

**SINGING THE ZIMBABWEAN NATION: NATIONALISM, LANDSCAPES OF  
MEMORY AND THE STATE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The paper analyses how landscapes of memory and collective history are captured and acted out through performance and singing of the national anthem in Zimbabwe. It observes that through the lyrics, motifs and symbols, the nation-state's history is frozen and captured through music, melody, lyrics and harmony. The past is not only memorialised, remembered but it is performed and remembered every day. The present is also remembered, so is the future and in the process unites all that perform it. Through music and song, the state is sacralised; its unity, beauty, the war of liberation and crucially the blood of those that literally and metaphorically sacrificed their lives for the nation-state.*

**Key Words:** national anthem, national pride, nationalism, memorialisation

**Introduction**

When Cecil John Rhodes's British South Africa Company (BSAC) colonised the land of Zimbabwe, the settler colony adopted 'God Save the Queen' as the national anthem. Colonialism turned the African into a subject of the British Empire and the Queen, and this process was visible in that the African subject paid homage to the Queen and Empire completing not only the political and economic imperialism and subjugation but also the soul of African nationalism had been conquered as the African had to pay homage through song to the colonisers. The move towards the decolonisation of Africa following the end of the Second World War witnessed the British Empire granting independence to a number of its former colonies in the 1960s. This was disconcerting to the right-wing elements of Southern Rhodesia who on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1965 unilaterally declared independence from Britain and proclaimed Southern Rhodesia as

independent and sovereign. Though 'God Save the Queen' remained the national anthem, Rhodesians began searching for a new anthem and following the declaration of Rhodesia as a Republic in March 1970. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1974 Rhodesia adopted a new anthem whose melody was based on Ludwig van Beethoven's 'The Fourth Movement'. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 1974 following a competition to write lyrics to accompany the melody, Mary Bloom's lyrics were adopted and Rhodesia's national anthem became 'Voices of Rhodesia.' The two-tier settler economy where the race dominated and informed politics, economy and society, the national anthem was embraced by Rhodesian nationalists. Upon the attainment of independence on the 18th of April 1980, Zimbabwe adopted a new name for the country dropping off 'Rhodesia' in favour of the indigenous and African 'Zimbabwe' harkening back to one of the great African state of Great Zimbabwe, it adopted a new national flag with socialist aspirations seen through the red star, the Zimbabwe bird which was sacred in Great Zimbabwe, the Pan-Africanist colours of red, green, black, yellow, coat of arms and new currency as a symbol of asserting her independence from colonial rule and domination. The new nation-state adopted new national symbols such as a new constitution, parliament, national monuments such as museums which told the Zimbabwean story, a national day known as independence day, national holidays such as Heroes Day, roads named after some of the heroes and heroines of the liberation war, , national oath of office, a new national army, the Zimbabwe bird, Chimurenga music, a national motto , a national sports stadium, a heroes acre which is a shrine where the gallant heroes and heroines, those that sacrificed their lives for the independence of the nation-state lie buried. Some Rhodesian symbols such as the coat of arms, public holidays which celebrated and the exploits and kept the memory of Rhodesian history and conquest such as Founders day, Rhodes day, Pioneer's day, took down the statues of colonialists such as Cecil John Rhodes, Leander Starr Jameson, street names, and place names were also changed to reflect the nationalist vision of the newly independent Zimbabwe. However, there was a missing piece to the nationalist puzzle; state-a truly Zimbabwean national anthem.

The new national anthem was not easily embraced by Rhodesian whites who felt that it was exclusionary, one notes how the adoption of a new national anthem to replace 'Voices of Rhodesia' meant that the national anthem emerged as a site of struggle, a site and space for

national reconfiguration of ideas, aspirations, a reconfiguration of the notion of nationhood, Zimbabweanness and Rhodesianness. There were tensions between the formerly privileged Rhodesians who felt that the Rhodesian experience and memory which had dominated the landscape for ninety-odd years was being replaced and erased from the national psyche. On the other hand, ‘Voices of Rhodesia’ had been written in praise of white Rhodesia, advancing through music, landscape and lyrics white, right-wing Rhodesian nationalism which was exclusionary and based upon race and the colour bar. By the same token, a case could be made that the new nationalist government through the new national anthem and various national symbols which were being employed to construct a new national identity were equally as exclusionary as the Rhodesians.

In April 1980 when Zimbabwe’s flag was raised and the colonial Union Jack’s sun set, Zimbabwe was greeted with chords of the national anthem *Ishekomborera Africa, Nkosi sikeleli Africa*. This was the de facto nationalist and pan Africanist anthem which was sung across a swathe of African nation-states. However, this song, though pan-African in nature and content, its main reference was reflected in its title where Zimbabwe is not mentioned as a nation-state. In fact, the lyrics to *Ishekomborera Africa* did not make any reference to Zimbabwe as a nation-state at all. By not making reference to Zimbabwe by name, one may hazard the thought that there was a key ingredient missing in symbolising the nation-state. National symbols are important markers in imagining the nation-state and in understanding nationalism.

The rationale for this study is based largely on the paucity of scholarly works and literature that examine symbols of nation-state in Zimbabwe. This is an under-researched area in Zimbabwe which needs further exploration. The paper aims to forge an academic pathway in opening new avenues of exploring and understanding Zimbabwean nationalism through the study of symbols, two of them in the public domain, whereas the other though private has also become public. To fill this lacuna, the paper offers an examination how the national anthem has been used as a tool to create or attempt to create a homogenous Zimbabwean nation-state. The paper’s innovation lies in that in its consideration of symbols and the nation-state, analyses official symbols such as the national anthem and party-nation-state symbols such as the national pledge. By examining these symbols the paper argues that the national anthem far from being a national song belonging

to the nation-state and the imagined national community, it is in fact a political, party-biography song capturing and presenting the official narrative, vision of the head of state, his party and above all his convictions on how Zimbabwe should be and its sense of history. These symbols have within them an undercurrent of the cult of personality, hidden in a subtle manner within the song.

This study contributes to and extends the field of national symbols, nationalism and politics in Zimbabwe by examining how belonging, identity, space has been shaped through the ideological apparatuses of the national anthem and national pledge. We begin by a brief overview of previous scholarship on national symbols in Zimbabwe demonstrating the gaps that previous studies have failed to fill. We further suggest that an understanding of national symbols is best achieved through employing constructive symbolism and critical discourse analysis as theoretical lens. This is on the basis that national identity is constructed through symbols and a careful sifting and selection of language is needed to convey precisely the kind of message the political status quo so desire. The central postulate presented in this paper is that national symbols have been fundamental strategies of the ruling party in Zimbabwe to (re)organise and create or manufacture ideological and historical consent around issues and figures. Our argument is premised upon the study of the national anthem and national pledge, the reason is firstly, both represent the vision and ideas of Zimbabwe, whereas there was a ‘competition’ for the national anthem, there was no such process for the national pledge. This provides an interesting counterpoint as it were, the national pledge is the latest symbol of the ruling party to be introduced, we are still witnessing how the party uses and will appropriate symbols in an attempt to create ideological and historic hegemony.

The authors used verbatim Zimbabwe’s national anthem capturing its lyrics in all the three languages. The national anthem was written in three languages, these are the official languages. Originally, the anthem was first written in Shona which is the dominant linguistic group, be that as it may, we are cognisant that there are various Shona dialects such as ChiManyika, Karanga, Korekore, Zezuru to name but a few, we therefore use the term Shona in a generic sense. As of now, the national anthem has not been translated into some of Zimbabwe’s national languages which are in the minority. The national pledge likewise was used verbatim, it is available in the

public domain therefore accessing it was not a big issue. Documents on the 21st February Movement on the other hand have relied largely on a sample of newspaper articles based on interviews and stories run towards the day.

The article proceeds as follows: it starts off by placing the national anthem, in nationalist discourse and the official narrative. This is followed by a discussion on the theoretical underpinning which is informed by Hobsbawn's invention of tradition and symbolic constructivism. Thereafter is a discussion of national identity through the prism of the national anthem before concluding remarks.

### **Symbolic Nationalism and Landscapes of Memory in Zimbabwe's National anthem**

A nation-state has a plethora of symbols used to identify and set it apart as unique from other nation-states. Hobsbawn (1983:11) writes "the National Flag, the Nation Anthem and the National Emblem are the three symbols through which an independent country proclaims its identity and sovereignty, and as such they command instantaneous respect and loyalty." A nation's identity is important, and a national anthem is one of the most important identity markers. The tune, lyrics, music make it unique, giving it a distinct identity different from any other nation-state. True, Zimbabwe was committed to national liberation of all African states, it was committed to African nationalism, but its identity as a nation-state was also important for the anthem was to be an expression of what it means to be Zimbabwean. It captures the essence of Zimbabweanness, the aspirations of the nation-state, the character of the state, its history and in essence is a celebration of the nation-state. However, national anthems are carefully 'selected' in order to ensure that they truly reflect the national aspirations real and imagined of the nation-state. In a word, the national anthem can be read and analysed as reflecting the ideas and ideals of those in power and authority. A national anthem evokes a spirit of patriotic fervour, nationalism and a sense of belonging to the nation-state. Singing the national anthem is a solemn declaration, a promise where one declares their loyalty, demonstrate patriotism, devotion, allegiance and also celebrate being a member of the national community and a citizen of the country. In 1994, Zimbabwe adopted a new national anthem 'NgaikomborerweNyikayeZimbabwe or 'Kalibusiswe' LizweleZimbabwe' which in English is

‘Blessed be the Land of Zimbabwe.’ The national lyrics to the national anthem were penned by one of the country’s finest literary geniuses and a revered nationalist writer, Professor Solomon Mutsvairo who had also penned a popular Shona novel ‘Feso’ which was about Zimbabwe’s the liberation war, whereas the music score was composed by Fred Lecture Changundega.

The importance of the national anthem can never be underscored. It is sung and performed at state functions, state occasions such as national days, national holidays, inauguration of the President, international sporting events such as the Olympics games, international football matches, state visits, school assembly and therefore serves as a window to communicate and showcase to the rest of the world and the people themselves, the national aspirations, and the country’s history and national identity. By not having her own song, by not singing her own song, she was singing and dancing to that of others. National anthems therefore are an expression of a nation-state’s uniqueness, they capture and reveal its aspirations, experiences, the road and journey that has been travelled towards becoming a nation-state and it is an expression of nationalism and nationalist fervour.

The national anthem valourises, praises, worships and pays homage to the nation-state. The state as an object of praise, respect and worship is seen as eternal, worthy to be defended, an institution that is sacred it is one’s duty to lay down their life for the state. By joining in unison to sing the national anthem, the ‘imagined community’ are in a way engaged in a semi-religious ritual that is akin to partaking of a holy sacrament where the central object of worship and reverence is the state. The anthem serves the purpose of uniting the diverse groups that have been divided; these divisions could be linguistic, political, ideological, geographic, regional and social. Through the national anthem, the state exists not just as an abstract idea, but as a concrete and somewhat tangible entity. The state through the lyrics of the national anthem exists in the past, the present and the future; it unites those that have gone before, the departed with those living in the present and those who are yet to be born. The ideals and ideas expressed in the national anthem transcend both time and space, conveying a sense of national identity and nationalism amongst the; imagined community.’

National anthems reflect the ideas, ideologies and vision of the elite in power. The national anthem then serves the purpose of rallying the imagined community towards accepting the ideas and vision of those in power as being the vision of the entire community. Anthems such as Zimbabwe's are both 'inward looking and outward looking', they shape and advance a self-conceptualisation of what the Zimbabwean nation-state is, its virtues and at the same time creates and conjures up images of the 'other' that is the imperial other who was defeated and is both remembered and forgotten through the national anthem. The colonialists are remembered, not fondly, but the remembrance is about the valour and bravery of those that defeated the colonialists, therefore what is being celebrated and reinforced are the actions of those that fought to liberate and create the nation-state. Central to the creation of the nation-state was the ideology which the fighters carried and this was shaped by the elites.

Cerulo (2008:46) 'national anthems are also known as national hymns, songs of praise not to God, but to the nation, which is often treated as some kind of lesser God, certainly a sacred entity.'

A national anthem can then be read as a disciplinary tool which whips into line deviants, even those who may not be supportive of the political status quo or its ideology. It therefore captures and transmits their political ideology and worldview which the nation-state then embraces as their own. Viewed this way, a national anthem is consciously and deliberately constructed, its lyrics sifted, its message controlled by those in power, so that it reflects their vision as the ruling class. Zimbabwe's national anthem was written by Solomon Mutsaers who beat off other writers and lyricists to pen the national song. What this implies and suggests is that there was more than one version and vision of Zimbabwe as various songs which were submitted for consideration all presented the writer's version of Zimbabwe. That their songs did not win suggests that Mutsaers's version and vision was close to that which the ruling party and political elite were more comfortable with. This would imply that national anthems are a political construct, a form of political communication, and in its own right a genre on its own. Apart from this, a national anthem can be regarded as a historic construct calling forth the kindred, kin and kith to rally behind the nation-state. The lyrics to the national anthem link both pictorial visual symbols and abstract symbols to create national identity and attempt to build social cohesion within the

nation-state community. Nationalism and a national identity continue to dominate political discourse in independent Zimbabwe. Nationalism and national sovereignty were one of the rallying points and cries during the country's war of liberation. During the bitter war of attrition between the nationalist movements and the Rhodesians, music was one of the means of keeping and maintain the spirits of the fighters and served to imagine a new liberated nation-state.

The paper seeks to unpack how nationhood has been symbolised since Zimbabwe's independence. This will be achieved through the prism of the national anthem and an analysis of the national pledge. Broadly, the paper answers the question, 'How does the national anthem convey or the nationalist narrative of the past and a vision of and for Zimbabwe?'

### **Symbolic Construction of National Anthems**

National anthem belong to the state, they are for the state and are by the state. Kelen (2015: 48) 'an anthem is the people's poem, not by virtue of mere popularity, but because it has the sanction of the state.' The national anthem is not merely performance, celebration or spectacle, it is ideological and serves a political socialisation process. National anthems reflect the beliefs, worldview and ideology of the state. It often reflects the ideology of the state and the ruling elite, it can be understood as part of what Althusser (1971) terms Ideological State Apparatus. For instance, the Zimbabwean national anthem buttresses the ideology of Africanism. The national anthem as a symbol is important to the nation-state as it communicates the ideas and ideals of the state. Huntington (1996) reinforces this idea noting the importance of community symbols to the nation, migrants, and different ethnic groups within a state. The national anthem is one important community symbol through which a complex web of rituals, worship, and pledge of allegiance to the nation-state is exercised or visible. The national anthem may be viewed as a leitmotif and possibly one of the most important symbols of nation-state identity alongside the national flag. It may be regarded as the 'pillar of nationhood' (Eriksen, 2006:2), thereby rendering it a potent and powerful symbol of national identity. Its musical chords, lyrics and the voices of a people singing or going up in one voice despite political differences, ideological schism, ethnic and racial differences may generate and elicit a strong sense of identity and belonging as their voices go out in song. Kelen (2015: 49) 'the performance of an anthem-



national or anthem or otherwise-is an identity-focussed instance of unison. When people sing their anthem together they should strongly feel the distinct specialness of their identity-in-common.’ The anthem then represents a group or collective spiritual experience where identities are constructed, reconstructed or imagined (Anderson, 1991).

A national anthem is an expression of the nation as well as its identity. It is a way of the nation-state’s self-conceptualisation of itself and a way of imagining and representing itself. It is an expression of nationalism and national identity. It captures the experiences of that brought the nation-state into being. Further to that, the national anthem, performed in the public sphere is a ceremony or stage where public worship of the nation-state and its ancestors and founders takes place. It is the national official song where an act of worship, a call to loyalty, remembrance, allegiance and a public affirmation of national identity, patriotism and a collective national identity is expressed. In a word, the national anthem is the national language of the nation-state. The national anthem is a product and creation of various factors and forces, these range from the nation-state’s historical experiences, circumstances leading to the birth of the state, political culture, political ideology, political leadership and even the international system. There may be different languages, ethnic groups, different regions, contending political ideologies, but the national anthem brings all these contending forces and energies together under the emblem of the nation-state. A national anthem is the nation-state’s official national song that is sung during official state occasions, it is an emblem of a nation-state, an insignia of a nation-state’s hopes, dreams, aspirations, it is a repository and depository of the nation-state’s past, recalling and reliving the pangs of birth which brought it into existence, , exhorting its triumphs. National anthems project a message, a political and social message; it is a way of making disciples of the populace and in a sense leading them to worship at the altar of the nation-state and those that are in power as the ruling class.

A national anthem may be read as a symbol through which the nation is indirectly worshipped (Spillman, 1997) where all citizens congregate at the altar of the nation-state to pay homage and allegiance to it. In the same vein, Durkheim (1976: 427) writing on religion and symbols notes that:

There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and collective ideas which make its unity and its personality...this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their sentiments; hence come ceremonies which do not differ from regular religious ceremonies, either in their object, the results which they produce, or, the processes employed to attain these results.

Durkheim's observation is equally applicable to understanding national symbols such as the anthem. The nation anthem therefore serves as a means of ensuring collective identity, collective memory as well as renewing the allegiance of individuals and their commitment to the nation-state and those in power. There is a sobriety, sombreness, a reflective, reverent sense and tone and mood when the national anthem is sung or performed similar to that found in a religious service. Therefore, the worship is at three levels, the nation-state, the ruling party and the national flag or national ceremonies where the anthem is performed. By the same token, we see the power and authority of the ruling elite who are able to discipline the populace and inculcate their ideology and sense of reality through the national anthem.

One of the striking aspects of the Zimbabwean national anthem is its religious undertones. This is however not unique to Zimbabwe as anthems generally have a religious background to them. The anthem is a plea, petition, supplication and prayer to God to bless and protect the land of Zimbabwe. It acknowledges His supremacy over the sovereign people and the natural resources which endow the country.

Nkosi sikeleli' Africa

Maluphakanyisu' dumolwayo

Izwaimithandazoyethu

Nkosi sikeleli

Thina

UsaphoLwayo

Lyrics to Nkosi Sikeleli Africa

O lift high the banner, the flag of Zimbabwe SimudzaimurezaweduweZimbabwe

The symbol of freedom proclaiming victory Yakazvarwanemotowechimurenga;

We praise our heroes' sacrifice, Neropazhinjiremagamba

And vow to keep our land from foes; Tiidzvirirekubvakumhandudzose;

Blessed be the land of Zimbabwe. NgaikomborerwenyikayeZimbabwe.

O lovely Zimbabwe, so wondrously adorned Tarisai Zimbabwe Nyika

With mountains and rivers cascading, flowing free; yakashongedzwa

May rain abound and fertile field; Namakomo, nehova, zvinoyevedza;

And may the Almighty protect and bless our land. Mvurangainaye, mindaipembesa

Vashandivatuswe, ruzhinji,

ruzhinjirugutswe;

NgaikomborerwenyikayeZimbabwe.

O God, we beseech Thee to bless our native land; MwaripafadzainyikayeZimbabwe

The land of our fathers bestowed upon us all; Nyikayamadzitateguruedutose;

From Zambezi to Limpopo; Kubva Zambezi kusvika Limpopo;

May leaders be exemplary; Navatungamirivavenenduramo;

And may the Almighty protect and bless our land. NgaikomborerwenyikayeZimbabwe.

## **1 Lyrics to Zimbabwe's National anthem**

Zimbabwe's national anthem is a cross between 'the tableau' and 'the prayer-song' (Kelen, 2015: 50). The grandeur and beauty of Zimbabwe is expressed and at the same time God as the deity is implored to show favour, mercy and smile upon Zimbabwe and bless it. The tableau is an anthem communicating a picture of a great or worthy nation, whereas the prayer-song is a plea sent to deity to protect and bless the nation (Kelen, 2015). The physical landscapes and the geographic grandeur and splendour of the nation are also celebrated within the national anthem. The anthem paints a tapestry and kaleidoscope of Zimbabwe's physical features, these are celebrated. This is not done to take people through a physical geography lesson but serves mythologising function setting the nation apart as unique in the wider world.

An important characteristic of the national anthem is that it creates shapes and reinforces the idea of landscapes of memory. Remembrance and memorialisation of how the state was born, birthed and came into being is a major theme that runs throughout the anthem. For Zimbabwe, the sacrifice of the liberation fighters is made central in Zimbabwe's history and its foundation. It seeks to remind the populace that Zimbabwe was born following supreme sacrifice of blood by the freedom fighters. The idea of a useable past is easily evoked as the past demonstrates the connections between the past, present and future, the past reminding Zimbabweans of the history not only of subjugation but how freedom was attained through the sacrifice of blood, how the heroes and heroines of the struggle gave up their present so that future generations could live in freedom from colonial bondage and rule. The national anthem therefore in that respect serves a trinitarian function of employing history in the present and connecting the various generations of Zimbabweans together as a family. This is gleaned in the evocation of the ancestors of the land and connecting them with the present.

Furthermore, the importance and significance of blood and blood-sacrifice cannot be ignored. Blood sacrifices are common in both western and African religions; it is believed that a true sacrifice is one that involves the shedding of blood. Here there is a religious parallel with the bible where the sign of supreme sacrifice and love is symbolised through the shedding of blood. The sacrifices of the liberation fighters are likened to that of Jesus Christ sacrificing Himself for

humanity as suggested by the bible in the gospels. The first line where the flag and its banner has to be raised also has religious connotations based on the bible and this has a resemblance to the first line found in the Rhodesian national anthem. This idea brings to one to imagine the nation-state as being sacred, holy and with religious connotations which make it worthy to be served, worshipped, praised and glorified. Therefore, despite the seeming differences between the two anthems of Rhodesia and independent Zimbabwe, the themes and motifs of landscape, memory, geographical praise of the land and appeals to God run through both anthems. The shedding of Jesus's blood occurred as he was hoisted and raised up, therefore the lifting high of the banner of the flag which has been a result of bloodshed is symbolic of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ whose blood according to Christian theology and teaching cleanses and saves humanity. The blood and hoisting motif are not surprising when one considers that Solomon Mutswairo was a Christian, therefore the use of Christian symbolism and motifs is hardly surprising on the part of the lyricist who was a member of the Salvation Army. Furthermore, the religious tenor and undertones is hardly surprising, Zimbabwe is an avowedly Christian nation, which is the official religion in the country. The stanza and anthem as a whole also show a mixture or combination of nationalism and religion which would suggest, this would then imply that nationalism and its symbol the national anthem is a form of religion. There is a certain decorum which borders on the religious, sacredness and reverence which are observable when the national anthem is being sung.

The idea of sacrifice by those that fought in the war of liberation is encapsulated in the national anthem. By implication those who died fighting for the liberation of the country and those that fought to bring independence are indirectly worshipped in the national anthem. This echoes the idea of totemism espoused by Emile Durkheim (1976) suggesting then that the national anthem is akin to a ritual where the nation is called into congregate before the nation-state and the political establishment. The first and last stanzas show a link between the present and the past. This echoes Hobsbawm (1983) idea of invented tradition where new rituals were created in order to nurture loyalty, identification with the nation and garnering support for the political status quo. The national anthem's lyrics echo this idea as reference to the past is made, this includes the liberation war which valorises the liberation fighters as courageous, brave, fearless, qualities

which won the struggle and by the same token traits which Zimbabwean ought to possess. History is also evoked in the last stanza where the nation's pre-colonial past, its ancestors are called forth, recalling somewhat the earlier nation-states and empires such as Great Zimbabwe, Mutapa, Rozvi, Ndebele states which existed before colonial intrusion. By so doing, the ruling party, which has always prided itself as nationalist, claims the past, present and future as their own, they identify themselves with the pre-colonial past of the ancestors, then the past when the struggle against the colonialists takes place, and then the present future which all kin and kith have to congregate round the symbols and national rituals as represented by the national anthem. This gives the ruling elite legitimacy within the nation, re-asserts their claim as nationalists and this is done by using the past, the war and in the process creating landscapes of historical memory and constructing a nationalist narrative.

The war of liberation retains a special place for the political establishment; it is part of Zimbabwe's legacy. Its importance is evident in the national anthem which serves to evoke historical memory of the war of liberation and the role played by the liberators and the ruling party. The first stanza encapsulates this idea as it reveals that war was the midwife and locomotive which brought the nation-state into being. One of the crucial narratives buttressed by the Zimbabwean anthem is the centrality of the liberation war to the consciousness and existence of the nation-state. By singing the anthem, the people are reminded of the nation-state's past and by extension the debt owed to the ruling elite within the Zimbabwean nation-state. This is achieved through the constant reminder or motif of the liberation war which is appropriated to the ruling party and by extension the anthem is the vision and expression of the ruling party's version of history and aspirations. The national anthem plays a pivotal role in the national consciousness of a nation-state as it has an instrumental function within the nation-state, serving to socialise and inculcate official history and a collective political and historic consciousness.

In addition, the first stanza also suggests the call for every kindred nation to defend the nation, not just physically by taking arms but also metaphorically. National aspirations and by extension its leadership should also be defended. There is an exhortation to defend the country from its enemies this is made this is evident in line four of the original lyrics which are in the vernacular Shona. The significance of this line for the ruling party has perhaps become more marked

beginning around the year 1999 when the labour based Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) began to challenge Zanu PF's political hegemony. The ruling Zanu PF party framed and presented political opposition as imperialist agents of the West and puppets of the West who were therefore enemies of the state.

The national anthem brands the nation showing its distinctiveness. Cusack (2005) submits that national anthems are pivotal in national indoctrination and the branding of the flock. One gets a sense of political and national mobilisation where the flock is being ushered or encouraged to follow the leadership. Official historic narrative concerning Zimbabwe stresses the liberation war and that the youth and nation at large should never forget the role and sacrifice made by the war veterans who sacrificed so that the populace may enjoy freedom and liberation. The national anthem plays an important role in historicising the war of liberation, brings into remembrance and memory the centrality of the war to the Zimbabwean national psyche, reverence and respect for the founding fathers and mothers of Zimbabwe, acknowledging the role played by the liberation fighters to secure the nation's freedom, the debt which the nation and the young owe to those that fought in the war, those that gave up their lives, their todays so that the future could be bright for the unborn. The people are reminded that the country's birth and independence were a result of the barrel of the gun, a protracted war of liberation and attrition, by extension the flag, the country and what it stands for or rather the ideals of those that went before should be defended against enemies of the state. The national anthem also reiterates that Zimbabwe is a Christian State where the Biblical God watches and serves as the protector and source of all that is good and the blessings that hallow the country's way.

National anthems use the border rivers to demarcate the physical geography within which the nation exists. Zambezi and Limpopo are the two rivers that encircle and demarcate the geographic location of the country. To anyone who may not know about the country, the mention of the two rivers enables one to locate the country. The country's natural environment and landscape is praised and exalted within the national anthem. Geographic spaces, iconography and physical landscapes are celebrated in the national anthem. This is not unique to Zimbabwe but it adds a sense of exceptionalism to the nation-state and the geographic features and landscapes are celebrated as being unique to Zimbabwe. The rivers of Zambezi and Limpopo, majestic

mountains, as well as the rich landscape in the vicinity of the country are celebrated as wondrous, marvellous and unique. A form of geographically informed nationalism is visible in the national anthem as it speaks to the issues of space, and indirectly the expropriation of space by the colonialists which has been reclaimed in no small measure through the bravery and valour of the liberators. Zimbabweans and the rest of the world are urged or exhorted to ‘look’ at how beautiful Zimbabwe is. Citizens are urged to appreciate how beautiful Zimbabwe is. The anthem also captures that the country is endowed with natural resources, it is abound with land, minerals, flora and fauna and these have been bequeathed to Zimbabwe by God. One notes how the song moves from being a plea and a prayer to God, towards an instruction to the performers, the populace urging and instructing it to guard jealously the land, not just physically or literally but metaphorically.

The national anthem exudes and expresses joy, happiness and pride in the nation-state. Looking at the context, the anthem expresses and captures the rebirth of the nation-state and asserts the unique nature and feature of Zimbabwe as a nation-state. Prior to the new anthem, Zimbabwe was using ‘nkosisikeleli Africa’ which was then translated into the Shona as ‘Ishekomborerera Africa.’ This was the spiritual anthem of a number of African nation-states and arguably did not quite capture the Zimbabwean story and experience

## **Conclusion**

National symbols carry a symbolic meaning and play an instrumental and memorialisation role within the state as they are meant to help forge and create a sense of community within the imagined community. The national anthem also spoke to issues of space as seen through the colonial encounter, the colonial experience, conceptions of place particularly the issue of land appropriation, the conceptions of ‘being’ Zimbabwean in a newly independent state meant that a re-identification or re-assertion of national identity was needed. The national anthem provides insight into these struggles of creating and fostering the Zimbabwean nation. Through singing of the national anthem, playing or hearing the national anthem the imagined community joins in the take part in the ritualization and worship of the state as they pledge allegiance to its values and ideals. Central is the issue of the founding and establishment of the nation-state, the role of



national heroes and heroines, the centrality and veneration of the liberation war within the nation-state. The national anthem seeks to bring to remembrance the values of the nation-state as well as to create and reinforce an awareness of the past and create a national ethos and identity. Benediction entreating blessings and mercies of God is a motif and recurring theme throughout the national anthem of Zimbabwe. This is noted in all the three stanzas where the last line in each stanza ends with a plea beseeching God to bless Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the symbol discussed in the paper demonstrate an attempt to create not just an imagined community, but a nation-state with an identity, an identity informed and forged by the ideas and philosophy of the ruling party and its vision and understanding of history and the forces which birthed Zimbabwe.

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