

DISCUSSION PAPER 14

Zimbabwe's Presidential Elections 2002

Evidence, Lessons and Implications

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Contents

Preface	5
<i>Kenneth Good</i>	
Dealing with Despotism: The People and the Presidents	7
<i>Amin Y. Kamete</i>	
The Rebels Within: Urban Zimbabwe in the Post-Election Period.....	31
<i>Brian Raftopoulos</i>	
Climbing out from the Rubble	48
<i>Tandeka C. Nkiwane</i>	
Observing the Observers	51
<i>Henning Melber</i>	
Zimbabwe and “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness”	59
<i>Ian Taylor</i>	
Zimbabwe’s Debacle, Africa’s Response and the Implications for the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).....	68
<i>Patrick Molutsi</i>	
Beyond the Zimbabwean Mist: Challenges and Prospects for Democracy in Africa	76
<i>Stefan Mair</i>	
Zimbabwe after the Elections: A German View	84

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Preface

The Presidential Elections in Zimbabwe had already received international attention and controversial responses before they actually took place from March 9 to 11, 2002. The controversies and the clash of dissenting views have since even increased. To some extent it seems not to be exaggerated to consider the currently polarised perceptions in terms of their impact as a prominent focal point also for the discussion of wider conceptual and policy issues reaching beyond the immediate context of Zimbabwean politics.

The analysis of the socio-political developments in Zimbabwe in their historical perspective plays a prominent role in its contribution to the research network on “Liberation and Democracy in Southern Africa” (LiDeSA), established during 2001 at the Nordic Africa Institute. When the controversies around the Presidential Elections and their wider relevance not only for the country itself but also for other SADC states in the region, the scope and perspective of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)—and hence by implication for aspects of a future collaboration between agencies from the North and the South on issues of good governance and democracy—became increasingly visible, the idea matured to compile a modest volume illustrating the contested parameters and to map the political-ideological territory. This was not done, however, as the contributions illustrate in different ways, from a point of view of neutrality.

The research network offered an excellent point of departure for implementing such a project within as little time as possible. The volume presented here brings together a number of committed scholars almost exclusively in or from the Southern African region. They differ in their academic disciplines and political orientations but share a commitment to policy issues related to whatever they perceive and define as good governance. To that extent the discussion around the Presidential Elections in Zimbabwe is much more than this: it offers deeper insights into current notions and concepts reflected upon not only in Zimbabwe or even the regional context. Zimbabwe hence serves as a case study and point of departure for a wider debate on more general issues of relevance beyond its borders.

I wish to thank all those scholars who so willingly have found the necessary time to contribute to this publication.

Henning Melber
Uppsala, April 2002

Dealing with Despotism: The People and the Presidents

Kenneth Good

At independence in March 1980, Zimbabwe and its new leader Robert Mugabe inherited the second most advanced economy in Africa. It was not only diversified, but it was also integrated at the domestic level to a high degree. Its per capita industrial output was behind only its larger southern neighbour in sub-Saharan Africa. It had a large basic iron and steel capacity, based on local raw materials, linked in with mechanical engineering and other industrial sectors.¹ By 1979 there were 1,340 manufacturing companies producing 25.5 per cent of GDP.² Its agriculture achieved food self-sufficiency and sizable surpluses in many crops—eg, annual harvests of over one million tonnes of maize in the mid-1970s—and also provided about 40 per cent of the materials used in manufacturing.³ Industry reciprocated by producing, for instance, nearly 15 domestic varieties of fertilizer, and the chemicals and pesticides which limited grain spoilage to one per cent (against an average of 15 per cent elsewhere in Africa).⁴

Both the diversification and the integration had arisen under the direction of a strong and interventionist state.⁵ Large investments had been made by the exploitative and developmentalist settler-colonial state in agricultural research and extension services, the expansion of iron and steel production, in abattoirs and meat freezing, and in infrastructural growth. Kariba provided cheap and reliable electrical power, and Z\$93 million went into up-grading Rhodesia Railways in the 1970s (when the local currency was actually higher in value than the American dollar). Such measures also helped to direct foreign investment and re-investment funds into industry.⁶ Agricultural pricing and marketing systems were relatively efficient, and farm exports in 1984 earned the country US\$500 million.⁷ Education was also good; while Zambia entered new nationhood with hardly a dozen black graduates, Zimbabwe in 1980 boasted 12,000. GNP per

¹ David Wield, "Manufacturing Industry", chapter in Colin Stoneman (ed.), *Zimbabwe's Inheritance*, London and Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1981, p. 151.

² "A Survey of Zimbabwe", *The Economist* (London), 21 April 1984, p. 13.

³ Stoneman, "Agriculture", in op. cit., pp. 136 and 143–44.

⁴ Glenn Frankel, "An African Success Story", *The Guardian Weekly* (London), 16 December 1984.

⁵ An "outstanding feature" of the period 1965–80 was "the forcefulness and coherence of state intervention in the economy", Xavier M. Kadhani, "The Economy", chapter in Ibbo Mandaza (ed.), *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition 1980–1986*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1986, p. 104.

⁶ Wield, op. cit., p. 157.

⁷ Frankel, op. cit.

person was US\$850, three times Tanzania's average and twice Kenya's. Bidding farewell to Robert Mugabe after attending the independence celebrations, President Julius Nyerere reportedly told him: "This is the jewel in Africa's crown. Don't tarnish it".¹

Embedded within the strong state was also a powerful security system which became more centralised and entrenched between 1965 and 1980. This inheritance was compatible with the beliefs and institutional preferences of the new rulers. Summed-up as a "commandist" outlook and experience within a nationalism which was more authoritarian than emancipatory. These were institutionalised through the 1980s in an effective one-party state and a strong executive presidency.²

MASSACRE IN MATABELELAND 1983–87

The security apparatus and the authoritarian state were quickly operationalised and developed by Mugabe. At the beginning of 1983, the Fifth Brigade, or Gukurahundi ("the rain which washes away the chaff"), initiated a methodical programme of repression upon the people of Matabeleland.³ The specially created brigade originated in an agreement signed between then-Prime Minister Mugabe and North Korea in October 1980, six months after his accession to power; it was trained for unquestioning loyalty, it operated outside the normal military hierarchy, and answered directly to Mugabe.⁴ Under Colonel Perence Shiri, the unit was responsible for mass murders, torture, and property burnings in the communal areas of Northern Matabeleland, where supporters of Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union, characterised as "dissidents" by Mugabe, supposedly resided. According to a subsequent report by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, more than 2,000 civilians were killed, hundreds of homesteads were burnt, and thousands were beaten, within a space of six weeks in 1983. "Most of the dead were killed in public executions involving between one and 12 people at a time".⁵

Bhalangwe camp, near the Antelope mine, contained many large sheds, and some 130 detainees, children as well as adults, were kept in them. They slept

¹ Cited in "An African Success Story", p. 3. President Samora Machel's assessments were apparently similar, and he is said to have cautioned his comrade against precipitous action which might undermine the country's agricultural resources. Colin Stoneman and Lionel Cliffe, *Zimbabwe: Politics, Economics and Society*, London and New York, Pinter Publishers, 1989, p. 15.

² Jonathan Steele, "Ian Smith's Heir", *The Guardian* (London), 13 August 2001. He made reference to the work of Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Terence Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*, Oxford, James Currey, 2000.

³ Those systematically attacked included community leaders, civil servants, members of other army units and the police, and "civilians at large". Alexander, et al., op. cit., p. 217.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁵ The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and the Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: a Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980 to 1988*, Harare, February 1997. A detailed account of the report can be found in the *Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), 2 May 1997. Both are referred to below.

squeezed together on the floor without beds, blankets, or toilet facilities. Interrogations were conducted by the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO)¹ and Five Brigade, beatings began at 5.30 am, and electric shocks, water torture, and sexual mutilation were used. Trucks visited the camp nightly, corpses were tipped down disused mine-shafts in the area, and hand grenades were thrown after them. Five Brigade created terror in a sustained and systematic way. Indiscriminate killing was part of the system. All the villagers in Tshomwina, in January-February 1983, were beaten and five were killed, of whom one, badly mutilated, took eight days to die, bereft of medical help. At Mpungayille in the same year a mentally retarded boy was shot dead, then three men, then four women too when they began to cry. Killing was perhaps less widespread in Matabeleland South, but many “horrific atrocities”, in the words of the Catholic Commission, occurred. Among them was a mother forced to eat the flesh of her four-month-old baby after it had been axed three times, and a girl of 18 and another of 11 years sexually attacked then shot dead.² At Donkwe Donkwe the soldiers took 200 men, women, and children to a local school, and everyone was beaten from sunrise to 10 am. Six men were then randomly chosen and killed, while the others were made—as was often the case—to sing songs praising Robert Mugabe. The Report estimates with “reasonable certainty” the total number of dead through the 1980s at 3,750—but “the real figure for the dead could be possibly double 3,000, or even higher”. There were 99 known mass beatings, with the victims thereof totalling almost 5,000. Those known to have been physically tortured numbered some 7,000.³ Peter Godwin believed that about 7,000 people were killed, and he later vividly remembered the stench of the rotting corpses in the mine-shafts near Bhalagwe (or Belaghwe).⁴ Robin Cook, the British Foreign Secretary, told parliament in March 2001 that 10,000 people were killed in the massacres in the province over two to three years.⁵

¹ Created in 1964, chiefly to gather foreign intelligence, and instrumental in the creation of Renamo in Mozambique, Mugabe gave it responsibilities for domestic intelligence too. Its increased size and scope were indicated in the rise of its budget from Z\$3 million (or US\$4 m) in 1979 to Z\$70 million in 1991–92. *The Economist*, 25 July 1972.

² Rape was used almost systematically, and the Fifth Brigade’s Commander reportedly “had a policy of ordering the soldiers to take women”. Alexander, op. cit., p. 221.

³ *Breaking the Silence*, pp. 157–58. Torture is a long-lasting experience. “It is commonly said”, note Alexander and her colleagues, “that people are ‘still dying’ from the wounds inflicted by the Fifth Brigade”, *ibid.*

⁴ Author of *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa*, interviewed by Maureen Isaacson, *Saturday Star* (Johannesburg), 13 April 1996. His book presented detailed personal and eye-witness accounts from close to the time when the events occurred; for instance, of the “ritual of interrogation” at Bhalagwe: “Before they even began to question you, they would break one wrist. If you didn’t yield any information about the dissidents, they broke an ankle, then the other wrist, then the other ankle. Inevitably, most people were gabbling away with all sorts of made-up confessions...Anything to prevent that brown boot from crashing down again. Acting on the ‘confessions’, the soldiers would...collect a fresh batch of victims..”. *Mukiwa*, London and Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996, p. 362.

⁵ Cited by Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, in “The Limits of Engagement”, mimeo, 2002.

Experienced journalists have written of up to 20,000 deaths.¹ A unity pact signed between Nkomo and Mugabe in December 1987 was the intended herald of Zimbabwe's one-party predominant state.

No official acknowledgement of what happened in Matabeleland has been made, and the relatives of the victims have therefore been unable to obtain death certificates. "People just disappeared and have never been traced", said Busani Bafana, a journalist in Bulawayo, and President Mugabe has specifically ruled out the possibility of compensation.² "For years, [his] administration had managed to put a lid on news of the massacres".³ The Report of the Catholic Commission was presented to President Mugabe in March 1997, but the country's Catholic Bishops are said to have gone back on a promise to release it publicly. A copy was obtained by the *Mail and Guardian* and details of "one of the untold horrors of Africa" appeared in Johannesburg on 2 May. The findings were ignored in the government press in Harare and covered in one independent weekly only.⁴ Air Marshal Perence Shiri, who executed Mugabe's orders, is one of the most senior officers in the Zimbabwean military in 2002. The latter's responsibility for crimes against humanity, rivalling General Augusto Pinochet and Slobodan Milosevic, is manifest.

PRESIDENTIALISM AND NON-PARTICIPATORY POLITICS IN THE 1990s

At independence in 1980 about 91 per cent of the electorate turned out to vote, with the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) winning 62 per cent of the ballot. This extraordinary level of electoral participation was nevertheless exceeded in 1985, when 97 per cent of those eligible voted.⁵ But participation plummeted to 54 per cent in 1990, rose to 61 per cent in 1995, partly because nearly half of the seats were uncontested, and fell further to 31 per cent in 1996. The predominance of the ruling party—after December 1987 ZANU-PF effectively engulfed ZAPU—the incapacities of existing opposition groupings, and Zimbabwe's unfair constitutional and electoral laws had rendered elections meaningless.

Thirty of parliament's 150 members are directly appointed by President Mugabe, who also appoints the members of the Electoral Supervisory Commission—usually serving or retired officials—who are answerable to him.

¹ For example, Michael Hartnack, writing on the death of Joshua Nkomo, "the old man who sold out", as former admirers in Matabeleland came to know him, in *Business Day* (Johannesburg), 2 July 1999.

² Lewis Machipisa, in *The Star* (Johannesburg), 9 May 1997.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Mail and Guardian*, 2 May, and Machipisa, *The Star*, 9 May 1997.

⁵ Figures presented by Masipula Sithole, "The General Elections 1979–1985", chapter in Mandaza, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–88; the level of 97 per cent in 1985 was related to a 'go-to-the-people' voters' registration scheme. These figures were extraordinary compared with both the high turnouts, sometimes of 80 per cent, in new multiparty elections in Africa since 1990, and with the low rate of only 42 per cent at national elections in liberal-democratic Botswana in 1999. Turnout in presidential elections in the United States averages around one-third of those eligible to vote.

The Registrar General is a presidential appointee, responsible, for instance, for maintaining the voters' roll, unfettered by any legal obligation that the list be open to public scrutiny. The Political Parties (Finance) Act, introduced after the unity pact, provided state funding to any party with more than 15 parliamentary seats. Only the ruling party qualified, and in 1996 it obtained Z\$30 million (about US\$3.2 m.) of taxpayers' money; between 1992–95 it had got some US\$10 million. In addition the state-owned broadcasting monopoly and newspapers vigorously promoted ZANU-PF and ignored others. In 1995 voter registration was so chaotic that 100,000 would-be voters were turned away.¹

The President's increasing authoritarianism and his disdain for human rights through this period was evident in many areas. He came to power declaring that he could not envision confirming a death sentence, and indeed a ruling-party official who murdered opposition supporters was pardoned. But as the suppression of the "dissidents" expanded, the gallows wassoon re-deployed, and by the mid-1990s, 56 or 57 people were believed to have been executed. A "multiple scaffold", capable of hanging five people at a time, was introduced, despite serious doubts being voiced about the speed of death in executions in this way.²

Mengistu Haile Mariam was for 17 years a dictator and a killer of Ethiopians and Eritreans on a gigantic scale,³ but when he was overthrown by popular forces in 1991, he found refuge with his family in Harare under Mugabe's auspices. Repeated requests for his extradition to face justice in Ethiopia have been ignored by the Mugabe government. Not only were there perverted ideological similarities between the two men but, according to Ryle, the Zimbabwean leader had "learned his trade partly from Mengistu, when his army trained units of the liberation forces led by Mugabe in the 1970s".⁴

Under ZANU-PF's predominance in parliament, the constitution became, not the foundation of the country's laws, but a thing of contingency and endless malleability. Between 1987, when Mugabe became executive President, and mid-2000, the constitution was amended 16 times.⁵ Popular change was not possible under such circumstances, and non-participation was not apathy but a rational response to authoritarian power and an absence of choice. Mugabe could not then be replaced, but his legitimacy could be highlighted and brought into question.

¹ *The Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 13 April, *The Economist*, 15 April 1995, and *Business Day*, 23 April 1996.

² For death to be instantaneous by hanging, an experienced hangman is required who is able to make careful calculations of the victim's body weight, the length of the required drop, the springing of the trap, etc. Michael Hartnack, in *Business Day*, 4 October 1996.

³ He made General Pinochet "look like a pussycat", John Ryle, "Disneyland for Dictators", *The New York Review*, 14 January 1999, p. 8. There were at least 10,000 dead in the Red Terror, hundreds of thousands killed in civil war, and dozens he shot dead personally. Neil Henry, in *The Weekly Mail*, 24 May 1991.

⁴ Ryle, op. cit.

⁵ *Business Day*, 28 June 2000.

LAND REDISTRIBUTION AND FARM INVASIONS

Land was one of the issues which fuelled the armed liberation struggle, 1972–80,¹ and the inequitable distribution of good farmland remained an issue of contention in 1980. But progress was made, consistent with the rule of law, the maintenance of agricultural stability, and the decidedly mixed priorities of the Mugabe government. With financial aid from various countries, including 44 million pounds from Britain, the government acquired 3.8 million hectares, on which 71,000 families were resettled, between 1980–99. But the government's commitment to genuine land reform was doubtful; not all the available funds were utilised by the government, and in 1996 a land resettlement grant was closed "in the absence of government plans on how to spend it". Additional "problems" had arisen, "attributed to inadequate planning and failure to provide proper infrastructures and support systems".²

Problems were definitely apparent in early 1994. Bath Farm was a cropping and livestock estate of 1,234 hectares, with a permanent river, in the Wedza district, south-east of Harare. The land was prepared for resettlement by 33 peasant families from the nearby and over-crowded communal farming area, before it was revealed that the farm had been acquired on leasehold by Witness Mangwende who, as agriculture minister, was responsible for the programme of land acquisition. When asked at a public meeting in January 1991 how abuse of the state's powers in land acquisition could be prevented, Minister Mangwende had replied: "Trust us".³

Zimbabwe's land redistribution programme, by early 1994, was actually "benefiting a powerful new elite", according to Robin Drew. Senior officers in the Zimbabwe National Army, the Air Force, the Zimbabwe Republic Police, the CIO, top civil servants, and at least one other serving and senior cabinet minister, Stan Mudenge, were among the fortunate few. Air Marshall Perence Shiri had been allocated a 2,800 hectare farm, previously under leasehold to a white farmer. Retired Air Force commander and Politburo member, Josia Tungamirai, was pictured on national television proudly showing reporters over his new tobacco estate.⁴ Corruption and inequity were part of the problem. But also involved were serious agricultural consequences. International food agencies warned then that the government's rush to take over the six-million hectares of the country's "maize and tobacco belt" threatened food and

¹ As it did elsewhere under settler colonialism in Africa. The poor peasants who took up arms in Kenya, beginning in 1952, called themselves the Land and Freedom Army, and in Algeria a mobilising slogan was "Land to the Fellah!".

² The government also had to hand at the end of the 1990s some 300,000 hectares of commercial quality state land, available but unused for resettlement. International Bar Association, *Report of Zimbabwe Mission 2001*, London, 2001, p. 30.

³ He was also given a financial advance worth about R80,000, from the then cash-strapped Agricultural Finance Corporation, but failed to plant maize before the rains. Crops wilted, threatening the wages of the labourers on the estate. *The Star*, 4 March and *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 6 March 1994.

⁴ *Sunday Times*, 6, and *The Star*, 30 March 1994.

commodity production, as good land went, not to experienced and needy peasant farmers, but to the political and military elites.¹

An international donors conference was held in Harare in September 1998. Opened by President Mugabe and chaired by Foreign Minister Mudenge, it was intended to inform the donor community about the Phase 2 Land Reform and Resettlement Programme, and to mobilise support behind it. A set of 13 principles on which reform and resettlement might proceed was agreed to by all concerned, including the Mugabe government. These included the need for institutional arrangements to enhance transparency and increase fairness in the redistribution process. Britain was ready to support such a programme.² Foreign Secretary Cook, in May 2000, reiterated his country's willingness to contribute 36 million pounds to a fair, efficient and open programme,³ and they pledged that sum again for redistribution that was legally and peacefully implemented accompanied by macroeconomic reforms at Abuja in September 2001.⁴ The International Bar Association also noted that the government's existing Commercial Farm Resettlement Scheme, under which land was allocated to black commercial farmers, lacked transparency in its procedures, and as a result, it was observed, "half of the land titles under the scheme had been allocated to public servants or politicians". Representatives of the landless people, the Association reported, "blame the government for a lack of energy and commitment to land reform".⁵ They had every reason to do so. Near the turn of the century 25 per cent of the members of the Commercial Farmers' Union were black, "most" of them, Hartnack reported, "wealthy urban business figures".⁶

By the end of 1999 the government appeared to have made little progress on the second stage of land resettlement for the poor. Moves were commenced two years earlier to acquire farms compulsorily, but the government failed to follow procedures laid down in its own legislation. At the end of 1999 Mugabe publicly reaffirmed his intention to expropriate farmland without compensation for the land value. Britain, he claimed, would provide the necessary funds to compensate the existing farm-owners. This proposal—of compulsory acquisition without compensation—was part of the government's draft constitution put to the voters at a referendum on 12–13 February 2000, and decisively rejected by them—55 per cent voting No. This was Mugabe's first serious setback at the polls in 20 years, and a virtual vote of no confidence given the importance of the issue. Nevertheless, what the people did not accept the party would, commanding 147 of the legislature's 150 seats, and the provision of expropriation without

¹ There were already rumours of "excessive hunting" on Air Marshall Shiri's estate. *Sunday Times*, 6 March and *The Star*, 30 March 1994. On another estimate, 400,000 hectares of land bought for resettlement by the poor were handed over to some 400 people in ZANU-PF, *The Economist*, 15 April 2000.

² *Report of Zimbabwe Mission*, p. 31.

³ Taylor and Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁴ *The Economist*, 15 September 2001.

⁵ *Report of Zimbabwe Mission* 2001, p. 31.

⁶ Michael Hartnack, in *Business Day*, 31 March 2000.

compensation was inserted into the existing constitution by amendment in parliament in April 2000.¹

The invasion of commercial farms commenced on 16 February. It began in Masvingo province in the south-east of the country, and soon spread widely.² The campaign was spear-headed by self-styled War Veterans (of the liberation struggle), whom President Mugabe had promoted and mobilised behind himself and his interests. Numbering between 50,000 and 70,000, they were given generous government handouts in November 1997—a lump sum of Z\$50,000, plus a monthly pension of Z\$2,000 to each person.³ This represented a handout from the public purse totalling, Hartnack estimated, Z\$4.5 billion.

As 1,500 farms were earmarked for seizure, the two inter-related moves brought about a 70 per cent fall in the currency.⁴ The budget deficit in Zimbabwe was already running then at about 9 per cent of GDP. Increased taxation was intended to pay for it—sales tax rose from 15 to 17.5 per cent, and an extra 5 per cent levy was imposed on personal and corporate tax.⁵ Boosting inflation, diverting investment funds away from development, and promoting anti-democratic tendencies, the gratuities represented an important step towards voodoo economics, representative more of Duvalier's Haiti rather than a once advanced Zimbabwe. By mid-March 2000 more than 500 farms had been occupied by the organised Veterans backed up where necessary by unemployed urban young men.⁶

Starting just days after the referendum, compelling evidence existed of the state's direct involvement in the invasions; government vehicles being used to transport occupiers to the farms; the engagement of CIO, army, and ruling party officials in the campaign; and reports of daily stipends paid to the occupiers. A "considerable body of evidence" indicated that government and party officials "assisted the invasions".⁷ By November of the same year, 1,700 farms were occupied by militants.⁸

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

² The campaign "earned itself" the epithet farm invasion, and was accepted as such by the International Bar Association. *Ibid.*

³ The monthly pension-payment was increased to Z\$2,800 in early 2000, and in October of that year they were incorporated as reserves into the army, with regular incomes and pension-eligibility, in addition to their special pensions. *Business Day*, 31 March, and *Mail and Guardian*, 6 October 2000. Earlier in the 1990s, "ZANU bigwigs had looted a fund intended to compensate veterans"; Mugabe's brother-in-law, for example, had obtained US\$70,000 for a scar on his knee and some ulcers, while the ex-combatants and destitutes got nothing. Then they had rioted. *The Economist*, 23 February 2002.

⁴ Hartnack, in *Business Day*, 31 March 2000.

⁵ Zimbabweans then paid tax of 20 per cent on incomes of more than Z\$12,000 a year, rising to 40 per cent on those of Z\$40,000, plus a 5 per cent so-called development levy. Company tax was a flat 40 per cent, plus the levy. Hartnack, in *Business Day*, 28 November 1997.

⁶ International Bar Association, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁷ The Supreme Court was satisfied about "encouragement and support of members of the government and...ruling party for the invasions". *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

⁸ *Business Day*, 3 November 2000.

Both the Minister of Justice and the Attorney-General confirmed to the Bar Association that the government acknowledged the illegality of the farm invasions and occupations.¹ The state's acceptance of illegality was compounded by a refusal to terminate the occupations. Mugabe himself announced on television that the government would not act to stop the invasions.² On the 20th anniversary of independence he actually branded the country's white commercial farmers as "enemies of the state".³

As "the level of violence in the farm invasions escalated", with assaults on farmers and farm workers, the theft and destruction of property, and an escalating number of deaths, from April 2000 onwards, the Zimbabwe Republic Police remained inactive. When High Court and Supreme Court declarations were obtained ordering the removal of the occupiers, the executive and police took no steps to implement the orders.⁴

Evidence also indicated that the government's wide-ranging resort to illegality was intended to combat the growing support for the new opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change. The use of force was explicitly endorsed by Nathan Shamuyarira, a government loyalist, when he reminded opposition supporters that "the area of violence is an area where ZANU-PF has a very strong, long and successful history".⁵ This would be done by hitting at MDC supporters within the white farming community, and by winning back rural support by raising anew the prospect of land resettlement.⁶ It seemed evident too that, as the June 2000 parliamentary elections approached, the government was using land to deflect public attention from other serious problems.⁷

These interpretations were supported by findings of the Supreme Court in autumn 2000: that farmers had been targeted "who were believed to be supporters of the opposition party"; that "the spoils of expropriation went primarily to supporters of the government party"; and that "various government officials had announced that only ZANU-PF supporters would be settled on the land".⁸ The attention of the people was not deflected from the failures of land reform, and the problems besetting the country. Consistent with the No vote at the referendum, an opinion poll carried out in February 2000, by the Helen Suzman Foundation, found that ordinary Zimbabweans differed markedly from President Mugabe on the issues of land and white farmers; only 9 per cent of people thought land the most important issue facing them, behind the fall of the currency, the key issue for 14 per cent, unemployment, the priority for 25 per

¹ *Report of Zimbabwe Mission*, p. 36.

² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³ Cited in *Business Day*, 19 April 2000.

⁴ *Report of Zimbabwe Mission*, pp. 36–45.

⁵ Cited by Iden Wetherell, in *Mail and Guardian*, 6 October 2000.

⁶ But to substantiate a commitment to popular land reform, Mugabe had to explain how he would do in a few months what his government had not achieved in 20 years, now without donor support, and despite the government's near bankruptcy. *The Economist*, 2 September 2000.

⁷ International Bar Association, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁸ The phraseology is the Bar Association's. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

cent, and rising prices, rated first by 28 per cent of respondents. Only two per cent thought whites were most to blame for the country's problems, while 28 per cent blamed Mugabe himself and another 41 per cent accused the government—not the British government or other outside agency—for the slow redistribution of land to the needy.¹

By a year later, in a trend that originated from the early 1990s, agricultural policy, and economic policy generally, were being subordinated to the seizure of farming assets by the ruling elite.² Between September and October 2001 more farms were occupied, and planting was prevented on 700 others.³ The destruction of agricultural capacity, which both Nyerere and Machel had warned against, was far advanced. A food crisis had been induced. The maize-exporting country faced a shortfall in the staple, it was reported on 12 July, of at least 500,000 tons, increased to an estimated 700,000 tons a week later; the need to import 100,000 tons of wheat also existed.⁴ Hardship was widespread. The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe stated in August that 74 per cent of the population could not afford the basic necessities, and the currency was worth just two per cent of its value in 1980.⁵ Average incomes have fallen by half since independence. The President's "open scorn for property rights killed investment in Zimbabwe".⁶

The government reacted to the worsening situation by both denying the existence of the shortages and exacerbating them further. Private sales of maize and wheat were officially banned, as farmers were accused of creating "false shortages by hoarding grain".⁷ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that "the Zimbabwean economy is deteriorating rapidly and poverty is rising", and it noted that the government's official exchange rate, of Z\$55 to one American dollar, hurt exports and promoted corruption.⁸ The imposition of a price freeze on basic foods followed.⁹ The food shortage only worsened. The World Food Programme (WFP) in Harare said in November that 500,000 people

¹ R.W. Johnson, in *Focus 21*, March 2001, and *The Economist*, 15 April, and 4 August 2000.

² Power over the economy was in a sense devolving to the quasi-military warlords behind the farm invasions. Jim Jones, in *Business Day*, 22 August 2001.

³ *The Economist*, 13 October 2001.

⁴ *Business Day*, 12 and 18 July 2001.

⁵ *The Times* (London), 16 August 2001.

⁶ *The Economist*, 23 February 2002.

⁷ *Business Day*, 18 July 2001. Information Minister Jonathan Moyo even claimed on national television that the farmers were instigating the looting of their properties in the Chinhoyi area themselves. *Ibid.*, 22 August 2001.

⁸ *Business Day*, 21 and 27 September 2001. Despite severe shortages of foreign exchange, the local currency had been fixed at 55 to the American dollar since November 2000, thereby stifling growth, said the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. *Ibid.*, 28 February 2002. The extent of the induced distortion was notable—the actual value of the currency, was around 300 to the American unit in late 2001. Prices at the Harare tobacco auction were set in US dollars, and the government had decreed that tobacco-sellers would be paid at the official rate. But if the farmers chanced to re-plant for next season, they would have to buy imported inputs, such as fuel, at the prices of the parallel market. Jim Jones, in *ibid.*, 22 August 2001.

⁹ *Business Day*, 16 October 2001.

were hungry. The government appealed for US\$300 million in food aid, but it destroyed the possibility of receiving such help by informing charities that all food must be distributed to the people under official supervision.

The government seemed complacent about food shortages in the towns. It appeared to be encouraging urban workers to return to the villages—a policy of so-called “decongesting”, in the words of one minister.¹ By the early New Year, the food shortage had become critical, according to the WFP. Many people were selling their livestock and belongings to buy food, and they were surviving on only one meal a day.²

But who was benefiting from the general and worsening emiseration remained much the same. The government was continuing to allocate prime farms to top army, government and ZANU-PF officials. Among the known recipients, identified by Basildon Peta, were the leader and self-styled commander of the farm invasions, Joseph Chinotimba; the youth development minister, Elliot Manyika; the police commissioner, Augustine Chihuri; the mayor of Bindura and known loyalist of the President, Webster Bepura; a senior CIO operative, Menard Muzariri; and another Mugabe loyalist, Dick Mafiosi.³ President Mugabe was not doing badly either.⁴

Farm seizures had become ever more violent as top ruling party officials resorted to evicting commercial farmers themselves, forcibly seizing their properties. This was supposedly being done under the government’s scheme to promote black capitalist farming. The Ministry of Agriculture had established a committee to vet potential beneficiaries. But an official close to the committee told Peta that most of the people it recommended had been sidelined in favour of influential figures. Police Commissioner Chihuri had himself reportedly chased away a farmer and seized his property in the Shamva area.⁵

State lawlessness was ever widening. Attacks on the judiciary by officials and War Veterans took place and the Supreme Court was invaded by Veterans in late November. Not long after, Chief Justice Gubbay, appointed by President Mugabe in 1990, was “forced into early retirement by relentless pressure from the government...coupled with unfair and untrue allegations...and threats of violence”.⁶ The Minister of Justice attacked the judiciary as being racists and

¹ *The Economist*, 17 November 2001.

² *Business Day*, 24 January 2002.

³ *The Sunday Independent* (Johannesburg), 23 December 2001. The recipients soon included the Registrar-General of elections, and the new Chief Justice who presided over a compromised judiciary. Editorial, *The Economist*, 16 March 2002.

⁴ In 2001 he was building a mansion, reportedly worth some 6 million British pounds, on 10 hectares of land in Borrowdale, Harare. This was the latest addition to “a constellation of private homes and state residencies dotted around Zimbabwe” which he and his wife had acquired over the years. Jon Swain, in *The Sunday Independent*, 8 April 2001. He also enjoyed large expenditures on international travel, for instance, spending some four million Rands on a trip to the United Nations’ Millennium Summit in New York, accompanied by a delegation of 47, including his wife and three children, *The Star*, 21 September 2000.

⁵ *The Sunday Independent*, 23 December 2001.

⁶ International Bar Association, op. cit., p. 61.

colonial relics—all of them were actually appointed to the bench or their office by President Mugabe.¹ The Bar Association was quite specific: the “campaign” against the country’s judges was “fuelled and encouraged by the government”, and in this and associated ways,² it was precipitating a situation of “general lawlessness and chaos”.³

Advocate George Bizos, a member of the Mission 2001, noted in January 2002, that none of the assurances given to the team by Mugabe and leading ministers had been honoured. Instead, “the situation has become worse regarding the safety of judges, the rule of law, selective prosecutions and intimidation”.⁴

MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE CONGO

Zimbabwe’s military intrusion into the fighting in Congo-Kinshasa began in August 1998, but was pre-figured in 1996 when Robert Mugabe is said to have “donated” US\$5 million to Laurent Kabila to finance his rebellion against Mobutu. Not long after, an organization called Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI) arranged to supply Kabila’s forces with food, uniforms and weaponry, in a deal said to be worth US\$53 million.⁵ ZDI was, characteristically, a state-owned firm run by retired military officers. Kabila is believed to have bought the backing of the Zimbabwean military “with a promise that its intervention would be”, in his words, “self-financing”.⁶ This was so for Mugabe and his commanders, but the operation was simultaneously very costly for the Zimbabwean people, and deeply unpopular.

Initially 6,000 troops, supported by Hawk and MiG 21 fighter aircraft and armed helicopters, were despatched, but 2,000 more soldiers were sent as early as October 1998. This major decision was taken by President Mugabe alone, without consultation with either parliament or his cabinet.⁷ More than half the members of the 54-strong cabinet were believed soon after to have voiced their

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

² War Veteran-led invasions spread to private firms in Harare in early 2001, as companies were forced to reduce operations or close completely under the induced economic exigencies. In April, Mugabe threatened stern measures against firms in financial difficulties. Towards June, almost 200 companies were under siege. Veterans stopped operations and assaulted managers. Harare’s largest private hospital, and Mazoe Estates, the country’s leading exporter of citrus products, were forced to close. More than 500 companies had been shut down, while many others were operating below capacity by September; some 10,000 people had been rendered jobless. As with farm invasions, the apparent intention was to cut private-sector support for the opposition party and intimidate workers. War Veterans hoped to undermine the trade unions by compelling firms to give their employees special payments. Unions were in effect being deprived of their membership. *The Economist*, 12 May, and *Business Day*, 4 September 2001.

³ Bar Association, *op. cit.*, pp. 80 and 90.

⁴ Cited by Xolani Xundu, in *Business Day*, 19 January 2002.

⁵ Michael Nest, “Ambitions, Profits and Loss: Zimbabwean Economic Involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo”, *African Affairs*, 2001, 100, p. 484. Nest’s use of the word “donation” obscures the important distinctions between gift, grant, or loan.

⁶ Chris McGreal, “A Fight for the Spoils of War”, *Mail and Guardian*, 26 January 2001.

⁷ Hartnack, in *Business Day*, 30 October 1998.

opposition to the war.¹ Civil society endeavoured to mobilise against the action. Churchmen, trade unionists, and human rights groups assembled under the leadership of the National Constitutional Assembly, and a task force chaired by Morgan Tsvangirai, secretary-general of the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions. An opinion poll commissioned by local human rights groups indicated that 70 per cent of people opposed the war.²

13,000 troops were in the Congo before the year was out, and the growing numbers of the dead and wounded were being flown back at night to Thornhill airforce base, remote from Harare. Secret too was the cost of the war to the nation, but estimates ranged from US\$400,000 to US\$1 million a day. "Scores of soldiers" about to be posted to the Congo were said to have deserted and several officers jailed for refusing the posting. In November, Harare erupted in a wave of anti-government riots, with crowds shouting "No Go Congo!".³

Mugabe's reaction at home combined military violence with illegality. Military intelligence officers seized the editor of the *Standard*, Mark Chavanduka, on 12 January 1999, and detained him for a week. Military police possessed no power of arrest over civilians, and the High Court ordered his release, but the defence ministry dismissed the ruling. The newspaper had run a story that 23 officers and men had plotted a coup because they believed that their commanders were more interested in business deals in Congo than the welfare of their soldiers fighting there. The defence minister, Moven Mahachi, declared that the journalists would not get away with such "traitorous" stories, and Chavanduka, and Ray Choto, who wrote the account, were beaten, suffered electric shocks, and were nearly suffocated by military interrogators.⁴

By the end of the year, it was revealed that 164 soldiers had been killed and 434 seriously injured in Congo. Considerable equipment had been lost, including an Allouette 3 helicopter gunship, a MiG fighter, and Brazilian-made Cascavek tanks and armoured personnel carriers. The budget for the defence ministry had been set at US\$9 billion for the next year.⁵

Mahachi repeatedly denied that the Zimbabwean military was in Congo for profit: "You don't go where people lose lives just because you want to make a few dollars. But as a result of our presence, a number of Zimbabwe businessmen are taking advantage of the goodwill there. If they don't, others will". A businessman like Billy Rautenbach was certainly involved in the Congo, but he was no ordinary Zimbabwean businessman. He was an associate of Robert Mugabe, and through his firm, Ridgepointe, gained a one-third share and management control of the Congolese state mining corporation, Gecamines, on the pressing

¹ According to *The Mirror*, a newspaper with good government connections, *The Economist*, 7 November 1998.

² *Business Day*, 30 October, and *The Sunday Independent*, 20 December 1998. Zimbabwe had no history of contact with the Congo, a long established kleptocracy, with no institutionalisation, and no experience of democracy whatsoever.

³ *The Economist*, 7 November 1998, and 30 January 1999.

⁴ *The Economist*, 30 January 1999.

⁵ *Business Day*, 26 November 1999.

recommendation of President Mugabe. This brought valuable cobalt earnings to Harare,¹ until Rautenbach lost his position, near the end of 1999, accused of siphoning-off profits by Kabila.²

An organisation called Osleg (or Operation Sovereign Legitimacy) appeared typical of exactly how and why the Mugabe government was militarily involved in the Congo. It was “officially the commercial unit” of the Zimbabwean Defence Force (ZDF), but in reality it was privately owned by four “shareholders”—Isaiah Ruzengwe, general manager of the Zimbabwe Minerals Development Corporation; Onesimo Moyo, senior manager in the Minerals Marketing Corporation; Job Whabira, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Defence; and General Vitalis Zvinvashe, Commander of the ZDF and of the operation in the Congo.³ Osleg became heavily involved in buying diamonds and gold. In early 2000 two important diamond concessions were handed over by Kinshasa to a new joint venture between Osleg and Comiex. The main shareholders in the latter were Kabila and some of his ministers. Osleg additionally was a major shareholder in Oryx, reportedly controlled by Kabila and Mugabe, which held Congolese diamond concessions.⁴ The European Union believed that Mugabe had “secretly channelled millions of pounds” from the sale of diamonds into “offshore bank accounts in the Bahamas and Malaysia”, and in March 2002 they were working to track this cash down.⁵

There were other profitable engagements. General Zvinvashe owned an air cargo company which won transport contracts from the ZDF, and his brother, Colonel Francis Zvinvashe, was also involved in “the ZDF’s commercial ventures in the [Congo]”. Land acquisitions were part of it all too, and a Zimbabwean state farm was said to have been given 500,000 hectares of land in the south of the Congo.⁶ Mugabe was in the Congo to plunder the rich resources of the ravaged country. The profit makers were the political and military warlords, and the losers were the ordinary soldiers and the people of Zimbabwe.

The incoherencies were deepening in Mugabe’s policy-making as the voodoo tendencies predominated. His government had earlier grossly undervalued the cost of the Congo operations, assuring the IMF that their spending was around

¹ He “served Mugabe’s purpose in ensuring that the Zimbabweans got their cut...from cobalt and copper mining”. *Mail and Guardian*, 26 January 2001.

² State investigators in South Africa added that he was “bank-rolling the war” in the Congo. Rautenbach’s wide role and relationships are considered in Good and Skye Hughes, “Globalization and Diversification: Two Cases in Southern Africa”, *African Affairs* (2002), 101, pp. 52–54.

³ Nest, op. cit., p. 480.

⁴ Ivor Powell, *Mail and Guardian*, 26 November 1999 and 17 March 2000.

⁵ David Leppard and Jonathan Calvert, in *The Star*, 11 March 2002. The British government was simultaneously probing reports that Mugabe had shifted 10 million pounds through Channel Island banks to Malaysia, and the possibility that up to 60 million pounds had left Zimbabwe during the first months of 2002. *Business Day*, 13 March 2002, with reference to a report in London’s *Sunday Telegraph* of 3 March.

⁶ Powell, op. cit., and McGreal, op. cit.

US\$3 million a month, when the actual expenditure through 1999—on an internal Finance Ministry memorandum—was US\$27.7 million monthly.¹

Towards the end of 2001 the ZDF's weaponry was in short supply—given the lack of foreign exchange, and the ruination of production nationally. All but two of the ZDF's British-made Hawk aircraft were believed to be grounded due to a lack of spares; Britain had stopped supplying military equipment, including Land Rovers to the Police, in April 2000. The total number of ZDF troops in the Congo was thought to have been increased further to around 16,000. If true, this meant that around one-third of all Zimbabwe's military personnel were committed to the Congo. Of the countries supporting the Kabila regime militarily, Zimbabwe "was the most heavily involved", and it had "overstretched Harare's resources" even by 1999.² Low-ranking soldiers were receiving their bonuses in near-worthless Congolese francs. Morale was very low. Mugabe had decreed that the bodies of fallen troops should be buried without ceremony in the jungle, according to an army captain who could not be named. According to official claims less than 100 soldiers had died, but the International Institute's sources placed the true toll, as of two years earlier, "nearer 700".³ Peta's army informant said that there was general criticism of top officers for adopting lavish lifestyles, and using professional soldiers to guard their concessions around Mbuji Mayi, one of the Congo's richest mining areas.⁴

MUGABE'S ACHIEVEMENTS⁵

The killing and torture in Mataberland was Mugabe's project, prepared for soon after his acquisition of power, and the Fifth Brigade, the main instrument of the assault, operated under his direct control. He initiated Zimbabwe's intervention into the Congo; President Mugabe began the farm invasions two to three days after the failure of his referendum vote; his decisions lavished scarce funds on the War Veterans and then turned them loose; it was the President of Zimbabwe who authoritatively expressed his contempt for the rule of law in a broad and

¹ Real spending was US\$166 million between January and June. Harare was endeavouring to obtain a loan of almost US\$200 million from the IMF, but the falsification was discovered. Report in the *Financial Times* (London), discussed in *The Star*, 5 October 1999.

² The total strength of the army was about 35,000, and the air force was 4,000, in 1999. The air force then possessed 11 Hunter, 8 Hawk, and 12 MiG 21 aircraft. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1999–2000*, London, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 279 and 245.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁴ Basildon Peta, in *The Sunday Independent*, 26 August 2001.

⁵ These were actualities in the 1980s, Stoneman notes, in primary and secondary education, and the expansion of primary health care, but he overstates his case by claiming that Zimbabwe remained, in 1998, "a multiparty multiracial democracy" and that its political record was "good by Third World standards, and especially so in African terms". Colin Stoneman, "Lessons Unlearned: South Africa's One-Way Relationship with Zimbabwe", chapter in David Simon (ed.), *South Africa in Southern Africa*, Oxford, James Currey, 1998, p. 91.

visceral sense. Dictatorship has its price, both for the bombastic solitary decision-maker and the people he subordinates. In a jewel of Africa, his actions created food shortages and hunger, halved personal incomes,¹ and shredded the currency. Production, investment, and the well-being of the populace are not maintained in these circumstances. Zimbabwe's GDP in 1990 was US\$8,784 million; US\$6,769 million in 1998; and one year later it was down to US\$5,608 million. Annual growth in GDP had been 7.0 per cent in 1990; 3.7 per cent in 1998; and only 0.1 per cent in 1999. Gross domestic investment went from 17.4 per cent of GDP at the start of the decade to 11.5 per cent near its end.² Since the late 1990s, however, the people of Zimbabwe have been trying to correct the problems placed upon them.

PARTICIPATION RENEWED, REPRESSION INTENSIFIED

Politics began to change through 1998, with the trade unions and civil society, and for the first time, a new union-aligned opposition party, in the vanguard of the movement. Demonstrations led by the Zimbabwean Congress of Trades Unions (ZCTU) had occurred in Harare in December 1997, against the 5 per cent War Veterans' levy, and serious rioting resulted when the police, in defiance of a High Court injunction, broke up the marches. Three days of riots over food and economic mismanagement took place in the capital in January. 1998 saw unprecedented strike action organised and led by the ZCTU and its secretary-general of the past decade, Morgan Tsvangirai. Affiliated unions with around 500,000 members supported the ZCTU, and in calling successful national strikes, the Congress, according to Hartnack, "proved themselves to have the full backing of virtually the entire urban black population of about 4 million people".³

Tsvangirai had been a nickel miner, and an executive member of the Amalgamated Mineworkers Union, and through the 1990s he improved the ZCTU's administration and restored the confidence of members.⁴ He had direct experience of Mugabe's violence —detained without trial for a week in 1989, and savagely beaten in his office, probably by War Veterans, in December 1997. "They say...that I am a pawn of the whites", he observed, "everything except the

¹ While massively increasing those of the political elite; for instance, almost on the eve of the constitutional referendum, he gazetted salary rises of between 150 per cent and 220 per cent for himself, his deputy and his 54 ministers and assistant ministers, and a month later increased the pay of the military above the rest of the public service, the salaries of some commanders going up by nearly 100 per cent. *The Star*, 8 December 1999, and 7 January 2000.

² The World Bank, *The Little Data Book 2001*, Washington D.C., April 2001, p. 230. Vital foreign direct investment was said to have fallen by a factor of eight between 1998 and 2001. Lucia Mutikani, in *Business Day*, 28 February 2002.

³ In *Business Day*, 23 November 1998.

⁴ The ZCTU leadership had stressed a dependent, collaborative relationship with government through the 1980s, and became embroiled in "corruption, embezzlement, maladministration". Lloyd Sachikonye, "State, Capital and Trade Unions", chapter in Mandaza, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

one thing [that] I am doing—fighting for ordinary workers' rights".¹ ZCTU demands soon called, not only for a 20 per cent cost of living allowance to offset runaway inflation, but also for full publication of the cost of what they called Mugabe's Congo intervention, sweeping constitutional overhaul, the reduction of the President's 54-member cabinet to 15, and a refund to taxpayers of the millions of dollars lost through official corruption.²

On 11 September 1999, a new opposition party was launched. With about 20,000 people in attendance in Harare, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) emerged out of the union-based dynamism of the past year supported by a broad range of civic groups—the churches, women and students, lawyers and human rights organisations. Earlier preliminary meetings were enthusiastically attended by whites, blacks, urban workers and farmers. Speakers at the launch described the Mugabe government as “looters and kleptocrats” and accused it of “crimes against humanity”. Tsvangirai was named as secretary-general of the party, and amidst chants of “Change” and “Arrest the thieves”, he called for an end to “fear and apathy”.³

An opinion survey conducted at this time indicated that Zimbabweans felt that their government was illegitimate and that they strongly wanted change. Less than 29 per cent thought that the last presidential election in 1996 had been free and fair. 38 per cent recognised that their country was not a democracy; only 19 per cent believed that they could trust President Mugabe, and nearly seven out of ten people either disapproved or strongly disapproved of his job performance. Almost the same number—66 per cent—took the same attitude towards parliament.⁴

At the end of an overseas tour in October, Tsvangirai asked Western European governments not to support President Mugabe's constitutional review commission, then under way, because it was fraudulent, unrepresentative, and partisan. Governments should instead be financing democratic bodies like the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), which was backed by civil society, the ZCTU, and the MDC.⁵

Tsvangirai had a point. The President had “launched” constitutional review the previous August. A 400-member commission was “despatched”, according to Hartnack, to garner opinion from the countryside, yet “within days of its return” to Harare “a draft appeared”. Mugabe allowed that he had been “in touch” with Godfrey Chidyausiku, the commission chairman, and former government

¹ Mugabe repeatedly claimed that ZCTU leaders were in “unholy alliance” with whites trying to prevent land redistribution. Michael Hartnack in *Business Day*, 13 February and 23 November 1998.

² *Ibid.*, 10 December 1998.

³ *The Economist*, 11 September, and *Business Day*, 13 September 1999. Other prominent figures in the MDC were Gibson Sibanda, president of the ZCTU, and Welshman Ncube, a legal academic. Tsvangirai became President of the party at its inaugural congress in early 2000. He was born in 1952 (cf. Mugabe born in 1924).

⁴ Institute for Democracy in South Africa, “Voice of the People?—Public Opinion and the Presidential Election in Zimbabwe”, 6 March 2002, pp. 4 and 6.

⁵ *Business Day*, 12 October 1999.

minister, throughout the drafting process. The proposed constitution was supposed to be adopted through a formal vote by all the commissioners, but Chidyausiku declared it to have been “adopted by [voice] acclamation”, at a specially convened meeting, despite vociferous cries of “no” from reportedly all sections of the final meeting.¹ The acclaimed document ignored seemingly popular demands for a prime ministerial system, and instead made Mugabe, 76 in 2000, eligible for two more six-year terms as executive president. Compulsory land acquisition without compensation was, as already noted, also there; Mugabe “personally wrote” this clause into the draft.²

This was the government’s draft constitution which 55 per cent of the voters rejected on 11 and 12 February, in a campaign led by the NCA, and involving the MDC and the trade unions.³ The contest was characterised by anti-white racism and an active bias against the No campaigners in the government media; neutral monitors were excluded from many polling stations in rural areas. The outcome nonetheless was highly significant. It “restored Zimbabweans’ fading faith”, as *The Economist* put it, “that change [could] be achieved through the ballot box”; it “amounted to a strong vote of no-confidence in Mr Mugabe and his party”; and “above all”, it expressed the electorate’s opinion on his mismanagement of the economy and intervention in the Congo. What won the day was the reinvigorated opposition, and “the resounding No from the teeming black townships in Harare and Bulawayo”.⁴

Change was almost achieved at parliamentary elections 24–25 June 2000. 57 of the 120 seats actually contested were won by the MDC, and 49 per cent of the votes, in its first national election just nine months after its foundation. Violence, generally attributable to the ruling party, occurred throughout the campaign. The Commonwealth Secretariat reported violence, intimidation and coercion in “many parts of the country, especially in rural areas, both against ordinary voters and against candidates and party supporters”. Most of this was directed against the MDC. 36 people were reported killed, thousands injured and 7,000 displaced. Violent acts, they noted, were “employed systematically as part of a strategy” to diminish support for the opposition. The European Union similarly reported “high levels” of violence from “most areas”, and they “attributed the bulk of [it] to ZANU-PF”. There was a “systematic campaign” of violence, beginning in February and continuing into June, “aimed at crushing” the oppo-

¹ Twenty-eight commissioners declared their opposition to both the content of the draft and its method of adoption, which the President ignored. John Makumbe, “How Not to Get a New Constitution”, *BBC Focus on Africa* (London), 11, 2, April–June 2000.

² Hartnack, in *Business Day*, 2 February, and *The Economist*, 19 February 2000.

³ Some 700,000 people voted No and 580,000 voted Yes, on a turnout of around 25 per cent. Even in Zvimba, the President’s birth-place north of Harare, some 12,500 voted Yes, but 3,400 brave people said No. Mercedes Sayagues, *Mail and Guardian*, 18 February 2000.

⁴ *Business Day*, 16 February, and *The Economist*, 19 February 2000.

sition. While the MDC too was involved in violence, “their responsibility for such activities was far less”.¹

Systematic intimidation was supplemented by electoral manipulation on a large scale. “Constituencies [we]re gerrymandered, the electoral role is out of date, and a ZANU hack is in charge of the count”.² A local human rights group found that 25 per cent of the names on the voters’ roll were either fictitious, listed repeatedly, or those of the dead. A United Nations team confirmed that the roll was filled with errors. A cumbersome voting and counting process could take days to complete, providing opportunities for rigging.³ The government-dominated electoral system plus the violence apparently worked. An exit poll conducted by the Helen Suzman Foundation concluded that the MDC should have won at least 87 seats, that is, a majority in the 150 seat House.⁴ But the determination of the voters in the face of the violence was equally evident and of future importance.

Opinion surveys testified further to the strong democratic pressure for political change. A Gallup International Poll showed earlier in the year that 63 per cent believed that it was time for change, and 65 per cent said that Mugabe must go.⁵ These figures also pointed towards a true majority for the MDC in parliament. A poll in September-October indicated that opposition to Mugabe was rising—74 per cent wanted him to go; 56 per cent favoured his impeachment; and the same number wanted him tried for his crimes. Tsvangirai led Mugabe as the choice for the next president by a margin of 41 per cent to 15 per cent.⁶

Indicating again his scorn for the law, President Mugabe, on 6 October 2000, issued an amnesty pardoning politically motivated crimes committed during the elections. Noting that the largest beneficiaries of the amnesty would be ruling party supporters, the International Bar Association said that Mugabe’s act represents “a message of acceptability” for politically motivated crime. Politically motivated violence continued in Zimbabwe during the Mission’s presence there.⁷

Intimidation of the opposition was “central to [Mugabe’s] campaign” to be re-elected President; both the polls and the voting indicated that if the vote was fair he would lose.⁸ Violence was augmented by imposing further constraints on

¹ Specific groups of the electorate were targeted by Veterans and ruling party supporters, said the EU: “Farm labourers...were threatened and abused, forced to attend party meetings and taken off to re-education camps...Other key groups targeted by ZANU-PF included teachers, nurses and civil servants”. Citations from the two reports in *Report of Zimbabwe Mission*, pp. 46–48, and *The Star*, 10 July 2000.

² Otherwise known as the Registrar General. *The Economist*, 24 June 2000.

³ *Ibid.*, 8 April 2000.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 July 2000. It was “a grossly unfair election”, *The Economist* affirmed.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 April 2000.

⁶ The poll was conducted by a local subsidiary of Gallup and the Helen Suzman Foundation covering both urban and rural respondents, *The Star*, 26 October 2000.

⁷ Murder, rape and robbery were excluded from the amnesty. *Report of Zimbabwe Mission*, pp. 50–51.

⁸ Editorial, *The Economist*, 3 November 2001.

the voting process. At the end of October 2001 the government announced that European Union monitors would not be invited the following year.¹ The government had already banned an experienced American observer group, the International Foundation for Election Systems, and expelled two of its senior officials from Zimbabwe. Jonathan Moyo, Minister of Information, indicated in October that the government would ban election monitoring by independent organizations.² The Carter Centre, with experience in 35 elections in 20 countries, was not allowed to observe those in Zimbabwe in 2002.³

Another Gallup Poll in November recorded that fewer than 25 per cent of the people wanted Mugabe to remain president. Repression and domination were tightened still further. Draconian laws were being pushed through parliament, reported Chris McGreal, that “all but ban political gatherings, free speech and the right to strike”. Parliament had banned Zimbabweans overseas from voting, removing about 500,000 people—one in ten potential voters—from the rolls. Other new laws made it harder for young people to register to vote. Evidence was growing, furthermore, of “padded electoral rolls and attempts to permit the President’s supporters to vote more than once”. 13 MDC supporters had been killed over a seven week period in December and the New Year. ZANU-PF had revived and trained a youth militia—unpopularly known as the Terror Teens—who manned road-blocks and often confiscated the identity cards (essential for voting) of suspected MDC supporters. Others might be “tied to trees and beaten or disappear altogether”.⁴ Their preferred weapon was a barbed-wire flail.

THE AFRICAN PRESIDENTS

Witnessing this worsening catastrophe, regional leaders have aligned themselves, not with the suffering of the Zimbabwean people and their courageous determination to end it, but with the party and leader bringing the destruction about. The economic realities, the results of two elections and numerous opinion polls, the reports of the violence by responsible organizations, Mugabe’s contempt for the law and his proclivity towards force—“We have degrees in violence”—have been wilfully ignored. The supposed “assurances” of his government, have been repeatedly seized upon even as they were quickly and consistently broken. A specious neutrality and open-mindedness was proclaimed among the regional leaders, while the Zimbabwean people were trampled upon, and the despot tightened his hold on power at whatever cost to his country and to the region. These are palpable realities, testified to, reported and recorded,

¹ Ibid.

² *Business Day*, 8 October 2001.

³ They expressed their support “for the people of Zimbabwe and their courageous commitment to [democracy]”, the Centre stated on 5 March 2002. Personal communication, Chaz Maviyane-Davies, 9 March 2002.

⁴ In *The Guardian Weekly*, 31 January 2002.

and seen with the naked eye in southern Africa by all except the region's ruling elites.

Regional leaders have showed consistent support for Mugabe and opposition to democracy since 2000. President Thabo Mbeki appeared to have no knowledge of electoral malpractice and wide-scale illegality as the June parliamentary elections approached, and he had no interest in acquiring it either. Warnings of early dangerous actions were dismissed as "entirely speculative". Rather than seeking corrective measures then on these findings, he represented them, in a large leap of logic, as "prejudgements" of the election results. The warnings constituted "interference" in Zimbabwe's affairs.¹ The June elections, castigated by the European Union and Commonwealth observers, were judged by the ANC government, on Mbeki's insistence, as "substantially free and fair".²

Land seizures and farm invasions were understood by the South African President in Mugabe's false terms as reformist redistribution. In May 2000, he initiated an attempt to get international funding for Mugabe's acquisition of 118 white-owned farms, without pre-conditions, he stressed, regarding the efficiency and fairness of the distribution process and the rule of law. Controls, he insisted, would constitute an imposition on the Mugabe government.³ As law and the economy collapsed, and international aid was suspended, Deputy-President Jacob Zuma, at a regional summit in Namibia, declared that the Zimbabwean President had convincingly explained that supposed redistribution would not affect commercial farming. "The delegates were quite appreciative of what he said...I think he gave quite a reasonable explanation".⁴

When the evidence showed that Mugabe had instigated the land crisis, Mbeki agreed with his brother president—and disagreed with the Zimbabwean people—that land was the central issue, the problem exacerbated by colonialism, and worsened further by continuing racism. He sent Thoko Didiza, his Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs, to study "land-reform" in Zimbabwe. He admonished South Africans against criticism of Mugabe. "Land [redistribution] is a problem caused by colonialism". Those who wanted the Zimbabwean leader condemned, he claimed, were people who thought all black governments were alike, and who were therefore, he implied, racists. He added soon after that criticism of his supportive policies towards Mugabe was essentially "racist attempts" fostering fear in South Africa. He then stood hand-in-hand with President Mugabe in Bulawayo, praised him for his wisdom, and declared that their two countries should work together against the "iniquitous results of colonialism".⁵

¹ *Business Day*, 25 May, and *The Star*, 13 June 2000.

² R.W. Johnson, in *Focus 21*, p. 9.

³ The scheme collapsed when the Scandinavian governments he approached indicated they would support only an established and genuine reform programme with control mechanisms in-built, *Sunday Times*, 11 June 2000.

⁴ *Business Day*, 12 October 2000, and Johnson, op. cit., p. 11.

⁵ Philip Munyanyi, general-secretary of the Zimbabwean Farm Workers' Union, said that his people were being burnt, beaten and tortured, and Mbeki uttered no protest. Ex-President Nelson Mandela,

Joaquim Chissano, the Mozambican leader, was possibly even further from reality and closer to Mugabe, describing his Zimbabwean comrade as “master” and “champion” of the rule of law. Mismanagement in land redistribution, he and Mbeki agreed, was the fault, not only of colonialism and racism, but also of foreign donors. Suggesting the need for transparency in the programme, and the avoidance of land being given to ruling-party cronies was, Chissano averred, creating “ill-feeling in our hearts. You are saying it is a sin to be a freedom fighter. It is very grave to think like that”.¹ Well after the referendum vote, and as lawlessness and violence intensified in Zimbabwe, Chissano told BBC World television, that “Mugabe was defending his people’s democratic rights”; accusations that Mugabe had enriched himself at the expense of his people were untrue.²

Given Chissano’s and Mbeki’s views about comradely freedom fighters, possible sanctions against the Mugabe government were consistently opposed. The South African President said, in February 2001, that “our responsibility is to engage the Zimbabwean leadership and to try to assist them and support them...”, and he ruled out any sanctions.³ A six-person team from the Southern African Development Community, reiterated support for Mugabe’s land policies, in December 2001, and declared their opposition to sanctions because, the Malawian foreign minister claimed, they would “hurt”—not save—“the whole region”.⁴ Mbeki’s Foreign Minister, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zumu, her deputy, Aziz Pahad, and the Malawian Vice-President opposed the “imposition of any sanctions” shortly after.⁵ Aziz Pahad went further and condemned even any threat of sanctions, and proclaimed an international preeminence for this regional view: in the end, he claimed, “what Africa says is what counts”.⁶

Reference to supposed “assurances” was another support repeatedly expressed in the face of all the evidence. The Zimbabwean Justice Minister, Patrick Chinamasa, was close to Mugabe and instrumental in the assault on the legal system there, but when he spoke to his South African counterpart in March 2001, Penuell Maduna declared that Chinamasa had reassured him of Zimbabwe’s commitment to the rule of law and an independent judiciary: “I am satisfied with what the minister told me. I got it from the horse’s mouth”, he

speaking the day after Mbeki appeared with Mugabe in Bulawayo, denounced liberation leaders who “despise the people who put them in power and ... want to stay in power because they have committed crimes”. He expressed loyal support for Mbeki’s policies, but added: “the masses don’t have to follow that route. The public must bring down these tyrants themselves”. Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6, and *Sunday Times*, 7 May 2000.

¹ Speaking at a meeting with Mugabe, Mbeki and the President of Namibia, Sam Nujoma. *The Saturday Star*, 22 April 2000.

² Speaking on Tim Sebastian’s “Hard Talk” programme, in *Business Day*, 14 September 2000.

³ Tony Yengeni, ANC chief whip in parliament claimed, in contradiction to South Africa’s own experience in the 1970s and ‘80s, that “history is littered with the devastation caused by foreign powers interfering in the internal affairs of [other] states”. *The Star*, 28 February 2001.

⁴ *The Star*, 13 December 2001.

⁵ *The Sunday Independent*, 13 January, and *The Star*, 14 January 2002.

⁶ *Sunday Times*, 10 February 2002.

said.¹ This was the position too of the Director General of Foreign Affairs, Siphon Pityana, on the expulsion of journalists from Zimbabwe: “We have been given an assurance about the importance of respect for a free press...and that none of the interventions made had anything to do with the breach of press freedom”.² When the opposite was clearly the case, Aziz Pahad still declared a year later that: “We have no reason to doubt that [Zimbabwe’s] commitments...will be met”, and the Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity, Amara Essy, described Mugabe’s preparedness to hold free-and-fair elections as “beyond challenge”.³

As the presidential elections got nearer, and the danger signals proliferated, some new interpretations were voiced by the South African leadership. Dlamini-Zuma claimed that, in unclear and unstated ways, “we all have a responsibility for making these elections free-and-fair”.⁴ Her deputy minister had gone on record earlier in refusing to criticise the Zimbabwean government over attacks on the press, adding further that any criticism of Zimbabwe was against South Africa’s best interest.⁵

Dlamini-Zuma and Pahad had been acolytes of Mbeki since exile days in Britain, and Pahad sought to deny both the significance of what was happening in Zimbabwe and its glaring consequences for governance and democracy. These were issues to which African leaders had fulsomely subscribed in 2001 in the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). NEPAD, like the “African Renaissance” proceeding it, was a project of Mbeki’s. With every passing day, Zimbabwe exemplified the destruction of the values which NEPAD and its progenitor Mbeki purportedly upheld. But Pahad, in early 2002, rejected foreign countries making their support for NEPAD conditional on what he called a particular attitude to Zimbabwe’s elections.⁶ Algeria’s President Bouteflika said in Paris in February that “we [in Africa] have taken on board everything you expected of us—good governance...transparency, human rights”.⁷ Pahad, however, seemed determined to deny both the values and their linkage with Zimbabwe: “We won’t be held hostage”, he declared, “on the basis of what happens in one country or another”.⁸

¹ In *Business Day*, 8 March 2001.

² “Hogarth” in *Sunday Times*, 25 February 2001.

³ Essy addressed reporters in New York, and added that Mugabe had said that “he had never cheated in his life and he was not going to start now”. *Sunday Times*, 3 February 2002.

⁴ *The Star*, 11 February 2002.

⁵ *The Star*, 6 February 2001.

⁶ The Defence Minister, Mosiuoa Lekota, was quoted at the same time as saying that a fair election in Zimbabwe would benefit Mbeki’s NEPAD. Wyndham Hartley, in *Business Day*, 14 February 2002.

⁷ Bouteflika was attending a meeting on NEPAD in Paris. Interview with Stephen Smith and Jean-Pierre Tuquoi, *The Guardian Weekly*, 21 February 2002.

⁸ *Business Day*, 14 February 2002. Other leaders too deflated or negated the principles of governance and human rights, and attacked those upholding them: President Obasanjo of Nigeria, another NEPAD proponent, described them as “extraneous values” imposed by the West, while Jacob Zuma and Trade and Industry Minister, Alec Erwin, speaking together in Pretoria, denounced what they called the Western “doctrine of collective punishment”. *Business Day*, 26 March 2002. Member of

In accepting the increasingly unacceptable in Zimbabwe, Mbeki and the others placed themselves in a cleft stick of their own making. Zimbabwe was not “another country”, and in failing to criticise Mugabe’s “tyranny”, “crimes” and abuse of his people, they negated their proclaimed beliefs and NEPAD principles incorporating them. If a fair election in Zimbabwe would benefit Mbeki’s NEPAD, as Lekota claimed, then a grossly unfair one, which Mbeki and his confreres had facilitated, did the opposite.

It was not as if they had not been warned. The Rand had fallen sharply when Jacob Zuma supported land invasions, and foreign investors were aware of and not impressed by South Africa’s links with Mugabe’s lawless regime. Leading United States’ policy makers, for one, had offered critical and cautionary statements on repeated occasions. The United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Walter Kansteiner, said in Cape Town in mid-February that “the political reality is that people are watching”. What happened in Zimbabwe could affect the United States attitude to NEPAD. It was inescapably important, he said, because it was “the first case study [since NEPAD appeared] of an African country where democracy is affected”.¹ Pahad was partially right in that African leaders too are judged by their speech and actions, and Mbeki and his cohorts had sustained their support for despotism.² Dlamini-Zuma could have accurately said that all regional leaders had a responsibility for ensuring democratic elections in Zimbabwe, and they did not begin to meet it. Zimbabwe was a litmus test of great consequence, which the presidents singularly failed. Inter-elite solidarity and the subordination of the people were the principles actually upheld.³

the ANC’s National Executive Committee, Dumisani Makhaye, declared publicly that “the West wants to impose presidents of their choice in our region”, with the strategy of “weaken[ing] governments and parties of the... national liberation movements”. *The Sunday Independent*, 31 March 2002.

¹ John Matisonn, in *The Sunday Independent*, 17 February 2002. Kansteiner was a frequent visitor, but Secretary of State Colin Powell had also visited, as had Congressman Ed Royce, chair of the House Africa committee, who said that Mugabe and his inner circle of officials and generals were sending money abroad, and that they faced selective sanctions, in which he urged South Africa to join. Stella Mapenzauswa, in *Business Day*, 17 January 2002.

² When the head of the South African Observer Mission announced that the presidential election was “legitimate”, he said that the long queues outside polling stations in Harare, and the disenfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of voters, were “an administrative oversight”, and the MDC, he added, had endorsed the election by taking part in it. Next day, Jacob Zuma confirmed the legitimacy judgement, and congratulated President Mugabe. He announced on the radio that “those discrediting Zimbabwe’s electoral process should listen to what the Africans are saying”. That at least was true. *The Star*, 14 and 15 March 2002. (Members of the Mission claimed near the end of March that the initial report released in Harare had been drafted by a small committee two days before the election. Sechaba Ka’Nkosi, in *Sunday Times*, 31 March 2002.)

³ A theme pursued in Good, *The Liberal Model and Africa: Elites against Democracy*, London, Palgrave, 2001.

The Rebels Within: Urban Zimbabwe in the Post-Election Period

Amin Y. Kamete

Zimbabwe's urban residents have staged a mass rebellion against the party to which they had owed their allegiance for two decades. It is a rebellion that started in the 2000 referendum and continued right through the presidential election. This paper maps out this urban rebellion, its genesis as well as the present state and possible future of the urban population. A brief historical overview is followed by a review of recent events and processes where the establishment is already beginning to express its disappointment with the urban populace. What this means or might mean in the context of a deteriorating economic environment and a volatile socio-political situation is the subject of the rest of the paper. The discussion argues that the urban electorate while not angry and ready to explode is definitely frustrated. It casts doubt on the possibility and/or effectiveness of a mass uprising in Zimbabwe.

1. THE "LOST CITIES"

Urban Zimbabwe was a ruling party stronghold. This became more so after the Unity Accord of December 1987, which brought the Matebeleland vote in line with the rest of the country. Henceforth ZANU-PF enjoyed a total monopoly on the urban electorate. Some political parties did try to break the grip but they made no difference. For almost two decades opposition parties came and went leaving ZANU-PF unscathed. To be sure, there were some signs of disenchantment in urban areas, but these were not so significant as to pose any threat to the seemingly unbreakable political hegemony of the ruling party. The biggest threat came in 1990, when the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) founded and led by the expelled former secretary general of ZANU-PF made a surprisingly strong showing in the general and presidential elections getting about a fifth of the votes cast, the majority of them in urban areas (Moyo 1992:182).

When five years later Forum—yet another transient opposition party led by the first black Zimbabwean chief justice—appeared on the electoral scene as the major contender, ZANU-PF had regained its grip. In the 1995 general election Forum got a paltry 6.3 per cent of the votes (Laakso, 1999:175). As if to drive the point home, the ruling party's candidate for the 1996 presidential poll scooped a massive 93 per cent of the valid national votes. The party got 87 per cent of the votes in the cities of Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru and Mutare. In the

remaining urban centres 91 per cent of the electorate voted for the ruling party (Laakso, 1999:179). Despite the fact that only 18 and 22 per cent of the registered voters turned up to cast their vote in the cities and other urban centres, respectively, the dominance of ZANU-PF during this period cannot be dismissed offhand.

The year 1999 brought a challenge that was to change the political landscape in Zimbabwe. It was in this year that the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed in Harare. It was this party that together with the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) handed the ruling party its first dose of defeat. This historical humiliation took place in the February 2000 referendum on the new constitution. The ruling party was confident that the electorate would ratify the new 'home-grown' constitution. After all it had at its disposal all the public resources to mount a successful campaign for the constitution. The MDC and the NCA vigorously campaigned for the 'No' vote while ZANU-PF worked tirelessly to convince the nation to vote 'Yes'.¹

When the results of the plebiscite were announced in February 2000, the government, and by extension the ruling party, had lost. Zimbabweans had voted 'No'. In fact, as Table 1 shows close to three in five urban voters voted 'No'. The party took solace in the fact that the people were not saying no to the party but to a government document. On this very rare occasion, ZANU-PF agreed that party and government were separate. When the president came on air to graciously accept the will of the people he was a true statesman.

Another defeat was in the offing. It came in the June 2000 general election. The ruling party was booted out of all major urban centres with the exception a few, among them Marondera Chinhoyi, Chegutu, Bindura and Beitbridge. Notably, these areas had been diluted by the incorporation of large swathes of rural and peri-urban territories in their constituencies (Government of Zimbabwe, 2000). Sceptics can almost be excused for arguing that significant portions of the vote for the ruling party in these urban centres are a result of gerrymandering.

Even in these centres the vote was too close to call (see Table 2). The ruling party got just over a third (35.49 per cent) of the opposition vote in the towns and cities. In the eyes of the party, this was a major betrayal, by a people whom it had liberated from colonial rule and as President Mugabe was to later say, had allowed to taste "the sweetness of sugar".² After June 2000, the ruling party continued to fare badly in urban local government elections. It lost the executive mayoral elections in Masvingo, Bulawayo and Chegutu. Little wonder then, that the government did everything it could, including appealing court decisions and defying court orders, not to hold mayoral and council elections in Harare. The outcome of such elections was a foregone conclusion. It should be remembered

¹ The constitution was in fact a government document. But the blurring between party and government in Zimbabwe meant that the ruling party took the constitution promotion exercise as party business.

² *Daily News*, 1 April, 2002.

that this was a city where the party in government had lost all parliamentary seats to the opposition in June 2000.

Table 1. Percentage of the 'No' vote in major urban centres in the 2000 referendum

Urban centre	Percentage vote
Harare-Chitungwiza	74
Chegutu	52
Chinhoyi	57
Kadoma	57
Marondera	53
Bindura	53
Kwe Kwe	65
Gweru	67
Gwanda	54
Beitbridge	34
Bulawayo	76
Mutare	66
Masvingo	62
Total urban	59.23

Source: ZWNEWS (2002a).

Table 2. Results of the June 2000 and March 2002 elections in major urban centres

Urban centre	2000 General election		2002 Presidential election	
	MDC	ZANU-PF	MDC	ZANU-PF
Harare-Chitungwiza	296,055	84,987	309,829	101,395
Chegutu	10,412	12,169	11,493	16,083
Chinhoyi	7,602	8,176	8,477	11,432
Kadoma	12,049	5,666	14,446	9,345
Marondera	10,629	10,692	11,667	15,719
Bindura	11,257	13,328	11,279	19,932
Kwe Kwe	15,388	8,352	17,061	9,917
Gweru	26,729	8,717	47,167	14,109
Gwanda1	3,029	4,358	12,610	5,967
Beitbridge	7,686	12,988	6,844	16,448
Bulawayo	142,379	22,350	131,890	29,828
Mutare	40,479	15,328	47,948	22,547
Masvingo	12,417	8,023	15,471	9,757
Total Urban	606,111	215,134	646,182	282,479

Source: ZWNEWS (2002a).

Then came the biggest and most exciting presidential elections in the history of the country—the 2002 presidential elections. This time the ruling party managed to increase its share to 43.72 per cent of the opposition vote, this in an election where a large chunk of the urban voters were disenfranchised before the election, or were prevented from voting due to what came to be called an 'administrative oversight'. There is little sympathy for this explanation. The controversial election has seen accusations of intimidation, violence and pure electoral fraud being levelled against the ruling party (ZWNEWS, 2002a; ICG, 2002). This landmark election confirmed that the urban population was moving away from the ruling

party's shadow. To emphasise the disaffection, the party lost the mayoral and simultaneous council elections in Harare and the mayoral election in Chitungwiza. It got nothing out of these elections.

That the urban residents in Zimbabwe have rebelled is thus a fact. What it means is however, less clear. The rest of this discussion is a reflection on post-election urban Zimbabwe. It examines the immediate post-election period and attempts to look into the immediate future. The focus of the paper is on urban government and governance in view of the developments on the socio-economic and political scene.

2. THE IMMEDIATE ELECTION AFTERMATH

There was widespread despondency in the urban areas immediately after the election. The urban rebels had been convinced that government would change. Before the poll, many were looking to a different future. Even the opposition was talking of purges within the army and the police forces and exit packages for the 'outgoing' president. By the time the polling dates arrived, some big time dreamers were already talking about a tribunal to try some party leaders for crimes against humanity, while the forgiving ones were readying themselves for a South African style Truth Commission. Such was the mood for and confidence in change. Not surprisingly there were reports and rumours of aircraft and helicopters waiting to leave the country with some top ZANU-PF officials as soon as the election results were out and they realised they had lost the reins of power to the MDC. The cynics were repeatedly pointing out that since these high-ranking men and women had been banned from their favourite destinations in Europe and North America perhaps Libya, Malaysia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo would take their disgraced comrades in. The deployment of the armed forces onto the streets during the vote counting process reinforced this view.¹

In view of such optimism, the disappointment that prevailed among most urbanites following the election results is understandable. The opposition leader pointed out that there was tension in the country.² That might have been an over-dramatisation of the situation.³ The truth is that there was frustration. There was despair also. But there was never widespread anger. Granted there were some firebrands who called for the losing candidate to declare himself president.⁴ These were, however, in the minority.⁵ That there was no spontaneous mass protest is less a result of the presence of heavily armed troops on the streets and the lack of a signal from the opposition leadership, than of collective despondency.

¹ *Daily News*, 13 March, 2002.

² BBC, 13 March, 2002.

³ *Daily News*, 14 March, 2002.

⁴ BBC, 13 March, 2002.

⁵ *Daily News*, 14 March, 2002a.

This observation is amplified by the response to a mass stay away (work stoppage) announced by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) to protest against harassment and violence. The common diagnosis for the less than inspiring response is that due to a combination of inadequate planning and misinformation, the labour body's call did not get the response it had anticipated. There is another telling explanation to this, however. Had the population in the cities and towns been angry, they would have taken this chance to let out that anger. The atmosphere was still charged with the post-election excitement and, as the opposition leader claimed, people were 'seething' with anger. If this is to be taken at its face value, then the situation was already explosive. What was needed was a trigger. The stay away was arguably such a trigger. The fact that there was no conflagration following the call reinforces the frustration of the urban residents. The urbanites opted to go on with their day-to-day struggles. Not that they did not hope for the best. Some put their hope in the MDC to find a solution. A few looked to the world to save them from what they saw as another six years of pain and misery.

Apart from deploying the army and placing it on high alert, the government did not do anything threatening at an official level. In the meantime a wave of mass retributions started in the rural areas. The retributions found an urban expression as the army reportedly started beating up people branding them as traitors.¹ Particularly hit were beer-hall and nightclub patrons and other late night revellers in high-density residential areas (HDRAs). By the end of the third week after the poll, the dreaded militia who had been trained at the Border Gezi National Service Training Centre were reportedly being deployed in Harare and other urban centres (Dzirutwe, 2002). The same reports indicated that the youths were being integrated into the state security machinery. This report was refuted by the authorities who denied that the "...graduates were being offloaded into the state security institutions" (Dzirutwe, 2002).

The deployment of the youth raises questions of motive. When they were deployed in the rural areas before the election, the purpose was obvious. They were to help in campaigning for the ruling party.² Their *modus operandi* was terror, violence and intimidation. This, together with their uniform earned them the title "Green bombers".

In view of this, it does not require a very fertile imagination to figure out why they are expanding their field of operation into the urban areas. It is to tame the rebels who have deserted the party, or to ensure that the new tenure of the administration is not unduly inconvenienced by 'reactionaries'. The same militant youths are known to have carried out massive 'political re-education' exercises for the rural electorate. The same might also be true about their deployment in urban areas. This would be in line with the president's opinion

¹ cf. *Daily News*, 5 April, 2001.

² *Financial Gazette*, 4 April, 2002.

that urban residents “need to be re-educated on the syllabus of sovereignty and national pride” (Zaba, 2002).

What makes this particularly significant is the fact that the state president finally commented on the voting behaviour of the urban populations.¹ Perhaps fittingly, the comment was uttered at a victory celebration in the president’s home area. A headline in an independent daily summed up the speech. It reads: “Mugabe slams urbanites”.² Understandably the president was angry with the urban voters. The mass desertion from the party is to him a betrayal. He scoffed: “They do not even produce onions or tomatoes. They have tasted the sweetness of sugar and some of us did not know that sugar could get people so drunk.”³ The coincidence between the remarks and the reported deployment of the militia should be unnerving to the urbanites.

The other notable thing about the immediate post-election urban centres, which may perhaps have attracted the militia, is the existence of ‘safe houses’. These are houses in urban areas set up to accommodate victims of violence and retribution. About 50,000 such people have been displaced from their homes, mainly in the rural areas (Ncube, 2002). The state media has labelled the safe houses as ‘killer houses’. The police have on several occasions raided some of these ‘killer houses’ and made arrests. The coming of the militia to town may in part be linked to this ‘unfinished’ business and may be a follow-up on some ‘cases’. Whatever the reasons: to the beleaguered urbanites the deployment coming so soon after the controversial election and presidential utterances, signals retribution and punishment for betrayal through the ballot box.

3. LOCAL AUTHORITIES VS. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE RULING PARTY

The urban areas will certainly experience the impact of the elections long into the future. They will also experience the impact of the pre-election events and processes. One of the most significant developments is on governance. As things currently stand, urban areas are not in step with the rest of the country. In addition there is an emerging polarity between the central government and urban local government. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the constitution of urban local authorities. The local institutions of governance in a number of cities and towns are or will soon be under the control of the opposition. There is no doubt about that. As noted above, five urban centres, including the two largest cities have been taken over by executive mayors who are in the opposition camp.

¹ Previously, at a campaign rally in the rural areas the First Lady had already labelled MDC supporters—and by extension urban voters—as “cats and dogs”.

² *Daily News*, 1 April, 2002

³ Unimpressed and probably irked by this remark one Harare resident fired back. In a letter written to an independent daily he asked, “Why doesn’t Mugabe relocate to rural Zvimba to grow onions?” (Zaba, 2002). He concluded: “What his remarks about Harare, Bulawayo and other towns boil down to is that he has at last admitted that he is a rural president”.

Harare has 44 of the 45 councillors belonging to the MDC. This pattern will most definitely be repeated nationwide as council elections are held in the remaining towns and cities. As noted above, the only hold the ruling party has on the urban population is through government because, in addition to losing local elections, the party has watched helplessly as its members of parliament lost their urban constituencies. Presently the overwhelming majority of urban constituencies are represented in the legislature by the opposition (see Table 2).

In terms of governance and government the implications of this polarisation are far reaching. As events continue to unfold, the situation where the ruling party controls central government and the opposition runs urban local authorities will become a national phenomenon. Although this should not be a problem in advanced democracies, the Zimbabwean experience so far suggests this power disjunction may not be good news for urban local government and governance.

Signals to this effect were given as the first election to yield an opposition executive mayor was about to be held in the historical town of Masvingo. One of the vice presidents warned people that only a ruling party executive mayor could talk to government and get things done, thereby bringing 'development' to the people. After the opposition victory, the minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing (LGPWNH) literally refused to install the winner. Neither did he attend the inauguration ceremony. The town clerk presided instead over the inauguration. The pattern was repeated with chilling regularity in Bulawayo, Chegutu, Harare and Chitungwiza. This is a sign of animosity. And caught in the crossfire as usual are the residents. It is impossible to see how a relationship, which has started off on such a bad footing can be changed for the better overnight. In Harare central-local conflicts have already begun to manifest themselves.

Recent developments in Harare illustrate this very well. The new administration decided to abide by a previous ministerial directive to reduce the drastically increased salary bill of the local authority. The council passed a resolution to reverse all promotions and recruitments effected over the previous six months (Tamborinyoka, 2002). The minister, who sensed that the move was not an administrative action but a ploy to victimise ruling party supporters¹ issued a directive nullifying the council decision (Tamborinyoka, 2002a). This was war between central and local government.

In addition to neutralising local decisions, the minister issued two other directives on two successive days. One of the directives saw the minister invoking his powers requiring all council resolutions that had to do with human resources and financial matters to be presented to him first before implementation. This is a straightforward directive that is based on Section 313 (1) of the Urban

¹ One of the employees to have been affected is the self-styled commander of the farm invasions, who is also a high-ranking executive in the party's Harare province and the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association.

Councils Act (Government of Zimbabwe 1995). That it was invoked after opposition victories in council elections is what may raise eyebrows. The second directive literally bans all mayors from attending Cabinet Action Committees. According to this directive the mayors can only attend such meetings by invitation. The reasons for the ban are not clear. But the motivation to keep opposition functionaries on the administrative periphery is unmistakable. A municipal reporter quotes council officials as saying that the directives “were meant to show that while the MDC may have won the council elections, the ZANU-PF government was effectively in charge” (Tamborinyoka, 2002a).

These developments point to a stormy relationship between local and central administrations. What central government is up to is not hidden from investigative eyes. The intention may be to frustrate the urban local councils by making it difficult for them to govern or function properly. As the situation develops and the opposition controlled councils fail to deliver, the minister will move in for the kill, suspending the councils on the grounds of such charges as incompetence or corruption. The fate of the Harare City Council that was suspended in 1999 (Kamete, 2001) is likely to be repeated on a grand scale in other towns and cities in the future as central government seeks to punish renegade local administrations. The executive mayor of Harare aptly summed up the situation when he mused that “others” (presumably central government) were coming up “to set booby traps and make sure that the will of the people does not prevail” (Tamborinyoka, 2002a). The same report points to the existence of plots to have the mayor and his council out within six months.

Indications are that the dissident local authorities will also be carrying out their own campaign against the ruling party and central government. As their ranks swell and the opposition sweeps all the council and mayoral seats in the urban centres, the MDC will surely carry out the reforms they have been promising, viz., to clean up local authorities by ridding them of corruption and incompetence. The messages coming from the City of Harare are undoubtedly going to be echoed throughout the urban sphere.

The new council is determined to make the ruling party and its officials pay all their outstanding bills. By any standards this bill is huge. At the end of March 2002, ZANU-PF officials alone owed the local authority close to Z\$300 million (about US\$7.3 million) in unpaid bills, mainly rates on residential and business properties (Zvauya, 2002). The significance of the arrears is that this massive debt from a few defaulters constitutes 37.5 per cent of all uncollected revenue in Harare. In addition, the party itself owed further hundreds of millions in water and rates charges. No wonder then, that the new executive mayor made a public undertaking to recover the money. In an interview with Zvauya (2002) he said:

We are in the process of recovering the money. Government and some ZANU-PF members top the list of our worst debtors and it is an issue that the new councillors are working on.

Perhaps sensing the political implications of the bold move, the mayor pointed out that though the council’s opponents might “...see this as a political move”

the recovery of debts was “a duty entrusted upon us by the residents of Harare”. To recover these debts the council will have to cut services like water supply to the properties in question, take the culprits to courts, and in the last resort, even confiscate and auction properties.

This is ordinary council business as the local authority seeks to fulfil its legal mandate. But it is unlikely that the affected people from the ruling party will see it that way. These people are not used to paying for services, hence the accumulation of the debts to such alarming levels. The local authority has always been run by party functionaries. And as they love to constantly remind everybody who cares to listen, they fought the (liberation) war.

Thus there are two inevitable outcomes of the bid by the local authority to recover lost revenue. First it will not be welcome, and second, it will be interpreted as political victimisation and arrogance against the party by a lower tier of government that is supposed to kowtow to them just as its predecessors did.

In addition to the party and its senior members government itself owes the urban councils huge amounts of money. For example the City of Bulawayo alone is owed more than Z\$102 million (about US\$1.9 million), which the executive mayor said was “slowing down the implementation of some key projects”.¹ Pronouncing a combative strategy like that adopted by Harare, he promised “to leave no stone unturned to get this money” from central government and that he would not allow himself “to be bullied by anyone”.

In view of the foregoing, it is hardly an exaggeration to predict war on the urban front. Long before the opposition took over in Harare, the new executive mayors of Chegutu and Masvingo had made it crystal clear that they too are on a crusade to make defaulters pay.² Like in Harare, the biggest debtors are the government, party and senior party members. Here too, the possibility of politicising this crusade, or interpreting it in political terms is very high. The battle lines are already drawn. In April the Executive Committee of the MDC-dominated Harare City Council decided to fight back. A committee recommendation to council read in part: “As a council, we are of the view that these ministerial directives are tantamount to usurpation of the authority of the executive mayor and his council” (Tamborinyoka, 2002b). The council’s decision to seek legal recourse on the matter is the first of many responses and counter-responses that will characterise central-local relations. The air of defiance in Harare certainly mirrors that in Bulawayo (see above).

The struggle between a central government trying to neutralise or even decimate opposition-controlled local authorities, and local authorities trying to make the ruling party and government honour their debts will have ripple effects on the residents. As this conspiracy, intrigue and animosity rage on between the local and the centre, the operations of the urban local governments are unavoidably going to be negatively affected as central government issues directives

¹ *Financial Gazette*, 4 April, 2002.

² see *Financial Gazette*, 4 April, 2002.

nullifying council resolutions, vetoing budgets and interfering with personnel management. The adverse effects will get worse as the local authorities preoccupy themselves with the centre rather than their constituency. Service delivery will be affected by lack of funds, attention and the absence of implementable decisions. If central government's attitude unfolds as outlined here, the few decisions that the local councils will be allowed to implement will be inconsequential ones such as those on bus routes, junior appointments and ceremonies. Urban residents will thus fare badly from the fallout and central government will be quick to come in with numerous 'We told you so's'.

In the past such paralysis and poor service delivery have been known to bring down local governments. Government will hope so before it moves in for the kill (cf. Kahiya, 1999). Will the urban populations take the bait? True to its colour central government and the party will try to stir up the residents. There is even a possibility of a few hired thugs taking to the streets to protest against the local authorities' crippled service delivery systems. Added onto the list of such 'grievances' (real and fabricated) are likely to be incompetence and corruption. This has been done in the past and it can be expected now. Such is the consistency of one of Africa's smartest political parties (see Kahiya 1999).

However, it is unlikely that the majority of the urban populace will see it in the same light. The fact that the centre even at the highest levels openly detests the opposition administrations, and has already started locking horns with them has not been lost on the well-educated and largely observant urban electorate. An upsurge of such activities is expected and as events unfold there will be no surprise over the perceived 'victimisation', even if some of the accusations turn out to be true. If anything is to be expected from the majority, it is widespread sympathy for the local administrations. The confirmed absence of scruples in the ruling party's dealings with opponents will contribute immensely towards the build-up of sympathy and expressions of solidarity.

Already expressions of sympathy and solidarity have started pouring in from residents disgusted by the minister's perceived unwarranted interference in council business. One resident accused him of "running Harare through the back door" (Moyana, 2002). Another irate urbanite wrote to the press, asking whether Harare should be "held to ransom by a minority".¹ Yet another resident warned the minister to "respect residents" (Nhamoinesu 2002), a remark that suggests that an assault on the local authority is tantamount to waging a war against the residents.

Whatever the response of the urban populations, central government is determined to see the 'rebel-controlled' urban councils go. As the "case" against them mounts, the minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing will move in to exercise his legal powers to suspend these councils and appoint commissions to run the towns and cities along the basis of the Harare City Commission. Experience shows that the duration of the appointed commis-

¹ *Daily News*, 5 April, 2002.

sions will be indefinite, despite legal provisions to the contrary, just as it happened in Harare. To maintain an air of “fairness” the minister is likely to leave some councils untouched. These will be insignificant urban local authorities in smaller towns, maybe with a sprinkling of a few larger centres.

4. EVERYDAY LIFE

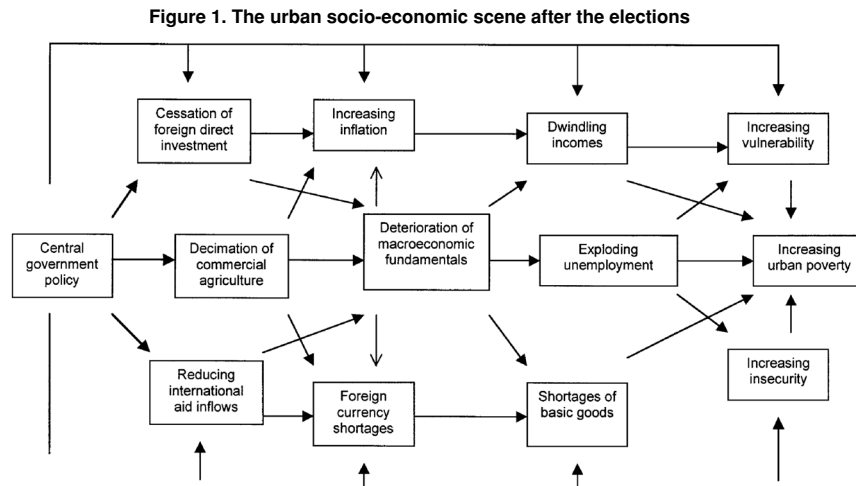
Figure 1 maps out the unfolding developments in the socio-economic sector. The analysis is based on the proven fact that central government is not going to change its structures, policy and practices as well as its behaviour from what it was immediately before the elections. If anything, there is going to be a formalisation of some of the structures and practices, among them the militias, farmer evictions and the selective application and enforcement of the law. Presidential utterances further testify to this fact (McGreal 2002).¹

Two significant features that will not change are the land redistribution programme and the nationwide violence. A prolongation of these two developments will have major adverse effects, among them the decimation of commercial agriculture, cessation of foreign investment and a reduction in foreign aid, in particular non-humanitarian aid (Nyakazeya 2002). A combination of the three will mean the perpetuation and worsening of the macro-economic vagaries plaguing the country.

The decimation of commercial agriculture illustrates this very well. From February 2000 there has been progress in the state’s bid to do away with the predominantly white-controlled large-scale commercial agricultural sector. As farmers stop producing crops or are forced off their farms, the urban centres will continue to suffer the consequences, not only in terms of food shortages but also in terms of de-industrialisation and the resultant joblessness as well as the erosion of incomes.

The agricultural sector has extensive backward and forward linkages in the urban centres. The fact that the country experienced a 20.4 per cent reduction in industry in the year 2001 alone (up from 10.5 per cent in 2000) shows that the decimation of a once vibrant sector is having the inevitable ripple effects throughout the scope of those linkages. Most affected are industries that supply the embattled agricultural sector, principally the agricultural engineering, chemical, veterinary services and transport industries. Also affected are the large markets for the agricultural sector, chief among them the food and beverages sector. Reports indicate that upwards of 400 companies linked to the agricultural sector have been closed down due directly to the land resettlement programme (Nyakazeya 2002). Many more have been scaling down production with some relocating to neighbouring countries.

¹ *Guardian*, 2 April, 2002.



Hard on the heels of the land reform programme came another policy disaster. This is the re-introduction of price controls on basic commodities as periodically defined and specified by the Ministry of Industry and International Trade (MIIT). In the list are items like maize-meal, sugar, soap, milk, beef, poultry and cooking oil. The controls, which are literally imposed towards the end of the production chain, mean that the manufacturers have to convert themselves into charitable non-profit-making organisations, scale down production, shut down or venture into the black market. As expected, only parastatals like the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) have taken the first option, having been forced to sell produce at below cost price. The private sector has taken a mixture of the other more businesslike options. In the last two years more than 550 manufacturing companies have closed resulting in thousands of workers losing their jobs (Marawanyika, 2002). Thousands of others have scaled down production, with workers being made to work reduced hours or days.

Government has also created an environment that is scaring away investors, driving or keeping away exasperated aid agencies¹ and suffocating the tourist sector. Security concerns and the non-existence of the rule of law are among the top contributing factors (Nyakazeya 2002). This further complicates the life of the urbanites who have to contend with a situation where foreign currency is in short supply and industries are driven further towards the precipice.

The effect of these negative developments is increased macro-economic instability ultimately resulting in unemployment, erosion of incomes and shortages of basic commodities. Urban poverty, which currently stands at over 75 per cent, is set to rise as real incomes dwindle and vulnerability and insecurity increase. The impoverishment of urban society is now accelerating and is set to intensify. As if to confirm this, the poverty line is continually shifted upwards due to the instability in the national economy. It was less than Z\$3,000 per

¹ This year alone Zimbabwe is expected to lose over Z\$4 billion (about US\$73 million) in foreign aid.

month in 1997, it rose to Z\$8,000 in 2000, and by mid-2001 it had been raised to Z\$16, 980 (Kamete 2001).¹ The figure for the first quarter of 2002 was a staggering Z\$22,000 per month (Marawanyika 2002). Inflation is at 116 per cent, further eating into the meagre incomes of the urban residents as the cost of living unrelentingly rises. So rapid is the erosion of incomes that by 2001 incomes were less than 10 per cent of the 1991 levels (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 2001).

In view of the unchanged government policy and behaviour, it is only logical to expect the trend to continue. Any changes that can logically be expected are those pertaining to the pace of deterioration. Events on the ground show that unless there is a dramatic change in government behaviour, the rate of deterioration is without a doubt going to increase. How then, will the urban electorate react to this frontal attack on their livelihoods?

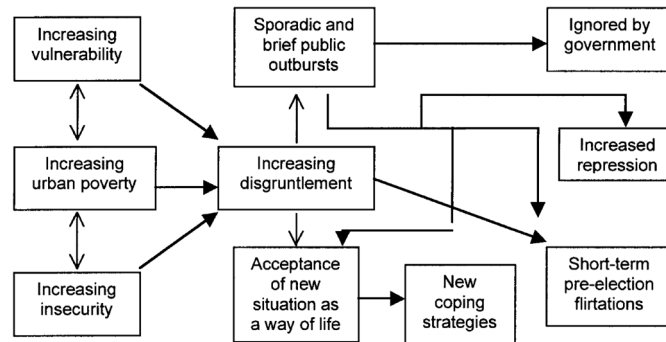
5. THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SCENE

Quite a number of commentators predict or even hope that an explosion will result from worsening socio-economic conditions in the urban areas. The belief is that the people will reach a point where they will not bear it any longer. Having reached breaking point the impoverished and the increasingly vulnerable urbanites will have two choices, namely starve to death or vent their anger on the source of their problems. There is a problem with this kind of analysis. As suggested above this is probably no more than hope. Chances of mass uprisings like those in Yugoslavia, Madagascar or the Philippines are as remote in urban Zimbabwe as those of the present administration voluntarily relinquishing power. That means a probability of almost zero. Figure 2 traces out what is most likely to happen.

Figure 2 paints a more realistic picture. As the plummeting living standards take their toll, Zimbabwe's urban populations will definitely become more disgruntled by the day. But it is unlikely that this disgruntlement will fuel a revolt. Two factors will rule out a large-scale co-ordinated uprising. The first one is that the army, which has a large section of loyalist troops and leaders whose survival is intricately intertwined with the existence of the government, will not hesitate to ruthlessly quell this uprising. That the urbanites know this is an indisputable fact. On at least three occasions in the past four years, urban residents have witnessed the deployment of the army under the flimsiest of excuses. Two of the deployments were occasioned by food riots. One was probably precipitated by fear of the public in view of very controversial election results.

¹ At the time of writing Z\$55 was equivalent to US\$1 at the controlled exchange rate.

Figure 2. The post-election socio-political scenario in urban Zimbabwe



With this awareness, the safety-conscious urban residents will not dare ignite a conflagration. This is not to say that some will not try. But whoever tries is not likely to mobilise the critical mass needed to ignite the country. The recent ineffective mass job stay aways by the ZCTU and several mass actions by the NCA are proof of this (Zimbabwe Assistant 2002).¹ It will need a lot of anger and bravado to brave the decisive and incisive state machinery. That anger, as argued at the outset, is overwhelmed by frustration and the urge to survive.

Instead of engaging in what they may regard as mass sacrifices, the urban residents are likely to accept the new way of life and adapt to it. Such adaptations are already evident in new survival and procurement strategies in the black market and the non-formal sector (Paganga, 2002; Zulu, 2002). Goods that are scarce in the shops are readily available on the black market. Even foreign currency, which is not available in the banks at the controlled rate, can easily be sourced on the flourishing black market. Notably, this is an exclusively urban black market. Thus, evidence indicates that the urbanites are already adjusting to the new austere way of life, much as their counterparts in Lusaka, the Zambian capital whom they used to scoff at, have done.

This is not to say that there will be total peace. That would be the most unrealistic dream the present government can have. The possibility of sporadic short-term outbursts cannot be ruled out. It is real. The food riots that have been witnessed so far stand as testimony to this spectre (HRF, 1998; CNN, 2000; PANA, 2000). However, just like their predecessors these outbursts are likely to be spontaneous and uncoordinated. By the time some opportunists step in, as they probably will, peace will have been restored, by whatever means necessary. The government will most likely simply ignore some of the less irksome protests. In such cases, the protesters will probably be left alone (which will be in a very few cases) or the police will quietly deal with them using the draconian Public Order and Security Act (POSA), which to all intents and purposes, is a piece of legislation crafted with the urbanites in mind. The manner in which the govern-

¹ *The Sunday Mail*, 7 April, 2002.

ment brutally frustrated a nationwide¹ NCA demonstration on Saturday 6 April, 2002 provides clear signals of the active repression that the non-conforming urban populations can expect should they wish to behave in ways deemed as threatening to the establishment. A combination of arrests, roadblocks and sheer brutality reduced the mass action to almost nothing.²

As council and parliamentary elections or by-elections draw near, government is most likely to revert to its carrot and stick method. Attempts will be made to woo the urban electorate through enticements comprising mainly incentives and promises. This is unlikely to succeed, but the government has been known to try where there is virtually no hope of salvaging anything. As frustration grows, the tried and tested method of intimidation, coercion and violence will be revived. Then it will be back to 2000–2002 again.

6. CONCLUSION

As the discussion suggests things are never going to return to normal in the urban areas in Zimbabwe. They are not going to be normal for the residents because they will get worse in terms of service delivery, local administration, socio-economic well-being and security. They are not going to be normal for the urban local administrations, as they will be engaged in endless battles with a hostile central government and ruling party bent on decimating them. They are not going to be normal for central government either. The government will helplessly watch as the urban rebellion and disenchantment with its former protégés intensify. As the chasm widens, the present separation between the rulers and their former mates will inexorably culminate in an acrimonious divorce as the government, which at present still believes in salvaging something by hook and by crook realises that the urbanites are a lost cause and the differences between the two parties are irreconcilable.

Both parties to the ‘marriage’ will continue to accuse each other of betrayal. The residents will rightly claim that the rulers failed to take care of them and their needs. The government and ruling party on the other hand will still cling to the old and—some would justifiably say—nauseating line that they deserve the residents’ loyalty on the grounds that they fought the (liberation) war and are the last bastion against the re-colonisation of the country. The proof of this will always be what everybody else is failing to see: the resurgence of British imperialism. As has been the pattern of late, the urbanites, among whom are some who are educated enough to understand the highly intellectual arguments, will not be willing to listen, whereupon the rulers will as usual turn their attention to the rural electorate who can be forced to listen to orations they barely understand.

¹ As expected ‘nationwide’ in this case means ‘urban wide.’ The organisation and planning of the protests were done in and for urban areas.

² *The Zimbabwe Standard*, 8 April, 2002.

But urban Zimbabwe is never going to burn. Amid the disgruntlement, residents will adapt to a new way of life. There will definitely be expressions of anger, but these will be small, sporadic and spontaneous. The rulers will also learn to live with this, through ignoring the small protests but enthusiastically putting down the larger ones. In the meantime, urban areas will continue inching towards the precipice, taking the whole country with them.

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Climbing out from the Rubble

Brian Raftopoulos

After two weeks of mulling over the devastation of the fraudulent Presidential elections, millions of Zimbabweans are still in a state of shock and wondering what will happen next. Most citizens went to the polls, aware that the ruling party had stacked the deck, but hoping that their overwhelming turnout would negate any attempts to nullify their vote. Thousands braved the administrative chaos, deliberate delays, long lines, ruling party harassment and violence, to assert the one individual action they thought they still had some control over. Many, usually non-political people, were arrested for daring to assert this right to vote, and had to ponder on how far this authoritarian state had taken control of their lives. The lesson has had to be learnt, that politics is not 'out there' for other people to engage in; that if people retreat into their personal and family lives, and ignore their loss of rights and liberties for long enough, then the realities of such repressive encroachments will follow them into their particular retreats.

Robert Mugabe is fond of lecturing Zimbabweans about how the liberation struggle brought democratic politics to Zimbabweans. There is substantive truth to that statement, for the energies and possibilities, which were released by the anti-colonial struggle, and the promise of the independence years were immense. No individual who suffered the oppression of settler colonial rule could not have felt the sense of being enabled by the new dispensation. However, Zimbabweans, including the nationalists, learnt about democratic politics from other sources too, including the contradictory practices and promises of colonial rule itself. In a more negative sense the nationalist legacy, in response to colonial violence, also brought with it experiences of political mobilisation which we, as a nation, need to unlearn and move away from. In particular, we need to continue our protests against the practices of forced party affiliation through violence, the demonisation of dissent as 'unpatriotic', a selective use of the history of the liberation struggle to deny other voices the right to be heard, and narrow race-based assertions of who has a legitimate right to be called national.

The state's conduct of the recent Presidential election grossly abused and undermined the civic and political rights of millions of Zimbabweans. Mugabe's campaign of violence and election fraud, as well as the persistent message of recrimination and threat, produced an ominous sense of a ruling party capable of any action to retain power. Indeed we have seen the Zimbabwean state reconstructed and increasingly criminalized, in order to allow greater powers to

military and militia elements. The election process itself has been so badly deformed, that only a return to constitutional reform can offer any hope of an overhaul. The public broadcasting authority, the ZBC, is an obscenity and a daily insult to Zimbabwean taxpayers. One statistic will serve to illustrate this point: The Media Monitoring Project calculated that out of a total of 14 hours and 25 minutes that ZBC news bulletins devoted to the Presidential campaign, ZANU-PF's candidate was granted a total of 13 hours and 34 minutes, or about 94 per cent of the coverage. The MDC candidate received 4 per cent of the coverage, which was used to 'attack, denigrate and discredit the MDC'. Any hope of a fruitful national discussion through such a media organ was completely lost. That 1.2 million people still managed to vote for Morgan Tsvangirai, in the face of such abuse, will be a lasting tribute to the critical abilities of the Zimbabwean public.

Mugabe may have 'won' the election, under such conditions, but he faces the prospect of a very serious deficit where it matters most, namely a loss of legitimacy amongst millions of Zimbabwean citizens. He will have to rule without the active consent of many, who no longer consider him a legitimate president. ZANU-PF must have known they would be in such a situation, for why else would they have ensured they had recourse to so much repressive and restrictive legislation. In the face of a rapidly depleted political and moral authority, this regime will rely increasingly on surveillance, threat and arrest. Thus we have the figure of the 'great' Pan-Africanist leader, and liberation war hero, claiming to speak for Africans everywhere, while trampling on the skeletons of his own citizens. It is a great tragedy that such noble ideas as Pan-Africanist unity and anti-imperialist struggles, have been so devalued and defaced by the degenerate politics of an unpopular regime.

No less disturbing has been the supine and accommodating approach of other African leaders to Mugabe's project. For they have been unable to challenge the Zimbabwean leader's articulation of the African project, giving him ample room to define the struggle against colonial legacies in his own authoritarian terms. President Mbeki, in particular, has been found wanting, as he has been left to chase Mugabe's tail, in an effort to remain in the SADC political terms of reference, and to avoid South African isolation from the region. The result has been that Mugabe has effectively toppled South Africa from their assumption of regional leadership, thus seriously compromising the much-vaunted New Partnership for Africa's Development, (NEPAD). There is little chance of civic groups, originally marginalized from the discussions around NEPAD, claiming any ownership of this project, when the continent's leaders show so little backbone in the face of the delinquent politics of one of their elders. Solidarity without accountability is simply a return to the modalities of Cold War politics, leading to a constant stream of empty slogans and political structures locked in arthritic postures.

The Western countries should find no solace in their condemnations of the ruling party in Zimbabwe. For there are dominant global economic and financial

structures, presided over by the regimes of the West, which will make the emergence of a Robert Mugabe a persistent possibility. We need better and more accountable structures of global economic governance, for even if a new government were to come to power in Zimbabwe tomorrow, a new round of fallacies about the neo-liberal economic agenda, would not deliver Zimbabweans from their current problems. Mugabe's message has found some resonance in Africa and the developing world, because some of his critique of globalisation is correct. It is also necessary to say that some of the statements that have emerged from the British government and the EU on Zimbabwe, lack the tone and understanding that are necessary for a more realistic engagement with former colonial countries. Therefore as much as Zimbabweans and Africans more generally must take stock of the events of the past few years in Zimbabwe, Western nations must seriously re-examine the terms of their re-engagement with development issues on our continent.

Zimbabweans are now faced with the task of finding a way forward. They have a government that has little legitimacy nationally, and which faces growing isolation not only from Western countries, but also from the Commonwealth and within Southern Africa itself. In addition this government has shown little sign that it can find a way out of the current economic morass that has engulfed Zimbabwe. Contrary to their campaign slogan it is not only the land that is the economy. Civic groups, despite all their important mobilisation efforts, are weaker than they were two years ago, as much as a result of a lack of coordination and common resolve, as from the interventions of the state. The MDC faces the task of keeping its forces together, and preventing the ruling party from 'persuading' certain sections of the party to jump ship. We are therefore faced with a delicate and dangerous balance of forces, with all parties in need of a way forward. It is in this context that the idea of a government of national unity has been mentioned, although it is a proposition that has long been considered by the South African government. We must await the details of this discussion. In the meantime we are in the midst of a stay-away, rightly called to protest the abuse of worker and trade union rights during the recent elections. After all, the right to vote, 'one man one vote', was as much a demand of the liberation struggle as the land question.

Observing the Observers

Tandeka C. Nkiwane

The Zimbabwe presidential elections were pivotal for a number of reasons. First, they were the first elections, since Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, where there was a credible challenge by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) to take over the reins of power from the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). This election was about state power. It was precisely because the stakes were so high that the ruling ZANU-PF used all the privileges of incumbency to manage the electoral processes.

It was also because the stakes were so high that the ruling ZANU-PF led by Robert Mugabe and opposition MDC led by Morgan Tsvangirai spent a lot of time seeking global solidarities to press their respective cases. The two parties spoke to different audiences and used different approaches to woo the international world. For the opposition MDC the story was that of misgovernance by ZANU-PF over the past 22 years. The MDC used the slogan, “Chinja Maitiro” (or change your ways), sought to sell themselves as a government-in-waiting, and actively pursued solidarities particularly, but not exclusively, in Western capitals. For ZANU-PF the story was about imperialism. As their electoral slogan went, “Zimbabwe will never be a colony again”. The ruling party focused on portraying themselves as a nationalist and pan-Africanist party. In particular Mugabe and his ministers castigated the world media (and the British media in particular) for using double standards, and spreading falsehoods about Zimbabwe.

The political scientist Giovanni Sartori once argued that electoral systems are the most specific manipulative instrument of politics. In the case of Zimbabwe, the question of the legal framework which governed the presidential election is key to understanding the systemic importance of incumbency. Zimbabwe holds presidential and parliamentary elections separately (the last parliamentary elections were held in 2000), and the constitutional and legal framework for the elections does not provide for an independent electoral commission. As a result there is an Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) comprised of 5 members, appointed by the President in consultation with the Speaker of Parliament. The role of the ESC is to supervise the registration of voters and the conduct of the elections. The ESC was immediately caught with respect to the role of international and local observers. A decision was taken in government, first, that there would be no outside *monitors* of the elections (this was to be done by civil

servants), and that accreditation of all observers would be restricted, mainly though frustrating bureaucratic regulations. Many of the “traditional” Western bodies such as the Carter Center and National Democratic Institute were not accredited. A joint ACP/EU delegation was accredited, but members from the United Kingdom (UK) were explicitly excluded. Similarly with other European delegations, the UK was noted as unwelcome. Eventually approximately 540 international observers (and 400 local) were accredited.

Some of these particularities are specific to Zimbabwe, but an important broader point is the power of incumbency to determine the rules of the game, particularly where the line between state, government and ruling party is blurred. The use of state resources in particular became problematic, or as the Commonwealth notes, “it is our view that the ruling party used its incumbency to exploit state resources for the benefit of its electoral campaign”.¹ The power of incumbency also was significant when it came to the preparation of the voter’s roll, a supplementary roll, which continued into the voting period. The role of specific individuals in the electoral process became problematic, in particular the Registrar General, whose responsibility it was to have prepared a voter’s roll, and whose office falls under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Many of the issues raised and represented by the observers are reflective of the polarization of the Zimbabwe polity. As Eddy Maloka and Itumeleng Mosala of the South African Observer Mission state, “Zimbabweans are split into two camps: MDC and ZANU-PF”.² The notion of polarization extended in particular to the media, where the major observer missions noted the extreme polarization between the state-controlled print media, which covered the ruling ZANU-PF favorably, and the majority of the private-owned print media, which covered the opposition MDC in a positive manner. The broadcast media presented a more difficult picture, where the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) gave substantive and unequal coverage to ZANU-PF. To illustrate this point, Brian Raftopoulos notes, “the Media Monitoring Project calculated that out of a total of 14 hours and 25 minutes that ZBC news bulletins devoted to the Presidential campaign, ZANU-PF’s candidate was granted a total of 13 hours and 34 minutes, or about 94 per cent of the coverage”.³ Even in the small proportion of opposition coverage, much of it was used to portray the opposition in a negative manner. There is a small independent radio broadcast media available in Zimbabwe on short wave, Voice of the People (VOP). The VOP is broadcast twice daily from Harare, but due to an increasingly restrictive legislative framework the radio station has been forced underground.

The role and scope of the media, both local and international, was one issue that polarized various observer missions. The presence of major global and

¹ Commonwealth Observer Group preliminary report, p. 2.

² Eddy Maloka and Itumeleng Mosala, “Setting the Record Straight,” *Sunday Times*, 17 March, 2002.

³ Brian Raftopoulos in his contribution to this volume.

regional news agencies was pronounced during the election period.¹ The only notable exception was the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which remains barred from reporting in Zimbabwe, and therefore the BBC broadcast from the border town of Beitbridge in South Africa. This *internationalization* of the Zimbabwe presidential election, and the unusual headline coverage was a double-edged sword for the nature of the electoral process in Zimbabwe. The ruling party sought to maximize the notion of double standards in the international media in particular. On this particular point, they had a particularly sympathetic hearing from African observer missions in particular. As the interim statement of the South African observer mission outlines, “as for the international media, its role during these elections tended to be overwhelmingly in support of the opposition”.² What was interesting was that despite the assertion by Minister of Information and Publicity, Jonathan Moyo, that the world media had campaigned for the opposition,³ there was a clear interest by the foreign and domestic media to have a presence at the governmental media events. The opposition MDC on the other hand sought to exploit the extraordinary presence of the world media to press their case for change, as well as to emphasize the importance of a large and continual international focus on the Zimbabwean polity. The role of the international media in this regard was and still is not unproblematic. As President Mugabe campaigned on international issues, he sought to portray the extraordinary presence of international media as a function of a well-organized white farming community. Whereas the large international media presence was a welcome development for an election in a relatively small developing country, the question of double-standards was a particularly pernicious problem which continually was raised by those sympathetic to both the ruling party, but in particular the MDC.

This particular point is directly related to the role and scope of local observers. The Zimbabwean government sought not only to restrict international observers, but also sought to severely constrain domestic observers. The two major non-governmental coalitions, the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) and the Zimbabwe Crisis Committee (Crisis) were involved in civic and voter education as civil society stakeholders in the electoral process. ZESN trained and proposed a list of 12,500 observers, of which 400 were eventually accredited on March 7, 2002—two days before the election. Both Crisis and ZESN generated regular media updates on the status of the election, but most unfortunately much of their hard and consistent work went unnoticed or under-reported due to the focus on the vast but transient international presence. At a press conference on March 13, a Western reporter asked the Coordinator of Crisis, Brian Kagoro, how she could help in the Zimbabwean democratic

¹ Most international media departed on Friday, March 15, 2002.

² Interim Statement by the South African Observer Mission to the Zimbabwean Presidential Elections of 9 and 10 March 2002, p. 2.

³ Press conference by Jonathan Moyo, Minister of Information and Publicity, March 11, 2002, Sheraton, Harare.

struggle, and he replied, “you can keep quiet”, explaining that all the hard won battles of Zimbabweans were being undermined by privileging the international opinion. The road to hell is indeed paved with good intentions.

The election period was extended by one day following a high court application won by the MDC, which argued that the polling stations in the major urban centers would not be able to clear all voters by the end of Sunday, March 10. Utilizing the power of incumbency, the government reduced the number of polling stations in urban areas by about 45 per cent (correctly perceived as opposition strongholds) and simultaneously increased the percentage of polling stations in rural areas, where ZANU-PF was anticipating its voter numbers. As the Commonwealth Observer Group notes, “On polling day itself, many who wanted to cast their vote could not do so because of a significant reduction in the number of polling stations in urban areas...these problems were not evident in the rural areas”.¹

The pre-election period was characterized by politically motivated violence. The police set up roadblocks throughout the country for no visible purpose except intimidation. The army was also mobilized, which made the tension palpable, and entire areas of the country were declared “no-go” areas, controlled by ruling party stalwarts. The relatively small numbers of international observers therefore, consciously or unconsciously, spent (too) much of their time in the capital Harare. A number of the larger missions, including the Electoral Institute of South Africa, the Commonwealth, the South African mission, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum, and the SADC Electoral Commissions Forum (ECF) did venture to most parts of the country to a greater or lesser extent, often depending on the mission size and resources, as well as capabilities. The SADC Parliamentary Forum made a particularly poignant observation at their press conference subsequent to the election where they argued, “not only did the SADC Parliamentary Forum witness some of these acts, its mission members were themselves targets of an orchestrated attack 10 kilometers out of Chinhoyi on 24 February”.² By contrast, the leader of the South African Observer Mission at their press conference on the same day insisted that the mission members did not witness instances of violence.³

The election period leading into the post-election period highlighted a number of issues associated with international observation, which merit discussion. The first was an emphasis for missions to declare whether or not the election was “free” and “fair”, with little room for gradation. Some argue that this is a useful expression, because an election that is “freeish” and “fairish” is fundamentally flawed and must be declared as such. On the other hand, as was expressed by

¹ *Commonwealth Observer Group to the Presidential Election in Zimbabwe 9–10 March 2002 Preliminary Report*, p. 2.

² *Statement by the SADC Parliamentary Forum Election Observer Mission, Zimbabwe Presidential Elections 9–10 March 2002*, dated 13 March 2002, p. 2.

³ The international and local press corps retorted that they had tapes if the delegation wished to view them.

virtually all the observer missions, they sought to move away from simple categorizations, and look more substantively at the election from a variety of competing perspectives. For example, the SADC Parliamentary Forum sought to examine whether the election conformed to SADC Norms and Standards of Elections, or the ECF, which looked at the criteria of secrecy, transparency, freeness and fairness.

Another important aspect of ‘declaring’ the result of the election observation related to timing and hierarchy. Clearly the analyses of certain observer missions ‘counted’ more than others, and in the particular context of the Zimbabwean presidential election, the South African Observer Mission and the Commonwealth Observer Group were the most highly anticipated reports (and had by far the largest press conferences).¹ Interestingly, the Namibian delegation, led by Kaire Mbuende, and the SADC Ministerial Forum² both made statements to the press on March 9 in the evening after the first day of voting. Significantly these statements were both ‘pre-emptive strikes’ if you will. Mbuende and later South African government ministers Steve Tshwete and Membathisi Mdladlana (with the SADC ministerial delegation), argued that the violence had been exaggerated by the international media and that they were satisfied with the elections at that point. This was highly unusual given the fact that the election was not complete, but again, in the context of timing this clearly was designed to be a strategic intervention, particularly in the face of heightened international attention on the elections. The Brussels-based International Crisis Group (which was not accredited) clearly made another example of a pre-emptive strike as an observer mission. The ICG in a press release on March 11 stated that: “Although the result of Zimbabwe’s presidential election is not expected to be announced for another two or three days... If major violence breaks out—causing or threatening loss of life on a large scale—it will not be possible to avoid considering the question of military intervention.”³

The election results were announced on March 13 during the morning. The opposition MDC immediately rejected the results, and so did the two civil society coalitions, Crisis and ZESN. Crisis put it most bluntly, stating that, “the will of the people has been subverted”.⁴ ZESN similarly argued, that mainly due to procedural issues, “there is no way that the election could be described as substantially free and fair”.⁵ Because of the polarization of Zimbabwean political society, some—most notably the South African Observer Mission—argued that civil society, far from being neutral was aligned to the MDC. To a large extent this ‘accusation’ is true, for very specific historical and locational reasons. The MDC as a political party grew out of a number of struggles, but most

¹ Both press conferences were held back-to-back at the Meikles Hotel on March 13 .

² A separate mission from ECF and Parliamentary Forum.

³ ICG “Last Chance for Peace and Democracy as Zimbabwe Violence Threatens”, Brussels/Harare, March 11, 2002.

⁴ Crisis in Zimbabwe Committee Press Statement on the Election Results, March 13, 2002.

⁵ ZESN Press Statement, March 12, 2002.

notably the struggles in civil society, the trade unions, the student movement and the women's movement and academia for opening up the democratic space, particularly in the face of structural adjustment and economic austerity. This coalition of interests coalesced around a number of constitutional struggles in Zimbabwe up until the defeat of the government-proposed draft constitution in February of 2000. Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC presidential candidate, was chair of the civil-society based National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) up until joining the MDC along with other prominent former NCA members, most notably Welshman Ncube, the MDC Secretary-General and former NCA spokesperson. This link between civil society and the MDC therefore is not unsurprising or unusual in the context of Zimbabwe. Of course the MDC as a coalition party has a number of other constituencies now, including the Commercial Farmers Union, in an anti-Mugabe front; a potentially contradictory agenda which the opposition party will have to confront eventually, but the MDC at its core remains intimately linked with individuals and groups located in civil society. The constitutional question remains significant for a large number of Zimbabweans, precisely because, as the election demonstrated, without constitutional reform the state has incredible power to determine the rules of an electoral process and the legislation enveloping it.

On March 13 the first large delegation to give an electoral assessment was the Norwegian team which determined the election, "substantially flawed". The next major press conference that was to be held was that by the SADC Parliamentary Forum. The Parliamentary Forum's Press Conference was postponed three times during the day because of disputes within the team. In particular representatives from Angola, Namibia and Tanzania were arguing for a less critical report whereas the majority of the other SADC states were arguing for a more critical report. The press conference was eventually held late in the day, where the delegation led by Duke Lefhoko of Botswana pronounced that because of the climate of insecurity in Zimbabwe since the 2000 parliamentary elections, "the electoral process could not be said to adequately comply with the Norms and Standards for Elections in the SADC region".¹ During the day a number of other African delegations including the Organization of African Unity delegation and Nigerian delegation pronounced the election free and fair. In the case of the Nigerian report, it was argued that in fact the Nigerian populace could learn something from the Zimbabwean election. The ECF delivered their delayed report on March 15, in which they declared that, "the criteria of secrecy, transparency, and freeness were met during the poll and the counting. However, the criterion of fairness was not adequately met".²

The delegation most media and observers were waiting for was the South African Observer Mission (SAOM). At a tense press conference, the South Africans led by Sam Motsuenyane declared that despite the climate of fear which

¹ SADC Parliamentary Forum, p. 4.

² ECF, Press Statement, 15 March 2002.

they recognized, the Zimbabwean people voted in large numbers and the opposition fought for democratic space, and therefore the elections, “should be considered legitimate”. The group further contended that, “now that the people of Zimbabwe have spoken, the world will respect the verdict”.¹ The group provoked laughter by the international media present, which was unfortunate in my view because it obscured the particular issues that the SAOM tried to raise, correctly or incorrectly. The first issue was context. The SAOM argued that the Zimbabwe election was extremely violent and therefore the criteria of “free and fair” were not applicable. The question that they grappled with was how to accurately get a sense of voter will in a context of violence and polarization by definition. In addition, the SAOM argued that the Zimbabwean context was a situation where the incumbent government controlled the electoral process with no independent body for administration and conflict resolution. The election needed to be analyzed, therefore, in the context Zimbabwean law, the group emphasized. In addition the SAOM continually noted that as a neighboring state, the repercussions of the elections were potentially very serious, and therefore the stakes were extremely high, not necessarily in terms of retaining ZANU-PF, but in terms of maintaining stability in the post-election period.

The next delegation most media and observers were waiting for was the Commonwealth Observer Group, led by a troika of South Africa, Nigeria, and Australia. This observer mission also was characterized by internal wrangling, with one participant actually leaving the drafting session the evening prior to the press conference. Subsequent to the SAOM, the Commonwealth delivered an equally surprising report. The Commonwealth group declared that, given the pre-election violence and procedural problems, “all the foregoing brings us to the conclusion that the conditions in Zimbabwe did not adequately allow for a free expression of will by the electors”.² This report provoked just as much surprise as the SAOM mission, but for different reasons. It was assumed that with South Africa and Nigeria forming the majority in the troika, and particularly having both released their country reports, that the delegation would be split. The pressures that the Commonwealth delegations faced were obviously different, with pressure applied in particular by the United Kingdom (which was deliberately excluded from the group by the Zimbabwe government).

These two major competing reports laid the foundation for an extremely problematic post-election period that continues until today. As the various mission reports illustrate, there was no consensus amongst international observers vis-à-vis the legitimacy of the electoral outcome. Significantly, the ruling party succeeded in highlighting a North/South rift between and among observer missions. The only true losers in this election, though, are the Zimbabwean people, who may never know what “might have been” given a more level playing field or less gerrymandering. The victory ZANU-PF sought and achieved

¹ SAOM, p. 3.

² Commonwealth, p. 2.

might yet be a Pyrrhic victory because many of the real structural problems in Zimbabwe remain. These include an unemployment rate estimated at 60 per cent, inflation hovering around 116 per cent, staggering external debt, and a looming food crisis which could lead to widespread dislocation. These are problems that any government, ZANU-PF or MDC, would of necessity have to address, but so little of the election addressed substantive policy on either side. The MDC's knee-jerk neo-liberal economic policies will not resolve these deep structural tensions in the economy, if experience is anything to go by. Similarly ZANU-PF's anti-imperialist sloganeering rings hollow when many of the post-independence economic and political constraints are of their own making. Indeed, up until about 1997 Zimbabwe was used as a 'shining example' of structural adjustment implementation. These are the real debates, which must of necessity take place in the Zimbabwean polity. As the SADC Parliamentary Forum noted, "generally there was no euphoria that normally characterizes elections in the region".¹ This was perhaps the most poignant observation made.

¹ SADC Parliamentary Forum, p. 2.

Zimbabwe and “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness”

*Henning Melber*¹

*The country you used to cry for
Is now in tatters
Chipo, carry the baby on your back
Let's get out of here*
(Thomas Mapfumo in the song Mamvembe, 2000)

*You are over the peak
You cannot do
What you used to do
You are old*
(Oliver Mtukudzi in the song Wasakara, 2000)

The current fates of the two most prominent songwriters and musical artists of Zimbabwe illustrate and symbolise Zimbabwe's misery: Thomas Mapfumo, legendary figure of *chimurenga music*, started to write increasingly critical song texts after the late 1980s. He fled his home country in 2000 after being warned that his life was in danger. Initially a liberation activist, he now resides in the US state of Oregon. His latest released tracks entitled *Chimurenga Rebel* after their release back home in early 2002 sold over 30,000 copies within two days. Because of the critical texts, the songs were banned from being broadcast in the Zimbabwean state media. People were even afraid of buying the music. According to Thomas Mapfumo himself, who was interviewed on the album: “Some people who had been seen buying this type of music were warned. ... This record should have sold more than 100,000 copies but because of the intimidation which is going on there people are afraid to buy the music.”² As a Mapfumo biographer summarised after the elections: “Thomas Mapfumo's freedom songs have been a lifeline for Zimbabwe since before it attained its independence. But so far, they have not been enough to defeat today's oppressor. His exile seems likely to continue. ... The only people celebrating today—other than Mugabe's greedy goons—are the unreformed, white Rhodesians who can now gloat, sip

¹ Different shorter versions of this comment have previously been published in *The Zimbabwe Independent*, Harare, March 22, 2002 and *The Namibian*, Windhoek, March 22, 2002.

² Joy Mutare/Sean Barlow, “Top Musician Slams Election, Calls for Protests” (interview published March 22, 2002; <http://allafrica.com/stories/200203220568.html>). See also “Why They Banned Chimurenga Rebel”, *The Daily News*, Harare, March 29, 2002 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203290499.html>)

their gin-and-tonics and say, with some justification, ‘We told you so.’ Shame, shame, shame!”¹

The same generation as Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mtukudzi created the most popular *tuku music* as a brand name among all generations in Zimbabwe. Originally far more committed to the religious gospel than to politics, he contributed by his song texts towards public awareness on a variety of social issues such as street kids, violence against women and HIV/Aids. With the release of the song collection *Bvuma/Tolerance* in late 2000 he opened a new chapter in his life, as the following extract from a newspaper report illustrates: “On February 9, 2001, Mtukudzi played in Mutoko, a small town northeast of Harare, where he encountered the most hostile of Mugabe supporters. It was reported that ‘war veterans’ invaded the show and forced everybody to wear the ZANU-PF T-shirts and peak caps. The ‘veterans’ then told him not to play the political song *Wasakara*, but Mtukudzi had decided that he was going to play the song anyway. At the end of the concert, the audience were beaten up and the musician was only saved by the fact that the cameras were near him and the ‘veterans’ did not want to risk being filmed.” The current feeling in the Zimbabwe music industry is, as the article states, “that the former white rulers were more tolerant of dissent in music than African successors”.²

PSEUDO-ELECTIONS...

The results of the presidential elections from March 9 to 11, 2002—with Robert Mugabe of ZANU-PF claiming almost half a million votes more than his contestant Morgan Tsvangirai from the Movement for Democratic Change— should not come as a surprise. Everyone with eyes to see could easily witness the build up to Mugabe’s “victory”. There were for months systematic efforts to minimize the number of opposition votes through manipulative measures, which aimed at excluding whole groups, previously entitled to vote. These groups were suspected to be mainly in favour of the opposition. This disenfranchisement in itself was already a severe misrepresentation of the people’s will before the elections took place. The parallel process of further controlling or co-opting strategically relevant actors is another case in point: the independent judiciary was undermined systematically, the courts gradually turned into a gallery of Mugabe followers. Dramatic pay increases for the army and police immediately prior to the elections were another example of how loyalty from substantial security forces in society was virtually bought. The recorded increase of votes for Mugabe during the elections in his rural strongholds (if the counting was a true reflection of the actual distribution of votes) is less a sign of more support to the

¹ Banning Eyre, “A Nation’s Agony”, *World Music Productions/Afropop Worldwide*, New York, March 13, 2002 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203180001.html>).

² John Kariuki, “Out of Tune Mugabe Tormenting Musicians”, *The East African*, Nairobi, March 4 to 10, 2002.

old and new President than a reflection of the successful destabilisation strategy based on repression and terror resulting in a culture of fear and at least the reduction (if not elimination) of dissenting voices. It is more than anything else a disempowerment of popular will, based on orchestrated oppression in abuse of the control over the monopoly of the state.

Mugabe benefited in this pre-election build up, degrading the final stage of the election process itself—as the last but only act of the production also to be watched by a selected outside audience upon invitation of the director—to an almost farcical exercise, through the consequences of September 11, 2001. The terrorist attack that shook the world distracted any meaningful international attention from Zimbabwe towards the “war against terror” elsewhere. As a result, the elections were already disqualified in terms of being anything close to “free and fair” before they even took place. As if this was not enough, the regime manipulated further by selective admission of observers both from the outside as well as by preventing most of the internal volunteers from exercising a meaningful role. Those with accredited status were in a further move entitled only to selective participation and excluded from witnessing crucial steps of the election process (transport of ballot boxes etc.). This was another violation of basic principles of unhindered supervision with the aim of enhancing and securing a free and fair voting procedure.

Last but not least, the re-arrangement of polling stations in favour of rural areas (Mugabe’s main strongholds) at the cost of urban voting districts (Tsvangirai’s major support base) had the predictable and intended result that many who still qualified and were willing to cast their votes were unable to do so. The high court order issued on Sunday evening, March 10, to open the polling stations once again the following day, was, in defiance of the law, only partially implemented. Hence many thousand voters were still denied their right to vote, evident through the footage of television reports. This in itself constitutes another serious flaw and violation of an essential principle, namely that those who are entitled and want to cast their vote should be able to do so. Such deliberate exclusion of willing voters disqualifies elections as democratic.

... WITH EXTERNAL BLESSING...

Given the degree of manipulation and repression before and during the election process, the outcome was predictable. It was with some consternation, however, noted how openly the ZANU-PF government acted in defiance of minimum standards under the eyes of the public. It is with even more consternation, that the lukewarm response is noted to this latest example of violation of democratic principles and norms by those African political leaders who quite recently advocated the notion of good governance, democracy and human rights as the

message of the “New Partnership for Africa’s Development” (NEPAD).¹ They are also trying to sell this commitment in return for massive additional material support from donor countries. But while they open their hands, they are simultaneously closing their eyes when the need for peer review (as advocated in NEPAD) arises. To that extent the real issue is not Mugabe and his inner power circle (they simply behaved the way one would expect) but the double standards of the African allies playing along. The political leaders in Africa, who show such non-commitment to the newly formulated and marketed NEPAD-values, are as much the culprits. They are disloyal to the political values they claim to cultivate and protect. By backing a despotic leader, they betray the temporary hope they fuelled with this initiative. Sadly enough, the SADC Extra-Ordinary Summit of January 2002 missed a golden opportunity and instead rendered a disservice to the credibility at stake when publicly expressing at best a lukewarm position by stating that it “welcomed the assurances by President Mugabe that the forthcoming Presidential Elections scheduled for 9–10 March 2002 will be free and fair”. Furthermore, “Summit noted with concern the negative reporting by certain sections of the media on Zimbabwe, and appealed to them to be objective. Summit expressed concern over the fact that some Western countries have authorised the broadcasting from their territories by their nationals of hostile and inciting propaganda against the Government of the republic of Zimbabwe. Summit called upon those countries to resist from such actions.”²

Sympathetic observers had hoped that this position would mainly express a strategically calculated manoeuvre at least on behalf of the most influential neighbouring country South Africa, by actually spelling out the expectations towards Mugabe’s government policy, which would allow it at a later stage to exercise some pressure with the credibility of a well meaning partner and to call the Zimbabwean government and the head of state to order.³ To the disappointment of many that has clearly been not the case. The soft stance especially by South Africa was considered to “undermine the notion of African solutions to African problems” as the philosophical core in NEPAD and seen to cast both NEPAD “and Pretoria’s leadership in a poor light and relegates African governance standards and democratic expectations to an inferior league”.⁴ The same authors, both with the South African Institute of International Affairs, considered in another opinion article the immediate aftermath to the Zimbabwe elections as a defeat for all major stakeholders except Mugabe himself: “democracy, the Zimbabwean populace and their economy, the image of South African

¹ See for an overview and analysis my article in *Forum for Development Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2002 (in print).

² Articles 20 and 22 of the Final Communiqué of the SADC Extra-Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government, January 14, 2002, Blantyre, Malawi (<http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/sadcsun.htm>).

³ Seen in this light, one might even argue that the SADC Extraordinary Summit of January 2002 in the spirit of NEPAD’s new approach most likely offered more ‘tough talk’—albeit behind closed doors—with another established and respected leader than any similar meeting before.

⁴ Greg Mills/Tim Hughes, “SA has failed its neighbours”, *Mail&Guardian*, Johannesburg, February 22 to 28, 2002.

leadership and the hope of African recovery through NEPAD have all been losers”.¹

It seems after the currently so obvious failure of the Zimbabwe test case that there are asymmetric elements in conflict. The lack of synchronisation became obvious even at the Opening Ceremony of the Fourth Session of the Nigeria/South Africa Binational Commission in Pretoria on 25 March 2002, when the representatives of the two African states—sharing major responsibility for the design and marketing of NEPAD and also within the Commonwealth troika to decide on temporarily suspending Zimbabwe (a means of mild though symbolically far reaching punishment considered by many as ‘too little, too late’ appeasement to soften the embarrassment among the potential NEPAD donors in the OECD countries)²—offered colliding interpretations on current policy issues. The Nigerian Vice President Atiku Abubakar noted in his address that “the ownership question and the agreement by African leaders to embrace good political, economic and corporate governance should now convince the critical observers of the continent of our sincerity of purpose. Indeed, the idea of African leaders holding themselves accountable through a Peer Review System is most laudable”.³ In contrast, the South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma (who on behalf of the South African government conveyed congratulations to President Robert Mugabe on his re-election through a visit in Harare even before the official South African position was announced)⁴ stated on the same occasion: “We need to vigorously challenge the doctrine of ‘collective punishment’ that is emerging in relationships between Africa and the developed North. This is the doctrine that any significant project initiated by our continent, particularly NEPAD, will not be supported if a particular leader or country behaves in a manner that is unacceptable.”⁵

This resembles the general sentiment articulated by African leaders, who seem to resent the idea that the Western countries are once again trying to lecture them on political morale and democratic virtues. The angry reaction of Tanzania’s President Benjamin Mkapa to the announcement of smart sanctions by

¹ Greg Mills/Tim Hughes, “Everyone’s a loser”, *Mail&Guardian*, Johannesburg, March 15 to 21, 2002.

² The indignation over “an ageing tyrant who is single-handedly destroying Zimbabwe’s economy and social stability” and the fact that SADC “has been acquiescent in the face of Mugabe’s abuses”, which if the silence continues “will gravely undermine its institutions, and will cast a deep pall over the most important leader in the SADC, President Thabo Mbeki” has been publicly articulated in a widely read South African newspaper by Jeffrey D. Sachs (Professor of Economics and Director of the Center for International Development at Harvard University), one of the most popular and influential academic opinion leaders in the World Economic Summit circles (“World needs to show despots the door”, *Sunday Times*, Johannesburg, March 31, 2002).

³ <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/nig253a.htm>

⁴ The South African Department of Foreign Affairs issued a statement by the Presidency on 14 March 2002 on the visit of the Deputy President to Zimbabwe, saying “Deputy President Zuma also congratulated President Mugabe on his re-election, based on the preliminary reports” (<http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/zim153b.htm>). Worse than this was the Deputy President’s televised body language when embracing comrade Mugabe in joy over the victory he had won.

⁵ <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/nig253b.htm>

the European Union prior to the elections was a classic example of this. Addressing a public rally in northeast Tanzania he pondered: "As you have heard about Zimbabwe and the EU's decision to impose sanctions. It seems that they want to divide Africa in Brussels in 2002 just as they did in Berlin in 1884. Africa must be prepared to say no."¹ As understandable as the rejection of such a measure, considered to be a finger wagging gesture, might seem to be given the historical context and the legacy of double standards, it questions at the same time the degree of seriousness of articulated notions within the NEPAD credo. After all, you cannot eat the cake and keep it, and the sceptical voices have dramatically increased since double standards were so obviously applied in the Zimbabwean debacle.²

A Windhoek based daily newspaper asked in a headline article if in the light of the polarisation between Namibia's and other African countries' views and most of the Western world, this is an issue of Africa against the rest of the world.³ The secretary general of the Namibian former liberation movement SWAPO, conveyed in a congratulatory message to the administrative secretary of ZANU-PF:

On behalf of the leadership and the entire membership of SWAPO Party ... our elation over the resounding victory scored. ... Your party's triumph is indeed victory for Southern Africa in particular and the African continent at large. It is victory over neo-colonialism, imperialism and foreign sponsored puppetry. We in SWAPO Party knew quite well that despite imperialist intransigence and all round attempts by enemies of peace, democracy and the rule of law to influence the outcome of the elections in favour of neck-chained political stooges, people of Zimbabwe would not succumb an inch to external pressure. They spoke with one overwhelming voice to reject recolonization. Their verdict should, therefore, be respected unconditionally by both the external perpetrators of division and their hired local stooges, who have been parading themselves as democrats. ... As we join your great nation in celebrating this well deserved and indeed well earned victory over the forces of darkness and uncertainty, we wish to call upon the people of Zimbabwe to prove to the prophets of doom that they can do without their unholy blessing, through hard work. In the same vein, we call for unity of purpose among the African people as the only viable weapon to ward off outside influence.⁴

Already earlier on, the head of the Namibian election observer mission had dismissed allegations of manipulations by ZANU-PF, by declaring that the

¹ Quoted from a report by Joachim Mwalongo, "President Mkapa Supports Mugabe, Condemns EU", TOMRIC News Agency, Dar es Salaam, February 20, 2002 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200202200433.html>).

² Admittedly it might be arguable to what extent the critics applied double standards themselves given the often all too one-sided interpretations. For the sake of the context here, however, this is of minor interest. After all, those blamed for new versions of colonialism and imperialism are the same ones who are asked to finance essential parts of NEPAD.

³ "Is dit 'n kwessie van Afrika teen die res?", *Republikein*, Windhoek, March 4, 2002.

⁴ SWAPO Party, Office of the Secretary General, Windhoek, letter dated 14 March 2002. Gwen Lister, the editor of an independent local daily newspaper commented upon the message in her weekly column 'Political Perspective' under the title "The stuff of literature!" (*The Namibian*, Windhoek, March 15, 2002).

system was “water-tight without room for rigging” and that they were “satisfied that an environment existed that enabled the people of Zimbabwe to exercise their democratic right to elect a leader of their choice”.¹ Consequently, the Namibian government also dismissed the suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth: “The Government of Namibia cannot subscribe to any course of action whose effect is to undermine the Government of Zimbabwe and undo the freely expressed will of the majority of the people of Zimbabwe to choose their own leaders”, said a statement issued by the Namibian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting.² In his speech on the occasion of Namibia’s 12th anniversary of independence on March 21, President Sam Nujoma confirmed this position.³ While such a selective view seems unrealistic to the degree of being almost irrational, such a (dis-)qualification would ignore the inner logic of the attitudes and policies displayed not only by SWAPO as the former liberation movement now in legitimate political power as the government of Namibia, but to a certain extent also by other political office bearers of previous liberation movements such as the MPLA, FRELIMO and the ANC.

... DISCREDIT INDEPENDENCE

The case of Zimbabwe displays features of a transition in Southern Africa from controlled change to changed control following the armed liberation struggle against colonial rule and subsequent patterns of political dominance, under which “loyalty to a party is considered to be patriotism”.⁴ For the national liberation movements the seizure of power signals in their understanding some sort of “the end of history”. For the neighbouring parties in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa “Mugabe’s struggle to stay in power became a struggle for their own survival too. Supporting ZANU-PF was no longer just a matter of solidarity but of fundamental self-interest”.⁵ From this understanding follows, that a liberation movement should stay in power forever once it has succeeded in its anti-colonial struggle:

The NLMs [national liberation movements, H.M.] share what can only be termed a common theology. National liberation is both the just and historically necessary conclusion of the struggle between the people and the forces of racism and colonialism.

¹ Quoted from “OAU Salutes Mugabe, Commonwealth Kicks”, *This Day*, Lagos, March 15, 2002 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203150013.html>). Kaire Mbuende, the head of the Namibian observer mission, has previously been SADC Executive Secretary. The editorial of *The Zimbabwe Independent* (Harare, March 15, 2002) qualified his statement as “manifestly deceitful opinion” (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203150187.html>).

² Quoted from “Windhoek Dismisses Suspension”, *The Herald*, Harare, March 21, 2002 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203210487.html>).

³ “NAM Government Stands by Its Man”, *The Namibian*, Windhoek, March 22, 2002 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203220245.html>).

⁴ H. Makoni, “Patriotism and Loyalty”, *Zimbabwe Standard*, Harare, March 31, 2002 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203310067.html>).

⁵ R.W. Johnson, “The final struggle is to stay in power”, *Focus 25*, March 2002, published by the Helen Suzman Foundation. (http://www.hsf.org.za/focus25johnson_print.html).

This has two implications. First, the NLMs—whatever venial sins they may commit—are the righteous. They not merely represent the masses but in a sense they are the masses, and as such they cannot really be wrong. Secondly, according to the theology, their coming to power represents the end of a process. No further group can succeed them for that would mean that the masses, the forces of righteousness, had been overthrown. That, in turn, could only mean that the forces of racism and colonialism, after sulking in defeat and biding their time, had regrouped and launched a counter-attack. ... Hence the extra-ordinary self-righteousness, even now, of Mugabe and the ZANU-PF leadership. However much they kill and torture they are utterly convinced of their superior moral standing.¹

There is another related, general (and moral) conclusion from Zimbabwe's currently messy situation in as much as Mugabe and some of his bedfellows are a disgrace to the history of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa and the values it claimed to strive for. ZANU-PF insults by its present politics the moral and ethical claims, which were motivating the local and international support to armed struggle for political self-determination. It is actually exactly this notion of self-determination, so dearly fought for at the cost of many lives, which is now so utterly disrespected by the new political rulers. They are not prepared to abandon political power but act against the will of the people. Through their totalitarian mindset they betray the same values of democracy and popular participation they were in the past claiming to represent and were internationally supported for by a solidarity movement.² In return for continued despotic rule at the cost of the ordinary people they discredit their earlier legitimacy to liberate a country and its people. Victims turned into perpetrators. The rights of all are sacrificed for the privileges of a few—hardly progress compared with the situation under settler colonialism for those who continue to suffer.

A Zimbabwean scholar with, however, a subsequently highly dubious track record, recently labelled as “an academic mercenary on hire to ZANU-PF”³ stated with regard to his country at a Conference on Robben Island in February 1999 that:

... it would be a mistake to justify the struggles for national liberation purely on the basis of the need to remove the white minority regimes from power and to replace them with black majority regimes that did not respect or subscribe to fundamental principles of democracy and human rights ... ruling personalities have hijacked the movement and are doing totally unacceptable things in the name of national liberation. Being here at Robben Island for the first time, I am immensely pained by the fact that

¹ Ibid. See also my own critical assessments on related issues: “Liberation and Democracy in Southern Africa: The Case of Namibia”, in Christopher Saunders/Henning Melber, *Transition in Southern Africa—Comparative Aspects*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute 2001 (Discussion Paper No. 10), pp. 17–28 and “Flaws in Democracy”, *Mail&Guardian*, Johannesburg, November 31 to December 6, 2002.

² See for a case study Reinhart Kössler/Henning Melber, “The West German solidarity movement with the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. A (self-)critical retrospective”, in Ulf Engel/Robert Kappel (eds), *Germany's Africa policy revisited—Interests, images and incrementalism*, Münster/Hamburg/London: Lit-Verlag 2002, pp. 103–126.

³ Takavafira Zhou, “Jonathanois Grips Zim”, *Zimbabwe Standard*, Harare, October 21, 2001 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200110230321.html>).

some people who suffered here left this place only to turn their whole countries into Robben Islands.¹

Three years later, in March 2002, the same demagogue had turned 180 degrees and now praised the elections in his country as an impressive sign “that Zimbabweans have come of age that they do not believe in change from something to nothing. They do not believe in moving from independence and sovereignty to new colonialism, they do not believe in the discourse of human rights to deepen inequality”². Rhetoric of such calibre has earned him the label ‘Goebbels of Africa’³—Zimbabwe’s current Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo.

More than forty years ago Frantz Fanon in his manifesto on “The Wretched of the Earth” already expressed disgust about the emerging new elites he witnessed in independent African countries, supported by corrupt and power hungry intellectual sell-outs of the type just quoted. In a chapter on “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness”, Fanon portrayed what reads like a current analysis of Zimbabwe:

During the struggle for liberation the leader awakened the people and promised them a forward march, heroic and unmitigated. Today, he uses every means to put them to sleep, and three or four times a year asks them to remember the colonial period and to look back on the long way they have come since then. Now it must be said that the masses show themselves totally incapable of appreciating the long way they have come. The peasant who goes on scratching out a living from the soil, and the unemployed man who never finds employment do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly-coloured though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed in their lives.⁴

¹ Jonathan N. Moyo, “Future Challenges”, in *Report on the Conference Nordic Solidarity with the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa and Challenges for Democratic Partnerships into the 21st Century*. Organised by The Robben Island Museum, The Mayibuye Centre and The Nordic Africa Institute, 11–14 February 1999. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute 2000, p. 17.

² Quoted from “Zanu-PF Satisfied with Poll Proceedings—Moyo”, *The Herald*, Harare, March 12, 2002 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203120588.html>).

³ See Takavafira Zhou, op. cit. This might be too demagogic a label itself, given the historically unique dimensions of the German holocaust to which the Nazi propaganda minister relates. A rather intriguing profile of Jonathan Moyo and the like is offered by John Matshikiza, “Harare Has a New Landed Gentry”, *Mail & Guardian*, Johannesburg, March 8 to 14, 2002. He traces “Moyo’s transformation from urbane, meticulous intellectual to petulant, ultra-nationalist furioso” since the mid-1990s with a sensible but sharp mind and tongue (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203070404.html>).

⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin (reprint; French original 1961), p. 136.

Zimbabwe's Debacle, Africa's Response and the Implications for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

Ian Taylor

Few events in Africa in recent years have so excited world opinion as have the downward spiral of Zimbabwe under President Robert Mugabe and the years of chaos and terror under his rule. The slide into lawlessness, the wholesale illegal confiscation of land, the general free-fall of the Zimbabwean economy and the presidential competition between Mugabe of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Popular Front (ZANU-PF) and Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change, have been the stuff of many editorials and commentaries in all the main newspapers, both in the West and in Africa. At the same time however, the Zimbabwe case has highlighted the perpetual reluctance of African elites to criticise one of their own, particularly in the light of African leaders' reactions to what most people saw as fundamentally rigged elections. This point raises profound questions as to the seriousness and credibility of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

NEPAD was launched in October 2001 and was a supposed blueprint for Africa's regeneration. Its limited approach to interrogating the global political economy has already been commented upon elsewhere.¹ This article concentrates rather on holding up NEPAD's commitment to democracy and peace—*signed by African elites themselves*—to the actual concrete action that these very same elites have pursued (or not pursued) in the aftermath of the Zimbabwe elections. In essence, this article contrasts rhetoric with action. NEPAD document itself asserts that 'African peoples have begun to demonstrate their refusal to accept poor economic and political leadership. These developments are, however, uneven and inadequate and need to be further expedited'.² There is, so NEPAD claims, 'a new resolve to deal with conflicts and censure deviation from the [democratic] norm'.³ This springs from the view that 'development is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance'.⁴ NEPAD shows, the document claims, that 'Africa undertakes to

¹ Ian Taylor and Philip Nel "New Africa', Globalisation and the Confines of Elite Reformism: 'Getting the Rhetoric Right', Getting the Strategy Wrong", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, February 2002.

² *The New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development*, October 2001, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

respect the global standards of democracy, whose core components include political pluralism, allowing for the existence of several political parties and workers' unions, fair, open, free and democratic elections periodically organised to enable the populace to choose their leaders freely'.¹ In short, 'a democratic Africa will become one of the pillars of world democracy, human rights and tolerance',² in partnership with the developed world which has certain 'responsibilities and obligations' to support NEPAD.³

Tragically, that NEPAD only lasted less than six months before its credibility was fatally undermined demonstrates the nature of post-colonial African politics and the role that Africa's elites have played in contributing to the continent's ongoing marginalisation. The much-vaunted desire to alter the "rules of the game" on how the continent interacts with the West, without any real reciprocal change in the behaviour of African elites—an absolute precondition if such "Partnerships" are ever to be taken seriously—now seems to be a one-way street of demands but no duties on the part of Africa's presidents. To put it bluntly, that will never wash in the global corridors of power (however iniquitous these corridors may be) and it is naïve of African leaders to think otherwise. Fatigue with Africa's incessant problems is already high and, even though not all of Africa's malaise is its own making, the refusal of African leaders to at least try and get their own houses in order further exacerbates such negative attitudes in London, Washington, Paris *etc.* As one diplomat was quoted as saying in the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper in South Africa, it was 'unrealistic to expect the developed world to separate NEPAD and the Zimbabwe elections... Zimbabwe—and the African response to it—[was] an acid test of the continent's commitment to democracy'.⁴ NEPAD document, when launched, *did* have laudable commitments to the developmental needs of the continent, although it can be argued that its initial acceptance by the West was premised more on the fact that the message communicated fitted the global neo-liberal discourse rather than seriously interrogated the international political economy. But be that as it may, the attempt to penetrate the shield of sovereignty behind which too many corrupt leaders hid for too long held potential for advancing the interests of the ordinary African, rather than the elites. This now seems in tatters after the elections.

THE ZIMBABWE CRISIS

In the case of Zimbabwe, although there were repeated attempts to muddy the water over the problems in Zimbabwe, particularly with appeals to "the land issue" and a desperate playing of the race card, the real issue (not ignoring the very real topic of inequitable land distribution) was the concerted effort by Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party to retain their hold on political power. That

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 51.

³ Ibid., p. 52.

⁴ *Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), March 15–21, 2002.

African leaders chose to ignore this and rather seek to cast it as some sort of “neo-imperialist” question shows, it seems, that even now in 2002, bad governance, corruption, violence and vote-rigging will, at the final analysis, be defended to the hilt by many African presidents. Mugabe’s record on the economy, setting aside the land issue, the Matabeleland massacres, the one-party state and myriad other markers of his rule, has been lamentable. After twenty years of ZANU-PF control, not only are Zimbabwe’s citizens one-third poorer than they were at independence, but, according to IMF figures, Zimbabwe has gained the dubious distinction of being the world’s fastest-shrinking economy.

Sadly, rather than seeking to contribute positively to change this situation, many African leaders fell into line behind Mugabe—in effect positioning themselves in agreement with the view that there is a malevolent white racist conspiracy to recolonise Zimbabwe and make it into Rhodesia again, led by Britain’s Tony Blair and his “gay gangsters”. Thabo Mbeki, a man who likes to think of himself as some of sort of “philosopher king” went so far as to assert at the Commonwealth meeting in Australia in March 2002 that talk of ostracising Mugabe was ‘inspired by notions of white supremacy’ and that such moves were pursued because white political leaders apparently felt uneasy at their ‘repugnant position imposed by inferior blacks’.¹ This type of extreme language is not the unique preserve of Mbeki. But, what is significant is that it is precisely Mbeki who has been notably active in promoting NEPAD and the “African Renaissance”. Ironically, it was Mbeki who loudly proclaimed at a conference on the African Renaissance in September 1998 that:

We want to see an African Continent in which the people participate in systems of governance in which they are truly able to determine their destiny and put behind us the notions of democracy and human rights as peculiarly “Western” concepts. Thus would we assume a stance of opposition to dictatorship, whatever form it may assume. Thus...we say that we must ensure that when elections are held, these must be truly democratic, resulting in governments which the people would accept as being genuinely representative of the will of the people.²

Zimbabwe provided a clear test case for such noble sentiments to be measured against and for leaders such as Mbeki to translate rhetoric into action. After all, these commitments have not been imposed upon the likes of Mbeki and Obasanjo: they have been designed by and then voluntarily signed up to by such elites, with specific commitments to act rather than talk. The chairman of the steering committee for NEPAD, Wiseman Nkuhlu, is on record as saying that punitive action would be taken against countries that failed to obey NEPAD rules and that ‘we will act against those countries that fail to respect the human

¹ ‘Letter from the President: Zimbabwe: “Two Blacks and One White”’, *The ANC Today: Online Voice of the African National Congress*, Vol. 2, No. 10, 8–14 March 2002, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/2002/at10.htm>

² Thabo Mbeki, “Statement by Deputy President Mbeki at the African Renaissance Conference”, Johannesburg, 28 September 1998, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1998/tm0928.htm>

rights'.¹ In the context where the notion that ZANU-PF might be peaceably removed from power through the democratic wishes of the population was rejected out of hand by Mugabe and where human rights have been trampled upon for years, surely Zimbabwe was a test for Mbeki and Nkulu's grand statements? The government consistently targeted the judiciary, the independent media and opposition activists for repression and Mugabe himself repeatedly flouted a series of court orders barring the seizure of white-owned farmland by state-backed thugs. In January 2001 the presses of the opposition-inclined *Daily News* were bombed and several foreign journalists were expelled from the country. Clearly, 'a stance of opposition to dictatorship' was called for. Even more so with the murder of opposition activists openly and repeatedly encouraged from the very top.

All of the above clearly goes against the supposed fundamentals of NEPAD, which claims to push for Africa's development and to protect basic human rights and democracy. Africa's leaders did, momentarily, demonstrate a willingness to act with the September 2001 Abuja Agreement, brokered in Nigeria, which set out the conditions for a peaceful resolution of Zimbabwe's crisis and a programme of land reform that would take place within the rule of law. But, Morgan Tsvangirai recognised the problems with such agreements well before the Abuja document was signed, remarking that 'you know this is the saddest thing about Africa, all these flowery declarations and all without commitment. There's no commitment because there is no holding to account... The declarations are not worth the paper they're written on. Releasing such paper creates a feel-good atmosphere and, when leaders are reminded of what they have signed, they retreat into the defence of the sovereignty of nations'.²

This is the fundamental issue: African leaders will rarely criticise their own. The self-interest of African elites under threat from democracy (linked surreptitiously in their eyes to the notion of good governance) should not be played down. Nor should notions of solidarity and resentment at perceived "neo-imperialist" interference in the affairs of fellow African countries. Many African leaders have highly dubious credentials themselves. Zambia's Levy Mwanawasa came to power through seriously flawed elections; aid donors have virtually given up on Malawi's Bakili Muluzi and his corrupt regime; Tanzania's Benjamin Mkapa ordered a crack-down on opposition activists in Zanzibar, resulting in many deaths etc. *ad nauseum*. Focussing on the fact that critics of one of their colleagues is the former colonial master neatly allows such leaders to sidestep thorny issues such as democracy and accountability. After all, if they allow someone like Mugabe to be ostracised for his behaviour, who's next on the list? Better to show a united front and protect all members of the elite club. In

¹ Quoted in "NEPAD to Act against Countries Disobeying Its Rules", *South African Press Agency* (Midrand), October 25, 2001.

² Cited in Stephen Chan, "Commonwealth Residualism and the Machinations of Power in a Turbulent Zimbabwe", *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2001, p. 71.

addition, many African leaders seem to believe that they are predestined to rule, particularly if they are the head or inheritors of victorious liberation movements. Such thinking regards the country and its people as the rightful “property” of the leader, who can and must never lose power. If Mugabe were to be ousted, this legend would be shattered, setting a precedent for the likes of Dos Santos, Moi, Mbeki etc.

Ironically, the country that world opinion looked to for solid African leadership over Zimbabwe has fallen short, to put it mildly. South African support for Mugabe undermined any speedy resolution of the problem as Pretoria’s diplomacy was effectively based on a public excusing of Mugabe’s human rights record and the playing down or ignoring of any reports to the contrary. Note that a South African observer delegation was amongst the first to proclaim solemnly that the elections were “free and fair”, even whilst other observers were saying the exact opposite. Note too that the ANC openly welcomed Mugabe’s victory in the 2000 parliamentary elections as evidence of Zimbabwe’s increasing democratic credentials. In a statement, the ANC said, “we congratulate ZANU-PF on their victory as we realise that the election process has underscored the fact that democracy is taking root not only in Zimbabwe but in the sub-region and, indeed, in the whole of Africa”¹ In a joint statement following a meeting between senior members of the ANC and ZANU-PF in 2000, the two parties announced that they had ‘reached common ground’ on resolving Zimbabwe’s land crisis, namely that Britain should “unconditionally” give the Mugabe government funds for land redistribution. The ANC secretary-general Kgalema Motlanthe, ignoring the £44 million that Britain had contributed to the process of land reform but which had been stopped due to gross mismanagement and corruption, criticised London for “refusing” to fund land redistribution. Motlanthe went on to say that “the ANC does not accept any conditions put on funds by the British government”.² Prior to the 2002 elections, Mugabe’s position was also considerably strengthened by leaders of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) who gave him their unflinching support at the organisation’s 20th summit in Windhoek, Namibia in August 2000. President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique gave what was regarded as clear-cut support for Mugabe, saying there had been a tendency on the part of some ‘big powers’ to put a “blanket” over the history of the freedom struggle by “portraying heroes of the freedom struggle as anti-democratic and even dictators”. “We cannot in SADC condone these views. We are the democrats and we want democracy to work according to the will of our people in each one of our countries.”³

Part of the problem appears to be the unwillingness of many African leaders to differentiate between colonial legacies in the region and the survival strategies

¹ Quoted in *Africa Research Bulletin*, Vol. 37, No. 6, 2000, p. 13997C.

² *The Star* (Johannesburg), 27 May 2000.

³ *Africa Research Bulletin*, Vol. 37, No. 8, 2000, p. 14066A.

of corrupt and undemocratic autocrats. The vagaries of post-colonial politics and the tenuous grip most African elites have on any real sort of legitimacy means that camouflage and cover must be sought to grant their positions any sort of validity, however spurious. Appeals to “the colonial legacy”—even forty years after independence for many countries—seem to be thought by such elites as providing this. When African leaders have shown any concern over Zimbabwe, it is over the fear that the spillover effect from the crisis would affect the entire region. In essence, whether a colleague was suppressing democracy, encouraging lawlessness and openly stimulating racism against southern African citizens was not an issue *per se*. It only became an issue when such activities impacted negatively on the region's economies and everything else can be bracketed as the “residue of colonialism”. Yet, what African leaders do is crucial. Only strong, clear-headed African leadership can create the right conditions for a constructive process contributing to the rebuilding of Africa and an escape from the developmental impasse it has fallen into. In the case of Zimbabwe, Mugabe has delighted in snubbing extra-African initiatives (thus playing up his Africanist credentials as an African ‘standing up’ to the colonials), but has tended to be more receptive to African input. If African leaders had used their leverage more constructively it is possible that the situation in Zimbabwe might not have deteriorated so badly.

AFRICA'S RESPONSE

Unfortunately, Zimbabwe was in many ways the test case for evaluating the credibility of NEPAD and a clear opportunity for African leaders to signal that they had changed their ways. It is quite clear that this has not happened and NEPAD's trustworthiness lies in tatters. In fact, incredibly but not surprisingly, African elites fell over themselves in talking up the legitimacy of the elections. An observer team from the OAU said the elections were ‘transparent, credible, free and fair’,¹ whilst Nigerian observers in Zimbabwe endorsed Mugabe's victory, saying it had ‘recorded no incidence that was sufficient to threaten the integrity and outcome of the election’.² The noted democrat, Daniel arap Moi of Kenya rushed to ‘convey to your excellency and dear brother congratulations and best wishes on your re-election’,³ whilst Tanzania's Benjamin Mkapa asserted that Mugabe was ‘a champion of democracy’ and ‘it was up to the people of Zimbabwe to decide who should lead them, and the people of Zimbabwe have now spoken loudly and clearly’.⁴ For its part, SADC ‘endorses the position taken by the SADC ministerial task force on Zimbabwe that the elections were substantially free and fair’, Bakili Muluzi of Malawi—who currently holds

¹ *The Daily News* (Harare), March 15, 2002

² *The Guardian* (Manchester), March 14, 2002.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

SADC's rotating presidency—was quoted as saying.¹ Putting in their penny's worth, the South African observer team blamed the long lines of voters unable to vote despite waiting many hours on 'administrative oversights', drawing audible laughter from journalists and diplomats attending their press conference in Harare.² This should not be overly surprising, bearing in mind that one of the South African observers had previously told the *Washington Post* that 'I don't want to see Mugabe lose this election. He is still a hero to many of us'.³ No wonder that one Zimbabwean newspaper stated that the South African "observers" were 'next to useless'.⁴

For his part, Mbeki stated that South Africa would help Zimbabwe, regardless of the outcome of the presidential election. The ANC later asserted that "the will of the people of Zimbabwe has prevailed", "those parties that participated in the elections need to be congratulated" and, ignoring the massive evidence of widespread and systemic violence and intimidation against the opposition in the country, that "the issue of *isolated violence* [emphasis added] in Zimbabwe could not and should not be used as a stumbling block in the elections process in the country".⁵ If Mbeki and the other proponents of NEPAD had been serious about encouraging an African Renaissance then surely their response to Mugabe's behaviour would have been different and signalled a brave commitment to NEPAD's principles. But as Tendai Biti, an MDC MP commented on elite-produced initiatives such as NEPAD:

... at the end of the day [they] became nothing but a boy's club of little tin-pot dictators justifying the negative views of the traditional Afro-pessimist... For as long as Africans do not insist on uniform international standards of respect for human rights, respect for national coffers, the sacrosanct nature of elections and a commitment towards the eradication of poverty, then the noble ideas and concepts of African unity will become a pipe dream.⁶

The Zimbabwe debacle and the response of African leaders to this simply feeds such pessimism or, as the *Daily News* in Harare put it, "where South African ministers assume the role of apologists for Mugabe's repression and delinquency they become part of the problem".⁷

Ironically, despite Mbeki's claims that NEPAD reflects 'the sovereign will of the people' and the "aspirations of the masses", the whole initiative was remarkable for its *lack* of consultation with civil society in Africa.⁸ If it were consulted, then irritating questions over the neo-liberal project of advancing a

¹ *The Star* (Johannesburg), March 16, 2002.

² *The Guardian* (Manchester), March 14, 2002.

³ *Washington Post* (Washington DC), March 12, 2002.

⁴ *The Daily News* (Harare), March 15, 2002.

⁵ "Zimbabwe Presidential Elections: Time for Healing!: Time for Reconstruction and Development", *The ANC Today: Online Voice of the African National Congress*, Vol. 2, No. 11, March 15–21, 2002, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/2002/at11.htm>

⁶ MDC document "Why the African Union Will Fail", (Harare) July 23, 2001.

⁷ *The Daily News* (Harare), March 15, 2002.

⁸ Quoted in *The Sowetan* (Johannesburg), July 24, 2001.

corporate-dominated world might have been raised. Consultation with civil society might also have produced a document with teeth that might rein in corrupt autocrats past their sell-by date. As it was such impulses were not consulted during NEPAD's formulation and the ordinary African was totally ignored in its drawing up. What the document was more about was trying to make sure that:

... South Africa's Thabo Mbeki, Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo and Algeria's Abdelaziz Bouteflika...[who] dominate Africa's continental club, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) [would be] taken seriously in Africa and in the West.¹

Post-elections, it is doubtful whether this will have the same credence. In a speech to a "Review Workshop" on NEPAD in January 2002, Mbeki boldly stated that:

... if we cannot unite through an initiative that can permanently reshape this continent and bring about sustained improvement in the lives of our people, then we would have lost an opportunity that will not arise for some time.²

The fatal undermining of NEPAD's credibility by inaction over Zimbabwe has, I think, produced this 'lost opportunity'. As John Makumbe, a respected professor of political science at the University of Zimbabwe said, the election was more than about

... just Zimbabwe's future. What's at stake here is whether Africa is willing and able to police itself and is able to show the world that it is able to take that step forward to democracy and stability, rather than remain mired in the muck of autocracy and stagnation.³

Unfortunately, the curse of "Afro-pessimism" has, I fear, received more ammunition due to the elites of Africa and their response to the Zimbabwe debacle. It is a most depressing scenario.

¹ Patrick Smith "Africa Lowers Its Handicap", in *The Economist: The World in 2000*, London: The Economist, 2000.

² Quoted in *Botswana Gazette* (Gaborone), January 25, 2002.

³ Quoted in *Washington Post* (Washington DC), March 12, 2002.

Beyond the Zimbabwean Mist: Challenges and Prospects for Democracy in Africa

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As usual the furore surrounding Zimbabwean election of 9th and 10th March 2002 has come and gone. This highly contested and inherently controversial election attracted enormous regional and international media attention, political opinions of governments inside and outside Africa as well as sanction actions by the EU and the United States. The Commonwealth followed the EU and USA example by suspending Zimbabwe from its ranks for one year. As happened during the 2000 parliamentary elections, the 2002 presidential election in Zimbabwe resulted in substantial loss of innocent lives, damaged property, heightened political tensions and deepened economic crisis not only for Zimbabwe but also for the rest of the Southern African sub-region.

The Zimbabwean election was both specific and typical. The 2000 and 2002 elections were specific because they manifested a very peculiar historical and political conjuncture of the Zimbabwean economy and society. Zimbabwe's is a society still bleeding from the history of a racial war that was followed by a short but bloody ethnic conflict. Zimbabwe's economy represents a classic example of a colonial racially based enclave economy. It is characterised by entrenched privilege and inequality of land and other productive assets. This type of economy has a tendency to produce tensions and stresses that lead to conflict under declining economic fortunes. The two Zimbabwean elections were, however, typical in that they manifested characteristics increasingly common in both African and many other elections in new democracies around the world. Controversy, conflict and political tensions between ruling and opposition parties are now increasingly common features of elections in countries as far apart as Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Peru, Thailand, and many more.

In Africa, the Zimbabwean elections were held in the shadow of ongoing electoral controversies in Madagascar and Zambia. In some SADC countries, including Malawi and Mozambique, Tanzania and Lesotho not to mention Angola, the courts are still seized up with election dispute cases dating back to 1997 and 1999.

Understood in this wider context, the Zimbabwean election provides lessons and pointers beyond Zimbabwe. This short essay is not intended to determine

¹ Opinions expressed are personal and based on experiences while working and living in Southern Africa. They do not reflect the official position of International IDEA.

whether or not Zimbabwe's presidential election was free and fair. This question has been extensively discussed by those closest to the events as they unfolded in Zimbabwe before and after the election. Suffice it to say that from the reports of different observer groups it is clear, that they did not use a common measure/ indicators to determine what constituted a free and fair election. This continues to be a major challenge to the whole process of election observation.

However, in this essay we focus on the lessons learned from Zimbabwe and discuss these within the broader context of opportunities and challenges for democracy development in Africa.

1. ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS—THE NARRATIVE OF ABSOLUTISM

Two opposing positions have dominated discussions about the Zimbabwean presidential election of March 2002. The first position propounded by the main opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was that President Mugabe stood no chance of returning to power under conditions of a free and fair election. This position based largely on the results of the 2000 parliamentary elections claimed that with conditions of near economic collapse, widespread shortages of food, continued state engineered conflict unleashed against the opposition combined with forced acquisition of white-owned farms, the ruling ZANU-PF had done enough to alienate the voters. According to the proponents of this line of argument President Mugabe had therefore no choice but to resort to cheating in order to retain power. The strategy was to use all forces—internal and external—to stop cheating but the election had to be held as per constitutional requirement.

In contrast to the first position the ruling ZANU-PF and its leader held that he and the party still enjoyed widespread public support from the Zimbabwean people. ZANU-PF claimed that their leader would win the election without having to resort to violence and cheating as alleged by the opposition and its internal and external allies. Battered and embarrassed by the unexpected loss of the results of the 1999 national referendum and the strong show by the opposition in the 2000 elections, ZANU-PF was determined to make use of everything at its disposal to win the 2002 presidential election. It too insisted on holding this election against all the odds in order as President Mugabe put it, to bury Tsvangirai and his MDC.

These two positions were held so rigidly that they clouded any serious political analysis and excluded any discussion of alternative strategies. Yet the question has to be asked. Was it that necessary to hold the presidential election under the prevailing conditions? Would postponement have avoided further bloodshed, destruction of property and a deepened economic crisis in Zimbabwe? Yet with each side determined to prove its point, ultimately at any cost, this election went ahead. This election was therefore fought on an undemocratic platform from the very beginning and both parties and their external supporters have to be blamed.

The results of the election were as controversial as the election campaign itself. The MDC leader and western observers declared the results null and void—a result of systematic cheating and manipulation—a confirmation that their strategy to stop cheating failed. The government on the other hand saw the results as a public declaration of support. The observers from Norway, the Commonwealth, the SADC Parliamentary Forum and national non-governmental monitors were conclusive in declaring the elections as lacking in freedom and fairness. The official SADC delegation and some individual government delegations such as that of the South African government were of the view that the results were a sufficient expression of the opinion of the people of Zimbabwe.

2. THE CASE OF A LOST OPPORTUNITY

The most recent Zimbabwean election represents a case of a lost opportunity. The opportunity to stop deterioration of the political situation in Zimbabwe has been lost at three levels. First by President Mugabe and his ruling ZANU-PF, second by the leadership of opposition parties—more specifically the MDC—and third the regional and international communities could have used the platforms at their disposal to delay the election and made Zimbabweans work together to create a more conducive atmosphere for the election to take place but failed to do this. All of these key players ignored the harsh experience of the 2000 elections in the country. In spite of the major political rifts that were obvious then they all pressed for an election in March 2002. It was clear that the presidential election held within a tense and conflict-ridden environment would lead to more loss of life, more damage to property and deepen further the economic crisis of Zimbabwe. Yet all the leaders and their international supporters insisted that this election had to take place. The tendency on the part of the international community to hold elections even under the most difficult conditions was resonant in the Zimbabwean case. Yet it is widely known from the years of UN operations around the world that elections held under uncongenial conditions are useless elections. In countries such as Cambodia such elections have achieved nothing but misery for ordinary people. Three distinct players could have saved the situation.

2.1 Failed Leadership—President Mugabe and His ZANU-PF

As an experienced leader and recognizing the difficult situation in which his country was, President Mugabe should have exercised responsible leadership. He should have consulted with the opposition leaders, parliament and all relevant stakeholders to postpone the elections by two years or so. He could have formed a government of national unity and created an atmosphere for reconstruction, reconciliation and better working relations between the political parties in the

country. This, President Mugabe could not do because he despised his opponents, wanted to prove his point and cared little about the jobs, welfare and security of the very people of Zimbabwe that he claims to have liberated and for whose benefit he claims to be acquiring land. Given this failed leadership it is hard to believe that President Mugabe is a leader who puts the interest of the people of Zimbabwe before his personal pride and desire for power. He took a brutalised and highly divided country to an election that by all predictions was bound to tear it further apart. The Zimbabwean President and his ZANU-PF chose to rely on anti-colonial rhetoric that served to worsen the economic situation of the country—the main victims of which are the people of Zimbabwe. In the end, the Zimbabwean election of 2002 brought neither peace and democracy nor economic opportunities to the masses of Zimbabwean workers and peasants of whom more than 1.1 million are currently facing starvation. President Mugabe and his party are not showing any evidence of the perceptive leadership required to bring this battered nation out of its deep political and economic crises.

2.2 Failed Leadership—MDC

After several years of failed leadership in Africa, those seeking power must show that they are better leaders. This is especially so if they claim to be more democratic than the incumbent regime. Unfortunately the experiences of the second generation of leaders in Southern Africa, such as Chiluba in Zambia, Mokhehle in Lesotho and Moluzi in Malawi have not proved any more democratic than the regimes they unseated in those countries. Morgan Tsvangirai and his MDC in Zimbabwe have done a lot which is to their credit and have exercised a lot of restraint when faced with violence and intimidation. However, they too could have done better than Mr. Mugabe and ZANU-PF. If they had called for a government of national unity just after the 2000 elections and not on the eve of voting for the presidential election maybe they would have made a difference. Instead the MDC insisted on holding the election in spite of the fact that conditions were clearly not congenial for a free and fair election. In fact, MDC was still conducting electoral cases from the 2000 elections and yet they found it easy to believe that this “do or die” election for President Mugabe would be free and fair. This was a political gamble that displayed lack of political maturity and conscientious leadership on the part of MDC too. MDC was also driven by the belief in their immediate objective—acquisition of power with much less concern about the consequences for the people of Zimbabwe.

2.3 Failed Regional and International Leadership

The position widely propounded by western media and bought by political leaders across Europe and the United States which literally advocated for

removal of President Mugabe from power was not a constructive one on the part of the leaders of the EU and USA. President Mugabe's government was projected as a 'sultanistic regime', that is one based on no ideology, or a leader's personal mission, or even charisma, but simply on raw power sustained by fear of punishment and hope of reward.¹ President Mugabe was a leader with freedom to exercise power without restraint, unencumbered by a commitment to law, ideology, or values. This western perception of Mr Mugabe himself and his government as a sultanistic regime coming as it did after more than 20 years of celebrating Zimbabwe under Mr. Mugabe and his party as one of the success stories of reconciliation and democracy and post-colonial economic showcases in Africa was unfortunate.² The decision of Europe and USA to take a position on the side of the main opposition failed them. They could not act decisively as far back as 2000. Even important platforms for constructive dialogue such as ACP-EU, the Commonwealth and some bilateral meetings with Zimbabwean delegations were not allowed to deliberate openly and democratically. There was just too much emphasis put on President Mugabe as a person and the belief that the Zimbabwean people did not desire his leadership any more.

Many African leaders in both SADC and across the continent on the other hand were broadly sympathetic to the ZANU PF and the Zimbabwean government position. First many African leaders refused to meet the leader of the opposition MDC Morgan Tsvangirai. A few who did were criticised for doing so. Second, there is no public evidence that African leaders who met President Mugabe and his ministers were critical enough of his approach to the worsening political situation in Zimbabwe. Third, some African leaders were outspoken in their opposition to the suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth at the Sydney Summit. Moreover, many African leaders were quick to send messages congratulating President Mugabe upon the announcement of the results. Interestingly, not many reacted the same way when Zambian election results were announced in late December 2001. This is yet another sign of failed collective leadership on the part of African leaders. It is argued that African leaders could have used the Zimbabwean situation as an opportunity to prove to the West that they were serious in their claims about good governance as stated in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). While I do not buy this approach, I nevertheless believe that particularly the SADC leaders could have been much more forthright and up-front in their rejection of the demagogic politics of President Mugabe.

¹ Chehabi, H.E. & Linz, J.J. (eds), *Sultanistic Regimes*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

² Different reports of the World Bank and the UNDP of the 1980s and early 1990s as well as those of bilateral donors were full of praise for the Zimbabwean government and its leadership until the land acquisition policy programme around 1998.

3. ZIMBABWE IN A BROADER CONTEXT

Several issues of importance need to be addressed in the context of the Zimbabwean election. Among these are the issues of the land question and economic development, the choice of political institutions in new democracies, questions of political culture and the role of the regional and international institutions in supporting democracy at national level. The following is a quick overview of some of the issues.

3.1 The Land Question as a Political Landmine in Southern Africa

As mentioned in the introduction Zimbabwe is an example of a post-colonial society that has still to resolve the unequal land distribution issue, itself a product of colonial political economy in that country. This is an issue that resonates in different degrees in the cases of South Africa and Namibia as well. The land question in these countries requires a carefully worked out strategy by all. Certainly the Mugabe government has, in the case of Zimbabwe, mishandled the land question very badly. Twenty years of independence have not seriously addressed this challenge. The Zimbabwean government took the position that this political issue could be resolved through an economic trickle-down strategy whereby the Government would buy the farms from the white owners and re-distribute them to the peasants. This piecemeal solution was only realistic when the economy was doing well and the government had enough revenue to pay the farm owners. When the economic fortunes changed drastically as they did in Zimbabwe in the late 1980s, there was bound to be frustration on the part of the government. This in fact was the genesis of the present conflict.

The drastic economic downturn meant that fewer jobs were created to absorb the growing labour force, the wages were stagnant, farm prices declined and more importantly the land reform programme stalled. It was at this point that trade unions, farmers, and a layer of former freedom fighters each became frustrated with the government performance and demanded their share of the increasingly limited cake.

Two lessons emerge from the above narrative. Firstly it underscores the general issue widely raised in the literature on democratisation in developing countries. This is the issue that democracy without sustainable economic development is very fragile. In these societies democracy has to fulfil two equally critical requirements—political liberation and associated freedoms and security on the one hand and social welfare of the majority of the impoverished population on the other. Both of these require the active role of the state.

Secondly, the land question in particular deserves more attention beyond the programmes of national government. SADC should consider establishing a land fund trust that will support land reform programmes in the region. This will raise funds and propose a programme of land re-distribution that is carried out

with individual governments but certain to reach the most needy part of the population. An ad hoc land commission might even be envisaged to take on this task.

3.2 A Need for Presidentialism?

A lot has been written and discussed about the choice of political institutions in new democracies. The Zimbabwean situation once again brought some of this debate to the fore. First the question of the type of electoral system remains to be reflected upon much more carefully. As Lesotho has now realised, the first past the post plurality system has serious flaws that can sometimes be devastating. While none of the electoral systems is perfect, some combinations of proportional representation and plurality systems tend to reduce the rift in the political system and thereby impose conditions for a coalition form of government. This is often good for societies emerging from protracted conflicts such as Zimbabwe and many others in Africa.

The second institution which must receive more attention now than previously is the institution of presidency. In the context of Zimbabwe, the country was basically subjected to three costly ‘elections’ in the space of three successive years. There was first the referendum in early 2000, then the parliamentary elections later that year and then the presidential election in 2002. From both technical and economic viewpoints this is a costly demand on the often limited resources. However, even more important is the question of the political impact of the one individual called president. Presidents in new democracies have served to undermine rather than promote democracy.

Presidentialism creates a “super-man” image of politics not conducive to a situation where democratic institutions are so fragile. The Zimbabwean people would have had a lot more peace and security if there had been no presidential election at all. Other countries in the region such as Botswana and South Africa have in fact retained the presidency without having to have the person directly elected by the population. This has its own limitations but is much better than a separate presidential election. Other countries such as Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia hold presidential elections on the same day as parliamentary elections. This is still better. However, the issue of presidentialism goes beyond problems of elections into more substantive issues of the powers and role of the president in democratic politics.

3.3 The Political Culture of Intolerance

Once again the Zimbabwean election displayed yet another global feature of a growing culture of intolerance. Although this feature cuts across new and old democracies alike and may take different forms such as denial of access to media, limiting meetings organised by opposition parties, and use of money and such

other privileges of incumbency, the situation in new democracies borders on hostility towards the opposition. The arrogance and belittling of political opponents create hate politics of the nature that results in accusations of treason and such other labelling as we have recently seen in Zimbabwe. Under these conditions, there is a natural tendency for the young party supporters from both sides to react violently thereby creating a political climate of intimidation and an unfair election.

Political parties have to be supported to work together. In some countries political parties have developed codes and standards of campaigns and also meet regularly to address issues of common concern. This approach provides them the opportunity for dialogue and intimacy required of democratic politics.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS

The Zimbabwean election has been yet another reminder to the international community that democracy is a long process full of pitfalls and setbacks. The human cost of these pitfalls and setbacks tends to go beyond national boundaries of individual countries. This is why regional and international institutions should play a much more constructive role in nurturing democratic developments in individual countries. Indeed, such support should not end with political independence but address deeper political and economic issues required for sustainable democracy. The timely intervention of the international community is also very important. Very often, the assistance comes too late and in a manner that addresses a complex situation at a superficial level. The Zimbabwean elections have shown the failures of the regional and international institutions in acting in a timely manner and constructively.

But the Zimbabwean elections have raised a lot of other issues of relevance to those seeking to support democracy abroad as well. The issues relate to the timing of elections, the appropriateness of certain political institutions and the political culture of intolerance that led to electoral conflict, mistrust and harassment of political opponents and their supporters. These are weighty issues deserving more research but also immediate action in order for democracy to take root. The need for dialogue between political parties in Zimbabwe and the role of the regional and international players in assisting this cannot be emphasised enough.

Zimbabwe after the Elections: A German View

Stefan Mair

Zimbabwe has voted or—to be more precise—Robert Mugabe has held elections on his own conditions to make sure that there could be only one winner. Mugabe's election victory suggests that Zimbabwe's economic decline will endure and that the government will intensify its attempts to smash the political opposition. This makes it even more important for the donors to maintain their pressure on the regime. However, exerting pressure will only become effective, if it is supported by important African governments. In particular, the donors should show clearly towards South Africa and Nigeria that a new partnership between Africa and Europe, which is demanded by South Africa and Nigeria, can only be successful if Africa accepts responsibility for the implementation of self-imposed objectives—democracy, rule of law, human rights.

Robert Mugabe has pursued his re-election with consistency, vehemence and unscrupulousness. There is hardly any doubt that the manipulations of the Zimbabwean regime have decisively influenced the election results. The government had endeavoured to effectively suppress any activities of the opposition in the rural areas for months. Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters were intimidated, beaten and killed, campaign rallies of the opposition party were prohibited, interrupted or disbanded. Non-governmental organisations were hindered from providing voters' training as well as from observing the election. A campaign of defamation was started against the opposition leader, which culminated in charging him with high treason. Wide areas of rural Zimbabwe were effectively cut off from the outside world with the support of war veterans and the youth militia loyal to the government. The war veterans and the militia have built an informal oppression and control apparatus, which left the local administration only with two options: to collaborate or to be deprived of power by force. Attempts to expand this parallel-regime to the cities in mid-2001 failed. The consequence of this failure was an intensification of rigging efforts in the urban areas on election day: manipulated voters' rolls, a reduction of polling stations by 40 per cent and procedural delay in the polling successfully reduced the voter turn-out in urban areas to far below the country's average. In view of the fact that the support for the opposition has been particularly high in the cities, the attempt to hinder the urban voters from voting was of central importance for the outcome of the election.

ZIMBABWE'S FUTURE

What are the consequences of the rigged election—nationally, regionally and internationally? It can hardly be expected that the frustration concerning the election result will induce the opposition supporters to start a campaign of civil disobedience or even to risk violent resistance. Various factors are against this: firstly, the opposition's reluctance to mobilise their supporters to unlawful actions, which then could be a pretext for massive, violent repression by the regime. First reactions by the opposition leadership after the elections suggest that it is determined to stay on the road of legality which has, long ago, been left by the government. If the opposition party opts for appealing to the courts as the main strategy to reverse the result of the presidential election, the opposition's supporters will effectively be discouraged from reacting spontaneously and decisively on the rigging. Secondly, the government has left no room for doubt that it is determined to smash any civil resistance quickly and with all means. Army units have already been deployed to all larger cities and the police proved their willingness before and after the elections to take forceful action against government opponents. Thirdly, the Zimbabwean people have often revealed over the last 20 years that, if the worst comes to the worst, they would rather take refuge in political apathy than risk open confrontation with the government. The experience of the decade of civil war before 1980 might have been crucial for the development of this conflict aversion.

Therefore it can be expected that the Mugabe regime will survive the next few critical weeks. Furthermore, the president is likely not to be satisfied with his victory, but will undertake further efforts to eradicate any opposition for years. The central place in his strategy is taken by the prosecution of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai and further leading opposition politicians for high treason. The pressure on opposition supporters in the rural areas will hardly diminish, war veterans and youth militia will consolidate their system of full-scale control. Within the opposition there will surely be a heated discussion about the suitable strategy for the future. There have already been demands in the past, not to focus on the polling stations to oust the government from power but to take the issue to the streets, accepting the risk of violent escalation. These voices will become louder as the option of taking on the government in the polling stations will not be available for the next three years. The discussion on the right strategy has the capacity to divide the opposition party as well as the civil society groups, which are anyway distinguished by a large political heterogeneity. The aim to get rid of Mugabe has kept them united so far. As this aim is fading rapidly out of sight, the centrifugal forces might win dynamics. This has already been the case in a couple of other African countries.

But even if Mugabe managed to fragment the opposition, his election victory would still be a pyrrhic victory only delaying his parting from power. The price of the victory was extraordinarily high—paid for by the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy, by the destruction of the relationship with the donor community and by the establishment of repression and control structures parallel

to state administration. All this cannot be overcome in the near future. The occupation of large-scale farms owned by the European minority will largely lower the agriculture productivity and the export capacity for the next five to ten years. Even food security will be jeopardised for several years. Mugabe's victory will increase the exodus of the white Zimbabweans and the well-trained African Zimbabweans as well as increasing the flight of capital. The government's efforts towards the restoration of state control over the economy will not be suitable to make Zimbabwe's economy grow again and to create employment. The donors will not again enter into development co-operation of the former extent, the physical and, during the last few years, heavily damaged social infrastructure will therefore deteriorate further. War veterans and youth militia will increasingly use their repression and control apparatus for self-enrichment and the plundering of rural areas. Any state and local development efforts will be discouraged by that. The Mugabe regime will have fewer and fewer resources at its disposal to reward its political following and tie militant groups to it. Once the last hectare of the last large-scale farm has been resettled, it will become apparent that "just" allocation of land is not the sole pre-condition for socio-economic development—particularly as the Zimbabwean state no longer has the financial means to make the cultivation of the redistributed land productive. It is conceivable that the frustration and aggression of the war veterans and youth militia will then be turned against the regime. Furthermore, Mugabe's position could be undermined in future by growing resistance within the ruling party. In recent years, the resentment at the absoluteness of Mugabe's claim to power has grown. Some dissidents within the party have tacitly hoped for the opposition's victory and, therefore, have not yet risked open confrontation. This could change in future. If the dissidents find support among dissatisfied military officers a military coup cannot be ruled out completely.

The debate which has been forced on the opposition from outside about forming a government of national unity together with the present regime is hardly suited to solving the country's political, economic and social problems. Such an arrangement would only be acceptable if Mugabe agreed to restrict his role to a ceremonial presidency and to hand over the leadership of the government to a prime minister from the opposition. A government of national unity should see its main tasks as resolving the land question, restoring the rule of law, disbanding the war veterans and youth militia as well as organising early presidential and parliamentary elections. Irrespective of the fact that such an arrangement requires a comprehensive constitutional amendment, there have been no signs at all that Mugabe would accept such a solution.

CONCLUSIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICIES

Mugabe's election victory has placed the neighbouring countries in an unpleasant situation. Up to the election they could refuse to make a re-assessment of their attitude to the regime by emphasising that the creation of an enabling

environment for peaceful elections was their first neighbourly duty. According to Western judgement they can hardly close their eyes now to the fact that Mugabe's election victory rests on manipulation and repression. However, the tenor of the statements of the OAU and SADC election observers was that though the elections were not perfect they were free and fair enough to reflect the people's will. It was the Commonwealth observer-group's dissenting statement which in the end forced the South African and Nigerian presidents to take harsher action against their Zimbabwean colleague than they had ever been willing to do by suspending the country from the Commonwealth for one year. Some African governments are presently urging the Zimbabwean conflicting parties to form a government of national unity. It is hardly to be expected that Mugabe will become involved in an arrangement acceptable to the opposition (see above), if this urging is not backed by political and economic pressure. Without pressure from Africa Mugabe will continue his present policy which is a blatant violation of values and rules laid down in the SADC-treaty and the NEPAD-document (New Partnership for Africa's Development). His policy not only damages the credibility of the efforts of African leaders to begin a new partnership with the donor community based on common political values but will have tremendously negative effects on the regional economy of Southern Africa.

Both make a determined position of Europe and the US towards the Zimbabwean government inevitable. To pursue a policy of short-memory—that is the resumption of comprehensive development co-operation after a brief period of shame as a reaction to the first signals of the Zimbabwean government returning to a policy of economic structural adjustment—would be disastrous. This, for Zimbabwe, would be synonymous with a prolongation of the agony. On the other hand, a political shock-therapy—that is encouraging the opposition to overthrow the regime by decisive mass action—cannot be an option for the donor community. Because of that, there is hardly any alternative to the continuation and improvement of the present policy. That means:

- Continuation of “smart sanctions” and, simultaneously, enlargement of their target group. This could spur persons in the second line of the ruling party on to more determined resistance against Mugabe.
- Maintenance and intensification of support for the opposition and the civil society. In the case of Germany, this means increased direct support for the political foundations' work in Zimbabwe.
- Efforts to strengthen the coherence of the position of the EU-member states and the US toward Zimbabwe. France and Belgium, in particular, should be encouraged to follow the same line as their EU-partners. In exchange, the EU should increasingly commit itself to contribute to the resolution of the Congo conflict.

But the key to changing the situation in Zimbabwe to the better is with the regional and continental actors. The EU respectively the G8-states should stress

with vigour that there is no basis for a special and intensified relationship between EU and SADC as well as for substantial support of NEPAD by the G8 if the signatory states of the SADC-treaty and the initiators of NEPAD abandon their duty to ensure the respect for human rights and the rule of law as well as to protect democratic standards, as stated in these documents. Such an approach can, however, only be credible if the donor community dissociates itself from its policy of double standards. That means, without a willingness to apply the same political standards to any regime in Africa—be it of greater strategic importance than Zimbabwe or more sympathetic to European or American policy objectives than Mugabe—such an approach will fail. Especially the close co-operation of the US and some European countries with Uganda and Rwanda, both waging war in a neighbouring country, plundering and violating human rights there, gives the impression in Africa that the donors' policy towards the continent is at least cynical. The perception that Zimbabwe only receives special attention from the US and Europe because it harbours a substantial European minority and because Mugabe does not let pass any chance to annoy and upset the donor community bears the potential for a deep-rooted and sustained alienation between African and European governments.