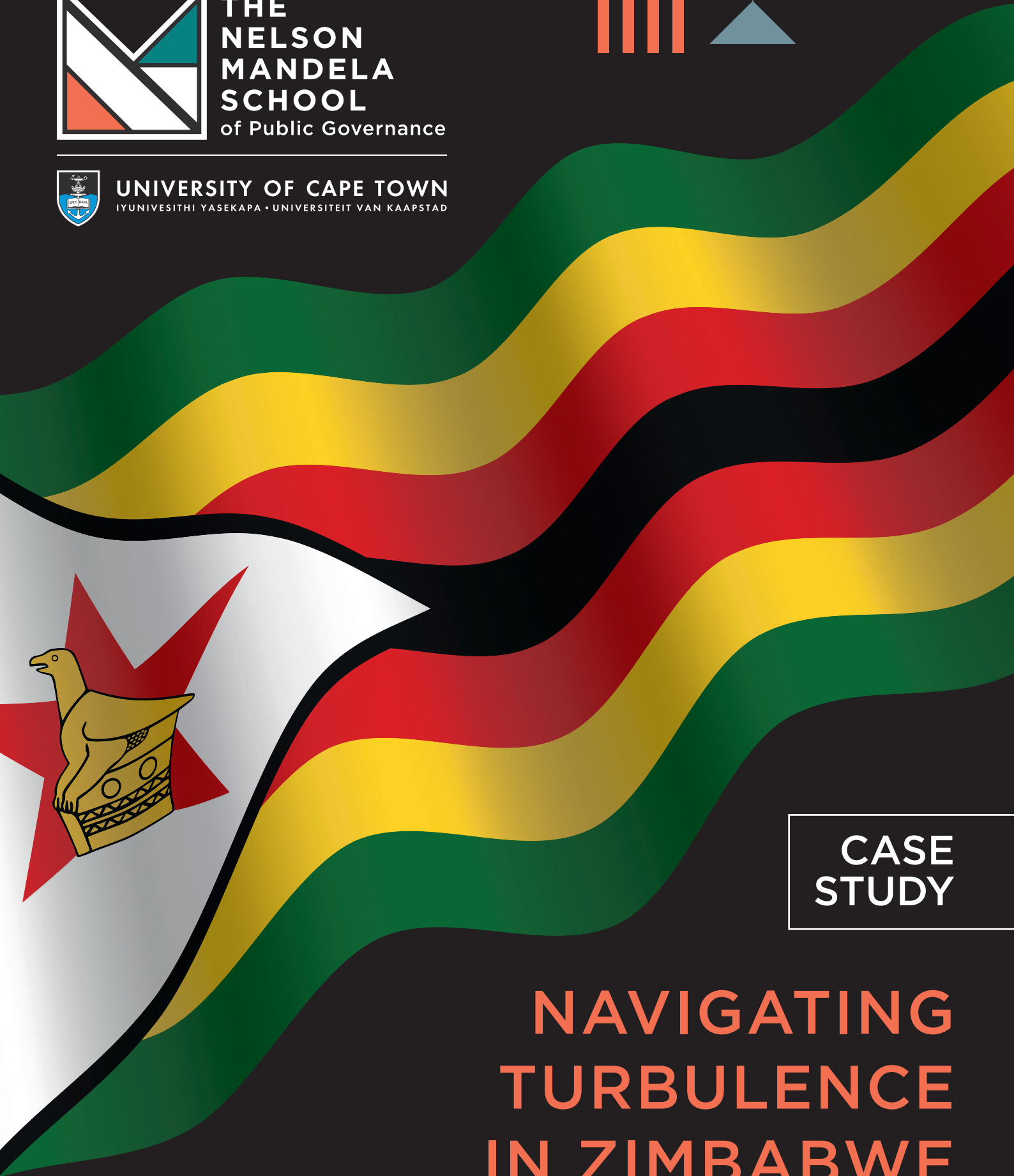




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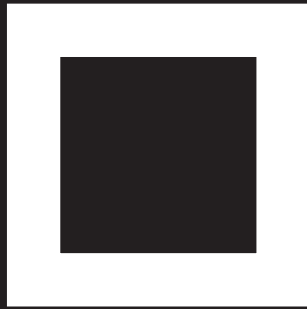


**CASE
STUDY**

NAVIGATING TURBULENCE IN ZIMBABWE

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Contents

Introduction.....	2
1. 1980-2000: From reconciliation politics and international re-engagement to growing authoritarian nationalism	5
Economic liberalisation in the 1990s	8
The Fast Track Land Reform process in the 2000s.....	10
2. 2000 - the eve of the November 2017 coup.....	11
The Global Political Agreement period, 2009-2013.....	15
Post-GPA: Prelude to the 2017 coup.....	18
3. The November 2017 coup and the fall of Robert Mugabe	23
The SADC, the AU and the international forces	27
Mnangagwa’s attempt at renewal: The transition national economy November 2017-July 2018.....	28
The July 2018 elections and their aftermath.....	30
Post-2018 economic and political policies: Austerity, repression and dialogue	31
Finding a way forward	35
References	38



Introduction

In assessing the critical junctures in interactions between governance and development over the post-colonial period in Zimbabwe, this chapter addresses the conjunctural moments when alternative routes to political and economic development may have been pursued. Firstly, it provides a broad overview of the challenges between the inception of independence in 1980 and the fall of the iconic nationalist figure Robert Mugabe in 2017. Secondly, it undertakes a more in-depth analysis of the challenges and opportunities that followed the coup against Mugabe in 2017 and the aftermath of that event.

In addressing the challenges around governance and development, the interaction of political dynamics at international, regional and national levels are examined in different historical periods in order to better understand both the limits of possibility at any given historical moment and the pressures for change. These pressures, as Raymond Williams articulated them, are not only those from emergent social forces and their 'unrealised intentions and demands', but also derive from 'the formation and momentum of a given social mode: in effect the compulsion to act in ways that maintain and renew it'.¹ Moreover, the periods of crisis that various societies undergo should also be viewed as opportunities for reconstruction in which the 'destructive and the reconstructive moments are part of a single process of social transformation'.²

All states have their specific historic and national conditions of formation. As Stuart Hall, drawing on Gramscian theory, set out in his critique of Thatcherism, understanding the particularities of each state provides the basis for assessing the central aspects of state rule. These include the forms in which political

forces are organised and represented, the ways in which the terrain of struggle is constituted, and understanding where the 'strategic points of application are likely to arise'.³

In understanding the forms in which state and broader societal politics emerged in Zimbabwe, it is important to examine several aspects of the country's state formation. First, as Dorman and several other analysts have pointed out, the power and stability of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) regime, or lack thereof, has drawn on three sources of power: material benefits or interests, coercive force and discursive strategies.⁴ This combination of political patronage and coercion has persistently moved towards an increasing reliance on the latter. Second, there has been a rapid erosion of state structures from powerful, centralised bureaucratic structures inherited from the settler colonial period, to state-party structures that took the form of increasingly militarised and 'informalised' forms of rule. This transition was characterised by a deliberate, but contested, de-professionalisation of the public service.⁵

Third, the structural changes in state institutions have created a complicated relationship between formality and informality in governance. Although formal state institutions have been weakened, it cannot be assumed that total disorder has followed. A good deal of recent studies of the Zimbabwean state have examined the different ways in which formal central state institutions have produced 'informality' and 'disorder' as the 'expression of a permissive form of central statecraft',⁶ at both the national and local government levels. This analysis connects with broader findings on the African continent showing that 'formal institutions have not just co-existed with

1 Williams, 1977, p. 87

2 Hall, 1988, p. 104

3 p. 129

4 Dorman, 2016, p. 4; Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009; Moore, 2014

5 Alexander, 2013

6 McGregor & Chatiza, 2019



informal institutions but have also shaped and in some cases strengthened them'.⁷

Fourth, it is important to locate the post-colonial state violence in Zimbabwe within a longer global history of violence and accumulation in the emergence of capitalism. This is not to provide an apology for the violence of the Zimbabwean state, but to place it within the broader challenges of attempting, in David Moore's words, 'to establish a viable structure of accumulation and legitimacy' in which to untie the Gordian Knot of human rights and political economy.⁸ Within the context of this conundrum, the state becomes the centre of the struggle for accumulation given the diminished private sector, which was historically dominated by a racial elite. Unable to develop a productive and sustainable capital accumulation project, the ruling elite have adopted monopoly control of state resources and public sector employment, which has led to increased violence, corruption, patronage and a lack of accountability in the use of public resources.⁹

For the purpose of this discussion, the paper will be divided into three time periods. The first will cover the period from the date of independence in 1980 to 2000. Much of the 1980s was characterised by a mixture of racial reconciliation politics, international re-engagement, ethnic hostility between the two major parties of liberation, and major inroads into social expenditure. It was also widely perceived that the new government had inherited one of the strongest economies in sub-Saharan Africa, with a good industrial base that was strongly linked to both the agricultural and mining sectors. By 2000, the introduction of the economic liberalisation programme in the early 1990s had begun to take its toll, and the year marked a major turning point in the political and economic upheaval. The second section covers the years 2000-2017, during which massive reconfigurations of the structural inequality inherited from the colonial period marked the political, economic and social terrain of the Zimbabwean polity. During this

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period, new forces and dynamics emerged in Zimbabwe's politics: the emergence of a major opposition political force, the launch of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, violence over a series of national and presidential elections, the temporary reprieve of the period of the Government of National Unity (GNU), and the fall of Robert Mugabe in 2017. The final section covers the period of the November 2017 coup and its aftermath.

At the time of publication, a series of important developments have taken place, shifting the power dynamics within the ruling Zanu-PF, the opposition parties and civil society. In May 2021, Constitution Amendment No.2 was published as an Act. Section 186 of the Constitution as originally enacted, stipulates that all judges must retire when they turn 70. The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 2) changed section 186 by providing for Presidential discretion and satisfaction in determining whether judges who turned 70 could continue their service as judges of the Constitutional Court and Supreme Court for up to five years¹⁰. The Amendment threatens judicial independence by centralising power in the presidency to appoint the Chief Justice, the Deputy Chief Justice, and the Judge President of the High Court and all other judges.

⁷ Cheeseman, 2018, p. 3

⁸ Moore, 2014, p. 205; Moore, 2012; Moore, 2015; Moore, 2016

⁹ Dashwood, 2000; Cheeseman, 2015

¹⁰ Veritas (2021)



The current regime is setting its game strategy to influence the outcome of the elections by increasing President Mnangagwa’s power and influence over key arms of government. This includes the Parliament of Zimbabwe, where MDC Alliance members were recalled to pave the way for the Amendment(s) to sail through.

According to Veritas (2021):

“It had become apparent during the Bill’s fast-tracked passage through Parliament that the Government was determined it should become law before Chief Justice Malaba’s imminent 70th birthday on Saturday 15th May, when he was required by law to retire. This was confirmed when it became known that the President’s Office had sent a letter dated 11th May to Chief Justice Malaba informing him that the President had accepted his election to serve until he turned 75 and the medical certificate he had submitted.”

The controversial Amendment was resisted by a consortium of civil society organisations who organised the Constitutional Rally; an online gathering of activists, lawyers, academics and citizens to oppose the move to increase presidential powers. Subsequently, the Young Lawyers of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum filed separate applications in the High Court challenging Justice Malaba’s term extension. The Minister of Justice, the Judicial Service Commission, the Attorney-General and all the judges of the Constitutional and Supreme Courts were cited as respondents in the applications. The

court ruled in favour of the applications and in response, the Minister of Justice denounced the judgment before submitting an appeal to the Supreme Court. This has led to a constitutional crisis since judges cited in the original applications, cannot preside over the same matter in the Supreme Court.

Former Zanu-PF Minister and well-known “spin-doctor”, Prof Jonathan Moyo, provided a nuanced analysis of the Constitutional Amendments. In an interview with Sapes Trust, he noted the role of the amendments in increasing presidential powers ahead of the 2023 elections. He argues that the current regime is setting its game strategy to influence the outcome of the elections by increasing President Mnangagwa’s power and influence over key arms of government. This includes the Parliament of Zimbabwe, where MDC Alliance members were recalled to pave the way for the Amendment(s) to sail through. The recall of MDC Alliance parliamentarians was preceded by the March 31st Supreme Court ruling that sought to “demobilize” the opposition and “depoliticise” the arena of contestation by empowering the Thokozani Khupe-led MDC T¹¹.

The Patriotic Bill seeks to further limit political and civic participation by outlawing any critique of the state, its policies and public actors. In her analysis, Ngwenya¹² observes that the Bill aims, “to promote and guard the country’s national interests through criminalising acts that campaign against Zimbabwe, including—but not limited to—private correspondence with foreign governments or any officer or agent thereof, false statements influencing foreign governments, or any other such conduct aimed at undermining the country.”

This paper does not provide a detailed analysis of these recent events.

¹¹ Moyo (2021)

¹² Ngwenya (2021)



1. 1980-2000: From reconciliation politics and international re-engagement to growing authoritarian nationalism

The raising of the flag of independence in Zimbabwe in 1980 marked the end of a long anti-colonial struggle that took the form of a war of liberation in the 1970s. In 1979, the Lancaster House Agreement between the Smith Regime and the forces of liberation – which was mediated by the former colonial power Britain with the strategic assistance of the Front-Line States, apartheid South Africa and the United States – set in place a particular balance of forces. According to one of the early analysts of this period, Ibbo Mandaza, the ‘post-white settler colonial state was characterised by the combination of the economic and state legacies of settler colonialism, and the renewed influence of international financial forces’.¹³

Given the constraints of the Lancaster House Agreement, which centrally sought to protect the status of the economically privileged white elite, the major challenge for the new Zanu-PF government was to create a new policy of reconstruction and development within the existing economic and social structures, ‘funded by private sector expansion and donor support’.¹⁴ The radical socialist promises of the liberation movement, which were largely a strategic discursive tool of the nationalist parties during the period of the Cold War, were

very quickly set aside. The government did implement large social policy initiatives in the fields of education, health, social protection and food security in line with its first economic policy document, Growth with Equity. However, the terms of the Lancaster House Agreement, combined with the legacies of the racially skewed economic structures, entrenched neo-liberal economic management methods¹⁵ in the first decade of independence.

In 1980, the government of Zimbabwe was largely ‘under-borrowed’¹⁶ and as previously noted, government expenditure was funded mainly through local resources, from mining and agriculture, and debt.¹⁷ Donor funding never reached the sum of US\$2.2 billion promised at the 1981 donors conference in Harare. ‘Because of the Cold War and other geo-political calculi’, only piecemeal payments were made.¹⁸ In the case of the US, criticism of ‘Mugabe’s one party Marxist system’ from key US policymakers resulted in the US approving only US\$40 million in 1984 of the US\$225 million pledged in 1981.¹⁹ It is reported that by the end of 1984, only one-fifth of the pledged amount had been disbursed.²⁰

ESAP provided access to external support such

13 Mandaza, 1986, p. 15

14 Saunders, 2019, p. 3; Dashwood, 2000, p. 24

15 Nyamunda & Sibanda, 2020

16 External debt-to-GDP increased from 10.4% in 1980 (10% in 1981) to 14.2% in 1982, 18.4% in 1983, 23.8% in 1984, 31.8% in 1985, 33.2% in 1986, 36.2% in 1987, falling to 29.3% in 1988, 28.2% in 1989, before rising marginally to 28.9% in 1990 (Dansereau, 2000).

17 Heavy commercial borrowing in the 1981-83 period resulted in Zimbabwe’s debt being badly structured, with excessive reliance on debt on relatively hard terms (World Bank, 1985).

18 Mate, 2018, p. 8

19 Scarnecchia, 2011

20 World Bank, 1985



Two central challenges in overcoming the limits of this inherited economic structure were land reform and the building of a new black business class. In 1980, the new Zanu-PF government inherited a highly unequal land ownership structure where 6 000 white farmers owned 42% of the land. Under the willing-buyer-willing seller, market-led land reform programme agreed at Lancaster House in 1979, the new government announced in 1982 that 162 000 families would be resettled. By the end of the 1980s only 52 000 families had been resettled with 2 713.725 hectares bought for resettlement.

that while the World Bank had only committed US\$3.9 million from FY52 to FY80, after independence, lending commitments increased from US\$672 million in FY81-90, to US\$888 million in FY91-00. As the country became eligible for the International Development Association (IDA) in August 1991, lending on concessional terms increased from 5% in 1952-89 to 62% in 1990-2000. However, there was to be no new lending from September 1999, and disbursements to Zimbabwe were suspended on 15 May 2000 as a result of overdue service payments.²¹

With the fall in market prices in minerals in the 1980s and the droughts in 1982 and 1984, the local revenue sources of the state diminished and the government's budget deficit grew, resulting in loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1981 and 1983.²² As Saunders observes, during this period, 'mining loomed large as both opportunity and challenge in state efforts to mobilise new revenue for development'. As opportunity, mining held the potential for 'growing foreign exchange earnings, employment levels, the skills base and intersectoral linkages'. In terms of challenges, the combination of foreign ownership dominance, dependence on international commodity markets and a 'deteriorating production environment'²³ contributed to the sector's instability.

Zimbabwe's external debt reached US\$3.4 billion by 1990, 28.9% of GDP.²⁴ Between 1980 and 1990, mining employment and production fell by 22% and 18%, respectively, while the manufacturing sector also contracted over this period. As a result, the export-led growth model, combined with the remains of the import substitution industrialisation model inherited from the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) period, were showing signs of their limitations.

Two central challenges in overcoming the limits of this inherited economic structure were land reform and the building of a new black business class. In 1980, the new Zanu-PF government inherited a highly unequal land ownership structure where 6 000 white farmers owned 42% of the land.²⁵ Under the willing-buyer-willing seller, market-led land reform programme agreed at Lancaster House in 1979, the new government announced in 1982 that 162 000 families would be resettled. By the end of the 1980s only 52 000 families had been resettled with 2 713.725 hectares bought for resettlement. This represented only 16% of land owned by white farmers in 1980.²⁶ During this period, the land reform was less focused

21 World Bank, 2004
22 Dansereau, 2000
23 Saunders, 2017, pp. 11-12
24 Bracking & Sachikonye, 2009
25 Palmer, 1990
26 Palmer, 1990



on radical redistribution and poverty alleviation than on following the 'developmental logic of ensuring productivity for domestic and foreign markets'.²⁷

Regarding the building of a post-independence black business class, Thandika Mkandawire provides a good description of the challenges:

*Settler capitalism in Zimbabwe was singularly parochial and narrow-minded. It persisted even after independence, with the laager mentality of settler capitalism. This mentality did not facilitate linkages with, let alone nurturing, a new black bourgeoisie. Even after Zimbabwean liberalisation, the financial sector was reluctant to lend to black business.*²⁸

The new government was also averse to the development of a new independent black business class that was independent of its patronage.²⁹ Therefore, in an attempt to address this weakness while also controlling the emergence of any new business class, the government maintained control over the existing parastatal sector, while further expanding this sector in the following decades. This area of public expenditure would prove to be both a major budgetary problem and a source of corruption.

For much of the 1980s, Mugabe's government allowed the economy to remain largely in the hands of white minority owners, while the ruling party consolidated its control of the state at the central and local government levels. They accomplished this through the control of traditional structures in the rural areas, in many areas continuing and replicating the controls of the Smith regime.³⁰ As part of this state consolidation, the ruling party violently controlled any major opposition forces, such as the competing party of liberation ZAPU. In the initial post-1980 period, there was an alliance between the major liberation parties, Zanu-PF and PF Zapu, in government. This pact

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fell apart in the context of the Gukurahundi massacres in the provinces of Matabeleland and the Midlands in the early 1980s.³¹

As part of Zanu-PF's post-independence hegemonic strategy, the role of civil society in the early 1980s was also constrained. Most NGOs viewed their role as largely complementing interventions of the state and in the process, tried to maintain a non-antagonistic relationship.³² With regard to a potentially strong labour movement, the state developed two major strategies. Firstly, the introduction of new legislation to improve the conditions and establish the rights and responsibilities of workers. Secondly, the establishment of a new labour centre, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), under the control of the ruling party.

For much of the 1980s these strategies managed to keep a large portion of the civic sphere close to the state. However, the emergence of more autonomous voices and processes in the ZCTU from the mid-1980s, followed by student protests against growing state corruption and an attempt to impose a one-party state in the late 1980s, heralded the emergence of a more active and critical civic

27 Dorman, 2016, p. 47

28 Mkandawire, 2019

29 Raftopoulos & Compagnon, 2003

30 Karekwaivanane, 2017

31 Eppel, 2004

32 Raftopoulos, 2000, p. 29



space that would grow exponentially in the 1990s. These critical interventions were built on the foundation of the trade union structures that had been built during the colonial period, developed a critical relationship with nationalist politics, and contributed to an alternative political narrative in the post-colonial period. As the inclusive narrative of developmentalism that had constituted the unifying politics of the state for much of the 1980s³³ began to crumble, alternative post-colonial political voices began to emerge.

Economic liberalisation in the 1990s

Despite the growing economic problems in the country, when the government adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in the early 1990s, it was still in a stronger position than most other African countries. This was because Zimbabwe still had a diversified economy, in which the contribution of manufacturing value added was the second largest in Africa. The comparatively better management of its debt, in addition to its stronger trading position, meant that Zimbabwe was in a slightly better position to face the global economic crisis of the late-80s. As a result, as Dashwood argues, rather than the government just being pushed into market-based reforms by the international financial institutions (IFIs), 'what emerged was a coincidence of views between the government and the World Bank' aimed at promoting faster economic growth through increased commodity exports and a more competitive manufacturing sector.³⁴

Central to the IMF conditionality were policies such as the removal of the exchange controls that had been part of the monetary policy adopted by the Smith regime. Smith's policies had been designed to retain control of the use of foreign exchange and the use of tariffs as a means of protecting local industry. In

terms of domestic resource mobilisation, the government, backed by major business groups and donors, pushed for larger incentives for the private sector, such as the removal of import duties and sales tax on capital goods.³⁵ In addition, the IMF conditions called for major restraint on state social expenditure, much to the chagrin of the labour movement and many civil society organisations.

By the mid-1990s the negative effects of the liberalisation policy were already apparent. Real wages had declined from an index of 122 in 1982 to 67 in 1994, while the share of wages in the gross national income fell from 54% in 1987 to 39% in 1997. In contrast, the share of profits increased from 47% to 63% in the same period. Employment declined from an annual average growth of 2.4% in the period 1985-1990 to 1.55% in 1991-1997.³⁶ The 1990s also witnessed the increase in levels of poverty due to a combination of deindustrialisation; the removal of subsidies in health, education, agriculture and food; and the effects of droughts in 1990/91 and 1994/95.³⁷ Moreover, a study comparing wages in the public and private sector for similar tasks contributed to the movement for adjustment of wages and public sector strike actions.³⁸

By the late 1990s, two policy decisions by the ruling party plunged the economy into further crisis conditions. The granting of unbudgeted pensions to war veterans in 1997, after long-held tensions between war veterans and the ruling elite since the 1980s, resulted in a major currency crash in November 1997. This act of fiscal indiscipline was further compounded by Mugabe's decision to enter the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 1998 in support of Laurent Kabila. This decision would later prove to have been an opportunity for sections of the military elite to engage in predatory acts of enrichment around the mineral resources in the DRC. By the end of the decade, relations between the Mugabe government and donors had deteriorated severely, resulting

33 Dorman, 2016, p. 45

34 Dashwood, 2000, pp. 64-65

35 Saunders, 2019, p. 13

36 Kanyenze, 2000; Bond & Manyanya, 2003

37 Mate, 2018, p. 17

38 Knight, 1997



in 'neither resources nor comprehensive responses to deepening poverty'.³⁹

On the land question, the period 1992-99 was characterised by the beginning of the challenge to the market-based policy of land reform in the context of growing economic crisis.⁴⁰ The passing of the Land Acquisition Act in 1992 allowed the government to designate land for acquisition that was not fully utilised, owned by absentee landowners, or held for speculative purposes. In November of that year, 1 471 farms were gazetted for compulsory acquisition under the new act. However, the commercial farmers challenged this action in the courts and in the end only 109 of the 1 471 farms designated were obtained by the state.

Despite this more radical move on land reform in 1997, by the end of the 1990s commercial farmland had only been reduced by about 150 000 hectares. Most of the land transfers that took place in the period of liberalisation occurred in the form of the transfer of land from individual to company ownership amongst white commercial companies. This was largely because government agricultural policy in this period allowed 'tax regimes and investment incentives to carry on despite their obvious benefit to white farmers and their enterprises'. Several analysts surmise that the reason for this policy was the continued influence of the Commercial Farmers Union on government policy, at least until the mid-1990s. However, more importantly, these policies were maintained because by 1990 there were at least 500 black commercial farmers, many of whom were 'connected to the state and benefitting from forms of political patronage', who were also able to benefit from these policies.⁴¹

Additionally, in 1998 there was a donor-backed proposal from the government, which could have provided a good opportunity to avoid the chaos that accompanied the land occupations in 2000. An agreement was reached on a resettlement model based on the background and technical knowledge of those farmers targeted for resettlement. Various technical

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processes were set out as a premise of large-scale small farmer resettlement. However, this initiative came to a halt in 1999 in the aftermath of inflammatory political statements from senior government ministers on compulsory land acquisition, which pushed the diplomatic and aid community to back off from the initiative. With the British government's reluctance to fund large-scale land acquisition, combined with lobbying by white commercial farmers against the government statements, the momentum on this process was lost.⁴²

In the midst of this growing economic crisis, the 1990s saw the emergence of labour unions, student and human rights organisations, women's rights groups and professional associations, which challenged repressive legislation that limited freedoms of association, assembly and expression.⁴³ Growing discontent amongst Zimbabweans as a result of economic mismanagement and the impact of the structural adjustment programmes culminated

39 Mate, 2018, p. 16

40 Moyo & Yeros, 2005, p. 183

41 Pilosof, 2016, p. 45; Alexander, 2006

42 Chaumba et al., 2003

43 Sachikonye, 2017; Aeby, 2016



The language and politics of development and unity that Mugabe's government set out in the 1980s and much of the 1990s moved towards a growing rupture between the discourses of radical redistribution and human/civic rights.

in calls for constitutional reform. The late 1990s saw the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The NCA was formed out of a broad coalition of trade unions, opposition parties, student groups, women's organisations, representatives of the informal sector and church groups to campaign for a new constitution in 1998. The MDC emerged from the resolutions of the National Working People's Convention in February 1999, organised by the ZCTU, NCA and 40 other civil society groups. During the convention, the groups agreed to form a broad-based political movement for change.

Trade unions and civic groups, predominantly urban-based, faced major violence and repression by state security.⁴⁴ The widespread use of state and ruling party coercion and violence for much of the post-1980 period displayed the state's uneasiness with opposition forces and critical voices from civil society.⁴⁵ Analysis of state-civil society relations in this period point to the dichotomy between liberal-democratic and radical nationalist discourses.⁴⁶ Helliker observes that the liberal notion of civil society dominates scholarship on this field in

Zimbabwe. Due to the antagonistic history between civil society and the state, Helliker highlights that movements closely aligned with Zanu-PF, such as the National Liberation War Veterans Association, do not necessarily self-identify as part of civil society. Both liberal and radical theorists agree that civil society in Zimbabwe is 'a viable alternative to the failed state'.⁴⁷ However, civil society is criticised for failing to recognise rural forms of civic activity.⁴⁸ Helliker's nuanced observations of civil society, its composition and arising tensions go beyond the broader arguments centring on a 'progressive civil society' and the 'regressive state'. McCandless identified these tensions along political lines, with some parts of civil society linked to Zanu-PF, and others linked to the MDC.⁴⁹

The Fast Track Land Reform process in the 2000s

By 2000, this confluence of economic, political and social forces set the scene for major changes that would mark the post 2000-political scene. The demise of the politics of reconciliation that set the tone for the 1980s, combined with the negative consequences of the period of economic liberalisation in the 1990s, resulted in the emergence of vastly polarised social and political forces at a national level. This mirrored the emerging gulf between the national state and its once promising international supporters. The language and politics of development and unity that Mugabe's government set out in the 1980s and much of the 1990s moved towards a growing rupture between the discourses of radical redistribution and human/civic rights.⁵⁰

44 Helliker, 2012; Aebly, 2016; Ncube, 2010

45 Kriger, 2005

46 Helliker (2012) outlines liberal and radical interpretations of civil society and civil society-state linkages. The liberal view sees civil society as 'a progressive social force in perpetual struggle against the modern state', with the potential to democratise the nation-state. Radical notions of civil society, see its role as 'social movement based' and society-centred, aligned with Anarchist and Radical Libertarian thought that share the goal to develop 'counter-power' to the state.

47 Helliker, 2012

48 Moyo, Helliker & Murisa, 2008

49 McCandless, 2011

50 Raftopoulos, 2006



2. 2000 – the eve of the November 2017 coup

The year 2000 proved to be one of the key landmarks in Zimbabwean politics. In that year, Zanu-PF lost a referendum around its attempt to impose a new constitution against popular pressure. The constitution submitted for a vote contained several progressive elements. These included limits of presidential power and lengths of mandate, as well as broad measures of accountability regarding state power that, if implemented, would have placed more restraints on the ruling party's conflation of state and party. Mugabe's party clearly understood this and moved to mobilise against its implementation. In addition, the newly formed opposition party, the MDC, made major electoral inroads in the 2000 elections, despite state repression and internal organisational, accountability and strategic challenges.⁵¹

Faced with a combination of growing pressure for land reform from its own constituents, particularly the war veterans, the stepping back of the Blair government from the support for land reform formerly promised by the Thatcher government, and the increasing pressure from opposition forces for democratic reform, Zanu-PF embarked on a major land acquisition process in 2000, which came to be known as the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. There is ongoing debate about the process and outcomes of this policy intervention in a vast literature that is beyond the scope of this paper. In short, however, some of the major outcomes of a violent acquisition process that deepened the authoritarian and militarised forms of state rule included:

- While in 2000 there were approximately 4 500 white commercial farmers occupying 11 million hectares of land and producing over 70% of agricultural outputs, by 2008 this number had been reduced to about 500. This

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resulted in the establishment of 'new petty-commodity-producing establishments' that accounted for 93.7% of the new farming establishments.⁵² However, this redistribution was also accompanied by 'forms of exclusion and subordination' with regard to farm workers and women.⁵³

- In some areas, the land reform also led to the recasting of racialised production systems and commodity chains, and the reconfiguration of the 'relationship between the state and informal market systems'.⁵⁴ The expansion of small and medium scale farmers resulted in the growth of trade between the latter and informal sector traders and the

51 Raftopoulos, 2006

52 Moyo & Yeros, 2005, p. 195

53 Helliker & Bhatiasara, 2018, p. 11

54 Mavedzenge et al., 2008, p. 619



International isolation of the Mugabe regime also included sanctions and targeted measures imposed by both the US and the EU. In 2001, following the violence and human rights abuses that marked both the Fast Track Land Reform programme and the elections of 2000, the US enacted the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA) into law.

growth of income opportunities. However, the poor infrastructure in the country and the growth of state corruption has severely limited the potential of the changes on the land.⁵⁵

- While ruling party structures and elements of the state were vital parts of the land occupations, researchers have also noted ‘considerable self-initiative on the part of occupiers’. In addition, in some areas the relationship between the state and occupiers ‘was marked by uncertainty, ambiguity and fluidity, with occupiers not always guaranteed state support and protection’.⁵⁶
- On the negative side, there was an overall fall in the production of commercial farming. This was accompanied by the failure of many resettled farmers to acquire agricultural inputs and access to markets because of the lack of government support. In addition, the new form of capital accumulation developing in the resettlement areas resulted in the ‘incorporation of peasants into the global value chain controlled by and benefitting

the global corporates’ and a national elite controlling the local tobacco markets.⁵⁷

- In addition, the decline in agricultural production had economy-wide effects in that, by the mid-1990s, over half of the inputs into agriculture were supplied by the manufacturing sector, while in the reverse direction, 44% of agricultural inputs went into the manufacturing sector.⁵⁸

The major economic disruptions and widespread political violence caused by the Fast Track Land Reform Programme increased the international pressure and isolation that began in the late 1990s when the government defaulted on its debt repayment obligations. Zimbabwe was declared ineligible to borrow from the IMF’s Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility from autumn 2001, followed by the suspension of all technical assistance to the country in 2002. Given these default constraints, total foreign payment arrears rose from US\$ 109 million in 1999 to US\$ 2.5 billion in 2006. Additionally, foreign direct investment declined from US\$ 444.3 million in 1998 to US\$ 50 million by 2006, with donor support also falling in critical sectors such as health and education.⁵⁹ The external debt-to-GDP ratio, which had increased from 28.9% in 1990 to 51% in 1998, continued on the upward path, rising to 85.4% by 2008 and averaging 57.7% during the 10-year period 1999-2008. Meanwhile, reserves collapsed from an average of 0.5 months of import cover during the decade 1990-99 to 0.3 months by 2000 and 0.1 months by 2008, averaging 0.2 months of import cover during the period 2000-2008, which is far below the recommended level of at least three months of import cover.⁶⁰

International isolation of the Mugabe regime also included sanctions and targeted measures imposed by both the US and the EU. In 2001, following the violence and human rights abuses that marked both the Fast Track Land Reform programme and the elections of 2000, the US enacted the Zimbabwe Democracy

55 Scoones and Murambarimba, 2020.

56 Helliker & Bhatasara, 2018, p. 10

57 Mkodzongi & Lawrence, 2019, p. 4

58 UNDP Zimbabwe, 2008, p. 126

59 Kanyenze, 2018, p. 78

60 See <https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Zimbabwe/reserves/>



and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA) into law. ZDERA required representatives of the US in the IFIs to vote against the granting of any loans to the government of Zimbabwe. Additionally, the act set out that the US would withhold funding to the Africa Development Fund equivalent to any funding provided to Zimbabwe for arrears clearance.⁶¹ Any repeal of this act would require major political reforms, as well as respect for property rights following Fast Track acquisitions. (See Annex 1 for a summary of the Politics and Policies of key players in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2020).

For its part, the EU put in place various targeted measures following the violent elections in 2000 and 2002, and the expulsion of the Head of the EU Observation Mission in 2002. These measures included travel bans and assets freezes on Zanu-PF Ministers, party members, military personnel and business entities linked to the state. Furthermore, an arms embargo was placed on the sale of arms and military technology to the state-owned Zimbabwe Defence Industries.⁶²

These events contributed to the rapid descent and crisis of the Zimbabwean economy during the period 2000-2008. The major features of this crisis included: unsustainable budget deficits and unmanageable public sector foreign and domestic debt; volatile and unpredictable exchange-rate systems characterised by multiple exchange rates, rapid dollarisation and collapsing currency; uncontrolled monetary expansion driven by quasi-fiscal activities; rising inflation estimated to have reached 231 000 000% by July 2008; imposition of price controls resulting in the collapse of production; cumulative economic decline of at least 51% between 1999 and 2008, causing the economy to decline from the second largest in the SADC to the 11th position; and the plummeting of GDP from US\$8.6 billion (current) in 1996 to US\$4.4 billion by 2008. Per capita GDP declined from US\$741 (current) in 1996 to US\$357 by 2008.⁶³

Any hopes that the discovery of massive mining deposits in the Marange district in the 2000s could drive an economic recovery were quickly dashed by the elite military capture of large portions of the revenue. As Saunders aptly describes this theft of resources:

[the potential for domestic resource mobilisation] was quickly undercut by elite domination of the extractive process, which was enabled by state capture in the early 2000s and fuelled by elite predation and rising partisan conflict with MDC opposition. State capture weakened the bureaucracy's administrative autonomy and injected partisanship into decision making. At the same time, the allure of enormous mineral wealth which was easily accessed and could be traded secretly incentivised irregular and predatory behaviour by state elites. This toxic mix of opportunity and adversity was further enabled by the international diamond trade, an industry notorious for the scale of unaccounted for revenues due to smuggling, corruption and undervaluation of stones - as much as US\$2 billion between 2008 and 2012 in Zimbabwe alone, according to conservative estimates.⁶⁴

This elite predation around mining revenue unfolded within the context of deepening economic crisis and growing factionalism in the ruling party over leadership succession issues and the control of state resources attached to the faction in control. In such factional battles, where the control of key institutions of the state such as the military, police and intelligence are areas of contestation, corruption is a key strategy for the control of opposing forces by the party leader. As Gramsci observed, between consent and coercion stands corruption or fraud, which can be utilised when the use of overt force is too risky to demobilise competing groups or keep them in check.⁶⁵

For much of his stay in power, Mugabe was able to balance competing factions in Zanu-

61 Matyszak, 2019

62 EPD, 2019

63 World Bank data.

64 Saunders, 2019, p. 40

65 Gramsci, 1971, p. 80



Because Tsvangirai failed to achieve the required 50% plus one majority required for an outright presidential victory, a runoff was carried out at the end of June 2008. The violence that preceded the runoff, carried out by the ruling party against the electorate that had rejected its rule, plunged the country into further uncertainty.

PF largely through corruption, patronage and the threat of force. In so doing, he kept a strong grip on the party and state structures. Levitsky and Way argue that the capacity of incumbents to hold onto power in competitive authoritarian regimes, in which they include Zimbabwe, depends on two factors. The first is linkages to the West in terms of the density of ties (political, diplomatic or economic) and cross-border flows (such as capital, goods and services). The second is organisational power in the form of the depth and cohesion of state and party structures.⁶⁶ In the Zimbabwean context, the diminished linkages and influence of Western governments from the early 2000s, and Zanu-PF's Look East policy, led to an increasing reliance on coercive state control to maintain authoritarian rule.

However, by 2008, intensive factionalism within Zanu-PF had begun to erode the cohesion that Mugabe could claim in earlier times. Moreover, the clear lack of a developmental approach in the party's much proclaimed indigenisation thrust,⁶⁷ particularly in the context of the growing rifts and fracturing around this issue in Zanu-PF,⁶⁸ pointed to a forthcoming battle for zero-sum control of the party/state by one faction or another. For the political and civic

opposition, the period between 2000 and 2008 was marked by heightened repression, which along with the internal democratic and organisational challenges in the MDC, contributed to splits within both the main opposition party and civil society. This growing political and party polarisation⁶⁹ provided the determining context for the absence of any serious social dialogue. Instead, attempts at any form of tripartite dialogue between the state, business and labour were stymied by lack of trust and political will, minimal implementation of any agreed measures, the lack of mandate of some of the parties to the discussions, and very little sense of negotiations in good faith.⁷⁰

By the time of the 2008 elections, the high levels of pre-election state-led violence resulted in growing pressure from both Western countries and the political and civic opposition inside the country for regional intervention to mediate the conditions for a peaceful election. From 2007, an SADC mediation team led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki helped to prepare the groundwork for more internationally acceptable electoral conditions in 2008. After a month's delay in the release of the election results, it was announced that for the first time in the post-independence period, Zanu-PF had lost its parliamentary majority. The two MDC parties, which had split in 2006, combined to win 109 parliamentary seats, while Zanu-PF won 97. In the presidential election, opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai won 47.9% of the vote while Mugabe garnered 43.2%. Both results were indicative of the growing divisions within the ruling party and its accumulating loss of legitimacy amongst the electorate.

Because Tsvangirai failed to achieve the required 50% plus one majority required for an outright presidential victory, a runoff was carried out at the end of June 2008. The violence that preceded the runoff, carried out by the ruling party against the electorate that had rejected its rule, plunged the country into further uncertainty. The result was further SADC involvement that led to the signing

66 Levitsky & Way, 2010, p. 23; Southall, 2015

67 Saunders, 2017

68 Ndakaripa, 2019

69 LeBas, 2006

70 Ledriz, 2019



of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2008 and the formation of a Government of National Unity between 2009-2013. The SADC-negotiated agreement had more to do with the perceived maintenance of regional stability, and a selective conception of national sovereignty that fortified the hold of national liberation parties on state power, than broader democratic demands. The result was a political deal which brought a temporary end to the political violence and opened up a few important spaces for political reform, while largely keeping in place the authoritarian political architecture of the Mugabe regime.⁷¹

The Global Political Agreement period, 2009-2013

The GPA, which set out to prepare the political process for a generally acceptable election after the debacle of 2008, was marked by severe ebbs and flows. At almost every stage of the mediation from 2007 and the implementation of the GPA from February 2009, intense conflicts over the interpretation of the accord left their debris on the political terrain. At the heart of this contestation was the struggle over the meaning of 'sovereignty'.

Around its conceptions of sovereignty, Zanu-PF wove dense layers of political discourse around its continued abuse of state violence and coercion. As many observers have noted, the naming of 'enemies' and 'outsiders' by the Mugabe state, in the context of a selective script around liberation and national unity, has been a key dimension of the 'state's performance of its "stateness"'.⁷² This politics of sovereignty, heightened in Zimbabwe starting in the late 1990s, was perceptively and starkly described by Eric Worby a decade ago. He noted that it was less about who is included under the rubric of citizenship than about who decides who is included, and who decides who lives and who

dies.⁷³

Moreover, in the framework of a highly contested political framework like the GPA, the deployment of security, intimidation and punishment remained key resources in Zanu-PF's battle to retain state power. Within the politics of the 'Inclusive Government', the major aim of this strategy was to manipulate and stall the reform provisions of the GPA. This was done with the intention of regrouping and consolidating after plunging to the nadir of its legitimacy in the 2008 electoral defeat. Zanu-PF not only relied on violence and coercion to claw back political space within this period, but showed its gamesmanship in the distribution of ministerial responsibilities, giving the MDC formations the economic and social ministries, while retaining those related to power and security, including the local government portfolio that had to reign in MDC-controlled local authorities.

A combination of factors posed difficult challenges for the opposing players in the GPA: the uneven effects of the changes on the land over the last decade, the abuse of income from the Marange⁷⁴ diamond mines to extend its patronage, the resonance of the indigenisation⁷⁵ message in the context of shrunken opportunities for economic advancement, and a reiteration of the liberation, anti-imperialist discourse in the face of the continued debate over Western 'sanctions'.

Zanu-PF's attempts, under the GPA, to deal with the challenges created by its own policies took different forms. In terms of economic policy, in addition to the new beneficiaries created in the problematic Fast Track Land Reform Programme, Zanu-PF had placed central emphasis on the policy of indigenisation since 2009. In a report at its 13th National People's Congress held in December 2012, the party outlined this programme as follows:

71 Raftopoulos, 2013; Aeby, 2017

72 Ranger, 2004.

73 Worby, 2003, p. 59

74 The significance of the discovery of diamonds in Marange in June 2006 is that the country could have easily enhanced its fiscal space in a relatively short period of time given the extensive alluvial diamond fields.

75 Increasingly in the 1990s, Zimbabwe drew closer to Malaysia, participating in the International Smart Partnership Dialogues held in Langkawi since 1995. A representative from the Malaysian prime minister's office was invited to share their experiences of indigenisation with local stakeholders in 1996.



Our strategic focus is on facilitating movement on indigenisation per se to focus on full economic empowerment with direct and measurable benefits to the people.

The heightened drive towards sustainable economic empowerment for the masses is anchored on a triangular approach focusing on creating and growing opportunities, training and business skills development, and the provision of funding for indigenous business ventures, particularly startups and those run by previously disadvantaged individuals with an overarching goal of ensuring their entry and meaningful participation in the mainstream economy.⁷⁶

While this policy became a central part of Zanu-PF's campaign strategy ahead of the 2013 election, it was also clear that it was part of the ongoing politics of patronage by the Mugabe regime. There were persistent concerns about the lack of transparency over the revenue from the Marange diamond mines and the Zanu-PF patronage networks that emerged. In his 2012 Mid-Term Fiscal Policy Review, Finance Minister Tendai Biti of the MDC complained that against anticipated diamond revenues of US\$600 million, only US\$46 million had been received in the national fiscus.⁷⁷ Biti also complained about the 'expenditure overrun' on employment costs attributable to an overall growth in employment levels of 9 820 during the period January to May 2012, with the largest part of this growth represented by the 5 200 recruits to the Zimbabwe National Army. Thus, one of the key messages of Biti's review was the problem of Zanu-PF's patronage through a combination of unaccountable diamond revenues and expansion in the security sector. Against this trend, the Finance Minister called for greater 'austerity' and the 'return to cash budgeting'.

The problem of Zanu-PF's politics of patronage was also apparent in local government. As McGregor has shown by reviewing violence and threats against local councillors, civil

servants and civic bodies, Zanu-PF relied on 'coercive measures, and irregular enticements to try to maintain the local state as a system of patronage when challenged under the Inclusive Government'. Her analysis points to the ways in which the privatisation and deregulation of local authority controls 'provided opportunities and resources to fuel Zanu-PF accumulation and patronage through party linked business'. Moreover, as the privatisation and deregulation were carried out at the same time that recentralisation policies were underway, 'the combination allowed for a greater inter-penetration of party/state business ... deepening the capacity of the local state to act as a vehicle of accumulation, and for partisan distribution of local state allocated goods'.⁷⁸

The second part of Zanu-PF's strategy under the GPA was the continued use, or threat, of selective violence and coercion. This obstructive politics manifested itself in the blockages that Mugabe's party placed before the implementation of various democratising provisions of the GPA. These included: the equitable distribution of ministries; the enactment of the law establishing the National Security Council; the appointment of Provincial Governors and senior appointments such as the Governor of the Reserve Bank and the Attorney General; and a process to reverse all breaches of the Memorandum of Understanding of the Global Political Agreement.⁷⁹

The combined effects of these and other obstructive measures were to present the two MDCs with formidable obstacles. The MDC formations, MDC-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and MDC-MutaMbara (MDC-M) faced major challenges dealing with administrative and bureaucratic issues within the GPA and in deploying competent people as representatives in government. The intraparty and interparty animosity and conflict of the two formations also hindered their organisational growth and allowed Zanu-PF, and Mugabe in particular, to play them off each other. When all these problems were added to the growing trend of

76 Sunday Mail, 2012

77 Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2012

78 McGregor, 2013

79 Raftopoulos, 2013



corruption in the (MDC-T, it was not surprising that the support base of both formations began to decline. A Freedom House Survey carried out in mid-2012 reported that the MDC-T suffered a fall in support 'from 38% to 20% in the parliamentary vote from 2010 to 2012'. In contrast, Zanu-PF 'experienced a growth in popular support, moving from 17% to 31% in the same period'.⁸⁰

Zanu-PF's history of violence cannot easily be discounted in such surveys, and the memory of such violence continues to be a key factor in Zimbabwean politics. The widespread involvement of women and youth in Zanu-PF's coercion and violence created a constituency with a stake in such violence. In a study of women and political violence in the Midlands, Marongwe provided a disturbing account of a broader complicity in the then-ruling party's violence:

Many people...participated at...rallies either as cheerleaders, politicians, ordinary women and men, youth militias or also as war veterans. At times these roles were confused and conflated, making the distinction more difficult. Besides these office bearing women in political organisations the majority of ordinary women also helped to foment political violence. These women sang, danced, ululated, wore party regalia and made various performances.⁸¹

Such a political legacy cannot be discounted in any account of electoral mobilisation. Nevertheless, it is also clear, as noted above, that Zanu-PF has not relied solely on violence to maintain its power base. It was also more effective in the GPA years in crafting a 'number of election and party choice platforms around the land, indigenisation, and the effects of foreign interference', as well as its longstanding messaging around the legacy of the liberation struggle.⁸² The MDC's message of 'change' and its fight for human rights, while effective in mobilising a largely discontented citizenry for much of the 2000s, lost some of its force as the MDC formations became more

Regarding the SADC position, Mbeki's determination to ensure that African institutions maintained control of the mediation process on Zimbabwe set the tone for the relations between the SADC and the West during this period.

accountable for policy decisions under the Inclusive Government.

The civic movement also dealt with the complex challenges of the GPA in uneven ways. The civil society groups were largely marginalised in the SADC facilitation and were also unprepared for the agreement that emerged in 2008. The result of this was an extremely ambivalent approach to the GPA, sometimes resulting in the loss of opportunities to open up more political space during this period. This ambivalence was particularly apparent over the issue of constitutional reform. Unlike the period of the constitutional debate in the late 1990s, when the civic groups under the NCA played a key role in setting the intellectual and political agenda of the discussions, the GPA period largely witnessed contradictory messaging and weak participation by these groups.

Regarding the SADC position, Mbeki's determination to ensure that African institutions maintained control of the mediation process on Zimbabwe set the tone for the relations between the SADC and the West during this period. This approach was influenced by his broader Pan-Africanist vision, the shared liberation legacy of the regional nationalist movements and a critical perspective on the persistent imperial ambitions of Western interventions in Africa. The result of this perspective was to contain the influence of the EU and the US on the SADC

80 Freedom House, 2012, p. 5

81 Marongwe, 2012, p. 236

82 Freedom House, 2014, p. 21



mediation, which led to uneasy attempts by the South African facilitation team to reconcile the need for democratic changes in Zimbabwe with the requirement for political 'stabilisation'.

Mbeki's perspective should also be viewed within the context of the contradictory role of Western diplomacy and the highly problematic influence of the sanctions debate on the SADC facilitation and the implementation of the GPA. Western governments were only agreeable to the MDC-T joining the Inclusive Government on condition that Zanu-PF was genuine about power sharing, that there were sufficient guarantees to ensure a transition, and that 'Mugabe's exit was ensured'.⁸³ Notwithstanding the relaxation of the EU's targeted measures against the Zimbabwean state, the lack of convergence between the West and the SADC on these issues led to persistent tensions over the issue of sanctions. This largely played into the hands of the Mugabe regime.

After a protracted process of facilitation, and the contested and frustrating experience of an Inclusive Government, the 'harmonised elections' went ahead on 31 July 2013. Although there were clear indications that once again the MDCs faced major obstacles in the elections, the extent of Zanu-PF's 'victory' shocked many observers. The major reasons for this 'victory' have been described above. In the presidential vote, Mugabe received 61% of the vote, compared to the 44% he had won in 2008; Tsvangirai's vote plunged from 48% in 2008 to 33% in 2013. In terms of the parliamentary seats, Zanu-PF increased its number from 99 seats in 2008 to 159 in 2013, while the MDC-T's number dropped from 99 seats in 2008 (with the smaller MDC formation winning 10 seats) to 49 in 2013. Moreover, the total number of votes counted increased by 25% between 2008 and 2013, with Zanu-PF increasing its share of the vote between these dates, while the percentage of the MDC-T vote dropped in this period.

While one of the major achievements during the GPA period was the adoption in 2013 of a new constitution which enshrined important democratic and human advances in the Bill of

Rights, progress was also made in economic performance. The adoption of a multi-currency regime quickly extinguished the hyperinflation of the 2007/08 period and stabilised the economy, at least until 2018. However, the weak prospect of sustained political and economic reforms in the post-2013 period provided little hope that the economic rebound of an annual growth rate of 13.9% between 2009 and 2012 could be sustained.

Post-GPA: Prelude to the 2017 coup

In the aftermath of the 2013 elections, after abandoning in mid-stream the Medium Term Plan (MTP) (2011-15), the new government adopted the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZimAsset) (October 2013-December 2018) without broad-based consultations. ZimAsset had four strategic clusters, namely: (i) food security and nutrition, (ii) social services and poverty eradication, (iii) infrastructure and utilities and (iv) value addition and beneficiation. In an attempt to woo the West, the Zanu-PF Minister of Finance, Patrick Chinamasa, indicated in May 2014 that the government of Zimbabwe was 'very alive to the fact that systematic engagement with all nations will be key to unlocking funding' and dealing with the country's tight liquidity problem.⁸⁴ In line with the Government's continued negotiations with the IMF, 'geared towards macro-economic stability,' Chinamasa proclaimed:

In short Zimbabwe is open to foreign direct investment from all nations of the world, whether these be in the North, South, East or West. ... Let the message go out loud and clear that Zimbabwe is ready to re-integrate into the global economy. Zimbabwe is looking for new friendships, new opportunities while consolidating old ones. We are looking for mutually beneficial economic relationships not confrontation. We are too small a country to pursue a policy of confrontation.⁸⁵

83 Hoekman, 2012, p. 75

84 Chinamasa, 2014, p.8

85 p. 10



However, this attempt at a discourse of 'normalisation' of relations with the Western countries was always going to face major hurdles in the context of persistent questions around Zanu-PF's electoral legitimacy since 2000 and the shadow of US and EU sanctions and targeted measures.

In the absence of stronger policies, recovery driven by the mining sector during the GNU period of 2009-12 proved short-lived as it was limited to a temporary rebound associated with stronger external demand. Table 1 reports trends in selected macro-economic indicators for the period 2009-2018. While real GDP growth had averaged 13.9% during the period

2009-2012, it decelerated precipitously to an average of 1.3% per annum for the period 2013-19, against the ZimAsset target of 7.3% annual growth. Factors behind the deteriorating economic performance included limited access to, and the cost of, capital; high cost of doing business; revenue under-performance; low domestic savings; limited domestic and foreign direct investment; the growing fiscal deficit and the related liquidity problems; a fall in incomes and weakening of domestic aggregate demand; structural bottlenecks, including power shortages and deteriorating infrastructure; corruption; a volatile and fragile global financial environment; and two consecutive droughts during 2015-16 and again in 2019.

Table 1: Economic Trends, Selected Macroeconomic Indicators, 2009-2018

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Real GDP growth %	5.4	19.7	14.2	16.7	2.0	2.4	1.8	0.8	4.7	4.8
GDP per capita	790.3	976.1	1 131.8	1 310.4	1 428.0	1 428.0	1 431.7	1 440.8	1 510.8	1 629.0
Annual Inflation (end period) %	-7.7	3.2	4.9	2.9	0.3	-0.80	-2.50	-0.93	3.46	42.10
Trade Balance (US\$M)	-3 957.6	-2 619.2	-5 038.2	-3 581.2	-4 196.9	-3 316.0	-3 298.5	-2 379.1	-1 738.2	-2 372.9
Current a/c balance (US\$M)	-615.0	-1 576.1	-2 570.4	-1 973.7	-2 669.9	-2 405.1	-1 678.4	-717.9	-286.2	-1 029.0
Current a/c balance (% of GDP)	-6.4%	-13.1%	-18.2%	-11.5%	-14.0%	-12.3%	-8.4%	-3.5%	-1.3%	-3.3%
Capital a/c balance (US\$M)	391.0	231.0	345.6	737.5	251.0	369	398	242	278	209
Total External Debt (US\$M)	5 687	7 050	7 509	7 623	9 059	11 086	10 794.50	11 544.19	12 303.44	12 424.18
Import cover (months) at 100%	2.0	1.1	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.7	0.5
Total External Payments Arrears (US\$M)	3 725	3 925	4 234	4 501	4 749	5 261	4 958	5 036	5 393	5 555
(% of GDP)										
Consumption-to-GDP ratio (%)	110.1	105.1	102.5	114.0	105.5	103.2	108.4	101.5	101.0	102.7
Investment-to-GDP ratio (%)	9.9	17.0	14.6	12.2	9.2	9.6	10.0	9.8	9.7	9.3

Source: RBZ and ZimStat



After 2013, economic performance was largely undermined by the re-emergence of fiscal profligacy and indiscipline, especially after 2015. In the absence of re-engagement with the international community, official aid was off-budget. Zimbabwe therefore relied solely on domestic resource mobilisation as the major source of budgetary financing. As such, fiscal space remained severely constrained due to poor performance of revenue inflows against the background of rising (recurrent) expenditures and a shrinking tax base owing to company closures, retrenchments and informalisation of the economy. Owing to the re-emergence of fiscal indiscipline, the budget deficit spiked from 0.9% in 2015 to 5.9% in 2016 and 9.2% in both 2017 and 2018.⁸⁶

On the revenue side, apart from the impact of company closures and retrenchments, severe leakages were identified as a challenge. The mid-term 2015 Fiscal Review Statement indicated that the government was losing US\$1.8 billion annually through illicit outflows that include smuggling, illegal dealing in gold and precious stones, corruption, fraud, tax evasion, and externalisation, among others.⁸⁷ Owing to limited access to foreign inflows, the fiscal deficits had to be financed through domestic borrowing, which put the financial sector under considerable pressure, leading to liquidity (cash) shortages in 2016.

As a result of the expansionary fiscal stance, government debt to the banking sector increased steeply since 2015, culminating in a prolonged financial crisis that severely limited credit to the economy and resulted in cash shortages. This prompted banks to limit cash withdrawals and import payments as they had depleted their US dollar reserves.⁸⁸ The level of Treasury bills (TBs) resulted in a disparity between the high levels of virtual money against available US dollars and bond notes.

In response to persistent liquidity challenges, in May 2016, the government introduced capital and current account controls, and the quasi-currency instruments of real-time gross settlement (RTGS) and bond notes. The introduction of surrogate currencies effectively crowded out hard currencies, which disappeared from circulation. This resulted in the emergence of a parallel market where multiple exchange rates applied for physical cash (bond notes) and electronic money.

Following the end of the implementation of the Staff Monitored Programme (SMP) with the IMF in December 2015, and its endorsement by the IMF Board on 2 May 2016, Zimbabwe designed an Arrears Clearance and Debt Resolution strategy that was approved by the IMF and World Bank in Lima, Peru, in October 2015.⁸⁹ While the requirement was for Zimbabwe to clear its arrears to the IMF, World Bank and African Development Bank totalling US\$1.8 billion by the end of April 2016, only IMF arrears of US\$107.9 million were paid off on 20 October 2016 through an off-set arrangement. The country committed to resolve the outstanding arrears to the other multilateral creditors: US\$610 million to the African Development Bank, US\$1.16 billion to the World Bank, US\$212 million to the European Investment Bank, and other multilateral institutions and bilateral official creditors.

However, with no progress in this regard, re-engagement stalled. Lack of progress in arrears clearance rendered the adoption of the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (I-PRSP) (2016-2018) in September 2016 meaningless. In the absence of progress towards the clearance of the arrears and implementation of the required structural reforms which provided the basis for re-engagement, Zimbabwe could not access the much-needed new lines of credit. While President Mugabe tacitly endorsed the reform

86 Recourse to local borrowing resulted in domestic debt rising from as low as US\$275.8 million in 2012 to US\$4 billion in 2016; US\$7 billion in 2017 and US\$9.6 billion by August 2018. Financing the budget deficit through domestic borrowing is reflected in the rising proportion of domestic credit to government, which increased from -0.3% in 2009 and 1.5% in 2013, to 11.8% in 2014 and 66.7% by 2018.

87 Illicit financial outflows were also identified as a major source of resource leakage in the January 2016 Monetary Policy Statement, which was aptly sub-titled, 'Economic Transformation Through Transparency and Accountability'.

88 To this extent, as indicated in the 2018 budget statement, Treasury bill issuances had assumed the form of surrogate currency to settle government expenditure.

89 The SMP, which had been approved by IMF Management in June 2013 for the period April-December 2013, was extended to 30 June 2014 at the authorities' request to allow time for the national authorities to strengthen their policies and deliver on outstanding commitments under the programme. The government requested and was granted further extension for 15 months from October 2014-December 2015.



agenda, he maintained his radical and often contradictory rhetoric. Clearly, as Masunungure and Shumba argue, post GNU, the anti-change forces in the ruling party had an upper hand and when the reformers indicated they were going to implement changes, they would deploy hard power against the soft power employed by the pro-change forces.⁹⁰

While the economic options for Zanu-PF were rapidly closing down, the factional struggles for leadership succession in the ruling party were also reaching new heights. Unfortunately, the leading opposition MDC-T split once more after the end of the GPA, further weakening its efforts to unseat the Mugabe regime. In terms of the broader civic movement, the weakening of older social movements that had emerged in the late 1990s, such as the ZCTU and the NCA, led to the emergence of new forms of activism in the spaces of the dominant informal economy.

The abduction and disappearance of activist and journalist Itai Dzamara in April 2015 led to the formation of the Occupy Africa Unity Square campaign to reclaim the public space and promote action on socio-political issues. Dzamara had staged a one-man demonstration opposing Mugabe's rule and demanding accountability from the state. Sachikonye quotes Patson Dzamara, one of the founder members of Occupy African Unity Square:

'The campaign was an action by young people and other oppressed members of society both politically and economically to reclaim our public space and the future by occupying public spaces, be it parks, streets or squares in their areas and utilizing those for dialogue and action on political and social issues'.⁹¹

The move to reclaim public spaces and action on issues affecting Zimbabweans' livelihoods entered a new phase through engagement, with social media playing an important role in the dissemination of information and mobilisation of people in protests against increasing economic hardships and political repression.⁹²

The abduction and disappearance of activist and journalist Itai Dzamara in April 2015 led to the formation of the Occupy Africa Unity Square campaign to reclaim the public space and promote action on socio-political issues.

In April 2016, Pastor Evan Mawarire shook the nation with a video where he challenged the significance of Zimbabwe's flag in a context where the promises of independence were a far-cry from the reality he and his family were confronted with. The video was shared on Facebook and other social media platforms including Twitter. Dubbed #ThisFlag, Mawarire released daily videos demanding accountability and called on Zimbabweans to wear their flags as a sign of protest. The #ThisFlag movement spread to Zimbabweans in the diaspora, who also shared videos on social media to call the Zanu-PF-led government to account for corruption and failed governance.

In the months that followed, #ThisFlag pursued a campaign to elevate people's voices. This led to street protests, including confronting the Reserve Bank Governor, John Mangundya, on a proposal to introduce bond notes. Mangundya complied with a call for a public hearing, attended by 250 citizens, and responded to their critical questions and feedback. The #ThisFlag movement also successfully mobilised petitions against Samuel Undenge, former Minister of Energy and Power Development, who was accused of multiple corrupt activities. In addition to these petitions, the #ThisFlag movement called for mass stay-aways in July 2016. The public responded to 'Shutdown Zimbabwe' by closing

90 Masunungure & Shumba, 2012

91 Sachikonye, 2017, p. 130

92 Gukurume, 2017



their businesses and not attending work on 6 July.

It is important to note that movements such as #ThisFlag, Tajamuka and #ThisGown played an important role in reviving protest culture in Zimbabwe, which until this point, Zanu-PF had managed to crush. The unpredictability of social media and increased online connectivity provided an important platform for protest movements to gain momentum. Pastor Evan Mawarire, members of the #ThisFlag, Tajamuka and #ThisGown movements, were arrested and charged with inciting public violence and later with 'attempting to subvert a constitutionally elected government'.

Towards the end of 2017, the converging forces of a massive economic crisis, increasingly public displays of the leadership struggles in Zanu-PF, new forms of social protest through more informal forms of organisation, and the long-term impact of international isolation resulted in a dramatic change in the leadership of the ruling party.

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3. The November 2017 coup and the fall of Robert Mugabe

The November 2017 coup in Zimbabwe was preceded by a long history of factional struggles in Zanu-PF, with the dominant military emerging as the central power player in the party starting in the liberation war years. In 1975, the Mgagao Declaration, made by the war veterans in Zanu based in liberation camps in Tanzania, effectively removed the previous Zanu leader Ndabaningi Sithole from the leadership of the party on the grounds that he had betrayed the liberation struggle. This declaration laid the ground for the emergence of Mugabe's leadership at the behest of the military on the ground. A key figure in establishing Mugabe's dominance from 1977 was war commander Rex Nhongo, who played a significant role in eliminating any dissenting voices against Mugabe's leadership during this period.⁹³ These factional battles were based on a combination of ethnic as well as strategic and ideological differences, and increasingly grew around the two major ethnic groups within the broader Shona grouping: Mugabe's Zezuru group and Mnangagwa's Karanga group. Having noted this, it needs to be made clear that such inter-ethnic conflict were also accompanied by fault lines within ethnic groups.

In the period after 1980, the military continued to be the dominant force in Zanu-PF, although from a background position. This changed from the late 1990s in the face of a strong opposition and a real threat to the ruling party. Formal state institutions were increasingly dominated by military figures, and the key sectors of the economy became the focus of accumulation by senior military figures. Through the land occupations, the military elite were central benefactors of land allocation, while the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Finance channelled money to fund parallel agricultural schemes through shadowy companies with links to the military. In addition, the military elite controlled the tenders to supply inputs

into the command agriculture scheme through a company called Sakunda Holdings. Moreover, through a partnership with a Singapore-based enterprise called Trafigura, Sakunda controlled the single fuel pipeline from Mozambique to Zimbabwe, thus dominating the import and sale of fuel into the country.⁹⁴

Following months of factional struggles between the Lacoste faction led by then Vice President Emerson Mnangagwa (also nicknamed 'the crocodile'), and the Generation 40 (G40) faction around President Robert Mugabe and his wife Grace, Mugabe fired Mnangagwa on 6 November 2017. This followed

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93 Tendi, 2020

94 Zamchiya, 2020



Mugabe's warning to Mnangagwa two days before when Grace Mugabe was booed at a rally in Bulawayo. The president's wife has threatened the embattled vice president with the call that the 'snake must be hit on the head'. This was the Grace Mugabe's decisive move in her bid for the vice presidency in the upcoming Zanu-PF congress in December 2017.

This most recent factional struggle in Zanu-PF followed a long history of violent internal battles within the party, from the years of the liberation struggle in the 1970s around ethnic and ideological questions. A few years prior to his own party exile, Mnangagwa played a central role in the removal of the previous vice president, Joyce Mujuru, the wife of key liberation commander Solomon Mujuru. As Miles Tendi has explained, Mnangagwa, in support of the Mugabes and with the central involvement of Army Chief Constantine Chiwenga and the machinery of the military intelligence, conspired in the ousting of Joyce Mujuru. This event took place after a long struggle between the Mujuru and Mnangagwa factions in the 1990s.⁹⁵ The rise of Grace Mugabe took place within the context of the factional struggles in which a younger leadership faction, known as the G40, allied with an ageing Mugabe and his wife to weaken the role of key military figures in the party.

As Tendi argues, there were four key drivers of the November coup: the opposition to Mugabe's attempts to downgrade central liberation struggle figures, Mugabe's decreasing authority and the growing strength of the G40 faction, the political aspirations of certain generals, and the 'insecurity in the military's upper ranks caused by conditions or precarious tenure and fear of criminal prosecution'.⁹⁶ Thus, both Mugabe's succession plan and Mnangagwa's long-held presidential ambitions were in play for some time. While at certain times these agendas coincided in their strategic intent, at some point the final confrontation between the two was always on the cards.

The firing of Mnangagwa from the vice presidency

and his expulsion from Zanu-PF, however, had vastly different effects on the Zimbabwean polity. While Joyce Mujuru's dismissal and the expulsion of several of her allies caused some disturbance in the ruling party, it was nothing like the turbulence that followed Mnangagwa's removal and the attempted arrest of the commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces, General Constantine Chiwenga. The statement justifying this decision accused the former vice president of persistently exhibiting 'disloyalty, disrespect, deceitfulness and unreliability', and that he had behaved in a manner 'inconsistent with his official duties'.⁹⁷

In response, Mnangagwa, who fled the country soon after his removal from government, accused Mugabe of allowing the ruling party to be 'hijacked by novices and external forces' with a track record of 'treachery'. In a manner that gave a clear indication of the intervention that would follow, Mnangagwa warned Mugabe:

*I will go nowhere. I will fight tooth and nail against those making a mockery against Zanu-PF founding principles. You and your cohorts will instead leave Zanu-PF by the will of the people and this we will do in the coming weeks.*⁹⁸

Soon after this statement, it was clear that Mnangagwa's exit statement was no idle threat. On 13 November, General Chiwenga sent out an ultimatum at a press conference surrounded by 90 senior officers. The armed forces, he promised, as the major 'stockholders' of the liberation struggle, would take corrective measures against counter revolutionaries threatening to destroy Zanu-PF from within. This was a clear reference to Grace Mugabe and the G40 grouping around her. Chiwenga carefully cast his intervention in the language of constitutionalism stating:

Let us begin by quoting the constitution of this country particularly the preamble which speaks 'Exalting and extolling the brave men and women who sacrificed their lives during the Chimurenga/Umvukela and

95 Tendi, 2016

96 Tendi, 2019

97 Moyo, 2017a

98 Mnangagwa, 2017



compatriots who toiled for the progress of our country.⁹⁹

Continuing in the language of constitutionalism, Chiwenga quoted Section 212 of the constitution which he argued ‘mandated the Zimbabwe Defence Forces to protect its people, its national security and interest, and its territorial integrity, and to uphold the Constitution’. Finally, Chiwenga warned that even though Mugabe remained the commander in chief and head of state of Zimbabwe, the armed forces would protect ‘our legacy’ and that ‘those bent on high-jacking the revolution will not be allowed to do so. This stress on ‘constitutionalism’ drew on a long history of the selective use of the law and the language of constitutionalism by Zanu-PF in an attempt to legitimise repressive political interventions. It also appealed to the long-term importance of the practice and idea of law, and the political imagery built around making claims against a rule-bound state amongst Zimbabweans even in the face of a highly politicised judiciary.¹⁰⁰

In response, Zanu-PF’s National Secretary for Information and Publicity labelled Chiwenga’s statement ‘an outrageous violation of professional soldiership’ that suggested ‘treasonable conduct’. Moreover, he reaffirmed the official position of the ruling party which placed the ‘primacy of politics over the gun’.¹⁰¹ This position was in turn affirmed by the Zanu-PF Youth League.

On 15 November, Chiwenga’s statement of intent was followed by the military takeover of the country’s broadcasting service. An announcement by Major General Sibusiso Moyo stated that the military was stepping into the Zimbabwean political fray in order to ‘pacify a degenerating political, social and economic situation’. The intervention by the military was named ‘Operation Restore Legacy’ but in reality it was a coup in favour of the Mnangagwa faction against their G40 opponents in Zanu-PF.

However, the military were fully aware that neither SADC nor the African Union (AU) would recognise a new regime brought in through such means. Thus, Mnangagwa and his supporters in the Zimbabwe Defence Force opted for a carefully choreographed three-pronged strategy. Firstly, as mentioned above, they avoided of any reference to a coup d’état and the continued acknowledgement that Mugabe remained the commander in chief of the armed forces. The ‘lawfulness’ of the military intervention was granted in the High Court on 24 November 2017 by George Chiweshe, the Judge President of the Zimbabwean High Court and retired brigadier general of the Zimbabwe National Army.

Secondly, the ‘Mugabe must go’ march organised by the War Veterans on 18 November was devised to provide popular support for the military’s action. The organisers counted on the accumulated resentment for the Mugabe regime amongst the Zimbabwean citizenry and their calculation was correct. The thousands that turned out for the march celebrated in a carnival of cathartic joy and unified release that manifested in a temporary romance between the armed forces and the citizenry. This was a case of coating a coercive force in the guise of popular consent to build a temporary hegemonic frame. Importantly, the opposition MDC Alliance under Nelson Chamisa¹⁰² gave their support for the coup, adding to the popular call for Mugabe’s removal. The MDC provided this support on the assurance by Mnangagwa that his government would set up a transitional authority with the opposition ‘to institute political and economic reforms and facilitate an internationally supervise free and fair election’.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, this agreement was not honoured as Mnangagwa pursued his own strategy to secure the legitimacy of the coup regime through an election process in which he and his party would emerge victorious.

99 Chiwenga, 2017

100 Veheul, 2016

101 Moyo, 2017b

102 The MDC Alliance is an electoral bloc that was formed by seven political parties on 6 August 2017. Nelson Chamisa came to power in the MDC Alliance after Morgan Tsvangirai’s death in February 2018 through a constitutionally flawed and violence driven process, which has continued to reverberate in the politics of the opposition, and to be used by the Mnangagwa regime to further divide and weaken the opposition forces.

103 Zamchiya, 2020; Newsday, 2019



Thirdly, in order to provide the constitutional veneer for the military intervention, the Zanu-PF Central Committee met on 19 November and made several decisions. It expressed gratitude to the military for its intervention in the internal affairs of the party, with a view to bringing normalcy to the party and government. More decisively, the Central Committee expelled 20 members of the G40 faction from the party and removed Robert Mugabe from his position as president and first secretary of the ruling party, also recommending that he resign as state President. Grace Mugabe was also relieved of her post as secretary for the Women's League and Vice President Philekizela Mphoko was removed from his post. The party then elected Emerson Mnangagwa as the new interim president of Zanu-PF and nominated him to fill the vacancy of state president. The Central Committee also reinstated membership to all those who had been subjected to disciplinary measures since 2014 and recommended that war veterans be placed in 'strategic positions within the party and government on the basis of merit'.¹⁰⁴ One day before this Central Committee meeting, the Commander of the Zimbabwe National Army, Lt. General Valerio Sibanda, announced the end of Operation Restore the Legacy, stating that 'a new political dispensation has been ushered in to take Zimbabwe into its rightful place within the SADC and the world at large'.¹⁰⁵

It was the hope that this strategy would force Mugabe to resign voluntarily, before which he would appoint Mnangagwa as vice president and thus ease the path for his successor. However, in a public address to the nation on the evening after the Central Committee meeting, Mugabe took no such position. Instead, he made a somewhat surreal speech assuming he was still in charge. He stated that the military intervention was not a challenge to his command as president and commander in chief. Moreover, he would preside over the December Party Congress to deal with the issues that had been raised by the military

and 'return to the guiding principles of our struggle'.¹⁰⁶

This forced the Mnangagwa group to proceed with their next course of action, namely the impeachment of Robert Mugabe. Following the decision of the Zanu-PF Parliamentary Caucus to initiate impeachment proceedings on 20 November, the process was put in motion in Parliament on 21 November. Amongst other charges, Mugabe was accused of allowing his wife to 'usurp government functions' and 'state resources', as well as ignoring all 'allegations of corruption and misappropriation of public funds'. Mugabe was also charged with the inability to perform the functions of the office 'because of physical or mental incapacity'.¹⁰⁷ On the same day, Mugabe sent in his resignation letter to the speaker of the House of Assembly. In the letter, Mugabe wrote that his decision to resign was 'voluntary' and arose from his concern for the welfare of the people of Zimbabwe and his 'desire to pursue a smooth, peaceful, and non-violent transfer of power'.¹⁰⁸ The resignation was greeted with another round of national celebrations. On 24 November, Emmerson Mnangagwa was inaugurated as Zimbabwe's new president.

The SADC, the AU and the international forces

In the first stage of these developments, both the SADC and the AU reaffirmed their commitment to the SADC's Democratic Principles as they related to the unconstitutional removal of democratically elected governments and the AU Constitutive Act.¹⁰⁹ The SADC Organ Troika, which met on 16 November, then recommended an urgent Extra Ordinary SADC Summit on Zimbabwe, which in turn recommended that the presidents of South Africa and Angola undertake a mission to Zimbabwe on 22 November to assess the situation. This intended mission never took place as it was overtaken by the processes leading to the resignation

104 Moyo, 2017c

105 Sibanda, 2017

106 Mugabe, 2017a

107 Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2017

108 Mugabe, 2017b

109 SADC, 2017a P1.



of Mugabe. Soon after the events, the SADC responded positively to Mugabe's resignation, hailing the 'discipline and peacefulness of the people of Zimbabwe'.¹¹⁰ It should also be noted that early on in the coup, the war veterans had made it clear to the SADC, the AU and the international community that they would 'once more make the supreme sacrifice' to stop the restoration and imposition of Mugabe on 'our nation'.¹¹¹

The EU and the UK also sent out cautiously optimistic signals to the new regime, with the British government particularly enthusiastic over the new developments. After the 2013 election, which once again kept Zanu-PF in power, the EU was at pains to find a workable means of engagement with the Mugabe regime. This manifested in extensive funding to institutional capacity building and governance in areas such as the judiciary, public finance management, trade facilitation and ease of doing business. In addition, the EU invested heavily in the funding of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and supported civil society's electoral monitoring and educational activities.¹¹²

Some form of reform process without Mugabe provided the EU with a new opening for further engagement, as it did for the British government. A statement from the Council of the EU clearly set out the eagerness of the former to engage the Mnangagwa regime:

*The ongoing political transition in Zimbabwe creates high expectations among all Zimbabweans. It can open the way to a full return to the Rule of Law, within the constitutional framework, and under civilian rule, allowing for a preparation of much needed political and economic reforms.*¹¹³

The EU also welcomed the commitment of the authorities to hold elections in line with the constitution and looked forward to an invitation

to observe the elections. Finally, the European body committed to supporting the regime 'in establishing as soon as possible a constructive re-engagement with the international financial institutions based on a clear and time-bound economic and political reform programme'.¹¹⁴ The UK were very quick to respond to the Mnangagwa regime, sending an envoy to the inauguration of the new president in November 2017 and in April 2018, promised that it would strongly support the re-entry of Zimbabwe into the Commonwealth, dependent on the regime conducting a free and fair election. On several occasions since the coup, Mnangagwa promised such an election and that 'observers from across the globe' would be allowed to witness the process in 2018.

Western countries as well as China and Russia all 'tempered their reaction and avoided condemning the military intervention' because of an international consensus that Mugabe needed to be replaced.¹¹⁵ In March 2018, the US position on Zimbabwe also changed in response to the November events. A Senate

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110 Herald, 2017a

111 Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association, nd.

112 Zimbabwe Independent, 2018

113 European Union 2018, p 1..

114 p.1

115 International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 11



Bill was introduced to amend the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Reconstruction Act (ZDERA), which was passed in 2001 in response to the Fast Track Land Reform Programme and the human rights violations that accompanied the politics of that period. The new bill clearly set out the preconditions for the lifting of the targeted measures against the Zanu-PF regime and these related, in particular, to electoral reforms for the 2018 elections. More particularly, the bill stipulated the need for reforms in the following areas: the release of a biometric voter registration roll in both paper and digital form that could be endorsed by all registered political parties; an independent electoral management body nominated by the political parties represented in the Parliament of Zimbabwe; that the Defence Forces stay out of the electoral process as mandated by the Zimbabwe Constitution and remain non-partisan in the process; international observers from the US, AU, SADC and the EU be permitted to observe the entire electoral process preceding, on, and following the voting day; candidates be allowed free, full and equal access to the state media; and the civil society groups be allowed to carry out voter and civic education and to monitor the entire electoral process.¹¹⁶ These conditions largely

The new regime branded the new era the ‘New Dispensation’, whose mantra was, ‘Zimbabwe is open for business’. President Mnangagwa identified the economy as his major focus given its neglect under Mugabe. In this regard, the emphasis would be on agriculture as the mainstay, with an ‘investment-led economic recovery’ that focused on job-creation.

followed the recommendations made by MDC Alliance member Tendai Biti in his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa in December 2017, which in turn, merely reiterated demands voiced by the political and civic opposition since the early 2000s.¹¹⁷

Mnangagwa’s attempt at renewal: The transition national economy November 2017-July 2018

In his first presidential address, Mnangagwa pledged that his administration would carry out various economic stabilisation measures, including promoting a market economy, ensuring the safety of foreign investment, and compensation for white farmers who lost their land in the Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme within the terms provided by the constitution. Mnangagwa also stressed the importance of unity and reviving the economy. He implored all party cadres to ‘now think, sleep, dream and walk productivity’. He further warned his party that:

*We will not be able to accomplish much for as long as our sense of party work remains hidebound in the template of looking at Zanu-PF as about politics, politics, politics. No more! It’s politics and economics! Let us recognise that the best emerge from the marketplace where livelihoods are made. Productivity at all levels must be religiously encouraged’.*¹¹⁸

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116 US Senate, 2018

117 Biti, 2017

118 Herald, 2017b



7 December 2017 by the reinstated Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Patrick Chinamasa, the unsatisfactory performance of the economy was attributed to declining domestic and foreign investor confidence levels associated with policy inconsistencies, and an uncertain and uncompetitive business environment. Entrenched weaknesses and indiscipline in the management of public finances were also highlighted as challenges blighting the economy. These were reflected in failure to adhere to approved budgets, with significant expenditures incurred arbitrarily outside budget votes, and failure to follow laid down systems, which also involved resorting to quasi-fiscal expenditures.

The 2018 national budget statement elaborated the economic thrust under the theme 'Towards a New Economic Order', emphasising the following: (i) public sector and parastatal reforms and accelerating ease of doing business reforms; (ii) re-engagement of international development partners as a basis for normalisation of relations, arrears clearance and debt resolution; (iii) production-led economic recovery, attracting foreign direct investment, and pledge to safeguard all foreign investment and fully abide by the signed Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreements (BIPPAs); (iv) commitment towards servicing and re-scheduling of domestic and external public debt obligations as a basis for re-engagement; (v) compensation for BIPPA violations and acquired land where violations of Zimbabwe's obligations under BIPPAs were made, including over land acquisition; (vi) commitment to compensate all farmers from whom land was taken; (vii) three months' amnesty, over the period 1 December 2017 to end February 2018, to individuals and corporates for the return of illegally externalised funds and assets; (viii) expediting Zimbabwe's One Stop Shop Investment Centre with online services;¹¹⁹ (ix) attracting diaspora participation through investments as well as knowledge and technology transfer; (x) dealing with corruption, rent-seeking and other business malpractices.

Instructively, on 3 March 2018, the president launched Vision 2030 targeting the country to become an upper-middle-income economy by 2030. The vision was further crystallised into a policy document, 'Towards an Upper-Middle Income Economy by 2030: New Dispensation Core Values', launched on 19 April 2018 in Washington, D.C. by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Patrick Chinamasa. The Vision 2030 policy document highlighted the critical role of the forthcoming national elections, insisting that: 'The litmus test for the new government's commitment to democratisation objectives and "walking the talk" hinges on the conduct of the forthcoming Harmonised Elections, scheduled to be held in July 2018. His Excellency, the President, has already announced and promised resoundingly free, fair and credible elections, which will be free of violence. The election processes, from the preparations to the voting, are being undertaken in line with the country's constitution, as well as SADC guidelines on conduct of democratic Elections, and African Union (AU) Principles'.¹²⁰

The July 2018 elections and their aftermath

In the run up to the 2018 elections, the main opposition party, the MDC Alliance, built its campaign on the lack of legitimacy of the Mnangagwa-led government and the need for major electoral reforms. The message was linked to the declaration that unless such reforms were undertaken, the opposition would not accept the outcome of the electoral process. The reform demands included no election violence and access of all parties to all constituencies, a non-partisan Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), a transparent voter registration process, the non-involvement of the military in the elections process, equal access to the public media, and international election observer status. This was an election campaign that had constituted the opposition demands since its formation in 1999 and throughout all the elections in the 2000s.

¹¹⁹ The Zimbabwe Investment Authority has been merged with the Special Economic Zones (SEZ), Zimtrade, and the Joint Venture Unit to establish a One Stop Shop Investment Centre for potential investors, the Zimbabwe Investment Development Agency (ZIDA).

¹²⁰ Government of Zimbabwe, 2018a, p. 13



Following relatively peaceful national elections on 30 July 2018, protests erupted in Harare on 1 August 2018. What triggered the unrest was that while the ZEC started to announce results on 31 July, it inexplicably stopped, resuming only some 18 hours after midday on 1 August. On 1 August 2018, the ZEC announced that Zanu-PF had won a two-thirds majority in parliament (144 seats to the MDC-Alliance's 64, a gain and loss of 15 seats, respectively, compared with 2013). Disgruntled crowds besieged the entrance into Rainbow Towers Hotel, the command centre of the ZEC, demanding release of the results of the presidential elections. As the protesters were driven back by the police from the entrance to the Rainbow Towers, military vehicles arrived, and soldiers started assaulting the retreating crowd, firing live ammunition indiscriminately. Six people died from gun shots, 35 were injured, and massive damage to property was incurred.¹²¹ This was followed by a crackdown on perceived MDC supporters, mainly in Harare's high-density suburbs. The violence spilt over into rural areas, particularly the three Mashonaland Provinces and Masvingo, in the form of retributive violence on perceived opposition activists and supporters.¹²²

The following day, the ZEC declared Mnangagwa winner of the presidential race, with 50.8% of the vote, compared to Chamisa's 44.3%, just averting a second round of polling. The other 21 presidential candidates managed less than 170 000 votes collectively (5% of the total).¹²³ The MDC-Alliance petitioned the Constitutional Court on 10 August 2018, challenging the presidential election results.¹²⁴ The Constitutional Court ruled on 24 August 2018 that the MDC had failed to prove its case and declared Mnangagwa the duly elected winner, who was sworn-in as president on 26 August 2018.¹²⁵

Following the disturbances, President

Mnangagwa appointed a seven-member commission of inquiry into the post-election violence under the leadership of former South African President Kgalema Motlanthe.¹²⁶ While the commission found that the demonstrations 'had been incited, pre-planned and well organised by the MDC Alliance', it also noted the worrisome levels of polarisation and bitterness within 'the body politic of Zimbabwe'. The commission recommended the setting up of a fund to assist all victims of the violence and dependents of the deceased, including assisting young children of the deceased with school fees and their general welfare. Accordingly, the government was required to put in place a special committee to assess and determine quantum of damages and compensation to be awarded to victims on a case by case basis. The urgent need to avail medical support to all the injured was also raised.

On enforcement of law and order, the commission recommended that parliament should consider aligning the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), with the provisions of the constitution on the deployment of the military internally: that police should be equipped with the necessary skills and capacity for dealing with rioters; that the use of the military to assist the police for the control of public order should only be resorted to as a last measure in extraordinary situations; and that in the interests of national cohesion and the protection of all citizens, the police should be further trained to be professional and non-partisan. It further recommended that the military should conduct an immediate and full audit of its standing orders and procedures for engagement in law and order enforcement operations, including riot control. Furthermore, it discouraged the use of live ammunition as warning shots and that such tactics should only be used in limited circumstances of danger to public safety.¹²⁷

121 Government of Zimbabwe, 2018b

122 See <http://www.hrforumzim.org/news/2018-post-election-violence-monitoring-report-updated/>

123 See <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/zimbabwe/after-elections-zimbabwe-governments-legitimacy-limbo>

124 Chamisa, 2018

125 Constitutional Court, 2018

126 Government of Zimbabwe, 2018b. The team, which included former Commonwealth secretary-general, Emeka Anyaoku, British lawyer Rodney Dixon and former Tanzania defence forces chief Davis Mwamunyangwe, was given three months to complete its investigations and report back to the president.

127 Government of Zimbabwe, 2018b, pp. vi-viii



Thus, instead of enhancing the legitimacy and commitment of government, the elections of 2018 resulted in it being questioned, and its integrity seriously impaired. If anything, the contested electoral results undermined the government's credibility and the international goodwill generated by the departure of Mugabe, and confirmed that the country remained deeply divided. The disputed election results not only heightened the political divisions in the country, but also highlighted the urgency of reforms if stability was to be safeguarded, as well as government's re-engagement strategy with international donors.

Furthermore, the overall election process and the aftermath once again polarised the regional and international players. While the SADC and the AU gave an overall endorsement of the electoral outcome, the Western observers were much more critical of the process.¹²⁸ Moreover, in response to the post-election violence, the EU, US, Canada and Switzerland issued a joint statement condemning the violence and heavy-handed response by the state.¹²⁹ Then-British Ambassador Catriona Laing, who had been supportive of the regime, criticised the "excessive use of force" against protesters and called for the withdrawal of troops from the streets of Harare. The deployment of the army onto the streets of Harare to quell protests only served to confirm the contentious issue of the pre-eminent role of the security forces in Zimbabwe's politics. Critically, therefore, to restore its credibility and resuscitate the momentum towards international re-engagement and recovery would require stronger evidence of reforms as well as more inclusive, transparent and accountable governance.

Post-2018 economic and political policies: Austerity, repression and dialogue

On 1 October 2018, Governor of the Reserve Bank John Mangugya, and Minister of Finance

and Economic Development Mthuli Ncube presented monetary and fiscal measures designed to address the challenges facing the economy. The key policy measures announced included the separation of Nostro foreign currency accounts (FCAs) and RTGS; and the introduction of a 2% intermediated financial transactions tax. Banks were given until 15 October 2018 to fully comply with the policy measure. The separation of Nostro FCAs and RTGS balances was meant to encourage exports, diaspora remittances, and banking of foreign currency into the Nostro FCAs. In order to preserve value for money for the banking public and investors during the subsistence of the multi-currency system, it was announced that the relationship between the two currencies would remain at parity (1:1). It was also announced that in order to promote transparency in the issuance of treasury bills, with effect from 1 November 2018, the Central Bank would invite tenders for investors to participate in the auction system of treasury bills.

By separating FCAs for Nostro and RTGS funds, the government tacitly accepted the reality of different currencies in operation in the economy, one where the physical multi-currencies apply, and the other relating to electronic transfers not backed by any physical cash (RTGS balances and bond notes). By maintaining parity in the exchange rate (1:1) when it was clear that with the huge shortage of multi-currencies electronic transfers which were not backed by any physical cash had a much lower value, as reflected by the premium on physical cash on the thriving parallel market of foreign currency, Gresham's law would continue to operate.¹³⁰ Moreover, RTGS balances could not be used for external payments and would continue to lose value due to inflation.

In a bid to set the economy on a recovery path after years of stagnation, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development launched the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) on 5 October 2018, set to run from October 2018 to December 2020. The TSP,

128 European Union, 2018; Bloomberg, 2018

129 International Observer Mission, 2018

130 Gresham's law posits that 'bad money drives out good money'. Essentially if both the inferior and superior transaction medium were accepted at the same price, most of the transactions would take place using the inferior transaction medium and the superior one would play a minor role.



With the economic crisis deepening throughout 2018, the already fragile livelihoods of the majority of Zimbabwean citizens became even more precarious. In late 2018, public sector workers including doctors, nurses and teachers went on strike over their depreciated salaries and working conditions in the face of rising inflation and the persistent monetary crisis in the country.

a severe austerity strategy similar to ESAP, focused on the following: (i) stabilising the macro-economy and the financial sector; (ii) introducing necessary policy and institutional reforms to translate to a private sector-led economy; (iii) addressing infrastructure gaps; and (iv) launching quick-wins to stimulate growth. The short-term programme would be succeeded by two five-year development plans running from 2021-2025, and 2026-2030.

Despite the pronouncements on involving key stakeholders in all aspects of the policy cycle, from design to monitoring and evaluation, the TSP was, as with past policy blueprints, introduced without broad-based participation. No evaluation of its predecessor, ZimAsset was even undertaken. Yet, lessons from the structural adjustment period, constitutional requirements, as well as the Vision 2030

policy framework emphasised broad-based participation as a requirement for national ownership of development programmes if they were to stand any chance of success.

Predictably, following the fiscal and monetary policy measures adopted in October 2018, the economy experienced the following:

- i. Rapid increase in inflation from 5.4% in September, rising to 20.9% in October, 31.0% in November, 42.1% in December 2018, 56.9% in January, 59.4% in February, 66.8% in March, 75.9% in April, 97.9% in May and 175.7% in June 2019;¹³¹ against a SADC macro-economic convergence target of inflation of 3-7%.¹³²
- ii. The exchange rate depreciated from the pegged trading level of ZWL\$2.5 to the USD on 25 February 2019 to ZWL\$16.8 to the USD on the interbank foreign currency market¹³³ and ZWL\$23 to the USD on the parallel market as at 31 December 2019. In the context of dwindling reserves, the exchange rate overshot to levels of ZWL\$41 to the USD by mid-March 2020 on the parallel market, almost doubling its levels of December 2020 and contributing to inflationary pressures.

With the economic crisis deepening throughout 2018, the already fragile livelihoods of the majority of Zimbabwean citizens became even more precarious. In late 2018, public sector workers including doctors, nurses and teachers went on strike over their depreciated salaries and working conditions in the face of rising inflation and the persistent monetary crisis in the country. Representing around 27.4% of formal employment, the largest portion of formal employment in the country, the striking public sector workers presented a serious problem for the functioning of the state.

¹³¹ Mthuli Ncube indicated that following the introduction of the local currency on 24 June, it would be meaningless to compute annualised inflation levels, and hence since July 2019, no official data were available except for monthly inflation levels.

¹³² Even though ZimStat stopped publishing data on inflation after June 2019, the IMF and World Bank continued to provide estimates, which indicate levels of 230.5% in July, 288.5% in August, 353% in September, 440.1% in October, 480.7% in November, 521.2% in December 2019 and a decline to 473.1% in January 2020. When ZimStat resumed computing and publishing year-on-year inflation levels in February 2020, on the basis of having a full base year of RTGS consumer price indices, the rate of inflation stood at 540.2%. See <https://tradingeconomics.com/zimbabwe/inflation-cpi>

¹³³ The exchange rate depreciated to ZWL\$17.4 to the USD by 31 January 2020 and ZWL\$18 to the USD by 28 February 2020.



However, it was the steep increase in the price of fuel in January 2019 that provided the spark for a new round of popular protests. On the eve of his trip to Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Kazakhstan, Mnangagwa announced a 250% rise in the price of fuel. In response, President of the ZCTU Peter Mutasa and the leader of the #ThisFlag movement, Evan Mawarire, called for a peaceful stay-away by the workforce from 14-16 January as a protest against this latest round of economic policy interventions.

The state responded swiftly and brutally to the outbreaks of violence resulting from the protests. Of the 17 extra-judicial killings reported, the areas most affected were Mbare, Mutare, Kadoma, Marondera, Hatfield, Kuwandzana, Chitungwiza, Glenview and Epworth. The perpetrators were mainly members of the Zimbabwe National Army and the Zimbabwe Republic Police. Of the total 954 arrests, while the effects were nationwide, the areas most affected were Harare (297), Bulawayo (237) and the Midlands (187). Most of the reported human rights violations were in Harare and Bulawayo, while Harare topped the number of killings, assaults by gun shots, as well arbitrary arrests.¹³⁴

In response to the growing precarity of their livelihoods and the broader crisis of social reproduction, trade unions responded through strike action. In setting out their recourse to strike action, various unions described the desperate, incapacitated state of their membership. In the context of the politics in 2019, this public sector strike added to the legitimacy and capacity issues of the Mnangagwa regime and could well prove to be the Achilles heel of the latter. This is because every attempt to increase the salaries of the public sector workers has been rapidly eroded by the central failure of the regime to deal with issues around employment creation, new investment, and expanded productivity. These policy deficits have in turn created the conditions for the inflationary spiral and currency depreciation that, under current

conditions, will persistently negate any wage increases and reproduce the strike wave.

It is therefore an indictment of post-independence Zimbabwe that instead of leveraging socio-economic transformation, over the years, the economy has rapidly de-industrialised and informalised such that it now has the third largest shadow economy out of 158 countries worldwide with an average of 60.6% of GDP, after Bolivia at 62.3% and Georgia at 64.9%.¹³⁵ In fact, data from ZimStat suggests that informal employment increased from 80.7% of total employment in 2004 to 84.2% in 2011 and 94.5% by 2014. Tellingly, the percentage of the population living below the poverty line has remained above 70% since the 1990s.¹³⁶ Due to economic contraction and the sharp increase in prices of food and basic commodities, the World Bank estimates that extreme poverty increased from 29% in 2018 to 34% in 2019; from 4.7 to 5.7 million people.¹³⁷ Yet, poverty levels have declined substantially in all regions of the world, with the proportion of the population living below the poverty line declining from 59.7% in 1993 to 41.4% in the region experiencing the slowest rate of decline, sub-Saharan Africa.¹³⁸

The World Food Programme indicated that 7.7 million Zimbabweans (more than half the population), required food assistance by the end of 2019. This was largely due to poor rainfall, the devastation of cyclone Idai and the decline in agricultural production.

Mnangagwa's attempts at national dialogue have also proved to have limited traction and have taken the form of four initiatives.

- **Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD):** This is a dialogue with approximately 17 political parties who participated in the 2018 elections, all of which have negligible electoral support and none of which have any representation in the current parliament. Its purported intent is to build a national political consensus. The major opposition party, the

134 Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum, 2019

135 IMF, 2018

136 It was 75.6% in 1995; 70.9% in 2001; 72.3% in 2011/12; and 70.5% in 2017 (see ZimStat 2019, Table 20).

137 See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/zimbabwe/overview>

138 World Bank data, see <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/povDuplicateWB.aspx>



Chamisa-led MDC, made the decision to boycott this dialogue as it characterised it as a public relations exercise in which the dominant party, Zanu-PF, has total control of the process. Alternative parallel attempts are currently underway to bring the major parties together, one through a church initiative led by the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations, and the other through a parliamentary dialogue which has been underway since the period of the GNU, led by the Zimbabwe Institute. Both these attempts have been stalled by the stonewalling of both major parties, Zanu-PF and MDC, around the issue of the legitimacy of Mnangagwa’s presidency.

- **The Presidential Advisory Council:** This was established in January 2019 with the objective, amongst others, of providing ideas and suggestions on ‘key reforms and measures needed to improve the investment and business climate in the country for economic recovery and growth’.¹³⁹ This body is largely composed of Mnangagwa allies, some of whom have been accused of running the cartels that are currently contributing so widely to the deepening corruption in the country.
- **The Matabeleland Collective:** One source of the origin of this collective is that it was established with the objective ‘of building a consensus and an effective social movement’ in Matabeleland ‘to influence national and regional policy in support of: participative democracy; healing; peace and reconciliation; economic renewal; social inclusion and equality; and devolution’.¹⁴⁰ Some of the criticisms that have been raised around this collective include: 1) It has been drawn into Mnangagwa’s attempt to control the narrative around the Gukurahundi massacres in Matabeleland and the Midlands in the 1980’s, by closely monitoring and ‘guiding’ the activities of this group, 2) the collective has exacerbated the divisions within an already weakened civic movement by regionalising what should be viewed as

the national issue of the Gukurahundi state violence and 3) the formal constitutional structures and the implementation mandate of the collective are not clear.

- **The Tripartite National Forum (TNF):** In June 2019, the TNF was launched as an independent statutory body after having operated for over 20 years as a voluntary organisation. Amongst several functions of this body set out in the TNF Act are the requirement to: 1) Consult and negotiate over social and economic issues and submit recommendations to Cabinet, 2) negotiate a social contract and 3) generate and promote a shared national socio-economic vision.¹⁴¹ Moreover, the act states that the decisions of the forum shall be ‘reached by consensus’, and that the decisions reached in the ‘domain of socio-economic policy shall form recommendations to Cabinet’.¹⁴² While the establishment of the TNF could provide a good platform for debate and consensus, serious concerns were raised about its efficacy. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions has persistently warned of the long history of the lack of broad-based consultation on past development programmes such as ZimAsset and the Transitional Stabilisation Programme. Similar concerns were expressed by the ILO and the Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe.¹⁴³

Mnangagwa’s limited attempts at a national dialogue were further demonstrated in his Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No 2 Bill 2019, which will effectively restore the powers that Mugabe abused to decide on his successor, and various levels of judicial and state appointments.

Finding a way forward

In concluding this paper, it is important to return to the primary research question of this project: to focus on critical junctures in governance-development interactions by examining ‘points of inflection where

139 Statement by the Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet on announcing the Establishment of the Presidential Advisory Council, 30 January 2019.

140 Matabeleland Collective, 2019

141 Tripartite National Forum Act 2019, Government Gazette 4 June 2019, p. 37

142 Tripartite National Forum Act 2019, Government Gazette 4 June 2019, p. 39

143 LEDRIZ, 2019; Kuwaza, 2020



profoundly divergent pathways vis-à-vis governance and development are possible'. In the course of navigating this question throughout Zimbabwe's post-colonial political and developmental challenges, we have been acutely aware of Mkandawire's caution in approaching this issue. The latter warns that international organisations of the good governance agenda have created a rather 'voluntaristic and hubris-laden belief in their capacity to mould states with one template and with little consideration of structural constraints or local politics'.¹⁴⁴

With this perspective in mind we have tracked several conjunctural moments of developmental opportunity between 1980-2019 that have also been constrained by structural limitations at different historical points. In the 1980s, the Lancaster House Agreement provided a chance for a former colonial power, in conjunction with other Western states, to provide the resources for substantive movement on a land reform programme. The opportunity was constrained by a combination of the strictures of the willing-buyer-willing-seller conditions set at the Lancaster House talks and the limited resources eventually provided by the Western powers because of early indications of political authoritarianism in the new government. In addition, Zanu-PF government showed little political will in pushing for a stronger land reform programme because of the interests of a small party elite that had begun to emerge in the commercial farming sector. These developments led to an accumulation of political pressures that would come to the fore from the late 1990s and explode on the political stage in the 2000s.

In the 1990s the government was overenthusiastic in its embrace of economic liberalisation in the hope that it would grow the productive sector and assist in dealing with the increasing national debt. However, it very quickly became apparent that there was an inherent tension between the means (austerity) and the ends (prosperity), since austerity entailed cutting back on aggregate demand, which ultimately affected growth, employment, and poverty

levels. The growing negative impact of the structural adjustment programme led to large-scale trade union strikes and the emergence of a national opposition movement that for the first time since independence, threatened the hold of Mugabe's party on state power.

The response of the ruling party to this widespread discontent and popular mobilisation by the opposition forces was twofold. Firstly, it deepened the reconstruction of the state and politics of the country in more authoritarian nationalist forms. In carrying out this process, Zanu-PF deployed a selective rendition of the liberation history and anti-imperialist discourse that attempted to justify national political repression.¹⁴⁵ Secondly, the state used the mounting popular pressure for changes on the land issue to institute the Fast Track Land Reform Programme which not only led to a radical redistribution of land but significantly influenced the forms of rule in the rural areas, including the violent repression of emerging opposition forces. The long-term economic and political effects of this radical reconfiguration of Zimbabwe's political economy are still being felt in the country's polity.¹⁴⁶

Throughout the post-colonial period, the emergence of an autonomous black business elite was severely proscribed both by the control

Mnangagwa's limited attempts at a national dialogue were further demonstrated in his Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No 2 Bill 2019, which will effectively restore the powers that Mugabe abused to decide on his successor, and various levels of judicial and state appointments.

144 Mkandawire, 2017, p. 185; see also Rodrik, 2006

145 Ranger, 2004

146 Raftopoulos, 2014



of the private sector by the white minority in the 1980s and 1990s, and the reluctance of the state to support the development of a strong black business class that would operate beyond the patronage of the state. This led to increased corruption and elite state capture of public resources in the land programme, the parastatals, and the highly profitable mineral sector. The result was the loss of an opportunity to nurture a more sustainable and productive accumulation model that would have widespread linkages across the various economic sectors.

The rapid decline of the economy throughout the 2000s both heightened the political polarisation in the country and intensified the factional succession within the ruling party. The November 2017 coup that resulted in Mugabe's demise was a culmination of these pressures which opened up new possibilities for change, notwithstanding the always threatening presence of the military. The events of 2017 were widely supported by the citizenry, MDC Alliance, the SADC and the AU, and were seen as a positive step by the Western powers. The 'open for business' narrative of the so called 'New Dispensation' was met with widespread goodwill at national, regional and international levels, with new opportunities for international re-engagement.

However, a combination of Mnangagwa's reported failure to honour the agreement with the opposition on the establishment of a transitional authority and the post-2018 election violence, followed by further iterations of resurgent authoritarianism in 2019, very quickly led to the dissipation of the benefit of the doubt afforded to the Mnangagwa regime. Opportunities for debt rescheduling and possibilities of international investments quickly moved off the table. In terms of the 'open for business' mantra, the government bureaucracy showed little signs of welcoming new investments. While setting up a business in Zimbabwe improved from 32 days (a rank of 176 out of 190 countries) in 2019 to 27 days (a ranking of 167) in 2020, it was the second-worst ranking for the country in terms of the 10 areas assessed in the World Bank 'Doing

Business Indicators', after enforcing contracts ranked 169.¹⁴⁷


By mid-2020, both major political parties in Zimbabwe faced considerable obstacles. Zanu-PF was confronted with major economic challenges on several fronts, to which it had no adequate response and was in desperate need of outside assistance. The regression in its hopes of international re-engagement combined with continued factionalism in the ruling party is likely to push the latter into an increasing reliance on violence and repression. At the same time, it is clear that key cartels in the ruling party are benefitting from the crisis through their control of limited foreign currency, the fuel market, and command agriculture, and the lack of transparency in accounting for the income from the mineral sector. For the MDC Alliance, the combined strategy of denying legitimacy to the Mnangagwa government, protests, and the idea that the collapse of the economy would lead to the eventual breakdown of the current regime, also showed limitations. The 31st March (2020) Supreme Court judgment further weakened the MDC Alliance, effectively removed them from Parliament and cleared the way for Zanu-PF to move on its Constitutional Amendments with the support of a more amicable opposition party led by Khupe and Mwonzora. This new configuration of political power threatens genuine, inclusive national dialogue.

Yet, despite the bleakness of the political and economic situation, in late 2019 there were small signs that there could be a way beyond the current impasse. A statement by South African Minister of International Relations and Co-operation Naledi Pandor showed a clear understanding of the need for a more substantive national dialogue in Zimbabwe. While the Minister reiterated the SADC call for the end of sanctions, she also stated that the economic and political challenges needed to be confronted, simultaneously.¹⁴⁸ As a follow-up to this statement, former President Mbeki, who led the mediation leading to the GPA in 2009, visited Zimbabwe in December 2019, in order to help prepare the ground for a new round of national dialogue. However, by the

147 World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020

148 ED, Chamisa must talk: SA. <https://www.newsday.co.zw?2019/11/ed-chamisa-must-talk-sa>





first quarter of 2019, little progress had been made on this process, with both Mbeki and SADC leaders growing increasingly frustrated with 'Mnangagwa's refusal to allow the Mbeki mediation to take shape'.¹⁴⁹ This frustration was also apparent at the international level when the EU, UK and US all renewed their different restrictive measures in March 2020, with the US even adding two more high-level Zanu-PF officials to their sanctions list.

Notably, the focal point of resistance to increasing militarisation of the state, diminishing accountability and effectiveness of key institutions, including the judiciary; has emerged from youth-led social movements and civil society organisations. From the #ThisFlag and #Tajamuka movements, to more recent actions led by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Zimbabwe Young Lawyers Association, ZimRights and others, the recent judicial victory challenging Justice Malaba's tenure points to a new trend in relations between civil society and the state.

In conclusion, it must be noted that throughout the extended political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe since the late 1990s, both the political and civic opposition maintained their demands and belief in peaceful protests, the expansion of democratic spaces, and the need for internationally recognised free and fair elections. These values have characterised the core of opposition politics in the post-colonial period, notwithstanding growing democratic deficits in the politics of the opposition itself. However, in the face of persistent state repression and the militarisation of state institutions, growing voices amongst the restless youth population have begun to question the efficacy of this adherence to the need for elections.¹⁵⁰ One can only hope that Zanu-PF understands how the repression and violence that pushed the nationalist generation of the 1950s and 60s into a liberation struggle could trigger similar frustration and anger amongst the post-colonial youth, leading to new forms of violence.

149 Zimbabwe Independent, 2020

150 Hodgkinson, 2019



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