

## MUSIC, POLITICAL SPACE AND POWER IN ZIMBABWE: A CRITIQUE

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper explores the dichotomous relationship as well as tension between music, political space and contestation for power in Zimbabwe. The paper employs Louis Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) as well as content analysis to explain how music is deployed to support the status quo or to create a counter narrative. It is based upon the premise that music played an important role in Zimbabwe's war of liberation as the liberation armies and parties employed it to challenge the status quo. Freedom fighters kept their spirits up through music; they celebrated their victories and mourned the loss of fellow fighters. Upon the attainment of independence with the country adopting a socialist ideology, music seemed geared towards praising the regime, was to be a tool in the hands of the state and party hence and was uncritical of the government and its shortcomings. This was visible in the euphoric, idealistic and personalised songs produced in the early years following independence. However, corruption, lack of tolerance, shrinking democratic space, insensitivity to criticism and crass materialism began to be endemic and cancerous within the regime. Music began to be critical of the regime and this reflected the general disillusionment of the populace. Alarmed, the regime sponsored pro establishment groups, produced jingles, albums which told its narrative and these received massive airplay on state radio and television. Music which was considered critical of the establishment was ditched in favour of what was clearly partisan music. This article explores how music has been used in post-independence Zimbabwe to remind people which party brought them independence, to elevate the party to the pedestal of deity, create cult of personality, how the ruling party uses music to create memorisation and for ideological purposes. Music has been employed by politicians to disseminate political messages to the populace, popular musicians and of late youthful musicians have been used to spread the ideology of the ruling elite. Musicians have recorded songs in support of government policies, performed at government functions, performed at rallies held by different parties, in a nutshell politicians realise the power of music as a communication medium. Songs praising one party and leader have been penned whilst others denouncing and labelling opponents of the regime as sell-outs and nobodies have also been penned and received airplay. It also teases out how music has been employed as an alternative to challenge the political ideology of the status quo through critiquing prevailing political dispensation. On the other hand the paper observes that music can be used to subvert the status quo and reveal an alternative to official government narrative. Using selected songs, the paper draws out that music has been a battleground for ideas and that songs have either been used to prop the regime or critique it*

**Words:** Zimbabwean Music, Movement for Democratic Change, ZANU (PF), Media, Ideology

## **Introduction**

This paper explores how music has been employed by the state to spread its ideology and garner support for its policies. It is to be observed that in music, one is able to weave a rich historical tapestry of Zimbabwe's history and learn a lot about political developments within the country. Bassopo-Moyo (2012) notes that music is informed by the 'social and cultural context' and one may also add that the political environment plays an equally important role. A similar view is echoed by Brown (2008:1) who articulates that 'music is filled with political content and has ...been a venue for profound political expression...' Against this background, the paper shows that music has often been central in Zimbabwean politics and is employed from time to time by political parties to garner support for their parties, state their policies and support for their candidates. Music not only reflects society's hopes and aspirations, it also articulates issues facing the populace, and is a mirror of the political landscape and temperature. The paper is structured in five parts. Following this introduction is a brief section on the paper's methodology, followed by the theoretical framework drawn from neo Marxist thinking mainly Lois Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) which helps unpack how music can be used by the state for its own benefit and advantage as well as how it can be used to challenge state ideology. This will be followed by a critical discussion of music in Zimbabwe employing the theoretical framework identified and assess the strength of the argument. The final part is the conclusion which sums up the paper and its main arguments.

## **Research Methodology**

Turning to methodology, the paper samples a number of songs by Zimbabwean artists since independence right up to the year 2013 using content analysis. Space limitations prevent a thorough look into all the music that has been produced hence a number of notable artists such as Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mutukudzi, Simon Chimbetu, Lovemore Majaivana, Comrade Chinx, the ZANU PF choir, Born Free Crew, Elliot Manyika and the MDC-T album amongst others will be analysed. Songs and albums are analysed to bring out deep lying meanings and placed in a historic milieu in order to help bring about an understanding and meaning lying behind. The paper argues that music and politics in Zimbabwe have a close relationship and that political parties and politicians often employ it to persuade the populace towards their respective party ideology and in accepting 'their' version of reality and issues involved.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper deploys Louis Althusser's ideology and ideological state apparatuses (ISA) to analyse the role of music in creating hegemony and a dominant ideology in Zimbabwean politics. Althusser (1971:146) writes that the ruling class holds state power and '...this same ruling is active in the ideological state apparatuses...' From the onset, it should be noted that within society and the political domain, there is always the dominant ideology and then a counter ideology which seeks to challenge the status quo. According to Althusser (1971:149) the ideological state apparatuses subtends the '...interests of the dominant ideology, and thus, the interests of the ruling class.' It stands to reason then, that music is a tool used to reflect the views and ideology of the dominant class who are the ruling class. Using this theory as its basis, this paper submits that music has been employed in different ways by the ruling party and the state to put across its ideology, logic and reinforce within the populace its political messages. Songs have been recorded by pro-government artists celebrating the supremacy of the leader, ZANU (PF) as the party that brought forth independence to Zimbabwe, in support of land reform and creating a siege mentality that the country was under attack from a Western conspiracy. ISA utilise persuasion, propaganda to 'pass' the state and dominant class's ideology. One is confronted by a situation where 'reality' is as perceived and conceived by the ruling elite. Althusser (1971) identifies communication as an integral part of ISA and in Zimbabwe the media through radio, television, jingles, songs, advertisements, newspapers, and billboards has been used to disseminate the political ideology and message of the ruling class.

### **Music and Ideology**

Critical to the ideological state apparatus is control of media. By controlling the media, the state determines what the populace listens to thereby controlling and filtering the message. This resonates with both the ideas of Herman and Chomsky (2002) and Althusser (1976) whose ideas express the view that the elite dictate content to the populace. Using this logic, one may argue that, the music produced has to be played on national radio and this is controlled by the state. In other words, this has a subtle influence on the content and message which the artist will seek to project.

Since there is a relationship between music and politics it can be suggested that there is the ideological slant to music within society. Using a Marxist lens, it is clear that music like any art form has an ideological use and used mainly to support the status quo (Gramsci, 1976; Althusser, 1971). Music serves to transmit ideas and that in itself makes it susceptible to being a tool for producing ideology and transmitting it to the populace. In a nutshell, music is not purely for entertainment, it has the ideological as well as political undertones either supporting the status quo or challenging it. One may submit that music serves to create political cohesion, support for the state, support for the ruling

party, support for its ideology and version of reality, garner support for its policies, and sway public opinion in order to ensure regime security (Gramsci, 1976).

The opposite is equally true as music can be a tool for fighting against the status quo, as it can be used to voice out dissatisfaction against the state, its policies and the economic woes bedevilling it. Therefore it has a duality of serving the interests of the status quo to manufacture consent; it can be used for propaganda purposes as well as to create hegemony (Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Gramsci, 1976). On the other hand it can subvert the status quo thus creating an alternative version of reality challenging the official narrative. Gramsci (1976) advances the idea of dominant ideology which is a reflection of the ideas of the ruling elite and to advance its ideology, the elite employ a range of instruments such as music. In such a scenario, music serves the interests of the ruling party and this creates artists who are praise singers, support and seek to maintain the political status quo and are not critical of the regime. It is hardly surprising then that songs produced in this era reflect an uncritical attitude towards government and pander towards praise and the cult of personality. Althusser (1971) observes that the state tends to want to establish control over art and music in order to 'advance' its ideology. In like manner, ZANU (PF) has over the years been able to employ music to disseminate its ideology as well as to frame and control political discourse in the country. Music in essence can be a tool to support the status quo or to challenge the prevailing political order.

Control of the media enables the ruling elite to embark on a hegemonic project and to create a state ideology and narrative which favours it. For example *Star FM* is owned by the Zimpapers Group which publishes the government mouthpiece *The Herald* and has close 'umbilical ties' with the government. The other station is *ZiFM* owned by the now Deputy Minister of Information and Publicity Supa Mandiwanzira who is a member of the ruling ZANU (PF) party. Therefore, in a sense the airwaves continue to be dominated by actors associated with the ruling party and one cannot ignore the obvious connections with the ruling party. It is only in 2012 that two new radio stations were granted licences to operate, but these are closely linked to the state.

The media is an important agent for political socialisation and in this respect media plays a pivotal role in bringing about socialisation. This dovetails with the ideas of Marxist critics who argue that the media reflects the attitudes and pre occupation of the elite (Gramsci, 1976; Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Althusser 1971). This then suggests that there is a nexus between music, ideology and politics making music a contested space where politicians seek to project their version of reality and win support for themselves. It also becomes the theatre where those on the periphery seek to subvert the status quo through creating a counter narrative challenging the existing order.

The regime's eagerness to use music as a tool for building consensus was also visible in their fascination with Chimurenga music. Chimurenga means fight, struggle, or revolutionary struggle (Bassopo-Moyo, 2012), this genre became associated with the war of liberation as it was social and political commentary of the prevailing conditions faced by the colonised Zimbabweans. Its strong lyrics and defiance resonated well with the war of liberation hence its metaphorical name of liberation music. It is noticeable that that this genre became associated with the idea of nationalism and in the years following independence the populace imbibed music whose lyrics were in support of the regime.

### **Cult of personality and the leader**

A key element in the ISA context is music's fixation with the 'great man.' here, the media is manipulated to cultivate a cultic following of the leader and a cult of personality which is visible even in some songs recorded. Althusser (1971:154) uses the metaphor of a concert to explain as he pens 'this concert is dominated by a single score...the score of the Ideology of the current ruling class which integrates into its music the great themes...of Great Forefathers.' Warriors, heroes and heroines such as Sekuru Kaguvi and Mbuya Nehanda are celebrated in Zimbabwean history as having stood up against the whites. Therefore, songs began to weave this narrative thus elevating Mugabe to the same level of those that have gone before him. This reinforces his greatness and the idea of him as a man of destiny like the ancestors fighting for his people, hence one finds songs in praise of him.

Despite early promises a culture of personality was to rear its head in music productions as songs in praise of the Robert Mugabe were composed. This was to prove to be a disturbing feature of Zimbabwean music as artists and their songs seemed to be used to support the myth that there was only one individual fit to rule the country. Unknowingly and perhaps naïvely, musicians were contributing to what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2010) terms Mugabeism and at the same time nurturing a cult of personality. Songs raised the new leadership for having delivered independence to the majority and this laid a dangerous precedence and foundation of the cult of personality

The years following Zimbabwe's independence provided fertile ground for praising the Prime Minister and leader of ZANU Robert Mugabe. One of the dominant themes in Zimbabwean music is the praise heaped upon the President. This helped foster the creation of the cult of personality as well as the big man syndrome. This is reflected in a number of songs perhaps the most famous or infamous of these being 'Ishe komborera President Mugabe' by the Runn Family. In the same vein, the political leadership was feted and praised through music. One 'popular song' which was recorded in the same period was entitled 'Ishe Komborera President Mugabe' by the Mutare based Runn Family which beseeches the heavens and God to bless the President abundantly. The track was a plea to the heavens

to grant long life and prosperity to the fountain of the nation evoking the socialist ideology which ZANU was following at the time. A key feature of socialist/Marxist states was the supremacy of the party leader and cult of personality and one notices that the platform was being set for the creation of a cult of personality, hegemony, one-partyism and an indispensability syndrome by the regime (Rich-Dorman, 2002).

Songs were uncritical of the regime which seemed to be unable to do any wrong. An almost messianic and cultic following was created as musicians declared 'long live comrade Mugabe' in praise of the man who was viewed as having single-handedly brought independence to the country and therefore deserved to be eulogised in song. This theme was to be repeated once again in the new millennium as Zimbabwe's fate seemed to be equated with the presidents, and the definition and conceptualisation seemed to be based on one's support for the president (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2010). These praise songs directed towards an individual were to lead to what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2010) terms 'Mugabeism' which manifested itself through music and was to be a 'full blown' ideology and cultic movement after 2000. An emergent trend was one of a cult of personality and the elevation of one individual to a pedestal of deity status. When one uses content analysis to deconstruct the underlying messages, one gleans that songs create the myth that there can be no one else or any other party to lead Zimbabwe apart from Robert Mugabe. Not to be outdone, a youth group known as Born Free Crew have produced songs in support of the regime to appeal to what can be a disillusioned generation which finds itself unemployed and with little opportunities. Their song 'Get Connected' depicts Mugabe as the epicentre, the hub and nucleus similarly evoking the helplessness that the nation would face without him at the helm. The song gives the title '*baba*' (father) to Mugabe so that it creates that impression within the minds of the youth that even if he has made some political or social or economic blunders, he is still the father and patriarch of the state.

However, the late 1980s and 1990s brought a noticeable change as musicians began tackling issues which had been anathema in the years after independence. As the political and economic situation continued to deteriorate in the 1990s artists began to be more politically conscious as their lyrics articulated the concerns of the ordinary citizen. Corruption within the government was a growing concern and at the same time the government had introduced the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) and had abandoned its socialist rhetoric in favour of capitalism. Unemployment, joblessness and economic difficulties characterised the 1990s and this is captured in the music produced at this time. Arguably, the country had never been socialist in the first place but this had been a convenient 'cover' to provide it with an appeal to the peasants. The country which had once been regarded as a beacon of hope on the African continent was sliding towards autocracy,

intolerance, economic mismanagement and creating a schism between the political elite and those they were meant to serve.

Furthermore, the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) seemed to scare the ruling party and desperate for political survival, the regime turned to music in an attempt to regain ground which had been lost. The ruling party sought to tap into music in order to ‘tell its own story’ and reality. This was done by remixing songs from the struggle for independence, control of the airwaves, and songs in support of government policies such as land as well as those which continued the mantra and official government line of re colonisation and conspiracies by the west. This period saw the likes of Andy Brown, Cde Chinx, Elliot Manyika, Sister Flame, Tambaoga and numerous other artists being employed by the regime to put across its message. Pro government songs received maximum airplay as radio was controlled by government. What emerges here is what Althusser correctly identified as ideological state apparatuses as music was now a tool controlled and readily manipulated by the state to serve its own purposes.

Culture is another critical facet of ISA and the dominant class may use culture to appeal to the ‘sensibilities’ of the populace and the process fuse political ideologies in ‘cultural’ music. The likes of Sekuru Kaguvi and Mbuya Nehanda who are ‘legendary and mythical’ in the narrative of Zimbabwe’s struggle against the settler regime were evoked in various songs thereby revealing that link between communication and culture as these were seen as defenders of culture against foreign intrusion. One observes that music falls under both the communication and cultural threads as it communicates political messages, ideology and the cultural function is to create and maintain hegemony within the state. The state therefore seeks to use the popularity of music to its advantage; that is to preserve its hold on power. The link between the ancestors and Mugabe suggests that he is similar in stature to them and imparts to him some sort of immortality in Zimbabwe’s history.

### **Corruption and Poor Governance**

Despite a litany of praise singers there were ‘dissenting’ voices singing and protesting against the corruption and increasing materialism by the politicians. Content analysis reveals that some of the music covered themes such as corruption, the high cost of living, poverty, a chastisement of the political corruption and poor governance by the regime. The subaltern had found a voice to challenge the cultural and creative hegemony and monotheism created by the regime and even by a culture of self-censorship by the artists themselves (Bere, 2007). Corruption was becoming systemic and endemic within the cabinet, the most shocking event being the Willowgate Scandal which implicated members of cabinet and those closest to the regime. Sibanda (2004) writes that Chimurenga music legend Thomas Mapfumo’s song ‘corruption’ was banned from the airwaves for expressing dismay

and ridicule at the levels of corruption by the political elite. The album was embarrassing to the government given the popularity of Mapfumo amongst the grassroots as well as how the regime held him in high esteem because of his musical contribution to the struggle for independence. The government responded by blacklisting it in order to silence its biting criticism and damning indictment of corruption.

The gravity of corruption and the state's lackadaisical as well as business as usual approach to corruption witnessed artists producing more songs on the issue. Andy Brown did a song where he lamented the scourge of corruption and the self-indulgent spirit of the elite whilst the ordinary citizen was languishing in abject poverty. In his song he laments that the authorities do not care about service delivery or the populace; the chefs are grotesquely obese, with protruding bellies from ill-gotten wealth. Funds such as the war victims' compensation went into the pockets of the party bigwigs before trickling down to the ordinary people. After having served ZANU PF and becoming disillusioned with the party, Last 'Tambaoga' Chiyangwa performed a volte-face similar to Saul's Damascus experience when he penned a song entitled 'Huori' where he addresses the issue of corruption to 'Mutungamiri' the leader telling him how corrupt his lieutenants have become as they line up their pockets with the country's wealth. This is political commentary that is relevant considering how mystery surrounds proceeds from the sale of diamonds, accusations of ministers having multiple farms, properties and issues of kickbacks. Unsurprisingly the songs did not receive airplay on national radio.

Thomas Mapfumo's track *Disaster* mourned the chaos and rape of the country by a self-serving leadership which was running out of ideas. Corruption was yet again a recurring theme highlighting the concern by the public about the ruling party's 'tolerance' of corruption. Patronage, cronyism and kleptocracy seemed to be fashionable 'traits' amongst the regime and this song was a bold challenge to a government and leadership which was proving self-serving. Music was now occupying central space as means of expression to challenge the regime and question its activities. Oliver Mutukudzi's '*Bvuma Tolerance*' album was a trailblazer as it was a work of political and social commentary. It is neither here nor there if at all the artist had set out to make a political album. A popular track from his album was '*Wasakara*' which was seen by the general populace as chastisement to Mugabe to leave office due to advanced age. President Mugabe continued to cling on to power and was unchallenged both within his party and the political opposition appeared weak to dislodge him. Music provided some sort of challenge to his continued imperial rule so as to speak. In the 2002 presidential elections as well as the Presidential run-off of June 2008 it is widely believed that the regime used underhand tactics to steal and win the elections. The elections have widely been condemned for failing to meet international best practise and were satisfactory as opposed to being free and fair. Steve Makoni's



'*Handiende*' became a political statement as it was interpreted as a message to the aged leader to stop clinging to power and give the reigns to the next generation.

Thomas Mapfumo produced the song *Mamvemve* which can be translated to mean rags, ruins, shreds, pieces, tatters. The song laments how the economy has been plunged into turmoil because of greed and corruption by those in power thus reducing the country to poverty. His song '*Disaster*' laments the state of disarray which now exists in the house which is the country. The house is experiencing economic, social and political upheavals due to poor leadership, poor policies and self-aggrandisement by the top party hierarchy. The song '*Zimbabwe*' calls for the local authorities and inhabitants to respect and uphold the rule of law. After 2000 Zimbabwe slid into a state where the rule of law was trampled upon, where war veterans, ZANU PF youth militia were a law unto themselves harassing white commercial farmers, civil society and opposition party members. The song is a call for the authorities to respect the human rights and the freedom of choice, urging them to shun the use of force, other forms of manipulation, cohesion, threat or violence. There is a need to listen to alternative views and to be tolerant of those whose ideas differ from that of the ruling party and state.

Solomon Skuza also sang about corruption as it appeared the regime was turning out to be a breeding ground for corrupt politicians. Lovemore Majaivana lamented in a dirge like manner the condition of the country when he sang '*Lelilizwe Alilamali*' sentiments which the ordinary citizen could identify with yet the irony lay in that the elite were feasting and living in both pomp and luxury. Equally ridiculous was that this was taking place in a supposedly socialist state where egalitarian principles were espoused.

One notes how music was no longer being used as part of ISA but as a challenge and alternative voice to the attempted monopolisation of power and a way of subverting official state narratives and control using culture and music. Musicians were beginning to stick out like a sore thumb speaking out against the ills of the regime. The country had now become higgledy-piggledy since self-interest now was taking precedence over public interest.

### **Censorship and Musicians Singing for their Supper**

The 1990s and the beginning of 2000 were marked by a renaissance in music as Zimbabwe's musicians began to take the regime to task. Disillusioned with the regime and its policies, music began to assume political undertones and a consciousness which seemed to have been lacking. The 1990s saw the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) which brought hardship to the ordinary citizen. The government had by now abandoned any semblance of socialism following the collapse of the bipolar world and the end of the Cold War. Job losses and retrenchments, removal of subsidies coupled with a drought combined to make life difficult for the

lower rungs of society. Such conditions provided fertile ground for the Zimbabwean musician to express themselves and be the voice of the people. The increasing attitude of consumerism by the regime was nauseating to the populace who wanted an outlet to vent their pent-up anger. One notes the politicisation of music with the state fully aware of how it could be challenged began hatching plans to re assert control of music in order to shape discourse in society through song.

Media censorship was resorted to in an attempt to prevent such tracks from being played on public radio but this did not deter their popularity especially amongst the urbanites that turned to music as an outlet for expression. Mapfumo's popularity had been unquestioned and in part the government had helped immortalise the man and legend, yet now he was churning out tracks which were highly critical of the government. He came to be viewed as a rebel and an undesirable element as his lyrics were deep, incisive and scathing to the system. For more than three decades the airwaves were controlled by the state. The Gramscian idea of hegemony is visible as the state controls the airwaves thereby enabling politically correct music to be played thus entrenching the ideology of the political elite within the psyche of the populace.

Another tactic employed by the state was to sponsor musicians to counter the emergence of an alternative narrative. According to Sibanda (2004) the government's '...strategy was to blacklist songs that were against its policies' whilst simultaneously working towards shaping and controlling public perception and sentiment by directly sponsoring and supporting artists who could be of use to the state by singing songs supporting the political elite and the party's policies. Cutting down of foreign content has been interpreted by observers (Bere, 2007; Sibanda, 2004) as an attempt by the ruling party to ensure that music recorded and played on radio was politically correct and in the process this excluded artists who were critical of government policy. Furthermore, a system of patronage was visible as some artists were awarded with funds to build recording studios so as to continue churning out music in support of the regime, whilst others were '...awarded contracts to play at state functions and major national events' (Mhiripiri, 2012; Sibanda, 2004). This was achieved through sponsoring artists to record pro government songs and albums. These artists were given extensive airplay and would perform at commemorative galas and ZANU PF functions. Less than talented artists such as Tambaoga whose penchant for vulgarity preceded his musical and vocal ability were elevated to instant stardom. There also emerged the likes of Sister Flame and Mbuya Madhuvu who were praise singers and pro-government artists whose songs were championed and played on local radio.

A state ideology and historical narrative as well as an imagining of the future have all at some point been articulated through music. Music carries with it an ideological aspect and this has been seized upon by the state to further its own political agenda Althusser (1971:145) asserts that '...ideological

state apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function massively by repression, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic.’ The ruling party conceived an idea of holding galas where ‘politically correct’ artists could play. Mhiripiri (2012:12) asserts that these became ‘...occasions to manufacture consent and reconstruct and recreate historical memory, for those in control and in power, and alternatively, they are a site of struggle and offer an opportunity for dissenting voices.’ It is observable that the state sought to spread its ideology through a popular medium and that it controlled the medium of communication. This was becoming the case in the period beginning year 2000 as the government bombarded the airwaves with ZANU (PF) songs, jingles and songs by pro-government artists received heavy rotation. One reason for this change is partly explained by the rise of the Trade Union-backed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which emerged as a strong challenger to ZANU (PF)’s hold on power. Suddenly, so it seemed, power was slipping through the ruling party’s hands and this witnessed intensification in the use of music as a tool for spreading the ruling party’s ideology and position on various issues.

Equally important is the realisation that at the turn of the century, relations with Labour led Britain deteriorated to a point of hostility by ZANU (PF). The media through music was served to articulate rather crudely and sometimes insultingly, the ruling party’s views. Tony Blair was not particularly liked by Mugabe, there was no love lost between the two. Blair blamed Harare for the chaos and economic stagnation in the country and particularly irked Mugabe when Claire Short wrote a letter absolving Labour from providing funds to pay for land redistribution (New African, 2007). Blair accused the regime of bad governance, ignoring the rule of law and in essence called him a dictator.

Mugabe responded through the skilful manipulation of the media by using soft power to get his message across. Playing the race card and Africa’s sad experience of colonisation, Mugabe projected his spat with Blair as proof that Britain was interested in regime change. At the United Nations General Assembly in 2002, Mugabe accused Britain of attempting to destabilising and vilifying and of pursuing regime change agenda. The ruling party linked the opposition MDC to the British and labelled it a British proxy led from London. Songs linked the party to the British thus serving to discredit it as a viable political organisation, instead painting it as one interested in the re colonisation of the country. A siege mentality was created and as a defence and survival mechanism, music and the memory of the liberation war was roped in to legitimise the regime.

It is interesting to note that following the rejection of the Constitutional Commission’s proposed constitution in February 2000, the ruling party was fearful of possible defeat. This is in light of the economic downturn which the country was experiencing as well as a growing disillusionment with the political leadership. The overzealous Jonathan Moyo was appointed Minister of Information and Publicity and the airwaves were under his control. One of his acts was to cut down on foreign content

and eventually only local content was aired on radio. This move paved way for the ruling party to fully orchestrate its programme of bombarding the listeners with its own version of reality.

Control of the airwaves is elementary towards achievement of creating some form of consensus within the state. Communication serves to bombard and cram ‘...every citizen with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism...moralism...by means of the press, the radio and television’ (Althusser, 1971:155). One of the state’s moves was to tighten its already vice-like grip on the airwaves by first introducing a policy of playing 75% local content on radio which was later increased to 100% on all four Zimbabwean radio stations (Mazango, 2005). This meant that the listeners and those watching television were now at the mercy of the state which bombarded the eyes and ears with music laced with ideological messages. What Althusser (1971) alludes to was visible in the years after 2000 as the citizenry was crammed with a blitz of issues which the ruling class regarded as important but not limited to; land, discrediting opposition political parties as stooges of the West, as well as how Mugabe was the saviour and defender of the down-trodden and the narrative that Zimbabwe was under siege from Western imperialist countries led by Britain.

Political jingles and songs urging the populace to persevere, extolling land reform and other pro ZANU (PF) messages were played on radio. Tendi (2010:4-5) writes ‘catchy music jingles and albums, the majority of which were composed by the then Information Minister Jonathan Moyo, reworking liberation war songs and celebrating ZANU PF’s role in liberation history, were aired on state-run national radio and stations hourly. Mazango (2005:18) concurs with Tendi as he argues that extensive use of jingles was ‘...a central part of the patriotic history project...’ Jingles which were aired on air included ‘*Kuri Kwedu Machembere, Sisonke, Our future, Siyalima, Mombe Mbiri Nemadhongi Mashanu, Uya Uone Kutapira Kunoita Kurima, Rambai Makashinga, Sendekera Mwana Wevhu*’ which all addressed the issue of land and its redistribution (Sibanda, 2004; researcher’s data). One observes that these jingles carried both an overt and covert message that ideologically expressed support for land reform which was the centrepiece of ZANU (PF)’s election campaign and selling point. A telling statistic is given by Sibanda (2004) who notes that one jingle ‘*Rambai Makashinga*’ was played across all four radio stations 288 times a day and 72 times a day on television.

Using content analysis one gleans that jingles showed ZANU (PF)’s version of reality and what the country’s problems were. The messages in the jingles showed that the British and their proxy were the problem, the stubborn white commercial farmer who still believed in ‘little Rhodesia’ and owned tracts of land when the native Blacks had none, celebrated the seizure of land, talked of the joys of farming in one’s ancestral land, and blamed the economic ills of the country on the Anglo-Saxon axis.

Land was a common theme that ran through the music of artists during this period. Pro-government musicians were singing about land and they sounded as if they were reading from the government script. ZANU (PF)'s campaign for the 2002 Presidential elections was based upon the centrality of land, *land is the economy and the economy is the land* was the mantra expressed by the party (ZANU PF Election Manifesto, 2002). The land question provided fertile ground for the regime to exploit and artists were called upon to extol the virtues of land reform. Land reform was seen as an extension and continuation of the Chimurenga (war of liberation) and this was christened 'the Third Chimurenga.' this metaphorically linked ZANU(PF) and Mugabe in particular with the tradition of Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi and Chief Rekayi Tangwena who had resisted white rule and challenged the appropriation of Zimbabwe's land.

Keen to project the party and its leader as knights in shining armour, the government sponsored the *Hondo Yeminda* album to churn out pro government messages about land and pour scorn and insult on those deemed enemies of the state and stooges of British and western imperialism. However, as Mlambo (2012:12) perceptively writes '...the independence government had not really pushed the land reform issue for the first two decades, fearing to upset the applecart and ruining the agricultural industry which was the country's proverbial cash cow.' One is drawn to how music was then used to further the political ambitions and longevity of the regime by constructing a new narrative on the land issue. Furthermore, this project demonstrates how music became politicised and a tool to maintain the status quo and counter any challenge to the official narrative. Artists such as the Zimbabwe Republic Police Band, Cde Chinx, Marko Sibanda, Tambaoga, Elliot Manyika, and Andy Brown had songs which addressed the issue of land.

Cde Chinx's song suggests that land is central to the Zimbabwean identity and a people are a people because of land. It employs a metaphor of war and violence reminding the listener that a new war is being waged, that this war is now a war about redistributing land to the landless. The message was meant to counter the popularity of the MDC as well as to woo the disillusioned electorate who were losing faith in the ruling party. Considering that the song was played regularly on radio and on television, its message was broadcast across the country as the media was controlled by the state. The song was also targeted at the youth reminding them of the horrors of the colonial regime. Those who had lived under the racist system were reminded of the past and in the process ZANU (PF) was able through music content and the video images to appeal and win the war of ideas.

As a survival strategy old songs from the liberation struggle were remixed and re-performed by younger artists to give them more appeal to a younger and trendier constituency of the youth. The 'hottest and most happening' producers were roped in to give the tracks a youthful appeal. In terms of music direction, Zimbabwe's urban youth were listening to a genre called urban grooves and it was

the brief of these producers to make liberation tracks as catchy and appealing to the youth as possible. This was a move designed to inculcate patriotism within the youth who were becoming mentally colonised by western music.

Another theme that can be gleaned in the music of the noughties is that of the need to be firm in the face of hardship. Yet again we find colonisation being evoked and in the process keeping alive the memory of colonisation and evoking how bad and evil the whites were. This was consistent with ZANU (PF)'s message that there was a plot to recolonise the country by the British and its Western allies. Land was tied to colonisation and the seizure of white commercial farms was seen as part of the war against a new form of colonisation. This used the siege mentality and in this case the official narrative was that there was a diabolic scheme by the west led by the British to recolonise the country. Laughable as this was, music was used to drum the message of solidarity and the need to persevere. To be a musician and to get heavy rotation did not need musical acumen or talent, one needed to propagate ZANU (PF) ideology or be a member of the party. The late Elliot Manyika may not have been an exceptionally talented singer yet his track '*Nora*' was played to the point of overkill. Its message dovetails with that of a government sponsored project song '*Rambai Makashinga*' which was imploring Zimbabweans to be strong and resilient in the face of adversity.

The issue of race is raised in a subtle manner in the music produced during this period. One is mindful that the land had implications for race relations, so did the spat between Britain and Zimbabwe. ZANU PF's strategy was to racialise the issue and this was reflected in the songs. Marko Sibanda's lyrics '*Mabhunu beselijwayele*' harbours bitterness towards the West and shows how ZANU (PF) held it with contempt. This is seen in one of the vulgar tracks sung by Tambaoga entitled '*Mutungamiri weZimbabwe ndiBob*' by Tambaoga. The singer thanks the President for giving people land and in the lyrics the singer stresses the point that when Zimbabweans voted they made an agreement that the leader of Zimbabwe is Bob and therefore let us accept what we voted for. The song can be read as a 'shut up' to those who questioned the legitimacy of the 2002 polls which were seen as neither free nor fair but shambolic and stolen. There is a blatant and personal insulting attack on Tony Blair as the singer conveys a message that the only Blair that he knows of is toilet in reference to the popular pit latrine called the Blair toilet. This is further exacerbated with a flagrant conflation of the word British to 'Brishit' implying that the people are a piece of junk, garbage or rubbish in national live show galas.

Political intolerance was also evident in some of the songs produced as they threatened violence and unspecified action. ZANU (PF) has in the past boasted of having 'degrees in violence' and this has not been an idle boast. The record of history shows the party and its top leadership have not shirked from employing violence for example during the liberation war to stem internal revolt, the

Gukurahundi in the 1980s and violence in presidential and parliamentary elections spring to mind. When people hear such songs which are an equivocation to violence, they decide to play it safe by supporting the status quo for fear of the consequences specified in the songs. This violence is threatened against those who do not subscribe to ZANU (PF)'s policies and ideology hence creating enemy images and justifying their being alien, violence against them and being labelled 'sell-outs' and stooges of the British.

Elliot Manyika's '*Musha une mabhunu*' subtly urges for the extermination of the 'enemy.' when one analyses the song on a metaphoric level one is drawn to the fact that political opposition are equated to the '*Mabhunu*' who were white Rhodesian security personnel. This then suggests a link between the opposition and colonialists an important message which ZANU (PF) has always been keen to drum in order to discredit the MDC. In the song, the singer demands to know the households which are harbouring '*mabhunu*' which can be read as households with MDC supporters, the singer wants these households identified then these 'sell-outs' brought to the party which will then deal with them. The same artist continues with a message of violence in a song which received heavy rotation entitled '*Nora*' where he offers a reminder that ZANU(PF) is a revolutionary party which if need be will shed blood to defend its version of reality and ideology. This becomes reminiscent of the violent 2008 presidential run-off where the country witnessed bloodletting especially in the rural areas. Night vigils similar to the *pungwes* reminiscent of the liberation war were held and 'bases' which in reality were torture camps were set up to re-educate and re orient these '*mabhunu*.' One then observes the instrumentality of music in spreading an ideology of intolerance. Both songs urge the need to segregate such 'rebels' educate and reorient them of the fundamentals of so that they may know the true way. Voting for any other party will be tantamount to bringing back the whites. There is therefore need for people to remember the soldiers who died at Chimoio, Bindura, Mutoko and other areas. One observes how both songs use memory of the colonial experience to create fear and in the process maintain the party's hold over the citizens and power.

### **Music and the Government of National Unity**

The controversial elections of 2008 culminated in the Global Political Agreement (GPA) which in turn brought a Government of National Unity (GNU). These were hotly contested and the results for the first round of elections were inexplicably 'delayed' by a month. This fuelled speculation that results were being manipulated and engineered to produce an outcome favourable to the political status quo. Eventually, when results were released there was no candidate who had garnered 50% of the votes hence a run-off had to be held. With the opposition pulling out of elections because of intimidation, Mugabe won the run off but there was pressure for a solution to the impasse because the elections had been a sham. The GNU was a compromise government and ZANU (PF) made no secret

of its dislike for the arrangement. Music yet again was summoned and the objective was to imprint in the public's mind on the popularity of ZANU (PF) despite the power sharing agreement.

Despite a Government of National Unity suggesting that there was equality within it, ZANU (PF) was keen to remind the populace where power really resided. The cult of personality and the battle for the heart and mind continued to be manifest in music. The Mbare Chimurenga Crew sang a song entitled '*Nyatsoteerera Unzwe Kutonga*'-(Listen attentively) shows that Bob (Robert Mugabe) is the one in office and the only one who can rule Zimbabwe. This is a song released during the GNU era which associates the achievements of the GNU to Bob (the office holder). Women wearing ZANU (PF) regalia dance to the song showing their excitement and acceptance of the accomplishments of the President. A group calling itself VaMugabe Chete Crew also emerged on the scene, the group's name bears testament to where their allegiance lay and their song '*Gushungo*' is in praise of Mugabe. The song eulogises Mugabe declaring that he is the best ever thing ever to happen to Zimbabwe. It goes on to suggest that those who do not follow him will suffer perpetual poverty as the country's prosperity is due to Mugabe leadership. One cannot help but notice the relevance of both Chomsky (2002) and Althusser (1971) as the media serves the interests of the elite and their desire to hold on to power at all cost. One also uncovers the politics of patronage and personality as Mugabe is seen as the source of all.

However, this development was not only restricted to ZANU (PF), even the political opposition joined in with their array of equally obscene tracks. The MDC realised the instrumental power of music and attempted to use it to its advantage. However, unlike ZANU (PF) which controlled the airwaves, the MDC's attempt to use music was perhaps not successful. Its albums for instance were to be found on the underground unlike ZANU (PF) songs and songs praising the party which were played on air regularly. One notes that the party had learnt the power of 'soft power' in trying to influence the populace and was seeking to gain a foothold into the electorate. Furthermore, one notes how even opposition parties were using music to subvert the official narrative and to get their ideas across.

The focus on personality politics is a disconcerting feature in Zimbabwe's political landscape. Even the MDC which has presented itself as democratic fell into the cult of personality as a song entitled '*Famba Tsvangirai*' was produced. In summary it is encouragement to Tsvangirai to persevere in 'his' quest to free Zimbabwe from ZANU (PF)'s misrule, observe how the song places the personality ahead of the party and even the state. This leads one to draw an inference that art serves the political elite who simply use the populace as a stepping stone to power. The fact that MDC had its own album and songs further shows the polarisation, abuse of music as an ideological tool as well as propaganda.



Furthermore the song talks about the breakaway faction of Ncube and Sibanda demonstrating how a culture of intolerance exists even within the opposition. This suggests that Tsvangirai views himself as the epitome of the struggle against ZANU (PF) and has a monopoly over it; anyone who disagrees with him or his methods is castigated. This is no different from the messages espoused in ZANU (PF) songs. It also laments how that ZANU (PF) enters into elections having an unfair advantage (*Kukama mukaka wakakora kare*) (vote rigging) and controlling key state and electoral apparatuses. The song also accuses ZANU (PF) of incompetence and downright mediocrity blaming it for the ills bedevilling the country. It challenges the official version of reality where ZANU (PF) has been claiming victories and successes. Gono's children have access to education, basic necessities whilst our children are wallowing in poverty.

Music was also used in political rallies, galas and national events to galvanise the nation behind the ruling party. This illustrates how ZANU PF used music to bolster its position and spread its message through music. The opposition MDC also utilised music in its rallies and campaigns as a way of winning the hearts and minds of the electorate.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has demonstrated how the state has attempted to use music for political purposes. It has shown how in Marxists' analysis music serves the interest and promotes the ideology of the ruling elite and how the state uses ideological state apparatuses to create hegemony and consent for its policies and official narrative. Equally important is the realisation that wherever there is an official narrative, a counter narrative emerges. The political opposition sought to counter ZANU (PF) propaganda and ideology by recording songs to challenge the status quo. However, this was not highly successful as they did not control the airwaves an important aspect to help create ISA. It is noteworthy that music reflects society's concerns as a whole and because of its appeal it is viewed by those in power as having instrumental power, in essence music can be used for propaganda purposes to maintain the status quo in power, to propagate the ideology of the ruling elite. Music has served to project reality as seen by the ruling elite in this case Robert Mugabe and ZANU (PF). Perhaps because of Zimbabwe history and war of liberation, music and politics will always be linked and whoever is in power will use music to garner support for their policies, cultivate the cult of personality and control the airwaves to establish ISA.

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