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Managing the born-free generation: Zimbabwe's strategies for dealing with the youth

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Table of content

Introduction	3
1 Setting the scene: recent developments in the Zimbabwean context.....	4
2 Methodology.....	5
3 Ideology and framing of youth in Zimbabwe	6
4 The role and position of youth in government and the ruling party.....	9
4.1 ZANU-PF Youth League.....	9
4.2 Patronage politics.....	12
5 Youth policies	13
6 Youth-directed employment schemes and programmes	15
7 The Zimbabwe Youth Council and youth civil society.....	18
8 Student unions.....	20
9 Youth activism outside of formal institutions.....	21
Conclusion.....	22
Reference	24

Introduction

A number of governments on the African continent have their roots in liberation struggles. In countries like Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Uganda, liberation armies turned into political parties after armed struggle against colonial or repressive regimes. They have been in government for decades and the 'liberation narrative' continues to figure strongly in their claims to be legitimate and stay in power. Yet, in all of these countries, the current generation of young people was born after the liberation struggle. Feeling aggrieved that they have not seen the fruits of the liberation and experiencing high levels of un/under-employment and economic adversity, it seems that these youth no longer accept the 'liberation narrative' (Mate 2012; Reuss & Titeca 2017). On their part, governments are increasingly aware of the youth demographic and high rates of youth unemployment and are afraid they may become a threat to power (Nordas & Davenport 2013; Southall 2019). Rather than reforming and opening up through democratic revolution, it looks like the African liberation regimes are only handing over power to younger generations who are 'already deeply caught up' in their 'political culture of authoritarianism, patronage and self-enrichment' (Southall, 2019:154).

A rich literature on Africa's autocratic and repressive regimes has discussed the diverse strategies through which these regimes seek to consolidate and stay in power. Prominent strategies include election rigging, extensive patronage, corruption, the use of decentralised or federal governance systems, limiting political and civic freedoms through restrictive legislation, election violence and forms of surveillance and intimidation to crack down any form of dissent and protest, and promoting a culture of fear and discourses that delegitimise dissenting voices (Aalen & Muriaas 2018; Ghandi & Lust-Okar 2009; Hodzi 2014; Hossain, Nalini, Mohmand, Nazneen, Oosterom, Roberts, Santos, Shankland, & Schroeder 2018; Schedler 2013). As part of a research project on youth in authoritarian regimes, this working paper explores the proposition that the ways that regimes deal with this urban youth population is a strategy for holding on to power.

While it is known that regimes that have large youth populations are more likely to use repression than other regimes (Nordas & Davenport 2013), this paper will discuss various other youth-focused strategies, with a focus on Zimbabwe. This working paper discusses how the relationship between the Government of Zimbabwe, the ruling party and the country's youth population has developed over time and examines the strategies used by the government and ruling party to include, exclude and repress the youth. It is organised in sections that analyse the distinct mechanisms through which the youth population has been addressed, comprising both political and economic strategies: the use of ideology and the framing of youth; the position of youth in the government and ruling party, youth policies, youth-focused economic programmes and institutions for youth representation. In addition, in order to explain how youth have engaged, the last two sections discuss forms of youth engagement outside of formal institutions, through youth civil society and student unions and informal civil society. While the main focus of this paper is on urban youth, who are largely regarded by the state as a serious political threat, it will also touch upon ways in which the regime engage rural and peri-urban youth. It is important to

note that rural youth are largely framed as, and believed to be, supporters of the ruling ZANU-PF regime and thus not perceived as a serious political threat to ZANU-PF. The working paper is one of the four background papers for the NorGlobal-funded research project on the relationship between youth and 'liberation governments' in four African countries: Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Uganda. As such, it will inform the qualitative phase of the study in 2020 and 2021.

1 Setting the scene: recent developments in the Zimbabwean context

While the developments in Zimbabwean politics post-Independence are well-documented up to 2013, there is less academic literature for more recent years. The dynamics between the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the political opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and Movement for Democratic Change – Ncube (previously united in one opposition party) have been thoroughly analysed, particularly for the 2000s or the 'crisis years.' The various formal and informal strategies through which ZANU-PF and erstwhile President Robert Mugabe, together with the security apparatus, have maintained control have also received scholarly attention. Some of this literature has looked at Zimbabwe's youth in relation to political parties (Hodzi 2014; Kriger 2005; Wilkins 2013), (student) activism (Hodgkinson 2013), and how youth navigate the politicised environment in everyday life (Oosterom & Pswarayi 2014; Oosterom 2019). Yet there has not been a systematic analysis of the range of strategies with which ZANU-PF regime has dealt with the youth population. Indeed, little is known about how the post-Mugabe regime and the Movement for Democratic Change-Alliance (MDC-A) has engaged youth in urban and rural contexts. This working paper aims to contribute to filling this gap. In order to understand the different strategies that will be discussed in this paper, this section briefly discusses key political milestones in Zimbabwe's political history and the factionalism that eventually led to the coup in November 2017.

ZANU-PF grew out of one of the liberation armies and has been the ruling party since Independence in 1980. The party developed strong authoritarian traits involving sustained political violence and repression of the opposition (especially from 2000 onwards when the opposition gained support), civil society and media. Political violence peaked during and immediately after electoral periods (Kriger 2005; McGregor 2013; Sachikonye 2011). The opposition group MDC emerged from a coalition of trade union and civil society organisations during the dwindling economic situation of the 1990s. The MDC garnered much of their support from young, urban populations. During the 2000s, political and economic conditions in the country worsened (Gukurume 2015). The 2008 elections witnessed unprecedented levels of political violence against a backdrop of hyperinflation and economic crisis. The Southern African Development Community brokered a Government of National Unity (GNU) with ZANU-PF and both MDC groups. While the GNU resulted in economic stabilisation and a new Constitution, ZANU-PF used the time to regroup (see Raftopolous 2013). ZANU-PF returned firmly into power after the 2013 elections, which were widely believed to be won through election rigging and

material strategies. The GNU, however, also led to some disillusionment with the MDCs and their ability to bring more change (Dorman 2016; Raftopolous 2013). After 2013, the country's economic situation regressed, reversing many of the economic gains made during the GNU. This shift has been blamed on the intense factionalism within ZANU-PF in response to the issue of the succession of former President Robert Mugabe (Tendi 2016), while the opposition got increasingly fragmented. Within ZANU-PF, Joyce Mujuru and Emmerson Mnangagwa were competing over the succession of President Mugabe (Mnangagwa's faction was known as the Lacoste faction), but Mujuru was expelled from the party in December 2014 (LeBas 2016; Nyambi 2016; Tendi 2017). The G40 (Generation 40) group, a faction of younger ZANU-PF politicians who had grown frustrated with the older generation's hold on power, supported the Mugabes and particularly President Robert Mugabe's wife.² After the purging on Mujuru in 2014, two factions (Lacoste and G40) competed for power and influence in ZANU-PF. As factionalism and the race to succeed Mugabe intensified, Mnangagwa fled into temporary exile after threats from the Mugabes, and masterminded a coup in 2017 together with military generals.

In November 2017, the military ousted Mugabe in what has been labelled a 'soft coup' and Emmerson Mnangagwa was put forward as Mugabe's successor (Beardsworth, Cheeseman & Tinhu 2019). After the coup, many G40 members were purged from the party and some of its leaders went into exile.³ It was a clear sign that gerontocracy had won and handing over power to younger generations was far away (Southall 2019:147). ZANU-PF and Mnangagwa won the national elections in July 2018. An initial period of hope and optimism about change soon made place for disillusionment as the country plunged deeper into economic crisis (Beardsworth et al. 2019:593-5). Grievances culminated over price hikes, especially for fuel, and led to urban protests in January 2019, which were met with military violence in Harare (ibid). Thus, there have been no signs of political reform and Mnangagwa's circle seems to entrench the power of those with liberation credentials.

2 Methodology

The paper comprises a desk-based review of academic literature and government documents, as well as a media search of online media articles of both independent and government-owned media outlets. We did a systematic search of the two most-read newspapers in Zimbabwe, one of which is government-owned (*The Herald*) and one is an independent newspaper (*News Day*).⁴ For a list of selected keywords such as 'youth league' and 'youth empowerment' all online articles that were published between January 2013 and August 2019 were collected in a data base. These dates were selected because limited academic literature on youth in Zimbabwe exists for this

² Newsday, Chamisa is a typical G40: Mugabe's party, July 21, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/07/chamisa-is-a-typical-g40-mugabes-party/>

³ Newsday, Chiwenga warns G40 remnants, July 14, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/07/chiwenga-warns-g40-remnants/>

⁴ See Willems (2004) for an account of how these newspapers present different perspectives on political issues.

period. For specific events, for instance the coup in November 2017, we included searches in other newspapers. We mainly used academic literature to discuss the wider political context and party- and government strategies prior to 2013.

3 Ideology and framing of youth in Zimbabwe

The framing and labelling of actors, including through using nicknames, has been identified as tool used by ZANU-PF to undermine its opponents and legitimate certain policies and actions (Nyambi 2017). The discourse and framing of youth throughout the 1980s and 1990s remained closely entwined with the liberation ideology, supporters of the ZANU-PF government were discussed in terms such as 'committed revolutionaries' and 'defenders of the revolution' (Kriger 1999, 2005; Zeilig 2008). When challenged, government officials were quick to dismiss opposing voices as dissidents and sell-outs, as they had done previously when discussing student activists and unions starting from the late 1980s (Dorman 2014; Zeilig 2008). The architecture of the ZANU-PF party for the youth from national to cell level served to reproduce this rhetoric.

The political tide turned in 2000 when ZANU-PF's hegemony was first challenged by the MDC. ZANU-PF started to actively promote a discourse of good versus bad youth. At this stage, while the land reforms were implemented in the name of the 'Third Chimurenga' (third revolution), the MDC and its supporters were labelled as sell-outs of the country, giving in to Western, neo-liberal countries and capitalism. A discourse of political nicknaming served to portray the opposition as enemies of the nation, which worked to instil fear and build a narrative of the indispensability and legitimacy of ZANU-PF (Nyambi 2017). The labelling of - and messages to - the youth evolved in parallel. President Mugabe and other government and party officials started to use the derogative term 'born free' to refer to the generation born after Independence, accusing them of taking independence and freedom for granted without appreciating the liberation struggle and its fighters (Mate 2012:109). Born-free youth were portrayed as being susceptible to foreign influence, as evidenced by their support to the MDC (ibid). 'Good youth' are therefore those who respect the liberation ideology and kind of patriotism promoted by the ruling party. The label 'born-free' continued to be used after the Government of National Unity ended in 2013 (Oosterom & Pswarayi 2014; Oosterom 2019). Just like other nicknames and labels (Nyambi 2017), the political practice of labelling youth as born-free serves a political purpose: it discredits youth and grievances they might have. Over time, the very term 'youth' itself developed political connotations since it became associated with mobilising for or against a political party, although this often implicitly assumed actions by male youth (Oosterom 2019; see also Wilkins 2013).

While the ZANU-PF government denounced the born-free danger when they felt challenged, they were also aware that they had to reach out to youth constituencies and bolster patriotism. To reproduce the liberation narrative, the government began a form of cultural nationalism and cultural events, such as musical galas screened on TV, were used alongside the more

traditional/official and military ceremonies (Willems 2013). The government reached out to the young population by using young artists and the popular 'urban grooves' genre and simultaneously revived Chimurenga (revolutionary) songs, thus promoting its ideas around independence, heroes and unity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Willems 2009). A coerced version of instilling patriotic values happened through the National Youth Service (section 3). Later in Mugabe's rule, ZANU-PF tried to demonstrate, while ageing, it was very much connected to the youth. In 2010, the party again reached out through popular music, using affectionate language when referring to the President, presenting him as a strong and able man. Mugabe even rapped along in a song (Nyambi 2018:7). The annual celebration of Mugabe's birthday in 2010 involved football tournaments for a cup named after him using his first name 'Bob' (ibid.). For the final stage of Mugabe's rule, Nyambi (2018:6) writes that: 'Mugabe and ZANU PF are clearly aware of the risk attendant on his old age (he turned 93 in 2017), hence the consistent efforts to portray him as strong, healthy, and (ironically) even young'.

Youth and youth empowerment figured prominently in official documents, one example is the 2013 party manifesto, which emphasized indigenisation and economic empowerment (below) (ZANU-PF 2013). The manifesto promised to dedicate millions of US dollars to scholarships and initiatives directly targeting the youth and to create over two million jobs appealing to the youth population. At the same time, youth were meant to be protected against external 'manipulation' (Hodzi 2014:60). In 2017, President Robert Mugabe and his wife Grace held a number of 'youth interface meetings' to speak to the youth, however these were also considered a platform for ongoing factionalism: an opportunity to promote the G40 and undermine Mnangagwa.⁵ Indeed, to cement their hold on the youth, the Mugabes appointed the President's nephew Patrick Zhuwao as the Minister of youth.

Since the coup, President Mnangagwa has mainly addressed the youth as part of his rhetoric on boosting economic development. The 2018 ZANU-PF party's central promise was to enhance Zimbabwe's position in global markets and economic development, with slogans like 'the New Economic Order' (p.46) and 'Zimbabwe open for business' signalling a break from the Mugabe era of stagnation and decline. The manifesto singled out youth as special target group and highlighted their access to decision-making and housing (p.44, 46) alongside the mainstreaming of youth and women in all sectors of the economy (2018:19). In speeches at the opening of the Child Parliament in June 2019, President Mnangagwa reiterated his view on youth as 'partners in development' and made an appeal for their contribution.⁶ The emphasis on the role of youth in economic development, which started in the mid- to late 2000s thus continues, and justifies a plethora of economic interventions for youth that can be allocated along partisan lines, as subsequent sections will show. Table 1 below gives an overview of how ZANU-PF's discourse and political and economic strategies for youth have developed over time.

⁵ Chronicle, *Lessons learnt from Mugabe's 'youth interface' rallies*, November 7, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/lessons-learnt-from-mugabes-youth-interface-rallies/>

⁶ The Sunday Mail, *Youth critical partners in national development*, June 16, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/youth-critical-partners-in-national-development/>

Table 1: ZANU-PF's discourses and strategies for youth deployed over time

Time period	Discourses	Political strategies	Economic strategies
1980-1989	Not yet targeting youth at large scale, but generic discourse on support for liberation. Opposing voices in student activism in late 1980s dismissed as sell-outs.	Youth brigades/militia, extend from using war collaborators.	Not yet youth-specific
1990-1999	Not yet targeting youth at large scale, but generic discourse on support for liberation and increased labelling of those opposing the regime as dissidents	Crack- down on student unions and protests, while reinforcing links between the party and certain student unions.	Not yet youth-specific
2000-2008	Instilling 'patriotism' in the 'born-free generation' and labelling those who support the opposition as 'sell-outs' and susceptible to foreign influence. Appealing to youth through popular culture.	National Youth Service established; graduates used as militia; and violence mobilisation of party youth. Ministry of Youth and Development and Employment Creation established, and first Youth Policy adopted, in response to youth disenfranchisement and supposed youth support to MDC.	First National Youth Fund created in 2006
2009-2013: Government of National Unity	Growing awareness of the size of the youth population, emphasis on youth productivity for economic development. Promises to youth in 2013 party manifesto aligned with this view.	Patronage networks to youth: incorporating youth as ghost workers on government payroll. ZANU-PF seeks to entrench informal politics and networks for mobilising violence and channelling resources, using NYS graduates on the ground.	Youth Empowerment Fund (linked to broader Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act and policy) 2013: start of ZimAsset linked youth funds
After 2013: ZANU-PF back in power	Appealing to the youth vote. Youth Interface Rallies 2016- 2017	Youth Policy revised in 2013, more emphasis on youth role in economic development. ZANU-PF youth league manifests factionalism, G40 vs. Mugabe, leads to reshuffle in positions to keep control of youth league.	Continuation of Youth Development Fund and other funds linked to ZimAsset
After November 2017: Post-Mugabe era	Mnangagwa government suggests to be accommodating of young people and emphasis their instrumental value and responsibility in economic development	Following Operation Restore Legacy, most G40 members were purged from ZANU-PF and youth league.	Empower Bank: 12 million USD\$ capitalisation for this bank Income Generating projects: 10 million USD\$ Youth

4 The role and position of youth in government and the ruling party

ZANU-PF is an increasingly ageing party with the majority of its councillors, parliamentarians, and ministers being over 50 years old. While the MDC was meant to be a young party, and indeed draws support from young, urban voters, Hodzi (2014) argues that neither ZANU-PF nor MDC offer real political power to the young. This section details how the ZANU-PF Youth League has been important for mobilising young cadres as a vehicle for patronage and as an institution for socialising youth into the liberation ideology. It then explains patronage practices of ZANU-PF more broadly -as party and government- which it has used to co-opt youth and tie them into networks that can potentially be mobilised into violence. Hence, both the YL and extensive patronage networks are part of ZANU-PF's architecture to stay in power.

4.1 ZANU-PF Youth League

Hodzi (2014) writes how the youth wings of both ZANU-PF and MDC-T serve mainly to reproduce the voice of the party leadership. The ZANU-PF Youth League (YL) has been an active youth wing through which young people can demonstrate loyalty to the party and develop a political career and accumulate wealth through patronage networks. The YL has been central for political mobilisation, especially for campaigns and elections (Hodzi 2014) and has been strongly associated with organising and conducting political violence and intimidation in the past (Kriger 2005). For instance, the then-ZANU-PF Youth Brigade enacted violence in the Matabeleland region in the early 1980s as part of the Gukurahundi mass violence. The group also violently disrupted campaigns, meetings and rallies by the opposition and engaged in arson and intimidation in areas suspected of support to the opposition (CCJPZ 1997; Kriger 2005). Officials have used ZANU-PF youth to attack opposition supporters and politicians, creating impunity by offering them protection (Kriger 2005:18-19). During the land reforms in the early 2000s, party youth operated alongside war veterans and security agents when farmers were violently evicted from their land (Dzimiri 2014). In high-density urban areas, organised party youth control access to resources, like housing and stands for selling goods, and water sources, excluding opposition supporters (Kriger 2012:20; McGregor 2013). These practices also occurred during the period of relative stability under the GNU. Although not as widely networked and resourced as the ZANU-PF YL, urban MDC-T youth have organised and enacted violence too, often to resist or retaliate against state violence (Wilkins 2013). There is very little information on the role of young women in the Youth League and it is unknown whether there are differences between young men and women in terms of how they are recruited into the YL, mobilised for different types of political activities and violence, and how young women move across from the YL to the women's league.

Yet, ZANU-PF does not offer 'real' political power to youth. In the 2013 elections, the Politburo of ZANU-PF (but also MDC's National Executive Committee) dominated the selection process of candidates. They put forward young candidates in constituencies where they had little chance of

winning and ignored calls for a youth quota (Hodzi, 2014:59).⁷ In the 2013 elections, it appeared that the government deliberately prevented the registration of urban voters, especially youth voters, expecting they would vote for the MDC.

Factionalism manifested itself within the ZANU-PF Youth League. After 2013, a section within the YL was controlled by the Mujuru faction (Tendi 2016), but many of them were expelled when Mujuru and her allies were purged from the government.⁸ The leadership then supported the Mugabes and became associated with support for G40.⁹ Before the November 2017 coup, YL chairperson Chipanga criticised Gen. Chiwenga and the military, but apologised for this only days later.¹⁰ Other prominent Youth League members quickly sided with the new party leadership and military. They expelled Chipanga and other YL leaders,¹¹ and Chipanga was arrested and put on trial for 'communicating falsehoods' that caused disaffection in the military.¹² The new YL leadership firmly denounced G40 as 'dangerous cabal'¹³, which had forcefully persuaded many youth members to join them, and clearly communicated YL support for Mnangagwa. The YL actively mobilised voters for Mnangagwa in the 2018 elections.¹⁴ When it became public that Mugabe was forming a new party, the National Patriotic Front (NPF), the Youth League spoke out against it, saying he might 'lose his legacy'.¹⁵ The YL has since endorsed controversial government measures, like the ban on US dollars in June 2019.¹⁶

Mid-2019, frictions between the Youth League and the party leadership emerged. At a Politburo meeting in July 2019, party youth accused former ministers and senior party officials of

⁷ It must be noted that the MDC's National Executive Committee did the same (Hodzi 2014).

⁸ The Herald, *Youth League backs President*, December 9, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/youth-league-backs-president/>

⁹ News Day, *Zanu PF youth league targets ED*, October 20, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/10/zanu-pf-youth-league-targets-ed/>; The Herald, *Four booted out of Zanu-PF Youth League*, November 21, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/four-booted-out-of-zanu-pf-youth-league/>

¹⁰ The Herald, *Chipanga apologises, spills the beans*, November 16, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/chipanga-apologises-spills-the-beans/>

¹¹ The Herald, *Youth League slams 'uncultured' First Lady*, November 20, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/youth-league-slams-uncultured-first-lady/>

¹² Newsday, *Chipanga seeks permanent stay of prosecution*, October 26, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/10/chipanga-seeks-permanent-stay-of-prosecution/>; Newsday, *Chipanga, Hamandishe remanded to January 30*, December 22, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/12/chipanga-hamandishe-remanded-to-january-30/>

¹³ The Herald, *Zanu-PF Youth League to do things differently*, December 30, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/zanu-pf-youth-league-to-do-things-differently/>; The Herald, *Youth League calls for unity*, November 29, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/youth-league-calls-for-unity/>

¹⁴ The Herald, *Register to vote, Youth League urges youths*, April 17, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/register-to-vote-youth-league-urges-youths/>; The Herald, *Youth League intensifies #EDHasMyVote campaign*, March 1, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/youth-league-intensifies-edhasmyvote-campaign/>

¹⁵ The Herald, *Youth League warns Mugabe*, March 19, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/youth-league-warns-mugabe/>

¹⁶ The Herald, *Youth League stands ground on corruption*, June 28, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/youth-league-stands-ground-on-corruption/>

corruption and published a list of names of accused officials, while maintaining support for Mnangagwa's economic policies and fight on corruption.¹⁷ Yet they were accused of acting on behalf of senior officials from rival ZANU-PF factions (which the YL denied). Vice-President Gen. Chiwenga dismissed the YL as "overzealous youths who were according themselves too much power".¹⁸ YL leaders continue to make statements against corruption among senior officials, consistently citing Mnangagwa's plight to fight corruption.¹⁹ The YL's stance on corruption by senior government officials led to the arrest of Minister Prisca Mupfumira on allegations of corruption and abuse of office. It is not immediately apparent whether these are genuine complaints or actions that divert attention from the government's inability to resolve the economic crisis.

The discourse used by the YL remains aligned with ZANU-PF on patriotic values. For instance, former ZANU-PF secretary for Youth Affairs Pupurai Togarepi²⁰ stated soon after the reshuffle in YL leadership in November 2017 that the YL had to '*reconnect youth with the ideals of the revolution*'.²¹ For Youth Day 2019, he stated that: "*To us it's (Youth Day) about somebody's sacrifice, exemplary life. Especially to be able to fight for your country, bring independence, work for it for a very long time, being consistent with the founding principles of our revolution*".²² In March 2019, deputy secretary Matutu claimed that unemployed youth were recruited by 'regime change agents' to destabilise the country.²³ ZANU-PF's Youth League is also in charge of the '21st of February Movement': the organisation that coordinates Robert Mugabe's birthday celebrations, which are youth-focused events and evolve around the same rhetoric of nationalism and national heroes, and that youth empowerment happens through ZANU-PF leadership.²⁴ The organisers have invited international representatives of liberation parties on

¹⁷ The Herald, *Zanu-PF Youth League speaks on corrupt kingpins*, June 25, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/zanu-pf-youth-league-speaks-on-corrupt-kingpins/>; The Herald, *Youth League stands ground on corruption*, June 28, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/youth-league-stands-ground-on-corruption/>

¹⁸ The Independent, *Bigwigs clash in explosive Zanu PF politburo meeting*, June 30 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2019/06/30/bigwigs-clash-in-explosive-zanu-pf-politburo-meeting/>

¹⁹ The Herald, *Animal Farm era over: Zanu-PF Youth League*, August 1, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/animal-farm-era-over-zanu-pf-youth-league/>; Newsday, *Corruption ruined our future: Zanu PF youth*, July 31, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/07/corruption-ruined-our-future-zanu-pf-youth/>

²⁰ Longtime secretary of Youth Affairs Pupurai Togarepi was ousted from the Youth League in February 2019, together with deputy secretary Lewis Mututu, and Admire Mahachi and Mercy Mugomo. Newsday, *Zanu PF youths oust Togarepi*, February 7, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/02/zanu-pf-youths-oust-togarepi/>

²¹ The Herald, *Zanu-PF Youth League to do things differently*, December 30, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/zanu-pf-youth-league-to-do-things-differently/>

²² Chronicle, *National Youth Day couched in economic aspirations*, February 22, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/national-youth-day-couched-in-economic-aspirations/>

²³ Newsday, *'Unemployed youths recruited to destabilise Zim'*, March 4, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/03/unemployed-youths-recruited-to-destabilise-zim/>

²⁴ The Herald, *21st February Movement donors warned*, January 28, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/21st-february-movement-donors-warned/> (2015); The Herald, *All set for 21st February Movement celebrations*, March 1, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/all-set-for-21st-february-movement-celebrations-2/> (2014)

various occasions.²⁵ Through such events, the party seeks to connect to youth constituencies while simultaneously reproducing the liberation ideology as the legitimate basis for being in power.

4.2 Patronage politics

ZANU-PF has effectively used different forms of patronage to maintain both resources within its networks and loyalty to the party. Recruitment into the civil service, for instance, became a prominent strategy especially after the first victory of the MDC in local elections, and also served to extend its control to the local level (McGregor 2013). The partisan allocation of land, food aid and humanitarian relief, is another form from which opposition supporters are excluded (ibid.; Kriger 2005, 2011). Kriger (2011) argues that the development of informal networks, used for patronage, became particularly important during the GNU (2009-2013) as ZANU-PF had to formally share power and thus needed informal strategies to undermine the opposition, effectively creating a parallel government. This strategy continues to be important, as this section will demonstrate.

Youth have been integrated through appointments considered 'ghost workers.' During the GNU, the Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenization, and Empowerment; and the Ministry of Interior continued to recruit despite the Treasury ban on recruitment to save money (Hodzi 2014). The estimates on ghost workers vary. During the GNU, an audit conducted by a foreign consultancy firm revealed there were an estimated 75,000 ghost workers, the vast majority of which were youth, and graduates of the National Youth Service programme (below). ZANU-PF dismissed both this report and a 2009 audit report which said the Ministry of Youth had employed around 10,000 workers during the 2008 elections.²⁶ Although youth officer-ghost workers were predominantly urban youth, several youth officers were recruited in rural areas.²⁷ Rural youth officers mobilise support for ZANU-PF at the grassroots level and spearhead election campaigns.²⁸

Government personnel vote prior to election day thus the large numbers of youth recruited into the military and police likely contributed to election rigging in the 'special vote' (Hodzi 2014). Those recruited as ward officers focused on '*protecting their jobs by obeying the demands of Zanu-PF politicians*' (Hodzi 2014:63). Kriger (2012) argues how the recruitment of youth and their deployment in youth militias were part of ZANU-PF strategy to entrench informal

²⁵ The Herald, *All set for 21st February Movement Celebrations*, February 24, 2012. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/all-set-for-21st-february-movement-celebrations/>

²⁶ VOA, *Zimbabwe Governing Parties Lock Horns Over Public Pay and 'Ghost Workers'*, July 8, 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/mdc-calls-for-swift-changes-and-removal-of-ghost-workers-from-government-payroll-125235089/1458669.html>

²⁷ AllAfrica, *Public Service Commission says Youth Officers Useless, No single Project Initiated so far*, December 21, 2016. Retrieved from: [AllAfrica.com/stories/201612220091.html](http://allafrica.com/stories/201612220091.html)

²⁸ NewsDay, *3200 Green Bombers' bounce back*, April 12, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/04/2-200-green-bombers-bounce-back/>

patronage networks during the GNU. While formally in a power-sharing arrangement with the MDC, ZANU-PF was creating a parallel governance structure through use of violence and channelling resources to their constituencies, thus excluding alleged opposition supporters (ibid.). Youth militia were strongly involved in monitoring who gets access to food aid and agricultural inputs in rural areas and access to housing and vending stalls in urban areas (ibid., 18,20).

The heated issue of ghost workers resurfaced in 2015 when then-Minister of Finance announced he wanted to cut the government wage bill.²⁹ He faced resistance from then Minister of Youth, Zhuwao, who strongly denounced allegations that youth ward officers (five per ward, \$2.5 million per month) were ZANU-PF foot soldiers, saying: “The role of government is to facilitate empowerment and that can only be done if the relevant ministry has officials at grassroots level.”³⁰ After the 2017 coup, the Public Service Commission again announced plans to cut down on ghost workers and retired over 3,000 youth officers.³¹ However, in April 2018, the Mnangagwa government re-engaged the youth officers ahead of the July elections.³² Many of them are National Youth Service graduates (see below) who are part of ZANU-PF's networks and used to harass and intimidate the local population. Evidently, there are limits to offering positions even in this context. During election campaigns, all parties have targeted unemployed youth with food, drinks, money and free party regalia as short-term transfer of resources (Hodzi 2014; Kriger 2011; Oosterom & Pswarayi 2014). While some youth certainly buy into these practices, studies also demonstrate that young people consciously navigate away from patronage relationships, aware of the risk that this might expose them to violence mobilisation (Oosterom 2019).

5 Youth policies

This section discusses the youth policies and the political and economic background against which they were developed and adopted. Youth policies promulgated by the ZANU-PF led government were largely mediated by and a response to the deepening economic crisis and growing political dissent from urban youth who felt marginalised from economic and political processes. After independence, ZANU-PF dedicated a cabinet position to youth, the first Minister of Youth was 22-year-old Joyce Mujuru who took the position in 1980. Knowing that discontent with the economic situation prompted many youths to support the MDC formation and in

²⁹ The Independent, *Wage bill: Ghost workers haunt state*, August 7, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2015/08/07/wage-bill-ghost-workers-haunt-state/>

³⁰ The Independent, *Zhuwao vows to keep ghost workers in govt*, October 9, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2015/10/09/zhuwao-vows-to-keep-ghost-workers-in-govt/>

³¹ Newsday, *Govt targets ghost workers*, October 10, 2018. Retrieved from:

<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/10/govt-targets-ghost-workers/>; The Herald, *End close for ghost workers*, December 29, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/end-close-for-ghost-workers/>

³² The Herald, *Regularise Youth Officers Contracts, Civil Service Commission Ordered*, April 16, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://herald.co.zw/regularise-youth-officers-contracts-civil-service-commission-ordered/>

elections, the ZANU-PF government gave new prominence to youth in the cabinet by introducing the Ministry of Youth and Development and Employment Creation.³³ It adopted National Youth Policy in 2000.

This policy led to the formation of the National Youth Service (NYS) programme across the country. Close ally of Robert Mugabe and then Minister of Gender, Youth and Employment, Border Gezi³⁴, initiated the NYS programme in 2000. For Gezi, the purpose of the NYS was to empower youths for nation building through life skills training and impartation of patriotism and leadership skills. The vision of the NYS was instilled in recruited youths at various training camps across the country. Trainings were designed to foster patriotism among youth country and teach entrepreneurship skills. However, critics viewed the NYS as ZANU-PF's indoctrination technique. The Herald reported that *'The modules delivered to youths during the training demystify what many of our youths have been misled to believe, that Africans and their culture are inferior to other inhabitants of this earth, more so to Europeans'* and therefore NYS *'...is geared towards boosting the self-worth image of the youth as an independent and self-reliant generation that is knowledgeable of its own roots, patriotic,...'*³⁵ The NYS programme was meant to teach vocational skills and instil a sense of patriotism to raise young people as 'good Zimbabweans'.³⁶ In training camps across the country, approximately 80,000 youth were trained between 2001 and 2007, when NYS was suspended.³⁷ The NYS programme became a large-scale paramilitary training programme and NYS graduates were involved in various forms of state surveillance (Dzimiri 2014; Solidarity Peace Trust 2003). While ZANU-PF has used youth militias ever since Independence (Kriger 2005), the NYS produced a new generation of youth militias. The youth militias conducted election violence alongside war veterans between 2000 and 2008, and in are complicit in the allocation of resources through ZANU-PF patronage by monitoring distribution of agricultural inputs, humanitarian relief and food aid, and access to other resources (Dzimiri 2014; Kriger 2012). Mhike (2017) argued that the NYS as a state-controlled programme was ZANU-PF instrument of youth mobilisation to strengthen its political hegemony and hold on power. However, not all NYS youth were involved in violence. In fact, Mhike (2017) asserts that youth in the NYS should not only be seen as perpetrators of violence, but instead also as victims of ZANU-PF's manipulative mobilisation techniques and patronage system. The government made NYS participation a requirement for accessing any government job or scholarship as well as state funded youth empowerment programmes (Mhike 2017:246; Dhliwayo 2019) and therefore many young people completed NYS as part of their search for opportunities (Kagwanja 2005). As such, for many youths, joining the NYS was viewed as a strategic move to gain access to scarce resources and employment opportunities in government

³³ This later became the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment; and at present the.

³⁴ The Herald, Cde Border Gezi, a national hero of distinction, August 4, 2014, Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/cde-border-gezi-a-national-hero-of-distinction/>

³⁵ The Herald quoted in Solidarity Peace Trust, p.18

³⁶ NYS graduates are nicknamed 'Border Gezi youth' after the founder, the politician Border Gezi; but also 'green bombers' after their green uniforms and 'storm troopers' for their actions.

³⁷ European Country of Origin Information Network, Retrieved from: http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/202776/307706_en.html

departments. To be considered and recruited as police officers, soldiers, prison officers, nurses and other civil service jobs, the NYS certificate became a pre-requisite.

In 2013, the ZANU-PF government reviewed this National Youth Policy. The revised policy sought to place more emphasis on education and skills development for the youth and to promote the active involvement of youth in national processes and development. The policy coincided with attempts to revive the National Youth Service and the notorious youth militia, hinting at the 2018 election. However, this had insufficient financial support.³⁸

Since the 'soft coup' in November 2017, the new government has sought to revise the National Youth Policy to align it with the development trajectory of the so-called 'new' dispensation and/or second republic. Consultations with key stakeholders, including youth organisations and civil society, began in late 2018. The current political leadership argues that the revisions are meant to align the policy with the country's 2030 agenda to transform the country into an upper middle-income economy. For the current leadership, the youth policy was not consistent with the prevailing socio-economic and political realities. As such, the revised policy is meant to harmonise youth development initiatives and the national development agenda, in line with President's Mnangagwa's rhetoric on youth as instrumental to economic development.³⁹

6 Youth-directed employment schemes and programmes

The government has established funds to support youth income generating projects and loan schemes at various points in time after 2000, when youth under- and unemployment rates were staggering. The Youth Development Fund (YDF) programme was established as a revolving micro-loan facility around 2006 and was intended to promote and support youth entrepreneurship and income generating initiatives. Targeting youth aged between 18 to 35 years old, the fund was part of the government's indigenisation and empowerment strategy. Rather than emphasising job creation, the controversial Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act (IEA) of 2007 mandated all foreign owned businesses to cede 51% of their shares to black Zimbabweans as a way of promoting local ownership of strategic national resources (Magure 2012; Masunungure & Koga 2007). Under this act, funds were established for start-ups and business expansions. The IEA was only implemented under the GNU from 2010 onwards. According to Dube (2013) there are sharp differences among the Zimbabwean youths with regards to the indigenisation policy and programmes. Youth from the opposition parties and other organisations complained that the funding for youth empowerment is only accessible to

³⁸ See The Independent, Reviving storm-troopers Zanu PF's ploy for 2018, March 3, 2017. <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2017/03/03/reviving-storm-troopers-zanu-pfs-ploy-2018/>; The Zimbabwean, Re-branded NYS stinks, September 17, 2015 <http://thezimbabwean.co/2015/09/re-branded-nys-stinks/>

³⁹ The Sunday Mail, Youth critical partners in national development, June 16, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/youth-critical-partners-in-national-development/>

ZANU-PF aligned youth. For instance, ZANU-aligned groups such as *Upfumi Kuvadiki* (Wealth to the youth) largely benefited from the empowerment funds.

Similarly, the *Kurera – Ukondla* Youth Fund, established in the lead-up to the 2013 elections, was also monopolised by ZANU-PF aligned youth at the expense of other youth.⁴⁰ This fund was established as part of Old Mutual's indigenisation agreement with the Zimbabwean government and aimed to stimulate economic growth and reduce levels of unemployment.⁴¹ Young people complained that the requirements for them to access the *Kurera* funds were too stringent and rigid.⁴² In May 2014, the Central African Building Society (CABS) stopped the disbursement of the *Kurera* youth empowerment loans due to high default rates.⁴³ Many beneficiaries, especially ZANU-PF youth, felt this was free government money which should not be returned.⁴⁴ In 2014, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Youth and Indigenization discovered serious irregularities in the programmes, including abuse, embezzlement of funds by politicians and a staggering 85 per cent default rate.⁴⁵

Prior to the 2013 Presidential elections, ZANU-PF crafted a broad Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZimAsset) as a development policy blueprint, which it used as the party's election campaign manifesto. Although ZimAsset did not specifically target youth, it promised youth empowerment initiatives as well as employment for youth. When the ZANU-PF government launched ZimAsset, then President Mugabe urged the youth to 'own it and understand it'.⁴⁶ Youth affiliated to the National Youth Development Trust were seen as key stakeholders in the implementation of ZimAsset and were urged to seize the opportunities provided by the scheme.⁴⁷ During campaigns, ZANU-PF politicians sought to lure youth voters by promising resources to empower youth in business through ZimAsset's value addition and beneficiation cluster. This was particularly relevant for young people in the mining and agricultural sectors. For instance, the Ministry of Youth and the Zimbabwe Youth Council established and facilitated the participation of four anchor companies in four ZimAsset clusters (Youth Feed Zimbabwe, Youth Employ Zimbabwe, Youth Shape Zimbabwe, and Youth

⁴⁰ Dailynews, 'Kasukuwere politicising youth fund', September 3, 2012. Retrieved from: <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2012/09/03/kasukuwere-politicising-youth-fund>

⁴¹ Old Mutual, *Old Mutual Statement on Kurera-Unkondla Youth Fund Progress*, February 15, 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.oldmutual.co.zw/news/newsdetail/2014/12/02/old-mutual-statement-on-kurera-ukondla-youth-fund-progress>

⁴² The Sunday News, *Youth complain over inaccessibility of Kurera/Ukondla fund*, 2014. Retrieved from: www.sundaynews.co.zw/youth-complain-over-inaccessibility-of-kureraukondla-fund/amp/

⁴³ Dailynews, *CABS halts youth empowerment loans*, July 5, 2014. Retrieved from: www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2014/07/05/cabs-halts-youth-empowerment-loans;

⁴⁴ The Independent, *Youth Fund viewed as free government money*, July 11, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2014/07/11/youth-fund-viewed-free-government-money/>

⁴⁵ The Independent, *Youth Fund: Tale of unbridled looting*, June 13, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2014/06/13/youth-fund-tale-unbridled-looting/>

⁴⁶ The Patriot, *Own and understand Zim-Asset: President*, February 27, 2014. Retrieved from: https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/own-and-understand-zim-asset-president/

⁴⁷ Chronicle, *Youths urged to grab opportunities availed through Zim-Asset*, March 28, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/youths-urged-to-grab-opportunities-availed-through-zim-asset/>

Industrialise Zimbabwe).⁴⁸ The Ministry further launched the ZimCHEER Herald and the ZimAsset Youth Achievers programme which aimed to get youth focused on the country's agenda for socio-economic transformation. The ZimCHEER initiative was meant to celebrate young economic champions and designed to integrate youth within the ZimAsset policy and the broader development agenda. The YDF was used to fund some of these initiatives.

After swearing in of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, the YDF was temporarily suspended but was later revived prior to the 2018 elections. In January 2018, the government reportedly availed \$10 million for youth projects. Furthermore, Mnangagwa established a youth empowerment bank (Empower Bank, EB) after establishing a women's microfinance bank in 2018.⁴⁹ At its launch, the EB received \$12 million from the state.⁵⁰ This bank is expected to provide loans to young people at low interest rate and without strict demands for collateral security.⁵¹ The launch of the Empowerment Bank should be viewed within the context of ZANU-PF's election campaign narrative, when Mnangagwa promised to accelerate youth empowerment programmes to provide jobs for young people. It is important to note that the Empower Bank was not Mnangagwa's initiative. In fact, before he was ousted in November 2017, Mugabe had already released US 2,5 million for the capitalisation of Empower Bank.⁵² The former president wanted the bank to fund business ventures operated by young entrepreneurs. After its launch, many youths initially viewed this bank as the panacea to the challenges they faced in accessing funding for their projects. However, few projects and applications have been funded, as of March 2019 just 600 loans for youth projects and businesses had been distributed.

In addition, the government wants to empower youth through offering them small scale mining claims. In 2018, the government launched a youth in mining programme through the Zimbabwe Allied Youth in Mining Organisation, which should help young people who want to work in the mining sector access mining claims and equipment.⁵³

Dedicated youth funds and schemes have been an important strategy for appealing to the youth since the early 2000s, when youth unemployment became an increasing problem and a reason for discontent, and the government became increasingly aware of the youth demographic. Both as government and as party, ZANU—PF has used its broad networks to channel resources to its

⁴⁸ The Herald, *Zim celebrates youth empowerment*, March 3, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/zim-celebrates-youth-empowerment/>

⁴⁹ Newsday, *Mnangagwa relaunches Grace Mugabe project*, July 6, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/07/mnangagwa-relaunches-grace-mugabe-project/>

⁵⁰ The Independent, *Empower Bank adequately financed*, March 22, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2019/03/22/empower-bank-adequately-financed/>

⁵¹ Chronicle, *New bank opens in Bulawayo. \$50 000 non-collateral loan package for youths*, March 13, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/new-bank-opens-in-bulawayo-50-000-non-collateral-loan-package-for-youths/>

⁵² The Sunday News, *Government to economically empower youths*, June 18, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.sundaynews.co.zw/government-to-economically-empower-youths/>

⁵³ The Herald, *Youth mining programme launched*, September 29, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/youth-mining-programme-launched/>

own constituencies, seeking to promote loyalty and discipline in the youth. It is highly likely that current economic empowerment programmes will also be allocated along partisan lines to reward allegiance to ZANU-PF.

7 The Zimbabwe Youth Council and youth civil society

Many countries have established National Youth Councils (NYCs) with elected youth members to facilitate youth participation. In many contexts their budgets are limited, the councillors are not involved in real decision-making processes by government actors or their recommendations are ignored and they 'lack teeth' as they fail to connect with formal political structures (CEPPS 2018; Bangura and Specht 2012; McGee and Greenhalf 2011: 31). It is also known that the democratic potential of such NYCs has been undermined by elite capture, divisions between youth belonging to different ethnic groups and patronage by ruling parties (Cubitt 2012; Oosterom, Pan Maran & Wilson 2019). Many of these issues apply to the Zimbabwe Youth Council (ZYC).

ZYC was established in 1997 and is meant to facilitate the interaction between the youth and the Ministry responsible for youth affairs. ZYC has elected and appointed members, which paves the way for partisan appointments.⁵⁴ While ZYC does have elected members it operates more like a regulatory body for youth civil society organisations (CSOs) than a representative institution. Ministries can distribute youth-earmarked programme funds to ZYC, which it can allocate to member organisations. ZYC runs the Junior Parliament, which is implemented in each province with one child MP per constituency.⁵⁵ Youth in civil society have critiqued NYC for being undemocratic and 'old', for its partisan patronage in selecting beneficiaries and for becoming politicised altogether.⁵⁶ In 2015, all elected ZYC board members were known ZANU-PF activists, thus there were allegations that ZANU-PF interfered with elections.⁵⁷ ZYC has been accused of corruption, for instance in 2016 when the Parliamentary portfolio committee on Youth wanted to know how ZYC received fuel from the Manpower Development Fund (Zimdef)⁵⁸ and could not account for funds received from Old Mutual Zimbabwe that was allegedly disbursed to a young,

⁵⁴ The Herald, 'Govt announces youth board', 3 August 2016, Retrieved from: <https://www.herald.co.zw/govt-announces-youth-board/>

⁵⁵ Pachikoro, *The purpose and structure of the junior parliament*, 2016. Retrieved from: <http://www.pachikoro.co.zw/2016/06/the-purpose-and-structure-of-the-junior-parliament/>; The Sunday Mail, 'Zim will benefit more with young blood in Parly', 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/zim-will-benefit-more-with-young-blood-in-parly/amp>

⁵⁶ Newsday, *Youths call on leaders to end tyranny*, March 1, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/03/youths-call-on-leaders-to-end-tyranny/>; Newsday, *Youth up in arms against ZYC*, July 9, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/07/youths-up-in-arms-against-zyc/>

⁵⁷ Newsday, *Zanu PF grabs Youth Council seats*, August 31, 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2015/08/zanu-pf-grabs-youth-council-seats/>

⁵⁸ Newsday, *Parly threatens to charge Youth Council*, December 2, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/12/parly-threatens-charge-youth-council/>

controversial ZANU-PF activist the same year.⁵⁹ Accusations of corruption that emerged in late 2016 may have been fuelled by factionalism as ZYC stood with Jonathan Moyo, a prominent ZANU-PF politician and leading G40 member.⁶⁰

Youth civil society organisations have faced the same restrictions and forms of repression as all registered civil society and non-governmental organisations.⁶¹ Restrictive laws such as Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and Public Order and Security Act (POSA), all introduced during the political crisis in the 2000s, have not been amended to align with the 2013 Constitution and thus limit political freedoms of youth CSOs (ZHR 2013). In January 2013, the government introduced a law that required all youth organisations to register with ZYC, making it compulsory to pay fees, submit annual reports and renew registration annually (HRW 2013:27). Youth groups were outraged about how much control the law placed in the hands of the government, and perceived it as a tactic to control youth civil society ahead of the 2013 referendum on the new Constitution and the elections.⁶² The nature and strategies of Zimbabwean youth CSO have not been studied, but when they want to address and be vocal governance issues they are likely to face similar constraints as other CSOs.

While it is generally believed to be partisan and dominated by ZANU-PF, ZYC can be considered less influential than the party's Youth League, which is far more vocal on national issues and can mobilise youth directly. However, ZYC has gained influence as gatekeeper to accessing youth funds, and can refrain from granting funds to youth organisations that are not considered supportive of ZANU-PF. Consequently, many youth CSOs are compelled to show allegiance to ZANU-PF as a pre-condition for them to access funding and other forms of material support from the government and its affiliated institutions. However, some youth led civil society organisations have been outspoken about their grievances against the state. For instance, in April 2019, the National Association of Youth Organisations bemoaned the dwindling civic space in

⁵⁹ Newsday, *ZYC boss probed over \$17 650 donation*, May 12, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/05/zyc-boss-probed-17-650-donation/>; Newsday, *Kasukuwere announces new ZYC board*, June 14, 2012. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2012/06/2012-06-14-kasukuwere-announces-new-zyc-board/>; Newsday, *ZYC boss probed over \$17 650 donation*, May 12, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/05/zyc-boss-probed-17-650-donation/>. In November 2018 Lumumba was appointed as Spokesperson in Mnangagwa's government but dismissed after making allegations of corruptions to senior officials.

⁶⁰ Newsday, *ZYC stands by embattled Moyo*, October 13, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/10/zyc-stands-embattled-moyo/>

⁶¹ A rich literature exists on the range of strategies the ZANU-PF regime has used to curtail the independent media and civil society organisations that promoted human rights and democratic governance, and/or were aligned with the MDC. For further details, see Dorman (2002), (2003) and her book (2016) in which she analyses the ways in which the government has dealt with organised civil society over time and how CSOs responded; Chiroro (2013).

⁶² VOA, *Zimbabwe Introduces Tough Regulations Targeting Youth Groups*, February 05, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.voazimbabwe.com/a/zimbabwe-introduces-severe-regulations-targeting-youth-groups/1597064.html>; Dailynews, *Youth groups slam statutory instrument*, May 1, 2013. Retrieved from: <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2013/05/01/youth-groups-slam-statutory-instrument>

the 'new dispensation'.⁶³ The organisation was concerned about the concerted crackdown on youth led CSOs perceived to be critical to the state.

8 Student unions

Student unions are spaces through which university students and young people launch and develop their political careers. Indeed, many students view student politics as a steppingstone to national politics. Consequently, the regime has seized this opportunity to engage with youth in the student political landscape. In Zimbabwe, there is a predominantly bifurcated student body, with the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), the country's oldest student union, largely aligned to the opposition while the Zimbabwe Congress of Students Union (ZICOSU) aligns with ZANU-PF. ZICOSU was formed as a splinter union to rival ZINASU which was viewed by ZANU-PF as aligned to opposition political parties, especially the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). ZICOSU helps ZANU-PF to mobilise youthful votes across the country's tertiary institutions and beyond. Indeed, many ZICOSU students regularly meet ZANU-PF political leadership and are often provided huge financial support to fund their political campaigns and other activities on campus. For instance, the Zimbabwe Independent reported that from 2011 to 2014, officials from the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education allowed ZICOSU to access more than US \$ 220,000 for its activities (Moyo 2016).⁶⁴ It is largely believed that many ZICOSU students are part of a surveillance network on campus, conducting surveillance in cahoots with the notorious Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) (see Gukurume 2019a). Through such networks, ZICOSU students receive stipends from the government for their subsistence and upkeep on campus. Joining patronage networks aligned to the ruling ZANU-PF was one way through which students navigated the protracted socio-economic crisis (Gukurume 2019b). The ZICOSU leaders and members also tend to get priority for campus accommodation and other scarce resources on campus, such as loans and bursaries. In fact, the majority of the students who access the presidential scholarships to study in China, South Africa and other countries are members of ZICOSU (ibid.). Initially, the presidential scholarship targeted ZANU-PF aligned rural youth, many of which were children of war veterans and collaborators as well as the urban residents with connection to the ruling party.

Like the ZANU-PF youth league, ZICOSU was not immune to the factional battles that rocked the party.⁶⁵ At the height of factional battles, ZICOSU almost split into two factions with one camp in support of G40 and another camp in support of Lacoste. However, after the coup in November 2017 many ZICOSU students spearheaded Emmerson Mnangagwa's election

⁶³ NewsDay, *Youth Worry over Shrinking Civic Society Space*, April 17, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/04/youths-worry-over-shrinking-civic-society-space/>

⁶⁴ The Independent, *Zicosu milks government*, February 5, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2016/02/05/zicosu-milks-government/amp/>

⁶⁵ Newsday, *ZANU PF factionalism seeps down to tertiary students*, February 3, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/02/zanu-pf-factionalism-seeps-down-to-tertiary-students/amp/>

campaign through the #EDHasMyVote campaign on social media platforms.⁶⁶ To mobilise support from students, Mnangagwa organised a meeting with students from all tertiary institutions in the country in Harare in 2018. The conference was themed 'Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Inclusion of Leaders of Tomorrow', resonating with Agenda 2063 of African governments (AU 2017). This was a clear promise to the young well-educated generation, which had been disgruntled over the lack of formal employment that fits their education.

9 Youth activism outside of formal institutions

In recent years, new urban protest movements that involve large numbers of young people have emerged. These movements are organised outside of conventional, formal institutions like the unions and have largely mobilised online through social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, while often also engaging in street protests. Some of the most prominent social movements that emerged include #ThisFlag, #Tajamuka and #ThisGown (Gukurume 2017). These movements were led and initiated by young people frustrated with the deepening economic crisis, declining employment opportunities, worsening cases of corruption by government officials and growing cases of police brutality against vendors and protestors (ibid.). While these movements are largely urban based, some made efforts to mobilise young people in the rural areas through participation in the #ZimbabweYadzoka/Mayibuye iZimbabwe (reclaiming Zimbabwe) campaign.

In 2017, #ThisFlag mobilised people to protest together with the war veterans' organised demonstration to call for the stepping down of President Robert Mugabe. Thousands responded to the call by the #ThisFlag leader Pastor Evan Mawarire and marched on the streets of Harare in November 2017. Indeed, protests organised by youth led social movements, like #ThisFlag and #Tajamuka, helped sanitise the November 2017 military assisted transition/coup. After the coup, #ThisFlag leader Mawarire unsuccessfully contested for a councillor position in Harare in the 2018 general election. Since then, the movement's influence has waned, which is partly explained by the brutality through which the Mnangagwa regime responded to protests. However, in spite of the state brutality and intimidation, protests erupted again. In January 2019, Mawarire and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) leader jointly called for protests in response to the government's fuel price hike. The fuel protests called by the #ThisFlag and the ZCTU led to another brutal crackdown on protestors and seventeen protestors lost their lives during the two-week period of upheaval in January 2017 (Beardsworth et al. 2019). The two leaders were arrested and charged with treason.

⁶⁶ Bulawayo24 News, *Zicosu joins #EDHasMyVote campaign*, March 15, 2018. Retrieved from: <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-130294.html>

Conclusion

This working paper has discussed the multiple strategies through which the Government of Zimbabwe has dealt with its youth population. The paper shows that the Zimbabwean government has deliberately targeted young people using a combination of 'carrots and sticks', with the 'carrots' largely aimed at binding youth into patronage relationships. In its discourse, ZANU-PF has appealed to the youth and seeks to fashion a form of youth citizenship that aligns with its liberation ideology, and by implication respect for the older generation in power. ZANU-PF has institutionalised youth participation through the ZANU-PF Youth League, which has become important for mobilising constituencies and is part of the ZANU-PF apparatus for intimidating the population. The Zimbabwe Youth Council, however, is mainly used to distribute fund to party-aligned youth groups. The Youth League particularly serves as an avenue for accessing power and resources in the party. The National Youth Service (2000-2008) demonstrates a critical instance of violence mobilisation of youth. Although abandoned, NYS graduates continue to be part of ZANU-PF networks on the ground and are deployed for surveillance purposes. The development of patronage networks to youth constituencies, by maintaining ghost workers, the partisan allocation of scholarships and resources for education, and the allocation of various youth funds and schemes along partisan lines, has comprised a major ZANU-PF strategy to forge loyalty. Kriger's (2012) notion of governance and control through informal networks thus continues to be relevant, and this paper shows how this has been used by the now ageing liberation actors to both appeal to and control a young generation. As in Uganda (Reuss & Titeca 2017), patronage and coercion are major strategies for the ZANU-PF government to deal with the youth population, especially since it could no longer get away with 'hard' violence mobilisation after 2008. However, more than Museveni's regime in Uganda, ZANU-PF has used political institutions like the Youth League, NYS and ZYC as a vehicle for integrating youth, using them for surveillance and intimidation. Like Southall (2019) argued, if any power is handed to younger people, it is likely to those in ZANU-PF's inner circle.

To conclude, through its discourses, programmes for economic empowerment, and political integration, ZANU-PF is trying to deal with the youth in a way that ensures its power can be sustained. Yet it also appears that ZANU-PF's that patronage may not enough to appease the large numbers of youth who are currently affected by the dire economic situation. Moreover, there is some evidence that suggests that not all young people are susceptible to patronage politics (Oosterom 2019). Important knowledge gaps remain. One question concerns the relative importance of this menu of youth-focused strategies compared to other, better-known strategies like election rigging, given the limited number of youth reached by partisan funding schemes. While the rigging of elections may help a regime to stay in power for the immediate future, the youth-focused strategies discussed here may serve the consolidation of power for the longer term: through nurturing a loyal support base and socialization. A further question concerns diversity in the youth population. The gendered dimensions of recruitment into party networks has not been explored, nor is the, regional dimension, which is particularly relevant in Zimbabwe. Differences may also exist between urban and rural youth, with rural youth being

further removed from the centre of power and resources, while youth officers in Zimbabwe do operate in both rural and urban areas. Finally, there is a weak understanding of the agency of youth, both those who are affiliated to ZANU-PF and those outside of its networks, in response to these regime strategies.

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A rich literature on Africa's autocratic and repressive regimes has discussed the diverse strategies through which these regimes seek to consolidate and stay in power. Prominent strategies include election rigging, extensive patronage, corruption, the use of decentralised or federal governance systems, limiting political and civic freedoms through restrictive legislation, election violence and forms of surveillance and intimidation to crack down any form of dissent and protest, and promoting a culture of fear and discourses that delegitimise dissenting voices (Aalen & Muriaas 2018; Ghandi & Lust-Okar 2009; Hodzi 2014; Hossain, Nalini, Mohmand, Nazneen, Oosterom, Roberts, Santos, Shankland, & Schroeder 2018; Schedler 2013). As part of a research project on youth in authoritarian regimes, this working paper explores the proposition that the ways that regimes deal with this urban youth population is a strategy for holding on to power.

While it is known that regimes that have large youth populations are more likely to use repression than other regimes (Nordas & Davenport 2013), this paper discusses how the relationship between the Government of Zimbabwe, the ruling party and the country's youth population has developed over time and examines the strategies used by the government and ruling party to include, exclude and repress the youth.

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