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Mission Impossible? Social Movement(s) and Prospects for Emancipatory Rural Politics in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Zimbabwe is often described as one African country that has made remarkable strides in terms of the socio-economic empowerment of the indigenous people, from victory in the liberation war to land reform and to an indigenization and economic empowerment law. The latter's touted main objective was to purportedly alleviate the plight of the poor indigenous majority by addressing economic imbalances which saw the minority control the economy. Nevertheless, a deeper introspection of the actuality obtaining especially in the countryside points to a situation of an abandoned revolution or a country in a counter-revolutionary mode. We explore the role of social movements in the achievement of emancipatory rural politics in Zimbabwe. We focused on Zimbabwe Yadzoka Zvakare (loosely translated it means Zimbabwe has been revived) a social movement that is increasingly engaging in the agitation against authoritarianism in the countryside. The countryside is heterogeneous; to show this dissimilarity in the historical, socio economic classes, age, gender composition we draw our studies from two different sites in the district of Mutoko. The first site is a 'new' rural area that was formed after the fast track land reform, the second study site is a traditional "old" rural area that was established before independence and has now metamorphosed into a rural business center. Through the data generated from the two sites, we argue that prospects for emancipatory rural politics in Zimbabwe exist albeit differently from one rural site to another based on a number of factors. These factors include but are not limited to, area specific factors; social movement acceptance, economic activities, demographics, history of the area/how the people got settled in the area, ruling party ideology acceptance/hegemony, access to resources such as land, traditional leadership, government service provision/patronage depth, and movement specific factors; resources, mobilization techniques. The paper interrogates the following questions, how does ZYMIz mobilizes against authoritarianism; by utilizing social media which is ordinarily hard to police as well as using door to door tactics and taking advantage of community gatherings and events. Additionally, this research explores how the peasants in Mutoko exercise their agency in confronting oppression, what has ZIMYZ achieved, what are the challenges it faces, and whether the post Mugabe political dispensation brought any changes in the arena of emancipatory rural politics especially with regards to the role and operations of social movements? We pay attention to current conjectures; impending national election, the new Zimbabwe political landscape ushered in by the resigning under pressure of Robert Mugabe who was at the helm of Zimbabwean politics for 37 years and subsequent leadership change in ZANUPF.

Keywords: hegemony; emancipatory politics; social movement; authoritarianism; populism; Zimbabwe

1 Setting the Scene: Zimbabwean State and Politics

Zimbabwe is no different from the majority of African states that are generally classified as hybrids, that is, “blend of informal and formal institutional-democratic and authoritarian tendency” (Alex de Waal and Ibreck, 2013). Zimbabwe holds frequent elections in accordance with the constitution, has seen power alternating at the parliamentary level, at large internally within Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) since independence and from the turn of the millennium, which saw the advent of the opposition, parliamentary power dynamics shifted. Until November 2017 post-colonial Zimbabwe had largely known the rule of Robert Mugabe at presidential level who was elected and reelected through periodic and constitutional elections which from a point of view was a democratically disguised breed of dictatorship, (Brooker, 2014). Analyzing the state is difficult for states are moving targets (Jessop, 2008). However, here we offer an attempt to uncover some of the key features of the state, for the state is not a black box (Byres, 1995). ZANU-PF adopted a Marxist-Leninist stance during the liberation and to this day, some of the official discourses and policies still have elements of Marxism. However, it is important to note that some scholars argue that the party and the state is no longer Marxist for it is now riddled with reformism (Slyvester, 1990). The reformism is manifested in the fact that official policies and programs deviate from Marxist-Leninist dimension whose fulcrum is the empowerment of workers and peasants.

The state adopted structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that are essentially a neoliberal project that debases the poor. After SAPS the state went into an empowerment drive, implemented a land reform that *prima facie* gave land to the poor, this was considered a noble move by some pan Africanist segments of society. The foregoing however attracted considerable debate on whether it was utilitarianism in action in favor of the poor majority, if it was wealth amassing by the political elite hiding behind the thin shroud of mass empowerment, or if it was reactionary political tact by a panicking government, which did not know how to handle an increasingly popular opposition movement. Ironically, the same land beneficiaries are being overtaxed by the state when they sell their tobacco and not paid in full for the same. When they demand their dues, the state uses coercive force against the peasants in the form of anti-riot police; the state is seemingly not embarrassed to take with the left hand what it gave with the right hand. Additionally, the state has not invested enough to develop rural infrastructure, rampant corruption has seen the little dedicated resources being pocketed by corrupt politicians and officials, for example, the district development fund was always a subject of controversy until funds allocated to it dried up without being properly accounted for. In short, the state of affairs significantly mirrors a state of affairs prevalent during the colonial times.

The situation can be summed up as repeat of 1965, characterized by bureaucratic control over monetary, fiscal and infrastructural institutions and censorship of media, during colonial times colonial authorities denied equal citizenships and rights to government critics (Kagoro, 2010; Slyvester, 1990). Two views emerge to explain this state of affairs, first is a blaming of the state of affairs to historical epochs ‘a dysfunctional transition from colonial rule’ (Moyo, 1993; Kagoro, 2010) and the second, crisis of leadership and followership (Kagoro, 2010). Whatever the cause of the predicament the fact remaining is that post-colonial Zimbabwe introduced closure to rural demands, this is happening at both the ruling party and opposition party sides (Moyo and Yeros, 2005). As such, rural people are enduring the bulk of marginalization and exploitation from inconsiderate policies.

A key point to note is that for the past 37 years the state has been gravitating towards being a totalitarian regime, something that the post 21 November regime is seemingly trying to divorce itself from. A totalitarian regime is characterized by three main elements; the use of ideology to substitute reality, bureaucracy that is ruled by technical efficiency and no accountability and terror (Feuchtwang and Shah, 2015). Violence is used to enforce the ideology and bureaucracy; brutality is seen as legitimate and deserved. Totalitarian regimes can also be denoted by use of populism. To explain the concept of authoritarian populism Stuart Hall (1979) in his seminal article ‘*The Great Moving Right Show*’ argues that an authoritarian populist regime is characterized by “a striking weakening of democratic forms and initiatives, but not their suspension”. In populist stance, nationalism is emphasized over globalization, economic projects are based upon personal ties between leader and

masses, clientelism is a hallmark, there is robust implementation of policies of redistribution, disregard for the constitution and illegal influences on the judiciary (Scoones et.al, 2017; Petkovski, 2015).

Populism is not new in Zimbabwe, it became part of the official stance, and in short populist announcements form part of the state apparatus for instance the implementation of the Indigenization and Empowerment Act of 2010 that was aimed at cession of 51% of the stakes in foreign owned businesses to indigenous Zimbabweans. Populism has limited long-term benefits, but serves to appease the wishes of the majority in the short term. A case in point was the run up to 2013 election, the government scrapped water and electricity bills for urban voters in an effort to win the urban votes. To this day, urban municipalities are struggling with their fiscus and struggling to provide services as a result of lost revenue. As such through populism, the wish of the majority is regarded as democracy (Petkovski, 2015). This is trampling of democracy hence at times populism is regarded as illiberal democracy (ibid). The question that then arises is how do social movements navigate this hurdle of authoritarian populism or how do community mobilization work against or resist oppression and exploitation in rural Zimbabwe? In Mutoko district in Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe Yadzoka Zvakare (ZYMIZ) is mobilizing peasants to resist authoritarian populism.

2 Zimbabwe Yadzoka Zvakare

Zimbabwe Yadzoka/Mayibuye iZimbabwe (ZYMIZ) a social movement was formed on 5 August 2016. Essentially social movements are engaged in collective action or activities with clearly identified opponents, members share a collective identity (Batliwala, 2012; Christiansen, 2009; Dela Porta and Diani, 2006). It is led by a youthful Zimbabwean Dr. Victor Chimhutu, a public health and development academic who teaches at a university in Norway. He regularly travels to Zimbabwe to meet and participate in the movement's activities. The movement's membership is composed of youth, the handicapped, women, men, the employed and unemployed though the unemployed constitute the majority. The movement claims to have fluid structures in all the 77 political districts of Zimbabwe. In each district, it has a bona fide ZYMIZ representative. Above them, the movement has provincial coordinators and two national coordinators (of which one is currently active). The membership for Zimbabwe Yadzoka Zvakare is open to all races, age, class; they have some members in the diaspora (South Africa, Europe, North America and Australia) and in many parts of Zimbabwe. The movement recruits members by openly appealing to members of the public who identify with its cause that is, fighting against underdevelopment, authoritarianism and targeting to achieve progressive social change (Roy, 1995). Prima facie, contemporary social movements can be viewed as counter hegemony agents in their organized dissent against the existing order (Carroll and Ratner, 2010). In this regard, social movements become the pivot of processes driving social change and ultimately social order.

In order to steer social change ZYMIZ adopts a number of strategies, which are fashioned according to the unique needs of particular areas. As noted by their national coordinator, "*Recognizing that different rural areas have different challenges when it comes to penetration, which is why it is imperative for strategies to be localized*". The goal of ZIMYZ is that it fights for the community to be emancipated from an authoritarian ZANU-PF regime and other elites that control most facets of the community. To this end the activities of ZYMIZ can be classified as emancipatory politics (EP) that is political activities that are aimed at ending exploitation and enhancing participatory democracy, through which leadership is held to account on a daily as well as periodic basis (Feuchtwang and Shah, 2015). It is the comprehension of the regressive act or the process and how to move towards the achievement of progressive society (Feuchtwang and Shah, 2015; Scoones et al., 2017). The movement therefore is largely dependent on local knowledge and the modus operandi takes into account the need to bolster participatory democracy at grassroots level as well as increase the capacity of the ordinary rural dwellers to hold leaders accountable.

Ideologically, the movement mixes liberal and leftist ideas. In the former the movement believes there should be equal rights and justice and a free and fair election is the way to uprooting authoritarianism. In the latter the movement believes that the peasants and other oppressed groups

must unite to dismantle the ruling party's hegemony and the state must spearhead community empowerment. Additionally, in its mission statement it says that it is a subaltern movement, which literally means that it is a movement of people that are subject to the rule of the hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). Nonetheless, a closer analysis of the movement indicates that it is liberally inclined because the youth constitutes a significant part of its membership and they do not demonstrate a propensity towards leftism that is associated with the ruling party and has been largely blamed as source of the ruling party's populism and pseudo indigenous empowerment policies. Another pointer to the liberal inclination of the ZMYIZ is that the movement has better relations with the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) that has been pushing for liberal democracy since 1999. At the same juncture, the movement has a constrained relationship with the ruling party for the ruling party regards it as an ally of alternative politics that is bent to uproot the ruling party. Interestingly, the movement has been able to hide under the veil of voter education; that one way or the other benefits both ZANU-PF and MDC. Once, the movement gets in contact with the community encourages and mobilizes the peasants to resist authoritarianism.

ZIMYZ uses *nhimbe/ilima*¹, *pungwes*², meetings, door-to-door campaigns; they also take advantage of any local gatherings such as funerals, church services. In short, their strategies are context specific inspired by the opportunities and challenges within a setting. It is noteworthy that their tactics capitalize on accessibility and stability of the areas they work in, as this is evidence of the fact that the movement does not impose its "right way" upon peasants but rather takes their concerns into account. The movement's tactics are fluid for Zimbabwe has a history of high volatility and tension in rural areas during election times and run up to elections. The violence and rampant human rights violation in the rural areas especially around election times is believed to be a remnant of the liberation war and is summed up by Moyo (1993), "Guerrilla psychology opposed the basic tenets of tolerance of individual values and identities in the military training camps and in the operational areas, especially in the 'liberated zones'; in other words, it opposed the formation of civil society. This psychology continued after independence with the same consequence". The concern at this juncture is therefore, are the tactics representative of an emancipatory politics approach and will these tactics achieve desired impact and results. Further, is there need for the movement to think outside the box and adopt tactics that will enable outreach during potentially tense run up to electoral and post election periods.

3 Data and methods

We collected data from two sites in Mutoko District, Huyuyu and Mutoko Growth Point. We gathered the data from in-depth interviews and participant observations. We also conducted key informant interviews with representatives from community groups, government officials Zimbabwe Yadzoka Zvakare and other social movements. We collected the data over a period of 4 months.

Site A: Huyuyu (popularly referred to as Huyuyu Clearwin as homage to the wide support received by the ruling party) is located in Mutoko South Constituency, Mutoko district, Mashonaland East province. Huyuyu is a resettlement area comprised of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme beneficiaries and its major economic activities include mostly seasonal farming, market gardening and animal husbandry. The inhabitants have a minimum of grade seven primary education and the political leadership is characterized by the dominance of traditional chiefs as well as ruling party chairpersons who are very influential as the residents in this community were allocated land courtesy of the "jambanja"³ land reform by the ruling party.

¹ Nhimbe, an occasion when community members meet and work together on activities such as cultivation and harvesting

² Pungwe, communal activities done at night (from dusk to dawn) in rural areas such as church gatherings, ritual ceremonies, memorial service. Liberation fighters used them as platforms for mobilizing peasants during the liberation war.

³ The word jambanja is a vernacular colloquial term that is used to characterize the violence against white commercial farmers during the FTRLRP.

Site B: Mutoko Growth Point/township located in Ward 20, Mutoko South Constituency, is the business centre for Mutoko district and is the administrative center for the district. The residents in this community are mostly “outsiders⁴” who work in the banks, shops, surrounding schools and some wealthier locals who managed to build houses in the fast expanding township. In essence the residents live in a peri-urban set up, however the area falls under the jurisdiction of Mutoko Rural District council, which means it’s a rural area.

As for the general characteristics of Mutoko South Constituency, the constituency has a population of 37 128 (7 600 households), 279 boreholes, 144 are functional, 4 medical doctors and 2 hospitals, unserviced infrastructure at hospitals (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2015).



Fig.1: Location of Mutoko

4 Issue(s) Framing

Zimbabwe Yadzoka is a subaltern movement that focuses on those excluded from participation in important discourses of the country. Rural Social Movements (RSM) arises because rural people sometimes are marginalized from mainstream political debates (Woods 2003 cites Grant, 1990). These people are not of any specific location but can be identified by circumstances they are in, it maybe that more of these are in rural areas but not exclusively, therefore, they also have activities in urban and peri-urban areas. The foregoing sets social movements apart from other movements, issues as opposed to class unite people more. A cardinal value of ZYMIz is inclusivity and in that respect, they work with practically all sections of the society. This is also a major strength in that they open up spaces of participation for people in their local contexts and this secures the necessary buy in. This drive for inclusivity is denoted by their motto in the indigenous language, “tikabatana tinokunda”, this literally means if we are united we will prevail.

In the two study sites, the movement is mobilizing and fighting against, intimidation, political violence, partisan distribution of goods and services, economic disadvantages, lack of access to information, corruption, land grabs especially by ruling party youths, poor service delivery and partisan politics by traditional chiefs. The movement targets are the local elites; some from the ruling party and opposition parties, state leaders such as the district administrators and council chief executive who implement state policies, traditional chiefs and any other corrupt and oppressive community leaders. Recently via Facebook, the movement joined forces with other social movements to protest (online) against the procurement of 226 vehicles for traditional chiefs. This procurement of vehicles was interpreted by

⁴ Outsiders, term used to describe residents whose rural hometown is not Mutoko.

ZYMIz and the general population as a strategic move by the ZANU-PF leadership to arm-twist the traditional chiefs to influence voting in favor of the ruling party.

ZYMIz concedes that total freedoms of the people are not going to be realized in one election. As such, they are slowly building a revolution from below, which is difficult to extinguish. Carroll and Ratner (2010) refer to a “*neo-Gramscian approach*” that is rooted in a generative globalization from below as the most promising basis for counter hegemony. Building a revolution from below means the movement has to be led by peasants, interestingly, in this instance the revolution is led by non-peasants and being sold to peasants as the passport to their liberation. However, in responding to this observation the movement argues that eventually those in the periphery will take over and become masters of their destiny. The question then begets; can the peasants brand this a movement for them or it is just a movement for the peasants like any other?

The movement’s mobilization strategies are inspired by *ubuntu*, respect for human rights and dignity (Shivji, 2017). The movement feels that collectivism will spur the country to go further. The movement and the community are in unison in the idea that the mindset of policy makers and development agents is that it is normal for rural people to be poor. As such, they blame the state for basing “*resource allocation in rural areas is on assistance basis*”. Another respondent remarked that: “*Its true to say that rural people are oppressed in terms of resources. Resource oppression is a new phenomenon. All roads are designed to go to town. Government offices are located in towns. Rural people are summoned to travel to towns to get very small papers such as identification and birth certificates. People living in towns control resources. Piped water, electricity, roads, schools, hospitals are all located in towns*”. Thus, under development and exclusionary tactics in resource allocation by elites is one of the key grievance of the people in the study sites, this state of affairs can best be explained by the fact that capital is more concentrated and predatory, development is articulated at the center and disarticulated in the periphery (Feuchtwang and Shah, 2015; Moyo and Yeros, 2005).

5 Agency

Norman Long (2001) defines agency as the ability to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion. Agency therefore can be understood as a way of devising solutions to challenges that one is facing. The people in the two sites respond and react differently to the movement and interpret the situation differently. In Mutoko growth point, the older generations and born frees⁵ welcome the movement and attend its meetings, discuss somehow freely during the door-to-door meetings. On the other hand, peasants from Huyuyu, having been more exposed to ruling party populism, such as that the future will be good and it will compensate you for your hardships (Petkovski, 2015) are not very keen to cooperate with Zimbabwe Yadzoka. They would rather wait for the Promised Land as preached in accordance with the ruling party gospel by the prophets of clientelism politics. The movement acknowledges that the people have agency that is the capacity to independently act and to make free choices and notes that: “*We are getting good feedback, our people for long having been taught to think along partisan grounds, we can see many people are beginning to understand our point of entry. The movement is also benefitting a lot from local knowledge systems in various communities*”. Thus, the peasants in Huyuyu have revolutionary potential but as argued by Hobsbawm (1973) may need external forces for them to make an uprising, the external force must provide the political, economic and ideological resources, in this case, Zimbabwe Yadzoka maybe the external force and required ignition. In essence, the potential for peasants to revolt is huge but the actual power and influence is constrained by their socio-economic and political conditions (ibid).

Overall, in these two sites the peasants and the movement were able to demonstrate their understanding of agency as they were explicit in stating how their ability to make independent

⁵ People born after Zimbabwe’s independence or born after 18 April 1980.

political choices and act freely was hugely constrained by the desire to fit within the norm, this captured in statements like *“the leaders of this place don’t allow that (alternative politics)”* and *“sometimes we wish things would be different as individuals because that is what is normal but we always don’t get our way...”*. Thus, in reality, the peasants have class-consciousness and are also aware of agency and their limitations to exercise it. Hobsbawm (1973) rightly sums up this dynamic, when he highlights that societies are not static, they are undergoing transformation and peasants are now exposed to new ideas because of their kinsmen who have been exposed to lands beyond the horizon of the village. So in as much as peasants might fail to utilize their agency, social movements have made them aware of the power within them. The basis of EP is rooted in the fact that peasants have potential for revolution (Marx 1978 cited in Scoones et al., 2017). A case in point is the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, peasants participated as fighters and collaborators and the Chinese Revolution led by Chairman Mao is another case in point.

The agency is heterogeneous; the youth 18-35 across the gender divide in all the two sites have more agency and are keen to participate in movement’s activities. The preceding is primarily so, because it’s the age group which feels let down by the system in the sense that it’s a group that did not benefit from the land reform and also the most affected by the stratospheric unemployment. For the older generation, one respondent remarked in Huyuyu that, *“we don’t worry about anything as long as we have our land and ZANU PF is in power”*. Thus, when it comes confronting authoritarianism and ensuring improved standard of living, the older generation is not willing to take part or rather voluntarily constrain their agency, for they are happy with the benefits they get from the authoritarian government regardless of how minimal they might be. Authoritarian and populist governments are based on patronage; the patronage and clientalism conceal the revolutionary potential of peasants (Hobsbawm, 1973; Petkovski, 2015). Additionally, the older generations are more attached to the ruling party and unwilling to confront its illiberal tendencies because immediately after independence, the ruling party took maximum advantage of the underdeveloped civil society and declared itself the umbrella organization for social movements and some peasants are afraid of dirty campaign tactics by the ruling party (Moyo, 1993). Thus, elites and the ruling have been able to maintain their hegemony by presenting themselves as the sole legitimate movement of the people. The liberation war was fought mostly in the rural areas and there is a high chance that the older generations know how brutal the situation can be.

6 Tactics

Day (2004) notes that as opposed to material needs; the fulcrum of movement politics has shifted to symbolic changes. Movements have continuity over time and use a variety of actions and strategies; confrontation, militant, peaceful protest, public opinion building, advocacy, non-cooperation (a’ la Gandhi), (Batliwala, 2012).

6.1 Door to Door Strategy

The movement hinges its main approach on non-violence tactics to fight for the emancipation of the rural citizenry. Zimbabwe Yadzoka Zvakare’s main strategy is their door-to-door campaign strategy (D2D). In groups of 4-5 people they visit each and every household in the communities that they will be mobilizing. In the door-to-door strategy at the moment, they are teaching the rural citizens on their basic rights more particularly on their right to vote and also how to resist authoritarianism. The D2D approach is quite a noble approach bearing in mind how it affords the movement’s members chances to fully interact with community members. It is also ideal in situation were mobilizing a number of people may only be done after getting police clearance, which is not guaranteed to social movements for they are deemed to be allied to the opposition and regime change agenda both which are constitutional norms elsewhere but taboo in Zimbabwe. Key challenges of the D2D approach include the number of households they can reach out to especially in rural areas where the houses are dispersed and also nature of the rural economy limits the peasants’ revolutionary projects for example in harvesting time peasants would dedicate their time to harvesting instead of social movement

activities (Hobsbawm, 1973). To buttress this point of the shortfall of the D2D approach one respondent remarked that; “*what Zimbabwe Yadzoka achieves in 2 months, the ruling party elites will reverse in a day through one star rally*”⁶. However, it is also important to note that at times the number of people mobilized sometimes does not influence change as argued by Tarrow (2011), under certain conditions, even small groups of collective action can result in major political gains with far reaching effects.

Another challenge is the feasibility of D2D during politically tense times. Areas like Huyuyu will not be accessible to all and sundry as the ruling party will put into place machinery to guard against their vote, people will also be wary of being seen entertaining strangers or suspected opposition people in their homesteads as this could result in their land being taken away from them or physical injury. This then gives rise to the need for the movement to capitalize on the times when areas are relatively accessible. The advent of a ministry that polices the cyberspace which potentially will increase its policing towards election also means that the rural folk might be wary or receiving politically inclined messages and might be covered into reporting numbers sending them such messages to law enforcement as a show of loyalty to the ruling party. Additionally, the rural population will most likely be unwilling to share political messages with their counterparts and this will counter the movement’s information dissemination that relies heavily on foot and cyber soldiers.

6.2 Social Media

The movement has a noticeable presence on various social media platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter. On the social media platforms, the movement shares information about its activities, visions and goals. Its Facebook platform has more followers (36 000 as at 10 November 2017) than its twitter platform (1 800 as at 10 November 2017). As for Whatsapp, the movement has a group through which it shares information. Social media has become a strategic tool for social activists (Meuleman and Boushel, 2013; Ellis and Kessle, 2009), both in terms of cost and reach. This is ably demonstrated by the case in which social activists used twitter in Zimbabwe and beyond managed to have the appointment of President Mugabe as WHO ambassador rescinded. However the extent to which cyber activism can be instrumental and effective in rural areas can be severely hindered by low ownership of smartphones in the rural areas and the low incomes of peasants that forces them to prioritize food acquisition than internet data. Nonetheless, overall and as indicated by the respondents, Facebook and twitter are more effective tools to reach out audience in Mutoko Growth point than in Huyuyu. Mutoko residents generally have better incomes, are more educated and have better Internet connectivity in terms of mobile network and reliable electrical power supply. On the contrary, their counterparts in Huyuyu have lower incomes and lower education levels as well as limited Internet connectivity which is erratic and at times no sources of electrical energy on which to charge cellphones that are the mediums for Internet.

As for Whatsapp, we noted that at least 70% of residents in the 2 communities have access and are able to use Whatsapp, though in Huyuyu, a place where the traditional leadership is very much in control of the peasants lives, it’s very difficult for one to join the Whatsapp groups run by Zimbabwe Yadzoka and remain unreported to the authorities (ruling party) for being a sellout. The creation of a ministry⁷ whose core mandate revolved around control of the cyber space presented a new dimension to the challenges that social movements heavily reliant on social media like Zimbabwe Yadzoka face. The Computer Crime and Cyber Crime Bill, which was to be the main operative instrument for this ministry allowed government among other things to, intercept private communications and seize gadgets as evidence and those found wanting can be imprisoned for up to 5years. The then army commander is on record for insinuating that the law would enable arrest of those who want to destabilize Zimbabwe on the cyber platforms. The cyber platform is Zimbabwe Yadzoka’s main tool

⁶ Star rally, term used to describe a large political gathering especially towards election. Usually the President of the party organizing that rally will be the main speaker.

⁷ Ministry of Cyber Security, Threat Detection and Mitigation was created on 09/10/2017 but was dissolved by the Mnangagwa government but the portfolio and bill remain.

of communication, if they are deemed to be distributing potentially destabilizing material or sharing messages of that nature they will be arrested and the movement will suffer a major blow. This scenario presents the difficulties faced by a social movement relying on social media in Zimbabwe today.

6.3 Music

Additionally, ZYMiZ uses music as a form of expression, it is a fact that music speaks to people and has been the soul of many a liberation movement. Different repertoires are associated with different situations, for example use of threats or emotions is based on opportunity calculation (Tarrow, 1994). To date they have released four albums, two of traditional revolutionary music, and two of the dancehall reggae genre. The music the movement produces caters for people of all ages. The songs are uploaded on its YouTube channel Zimbabwe Yadzoka and also played during roadshows organized by the movement. The roadshows are done in Mutoko Township, because of accessibility in terms of the road network and also due to more community acceptance of road shows in Mutoko Township compared to Huyuyu. The movement notes its inclination towards raising awareness of grassroots on active citizenship and initiation of protests is not one of their objectives. The fact that the movement does not focus on protest maybe a result of what Kagoro (2010) argues by stating that the ruling party since independence has been working hard to create a compliant citizenry. Alternatively, maybe the movement is calculating political opportunities (Tarrow, 2011). Nonetheless, music by the movement is proving to be a vital tool in reaching out to the youth and the community, as indicated by our respondents. In addition, the movement tasks some community members to sing the revolutionary songs, which the movement composes. Unsurprisingly the movement's songs are not given airplay on the national broadcasting platforms that are under the hegemony of the ruling party.

7 Current Conjectures

7.1 'Coup not so Coup'

On the 18th of November 2018 citizens from most parts of Zimbabwe marched in the capital Harare for Robert Mugabe to step down amidst deteriorating standards of living and rampant corruption. Prior to this the military had put President Robert Mugabe and his wife and many of his cronies under measures of security that were interpreted by many as house arrest as their freedom of movement and association seemed curtailed. Zimbabwe Yadzoka and other several social movements gained prominence as they also mobilized their members to attend the march against Robert Mugabe. The march was a resounding success as later indicated by Mugabe's spokesperson that Mugabe felt pressured as he saw on national TV the masses gathered outside the state house and his personal residence. Consequently, Mugabe was forced to resign and Emerson Mnangagwa his former deputy took over and was sworn in on 24 November 2018. From Huyuyu, few citizens attended the 18 November March because of a number of reasons, firstly they didn't get the news on time, secondly some did not believe that Mugabe could be toppled from power after 37 years and others feared that the famous anti riot police could repress the citizens with water cannons. Thirdly, some feared the repercussion that could occur if the local leadership was to hear that they had attended an event to oust Mugabe from power and lastly some didn't have the money to make the \$5 journey to Harare. In Mutoko Township, a sizeable number of citizens, particularly the youth attended the 18th November.

In Mutoko, both to the Huyuyu Community and Mutoko Township residents, the removal of Mugabe was received with jubilation and at once reignited the spirit and invincibility of change. In addition, the new president⁸ has made some strong promises to push for democracy, however, from our interviews in the two areas, there are fears that social movements maybe coopted by the new leadership and in the end this may lead to legitimization of authoritarianism. If things go this way, the citizens feel they have to form alternative ways of confronting any new forms of authoritarianism that may emerge. As for ZYMiZ, it has capitalized on the tempo created by the 'coup d'état', it has

⁸ President Mnangagwa replaced Robert Mugabe on 24 November 2017, he was nominated by the ruling party to finish Mugabe's term that ends in July 2018.

embarked on more rigorous door to door campaigns in Mutoko and other rural areas and there is an increasing welcoming approach as citizens energy were rejuvenated by the deposition of Mugabe. Whatever the outcome will be of the new ZANUPF leadership as of now the leadership is showing more tolerance for social movement and willing to bend towards a government that respects human rights and is says that it is geared to develop the peripheries. Nonetheless, one may argue that the current servant leadership could be a result that the regime is eager to capture as much voters as it can in the coming elections. In addition, John Makumbe (2007) argued that ZANUPF is a system; as such the resignation of Mugabe may not necessarily mean the dismantling of an authoritarian regime.

7.2 Elections

Whilst elections do not provide a full measure of how emancipated a society is, they provide a platform for the citizens to replace oppressive and undesired leadership. In the 2013 election in ward 20 (Mutoko, Growth Point) MDC had 1096 votes, ZANU Pf had 3849, in Huyuyu Clearwin ZANU Pf had 3457 and MDC 96(ERC, 2013). The stark contradiction in voting patterns is a reflection of the mindset of the electorate as well as the amount of work that should be invested in dislodging the status quo in Huyuyu. The ruling party controls the peasants in Huyuyu through insecure land tenure (offer letters given to peasants during the FTLRP mean that the land is still state land). The peasants are therefore forced to pay allegiance even to authoritarian rule because they are scared of losing their only source of livelihood.

In addition, the ruling party politicizes and militarizes agriculture input support programs and food aid. This is evidenced by initiatives such as Operation Maguta and Command Agriculture, which were administered through the nearby 2.1 Army Infantry Battalion. Food aid and agriculture is mostly provided to ruling party supporters (The Independent 31st May 2013). Rural areas are characterized by paternalistic relations that are dominated by elites, business people and the clergy (Woods, 2008). In Mutoko Growth Point the opposition/alternative politics has been able to get sizable votes because the ruling party has no control over the residents who don't rely on agriculture solely and have free hold title on land. As a result, they are more secure and have limited interface with the traditional chiefs. In addition the council CEO who is a bureaucrat runs the township administratively, thereby decimating the amount of influence the traditional leadership has on the residents of the township.

When it comes to the role social movements are to play in the coming 2018 elections in the rural areas, three different camps emerged. The first group is of the view that the movement and the community are aware that the rural population determines the outcome of elections in Zimbabwe. As one respondent remarked, *"It's the rural vote that has kept ZANU in power for the past 37 years"*. Therefore, the peasant and the movement feel that if the current government cannot do something about their plight they may give their vote to other parties.

The second camp that is dominated by peasants and some political activists outside social movements views that; *"Social movements in Zimbabwe have lost steam and their existence is of very little significance the talk about them is based on the residual fame of 2016. Most of the social movements were in Harare mostly offline protesting against short-term issues a few spoke about the next election. The social movements had little success in building a critical mass around their demands"*. In this instance, it therefore becomes difficult to conclude that the social movements will influence voting patterns.

The third camp, opines that social movements will have a role in the next elections under specific condition, *"They will have a role to play particularly if there are disasters such as drought"*. These movements will emerge as saviors of vulnerable rural communities. This being the case they will attempt to influence rural voting patterns. The impact of their influence will depend on how vulnerable the rural communities are as we go into elections. Social movements tap on the vulnerability of communities to influence the pattern of their responses to politics. Even if social movements were to mimic the ruling party's approach to sway peoples voting by tapping into food distribution, it may not bring a dent to the ruling party because the ruling party also distributes relief food via Chiefs

especially in its strong holds. In addition, in recent times the government implemented an inputs support program, Command Agriculture, from which ruling party cadres have been benefitted from the scheme and aided good rains harvest⁹ has been good.

8 Achievements

Zimbabwe Yadzoka, though formed recently has managed to conscientise some peasants in the two sites as one respondent remarked; *“the movement has given the citizens chances to amplify their voices and maybe the authorities will change as a result of this”*. From a standpoint if the movement keeps sustaining its effort it could provide to be an effective way for the stigmatized and marginalized socially excluded (Batliwala, 2012), especially in the rural areas. One respondent remarked that, *“In the absence of a strong civic society movement rooted in the masses Zimbabwe Yadzoka can be relevant in that direction of filling the space of CSOs that have since become elitist providing on therapy and manipulation to meet grants contract targets”*. Therefore, this far ZYMIz has shown to be a goal oriented movement and has provided a platform for the citizenry to emancipate itself from exclusion and marginalization.

The movement has also seized and capitalized on the opportunity presented by factional fights in the ruling party and the popularity of social media to reach out to a larger audience. The movement has also made synergies with other formations such as the Association of Rural Teachers and Tajamuka. The latter is a social movement that fights against corruption, human rights abuses and authoritarianism; it uses radical methods such as violent protests at times. Whilst aligning with radical movements may at sight seem to deviate from the non-radical nature of ZYMIz, this gives ZYMIz an edge at times because the authorities in some of the cases they only take action after some protest. The former is an association advocating for better standard of living for rural teachers.

The movement contends that its model is novel and falls outside of the expected norms of typical NGOs. Typical NGOs operate in ways that are more formal and use mostly book methods to reach out. Zimbabwe Yadzoka uses unique outreach tactics and utilizes non-traditional social media platforms as well as utilizing community gatherings. Its tactics erupt like a volcano, albeit a good volcano, one whose larva is freedom for the people. Conventionalism without results is a farce in instances like these; those who don't conform to normal standards make history.

9 Challenges

9.1 Financial

Firstly, the movement survives on financial donations from members especially those in the diaspora; *“the movement is sorely funded by Zimbabweans home and abroad”*. This is a remarkable initiative given that the country is undergoing severe economic crisis and whoever can spare a dime to further the causes of his compatriots is a real hero. It's neither a suspicious nor new that movements can be funded by diaspora, for example in Somalia, diaspora funding is the most common form of movement resource base (Ellis and Kessle, 2009). The problem arises when the Diasporans exert too much control on the local actors or when there are inconsistencies in the flow of funds. Inconsistencies in the flow of funds hamper a movement's activity and ultimately distracts from goal achievement. In the same vein, there is also fear expressed by most respondents that limited resources may increase the chances of the movement being coopted by the elites. Once a movement is coopted it becomes 'defanged' and its radical edge becomes blunted (Borras and Edelman, 2016; Woods, 2008). However, not all social movements are coopted because they lack resources, some are easier to co-opt than others (Woods, 2008).

⁹ crop harvest was good in the 2016/17 agriculture season

9.2 Issue Framing

From the framing of its concerns, the movement seems to be having a myriad of issues it is tackling from human rights abuses, corruption, and electoral politics. Whilst, fighting the various forms of authoritarianism is laudable, working towards the eradication of all social ills may present a huge constrain ideologically and materially as Ellis and Kessle (2009) forewarn that a social movement must operate around an issue, specifically it must be a single issue movement e.g. one protesting against eviction from a farm. We however submit that the conditions and environment in which Zimbabwe Yadzoka is operating are unique. The movement is functioning in an environment in which there is an urgent need to address a plethora of equally important issues, restricting itself to a single issue might not secure it much needed buy in. It is therefore imperative for the movement to take under its ambit as many issues as possible for increased benefit.

9.3 Rising toxic populism and Political Intolerance

Lately there has been a rise in toxic populism at the national level especially from the ruling party leadership. The ruling party leadership is technically advocating for the physical elimination of enemies within itself and outside. For instance, while addressing public rallies, the leadership advocated for ‘crushing of heads’ of perceived opponents. This form of toxic populism has increased the political intolerance among the citizenry and some peasants end up viewing politics as a zero sum game. The political intolerance is seeing some of the citizens failing or being reluctant to accept that ZYMIz is a social movement that is non-partisan. This has in turn affected attendance at their meetings and reception of their messages.

A key informant from ZYMIz remarked that, *“Another challenge is mainly political from both the ruling ZANU-PF, which sees us as an appendage of the opposition body, and also from some opposition political parties that are beginning to see us as a competitor”*. The rise in toxic populism and political intolerance may hinder the movement in executing some of its obligations, for the community will become unwelcoming and a highly polarized environment poses human security threats to the movement members. On the other hand, for as long as the opposition also sees the movement as a competitor it means that even if there is change of government the movement will remain suspicious and will suffer from image issues. Its existence might forever be that of a nicodemus operation always at odds with the government of the day. From a standpoint this situation also presents two important questions, firstly, should social movements align politically, when they encourage people to vote for change to happen should they specify a particular party or candidate. Secondly, are movement issues not political in nature already, by picking an issue to rally with are not social movements already treading the political grounds hence the being viewed as competition by mainstream political parties. Zimbabwe, will be having her elections in 2018, there is a highly likelihood that the toxic populism and political intolerance will spiral as authoritarian leaders try to cling to power. Nonetheless, the movement leadership notes that, *“necessity is the mother of invention. The challenges give us opportunities to be different and unique”*.

10 What’s ZYMIz leverage?

ZYMIz draws its advantage from its unique tactics, which have enabled it to thrive in an environment that is to a large extent designed to discourage any opposition politics and movements. The state machinery in Zimbabwe developed to “contain” political views and dispensations divergent from the ruling party’s include the arbitrary use of state machinery like the army, police, and the intelligence service that provides state security overrides. The foregoing have been utilized by the previous dispensation to arrest activists and opposition political officials as well as ignite a reign of terror upon especially the rural masses suspected of “betraying” the ruling party through arbitrary arrests and torture. However ZYMIz has managed to play a successful cat and mouse game by utilizing social media platforms, implementing door-to-door strategies as well as utilizing public gatherings like funerals that the state can’t ban for moral reasons. The movement has also been employing tactics that enable it work within the confines of the law, albeit repressive, for example, one of its key

mobilization tactics is to gather groups of less than 8 people usually groups of 3-5 so that the gathering stays below the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) radar which draws attention to gatherings consisting of more than 8 people (POSA,2002).

Additionally, the movement makes use of 'external' mobilizers comprised of youth from the urban areas who among other things have the ability to dissolve into situations and because they are not attached to rural communities they have the ability to escape relational repression should it be necessary (Deng and O'Brien, 2013). External mobilizers face no threat of reprisal after meetings, because of this they become more courageous. In as much as the preceding tactic can be seen as controversial in the sense that it might be viewed as taking the reins of the movement from the locals and prima facie appear as an imposition, it possesses the advantage of protecting mobilizers who have been the targets in containing opposition politics and activism in Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, the movement has been able to thrive on the fact that it has been able to strike the right emotional chord with the community by participating and leading in *nchimbe*, a practice that sparks feelings of autochthony and solidarity that were prevalent during the liberation struggle. Participation in these activities, psyches up the peasants' feelings of unity, solidarity and prompts them to share their inner feelings of torment and more importantly how they can resist against authoritarian elites. Additionally these activities enable the movement to work below the radar of the oppressors.

The movement has a dedicated and strategic leadership, which brings one to think that this could be the emergence of an organic leadership (Gramsci, 1971) that is able to challenge the state quo. The leadership is able to mobilize the resources needed for the mobilization of the members. Furthermore, the leadership has earned a fair amount of legitimacy by being able to confront and criticize some opposition leaders who oppress the poor. Because of adequate of resource and legitimacy the movement continues to grow in influence (Della Porta, 2011).

The repression on a social movement by agents of authority may be defined as legitimate by the state (Miller, 1999), but this does not imply that it is legitimate and allowed to bury the political emancipation of rural areas especially. The state represses by arresting citizens who mobilizes and protest against corrupt leaders, unfair treatment of tobacco farmers. Additionally, the state repress by making it illegal and at times labelling it treasonous for an alternative politics to stage and demonstrate against the ruling party and its alliances such as traditional chiefs. Citizens who protest peacefully are arrested and at times held in subjected to illegal detention. It is this illegitimate use of state authority and power that the movement has defied by coming up with tactics that divert from the norm and this uniqueness has seen it thrive in an otherwise restrictive environment. Interestingly, the ruling party's authoritarian rule also has some limits, though they are somehow blurred, the authoritarian rule is more pronounced in the resettled areas and the communal lands, its grip is high in this area for it is there where the party's largest support base resides and also where it has managed to arm-twist and manipulate the peasants because of insecure land titles and precarious livelihoods as discussed in this paper.

11 People's movement or a movement for itself?

To a larger extent the movement can be classified as a people's movement. ZYMiZ arose as a result of socio-politico dissatisfaction with the status quo; its strategies are fashioned in a way so as to counter these and other day-to-day challenges being faced by the populace in its areas of operation. More importantly the movement is all-inclusive as membership is open to all and sundry. The fact that the movement did not originate in its areas of operation does not trivialize its work that cuts it out as a people's movement as there is effort to include the local communities once it takes off in a locality, which eventually takes ownership of the movement. Moreover, its tactics are designed to protect the people whose voice the movement is trying make heard in an environment that is politically constrained and largely devoid of political freedom. The people's ownership of the movement is evident in concessions that indicate that among other things, ZYMiZ has amplified the people's voices. Additionally the fact that its operations are largely dependent on funding and support from locals

shows that the people have taken ownership of the movement hence their preparedness to invest in it. Whilst current situation might seem to indicate that the movement has not fully captured the typical peasants and has captured more urbanites, the same conjectures indicate the chance of the movement are slightly higher than given that the movement has been successful in Mutoko town centre that is largely a rural area. The fact that the movement is active in Huyuyu is not a small victory as this is one of those areas in which ZANU PF traditionally enjoys support and is inaccessible to the opposition parties let alone social movements.

11 Conclusion

Zimbabwe Yadzoka Zvakare since its formation in August 2016 has managed to create organizational structures in all the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe. In Mashonaland East Province, in Mutoko District, the movement has managed to establish a presence and conscientize the citizens on how they can combine their forces in untangling and eradicating the rise of authoritarianism. Massive citizen marginalization and exclusion from development programs along centre-periphery prism and political party lines is on the rise, ZYMIz at the moment offers a platform for the citizens to engage in emancipation from authoritarian populism. At the same time, we remain aware that this is not an easy task for sometimes rural movements are transformed in their attempt to transform the state (Borras, 2001). However, the prospects for emancipatory rural politics in Zimbabwe exist albeit they vary from one rural site to another are a reality and an achievable mission due to innovative strategizing by social movements, priming of peasants' agency by various mechanisms such as the rise in social media use, migration and education (literacy). At the moment ZYMIz may appear to be a small movement compared to the hegemonic influence of oppressive elites but as argued by Tarrow (2011) that ordinary people have solidarities, and even if social movements fail, they set into motion political and social changes and under certain conditions even small groups of collective action can result in major political effects. The current political conjectures of leadership change in ZANU-PF present an opportunity for social movements to mobilize their members and confront exploitation and oppression of the rural masses. Whilst the opportunity may not be wholesome, the new leadership of ZANUPF has shown some readiness to allow social movements to operate and to give room for the citizenry to demand accountability and transparency from the leadership. Whilst the movement has been able to leverage on energetic mobilisers, rise of social media and loopholes of the public order and security act, in the long run, the ZYMIz as a movement needs to revise its tactics, in a country where the cyberspace can be shutdown anytime, as shown when a Ministry of Cyber security was formed only to be shutdown a month later after the resignation of Robert Mugabe. Over reliance on cyber activism as a tool of operation might present sustainability challenges.

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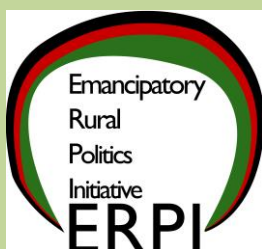
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The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless 'growth', climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

For more information see: <http://www.iss.nl/erpi>
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