

The Politics of the Unity Accord of 1987 in Baya's *Tomorrow's People*

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Abstract

That politics is the acquisition, retention and perpetuation of power seems to have been the teleology of the Unity Accord of 1987. This was an agreement signed between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU in the glare of the Gukurahundi genocide when the ethnic and political other had been rendered helpless and, therefore, offered a Hobson's choice. The agreement authorised ethnic subordination and left feelings of bitterness on sections of the country. In examining the politics of the Unity Accord, the study draws from Baya's play titled *Tomorrow's People* (2009). It is one of the literary texts that narrativises the sentiments about the unity agreement. The paper uses the Social Identity Theory to argue that the agreement was solipsistic in terms of constructing the them and us binaries in ethnic relations in Zimbabwe. The paper concludes that the implications of the accord have not been sufficiently theorised in terms of its political, social, linguistic and economic belonging and equal opportunities. There can never be national unity without reconciliation and forgiveness; enforced forgetfulness breeds bitterness and magnifies ethnic identification as shown in Zimbabwe today.

Keywords: Power, Subordination, Marginalisation, Politics, Healing, Reconciliation

Introduction

A fund of scholarly articles, book chapters and books abound on the topic of Gukurahundi, its execution and consequences. But very few studies of a literary nature have been carried out on the prelude to, contents and effects of the Unity Accord of 1987 on the victims and beneficiaries. This lack of wide publicity of the terms of the accord may be due to the fact that the triumphalist ruling party had achieved its vaunted one-party state while the vanquished PF-ZAPU was too embarrassed and humiliated to propagate these terms of surrender. What is generally remembered is what some have described as the ‘historic’ accord of 1987 that purportedly brought unity in the country. Literary works have not concentrated on the specificities of this document and its impact on socio-political and culture-economic relations between the rival ethnic groups. This paper seeks to pose the following questions: Who were the protagonists in the signing of the agreement? For what was the unity? What did it purport to do? What were the consequences? In trying to answer these questions, the study acknowledges Trouillet’s (1995, 50) contention that “at best history is a story about power, a story about those who won” and that the agreement was a demonstration of the vulgarity of power (Mbembe 2001, 110). An examination of the Unity Accord of 1987 is a dramatisation of this *fait accompli*. Gukurahundi was victory for the ruling ZANU-PF party’s power agenda and the unity ‘agreement’ was the apogee of that conquest.

The agreement came against the backdrop of the much-researched Gukurahundi atrocities that claimed the lives of approximately 20 000 of mostly Ndebele-speaking people in the Midlands and Matebeleland regions. These killings were done in the purported search for dissidents who did not exceed 400 (Eppel, 2008). From the foregoing, it stands to reason that this was a “grotesque overreaction by the state” (Eppel, 2008, 2) that tended to conflate dissidents with ZAPU, ZIPRA and Ndebele speakers. The accord also came as a result of

mass graves of supporters of PF-ZAPU and, the “mass grave (was and) is metaphor for human waste; a mechanism for de-individualising and dehumanising the (ethnic and political) Other” (Humphrey 2002, 7-8). The show of force on unarmed people was a political strategy meant to expose the opponent’s vulnerability, powerlessness and disposability. In the words of Humphrey (2002, 1), violence in such contexts is intended “to engender horror and to disrupt confidence in a normative reality.” It is meant “to paralyse their (individual’s) will to resist and make them acquiesce to new reality” materialised by such violence. Thus, the violence and corpses became political resources for the perpetrators to secure submission through an agreement which offered a choice which was not a choice. At a political level, by the middle of 1987 PF-ZAPU was in sixes and sevens as it had been banned, the “leadership either dead, or in jail or in exile, a terrorised and tortured support base, and little recognition of this fact in the rest of the country” (Eppel 2008,4). This meant that no meetings could take place to map the way forward; the councils that the party controlled had been dissolved and in typical ZANU-PF style, the party offices had been invaded and turned inside out. This meant the communication at all levels became impossible especially given the omnipresence of the 5th Brigade and the fear they had implanted in the minds of ZAPU supporters.

The media embargo in the areas that were affected by the atrocities meant that these areas had been left to their own devices, especially so given the ravaging drought during those years. The rest of the country not affected by the carnage was in a celebratory mood about the independence and the endorsement of their party in the 1985 elections and so harboured no goodwill about what they were told were a recalcitrant people bent on destabilising a ‘people’s government.’ Internationally, goodwill was on the side of Robert Mugabe, then Prime Minister, whose reconciliation policy hoodwinked the world into imagining him a statesman. So, the agreement had to be done when PF-ZAPU was at its weakest and had no bargaining ace. Besides, the general supporters of Joshua Nkomo reposed

and invested a lot of trust in him to navigate the treacherous terrain of the murderous politics of the period. They believed that he would spring a solution to their abject conditions. After all, he had proved his mettle in his fight against Smith's racist regime! But they never factored in the politics of annihilation of the enemy in order to extract inordinate concessions that characterised ZANU-PF. This approach was made manifest by Mugabe in 1982 when the 5th Brigade finished training. He said; "the dissident party (of largely Ndebele speakers) and its dissident father are not destined for rejection but for utter destruction" (Sokwanele 2010,6). It was in this context of gloom and doom that the Unity Accord, which dragged on for two years from the elections of 1985, was imposed. The next section examines the terms of the agreement in order to unpack its asymmetries for the future of ZAPU supporters.

Terms of the Unity Accord

The Unity Agreement (UA) contained only eleven points; pointing to the fact that there was not much rigour for such a delicate process that came after about seven years of rape, arson, disappearances, killings and other forms of violations. This shows that the process was a straightforward one where the victors simply declared their conditions for the cessation of the genocide-it was a take or leave it your own and supporters' peril. According to Eppel (2008,9), the accord stated that:

1. That ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU have *irrevocably* committed themselves to unite under one political party.
2. That the unity of the two political parties shall be achieved under the name Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) in short ZANU PF.
3. That Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe shall be the First Secretary and President of ZANU-PF.
4. That ZANU-PF shall have two Second Secretaries and Vice Presidents who shall be appointed by the First Secretary and President of the party.

5. That ZANU-PF shall seek to establish a socialist society in Zimbabwe on the guidance of Marxist-Leninist principles.
6. That ZANU-PF shall seek to establish a One Party state in Zimbabwe.
7. That the leadership of ZANU-PF shall abide by the Leadership Code.
8. That the existing structures of ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU shall be merged in accordance with the letter and spirit of this Agreement.
9. That both parties shall, in the interim, take immediate, vigorous steps to eliminate and end the insecurity and violence prevalent in Matebeleland.
10. That ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU shall convene their respective Congress to give effect to this Agreement within the shortest possible time.
11. That in the interim, Comrade Robert Mugabe is vested with full powers to prepare for the implementation of this Agreement and to act in the name and authority of ZANU-PF.

An Assessment of the document

As is evident, this was a surrender document. It pandered to ZANU-PF's quest for unbridled power through a one-party state. The inserted word *irrevocably* captures the fact that even after the dust of violence and emasculation had settled, the document does not envision a possible somersault by the vanquished to demand a visit to the pernicious document. Firstly, it implied that the state of inequality between the signatories had become a permanent feature of the relations between two parties and their respective supporters or groups. In other words, the agreement sanctioned the horse- and- rider relationship as an unchangeable structure even in future relations. It tended to elevate the myth that the ruling party played a major role in the liberation of the country with ZIPRA coming in with a complementary part. Secondly, it is significant to note also is the fact that naming is very important not only in literature but in life. The namer wields control over the named entity. PF-ZAPU's powerlessness was shown by its inability to, at the very least, have control over

the name that the partnership was to assume. From the time of the signing of the document, they surrendered the destiny of its supporters to the dominant party and this reflected voicelessness and the will to silence. Ironically, the silence was to be extended to the ZAPU supporters by the former ZAPU leaders; they expected them not to raise any critical issues about the document. Thirdly, Robert Mugabe's position as the leader of the party was taken as a given. He represented his group which was naturalised as the locus around which future leaders of the country were to be drawn. There was no mention of a system of rotation of the two nationalist parties, or indeed, of the strategic ministries that PF-ZAPU as a revolutionary party was to occupy. This was left to the magnanimity and sagacity of Mugabe or any other leader drawn from his group. Implicit in this is the fact that Zimbabwe would always be run by the Shona, or, in this case, the Zezuru. This part of the agreement appeared to authorise this view as all parties led by Ndebeles are deemed regional, ethnic or not national.

Fourthly, there was no clarity on the relative status of the two Vice Presidents. On the face of it, they had equal status but in practice the Vice President from ZANU-PF wields more power than the other one; after all he has always been in his party. This deliberate ambiguity masked the evident castration of PF-ZAPU. The ideological orientation of both parties was decided upon by the dominant party. It should be remembered that PF-ZAPU's ideological orientation was not as straightforwardly and fanatically Marxist-Leninist as that of ZANU-PF as seen by the buying of farms and other properties for their combatants. The leadership Code alluded to was a ruse to mask rampant self-aggrandisement that immediately reared its head through the Willow gate Scandal the following year. In one fell swoop, the agreement subordinated them to a strait jacket that even their proponents in the ruling party failed to adhere to as shown by the scandals that rocked the party from 1988 onwards.

Fifthly, PF-ZAPU structures had to be subordinated to those of ZANU-PF in terms of organisation and the philosophy of sloganeering that privilege the 'down with' hate-filled

speeches. This is a relevant point because the party cards bore the portrait of Mugabe and his party symbol. This effectively created a cult of personalism that was to be a permanent feature until he (Mugabe) was deposed in 2017. The one-party state the unity Accord sought to create had the effect of materialising an intolerant political culture whose view of the opposition was that it had to be destroyed by all means. The Unity Accord therefore sanctioned violence against all forms of opposition that were to emerge after this agreement. After all, there was now precedence that the easiest way to gain unfettered power was through use of the gun to prostrate the legitimate opponent. Ironically, this was later to be against members of Mugabe's ethnic group in Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Sixthly, the clause on the elimination of insecurity in Matebeleland was a semantic sleight-of-hand meant to apportion culpability for the genocide on both parties in equal measure. As researches show, the Gukurahundi bore much of the blame for this era (Eppel 2009). There is no mention of reconciliation, justice, restoration and healing. The agreement was therefore characterised by a kind of short-termism and myopia that was to be a recipe for future ethnic and political contestations. I argue that the Unity Accord was Machiavellian in terms of the way it sought to centralise power in Mugabe and his cabal and elide the ethnic and political other.

Theoretical Grounding

The study draws upon the insights of social psychologists Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory to examine Baya's views on the Unity Accord. In doing that, the paper is aware of the dangers of essentialist, totalising and unilinear conceptions of identity constructions; after all identities are much more complex and dynamic to be defined in broad strokes. But the paper contends that the choice of the theory is important because "SIT offers important insights regarding the social identity bases of discrimination, prejudice and inter-group conflict" (Islam 2014, 1782) in politically and historically fraught times. In broad

terms, the theory posits the view that identities are often a function of “a collective, depersonalised identity based on group membership and imbued with positive aspects” (Islam 2014, 1781). The positive evaluations of the in-group takes in the glare of the out-group to which it stands as a foil. In other words, and in Smith’s (1999) observation, comparison between groups is emotionally laden and equivalent to self-other comparisons, with group threats interpreted as threats to the self. Group identities often result in in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination and stereotyping. The upshot may be withholding of resources and jobs to the out-group, especially if the group is seen to be in competition, one way or the other, with the in-group, or if the out-group is perceived as having a history of adversarial relations (Duckitt and Mphuthing 1998).

The more the groups construct themselves as competitors, the greater the burden of group identification. In other words, if the groups believe they have a different history, language and political affiliation, then they tend to see more of differences than similarities. This theory has been used in politics to explain other group variables like ethnic, political and other potentially conflictual collectivities. ZANU-PF (largely Shona) and PF-ZAPU (largely Ndebele) were political organisations implicated both in the Gukurahundi and the subsequent signing of the 1987 agreement. The identities that these two groups orchestrated were largely political and ethnic so that each sought to outdo the other in the fight for political, linguistic, economic and other spaces in Zimbabwe. Thus, particular ethnophaulisms and group stereotypes were constituted in order to create positive images of the in-group while derogating the other. For example, there is the use ‘tshona’-derogatory term for Shona, and ‘inja’ (dog), *inxaha* (castrated dog) in the focal text to diminish the social standing of the out-group, in this case the Shona. In politics, power and dominance are positives that are glorified while social creativity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) leads the subordinate group to construct the other in not-so-savoury terms. The paper draws upon Volkan’s (1998, n.p.) reasoning that in

the formation of group identities, there are deliberate “chosen glories (and humiliations), chosen traumas, ideology and symbols” whose effect is to enact the other. The theory is, therefore, apposite in examining the ZANU-ZAPU relations during the Gukurahundi atrocities and the signing of the Unity Accord. The next section analyses the play *Tomorrow's People* and its interrogation of the politics of the agreement.

The Perceptions of the UA in *Tomorrow's People*

The play *Tomorrow's People* is one of the four plays written by Raisedon Baya under the title *Tomorrow's People and Other Plays* (2009). The play itself uses the technique of a play within a play to critique ossified social and political views held by the older generation; views that militate against the youth moving into the future unencumbered by the baggage of sins of the fathers and mothers. The action is enacted through a school class that is supposed to go to Scotland on an exchange cultural programme and is, bizarrely, expected by the school to perform Shakespeare there. The students find this awkward (Africans performing Shakespeare to whites and in Scotland!) and decide to rehearse instead a story that broaches particular Zimbabwean social, political and cultural problems; their story from their perspective. One of the themes that come up is the politics of the Unity Accord as perceived by the ordinary person. The play they enact is important in that it narrativises the moot and muted issue of the Shona-Ndebele relations as seen through the prism of the 1987 Unity Agreement. This is one of the few, if not the only text, that textualises the agreement.

As stated earlier, the Unity Agreement of 1987 stopped the violence in the Matebeleland and Midlands regions but did little to engender a spirit of unity premised on reconciliation and restorative justice. In order to meaningfully examine the pact, the study constructs Ndiweni, the character in the play, as a metonym of the Ndebele ethnic group so that the views that he articulates are seen as representative of his group. Ndiweni says to his wife Mabhena, “...this unity shit is really shit. Why should *we* celebrate *our own* defeat” (67)

(italics added). I read Ndiweni's assessment of the document as emblematic of his kind's emasculation in the signing of the agreement and that it had far-reaching consequences in terms of rendering them powerless and helpless. As far as Ndiweni is concerned, this was surrender, a triumph of "pan-ethnic nationalism of the Shona" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003, 18). It was a defeat of Ndebele identity and particularism and had the effect of announcing to the world the subordination of his group to the hegemonic impulses of the group represented by ZANU-PF.

The shit in the accord is perhaps captured in Owen Maseko, a Bulawayo artist's description of the signing of the agreement where Mugabe is portrayed as triumphally upright in his chair while Nkomo is lugubriously hunched in his own chair with a bloody knife stuck on his back; the state security organs-the police, the army and Central Intelligence Organisation- hovering menacingly around him (Alexander 2021). It is reflective of the Hobson's choice alluded to in the abstract of this paper; he has been whipped, sjamboked and machine-gunned into the signing table so that he cuts a very pathetic figure. The shit is also articulated in the loss of the name of the party, ZAPU, and the prominence of the party that killed Ndiweni's group, as if to suggest the tokenism implied in the 'pact'. The 'pact' therefore becomes the annihilation and swallowing of the party and the 'sacrifices' (68) that the party and its people made to liberate the country from colonial rule. The shit he excoriates is the transition from colonial hegemony to ethnic domination. Popular sentiment amongst the Ndebele, in their way of impugning the agreement, was that of a bride who refuses to jettison her surname when she enters into a marriage pact. Such a figuration constructed Joshua Nkomo as an insignificant, docile and pliable partner at the whims of ZANU-PF since he arguably allowed the name of the party and the symbols thereof to bear the name of the partner. He and the party become an appendage, a footnote that becomes reflective of their place in the Zimbabwean historiography. Accordingly, Ndiweni sees the agreement as

asymmetrical as it privileges ZANU-PF and the Shona tribe. Thus, he says: “But the truth is Joshua Nkomo should not have signed that unity accord. In signing the agreement he betrayed us. Sold out” (68). Indeed, when nationalists with the reputation of defying Smith in the name of black rule sit down to thrash out national problems, the expectation is that the outcome would be in the best interest of the citizens, minorities included. Yet, the hitherto powerful Nkomo presided over a process that effectively peripherised the group that he represented. In real terms, however, Ndiweni’s anger is misplaced if one considers the background to the agreement. He is less angry at the accord per se than the inequalities he sees as a function of the accord years after the document had been sealed. I argue that his anger is less about the past than the present that he inhabits which has rendered him and his ilk national spectators. Ndiweni uses hindsight to critique his contemporary situation; when the present is harassing, the mind tends to go backwards in time to locate, in a manner of speaking, ‘where the rain began to beat upon us.’ Post-conflict negotiations are ordinarily supposed to be give-and-take, but ZANU-PF was so bent on acquiring total power they did not baulk at beating a man who was down.

Masiphula Sithole sees it as strange that a whole Unity Accord document has only eleven points in total for a document that should have carried the weight of the genesis, modus operandi and future consequences of the violence. Thus, he is incisive in viewing the document as:

Spelling out terms of surrender and not compromise. Nowhere in the eleven-point agreement does Nkomo’s name appear, but Mugabe’s name appears three times. (Nkomo simply signs his name). Eight of the eleven points are pregnant with victorious Mugabe’s ideas. Where mention is made of PF-ZAPU it is to indicate that henceforth it shall be called ZANU-PF (Sithole 1991, 285-6).

If we are to take Mugabe and Nkomo as embodiments of their respective groups and their relative importance, then the relationship that has been created here is one of victor and the permanently vanquished. But Ndiweni overstates his case in dismissing Nkomo as a sellout. The weakness of the agreement which he seems to be highlighting, however, is that it was 'state-centric' (Murambadoro and Wielenga 2015) and 'elite-based' and "embodied a top-down approach (where)... Nkomo and Mugabe signed the Accord and then sold it to the people (Mashingaidze 2005, 86). This has to be understood against the background that after 1985, ZAPU became a banned party; scattered and disoriented, and when negotiations took place, it had to be some of the leaders to do the negotiations without consultations. The disconnect between the grassroots and the political leaders bred suspicion and bitterness at what they saw as their (leaders') costly, catastrophic and effeminate brand of nationalism. This was made worse by the general view of ZIPRA as a powerful, disciplined and courageous force whose weapons were second to none in the southern region. The extreme view expressed by Ndiweni is that had Nkomo recognised and supported the dissidents, it would have been a war with a purpose rather than allowing the supporters to be sitting ducks for the 5th Brigade. This is the context of the discourse of selling out that the character scaffolds. As it turned out, ZAPU did not have any bargaining power to extract concessions in the face of Robert Mugabe's fixation with a one-party state.

According to Alexander (2021, 771), one of the greatest weaknesses of the agreement was that it "offered no concessions to the victims of state violence beyond the cessation of violence." It was as if the victors were declaring that the victims should be grateful enough that the killings had stopped and that they are alive; everything else was of no consequence. Post-conflict agreements normally factor in the issue of reconciliation, healing and forgiveness. The Unity Accord was loudly silent on that aspect. When Yakhani, Ndiweni's daughter, exhorts him to be forgiving of the past and move ahead; to draw a veil of

forgetfulness on the people who wronged him and his group, he is unequivocal in his answer: “Forgiveness only comes after an apology, and not before!” (70) and that “these wounds...refuse to heal; the memories and nightmares...will go with us to the graves” (68). The agreement offered no apology to the victims; there were no programmes to rehabilitate and ensure healing takes place. On the contrary, victims were “kept alive but in a state of injury. In a phantom-like world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity” (Bates 2002, 21). This is the state that Ndiweni finds himself in; a state in the past that continues to haunt the present (Kaarsholm 2007).

It is a fallacy that unity can be imposed on people or legislated, especially those on the receiving end of dominant groups or state violence. The tragedy with the Unity Accord was that it sought to achieve unity without reconciliation, without truth and justice. The mere declarations of being ‘now one’ did not of itself foster a sense of belonging. Actively seeking it through consideration of the hurt that the other went through, seeking to expiate and confront the skeletons of the past-an apology- can be the magic wand. But the only time that Mugabe came close to offering an apology was on the burial of Nkomo when he described the period between 1982-1987 as a *moment* of madness as if to minimise the extended period of suffering by the other. Tragically, the so-called Second Dispensation has traversed the same path of withholding an apology although Mnangagwa is fingered as being instrumental in the execution of the genocide. According to Lederach (1997, 28), for reconciliation and national unity to subsist, there has to be four elements namely;” peace, truth, justice and mercy (forgiveness/healing.” The only component available in the unity agreement is peace, and even then as a leveraging tool by the victors. Brouneus (2003, 20) sees reconciliation as:

A societal process that involves the mutual acknowledgement of past sufferings and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships towards sustainable peace.

This was not done by the agreement and it attests to the half-hearted commitment to achieving lasting unity. In the words of Ndiweni, Nimrod, the character who wants to get married to his daughter, "...is part and parcel of a party that created killer soldiers, part and parcel of a party that duped us into believing that Unity would benefit everyone" (70). This is not a recipe for lasting peace, in fact in Ndiweni's view, the agreement was a monumental fraud in that it pardoned killer soldiers, thus ensuring that truth and justice do not come out; it cemented the view of super citizens and second class ones. The lack of benefit to everyone alluded to by Ndiweni is highlighted by "the perceived systematic marginalisation of Matebeleland in terms of development" (Eppel 2009, 43). The transient nature of the agreement was seen in Dabengwa pulling out of the agreement, the plethora of groups in Matebeleland advocating ethnic-based grievances like marginalisation, stuffing of schools in the region with non-Ndebele speakers, limited employment opportunities, and dominance of the Shona language. Some of these groups advocate secessionism as a solution to the asymmetries stamped by the unity agreement. This what Ndiweni means when he says the accord "...continues to benefit one group of people, one region and one tribe" (67). Ndiweni's "ethnic-induced anger" (Nyambi 2013, 121) against Gutu and the Shona in general is the manifestation of these unresolved issues. The conversation below illustrates this:

Mother: "And what exactly do you have against amatshona? Why do you hate them so much?"

Ndiweni: "I don't hate them. I hate what they have come to represent" (62).

To him, the Shona have come to symbolise violence, hegemony, exclusion, plundering the country, the subordination of other subjectivities and the process of writing out the Ndebele in the grammar of the nation. They have come to represent forcing the Ndebele "to live with their silenced memories of horror and fear" (Eppel 2009, 46). In national and political discourses, the Gukurahundi period is constructed in terms of a wound

that should not be opened. In official narratives, the Unity Accord is supposed to have healed that wound and this explains why the issue of the Gukurahundi and the unity agreement was tabooed—there was enforced forgetfulness ‘for the good of the nation’. Sadly, apart from Mugabe, Nkomo was a major proponent of mandated forgetfulness of the period. From Ndiweni’s articulations, it is obvious that the wound never healed but continues to fester long after the event. The enforcing of silence on the issue was strategic; it was meant foreclose the possibility answering uncomfortable questions from ordinary people. Thus, Huyse (2003, 35) points out that the silence that the officials place on the wound is “an officially imposed form of forgetting” that belies the bitterness evinced by Ndiweni. His wound represents a “past that no longer exists but keeps on haunting the present” (Alphen, 1997, 15). I argue that unacknowledged and unrecognised transgressions of the past have a tendency to resurface in the most unexpected of moments. According to Tulving (1974), contexts and internal cues trigger suppressed memories that overpower mandated forgetfulness.

For Ndiweni, the retrieval cues of the Gukurahundi and the unity agreement come in the form of Gutu, Nimrod’s father. That a Shona son wants to get married to his daughter triggers his pent-up emotions. He sees this as a strategy by the out-group to dilute Ndebele particularity and identity in much the same way the 5th Brigade raped Ndebele women to produce a generation of Shona children. Besides, the Shona for him have come to represent national destruction through wanton corruption. He says; “...You are not going to ruin my daughter’s life like you have done with this country and I’m not going to let you do the same with my daughter” (65). Ndiweni dissociates himself from the country which apparently is owned and ruined by an ethnic other who has excluded him. He thus becomes a spectator in a drama script authored and performed by the Shona group, a script authored and authorised by Gukurahundi and the unity agreement. In this drama of the apparently absurd, Ndiweni does not in any way want to be a participant. He does this by apparently disallowing his daughter

from marrying Nimrod. This attitude finds expression in, for example, the national team. When the national team wins or, especially, loses, it always commented that the ‘Shona team’, the team from Harare, or Dynamos has lost. Implicit in these kinds of comments is that the selection process, like jobs, is skewed towards a specific ethnic group in a show of in-group favouritism. This has the effect of constructing the Ndebele as rank outsiders in the national imaginary. That the national team is equated to the Harare team, Dynamos, goes to show the symbiotic links weaved between the formation of ZANU-PF and Dynamos in 1963. Both are conceived of as the antithesis of PF-ZAPU and Ndebele identity.

That Nimrod is Shona is enough to anger Ndiweni into clutching his knobkerrie because the language was used during the Gukurahundi to extract submission and to stampede his group into signing the agreement. Thus, for him the language and its speakers have come to represent deviousness. He says; “She is not marrying a Tshona! Not whilst I’m breathing” (61). Later, “show me just one honest and principled Tshona. Just one!” (61). This is obviously essentialist, reductive and stereotypical, but the mere possibility of the daughter marrying to the other group is inconceivable and it becomes a cue for him to potentially engage in a fight that he feels Nkomo should have waged on his group’s behalf. The anger is a product of perceived exclusion so the egregious failure and national mismanagement is viewed not as an aberration but as constitutive of the group. This has the effect of placing his group on a higher moral, organisational and behavioural pedestal. He fails to see Nimrod and Gutu as people but as representatives. He says of Nimrod; “His people killed my brother and his wife. They murdered a lot of people” (69). Thus, Nimrod becomes, in the words of Volkan (1998, n.p):

The image of a past...during which a group suffered loss or experienced helplessness and humiliation in a conflict with a neighbouring group. (He is) the mental representation of an event that has caused a ...group to face drastic losses, feel

helpless and victimized by another group, and share a humiliating injury.

In this way, Ndiweni is inviting his reluctant daughter to share in the injury experienced by his generation during the Gukurahundi and the Unity Accord and to possibly “mourn the loss and reverse the humiliation” (ibid). This is effect of trauma that keeps manifesting itself on the victims.

Alexander (2021, 778) has argued that while the agreement ended the atrocities, it left behind inimical legacies that she calls “...structural Gukurahundi that reserved jobs and resources for the Shonas”, what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2003, 25) calls “the Shona-ization” of Zimbabwe. This is what Ndiweni seems to allude when he says the accord benefitted only one group whose majority status renders them powerful enough to control public discourses and to define that which lies in the domain of subjective experiences of other groups. The group that did not experience injustices in the past cannot fathom the magnitude of suffering of the other. Ndiweni seems to allude to this when he says, in response to his wife’s charge of tribalism; “why is it tribalism when it comes from me and something else when it comes from the direction of the capital city?” (68). He means that there is tendency by the powerful groups to impose definitions and control discourses of what and what is not unity, of what can and should said, and when. The result is normalisation of the abnormal and failure to ventilate grievances that are group-specific. Banks (1996, 122) asserts that “only ethnic minorities will be conscious of ethnicity” is valid only if one does not factor in the injustices of the Gukurahundi and the enervating effects of the Unity Accord. The Grand Plan of 1979 and its sequel (2005), anonymous though believed to have been drafted by ZANU- PF intellectuals in London (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003) envisages a systematic plan to peripherise, dominate, exclude and dilute the Ndebele people in all spheres of life to such an extent that they come to accept the status quo as unchangeable. The document was widely circulated among the Ndebele after the signing of the pact. Ndiweni’s attitude may be seen as the

attitude of a tribalistic person but his views are widely shared though not generally admitted in official circles. Baya is of Shona background but he grew up and attended school in Bulawayo. His association with Bulawayo drama groups steeps him in the political, cultural, and linguistic milieu of these sensibilities towards the unity agreement.

Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing, the study argued that the UA reflects triumphalism of Shona nationalism. It simply legitimated the atrocities of the Gukurahundi and created a culture of impunity evident today's body polity. The agreement was less about healing, reconciliation and achieving unity but about power, especially power over the threatening other. The overall effect of the accord was to implant asymmetries of power embodied by Ndiweni's articulations that have left sections of the population hurting and feeling excluded from the nation. I argue that the implications of the UA have and continue to negatively play out as shown by the trauma exhibited by Ndiweni and the proliferation of groups that advocate regionalism and even secession as the solution to the perceived marginal status and lack of apology from ZANU-PF. The skewed nature of the accord has given rise to the radicalisation of identity constructions in Zimbabwe. To better understand these socio-political and economic bifurcations, the study used the lens of the Social Identity Theory to contend that the binaries of the in-group and out-group in the context of Zimbabwe can be bridged if there is an attempt at reconciliation and apology. This will make the major ethnic groups see themselves more in terms of similarities than differences.

Conflict of Interest: The corresponding author, on behalf of all authors, confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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