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Inside Youth bases. Case of Selected bases in Zimbabwe

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I. Introduction

In Zimbabwe just like several other countries, the youth are at the centre of political processes including violence. They engage in some of these activities from various spaces including their individual homes, political circles, and places of entertainment and as individuals among others. The veracity of the youth's actions and level of commitment are determined by among others the forum at which the activity would have been crafted and how it would also have been executed. In this study, it is acknowledged that in most political activities especially in Zimbabwe, there are common operational places where ideas, strategies and processes are crafted. These are commonly referred to as 'bases'. In these bases, there are unlimited freedoms, unrestricted entertainment and sometimes endless food supplies. They are also characterised by unmonitored availability of women for sexual services. It is therefore the scope of the study to explore the operations of the 'bases' with a view to understanding what really goes on but with a special focus on the challenges that are encountered in these enclosures.

This study was motivated and is to some extent, a follow up on previous researches on political bases in Zimbabwe post-independence. However, the previous studies did not comprehensively cover the activities inside political bases and other inter-youth and intra-base dynamics.

II. Background

Bases are politically created institutions that are used as rendezvous for political strategies and subsequent execution. In Zimbabwe such rendezvous are a common phenomenon especially ahead of crucial elections where there may be need by the ruling party to manipulate societies and the entire electoral field to its advantage. Bases have therefore existed from the 1970s liberation war.

Political bases have often been treated as sacred places for several reasons. The fact that they are places where political programmes and plans are made makes them secretive to an extent that the general public is kept away. Most of the plans made in the bases are often to weaken the opponents and therefore have to be confidential. This also extends to the way some of the plans and programmes are executed; requiring sometimes to eliminate threats and neutralise potential barriers by way of either death or severe persecution and torture among other approaches. The nature of the activities that are conducted inside the bases also make them sacred and inaccessible because the occupants would never want outsiders to be aware of their evil and immoral deeds. Drawing from RAU (2012: 23) and Dodo et al (2016: 208; 2017: 223), political bases especially in Zimbabwe are defined by torture, rape, severe assaults of suspected and known enemies, murder and several other immoral acts. What goes on inside is rarely discussed outside for fear of divulging the secrets. Resultantly, bases generally become sacred, frightening and places where no ordinary person would want to enter. This is the situation that has characterised all the bases that have been created in Zimbabwe.

Political bases' internal structures and make-up remain complex with several unanswered questions hanging. The numbers of people in a base, how they fend for their sustenance and how they relate with each other often fail to be explained ordinarily. The resources available; materially and human often fail to correspond with the nature of activities that are reportedly taking place in a given base. It is therefore against the above situation where the relationships and living arrangements are not explained that the study looks into the dynamics within a political base with a view to

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establishing some of the challenges and unravel intra-base relationships.

III. Statement of the Problem

The concept of 'bases' in Zimbabwe was borrowed from the 1970s liberation war when liberation war participants used them as centres for mobilising masses towards their cause. They were also used as persecution and torture chambers for identified and perceived enemies. Post-independence, the concept was again resuscitated during the land invasion era of 2000 going forward into all the subsequent political contestations of 2002 Presidential elections, 2005 Senatorial elections, 2008 Presidential Run-off elections, 2013 General elections and 2018 Harmonised elections including all Parliamentary by-elections.

Each time bases are established, youth in the surrounding areas especially aligned to the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) mobilise and relocate to the bases before they receive political instructions on subsequent operational parameters. Even the opposition political parties have their bases too. It is expected that in the case of rural areas, at least each village contribute some youth as a way of showing their support and allegiance to the cause. In the case of urban areas, there must be some representation from all the areas where there are; youth, economic and political expectations by the youth and perceived members of the opposition political parties. Bases are then declared 'no-go zones' attracting severe retribution for any transgressors of the set boundaries. Activities in the bases are highly secretive and often controlled by selected members of the former liberation war participants commonly known as war veterans or some senior youth leaders.

Operationally, bases are not allocated financial or material budgets. Rather, the youth are expected to mobilise the resources required for the sustenance of the base through whatever means possible which Dodo et al (2016: 208) refers as 'grab-and-go' method. Often times, as an incentive, the youth are required to take at least half of whatever resources that they mobilise to their homes while the remaining is delivered to the bases. In most cases, this arrangement has fuelled cases of robbery and criminality as the youth seek to line their pockets during the short election periods. In particular in 2008, vendors and some grocery shop operators were the main victims of robberies, goods confiscation and forced donations. Because of the levels of lawlessness in the bases, prostitution activities are also rife with many of the women and girls getting abused sexually. Some women whose sons and girls whose relatives were suspected of supporting the opposition parties were also raped and abused as punishment for their relatives' membership to the opposition parties.

Bases are complex institutions that follow strict hierarchy and discipline to ensure security. However, it is in the same institutions that serious human rights abuses are recorded and unprecedented levels of lawlessness are experienced. It is against this background that the study to explore intra-youth relationships, establish inter-base dynamics and identify base-youth challenges was conducted. Specifically, the study focussed on the activities within the bases.

IV. Methodology

This was a qualitative study following an exploratory design which sought to establish the operational dynamics within political bases, inter-youth relationships and some of the challenges encountered by the youth in the bases. The study focused on selected five political bases in Harare: Mvurachena and Mashonaland Central province: Wadzanayi Community Hall, Tafuna, Jumbo Dam and Gweshe Primary School. All the selected bases have existed during all the elections from 2002 but precisely, the study focuses on the 2008 Run-off elections and the 2013 Harmonised elections. Mvurachena had over 1500 youth while Wadzanayi Community Hall and Tafuna both in Shamva district had 100 and 45 youth respectively. In Mazowe district were Jumbo Dam and Gweshe Primary School which had 20 and 45 youth respectively. In total were 1710 youth distributed as follows: 1160 males (67.8%) and 650 females (38%). The selection of the bases was just random albeit with some intention to fuse bush and public place bases and also to accommodate high activity with low activity bases for effective juxtaposition of activities and youth behaviours.

The analysis was based on some youth narratives and complimented by archival records and academic literature. Youth narratives were drawn from interviews with 25 youth (10 females and 15 males) aged between 17 and 35 years randomly sampled from known youth activists at the selected bases. Of the 25 participants, 21 had participated in the 2002, 2008 and 2013 political base programmes thus widening their experience. Interviews sought to extract original and accurate data. Each interview consisted of the same basic set of questions with a flexible assortment of additional questions and comments meant to stimulate further response added as was considered fit by the interviewer within the framework of the session. This led to interviews of typically 30-40 minutes in length. The narrative interviews sought to extract data on the following aspects; ages of the youth, their motivation for joining the base, how they interacted with fellow youth, any code or rules that directed their conduct in the base and challenges that they faced in the base.

The analysis of data was done using Latent Content Analysis which allowed the researcher to break down the narratives into minute and *codable* units which

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then subsequently created usable themes. To ensure credibility, reliability and some generalizability of the findings, the study engaged data triangulation which resulted in the use of diverse sources of information and methodological triangulation. Both data and methodological triangulation ensured audit trail which involved keeping full and accurate explanations and interpretations, truth value and call backs.

V. Theoretical Framework

The study employed the Social Modelling and Cognitive Theory (Boxer et al 2015: 4159) which argues that youth learn to be aggressive and belligerent from modelling behaviour which they would have seen and captured from their elders and role models. According to the theory, belligerent behaviour results from acquired cognitive schemas or scripts stimulated from reminiscence and put into aggressive practice once a need arises. The theory argues that even though traits of aggressive behaviour appear during childhood, influences of family, friends and adults can preserve such behavioural traits during youth. It is therefore the environment in the bases which to a large extent, influences and nurtures the transmission of aggressive behaviour traits down to the youth.

The theory is relevant in that it acknowledges the fact that society creates humanity and all that circulates around it. It also realises the psychological underpinnings of the how the same society recognises the place of elders in as far as the youth are groomed. According to the theory, the elders and other role models create and develop societal systems and behaviours. In the case of Zimbabwe and its political bases, the youth adopt their aggressive conduct from the elders and formalised political systems that have existed for years.

VI. Literature Review

a) *Youth in the bases*

Definitions of youth have transformed continually as a reaction to shifting political, economic and socio-cultural situations. Young people in developing countries consist of the majority proportion of the entire population because of generally high birth rates and short life expectancy (WB 2011). They consist of a social group that encounters specific problems and fears as regards its future, difficulties that relate in part to narrow prospects for appropriate employment. Many developing countries including Zimbabwe are also facing unparalleled rates of rural-urban migration by the youth. The challenging circumstances that people go through in many developing countries are a lot even more difficult for young people because of narrow opportunities for training and education, sustainable employment, health and social services, and because of a rising incidence of substance abuse and juvenile delinquency (Sommers & Uvin 2011: 2; Allyne & Wood 2013: 611).

In this study, youth are young people usually between the ages of 10 and 35 years who are still dependent on some elders and still to settle socially, financially and economically (IIED 2011). These youth are often seen at the forefront in most political, economic and religious activities. However, their roles in such activities is often to represent other political or economic elites without much to benefit for themselves. The youth have been very active in mainstream politics since the pre-independence era of Africa when they were assigned to serve as foot soldiers of the liberation war fighters (Bradfield 2013). In the contemporary world, they are used as 'runners' by well-up politicians and businesspeople to facilitate the creation of empires through manipulation and violence (Dodo et al 2016: 208). Politically, Dodo et al (2016:208) define the youth as '*political vangaurds'*; young people who defend the ideals of their political party and are prepared to sacrifice their integrity for the sake of the elites who eventually pay them paltry remuneration.

All the youth in political bases have been classified into three distinct groups; actively progressive group, passively fearful group and actively destructive group (Dodo et al 2017: 223). These classifications follow the youth's behaviours, their propensity to engage in violence and how they would have been recruited into the bases. The groups clearly explain the nature of persecution that victims actually go through once they fall in their hands.

b) *Political bases*

The concept of political bases as they are applied in Zimbabwe and several other African countries is clearly explained in Dodo et al (2016: 208). It is described as a community centre where political activities especially of illegal and immoral nature are crafted and implemented for the furtherance of a political party's agenda. Political bases have existed since the liberation struggles when they were employed as venues for mass mobilisation and awareness. In Zimbabwe during the liberation war of the 1970s, bases provided venues where secret meetings called '*pungwe*' were held. In English *pungwe* [Shona word] means 'all-night awake' and these night vigils were to harden civilians into political and war combat.

According to RAU (2012: 23), bases in Zimbabwe are generally established and sponsored by the security services. Particularly, it is the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) that manages such institutions as a way of appropriately administering secrecy to ZANU PF political activities. While CIO is the brains behind and also responsible for logistics, the military is usually tasked with the role of manning the centres and physically running the activities. In some cases, the army assigns a member of the former

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liberation war participants or simply seconds an idle senior officer. In Zimbabwe, the army has more redundant and often semi-illiterate members who may be deployed for such assignments without affecting its daily programmes. Besides, according to RAU (2012: 23) and Dodo et al (2016: 208), bases provide an unmonitored place where all sorts of evils and criminal activities may be perpetrated without accountability.

According to Dodo et al (2016: 208), there are basically two types of bases. The first type is usually found in the bush for secrecy while the second type may be located anywhere within public institutions like schools and community centres. Post-independence political bases serve various scandalous purposes like deprivation of physical liberties, enforced prostitution, murder, and amputation of limps, rape, sexual slavery, assaults, and abductions among others (Dodo et al 2016: 208). Perimeter of the base premises are guarded round the clock to guarantee privacy. Within the base, there is a special place for the commander termed '*posto*'. There is also another place called "dare" where suspects are tried and persecuted (Dodo et al 2016: 208).

Bases are never supported formally through the provision of financial and material services. Rather, according to Dodo et al (2016: 208), youth in the bases employ what is called the 'grab and go' concept whereby they are 'technically' allowed to loot and rob for the sustenance of the bases.

c) Youth violence

Youth violence has been a scourge in most developing democracies the world over. It involves young people getting influenced to partake in social, economic and political disorders meant to drive a particular agenda. These forms of violence may involve the use of weapons which often hurt innocent and defenceless citizens. Studies show that about 70% of armed forces and groups worldwide (Sommers 2011: 292) and violent activities are perpetrated by male youth with only 30% females participating (WB 2011).

Studies also show that unemployed youth are two and half times more likely to take part in violence than the employed youth since their opportunity cost of doing so is low, and they may notice possible economic benefits (USAID 2005). In Zimbabwe, youth violence is known to be caused by a variety of reasons ranging from economic, political, social and ideological among others and the respective effects equally spreading far and wide especially impacting on the economy and local development.

VII. Findings

The findings of the study are presented according to research objectives that were created at the onset of the study. However, in some instances, there were sub-themes that were created to adequately respond to the findings.

a) Exploration of inter-youth relationships

The creation of the three youth groups APG, PFG and ADG clearly exposes the tendencies in the youth as defined by their family backgrounds, the schools they attended, level of education attained and how one received and appreciated instructions from the political leadership.

The ability to share is one trait that is imparted into the youth in political bases. This was revealed by 22 participants from across the selected bases who indicated that all the youth are expected to share the little resources available. This, according to the participants is also meant to ensure that they encourage each other to go out and mobilise more resources. Some of the resources that are shared in the bases according to the participants include food, bedding facilities and sometimes alcohol and drugs. The 22 participants also indicated that it was from these aspects of sharing especially alcohol and drugs that more youth were pushed into the abuse of the substances. According to the participants, there were some youth who actually leant and developed habits of smoking and taking alcohol from the bases while some were actually lured into the bases by the availability of the substances.

The youth in the bases are also taught to be tolerant with each other. According to 11 participants, while the same youth may not be tolerant of the outsiders especially perceived political opponents, they are encouraged to be accommodative of the other for the purposes of achieving a common objective. The other nine participants indicated that the level of competition experienced in the bases is counter the spirit of cooperation and tolerance. Youth have to fight for resources and relevance.

Nine participants who had experience of the 2002, 2008 and 2013 bases indicated that there were incidences of homosexuality in the bases largely emanating from the sleeping conditions and the fact that religious spaces are often stifled. They however pointed out that considering the levels of prostitution in the bases, the few cases of homosexuality simply showed how the Zimbabwean society had for too long suppressed reality with regards to the diversity of sexual orientation.

b) Establishment of intra-base dynamics

Twenty participants said that political bases are run on a patronage system where youth are rewarded for their preparedness and ability to execute tasks for their seniors. It was pointed out that there are instances when some youth decide to undertake assignments on behalf of the seniors without the latters' knowledge. Some even committed crimes just to please base commanders. According to ten participants, this created conflicts in the bases as some youth are then seen as either lazy or unwilling to sacrifice their time and effort for the party cause. One youth said:

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Isu vamwe tatovengwa. Taakutoonekwa sevapanduki nekuti hatikwanise kuita zvatisina kunzi tiite. Kune vamwe mayouth anoenda kunorova vanhu vavanoziva kuti vanemagrudge nemacommander. Vamwe vanotovatsvagira vasikana even vasina kumbotumwa.

(Some of us are now being seen as traitors. This is because we can't initiate assignments meant to please the commanders. Some even go for revenge attackers for the commanders while others bring the commanders prostitutes for their pleasure.)

The other four indicated that there were some over-zealous youth in the bases who just wanted to impress the seniors even without being asked to do it. One participant indicated that rewards and recognition in the bases was purely on merit.

On what motivated the youth to join the bases, various responses were gathered. It was obtained from 15 participants that forced conscription, poverty, fear of victimization of either self or another family member were some of the reasons that were prominent in pushing some youth into political bases. Of the 15, eight were females who impressed on fear of victimisation of their families if they shunned bases. They added that females were more vulnerable to the threats of the youth resident in the bases.

The other seven participants cited criminal mentality, the need for security and adventure as their reasons for joining the bases while the other three indicated that some youth were driven into the bases by the need for free sex and prostitution.

On the structure of the base, twenty-one participants indicated that there was a systematic way through which victims and suspects could be abducted into the bases for torture. It was indicated that a victim had to be named before the youth could 'arrest' him/her. Along the way to the base, the victim is interrogated and tortured before he/she is surrendered to the commanders who then determine his/her fate. According to the participants, the victim may be tried before the sentence/verdict is administered. One participant said this;

'*Kutonga kungotongawo, but nyaya inotoziikwa. Kuchaiwa chete*'(Trying an accused is just a formality, otherwise the verdict is known. All accused are thoroughly beaten up).

Normally, to save oneself, one accepts to undertake any given assignment which may include looting food in the local neighbourhood. This is meant to ensure that one loses sympathy from the public such that he/she ends up seeking company and support from the base. In other words, it is a way of cutting all the ties between the victim and the potential supporters in the community. According to the youth narratives, diagrammatically, the process of base entry and exit is as follows in the figure 'Recruitment Process'.

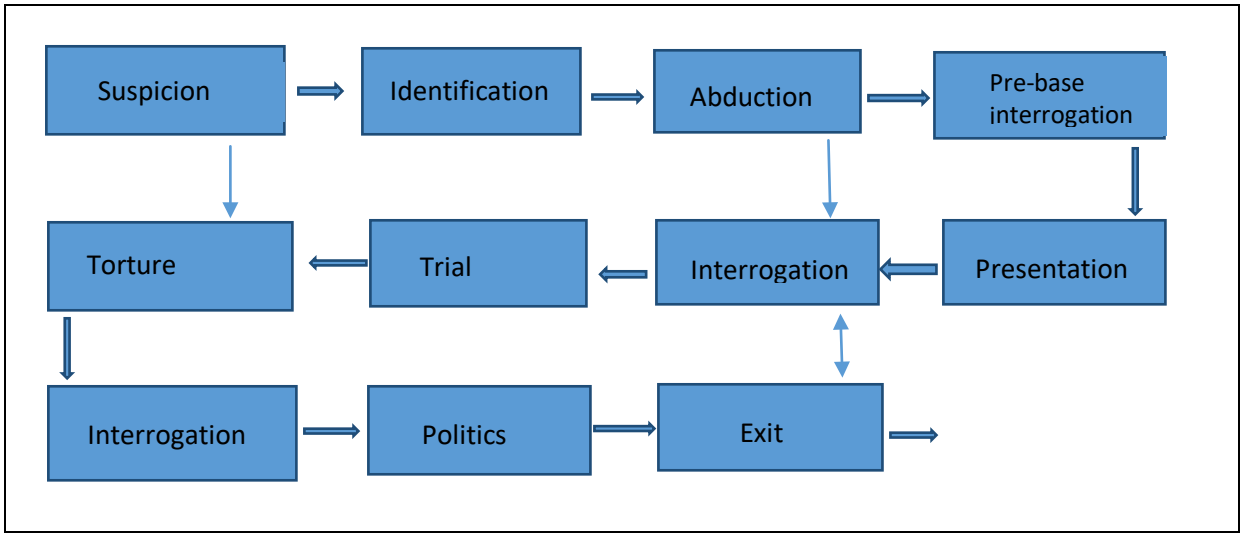


Fig. 1: Recruitment Process

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The Recruitment Process figure above explains how victims and members join the base. (Thick arrows show the normal route followed while thin arrows show alternative routes that may be taken to fast-track abduction of a victim/suspect.) The Suspicion stage is when one is suspected to be an enemy before he/she is positively identified for abduction. Soon after abduction and along the way to the base, there is some interrogation that is applied to extract information that may be of immediate use. The victim/suspect is then handed over to the base commander or base security commonly called '*seguranza*' before another round of interrogation is conducted. This time, the interrogation is to instil fear in the suspect. This process also helps ease trial where an offence may be raised against a suspect to justify any form of punishment. The trial outcome determines the form and severity of the torture to be applied. After a suspect or victim has been taken into the base, there is need to keep a close eye as a way of ensuring security and to be able to gradually convert him/her ideologically and politically. This can be made possible by continual interrogation which may be lighter than the initial application. Over time, the victim/suspect is politicised into accepting and acknowledging that the ideology and cause of the group in the base is justified. From then on, one may begin to partake in base youth activities like night vigils, robberies, looting and victim assaults among others.

c) Identification of base-youth challenges

The study also looked as some of the challenges that are encountered in the bases. Generally all the youth concurred that there were several challenges in the bases with some being created by the other youth while are simply structural.

Seven female participants pointed out that they were facing a problem of coercion into politics by the other youth members in the bases. They indicated that they had gone into the bases only to save their families and to find food for their family sustenance. They all decried moves to force them to be immoral and practice excesses politically. The other 16 participants revealed that in almost all the bases, there were no decent sleeping facilities to accommodate both male and female members. It was revealed that they share the same roofs undermining their privacy and decency. Some five female participants indicated that it was sometimes a result of such conditions that led to some youth either getting intimate or raped.

Closely akin to the above issue, 11 participants raised a challenge of rampant cases of rape in the bases without any remedial actions being taken. Three participants from Mvurachena revealed that rape was the order of the day with an average of five cases per day. They indicated that it had become normal in the base for females to get abused without anyone accounting for his actions. According to the participants, the problem had been perpetuated by the influx of prostitutes from the nearby farm settlement in search of survival. Six youth confided that sexually transmitted illnesses and pregnancies in the base were rife. The other eight participants refuted allegations of rape in the bases arguing that most of the base participants would have consented to sexual encounters. They indicated that most of them would have actually joined the bases in anticipation of free food and easy sexual escapades. One female youth from Mvurachena revealed this; 'The truth is that we are living in fear on a daily basis. The fact that there is lawlessness here is further worsened by the existence of a military barrack just next door. Girls are being raped here without any form of intervention. Actually, it is the commanders fuelling it'.

Eighteen participants said political bases were the main centres of physical abuses. The youth revealed that the conditions in the bases were not conducive for human habitation as they promoted violence, immorality and abuse. The 18 youth indicated there were some senior youth who enjoyed abusing others and the commanders were not worried; taking the abuse as some form of youth development and endurance. According to the youth, there were instances when for failing to bring looted food from the shops and vendors, one could be assaulted formally in the base. Others could be starved till they contributed something materially.

Of the 18, three participants from Tafuna and Jumbo Dam in Shamva and Mazowe districts respectively revealed that there were also cases where some defiant youth in the bases were assaulted till they died. Two participants concurred;

> '*Pabase pedumdara, panorohwa munhu kusvika aakusvipa ropa. Vazhinji vanofa nekurohwa*' (At our base, people are assaulted till they begin to spit blood. The majority of the assaulted actually die).

These assaults, according to the participants were meant to instil fear in the rest of the youth. It was a measure to regulate behaviour and contain the youth psychologically.

Lack of food in some cases especially if there are no youth mobilising adequate provisions (either through robbery or theft). According to 13 youth, food in the bases is shared according to some political hierarchy. According to the youth, the hierarchy is defined by one's placement in the political party, one's political history, physical strength, connections to known politicians and connections to base commanders. Therefore, there are some distant youth who are never related to prominent politicians and are physically weak who then suffer the effects of the system.

From the findings, the following figure diagrammatically explains the structure of a standard base.

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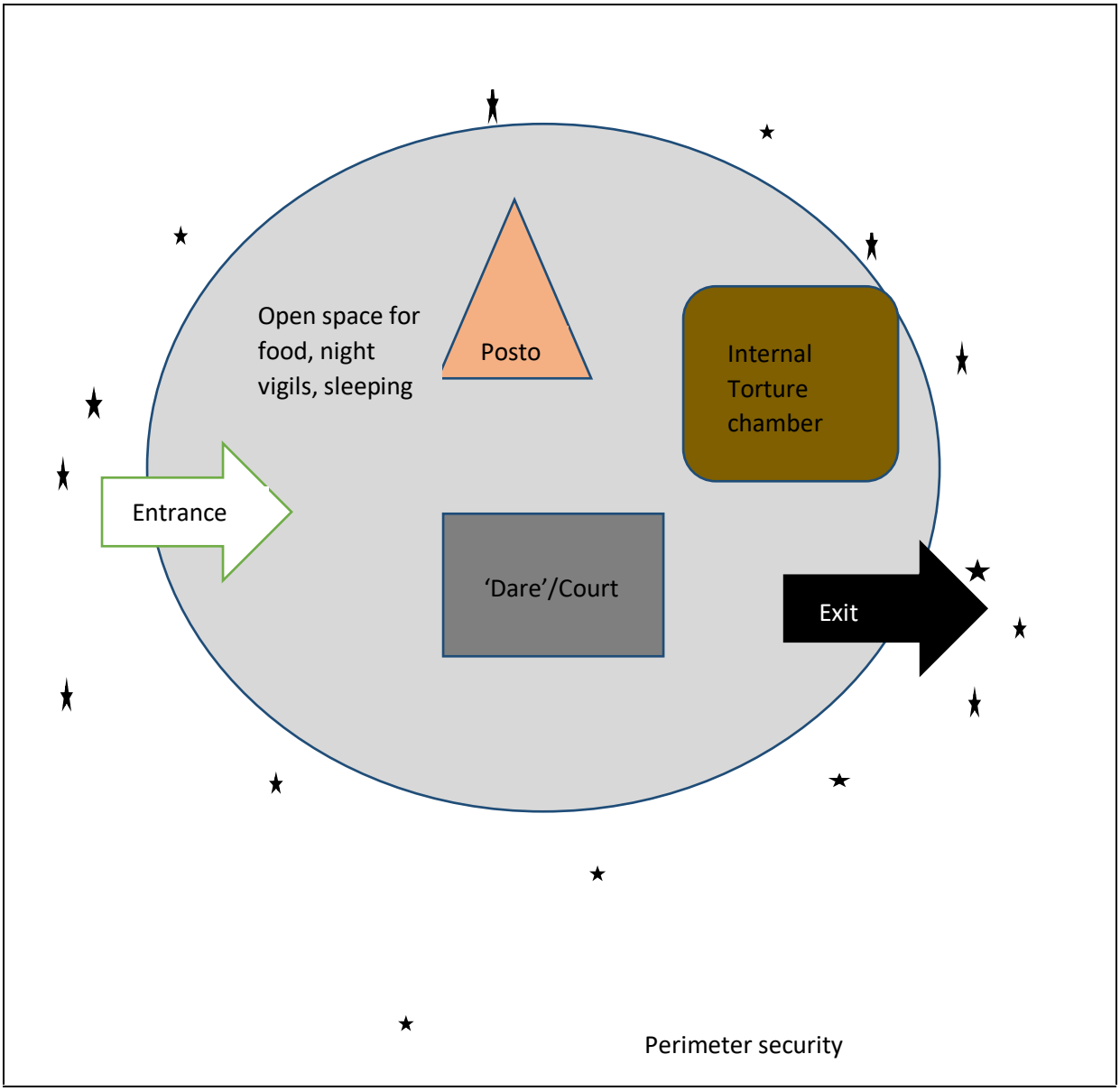


Fig. 2: Base Structure

Any base is located at a place where security and privacy are guaranteed. To augment natural security and privacy, there is human security also planted around represented by black stars. There is more than one door; one for entrance and any other for emergency exit. Inside the base is an area tightly secured and is reserved for the base commander. It is called '*posto*'. Behind the '*posto*' is an internal torture chamber where excessive torture usually meant to kill is conducted. This is meant to conceal the evil activities in the base from the general members. There is also a court area where suspects/victims are tried by some informal team of adventure, the need for free sex and prostitution, forced jurists. The rest of the base area is used as sleeping area, kitchen and for meetings among others. There is usually a thin line separating males from females when they sleep overnight.

Therefore, the 23 youth indicated that most of the challenges specifically emanated from the set-up of the base which allowed immorality and disorder from the onset. According to the 23 participants, the structure of the base encouraged competition for food, sleeping area, attention from the leaders, water and girls/men for sexual satisfaction among others thus creating endless conflicts and violence. The same participants also indicated that some of the trauma and fear emanated from the persecution and torture of the victims in full view of the youth. They said some of these torturous acts forced the youth to be submissive and keep hanging around the bases for fear of reprisals.

Creation of factions, groups and sometimes gangsters in the bases was noted to be another

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challenge. According to 17 participants, youth in the bases were often forced to work in groups for efficiency and effectiveness. However, the groups were often modelled along ethnic, regional, academic, ideological, family and other special common interests thus fuelling competition. It is that competition which subsequently leads to gangsterism; a problem within the bases and outside. Inside, gangsters usually engage in fierce physical fights while outside the bases, they terrorise innocent and defenceless citizens. According to six of the 17 participants, the behaviours of the youth in the bases was sometimes good as it also created brave leadership; ideal for some of the African challenges.

The same 17 participants also revealed that gangsterism was instrumental in the promotion of thuggery in the communities. They indicated that there were several criminal cases that were committed unfortunately with the law enforcement agencies having no political authority to take action. Therefore, bases promote a generation of youth who think that they are 'untouchable' as far as the law is concerned.

VIII. Discussions

Most of the drivers to youth getting into political bases; criminal mentality, the need for security and adventure, the need for free sex and prostitution, forced conscription, poverty and fear of victimization of either self or another family member resonate well with earlier findings by Allyne & Wood (2013: 611) and Dodo et al (2017: 223). However, there are some youth who are lured by the available substances for abuse and prostitutes.

From the participants, it is evident that it is in the bush bases where cases of torture and murder are rampant. Also relating with findings from other studies RAU (2012: 23) and Dodo et al (2016: 208; 2017: 223), there is a lot of impunity and lawlessness in the bases located in the bushes probably because there is no immediate social restraint and monitoring. Generally the concept of bases has led to the creation of new cultures; violence, negative competition, substance abuse and a hardened generation. The new cultures tend to cascade down some of the evil practices and systems to new generations as argued in the Social Modelling and Cognitive Theory. Generally competition as a new culture is bad if it is in the negative; supporting retrogression. Where negative competition exists, the study has revealed that there is unprecedented levels of violence, aggression and intolerance. Sometimes aggression, violence and intolerance directed at people and groups of the same origin and relationship.

It is deductible from the youth narratives of torture and psychological abuse that fear and persecution are some of the tools that are employed by the base commanders to maintain grip on the youth and also ensure that they manipulate them politically. The findings also show that bases are a creation of traumatic and unaccountable actions like arbitrary murders and rape among others. Like it is also noted by Allyne & Wood (2013: 611) and Bradfield (2013), bases have also led to the establishment of a lawless society and thuggery, which are both bad for development and democracy.

The study revealed that gangsterism and factionalism were instrumental in the promotion of thuggery in the communities. It is also noted that ethnic, regional, academic, ideological, family and other special common interests are the main lines along which factions and gangsterism are created. To a large extent, this explains the endless conflicts in most political groupings in Zimbabwe. As noted by Dodo et al (2016: 208), gangsterism and lawlessness in the bases has to some extent also bred and nurtured the 'grab-and-go' approach to resource mobilisation. Ultimately, this system encourages criminality and laziness on the part of the youth.

IX. Recommendations

There is need for a new drive to be directed towards the design and implementation of youth policies and programmes at all levels. The ways in which the challenges and capabilities of the youth are addressed by policy are expected to impact current social and economic circumstances and the well-being and livelihood of future generations.

Establishment of the rule of law through empowerment of the law enforcement agencies and re-alignment of the laws is one concrete measure that is recommended as a possible solution to the challenge of political bases. Especially in Zimbabwe, during the 2008 Run-off elections, it was the political leadership which technically disempowered the law enforcement agencies as a deliberate way of manipulating the election process. It is therefore that political willingness that is required if normalcy is to be retained.

The study also recommends public accountability across the board. It has been noted that there is a development of a new culture that seems to informally allow some people to get away with all their wrongs. There is need for some deliberate programme and laws that criminalise people and institutions that choose not to account for their actions. However, this boils back to an effective constitution and a general spirit of constitutionalism across the political divide. This requires strong institutions like the parliament, judiciary and the entire civil society.

X. Conclusion

Political bases are an historic concept that is strongly believed to have helped some movements and

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groups to win wars and contestations. Therefore, their existence in the Zimbabwean context is no surprise. Over the years, political bases have effectively managed to instil fear in the opponents so much so that they have been regarded as a necessary ally in electioneering processes. However, it is concluded that the concept of political bases is evil and bad that it needs out-right eradication.

The study realises that it may not be a walk in the park to eradicate this concept of bases from the Zimbabwe political terrain. Especially with the ruling party, the inhuman concept has played a significant role in propelling its numerous victories across the provinces. This may have been emulated by the opposition so much so that if it assumes power, chances that it perpetuates the practice, are high. Against this background, the study concludes that concerted effort probably driven by independent actors may be the solution otherwise the concept will be nurtured forever in Zimbabwe. The study also concludes that for as long as there are financial, material and other benefits in the political bases, every political outfit that gets into power supports it. Most importantly, bases are a complex institution which is characterised by several challenges, immorality, evil and dishonesty conduct. However, it has also created a generation of audacious and determined youth.

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