

## Introduction

The name Zimbabwe is derived from the Shona, *dzimba dzemabwe*, meaning houses of stone or stone buildings, today symbolized by the Great Zimbabwe Ruins near the present day town of Masvingo. Zimbabwe has a rich history, not only of achievement, innovation, co-operation and economic prosperity, but also of conflict, trials and tribulations that reflects the dynamism of its peoples. Many scholars, past and present, have enhanced our knowledge of the Zimbabwean past through their works. Particularly important in our understanding of the pre-colonial past have been the works of archaeologists, linguists, historians, oral traditions and records of 16<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese traders that interacted with central and southern Africa during that time.

## Pre-colonial history

Pre-colonial Zimbabwe was a multi-ethnic society inhabited by the Shangni/Tsonga in the south-eastern parts of the Zimbabwe plateau, the Venda in the south, the Tonga in the north, the Kalanga and Ndebele in the south-west, the Karanga in the southern parts of the plateau, the Zezuru and Korekore in the northern and central parts, and finally, the Manyika and Ndaus in the east. Scholars have tended to lump these various groups into two huge ethnic blocs, namely 'Ndebele' and 'Shona' largely because of their broadly similar languages, beliefs and institutions. (The term Shona itself is however, an anachronism, it did not exist until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was coined by enemies as an insult; it conflates linguistic, cultural and political attributes of ethnically related people). The political, social, and economic, relations of these groups were complex, dynamic, fluid and always changing. They were characterised by both conflict and co-operation.

Huge empires emerged in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, namely the Great Zimbabwe State, the Mutapa State, the Rozvi State, the Torwa state, Rozvi states and the Ndebele state. Great Zimbabwe was a majestic ancient stone city that flourished near the modern town of Masvingo from about 1290 to 1450 on the strength of a powerful and organised society. It thrived on the foundation of favourable agricultural conditions, cattle-keeping, great mineral wealth and most significantly, both regional and long distance trade. Trade was conducted with such far away areas as China, India, the Middle East and the Near East, East and West Africa, among other regional and inter-regional areas. Persian bowls, Chinese dishes, Near Eastern glass and other such items have been excavated at Great Zimbabwe, signifying the trade contacts with these far away places. Other trade goods identified with Great Zimbabwe included a variety of glass beads, brass wire, seashells iron wire, axe heads and chisels. Local goods included ivory, iron gongs, gold wire and beads, soapstone dishes and other items. The art of weaving was practised and some locals wore locally woven cloth. Some of the finest and most enduring finds at Great Zimbabwe were the seven or so soapstone bird carvings sitting on decorated monoliths. It is speculated that these were religious symbols signifying the point that Great Zimbabwe may have been a political, economic and cultural centre of great religious importance.

The period of prosperity at Great Zimbabwe was, however, followed by decline and abandonment due to shortages of food, pastures and natural resources in general, not only at Great Zimbabwe, but in the city's most immediate neighbourhood. Shona traditions identify Mutota, a Mbire ruler, as the leader who led his people to found a new kingdom, the Mutapa, in the Dande area in the Zambezi Valley where smaller and less spectacular madzimbahwe were built. By the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, Great Zimbabwe had completely lost its wealth, trade, political and cultural importance. Today, Great Zimbabwe is preserved as a valuable cultural centre and tourist attraction. It epitomises what has certainly been the finest and highest achievement of Shona civilisation.

By about the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the process of political centralisation had begun among the Shona-speaking people. This has largely been attributed to good economic conditions that ensured successful harvests and the accumulation of surplus grain, animals and other forms of wealth, which in turn stimulated population growth, allowing some individuals to assume positions of leadership. The decline of Great Zimbabwe thus allowed Mutota to conquer the Korekore and Tavara of the Dande and Chidema areas. Oral traditions have it Mutota's victims were so impressed that they nicknamed him Mwene Mutapa,

'owner of conquered lands' or 'master pillager', hence the birth of the Mutapa dynasty. He then embarked on an expansionist policy that resulted in the creation of a vast empire the Mwene Mutapa or simply, Mutapa, state, which stretched from the Zambezi valley into the Mozambique lowlands and towards the fringes of the Kalahari Desert. The Mutapa's control in these far away lands may, however, have been peripheral and not regular. (In fact, the vastness of the empire partly explains the breakup of the Mutapa state.)

An important feature of the Mutapa state way of life was the close link between politics and religion. So, when the Portuguese reached the Mutapa state, they sought to penetrate it through religion. When father Gonzalo da Silveira arrived in December 1560, he worked on converting the royal family to Christianity. He was largely successful in this because the vast empire had become heavily riddled with conspiracies, coup plots, succession disputes and civil wars to the extent that the reigning Mutapa probably wanted Portuguese help to hold on to power. The King, however, soon turned around and renounced Christianity, leading to the murder of da Silveira, henceforth marking a turn in Portuguese – Mutapa relations. Punitive expeditions were sent to assist the Mutapa's enemies, particularly Mavhura, a rival claimant to the Mutapa kingship. For their help, the Portuguese demanded that Mavhura sign treaties of vassalage to the Portugal, thus tying the Mutapa state to the Portuguese crown. The Portuguese took this opportunity to advance their imperial interests by using slave labour to work on the land they acquired under these treaties. This resulted in many armed conflicts in the area, causing many Shona to flee to the south where Changamire's rule was being established.

This era of puppet Mutapas, however, came to an end due to the rise of reformists within the Mutapa royal family, led by Mutapa Mukombwe in 1663, eventually giving rise to a class of rulers known as the VaRozvi. Between 1663 and 1704, Mukombwe and his successors successfully drove the Portuguese off their prazos with the support of the Tonga in the Zambezi valley and the Chikanga of Manyika. Mukombwe achieved the important feat of resettling Mutapa families in the lands he had freed.

However, Mutapa Mukombwe faced rebellion, a development that gave rise to the Rozvi State. Changamire Dombo defeated a punitive Mutapa army after rebelling in 1684. He established and consolidated his control in the western Butwa/Butua area once dominated by the Kalanga as well as in the lands of the Manyika and in the trading centres of mainland Mutapa. Dombo and his successors established the Changamire dynasty and ruled over the territory that includes most parts of what is now Zimbabwe.

The economy was the cornerstone of the Rozvi State's survival. Taking advantage of the dry grasslands, low trees and excellent pastureland of Guruuswa, the Rozvi raised large heads of cattle, goats and sheep. Crop farming also thrived. Pottery, blacksmithing, weaving and basketry were also important economic activities while the specialized iron industry produced tools and weapons. Surplus products were for trading. Gold mining and game hunting were however low key activities. The Rozvi, having 'grown' out of the Mutapa state, were well aware of the destructive activities of the Portuguese traders. They thus adopted an indirect way of dealing with the Portuguese. Trade was carried out through special agents called *vashambadzi* or through markets in the Mutapa areas. This policy allowed the Rozvi to maintain their political independence. Finally a combined Rozvi-Mutapa force managed to drive out the Portuguese out of the Zimbabwe high veld by 1694. After these celebrated anti-Portuguese campaigns of the 1680s and 1690s, Portuguese mercantilism never again made any serious attempts to establish control over Zimbabwe.

However, like the Mutapa state before it, the Rozvi state collapsed under the weight of its vastness which could not be sustained by its 'feudal' structures in the face of growing pressures from the Mfecane groups advancing from the south. From about 1826, the region discussed above was subjected to severe pressure from migrants fleeing from the Mfecane disturbances south of the Limpopo. By 1838, as many as five Nguni groups had passed through or settled in the region, each bombarding the Rozvi state and transforming the way of life of the local people.

Two of these groups, the Ndebele and the Gaza, however eventually settled permanently in Zimbabwe and subjected several Shona groups to their rule. The new settlers introduced a system of tributary control premised on the threat of military use. These newcomers not only dismantled the core of the Rozvi ruling elite, but also scattered its varying factions in all directions. Mzilikazi's Ndebele state thus subjugated and or incorporated into Ndebele society some Rozvi houses. However, as the Ndebele pursued their Shona enemies on the plateau, they nevertheless deferred to Shona spirit mediums. Mzilikazi's son and successor, Lobengula, actually strengthened his relations with the Mwari cult. By the 1850s, Ndebele rule stretched over the Zambezi, the Mafungavutsi plateau and Gokwe, with the Shona chiefs there paying tribute to the Ndebele. However, by 1879, Ndebele power was itself coming under serious threat from some Shona groups as Ndebele *impis* were being defeated due to the gradual adoption and proliferation of guns by most southern Shona groups.

The Ndebele had to establish a strong military presence to establish their authority in their newly acquired land. Besides subduing the original Shona rulers, they had to contend with the Boers from the Transvaal who in 1847 crossed the Limpopo and destroyed some Ndebele villages in the periphery of Ndebele country. Then there were the numerous hunters and adventurers who also entered the country to the south. Over and above these were the missionaries and traders; all these groups threatened the internal security and stability of the kingdom. After protracted diplomatic negotiations with Robert Moffat, the Ndebele allowed the London Missionary Society to establish a mission station at Inyati in 1852. Through the influence of traders, hunters, missionaries and other fortune seekers, the value of the Ndebele area had become well known to the white communities in the South by the late 1860s, paving the way for the complex encounters that culminated in colonial subjugation.

While it is a source of pride that there were these huge influential pre-colonial Zimbabwe states, it should be noted that a lot happened before and after them as well as outside their boundaries. Pre-colonial Zimbabwe is not just about the big states. The majority of Zimbabweans lived in smaller units inhabiting different kinds of environment, but they inevitably had links with the larger societies.

Pre-colonial Zimbabwe societies, large and small, were mainly farming communities who adopted iron to modernise their agriculture and cultivate more extensively than their stone age predecessors. They also practiced pastoralism and put much faith in their livestock. Cattle were an important indicator of wealth and a means of maintaining clients over and above being useful as commodities for bride wealth and as objects of sacrifice in the propitiation of the ancestors. External trade was an equally important activity in the Zimbabwe subsistence-oriented economy while gold mining was a seasonal activity, confined largely to the summer and winter seasons although gold washing continued through out the year and remained the main source of the gold for trade. Even the Ndebele, who early historians described as largely predatory, relied more on cultivation than anything else. Cattle keeping only augmented their economy while tribute collection was principally a means of imposing political control, not a mode of survival.

## **Colonialism**

From the 1880s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a coalescence of Christianity, mercantilism, colonialism and capitalism gradually displaced the pre-colonial socio-political and economic formations discussed above, bringing about a colonial transformation marked by the emergence of new identities, new commodities, new languages, new ideologies, new relationships, new political and economic outlooks and new tastes.

The myth of a Second Rand lying in Zimbabwe precipitated the launch of the Pioneer Column that established the colonisation of Zimbabwe. While they introduced some positive developments like western medicine, a stop to persecutions for alleged witchcraft and such practices as forced marriages and child-pledging, missionaries were the earliest representatives of the imperial world that eventually violently conquered the Shona and the Ndebele. They aimed at reconstructing the African world in name of God and Europe civilisation, but in the process facilitating the colonisation of Zimbabwe. Christian teaching stressed individual accountability to God above, thus undermining African religions ideologies that guided Africa political, judicial and religious powers. Missionaries were consistent and persistent in denigrating and castigating African cultural and religious beliefs/practices as pagan, demonic and evil. It

is not surprising that some missionaries like John Moffat abused Lobengula's trust and confidence by conniving with concession seekers. In the face of such ambiguities, African response to Christianity remained ambivalent.

Missionaries tricked Lobengula into signing treaties like the Moffat Treaty and the Rudd Concession without fully understanding them. The treaties ceded land and mineral rights to Cecil John Rhodes. Rhodes used the Rudd Concession to obtain a Royal Charter from the British government. Thus, due to extreme pressures from different groups all sent on extracting concessions from him, coupled with internal pressures from pacifists (who wanted negotiations and peace) and conservatives (who wanted war) among his own people, Lobengula succumbed to the chicanery and deception of the colonialists.

In 1890, Rhodes unleashed the Pioneer Column to invade Mashonaland, marking the beginning of white settler occupation of Zimbabwe. The Shona were not quick to respond to the invasion as they wrongly assumed the column was merely a uniquely large trade and gold-seeking party that would soon vacate. Soon Rhodes' invading British South Africa Company (BSAC) established a Native Department that authorised labour and tax raids on the Shona. Henceforth, constant skirmishes between Shona communities and tax collectors and labour raiders ensued as the Shona, who had not been conquered at all, saw no premise upon which the company could demand tax and labour from them. More significantly, however, the company started appropriating and granting land to the settler pioneers.

By 1893, the invading settlers had failed to find rich gold deposits in Mashonaland. They therefore decided to extend the frontiers of their new acquisition to Matabeleland. The colonial forces were bent on the complete annihilation of the Ndebele state and thus attacked the Ndebele in 1893. Despite spirited resistance at the Battles of Mbembezi River, Shangani River and at Pupu across the Shangani River, the Ndebele were defeated in October 1893, leading Lobengula to set fire to his capital and flee to the north, never to be seen again, dead or alive. Superior weapons were the decisive determinant of the outcome of this Anglo-Ndebele war.

The Ndebele forces were, however, not completely defeated and rose violently again in March 1896 against the excesses of the BSAC. These excesses, which also affected the Shona, included forced labour (*chibaro/isibalo*), taxation, raping of local women and looting of African resources, notably cattle. The Shona joined the uprising in June. The heroic Ndebele-Shona Uprisings of 1896, termed the First Chimurenga, formed the basis of later mass nationalism. An important feature of this uprising was the purported role of traditional African religious authorities that were said to have provided unity and co-ordination across Ndebele-Shona ethnic divides with two religious figures, Mkwati of the Mwari cult and Kaguvi of the Shona Mhondoro religions system, prominent. Mbuya Nehanda is another religious figure who played a pivotal role in propping up the rising in and around the Mazoe area. Other prominent heroes of the First Chimurenga included Mashayamombe, Makoni, Mlugulu, Siginyamatshe, Mpotshwan, and Kunzvi-Nyandoro, among others. Stories of the heroic exploits of these early heroes and the united approach by the Shona and Ndebele became a great source of inspiration during the Second Chimurenga from the mid-1960s.

In 1898, the Brits officially recognised the name Rhodesia for the colony after promulgating the Rhodesia Order in Council. The Order in Council was the governing instrument of Rhodesia until 1923 when the settlers were accorded Responsible Government. The main characteristics of the new settler establishment were land segregation, segregated governance and political and economic privileges for the white settler community. Thus, separation of races in the economy, political system and law became the order of the day. Racial difference was completely institutionalised in all facets of the colonial state's institutions. An early challenge for the colonial state was how to rule the Shona and Ndebele in an exploitative way, but without provoking another uprising. This became what has been termed "the native question".

In the early years of colonial rule, urban settlements developed and soon became 'sites of struggles' as they were characterised by the colonial politics of domination, control, segregation and exploitation. The rural-urban influx also provided early challenges. Besides racial divisions, urban areas were also marked

along class, gender and ethnic lines, hence the problems of miscegenation and inter-racial sexualities. Notwithstanding that in Bulawayo in 1897, white male settlers outnumbered their female counterparts 6 to 1, inter-racial sexualities were criminalised with the passing of the Immorality Suppression Ordinance in 1903 which made intercourse between a black man and a white woman illegal; the punishment was five years for the black man and two years for the white woman. However, there was no corresponding punishment for a white man who had a sexual relationship with a black woman. Such laws as the Southern Rhodesia Native Regulations (1910) and Native Affairs Act (1927), inter alia, empowered colonial officials to enforce what was deemed the colonial sense of civility, racial boundaries and settler prestige perceived to be under threat from the Africans.

Yet another significant characteristic of early colonial rule in Zimbabwe was land dispossession and forcible proletarianisation of the African. Two key aims of settler production were maximum output premised on minimum cost. These had to be achieved through the following; restricting African access to land, thus undercutting African peasant agricultural production, increasing taxation and hence forcing Africans to sell their labour cheaply to white mine owners and farmers. Paying the African starvation wages augmented all these exploitative measures. These machinations were legally supported by such oppressive and exploitative legislation as the Masters and Servants Ordinance, the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau, the Pass Laws, the Native Regulations Ordinance and the compound system which gave mine owners semi-'feudal' powers akin to those of slave owners of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We therefore note that in the 1920s and 1930s, the state increasingly intervened on behalf of the settlers against the interests of the Africans. White commercial production was promoted on the back of the destruction of African peasant production. This wanton undercutting of African peasant production marked the beginning of the underdevelopment of African reserves in Rhodesia and the forcible proletarianisation of the African.

From the above, it is clear that in colonial Zimbabwe, land dispossession immediately followed colonisation. As early as 1894, a Land Commission was appointed while the first two reserves, the arid Gwai and Shangani, were set aside for the Ndebele. By 1905, sixty reserves had been established, covering only 22% of the colony. Land had become the settlers' most valued commodity after failing in mining. Measures were put in place to support/finance white agriculture, with an Agriculture Research station being established near Salisbury. Land segregation was then concretised in 1930 with the introduction of the Land Apportionment Act which divided land into White Areas, Native Areas, Native Purchase Areas and Forest Areas. Within the Native Areas, no one held title to land; land was under 'communal tenure', but in the White Areas, land was a private property secured by title deeds. And when the Great Depression hit the fledgling settler economy, the settler government intervened by introducing a raft of legislation like the Maize Control Act, Cattle Levy Act, Reserve Pool Act, Market Stabilisation Act, among others, all of which had the effect of restricting African peasant production and forcing Africans to partake in the wage labour market. This inevitably resulted in a drop in African agricultural production which the settler government, however, blamed on poor African farming methods rather than land shortage and restrictive policies.

African responses to these early forms of exploitation and oppression ranged from outright resistance and acquiescence to adopting and adapting Christian ideologies and use of petitions for the return of Ndebele land alienated by the settlers. However, by 1923, African politics had assumed more complex forms with the formation of a relatively national organisation, the Southern Rhodesia Bantu Voters Association, although this was largely an elitist organisation, but with a vibrant Women's league that organised a successful boycott of the beer hall in 1934. Then there was the South Africa African Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) that catered for workers' interests. A significant phenomenon was also the formation of African churches that broke away from the orthodox Christian churches to ameliorate the impact of colonialism.

### **Impact of Second World War**

The Second World War fundamentally changed the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. In Southern Rhodesia, 1000s of Africans actively participated in the fighting, both on the war

front and back home through production of foodstuffs and various minerals essential to the war effort. On the war front, Africans fought side by side and on equal terms with whites. They came face to face with shortcomings of the white man which debunked the notions of white invincibility and superiority. Quite significantly, the African was exposed to contemporary thoughts and ideas on self-determination and equality. Post Second World War Zimbabwe thus experienced far-reaching economic, social and political changes marked by a gradual process of transformation in the political consciousness of Africans characterized by a change from the earlier position of requesting for fairness and accommodation in the governing structures from whites to that of seeking self rule.

The colonial state responded to the economic challenges posed by the Second World War by adopting specific economic policies and strategies that resulted in a relatively rapid growth of the manufacturing sector. This entailed transforming the country's heavy dependence on agriculture and mining to a diversified economy with an expanding manufacturing industrial sector. However, this overall industrial expansion was limited in scale as the country only had 382 industrial establishments employing a total of 20 439 black workers. A more fundamental development though was the large influx of white immigrants into the country in the immediate post war years, boosting the settler population and providing the economy with much needed skilled labour and a larger domestic market. 17 000 white immigrants entered the country in 1948 alone. However, white immigration had the significant effect of fuelling inter-racial tensions which hastened the rise of militant African nationalism. The arrival of more whites resulted in the displacement of African communities from areas earlier deemed "European Areas."

An equally significant development was that the emerging manufacturing sector demanded a larger permanent urban based worker reservoir, hence policies that further pushed over 100 000 Africans off the land into the cities. In turn, the huge inflow of indigenous Africans into the cities changed the ethnic and cultural landscape of the country's towns and cities. Before this, most main towns were dominated by foreign/migrant workers from neighbouring countries, notably Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique).

The post Second World War era also witnessed a significant rise of an African middle class of educated African professionals such as teachers, nurses, lawyers and entrepreneurs. However, these elite's concerns and aspirations initially tended to run counter to those of the ordinary masses. The tensions emerging from the interaction of these groups meant that the anti-colonial struggles took different and sometimes conflicting forms as each social grouping, namely alien and indigenous urban workers, the rural population and the emerging middle class, sought to advance its peculiar interests. Similarly, differences also existed within the dominant white settler community. The whites who had been in the country for a long time wanted to maintain the status quo of exclusive white domination while the post war immigrants tended to have liberal political views and attitudes towards Africans whom they felt had to be accommodated to avert the growth and threat of militant African nationalism. Accusations of partiality to Africans cost Garfield Todd the premiership in 1958, effectively marking the end of liberal tendencies and the ascendancy of exclusionist right-wing policies that resulted in the formation of the Rhodesia Front in 1962, the party that was to unilaterally declare independence in 1965.

### **Growth of Militant Nationalism**

The early African initiatives for the amelioration of the colonial conditions have been described by some scholars as proto-nationalist as they were targeted at encouraging the colonial authorities to provide a more tolerant and accommodating socio-political and economic dispensation and not at overthrowing colonialism. African political activity in this period manifested itself mainly in trade unionism. The Rhodesia railway Employees association agitated for better conditions for workers, its efforts culminating in the Railway Workers' strike in October 1945, signaling the workers' determination to improve their lot through organized action. In the following years, other workers organizations, notably the Federation of Bulawayo African Workers Union led by Jasper Savanhu, the African Workers Voice Association under Benjamin Burombo and the reformed Industrial and Commercial Workers Union under the leadership of Charles Mzingeli, were established. Burombo's Voice Association appealed to both rural and urban constituencies. Mopore strikes were experienced throughout the country over these years.

Other manifestations of African protest were the revival of the Southern Rhodesia Bantu Congress as the Southern Rhodesia African Native Congress, the Voters League and the creation of the African Methodist Church which was an African protest against both white religious and political domination. Students also expressed their disgruntlement through strikes, like the famous Dadaya Mission strike in 1947. However, this phase did not entail a 'nationalist Movement' as Africans were still generally thinking in terms of improving their conditions under white rule rather than attaining sovereignty and independence.

Mass nationalism eventually began with the formation of the City Youth League in 1955 by such young activists like George Nyandoro, James Chikerema, Edson Sithole and Duduza Chisiza. The League's new militancy was reflected in the Salisbury Bus Boycott it organized in August 1956 in protest at bus fare hikes by the United Transport Company. This was, however, overshadowed by the incidents in which several women were raped at Carter House in Harare Township (Mbare) as punishment for breaking the strike, revealing the gender tensions in the urban African communities at the time. While black women participated with their male counterparts in the anti-colonial struggle, they also had to deal with patriarchy.

In 1957, the City Youth League and the Bulawayo-based African National Council came together to form the country's first national political party, the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress (SRANC, later simply called the ANC) under Joshua Nkomo. The birth of the City Youth League and subsequent nationalist parties at this time has to be seen in the context of the quickening pace of African nationalism in the post-Second World War era which resulted in the landmark and inspirational independence of Ghana in 1957. The ANC challenged destocking, the unpopular government-initiated soil conservation policies and the notorious Land Husbandry Act (1951), a loathsome piece of legislation that included reducing the size of African land units, the number of cattle individuals could hold and undermining the chiefs' traditional control of the land.

In February 1959, the colonial government of Rhodesia declared a state of emergency and banned the ANC under the newly created Unlawful Organisations Act. Party assets were confiscated while over 500 political leaders were arrested. However, the African nationalists, growing increasingly militant, were unrelenting and formed the National Democratic Party (NDP) on 1 January, 1960 under Joshua Nkomo. A landmark demand by the NDP was majority rule under universal suffrage. The NDP's militancy, particularly the country-wide protests from late 1960 that resulted in widespread destruction of property and some deaths of protestors, led to its banning in December 1961. The nationalists responded by establishing the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), again under Joshua Nkomo. The party was however soon riddled with serious divisions of an ethnic nature resulting in its split in 1963 when a new party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), was formed under Ndabaningi Sithole.

In the meantime, the white community was also experiencing serious divisions. The Rhodesian government under Whitehead proposed a new constitution in 1961 that provided for the widening of the franchise to include more Africans on the voters' roll. The thinking within the ranks of the liberal whites who spearheaded this new constitution was that it would pave way for Southern Rhodesia's independence from Britain in line with developments in other British colonies. These moves were heavily criticized by conservative whites who were against any concessions to African nationalism. These conservatives were influenced by the need to protect their racial economic interests. This group won the 1962 elections under the banner of the Rhodesia Front under the leadership of Winston Field, who, however, lost the country's premiership to Ian Douglas Smith ostensibly for failing to force Britain to grant white Rhodesia independence. Failing to gain independence from the British, Smith opted for a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) on 11 November, 1965, setting the Rhodesian white community on a collision course with the black African majority.

### **Social and economic developments in Rhodesia during the UDI period**

The Rhodesia Front (RF) government's UDI 'project' shattered the African nationalists' goal of attaining political independence as was happening in most African countries. This goal clashed with the long held aspirations of the generality of the white section of Rhodesian society to safeguard its privileged position. While the contests over nationhood, a recurrent feature of the UDI era, appear to be between the Africans

and the white section of the Rhodesian society, they were in many ways complicated and transcended the citizen/subject binary. The political struggles of the period, often crossing the racial divide, were mainly about the social and economic interests of the various groups that formed the Rhodesian society. Notwithstanding the efforts of the RF government to create a sense of nationhood among whites, Rhodesian white society was divided along class and economic interests, among other variables. As the conflict intensified, some members of the white population were, by the mid-1970s, preaching a different gospel from that of the RF, admitting that majority rule was inevitable. At the same time, a number of Africans had, for economic and other reasons, defended white settler hegemony as soldiers in the Rhodesian army, Selous Scouts and policemen. The RF government put in place several measures as part of efforts to cushion white society in the wake of sanctions imposed on the country following the UDI. Although these measures were, in the short term, successful, the success was not without its own costs. By the mid-1970s, a combination of factors, chief of which was the intensifying civil war, resulted in an economic decline that adversely affected the many facets of Rhodesian society.

### **The liberation War, 1965-1980**

The civil war/liberation struggle that engulfed Rhodesia in the wake of the socio-political and economic developments that occurred during the UDI period was a complex one. It marks how the crisis in Rhodesia escalated as opposition to white rule became increasingly militant. It is a war bedeviled by many 'struggles within the struggle'. The final phase of the war was littered many atrocities that culminated in all the contestants in the struggle agreeing on the peace modalities at the Lancaster House Conference in 1979, which in turn resulted in the February 1980 general elections that ultimately led to independence on 18 April 1980.

Highlights of the escalating crisis in the early years of the UDI period were the famed Battle of Chinhoyi when ZANLA guerrillas engaged Rhodesia National Army soldiers and the 1967 Wankie Campaign which pitted Rhodesian soldiers against an alliance of ZIPRA and Umkhonto we Sizwe forces. Then there was also the 1969 Anglo-Rhodesia Agreement. The chapter argues that this was an attempt to ensure continued white rule while making token slow concessions to majority rule. This explains the huge "No" vote against those proposals during the 1972 Pearce Commission referendum that was set up to test the acceptability of the agreement. However, the intensifying conflict is marked by the ZANLA guerrillas' infiltrating the north eastern side of the country with the major highlight being the attack on Altena Farm in December 1972. Henceforth, the whole country was soon engulfed in serious fighting as ZIPRA also infiltrated the country from Zambia.

An important aspect of the escalating crisis was the 'global' nature that the Rhodesian crisis assumed. The crisis was not an exclusively Rhodesian affair. The neighbouring countries, notably Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia, and regional powers like Tanzania and Angola, continental powerhouse, Nigeria as well as Russia, China and the USA, among many others, all played significant roles in the crisis. Hence the détente period from 1974 that witnessed protracted efforts spearheaded by Kaunda and Vorster to bring about a negotiated settlement in Rhodesia between Smith and the nationalists. However, the efforts of the African countries in particular also extended towards achieving unity among Rhodesia's nationalist parties. This saw the emergence of several formations involving the nationalists during the UDI period. These included FROLIZI, UANC, ZLC and ZIPA. This plethora of formations is indicative of the fragmented nature of the nationalist camp in their fight against the Smith regime. Manifestations of the disunity are also reflected in the split that rocked ZAPU in 1971, the Nhari Rebellion against the ZANU leadership from late 1974 and the events surrounding the assassination of Chitepo in 1975, among others.

The escalating crisis is further highlighted by the manner in which the war became bloodier as the years went by. Serious atrocities were perpetrated by both sides as the war escalated. The Rhodesians carried out both air and ground attacks on mainly ZANU and ZAPU refugee camps in Mozambique and Zambia respectively. Some of these brutalities involved the covert poisoning of guerrilla sources of water and food supplies. Civilians were not spared either. There was the anthrax poisoning of livestock and the movement of thousands of rural villagers into concentration camps euphemistically called "protected

villages,” among other atrocities. Equally, the nationalist armies attacked white farmers in their isolated homesteads, assaulted centres of colonial power and blew up infrastructure.

This was not a struggle informed merely by racial differences. There were numerous conflicts that were a result of various levels of tensions. Some of the conflicts were due to purely personality clashes while others were caused by class, ideological and ethnic tensions. It was not unusual for a given crisis to be explained on the basis of a combination of two or more of these variables. The many tensions that beset the nationalist war were not only because of the heterogeneous nature of the black society, but also a result of the individual motivations for joining the war. While there are the usual ‘heroic’ motivations highlighted in nationalist historiography, there were many who found themselves in the war through coercion and press-ganging. Even peasant support for the guerrillas was not always voluntary while relations between the guerrillas and other stakeholders in the war were also not always rosy. Some missionaries, for example, were brutally murdered, this notwithstanding the many sacrifices they made towards the welfare of the guerrillas in particular and the rural communities in general.

The war also had a serious gender dimension. Women, particularly rural women, made heroic sacrifices in the war. However, some women took advantage of the presence of the guerrillas to report their abusive husbands. In the camps, for example, women guerrillas were subjected to all forms of sexual exploitation while *chimbwidos* in the fighting zones were sometimes raped. Then there was the ‘struggle’ by women combatants not to be restricted to serving only as porters, nurses and cooks, but also to be allowed to “handle the gun” as well. Thus, among the blacks, the fight against colonial oppression also co-existed with the struggle against male oppression of females. Within the white community, the war brought about a degree of emancipation to women since the escalating war meant the continued absence of their husbands and hence the need for them to be trained in self-defence methods like how to handle a gun.

Other levels of tensions experienced during the war include the generational tensions in the rural areas as the *mujibhas* and *chimbwidos* assumed more authority over their elders because of their daily contact with the guerrillas. There were also the young DAs who controlled the peasants in the so-called protected villages. These also wielded too much power as they were armed. Then there is also the spiritual element of the war in which, for instance, the ideological differences that affected the ZIPA period also impacted on guerrilla relations with traditional religion, albeit for a very short time. Another element of the tensions in the struggle is how the chiefs found themselves between a hard rock and a hard place as they had to please two masters, the RF government and the guerrillas. Ultimately, there was a shift in the balance of power in the rural areas as these traditional leaders generally lost power to the guerrillas.

The escalating cost of the war, the breakdown of civil administration, a collapsing economy, a failed Internal Settlement and increased pressure from allies all forced Smith to concede to the general elections that brought about majority rule. On the other hand, the nationalist leaders were also desperate to end a war that claimed thousands of lives in wanton bombings of refugees in neighbouring countries by the Rhodesian forces. The guerrilla armies were also confronted by strained logistics. Further to this, pressure from leaders of African countries, particularly the Frontline States, whose economies were also suffering the brunt of the war, also contributed to the nationalists conceding to unsatisfactory ceasefire arrangements whose effects continued to assail the new nation in the post-liberation war era. The war thus ended with the signing of the Lancaster House Agreement that resulted in national elections overwhelmingly won by Robert Mugabe’s ZANU (PF) party.