

## Youth Political Mobilization: Violence, Intimidation, and Patronage in Zimbabwe

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*In this article, we argue that the “making” and deployment of political violence can be construed as hard work, in which political elites mobilize those from below to sustain their positions through the mobilization and doing of violence against perceived opposition political parties and or individuals. The article examines the ways in which former President Robert Mugabe instrumentalized his political relationship with his clients as a tool of political mobilization and perpetrating political violence in urban spaces where his electoral support base had dwindled. We argue that one of the remarkable ways in which Mugabe was able to remain in power for three decades was through his ability to creatively transform his influence and political position into a source of opportunities for his political clients, in particular the youth. We, therefore, assert that Mugabe extended and maintained his political patrimonial relationship with youths who did the work of political violence for him and his ZANU-PF party. The mobilization of youth political violence is therefore an “art of governing” from below. This article is based on ethnographic data collected between 2016 and 2017 from youth in Harare. We conducted in-depth interviews, life-history interviews, observations, and informal conversations with youth in Harare city, Zimbabwe.*

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In this article, we argue that the “making” and doing of political violence is hard work. We assert that one of the remarkable ways in which former President Robert Mugabe was able to maintain power was due to his ability to transform his presidency into a source of opportunities for his political clients, in particular the youth. We assert that political violence is never easy to perpetrate and sustain over time. It requires social and political resources, including individuals mobilized into the practices of doing it. The article focuses on how “techniques” of doing violence were mobilized to control and govern those who resisted Mugabe and his political party. The ways in which violence has been mobilized to sustain Mugabe in power demonstrate how youth violence is an “art of governing” in a context characterized by political crisis and authoritarianism. The article then examines how, in return, youth utilized their relationship with the political system of former president Robert Mugabe

to extort people in the cities. This, therefore, reveals how “patronage” and “patrimonialism” political practices were deployed to sustain Mugabe’s regime and power. The article analyzes the voices of those who have been victimized by the youths who represented former President Robert Mugabe and his political party: the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). We assert that even though urban support for ZANU-PF was waning, the ZANU-PF youth intimidated, threatened, and mobilized people to cheer for Mugabe at political campaign meetings and other state-sanctioned gatherings. We begin by conceptualizing youth and youth violence, and then we contextualize how such violence was organized and deployed for purposes of mobilizing political support for Mugabe. We use Foucault’s (1976) ideas of “governmentality” to theorize how youth violence mobilization is an “art of governing,” in particular, those who resist being “governed” so that they can be “governable.” This, for Foucault (1976, p. 3) is the “mechanisms of power,” which orders and manages life and even death. The government deploys various “techniques of control,” to manage the resisting population. In this article, we examine such techniques. We then utilize the idea of “patrimonialism” (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Erdmann & Engel, 2007) to examine how youth who did violence for Mugabe benefited from such political relationship with the Mugabe regime for their benefit. In a context in which political patrimonialism is practised, the leader dispenses benefits in return for his followers to do violence, as a way of sustaining his political power. Youth are often caught in the practices of doing violence for political leaders in return for benefits.

### Conceptualizing Youth Violence

While there have been contentious debates on defining the youth, we acknowledge that youths are not a homogenous group and, rather than defining them in terms of age, we understand youths as defined by social expectations and responsibilities and consider those who, despite their age, have not yet been able to attain the social expectations of adulthood (Honwana, 2013, p. 19; Singerman, 2013). Thus, individuals may grow older, yet remain socially defined as youth. Hence, some youth live in a kind of prolonged “suspension” of being perceived as juveniles and their ability to move into socially constructed adulthood is impaired. For Singerman (2013, p. 1) this is the “limbo of waithood.” These youths lack social recognition as adults: they are no longer children in need of care, yet they have insufficient wherewithal to become independent adults (Singerman, 2007). Thus, many young people experience “wait adulthood,” that is, they remain stuck in a liminal position between youth and adulthood (Singerman, 2013).

It is therefore important to note that such “waithood limbo” becomes a form of entrapment where the majority of young people remain susceptible to being instrumentalized into doing violence, as well as becoming victims of it. Hage (2009) assert that this is “waiting out of the crisis” which is the capacity to “stick it out.” For Honwana (2013, p. 3), many youths in Africa can be considered as being part of a “waithood generation,” which can also potentially make them a potential source of violence. In this regard, Hage (2009, p. 11) assert that being part of youth is characterized by an “imaginary mobility,” an “existential mobility,” which is an “imagined” sense that one is “going somewhere” (p. 97). Such existential experiences make it possible for youth to engage in the work of violence in a context of crisis. Hage (2009) describes this as “stuckness” and underscores the experience of many youths of “waiting out of crisis.” Hage (2009, p. 1) refers to this as “existential dwelling,” an emphasis on youth who are embedded in the discrete ways of mobilizing and being mobilized into violence. It is important to note that youths who are mobilized to do violence are not entirely “stuck”; they do have the agency of understanding violence. In describing the social and political mobility of youth in a context of political crisis, Vigh (2009, p. 420) employed the concept of “social navigation” to examine how youths get by within violent times and situations, in particular how they move in unsettled spaces and places. Thus, for Sumberg et al. (2020), while youth are entangled in economic volatile situations, they

have the agency to move beyond their defined challenges. Thus, it is not just about doing violence, but youth are engaged in other existential economic activities as well. In this regard, they are “weaponized” to do violence, while grabbing opportunities in the same context (Gukurume, 2018; Oosterom, 2019; Oosterom et al., 2019).

However, the pervasiveness of youth violence can be understood from Honwana’s (2013) assertion that for many young people in African countries, where the economies are underperforming and corruption is rife, violence offers possible ways to survive. Violence can be inculcated in everyday life to the extent that people normalize fractured contexts (Vigh, 2008, p. 8). In such contexts, youths are increasingly moving from dispersed and unstructured social and political acts into more organized forms of violence (Honwana, 2013).

The perceptions for these young people are that violence brings hope. For Havel (1990), “hope... is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out” (p. 181). In a context of continued socioeconomic and political crisis, youth are faced with a “shrinking configuration of hope” to eke out a meaningful living. This is what Vigh (2008) refers to as the “temporal condensation of crisis” (p. 8), in which hope is invoked within the violent moments. In such situations, the youth become susceptible to armed violence. The contextualization of the mobilization of youth violence is critical as it provides a space that allows us to engage with specific forms of youth mobilization and the making of the politics of doing violence.

### The Politics of Violence: Contextualization

In Zimbabwe, the “making” of violence defines politics (Alexander, 2003; Chaumba et al., 2003). While doing research on and writing about violence is not a new phenomenon, it is imperative to interrogate how such violence has been mobilized and mediated in profound ways. The emphasis here is on how former President Robert Mugabe and his political party thrived on violence against their political rivalry. This is also underscored by some scholars who argue that Mugabe and his ZANU-PF henchmen have never peacefully coexisted with opposition parties since independence in 1980 (see Alexander & Chitofiri, 2010). In fact, ZANU-PF approached the opposition political parties and anyone who opposed them as enemies to be annihilated (Muzondidya, 2009). For instance, in post-2000 elections, ZANU-PF relied heavily on commanding youth to do violence to the supporters of their main political rival, the MDC (Masunungure & Mutasa, 2011; Sachikonye, 2011). The late Minister of Youth, Border Gezi, introduced the National Youth Service program to indoctrinate the youth into ZANU-PF politics of violence and a narrow patriotic history which portrayed Mugabe as the beginning and the end of Zimbabwean politics and liberation (Ranger, 2004; Tendi, 2008). The trained youth, pejoratively called “green bombers” as a result of the fatigue uniforms they wore, were deployed in youth militia bases, especially in the rural areas where they perpetrated political violence against MDC supporters (see Chitukutuku, 2017). The involvement of youths in violence helps us to understand how Mugabe mobilized violence to support and enhance his political status—especially in post-2000 when his political power base began to wane.

Political violence happened in conjunction with an unprecedented economic crisis that worsened in the post-2000 era (Gukurume, 2015; Jones, 2010a; Maringira, 2017). During this era, the country experienced a world-record level of hyperinflation for a country that was not at war. Consequently, due to this protracted socioeconomic and political crisis, ZANU-PF’s influence and support in the urban spaces was likewise continuously waning and eroded. The economic crisis compelled many people to resort to *kukiya-kiya* (surviving by making do) (Jones, 2010), especially buying and selling forex on the street. People’s livelihoods were mediated by and through practices of “*kujingirisa*” (multiple improvisational ways of getting by) (Gukurume, 2019a). These illicit practices of buying

and selling forex on the streets were fueled by hyperinflation, and this compelled the government to respond through price control blitzes. The police and army were deployed in crackdowns against formal business and informal traders.

The former Finance Minister in the Unity Government, Biti (2007) described the above approach of “arresting” inflation as *ginya-nomics*, that is, the use of extralegal means for the sole purpose of retaining political power. Biti referred to the Mugabe government’s way of dealing with the aforementioned situation as a “vampire militarized state” whose sole aim was the reproduction of political power (Biti, 2007). Indeed, it was this form of politics that pushed the majority of the Zimbabwean youth (who did not become “green bombers”) into informal employment; selling secondhand clothing (*bhero*), selling airtime on the streets, becoming vendors on the streets and in the local markets, and engaging in creative steel and wooden furniture making in self-initiated home industries.

However, the government sometimes unleashed terror against informal street vendors (see Magure, 2015; Musoni, 2010). The unleashing of violent crackdowns on the informal sector players and/or vendors was also a mobilization strategy that compelled many vendors to join ZANU-PF as a form of self-protection from state brutality. We particularly focus on issues of youth political threats, intimidation, and extortion in public markets, stalls, and taxi city routes and other spaces of informal and violent accumulation. The ability of ZANU-PF youth to do violence was necessitated by the support they enjoyed from both ZANU-PF politicians and the security agencies such as the police, military, and the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO). In fact, the youth militia was an informal extension of ZANU-PF’s repressive state machinery (Chitukutuku, 2017). For instance, in Mbare, a low-income area in Harare, a youth militia group called *Chipangano (Agreement)* was notorious for its role in political violence, extortion, the capture of market stalls, bus terminuses, and other public streets while enjoying the impunity extended to them by Mugabe’s ZANU-PF government. Chipangano committed acts of violence without being arrested by the police. This predominantly youth-led militia group orchestrated violence and mobilized support for Mugabe’s ZANU-PF and in turn were rewarded with the power to become the de facto tax collector from market stalls and home industries. Chipangano youth invaded open spaces and council property around the area of Mbare and used violence to governance space and rents. They grabbed council markets and allocated market tables: selling spaces in the market while extorting “revenue” thereof.

### Researching the Context of Fear

Being in a context where violence is legitimized by the state, asking those who do the work of violence and those who experience it is considered political. The research on which this article is based was conducted in Zimbabwe’s capital city of Harare between 2016 and 2017. We interviewed 35 participants, focusing on those who were affected by youth mobilization of violence in the city of Harare. Our conversations were not necessarily about violence but what people do in their everyday life to get by. We approached the youth who were working in home industries: manufacturing wooden furniture, making couches, tables, chairs, kitchen units, wardrobes, coffins, window/door frames, electric gates, etc.—mainly in high-density suburbs. We started a conversation with one of the carpenters, named “Tino.” He was interested in engaging us because, on a good day, we would have been his potential customers. He asked in our local language, Shona:

*Ndokuitirai chii ma Boss angu-Ndokupai chii nhasi?* (What can I do for you my bosses? Which products do you want today?). We responded: “*Ndimi ma Boss*” (You are our boss). Tino retorted, “*musadaro madhara*” (Don’t say that (while laughing)). We then told him that, “we are just interested in seeing what you guys are making in case when we get money we will know where to buy good couches and tables. (Tino, 2017, personal interview)

In our conversations, Tino later spoke about the fear of the spies “planted” by the former President Mugabe’s regime and how the ZANU-PF youth indoctrinate them (informal vendors) through the politics of representation of the former as “sell-outs” and outsiders. The idea of “sell-outs” is embedded in ZANU-PF’s discourse of “patriotic history” (Ranger, 2004), based on the creation of binaries, that of “patriots” and “sell-outs.” As part of such patriotic history, Mugabe was celebrated as the past, present, and future leader of Zimbabwe (Tendi, 2008), ZANU-PF loyalists were viewed as patriots while opposition politicians and supporters or perceived sympathizers were branded as “sell-outs.” As such, suspected “sell-outs” lived under real and perceived state surveillance from the youth militia, who acted as informers to the CIO. Indeed, some ZANU-PF-aligned youth were part of a sophisticated network of spies (see Gukurume, 2019a). Tino talked about how people fear(ed) their neighbors and how this anxiety has permeated into their daily activities and practices—including greeting and engaging strangers. We presented our ethical approval and university ID’s; Tino was persuaded and convinced that we were indeed academics doing research, and he agreed to grant us an interview and to assist us during our fieldwork.

We were introduced to other carpenters and steelmakers on the market complex located in a high-density area in Harare. In his introduction, Tino said, “these are my friends; they are from a university in South Africa. They just want to know our lives here at the complex; maybe you can also talk to them.” Tino left us with other young men who were making window/door frames and electric gates. Because we were introduced as friends from a university in South Africa, most of these youths did not bother to ask us about our interest in their products: window frames. However, we asked them if we can just have a closer look at what they were making. Indeed, they were doing great and innovative work. We later talked with them about our research on their lives in the city and importantly, how they were able to make a living. The responses revealed to us that Mugabe’s youth deployed different techniques of control such as a mobilization register, that is, a record of all the youth working in the complex and ensuring their attendance of ZANU-PF political campaigns.

We triangulated our research methods and sources of data. In collecting primary data, we utilized participant observation, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and informal conversations. We augmented this with published articles and other relevant published sources. Triangulating our research methods and sources of both primary and secondary data enabled us to not only get “thick descriptions” from the field, but it also ensured the rigor of our research data. Our participant observation involved regular visits to various city markets. The strength of this technique is that we were able to observe the everydayness of the market politics and activities in real time and within the context in which they occurred. By so doing, we were able to observe and demarcate what people say they do and what they actually do. This was possible after sustained and regular visits to the markets, engaging in everyday conversations with many of them. Doing so helped us to progressively build trusting relationships with our interlocutors.

After establishing strong rapport at the markets, we conducted 35 in-depth interviews with youth at this and several other politicized markets in Harare, albeit focusing mainly on one market in a high-density area in Harare. We also engaged in participant observation at the market, characterized with in informal conversations with youths and key informants. Our use of several ethnographic research methods enabled us to collect rich data. In fact, through in-depth interviews, we were able to probe through follow-up questions to get clarity on interesting issues that emerged from the interview process. Due to the fear of recording interviews in the field of study, in particular on issues which has to do with youth, we relied on taking notes, then collate the data after the interview process. In analyzing our data, we used thematic analysis, drawing themes from the data. While thematic analysis is widely used, there is no consensus on what thematic analysis is and how researchers go about doing it (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). We did not approach the field of data with preconceived themes to be developed in writing the article. However, we utilized the inductive approach in drawing our themes, and this involves data-driven themes, that is, we developed themes from the data. Braun

and Clarke (2019, p. 592) notes that the approach is not mathematical, instead it is theoretically flexible, generic, and less constraining. In our article, we identified commonly recurring themes from our data after coding (Braun & Wilkinson, 2003).

In defining a theme, Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) emphasize that it captures important issues and speaks to the guiding research question, which underpins the research, giving particular meanings within the data set. In our study, a set of themes emerged: participants talk about a register, in which their personal details were recorded, including attendance on ZANU-PF political meetings as one of the participants notes,

We have a register here, all our personal details are therein, we have nowhere to hide, ZANU-PF calls a register to record those present and absent from their meetings. (Tatenda, 2017, personal interview)

Participants also talk about singing and marching for the president each time he arrives at the airport—being forced to welcome him.

We are made to sing, and march for the president each time he comes to the airport. At ZANU-PF meetings, we are forced to cheer for the president even though we do not agree with his speech. (Farai, 2017, personal interview)

The majority of taxi drivers spoke about being made to pay money by ZANU-PF-aligned youth, so as to access busy routes to and from the market.

The busy routes to and from the market are never free routes. ZANU-PF militias ask for money and they use a “traffic” record book to record those paying. The money does not go to the government, it is their money. The same people who ask for this money on these routes, if you go to ZANU-PF meetings, you see them leading people to sing for the president. (Taru, 2017, personal interview)

From these dominant themes, we traced the patterns and how they relate to our key questions. Drawing from Braun and Clarke (2006), we familiarized ourselves with the data from the field, by rereading the data several times. While coding our data, we draw on the idea of “patterning of the field” (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 593), in which data gathered speaks to varied issues about the field of study. We also utilized the coding of data, a process of identifying and presenting the data which speaks to each theme, what Braun and Clarke (2019, p. 594) calls data “bucket.” So what we did was to pattern themes with a “shared meaning” (p. 594) drawn on the participants’ own understanding of what violence is in their context and how this has to be theoretically understood. The shared meanings produced what Braun and Clarke (2019) calls “domain summary themes which are organized around a shared topic but not shared meaning” (p. 593). In this regard, the themes are presented as “data domains” (p. 594). The recurrent themes, derived from our coded data became our key analytical lens. We defined our themes by ensuring that the themes are supported by data from the field. This helped us in writing and weaving data with existing scholarly and theoretical debates.

In the following section, we theorize the “register,” not just as a mobilization tool, but also as a diagram of power and biography of violence. The register helps in our understanding of profiling of individual citizens which in itself is hard work in doing political violence. The register was deployed to account for members who attended and absconded from the political party (ZANU-PF) meetings and activities in and around Harare. For youth to safeguard and retain their working space in the market complex, they needed not only be card-carrying members of ZANU-PF but also had to regularly attend party activities and demonstrate their commitment and loyalty to the party.

### Biographies of Violence: Mobilisation Register

The profiling of ordinary citizens is a methodology of doing political violence. The approach demonstrates that violence is organized and requires social and political resources to attain it. We use the “register” as a window through which to understand the complexities of youth violence in the context on which the article draws on. In fact, we assert that violence can be inscribed in a book. Here we argue that the use of a book as a register is not only a signification of violence but a record of that violence. The work of doing violence is oftentimes subtle; it is recorded and mediated in a text: the register book. We examine the register book as a “*dispositif* of power” which according to Foucault (1976) is the ways in which power is mobilized from the bottom, the local. This helps us to assert that power, and in particular political power, is not only mediated from the top political leadership but is produced from below. In this section, we explore how ZANU-PF youth used a book, recording names of people working in home industries as well as those who operated taxis in between suburbs in the city. For ZANU-PF, violence has to be recorded and remembered. The register is a systematic political control. For one of the participants, Tino,

The register is a real book, all the names of the people who work here are in that book. All our details, phone numbers, and our physical addresses. If there is a ZANU-PF political campaign and if the president is coming from abroad, then we are ordered to go to the airport to welcome him and if any of us does not go, then you know the consequences of being beaten up and losing your workspace. (Tino, 2017, personal interview)

There is a sense of profiling the individual for the purpose of doing violence, in particular in the event that there is a lack of conformity. The political profiling of people in the register is a “technique of surveillance” that represents “physics of power” and symbolic violence (see Foucault, 1977, p. 172). Therefore it signifies that power is an instrument of coercion (Foucault, 1998). For us, the register represents a form of “bio-power” (Foucault, 1976), it controls the population, in particular those deemed politically incorrect. The register is a form of what Foucault (1976) calls “governmentality,” that is a systematic way of governing people, in particular those who are deemed to be resistant. The register, therefore, displays an “art of governing” (Foucault, 1976). Thus, “govern/mentality” entails the processes of governing and the mentality of those who govern, that is, how the governing gets practised. In this regard, the register is a methodological way of doing violence and understanding how people are governed through forms of violence. Hence, in such circumstances, power is encoded into people’s everyday practices and often become misrecognized by the very same people. Indeed, when individuals acquiesce to subtle social and political orders, this violence is viewed as the norm. In fact, it is misrecognized and taken for granted and can be viewed only in symbolic yet embodied ways.

Thus, while Gaventa (2003) argued that “power is diffuse rather than concentrated” (p. 1), we assert that the “register” consolidate(d) power and deploys it when necessary. In this regard, the register is an exemplary manifestation of discipline and political control. The register becomes a “metapower” or “regime of truth” which control people in their everyday life. The register is the “metaphysics” of power (Foucault, 1977), in which the lives of people are engulfed and mediated with violence. The register is a “political instrument” which structures people to act even against their own political volitions. A market register is a form of “disciplinary power” (Foucault, 1977) which makes individuals act in specific ways. The register produces obedient people. The individuals controlled by the register are not just tractable and compliant, but they pay special political attention to ZANU-PF.

The register forms an “obedient” youth who pays attention to the demands of ZANU-PF politics, ideology, and propaganda. It conditions and configures them to respond to the call to attend ZANU-PF meetings. This is not to downplay the agency of some youth who deployed creative ways of resisting. Interestingly, the conversation we had with Tino revealed several important issues about the work of

violence done by the ZANU-PF-aligned youth. In the market, the register does the work of violence symbolically, in particular when people whose names are entered into the register subjectively reflect on having their names kept in the register. Indeed, we show how the register discipline(d) young people like Tino in the ZANU-PF way. Drawing from Foucault (1977, p. 137), the register produces “docile” bodies, those which are politically malleable to be subjected to certain instructions: attending political meetings beyond their own volition. This is a form of discipline which Foucauldian analysis defines as a general formula of domination that transforms the confused into ordered multiplicities (see p. 146). In this case, the “confused” are those who potentially antagonized Mugabe, and the register works as an “altering tool” to refine and reshape them in a particular political order. The young men are left with no political choices to support a political party they believe in. Tino revealed that all the vendors at the market were required to join the ZANU-PF cell groups where the market is located. The cell group is the locally defined ZANU-PF support base, in which the register is deeply entrenched. In these cell groups, vendors are indoctrinated with the ZANU-PF ideologies and propaganda and are expected to solidify their allegiance to the party. The process and practice of indoctrination is never an overnight event, but it involves continuous political education over an extended period of time. In the cell groups, ZANU-PF political ideologies are entrenched in the everyday life of the supporters.

During political meetings, a register is a political tool deployed to check attendance and active participation. Thus, the discipline and control engendered through the register are political—made by and for ZANU-PF. Importantly, the register is in itself a “biography of violence,” a political record, and an “archive of violence” in which people’s places of residence and contact numbers were made known to ZANU-PF. The register reveals that ZANU-PF survives through intense and deliberate political surveillance of the everyday in and around the urban markets in Harare and beyond. Thus, through the register, ZANU-PF youth are able to monitor and control the activities of possible anti-Mugabe supporters and less committed members in the market. We observed that the register is used to discipline and punish vendors who were real supporters, as well as those perceived as less committed. The register also served to reward those who demonstrate(d) commitment and allegiance through regular attendance of party activities. While the register symbolizes power, it is also a metaphor of punishment, which Foucault refers to as “techniques of punishment” (1977, p. 126).

There are at least two issues that are illuminated by the register: discipline and punishment. In the former, the register controls people and orders them in a specific political manner. In the latter, the register has certain political repercussions: those who do not attend political meetings will have their market stalls demolished or their products confiscated. The register is also deployed in the party’s politics of inclusion and exclusion when it comes to party largess such as food handouts or business loans. The register induces the reality of politics and power. It represents the regime of “truth.” It dominates the “politics of truth”: which means that it delineates acceptable and unacceptable politics. In this regard, “acceptable” politics is what is dictated and defined by the register. “Unacceptable” politics is that which was anti-Mugabe. Thus as a metaphor of power, the register creates political boundaries which enhance but sometimes constrain political initiatives in a given context (see also Hayward, 1998). Therefore, the register is what Foucault (1977) refers to as a “technology of power” and a source of “disciplinary power,” with a particular political “gaze” to discipline dissent into ZANU-PF political practice. This includes making people celebrate Mugabe through dancing, marching, and singing in all his political campaigns and speeches. These performative ways of showing allegiance are key in the market as well, where party regalia is worn every single day.

### **Singing, Marching, and Dancing: Mobilization and Violence**

It is important to note that political singing, marching, and dancing for the president is not only a glorification but it is also a “technique of governing” (Foucault, 1977). Central to this



assertion is that it is never easy to mobilize people to sing, march, and dance for a president. It involves rehearsals on and of songs to be sung and ways of dancing. This means that resources are pulled together to enable people to rehearse the songs and the dance, including providing the space and time to do so.

One of the ways in which youth mobilized was through forcing vendors and ordinary people to welcome Mugabe from international visits at the airport. Here they sang, worshipped, and ululate for Mugabe. For vendors, attending such events symbolized allegiance not only to Mugabe but also to ZANU-PF and hence made them safe from victimization. Singing for Mugabe signified the mobilization of political support. Thus, marching and singing for Mugabe reveal how mobilization is a political technique, which Foucault (1977) refers to as the “physics of power.” This means that power is substantiated by certain political practices, in this regard: marching and singing and praising Mugabe. The youth did not only sing, they danced and ululated for Mugabe. In the city of Harare, where the majority of voters shunned Mugabe’s political meetings, ZANU-PF youth work hard to rehearse and choreograph political dances and songs. Some of the young people, like Tino, were forced to participate by cheering for Mugabe when he returned from foreign trips. Some of these youths were also forced to attend ZANU-PF political rallies where they danced and praised him, yet they did not support him or his political party. Tino told us that they also go to peri-urban areas to mobilize support for ZANU-PF and to bus people in for major party events that are shunned by many urbanites. Indeed, rural and peri-urban people were not only bused-in for ZANU-PF events but also during elections to vote for ZANU-PF in urban constituencies. The youths were deployed as part of the rigging strategy for Mugabe and ZANU-PF. One of our participants, Tafi, revealed that:

We are always told when the President is leaving the country, and we know when he is coming back. We are always told that we have a role to play. When he comes back, we close this market complex, and go to sing for him. They think we support ZANU-PF, but we don’t. (Tafi, 2017, personal interview)

This is what Hoffman (2011, p. 42) calls the “making” of people available “just in time” for political work. Thus, forcing young men to welcome and vote for Mugabe was a testimony of how violence has been instrumentalized to prop up the regime. Young people became central in defining politics for Mugabe’s continued stay in power in the country. When the opposition MDC called for Mugabe to step down, pro-ZANU-PF youth mobilized people in Harare to embark on a one-million-man march in May 2016 in support of Mugabe. During this march, participants told us that all the main markets in Harare were closed. Vendors at the markets were all forced to participate in the march. Failure to participate in party activities would often result in vendors being expelled from the market and replaced by those on the waiting list. Indeed, several MDC politicians including, urban Members of Parliament (MPs), often highlighted that Harare’s “informal” markets like *Mbare Musika*, *Mupedzanhama*, *Magaba*, and Glen View market stalls had been purged of MDC supporters and allocated to several ZANU PF supporters and loyalists. Regular attendance to ZANU-PF activities was an important prerequisite to enable a person or group to retain a market stall. One of our participants, Tatenda, noted that,

In the complex where we are working, we were told that we are all going for a one-million-man march to support President Robert Mugabe, and after that, we would be addressed by the President. There was no room to ask what we were supporting, or whether it was worth marching. In fact, it was not, but we just marched in the streets, singing, praising him, and denouncing the MDC. (Tatenda, 2017, personal interview)

The youth mobilized the march and “worshipped” Mugabe, thereby creating an appearance of his “populism” as a ruler. But if legitimacy is about the exercise of authority through voluntary obedience (Weber, 1978), then former president Mugabe (and his youthful supporters) acted illegitimately. However, the youth do not do the work of violence alone. Instead, they work in parallel with state security agencies. For Tonderai,

The youth do not work alone; they are well-connected to the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), the police and the military. You cannot argue with a ZANU-PF youth. If you do, then you are literally passed into the hands of the CIO. The youth work as spies and or informers of the CIO. Once the youth label you as Anti-President Robert Mugabe, for us who are working in the complex doing the carpentry, you know you are out of the place. So, we just try to follow their orders for us to survive. (Tonderai, 2017, personal interview)

There was a political relationship between ZANU-PF youth, the intelligence officers, the police, and the military. Our participants contend that the violent youth of ZANU-PF are an extension of the army and other state security agencies. They all shared information on and about the perceived enemies of, and potential threats to, Mugabe. Indeed, in the market complex where this article is based, it was common to hear of youth informers who spied on behalf of the CIO. This finding resonated with Gukurume (2019) who showed the complex linkages between state security spy networks at various institutions and spaces like universities and, in this case, urban markets.

To undertake acts of violence against real and perceived opponents of ZANU-PF, youth are offered military training and sometimes given police uniforms to clamp down on protestors and other threats to ZANU-PF. In a sense, there is a militarization of the ZANU-PF youth. We use militarization as both a category of analysis and a category of practice (see also Maringira, 2019; Maringira & Masiya, 2016). While the former has to do with understanding the relationship between the youth and security agencies, the latter has to do with the tactics employed by ZANU-PF youth to instil fear in young men who work as entrepreneurs in high-density suburbs in Harare. In addition, ZANU-PF grants youth the political right to extort taxi drivers in the city of Harare. This is typical of what Bayart (1993) call the “politics of the belly” in African political systems. Indeed, Mugabe created a network of rent-seeking practices which enabled his clients to extort and engage in other forms of wealth accumulation and corruption in exchange for political loyalty and votes. Indeed, in Harare, the demand for rent is illustrative of the behavior of militant ZANU-PF aligned groups like *Chipangano and Upfumi kuvadiki (Wealth to the Youth)*. We explore these practices of “rent seeking” and “prebendalism” in detail in the following section. This is because there is a close political connection between the mobilization of the register and deployment of singing and marching groups of youth and the extortion of individuals in the city’s market routes and places. The latter practice serves as a benefit for those who do the work of mobilizing the register and political campaigns on behalf of Mugabe.

### Extortion as Protection Fees

Extortion is never an easy practice of and in doing violence. It involves social and political organizations to enable the collection and amassing of economic proceeds. It speaks to issues of violence as hard work in many different ways. The involvement of political patrons and beneficiaries reveals that extortion is organized both from below and the top political elite. The youth did not only do the work of violence for Mugabe, but also their survival. Hoffman (2011, p. 42) refers to this as “pay yourself,” in which youth had to devise ways to remunerate nonremunerated political work of violence. This form of violence included extortion which has been defined as the forced extraction of resources for protection services that are promised but not provided (Block & Anderson, 2001; Varese, 2014). However, groups that are often involved in extortion do create a danger and or a threat

and then seek to protect people from it (Varese, 2014, p. 350). Extortion also involves obtaining a valued resource from people without being concerned about offering protection (see also Hobbs, 2001). Often extortionists charge(d) a significant fee, which could exceed the expected fee (Skaperdas, 2001, p. 173). Extortion is characterized by force and fear. The extortionist forces their protection on the people they seek to extort (Verese, 2013, p. 353).

In one of Harare's high-density suburbs, the area on which our article is also based, Mbare, a well-known group of ZANU-PF youth militia known as Chipangano extorted money by threatening and promising taxi drivers that they will be protected from the police roadblocks. The Chipangano youth militia group took over most taxi terminuses/ranks and collected money from commuters. Chipangano was constituted of militant ZANU-PF-aligned youths. At taxi ranks, Chipangano used a similar political strategy: a register, a book in which all taxi drivers' names and car registration numbers were entered. The register noted those who operated each day and those who paid "operation fees" and other forms of fees. Chipangano was a wider political network that controlled much of city/high-density suburb life in Mbare, allocating market stalls and deciding who operates in strategic and profitable market routes to and from the city and other suburbs as well. The Mbare route was the busiest route to and from the Harare city center. Mbare area is home to the biggest market for farmers' fresh fruits and vegetables, flea markets, and certain home industrial areas. The busiest long-distance bus terminus is located in Mbare—about 3 km from the city. The distance is short and profitable for taxi operators; hence taxis always travel between the markets and the city. The route's profitability makes it also a target of the Chipangano militia group.

The Chipangano youth militia forced every taxi driver to pay the "operating fees." In our conversation with one of the taxi drivers, Sandura, he stated that "you have to pay Chipangano youths and that will be 'entry fees' and 'protection fees.'" The idea of such fees reveals to us how ZANU-PF youth made boundaries within constituencies: by having control over particular "terrains" within the city. These were terrains of fear and intimidation, where power was centered around ZANU-PF. The "entry fees" should not only be understood in terms of monetary value, but as a metaphor of power, that is, how Mugabe's ZANU-PF through its youth "arm" created borders constituted with and as spaces of power.

Indeed, Tanaka, who also operates along the Mbare route, noted that "Chipangano collects 'roadworthy fees.'" By paying the fee, a taxi qualifies to operate and becomes "roadworthy." This is a political practice which reminds us of how ordinary path/roads are configured into violent spaces. Failure to pay normally results in taxis being barred from operating on the Mbare market route.

There can also be other consequences. For instance, Gomba, a taxi driver, said, "if you try to resist, they can beat you, they can impound your taxi." This reveals how extortion is characterized by threats, intimidation, and extraction of a valued resource. Hence, in this regard, what makes extortion possible is how a threat is invoked and deployed against the victim. In such circumstances, the extortionist relies heavily on the use of force and not just protection. We asked why the taxi driver would not report the matter to the police. Gomba retorted, "how can you report to the police when the police behave like Chipangano. The police are also ZANU-PF, so where do you report. You have to comply if you want to operate in that route." The extract reveals a deep-seated extortionist relationship between the youths and the state, which is ZANU-PF. ZANU-PF dictated, manipulated, or simply disregarded the law to cement its hold on various institutions and by extension on power (Verheul, 2013). In fact, ZANU-PF sees itself as the law or above it. This enables them to determine the ways in which they act—when to do what they do. In this situation, a political party and its youth supporters act outside the law. In raising his discontentment, Simba, a taxi driver, reiterates that "sometimes the Chipangano militia would falsely accuse you of being MDC so that they beat you as punishment for refusing to pay their fee." The characterization of extortion and punishment is of interest in the sense that the latter relies on several factors to be substantiated.

This political trend was also reported in the *Mupedzanhamo* flea market and the *Mbare Musika* (vegetable market). In Mbare, some of our participants noted that suspected MDC supporters were violently removed and barred from trading. Tando, a 35-year-old trader in the Mupedzanhamo market, narrated his ordeal with the Chipangano youth militia:

One afternoon while I was selling my things, a group of youth approached my stall—before I even greeted them, they started demanding money. When I told them that I do not have any money because nothing was bought, they became violent. One of them shouted, “we don’t want opposition people here, this man should go.” I tried to explain but they could not have any of it. When I came back the next day, they violently evicted me and told me the stall belongs to someone now. (Tando, 2017, personal interview)

There are at least two distinctive elements here: eviction and violence. The politics of inclusion and exclusion is invoked. Those who were deemed to be anti-Mugabe were evicted. For Tando, eviction and violence were acts of retribution against him for his failure to pay the youth militia. Tando’s experience was not exceptional, but it resonates with the narratives of some of our participants around the Mbare market area. Most of them were told that Mbare was a no-go area for opposition supporters—whether imagined or real.

The youth militia constantly invoked their relationship with Mugabe. The appeal to such a relationship reveals how ZANU-PF youth were a client that requires their patron (Mugabe) to achieve their extortionist practices which would otherwise have been impossible to accomplish (see Erdmann & Engel, 2007). Thus, ZANU-PF youth deployed “informal politics which invade formal institutions” (Erdmann & Engel, 2007). This political arrangement gives credence to Chabal and Daloz’s (1999) argument that in neo-patrimonial settings, wealth and other resources are redistributed through vertical clientelist networks, in this case, ZANU-PF youth network of political relationships. However, the deep reciprocal relationship between patrons and clients sustains neo-patrimonial political systems. Thus, while the ZANU-PF youth benefits from this political relationship, in return, Mugabe enjoyed loyalty and allegiance from them. For instance, in the run-up to the 2008 by-election, ZANU-PF youth militia groups like Chipangano constructed “bases” which were spaces of violence and intimidation against opposition supporters and politicians.

This resonates with Chabal and Daloz (1999, p. 158) who noted that the aim of political elites is not just to possess power. It is more fundamental to use that power and the resources which it can generate, to “purchase,” the “political affection” and political “affective presence” of their people. This kind of practice relates to what has been termed by neo-patrimonial scholars as “spoils politics” in which once a political party is in power it distributes political benefits by employing and allocating resources to its supporters to keep it in power (see also Allen, 1995; Pitcher et al., 2009).

The doing of political violence is the “ordering of disorder” (Vigh, 2008, p. 11). Thus, ZANU-PF youth militia at the market makes political loyalty a prerequisite for utilizing and maintaining market stalls. ZANU-PF youth militia mobilized and forcibly collected “subscriptions” from nonsupporters to fund celebratory activities, thereby politicizing, for example, Mugabe’s birthday. As such, the urban markets in Harare were only allowed to function through the deployment of a violent patronage network system. Consequently, in the context of political and economic crisis, ZANU-PF’s coercive patronage systems strongly mediated people’s livelihoods in and even beyond the city (see Alexander & Chitofiri, 2010; McGregor, 2013; Nyamunda & Mukwambo, 2012). Hence, we assert that Mugabe and his party members thrived on political reciprocities which helped to sediment political relationships. This led to what Chabal and Daloz (1999) referred to as the “instrumentalization of disorder.” It means that for ZANU-PF, disorder and anarchy is a political resource in which criminal activities such as extortion are celebrated. Thus, this “instrumentalization of disorder” defines ZANU-PF’s political ends—to create

a category of youth with less motivation to work for formal institutions. Mugabe thrived in the “politics of disorder,” and the deployment of disorder was a political practice and resource meant to maintain a grip on political power.

### Conclusion

Political violence is never easy to perpetrate. It involves social, economic, and political resources to sustain the violence. Thus, we assert that the perpetration of political violence is hard work. In terms of theory, the article has contributed to our understanding of sustaining political power as hard work, an “art of governing,” characterized by “techniques” of doing violence from below. In this article, we have argued that the former President of Zimbabwe, Mugabe, was able to transmogrify his political position into a source of opportunities so as to sustain political power through violence while dispensing opportunities to his political followers. Thus political power is both a source of violence and social and economic opportunities. While ZANU-PF youths mobilized and intimidated people, we have argued that the relationship between ZANU-PF and its youth was sedimented in and by political benefits for both: Mugabe and the youth. It was a reciprocal political relationship, one in which former President Mugabe deployed the youths to do the work of violence, in return for political benefits extended to the youth in different ways, including ceding political power to extort tax drivers for individual youth benefits. The article contributes to our understanding of the youths and political power, in particular how political relationship invokes power for the former. We assert that doing political violence is hard work, which is characterized by maintaining a political relationship to sustain it.

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