The other factor that has over the period motivated the youth into joining riotous gangs and delinquency is the issue about falsehoods that are made by the political leadership especially during political campaigns when they will be soliciting for votes. In most areas where there are illegal activities like gold panning in Bindura, Kwekwe, Kadoma, Mazowe and Odzi amongst others, political leadership gives them guarantee that their activities and their illegal homes will never be stopped or demolished for as long as they continue supporting them. Surprisingly, soon after the elections, these activities are raided, panners arrested and their shacks demolished. At the end of the day, they are left with no choice but to turn wild. Other falsehoods come in the form of government designed policies which are announced purportedly to empower the youth. However, eventually, they turn out to be political rhetoric. In 2003, the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation launched an organisation called Enterprise in Business Organization (EIBO) in Harare, a project meant to economically empower youth and reduce poverty. Under the program, a number of projects were expected to benefit the youths, mostly graduates of the National Youth Service. However, nothing materialised on the ground.

Elsewhere, the youth want to join some of these illegal activities mainly because of the incentives that come out of it. Whenever youth are in the political 'bases', there are female youth who provide almost free sexual services willingly or otherwise. Besides, there is free food and beer from respective parties to keep their moral high. The youth also take time out to raid shops and market stalls for whatever they desire.

Violence

The war veterans supported by a government system passed on the war habits and lawlessness to the innocent youths over a period of time.

² Originally this party was called MDC before its split in 2005 bearing another smaller faction that retained the name MDC whilst the bigger faction was called MDC-T for Tsvangirai (President's name). Later on in 2010, the MDC split again bearing another faction called MDC-M for Mutambara (President's name). In this paper, MDC refers to the MDC-T which has the majority seats in Parliament.

This was evident during the political violence experienced in the 1985 General elections, 1990 General elections, 1999 farm invasions, 2000 Parliamentary elections, 2002 Presidential elections and the infamous 2008 Harmonised elections. Eventually, the youth took over the barbaric lawlessness of violence so much so that they literally controlled all government institutions. It is this youth violence that led to the destruction of the economic infrastructure and erosion of investment confidence that led to a record inflation that was experienced in 2008. Whether it is inherent in African culture, a result of poverty or that incumbent governments' sponsor violence, it leaves more questions than answers. The youth are hired by different political parties to conduct campaigns which unfortunately do not involve explaining policies to the electorate but intimidating opponents and voters. They are given money and alcohol and are asked to travel round the constituencies disrupting meetings of rival parties and intimidating opposition voters. They are in the majority of cases so influenced and abused that they tend to do anything that they are ordered to do by their 'masters' who are politicians.

During the 1985 General elections that were held in June, only a day after the announcement of the election results, ZANU then incited its youth wings to unleash terror and uproot all known and suspected members of the opposition. This violence was quite evident in the urban centres especially of Harare where ZANU enjoyed sizeable support from the Shona people ahead of its rivals; ZAPU, a Ndebele dominated party which had its support base in the Matebeleland region and ZANU Ndonga which also enjoyed its support in the Chipinge area of Manicaland. The youth terrorised innocent and defenceless citizens especially in the South-western suburbs of Harare; Highfields, Glen Norah, Mufakose, Mbare, Glen View and Mabvuku and Tafara in the East. People's valuable properties were either looted or destroyed during the melee while some lives were lost in a barbaric fashion. However, there were no arrests made as if the destructive activities had been officially sanctioned. The same violent activities were also experienced in 1990 ahead of a General election in which the opposition Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) was going to contest. Apparently, ZUM had been formed by the late Edgar Tekere who had been expelled from ZANU in 1989 for his opposition to the idea of a one-party state system. Because ZUM had been considered a real threat to ZANU, it was found imperative to suppress the party and all its activists. It was at this juncture that the youth went on a lawless spree terrorising people.

After the formation of the MDC in 1999, youths especially the unemployed, took an opportunity for possible recruitment for jobs while those who really knew that they were unemployable, joined hoping to get free incentives. Most youths in the urban areas joined the MDC while those in the rural areas joined ZANU PF, got trained in various activities before they were sent out for 'semi-wars' against each other, Dodo (2011). The youth were ready for any deployment anywhere and to execute any assignment. This was evident especially in Bindura, Mt Darwin, Mazowe, Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe, Mtoko and Umgusa districts where violent clashes leaving several dead were reported. In Bindura alone, according to security services confidential reports³, over three thousand youths from Harare were arrested for political activism during the 2001 Bindura by-election.

The MDC party used hordes of idle youths to campaign for the party during the 2000 Parliamentary and the 2002 Presidential elections that brought in the MDC into the political playing field. During the 2001 Parliamentary by-election in Bindura that was held to replace the candidature of the late Member of Parliament Border Gezi, MDC mobilised youths from around Harare for campaign assignments in Bindura. Thousands of youths were bussed to Domboshava Show-grounds, about 30 kilometres outside Harare and about 30 kilometres outside of Bindura before they walked to Bindura through the forests as they tried to evade Police road blocks and arbitrary stop-and-searches by both the Police and the ZANU PF youth militia. On the other hand, the government's security services had also intensified searches for all non-Bindura residents who were going for opposition party campaigns. Those arrested or caught were subjected to severely inhuman torture. The security ferret teams that comprised of the Police Criminal Investigation Department, the Central Intelligence Organisation and the Army were tasked with the responsibility to extract information from the captives, torture, and main and where necessary kill. Some of the lucky captives were transported under the cover of darkness and got dumped in the wildlife infested forests in Rushinga and Muzarabani rural districts about 120 km and 150 km outside of Bindura respectively. On the part of the youth, those risky assignments were some form of relief from a gloomy job market that was not bearing any fruits. Besides, the youths were provided with some campaign regalia and some financial token of appreciation. These youth were prepared to do anything for their party so as to keep themselves busy and occupied.

³ The author was part of the interviewing security details.

According to the information gleaned from the captured activists, these were ready for any war of any magnitude provided it accessed them to a decent livelihood or jobs. This situation was quite reminiscent of the quotation from interviewed youths elsewhere;

At 15 Sebastian Musimbi of Congo has already fought in 2 rebel wars and marched on foot through the heart of Africa with men twice his age. Cradling an Egyptian made submachine gun, Masimbi says he has no time for children's games. "When we play it is only to chase the enemy away into forest....." Military officials estimate about 5000-child soldiers known locally as "kadongo" are active in the Congolese army.... "They make good fighting because they are young and want to show off. They think it's all a game so they are fearless" said a rebel colonel Songolo. "Their minds go bad... they become criminals if they leave" Songolo said, Herald (1999).

From 1999, Zimbabwe began to experience massive job losses as most of the farmers whose commercial activities provided employment were being chased away by the youths in the company of the war veterans. This, coupled with the ever rising inflation, impacted heavily on the lives of the youth both educated and uneducated. There was a serious element of suspicion and hostility within the society between the blacks in need of jobs and other social facilities and the white capitalists over who supported land reform and who was anti-the agrarian reform programme. Some of the youth who worked for the white-men especially in the farms maintained their loyalty so much so that whenever there were violent clashes between the commercial white farmers against the 'war veterans', the youths would side with their masters. This was very prominent in the following districts; Chivhu, Marondera, Bindura, Mazowe and Bantam where the white farmers had established vigilante groups consisting of unemployed and loyal black youths⁴. The entire era between 1999 and 2004 was characterised by hostility and violence led by the youth. Unfortunately, all rivals would make use of the youth's energy, poverty, desperation and ignorance of their rights.

The 2008 March Harmonised elections were as peaceful as stipulated in the Southern Africa Development Community Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (Mauritius Declaration of 2004). The principles stipulate the following; item 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 and 2.1.8; full participation of the citizens in the political processes, freedom of association, political tolerance and voter education respectively, SADC (2010). The outcome of this plebiscite meant a defeat of the incumbent President Robert Mugabe by Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC. However, because of the need for a re-run on account of the fact that no-one had attained the 51% majority, the period in between the first round and the re-run in June of the same year saw violence at a level that had never been witnessed in the history of Zimbabwe minus the liberation war. ZANU PF through its commissariat department supported by the security services represented by Major General Douglas Nyikayaramba of the Zimbabwe National Army resorted to violence with the hope of displacing all communities considered to harbour opposition elements. Thousands of military, intelligence and Police details were deployed in all parts of the country to spearhead and supervise the violence that was being unleashed on all known members of the opposition parties, relatives and their sympathisers.

In the strongholds of ZANU PF; Bindura, Mt Darwin, Mazowe, Rushinga, Muzarabani, Uzumba-Maramba Pfungwe and Mtoko districts victims had their palms amputated so they could not vote while several were chased away from their traditional homes so that they could not return to vote. According to a ZPP (2009) report, over 2000 innocent civilians were either tortured or maimed while over 600 souls disappeared permanently. The 600 who disappeared in the hands of the dreaded Central Intelligence Organisation-commandered youths are now linked to the recent (2011) discovered mass grave at Chibondo⁵ in Mt Darwin. According to the Herald (2011), the bodies of the over 600 people found in the abandoned mine shaft, were victims of the pre-independence colonial Ian Smith regime. In direct contradiction⁶ to the state media, some of the bodies were still rotting while one of the bodies was wearing a shirt inscribed 'Ronaldino'. Interestingly, Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980 and therefore the bodies could not be still rotting over 32 years down the line and that the famous Brazilian international footballer Ronaldino only featured in the late 1990s and early 2000 years. It therefore implies that the body could only have been dumped in the shaft well after Ronaldino's era.

⁴ This information was extracted from Security and Cabinet Briefs of 2001-02.

⁵ Chibondo is an abandoned mine shaft in the district of Mt Darwin where over 600 decomposing human bodies were discovered in 2011.

⁶ The author witnessed some of the exhumations at Chibondo and therefore has first hand information.

According to Nyikayaramba's strategy, unemployed youths were set in groups of an average 20-25 at each political base where they would be under the direction of a member of the Commissariat⁷. The bases were used as detention centres for all deemed culprits or enemies of the ruling government. The youths would raid shops and other market stalls for food for their daily sustenance. The youths would also considerably share the few ladies at each base for sexual aggrandizement. However, there were some cases when they would rape women from the opposition party either as punishment for their affiliation to the opposition or simply to satisfy their sexual desires. United Nations (2002; 4) rightly observed that "Youth unemployment can lead to marginalisation, exclusion, frustration, low self esteem and, sometimes, to acts that create burdens on society". It therefore shows that once the youth are kept busy productively, the economy will definitely benefit. All the time and energy which the youth wasted on unnecessary acts could have been directed towards some productive tasks. On average, each administrative district with an average population of +/-40 000 people would have about 10 political bases.

During the entire political and economic crisis that was experienced in Zimbabwe between year 2000 and 2009, the youth in Zimbabwe were simply a time bomb waiting to be detonated. All their hopes of ever finding jobs had been washed away because of the time they had waited and the promises that the politicians had made. With 13 universities and over 26 tertiary colleges all producing well over 75 000 graduates per year, Zimbabwe's economy has not been performing well enough to absorb all the youth on the job market. As a result, most of these youth have been absorbed into the informal sector, constituting over 80% of the workforce. The tragedy in all this is that there is no job security. The Police force and the Municipality authorities harass them on a daily basis as if they do not pay trading levies and as if they are not educated. It is only a question of time before they are approached and recruited for possible insurgency activities. Actually Zimbabwe is a fertile ground for insurgency recruitment given the fact that the people and the youth in general are fed up with one continuous and unpopular government, the political and economic problems that Zimbabweans faced between 2007 and 2009 and the fact that there is ready motivation just across the border in South Africa. African National Congress (ANC) National Executive member and former Youth President Julius Malema has been an inspiration to several youth in Zimbabwe especially with his audacity to challenge the presidium and his determination to deliver whatever his promises.

The quality of his leadership and his courage to mobilise his followers to topple the former ANC leader and South Africa's former President Thabo Mbeki during the ANC 2007 Polokwane elective congress. Still guided and motivated by the Polokwane success, in 2011, he also tried to implement his strategy against current President Jacob Zuma. However, this time, the leadership were waiting for it so much so that they quickly clipped his wings by suspending him from the party before he was re-assigned to a less powerful post in the provinces. In the eyes of the youths in Zimbabwe, there is nothing that can stop them from fulfilling any of their dreams just the same way Malema has done.

Insurgency Opportunities

Since the era when Zimbabwe began to experience socio-economic and political problems, there has been a massive exodus of Zimbabweans seeking greener pastures outside of the borders. While most have been economic refugees especially those who went to South Africa, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Botswana amongst others. However, there is also a sizeable number of people who actually skipped the borders to evade political persecution and other criminal offences. All these left their homes, families and other facilities that they were used to and still dream of enjoying not because of their choice. All things being equal, these would as much as possible like to see the present government removed so that their lives could start all over again. Given an opportunity either they are ready to fight or simply sponsor an insurgency back home.

In 2007, former Minister of Finance Simba Makoni formed an opposition political movement called Mavambo/Kusile ahead of an election pencilled for March in 2008. The moment he sent out an SOS for finance, moral and other facilities help, millions of dollars were poured so he could campaign and oust the incumbent government. Most of his financiers were prominent personalities who had either fled political persecution or had their wealth confiscated by the government without proper judiciary procedures. These included the likes of former Minister of Economic Development Nkosana Moyo, a prominent former banker Mtuli Ncube, former businessman James Makamba and others.

⁷ This is a socialist concept meant to mobilise membership. However, in this instance all members of the commissariat were drawn from either the Army or the CIO as the most trusted security organs.

Besides these, there are several others who lost their relatives during the 2008 political violence and failed to attend the funerals because of their refugee statuses that might still have a bone to chew against ZANU PF government. Diasporas from Ireland and Sri Lanka are on record for sponsoring insurgency wars back home, (Fair 2005). The worst threat could possibly come from those people in South Africa and Botswana where most of the semi-skilled migrated to and still find no descent employment. This is also compounded by the 2009 xenophobic attack in South Africa and the barbaric, illegal and inhuman torture that Zimbabweans in Botswana are constantly subjected to. The danger with these groups lies in their proximity to Zimbabwe, the thick and vast wilderness in Gonarezhou and the Kruger National Parks (Limpopo Trans-frontier Park) which is ideal for any insurgency and their large numbers from which an effective and efficient army could be built. It is also important to highlight that most of the white farmers around the Kruger national park and in the Limpopo province⁸ of South Africa strongly sympathised with the displaced former Zimbabwe white commercial farmers. Some of these white farmers are also former Rhodesians who fled to South Africa soon after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. Therefore, it naturally becomes easy to support and even allow easy passage of the insurgency or even providing with rear military bases in the Limpopo area.

Since 2002, Zimbabwe established National Youth Service training programmes meant to prepare the youth for a patriotic life, equip them with appropriate life skills and conscientise them on the need for loyalty and patriotism. Three centres were established at Boder Gezi in Mt Darwin, Mushagashi in Masvingo and Guyu in Gwanda districts. The course curricula for these programmes did not look military. However, the entire programme was hijacked by pro-ZANU PF members' especially former liberation war fighters and retired soldiers who then manipulated it to suit the desires of their party. Resultantly, the programme produced graduates who had been severely brain-washed towards ZANU PF and that they were introduced to some basic military tactics. Equipped with basic military drills and propaganda against other political parties, the youth were often used during ZANU PF functions as either ushers or security details.

The programme certificate was initially used as an entry requirement into most government institutions like training as teachers, nurses, the army, the CIO and the Police, Prison services and other training colleges. This facility meant that more youth had to develop some interest willingly or otherwise. However, during the first three years, the programme had produced thousands of graduates who could not all be absorbed by a declining economy. What it therefore meant was that most of them felt used and betrayed so much so that they crossed the floor to the MDC party while others crossed the borders. Actually, MDC now has a group of potentially dangerous youths whom the party can engage for any operation noble or sinister. Similarly, there are also hundreds of such graduates outside of the borders who pose a serious threat to the present regime if the Sierra Leone and the DRC Banyamulenge styles are anything to go by. Like it has been alluded above, there are hundreds of Zimbabweans who failed to secure formal jobs locally before they migrated to other countries where they were subsequently enlisted into the army. Notably, some are in the British, Namibian and Australian armies where they have since perfected their military acumen. Given their frustration towards a system which they believe betrayed them, they too have the potential to regroup for any insurgency should there be a willing coordinator and financier.

Patience and tolerance on the part of Zimbabwean youth and the general populace has been stretched enough. Besides all the conflicts that I have alluded to above, the issue about the economy especially to do with the availability of basic food stuffs was the worst experience. In African culture it is said that you can do anything to a breathing soul but never starve that soul. Though Zimbabweans had endured political violence, state sponsored repression and human rights abuses, they could not stomach hunger. During the period late 2006 building up to 2009, the entire country had no food, water was scarce and electricity and fuel were equally unavailable on the market. People had to cross the borders to secure basic food stuffs from the neighbouring economies. The available goods were unaffordable while the rate of inflation was rising on a daily basis. Whenever food was availed by any private supplier or some government agency, it was either distributed on patronage basis or the stronger ones only accessed while the weak (elderly and children) would be trampled on. During this period, almost the entire population was pushed to a hard end where they could have resorted to retaliation. These sad memories are still in the minds of the victims and their immediate relatives so much so that it is quite easy for any force to convince people to rise up against the incumbent regime.

⁸ Limpopo province is the South Africa's border province with Zimbabwe's Masvingo and Matebeleland South provinces.

Government Initiatives

The demonstrations and riots over food in 1998 in almost every town in Zimbabwe, a spirited retaliation by the MDC youth to the security services during the 2002 Presidential elections and an equally offensive and defensive posture by unarmed youth during the 2008 pre-election violence sent a clear but threatening message to the government of the youth's potential to fight whenever unnecessarily provoked. At least the government realised that an idle youth is as dangerous as a soldier in combat. Therefore, relevant departments have jostled to put in place systems and measures that provide either jobs on the market or a descent life for the majority.

According to the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Employment Creation policy document, the ministry has in place a National Employment Policy which seeks to regulate and support the creation of employment. The Ministry also has a Social Development Fund (SDF) which coordinates the Poverty Alleviation Action Programme (PAAP). The PAAP is meant to reduce poverty and unemployment through social mobilisation, improved natural resource management, social infrastructure investments and income generating opportunities. Still focused on the welfare of the youth and the need to create jobs, the Ministry has in place a Micro Enterprise Development Programme which is primarily into micro-lending to youth, women and the disabled. Fearing that the youth might lose focus on their dreams and lifetime achievements, the ministry also periodically conducts Career Guidance and Counselling programmes meant to help direct the youth from the schools on the right career paths. Similarly, the Department of Social Welfare has 3 rehabilitation centres for the disabled youths in Ruwa, 30km outside Harare, Beatrice also 40km south of Harare and the Lowden Lodge. The three centres equip the youth with the skills in building, agriculture, secretarial and tailoring professions. All these are measures meant to ensure that the youth are accounted for in the economy. However, having a policy is one thing and its implementation is completely another. Whilst there may be all these policies and more, noble as they might look, very few youths have ever benefited from them. Actually, no-one knows about their existence except senior officials in the departments. The few who accidentally benefit are closely linked to the department's authorities.

Recommendations

Zimbabwe is very volatile politically considering the experiences that the general populace did go through during the entire independent period. However, there could still be some remedial measures that the government could effect as a way of trying to win the hearts and minds of the people. It is said that prosperous countries are those that establish, nurture, and protect their entrepreneurial skills. As such, the local authorities may find it necessary to tap on the entrepreneurial talents within the youth group with a view to further develop and eventually support them financially. In this case, the government could consider the legislative provisions on foreign investments which stipulate that no foreigner can invest in an area that can be undertaken by locals (e.g. retail services). Surprisingly, the majority of foreign investments by the Chinese, Nigerians and Pakistanis are in the area of retail where they sell clothing, electricals and communication technology. This kind of investment has not created any meaningful employment as they man the shops on their own. After all any Zimbabwean could do that. The relevant Ministry and departments actually needed to provide opportunities for the youth to start and operate appropriate enterprises; enlighten youth to generate an understanding of a variety of industries and basic economic concepts; identifying untapped resources and talents and utilising them as opportunities.

The government could also initiate programmes that would lead to positive impact on youth drug use, pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, school failure, or delinquent behaviour. These initiatives could also be run parallel with other facilities like the creation of social settings that are supportive of youth development, acceptable moral generation and development centres, and job training programs which are not partisan or run by politically biased authorities. As a parting observation, there is just a clear need for an integrated positive youth development focus which directs the youth to a constructive and health destination.

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