



Situation Report

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Zimbabwe: Increased securitisation of the state?

Introduction

More than four months have passed since Zimbabwe held its parliamentary polls and it still seems that the winner of these elections, the governing Zimbabwe African Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), still has no clear intention to end Zimbabwe's political crisis or a programme to resuscitate this country's collapsing economy. Instead, President Mugabe and his allies within ZANU-PF have used the post-election period to launch further attacks on opponents, both inside and outside of the party, in a series of somewhat chaotic policy decisions, ostensibly in a bid to consolidate their power base.

While the government's recently launched clean-up campaign – “Operation Murambatsvina” – is paradigmatic of the erratic nature of policy making and implementation in the country (reminiscent of the flawed implementation of the land reform programme) – it is also disturbing in the profound disregard for fundamental human rights of ordinary Zimbabweans, as well as in its heavy handed and violent nature. Observers have questioned the real motivation for this operation, suspecting that the government's justification of it being necessary as part of a pre-established project, “launched to obviate a potential hazard posed by unregulated and uncontrolled informal urban settlements and activities”, could not be further from the truth.² Was this military style operation a form of political retribution, indiscriminately targeted at urban areas perceived to be bastions of opposition support? If so, what does this mean for the future of Zimbabwe?

On 30 August 2005, in yet another clear indication of President Mugabe's failure to embrace change and embark on positive reforms, the ZANU-PF dominated Parliament adopted the Constitutional Amendment Bill. Notwithstanding strong protest from the MDC and civil society organisations, twenty-six clauses of this controversial bill were promulgated, giving the government the power to, among others:

- Prevent court challenges to government seizures of land as part of the “fast-track” land reform programme;
- Permit authorities to withdraw passports from individuals suspected of travelling outside the country to conduct “terrorist” activities; and,
- Establish a senate, comprising sixty-six members, fifty who will be voted for; 6 appointed by President Robert Mugabe and the remaining 10 elected by the Chiefs Council, effectively bringing to 26 the total number of legislators directly or indirectly handpicked by Mugabe.

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In a situation report written just before the March 2005 elections, entitled “*Zimbabwe’s 2005 Elections: Overture or finale?*”, we had developed three post-election scenarios. It is appropriate to revisit what at the time we considered the most likely scenario one in which ZANU-PF would walk away from the polls with an overwhelming parliamentary majority. On the basis of this scenario was the assumption that ZANU-PF would gain at least a two-third parliamentary majority (100 of the 150 seats in parliament), which would allow it to amend the constitution without recourse to the opposition. We anticipated that should the governing party achieve the two-thirds threshold, it would use its new parliamentary dominance to amend the constitution to create a new post of executive prime minister, with Mugabe retiring to a largely ceremonial presidency and serving out his term in this role until its expiry date of 2008.

The idea of reverting to a largely ceremonial and symbolic presidency has long been mooted. This, and the creation of a prime ministership to handle the important affairs of government has been proposed as a possible avenue by which to accommodate a continuing role for Mugabe as “Father of the Nation”, while permitting policy shifts to allow for some accommodation with the international community. This would create the sort of security guarantees that would allow the ageing president to gracefully exit the political scene in 2008. In this scenario, the retirement of Vice-President Msika and his replacement by John Nkomo could signify the incorporation at the highest level of a more moderate and policy-oriented leadership capable of transforming the current situation in a positive way.³

One of our main assumptions in the development of this scenario was that the core Mujuru-Zezuru faction in ZANU-PF would most probably use the post-election period to consolidate its position within the party and stabilize intra-party dissension by incorporating members of rival factions into their camp. One of the possible outcomes of this scenario could see a significantly weakened Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) invited into some sort of power-sharing arrangement or government of national reconciliation. Strengthened by a two-thirds majority and a re-committed and united leadership, ZANU-PF would extend an “olive branch” to the MDC thereby proving that, it too, is capable of reconciliation. In this way, a post-election ZANU-PF would mollify its critics under the rubric of “the national interest”.

Yet, as we developed this scenario we also warned that there was also the possibility that the ruling party would decide to go it alone, using its majority to definitively crush all opposition, inside and outside the party.⁴ We warned that “the party that emerged victorious from the March poll may be of little consequence in resolving Zimbabwe’s long standing crisis of governance if both ZANU-PF and the MDC are not committed to entering a new phase in their relationship, one which could foster broader positive interaction and policy formulation geared towards recovery”.⁵

ZANU-PF emerged from this election as the outright victor. In fact, the parliamentary poll of March 2005 saw the governing party securing a two-thirds parliamentary majority, winning 78 of the 120 elected seats. The MDC managed to gain only 41 seats, 16 fewer than in the 2000 elections, when it came within three seats of winning a parliamentary majority.⁶ This party has rejected the credibility of these results, claiming that the elections were rigged and that the voters’ roll was in a shambles.⁷ To make matters worse, it has maintained that the electoral playing field was skewed in favour of the ruling party – citing as evidence the fact that the president is authorised to appoint 30 non-constituency members to parliament (making up a total of 150 seats).

As things stand, ZANU-PF finds itself very much in the “pound seats”, because its two-thirds majority in parliament now allows it to change the constitution as it sees fit. Unfortunately, the ruling party has shown no inclination to use its resounding – albeit controversial – electoral triumph in a constructive manner

that would have engendered broader political interaction and a policy orientation focused on recovery.⁸ Instead, president Mugabe and ZANU-PF have used the two-thirds majority to entrench the power of the ruling party. By doing this, President Mugabe is clearly strengthening the position of the 'Zezuru old guard', who have proved more reliable and certainly more loyal than the so-called 'young Turks' in the party, who tried to challenge Mugabe over his appointment of Joyce Mujuru's as the country's second Vice President.⁹

In the executive, the appointments made to a now enlarged Cabinet of 30 ministries¹⁰ saw the president returning his trusted lieutenants to key ministries, such as the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The appointment of ZANU-PF Secretary for Administration Didymus Mutasa as the new State Security Minister, a key and influential post in Mugabe's government is an example of this. Zimbabwe's former ambassador to Britain, Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, another trusted lieutenant of Mugabe, took over as Foreign Affairs Minister from Stan Mudenge (demoted to the less influential Higher and Tertiary Education Ministry).¹¹ Zimbabwe's representative to the United Nations, Tichaona Jokonya, has replaced Moyo as the Minister of Information and Publicity. The ever-loyal Sydney Sekeramayi was retained as Defence Minister, as was Kembo Mohadi at Home Affairs and Herbert Murerwa as Finance Minister. Patrick Chinamasa, who led the purging of independent judges from Zimbabwe's bench, was retained at the Justice Ministry.¹²

Perhaps more ominously, a number of recent appointments have highlighted an increasing "securitisation" of government and the civil service. Mugabe has assigned key posts to members or allies of the Zezuru-led faction of powerful former army general Solomon Mujuru, and placed members of the security establishment in strategic civil service positions. A glaring example of this is the fact that Mugabe has given Mutasa (Minister for State Security) the responsibility to manage a new government taskforce that oversees the import and distribution of food in the country.

Operation Murambatsvina

In the midst of severe economic and social challenges, the Zimbabwean government saw it fit to embark on a much criticised and ill conceived 'urban renewal programme' code named *Operation Murambatsvina* (Restore Order), launched on 19 May this year. This clean-up operation began in Harare as a crackdown on unlicensed street markets and traders "to rid the capital of illegal structures, businesses and criminal activities". It quickly expanded to urban areas across the country to encompass unapproved housing and illegal extensions to homes owned or rented by the poor, with armed police (together with the army) deployed to enforce eviction orders and government officials insisting that the victims return to their rural home areas.

In order to stem the burgeoning international and domestic condemnation of the "clean-up" operation, the Zimbabwean government was quick to present it as part of a planned programme of urban regeneration claiming, that it had now on 9 July, launched a new operation, codenamed *Garikayi/ Hlalani Kuhle* ('Stay Well'). The government claimed that it had earmarked US\$ 300 million for this new operation, which would see the construction of houses for the urban poor affected by the demolitions.

Zimbabwe's political opposition was swift in maintaining that the primary goal of Murambatsvina was political. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) alleged that it was designed to destroy the party's urban support base, relocate people to the rural areas where they would be under the sway of ruling party-aligned chiefs, and forestall popular protest by the poor as the food crisis deepened. Analysts have pointed out the fact that the attack on the informal sector of the economy may have been carried out as a means of destroying the parallel market – which the government believes has been diverting away

desperately needed foreign currency away from the official economy. In fact, the parallel economy is one of the only growing sectors in this country's otherwise declining economy – a sector where the government has been unable to extract revenue from. If these, either in combination or individually, were the motivations for *Operation Murambatsvina*, they highlight a regrettable miscalculation on the part of the government. Economists estimate that the informal economy may generate anywhere between 40 to 50 percent of Zimbabwe's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employing up to 60 percent of Zimbabweans.

Considerations of whether the motivation for the clean up operation was rational or not, did not seem to limit the strongly worded criticism by the United Nations (UN) Secretary General's Special Envoy, UN-HABITAT Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka. Following a fact finding mission undertaken from 26 June to 8 July 2005, the UN special envoy called on the government to stop the demolitions of homes and markets that has affected 700,000 people, pay reparations to those who had lost housing and livelihoods and punish those who, "with indifference to human suffering", carried out the evictions. The UN Envoy noted that:

...The government of Zimbabwe should set a good example and adhere to the rule of law before it can credibly ask its citizens to do the same. Operation Restore Order breached both national and international human rights law provisions guiding evictions, thereby precipitating a humanitarian crisis.¹³

The report added that *Murambatsvina* "was implemented in a highly polarised political climate characterised by mistrust, fear and a lack of dialogue between government and local authorities, and between the former and civil society. Hundreds of thousands of women, men and children were made homeless, without access to food, water and sanitation, or health care. Education for thousands of school age children has been disrupted. Many of the sick, including those with HIV and AIDS, no longer have access to care. The vast majority of those directly and indirectly affected are the poor and disadvantaged segments of the population. They are, today, deeper in poverty, deprivation and destitution, and have been rendered more vulnerable." [sic]¹⁴ The report went on to note that:

...The humanitarian consequences of Operation Restore Order are enormous. It will take several years before the people and society as a whole can recover. There is an immediate need for the government of Zimbabwe to recognise the virtual state of emergency that has resulted, and to allow unhindered access by the international and humanitarian community to assist those that have been affected.¹⁵

As many as 2,4 million people may have been indirectly affected by an operation conducted by the police and army "at a time of persistent budget deficits, triple-digit inflation, critical food and fuel shortages and chronic shortages of foreign currency". Tibaijuka said the operation was based on colonial-era Rhodesian law and policy that had been "a tool of segregation and social exclusion", and called on President Robert Mugabe to bring national laws into line with the realities of the country's poor and international law.¹⁶

Despite the condemnation contained in the UN report, Local Government and Housing Minister Ignatius Chombo defended *Operation Murambatsvina* by saying that "the people evicted from their homes were in illegal settlements, and I don't think the UN can sanction illegality."¹⁷ Also of relevance is the fact that the UN envoy considered that *Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle* was beyond the capacity of the government to implement, and appealed to the international community to mobilise immediate aid to avert further suffering.

Increased Securitisation of the State?

While for many, the fact that *Operation Murambatsvina* was conducted by the

military is *prima facie* evidence of an increased securitisation of the state – the evidence of such a disturbing propensity is found elsewhere. Yes, it is the case that the unique organisation and efficiency of the military in Zimbabwe make it the only institution capable of undertaking such a large-scale operation.

The placing of military and security personnel in several top-level positions in civilian institutions is perhaps of greater concern. At the helm the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC), the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe (NOCZIM), to name a few we now find military people. Does this increased securitisation signify the general collapse of the civil service – one in which the military is the instrument of last resort?

Some analysts have in fact considered that the pervasive penetration of the military and the intelligence sectors in civilian institutions may constitute evidence that something akin to a military “coup” has already taken place in Zimbabwe. In this regard, the statement by the heads of the armed forces on 9 Jan 2002 that the presidency is a ‘straight jacket’ and that they would not salute a Commander-in-Chief (President) who lacked what they described as “suitable liberation credentials”, is often seen as an indication of the pivotal role that the military can play in this country.

In this role the military perceive themselves to be more than just the custodians of Zimbabwean territorial integrity and sovereignty from external threats, but also as some type of *Praetorian Guard* that must safeguard ZANU-PF’s political dominance. These scenarios notwithstanding, the increased securitisation of the state and the tendency of the governing elite to rely on the military to address non-military threats is a worrying development, one which further undermines democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe and may create a culture of impunity and military intervention in domestic affairs.

The process of regime change in Africa, as in most of the world, has typically occurred during periods that are characterized by political, social and/or economic crisis. While the general expectation is that peaceful, negotiated regime change will result in more inclusive (and, many would hope, more democratic) political systems, the reality is that political change rarely occurs in a linear manner.¹⁸

However, what prompts authoritarian regimes to liberalise, to become more democratic, to accept political competition? Traditional scholarship has often put forward expected-utility theories, and in particular used rational-choice models of decision-making as the conceptual framework most suitable to explain political behaviour. In this sense, as Nicholson points out, “actors behave in circumstances of risk as if they were maximising the expected value of some defined concept of utility”.¹⁹ Applied to the case of Zimbabwe, this would mean that the use of violence or other means of coercion would cease when the cost of coercion is estimated as being higher than the benefits of liberalization.²⁰ Yet, even when faced with economic collapse, a deteriorating humanitarian situation and the increasing likelihood of social unrest, Zimbabwe’s ruling elite continues to view the use of violence as an acceptable means of attaining its political objectives as was highlighted by *Operation Murambatsvina*.

Are there factors deeply entrenched in ZANU-PF’s political culture that may help us understand its current resistance to change? Is it the case that Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle had the unintended consequence of adding a counter-revolutionary tendency to the nationalist movement? Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger have argued that Zimbabwean nationalism has been “basically hegemonic and intolerant of diversity, internal and external criticism and dissent. As a movement it was basically sweeping in what it claimed and annihilatory in what it rejected”. Furthermore, these authors consider that:

...perhaps there was something inherent in nationalism itself even before the wars and the adoption of socialism, which gave rise to authoritarianism. Maybe nationalism's emphasis on unity at all costs—its subordination of trade unions and churches and all other African organisations to its imperatives—gave rise to an intolerance of pluralism. Maybe nationalism's glorification of the leader gave rise to a post-colonial cult of personality. Maybe nationalism's commitment to modernisation, whether socialist or not, inevitably implied a 'commandist' state. Indeed the post-colonial state authoritarianism cannot be explained only on the basis of its being a successor to an equally authoritarian settler colonial state. Rather, the legacy of African nationalism itself tainted the post-colonial state with authoritarian tendencies.²¹

This negative aspect of the legacy of liberation is particularly evident in the electoral politics of Zimbabwe. Robert Mugabe illustrated this phenomenon when he said, as far back as 1976 that:

Our votes must go together with our guns; after all, any vote we shall have, shall have been the product of the gun. The gun, which produces the votes, should remain its security officer, its guarantor. The people's vote and the people's guns are always inseparable twins.²²

According to Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Zimbabwe's political culture is largely a product of four main influences: the pre-colonial, the colonial, the armed liberation struggle and ZANU-PF rule.²³ This author considers that the contemporary political culture of Zimbabwe "represents an articulation of these four streams. The four influences that gave birth to the Zimbabwean political culture were all undemocratic".²⁴ Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes that,

...Colonial authoritarianism, far from deepening a commitment to democratic norms and practices on the African nationalist elite, merely consolidated an incipient authoritarian psyche in the nationalist leadership. The authoritarianism of the colonial era reproduced itself within the nationalist political movements. The war of liberation, too, reinforced rather than undermined this authoritarian culture (...) Every African was expected to embrace the liberation war and every one had to toe the line. This, more than anything else, generated and institutionalised a culture of fear, conformity and unquestioning support. The guerrilla armies and the nationalist parties were never democratically structured and did not operate in a democratic fashion. They were highly commandist and authoritarian.²⁵

It is clear that, to some extent, Zimbabwe's current predicament stems from its colonial, liberation and immediate post-independence experience. In this regard, the most significant contributory factors are as follows:

- Zimbabwe's leadership has failed to transform the repressive colonial state structure it inherited into a truly democratic one – largely a result of the fact that this former liberation movement has been unable to change itself into a democratic political movement. Unable to accept challenges to its rule, ZANU-PF has not fulfilled the promise made at independence, that of political freedom for all in Zimbabwe;
- The inability of ZANU-PF to instil a culture of citizenship and participatory democracy, coupled with institutionalised remnants of colonial practices, has resulted in an almost complete lack of accountability and transparency by post-independence governments;
- The increased control of all sectors of the state by networks of patronage based on regional, ethnic and political affiliation. As we mentioned elsewhere, "Zimbabwe has become a nation of accomplices joined together by ethnicity, region, political affiliation and war credentials. Government, amongst other vices, specializes in covers and cover-ups. It is for this reason that a justice system manned by kinsmen and party cadres is as evil as the Rhodesian system which was constructed along racial lines".²⁶

Holding on to power? The elite in Zimbabwe

- The structural adjustment policies introduced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank had a very weak human development component, exacerbating poverty in Zimbabwe. While the neo-liberal democratic model propounded by structural adjustment prescribed a weakening of the state's role, it came at a time when a more interventionist role for the state was required in light of severe human development deficit in the country.

The marginalization of other factions in the ruling party has opened the way for a post-election realignment within ZANU-PF, which has seen the balance of power shifting further in favour of the Zezuru faction. This has occurred at a time when the fortunes of the political opposition in Zimbabwe have declined. The result has been that this elite cabal has acquired almost hegemonic dominance of Zimbabwe's political economy – the very reason we describe politics in Zimbabwe as a “*Zezuru sum game*”. This term indicates the dominance of the Zezuru faction in a political environment that lacks any political force, either within or outside ZANU-PF, which can act as a counter-balance.

A notable illustration of this is the deliberate allocation of key positions in government and the ruling party to members of the Zezuru faction – bringing it a step closer to acquiring absolute control of the ruling party and all the other important institutions of the state (the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and all the security agencies). President Mugabe seems to believe that by placing trusted members in strategic positions he will secure protection from the threat of prosecution in the future (for human rights abuses, corruption, etc). Averting any unforeseen transfer of authority in the near future (democratic alternance) the Zezuru at the core of the government and ZANU-PF will ultimately decide who gets what, when and how. The danger is that the dominance of the Zezuru in government and in the ruling party may exacerbate inter-ethnic tensions, as various other factions challenge the dominance of the Zezuru. Such struggles for power within the party may further hamper efforts to find a negotiated solution to the crisis in Zimbabwe.²⁷

The Opposition

Since attaining its independence from Britain, Zimbabwe has been ruled by one party, the ZANU-PF, and led by President Robert Mugabe. Even though this country is for all purposes a *de jure* democracy, credible opposition to ZANU-PF did not begin to emerge until the early 1990s, under conditions of growing poverty and unemployment and public concern about presidential powers. In fact, the steady decline in living standards for most Zimbabweans throughout the 1990s was one of the main reasons for the growing dissatisfaction with the government. Judging by its track record, ZANU-PF has failed to provide the broad mass of the people with either human security or social peace, despite its nationalist rhetoric. Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya examine this deficiency in their work *Zimbabwe's plunge: Exhausted nationalism, neoliberalism, and the search for social justice*. They argue that after two decades of independence, the country's voters are experiencing “fatigue” arising from the ruling party's misgovernment and economic mismanagement.²⁸

The adoption by ZANU-PF of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991, had a devastating impact on living conditions in the country: indigenous industries built up behind protective barriers were devastated by cheap imports; unemployment soared; the poor were hit by rampant inflation, and new charges for health and education services. Yet, trade unions and civil society organisations found their efforts to engage with ZANU-PF over these issues rebutted by an increasingly authoritarian regime. Eventually, a series of strikes in 1996-98, particularly in the public sector, forced Mugabe to concede wage increases.

What these developments demonstrated was the triumph of strategic mass action against state repression and intransigence. This set the leadership of the

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and the political elite within ZANU-PF on a collision course. So deep was the resentment that the state daily paper, the Herald, habitually referred to labour leaders as “stooges of white imperial interests”. Peasants also expressed their frustration through spontaneous land invasions, and liberation war veterans demanded compensation for their sacrifice.

Throughout the 1990s pressure grew within civil society for a radical revision of the post-independence constitution – a pressure that finally gained expression with the creation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA). In addition, calls for the creation of a workers’ party were made. This prompted civic groups and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) to form a political party, the MDC, led by Morgan Tsvangirai, in September 1999. This was a broad coalition, which included support from NCA activists, members of the ZCTU as well as representatives from the business community. This most unlikely alliance, divided on several important policy orientations (including price controls and subsidies; or liberalisation versus greater state intervention in the economy), was united in opposing Mugabe’s increasingly personalist, authoritarian and antidemocratic rule. The MDC is therefore a coalition united more by distaste for Mugabe and ZANU-PF than by unity of political purpose.

Although the core areas of MDC support are limited to Matebeleland and Manicaland, particularly in these provinces’ urban areas, it was not until a coalition of urban dwellers, workers and trade unionists, students, middle class professionals (particularly lawyers) and human rights activists had been formed that ZANU-PF began to lose its urban power base. The unifying vision of liberation had broken down, linked to the ‘democratic deficit’ and the failing economic environment.

These achievements notwithstanding, the MDC has not been able to translate popular discontent over government policies into mass mobilisation in support of the opposition. This failure stems not only from deficiencies within the opposition itself, but equally from extreme and structural bias in the electoral process. The MDC has yet to participate in an election that can objectively be deemed free and fair. It is ironic, particularly in the year that marks a quarter-century of independence, that the early struggle for liberation from colonial rule was based on extending the vote to all, regardless of ethnicity, race or affiliation (whether political or religious).

What then is often presented as a weakness (the broad spectrum of organisations and political tendencies involved as components of the party) has also been an element of strength for the MDC. The broad composition of the MDC (strong and highly politicised civil society; a trade union movement; a business sector that has been dragged reluctantly into the political arena) may in fact explain why it has been capable of withstanding the attacks from the government and ZANU-PF. In the face of state-organised violence, the party has seriously threatened the ZANU-PF regime. It has built successfully on the struggles of the 1990s, uniting disparate social forces.

Nevertheless, the MDC has struggled to keep these different social forces unified under its leadership – as tendencies within the party have clashed on ideological grounds and on fundamental differences in policy. Factionalism in the MDC could ultimately lead to its disintegration.

The period after the 2005 Parliamentary elections requires the MDC to define a new set of values (inspirational and strategic) that will keep the coalition intact. There are evident cracks, with some sectors calling for mass uprising whilst others prescribe negotiations and international intervention. Secondly, Tsvangirai, as leader of the opposition, is neither in parliament nor in government. In a sense many of the recognised activities of the MDC are taking place without his active involvement. The dilemma is that there are situations

where a parliamentary caucus' agenda may be different from the broader party's position. Thus there have been instances where sentiments attributed to various pockets of the MDC leadership are contradictory. Cases in point are Eddie Cross's views on privatisation and Munyaradzi Gwisai's position on the land issue.

The MDC faces a challenge of articulation, particularly during possible negotiations with the ZANU-PF. President Mugabe has 'displaced' the crisis affecting his country: from the national to the regional level as a pan-African struggle against imperial domination. The MDC has not been as successful in its regional diplomacy. There is thus a need for the MDC to rethink its regional strategy and refine its prescriptions for a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe. In particular, the MDC needs to clearly articulate its position on the contentious issues of race relations, north-south relations, resource redistribution and the broader pan-African agenda. The simple question after the presidential poll has been, "What is the MDC's agenda now? That agenda must be well articulated, well publicised and owned by the membership.

*...the economy has contracted by more than a third in the past five years. Almost three quarters of the employable population are unemployed, an estimated 78% of the populace barely survive at levels below the poverty line, while almost half the population is suffering malnutrition, their incomes below the poverty line. Zimbabwe's balance of payments has been so negative that available foreign currency exchange does not even meet half of its imports and other current foreign exchange outgoings, let alone service external debt."*²⁹

Once robust, Zimbabwe's economy has been devastated by bad policy decisions, mismanagement, corruption, and political instability. In the early 1980's, growth records were exceptional at some 12% in 1980 and 7.5% in 1981, a reflection of the return to peace, favourable rains and high domestic demand. Since then, the economy has been on a downward trend. While during the eighties, growth averaged 4% and during the nineties it averaged 2%; growth declined sharply in 1999 to -1.4%, and was estimated to be around -6% in 2000 and -5.3% in 2003.

After abandoning the IMF programme in 1984, the government adopted tight and comprehensive state controls, but restricted access to foreign exchange led to a loss of support from the business community. In 1990 the government launched a five-year Economic Structural Adjustment Programme: state enterprises were to be privatised, trade to be liberalised, the budget deficit and inflation cut. Severe drought and a contracting economy held up the programme, which was renewed in 1994. However, a year later, the IMF suspended the programme due to a rising budget deficit. Since mid-1997 economic policy has seen a series of reversals from a commitment to economic reform, to the total abandonment of liberalisation.

With the exception of South Africa, Zimbabwe had a more diversified economy than any of its neighbours. In 1999 services contributed around 56% of GDP, the manufacturing sector was well developed, generating about 17% of GDP. Although the mining sector contributed only 4% to GDP, export earnings totalled 15% in 1998.

The implementation of the land reform programme in 1999/2000 resulted in a sharp drop in output from the commercial sector, causing the value of exports to decline by around 30% from an estimated export value of US\$1bn in 2000.

Domestic debt has trebled to US\$1,1 billion, and according to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, foreign currency reserves now meet less than 10% of demand from the productive sector. Annual inflows of foreign exchange from tobacco, which is Zimbabwe's main export crop, the sales of which began on local auction floors in April, are far below average. Experts have attributed this decline to poor crop quality and reduced output. The relative price stability of essential commodities maintained over the last year has ended, and reductions in inflation have

bottomed out. Prices are said to have increased by 100% since the election. The inflation figures released by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe at the end of April calculate inflation at less than 130%,³⁰ but economists from the private sector believe a more accurate estimate is somewhere between 300-400%.

Consistent with Zimbabwe's "Look East" foreign policy (adopted as a response to sanctions imposed by the West – primarily the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (USA) and the European Union (EU) – and also as part of a last ditch attempt to avert discussion on Operation Murambatsvina in the UN Security Council as well as expulsion from the IMF, President Robert Mugabe travelled to China in search of support. Analysts speculated that Mugabe might have offered the Chinese more substantial commercial concessions, including access to coal and platinum deposits in return for help in some of the issues mentioned above.³¹

Yet, although Mugabe seems to have secured China's veto in the UN Security Council against the report on Zimbabwe's clean-up campaign, "he did not, however, procure the economic aid package that he had asked for. Mugabe only received US\$6 million from the Chinese government", which is a drop in the ocean, when compared to the vital cash injection that the Zimbabwean government needs in order to avert total economic collapse.³²

Before President Mugabe departed for China, reports indicated that bilateral discussions involving the Zimbabwean and the South African governments, and related to a requested by the former for a US\$ 1 Billion dollar loan, were at a very advanced stage.³³ On 18 July 2005, South African government spokesman Joel Netshitenzhe confirmed that South Africa and Zimbabwe were engaged in talks, stating that:

*...Our government has been having intense discussions with the Zimbabweans on how we can assist them in their programme of economic recovery, as well as matters pertaining to the normalisation of the political situation in that country.*³⁴

Observers have pointed out that the delays in announcing details surrounding the loan could have been a result of the South African government's attempts at committing Zimbabwe to a set of stringent political and economic conditions. As part of South Africa's diplomatic strategy towards Zimbabwe (*silently engaging* President Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF to enter into dialogue with the MDC and to institute economic reforms) these conditions may have included:

- Constitutional reform;
- Electoral reform;
- Repeal of draconian legislation – the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

This attempt by the South African government to bring ZANU-PF to the negotiation table and to institute progressive reforms could have been undermined by the growing role of China in this country. Unlike their South African counterparts, the Chinese government has not been known for its intervention in support of good governance, respect for human rights and democracy. Analysts have pointed out that South Africa would be well advised to consider giving the loan both to avoid the consequences of having a failed state on its northern borders as well as not to "lose its geo-strategic influence in the Southern African Development Community to China".³⁵

As we have mentioned elsewhere, "the South African diplomatic position, described in media circles as "quiet diplomacy", has surprised if not disillusioned many observers who for one reason or another expected a stronger stance from Pretoria vis-à-vis developments in Zimbabwe". What is more likely is that Pretoria's policy of "quiet diplomacy", has been based on the theory that reform could best come from within the ruling party, as the armed forces have clearly

positioned themselves on its side.³⁶ Some have in fact suggested that South Africa seeks to use its diplomatic clout to reduce outside pressure on Mugabe while concentrating on encouraging the ZANU-PF to change from within. MDC leaders, especially the party Secretary General, Welshman Ncube, who led the MDC negotiating team, tend to support this view.³⁷

In a bizarre turn of events, the government paper *The Herald* reported that the proposed US\$1 billion loan from South Africa to Zimbabwe is in fact the product of an approach by the United States government to South African president Thabo Mbeki to “bail out Zimbabwe”. The Herald claims that a highly-placed Western diplomat in South Africa confirmed that IMF’s Deputy Managing Director Anne Krueger approached Mbeki and asked him to advance financial support to Zimbabwe ahead of the IMF summit set for September. The story said Mbeki was surprised that the United States, which had supported the cutting of Zimbabwe’s lines of credit from organisations such as the IMF, was now against Zimbabwe’s expulsion. If these allegations are proved, they could undermine South Africa’s credibility by allowing the portraying of this country as a front for western interests in the region.

The current dilemma facing Zimbabwe’s ruling political elite has arisen out of uncertainty and fear. Uncertainty about the challenges it may face as a result of the opening of the political space for true multi-party politics. Fear of what an opposition party in government could do, in particular the threat of prosecution of the current elite for human rights abuses and corruption. The case of Zambia and Malawi must loom ominously in the minds of the Zimbabwean elite.

The current trajectory of President Mugabe and ZANU-PF continues to raise serious concerns about the future of Zimbabwe and the immediate situation of ordinary Zimbabweans. The regime has used the post-election period to launch further attacks on opponents, both inside and outside of the party and taken a series of chaotic policy decisions in a bid to further entrench their power. *Operation Murambatsvina*, in its heavy handed and violent nature as well as profound disregard for human rights, is but an example.

The recently adopted Constitutional Amendment Bill, which prevents court challenges to government seizures of land as part of the “fast-track” land reform programme and allows authorities to withdraw passports from individuals suspected of conducting “terrorist” activities is a clear example of the further encroachment on civil liberties in Zimbabwe. In addition, the same Act has strengthened President Mugabe’s hold on power by effectively bringing to 26 the total number of legislators directly or indirectly handpicked by Mugabe.

These recent events have been met with strong protest from the MDC and civil society organisations. Yet, to no avail. As a result, the more positive predictions made before and during the immediate post-election period have now failed to materialize. This is particularly true as regards the scenario which anticipated that by winning an overwhelming majority ZANU-PF would amend the constitution in order to create a *soft-landing* for Zimbabwe’s ageing head of state.

Our worst predictions, namely that the ruling party would decide to go it alone by using its majority to definitively crush all opposition in the country have arisen. In this process, the increasing “securitisation” of government and the civil service is being used as the ultimate weapon.

President Mugabe is clearly strengthening the position of the ‘Zezuru old guard’ and the appointments made to Cabinet have seen the return of some of his more reliable lieutenants to key ministries, such as the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, Mugabe has assigned key posts to members or allies of the Zezuru-led faction of powerful former army general Solomon Mujuru and placed members of the security establishment in strategic civil service positions.

Similarly, policy shifts allowing for some accommodation with the international community have not taken place – Zimbabwe finds itself more isolated than before the elections. Given Mugabe's intransigence and failure to accept international initiatives aimed at alleviating the crisis, third-party's policy-options are limited -as evidenced by the outright rejection of attempts led by AU Chairman President Obasanjo, aimed at brokering inter-party talks to be mediated by AU Special Envoy to Zimbabwe, former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano.

A failure by the Zimbabwean elite to recognise that the situation has reached catastrophic proportions, will result in Zimbabweans of all walks of life continuing to see their livelihoods compromised and further eroded. South Africa's assumption that reform can only come from within the ruling party may well be correct. Yet, time to take concerted action seems to be running out – positive change agents within the ruling party must be identified as a matter of urgency.

- 1 Chris Maroleng is a Senior Researcher at the African Security Analysis Programme, Institute for Security Studies.
- 2 Operation Restore Order: A positive and corrective campaign. ZANU-PF Official website. <http://www.zanupfpub.co.zw/>.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 The results showed the same patterns as in 2000. The MDC won virtually all the seats in the main cities, Harare and Bulawayo, where civil society organisations are relatively strong and able to prevent electoral manipulation. The MDC also won a majority of seats in the southern region of Matabeleland, where the Ndebele people, once supporters of the late Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU, continue to oppose the Shona-dominated ZANU-PF. But in rural Mashonaland, in central and northern Zimbabwe, where the majority of the population lives, ZANU-PF won all but one seat. <http://www.answers.com/topic/zimbabwe-parliamentary-elections-2005>.
- 7 As the results were published, the MDC denounced what it called "the sham elections", which it said had been marked by massive electoral fraud. "The elections cannot be judged to be free and fair," an MDC statement said. "The distorted nature of the pre-election playing field and the failure to address core democratic deficits preclude a free and fair election." The MDC claimed that it would have won 90 seats if the election had been conducted correctly. See Zimbabwe parliamentary elections, 2005. <http://www.answers.com/topic/zimbabwe-parliamentary-elections-2005>.
- 8 For example, the governing party could have: (1) entered into a formal dialogue with the opposition and civil society aimed at finding a resolution to the political crisis and aimed at economic recovery; (2) invited the MDC into some sort of power-sharing arrangement in the interim, up until constitutional, electoral and security sector reforms were in place, which would allow for joint parliamentary and presidential elections to be held in 2010; (3) repealed legislation like the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Non-Governmental Organisations Act (NGOA) which would have allowed for a return to the full and unconditional rule of law, under an independent judiciary and the creation of a freer and more inclusive political environment; (4) amended the constitution following a transparent and broad-based consultation with all stakeholders, thereby guaranteeing civil liberties, restoring the rule of law and entrenching democratic values; (5) consolidated the ruling party by resolving the succession question and factionalism through the incorporation of progressive members of rival factions; (6) instituting measures geared towards the stabilisation of the economic situation and encouraging sound economic management, focussed on development, economic recovery and mitigation of the food security and energy crisis; (7) initiated steps directed at thawing the cold relationship with the "West".
- 9 In this regard see C. Maroleng. *Zimbabwe's 2005 Election: Overture or Finale? Situation Report*, African Security Analysis Programme, Institute for Security Studies, 10 May 2005. At a meeting in Tsholotsho the younger elements in the party came together to frame what became known as the Tsholotsho Declaration, expressing their criticism of Mugabe's choice by demanding that a younger candidate replace Vice-President Msika. In fact, observers noted that the Tsholotsho meeting was nothing less than an attempted "palace coup" – one in which all positions would be filled by Mnangagwa and his supporters. Their temerity was rewarded by the loss of party positions at politburo, central committee and provincial levels, in what may yet prove to be fatal to their political careers. A number of these "rebels" were also subsequently charged with providing confidential information to foreign powers, and others found themselves excluded and sidelined at the primaries for ZANU-PF's parliamentary candidates. A number of Mnangagwa's associates also fell victim to an anticorruption purge in which Solomon Mujuru played a key role at Mugabe's behest.

- 10 Paradoxically described as a “development cabinet”.
- 11 Mudenge supported former government propaganda chief Jonathan Moyo in a plot to block the elevation of Joyce Mujuru to second vice-president of ZANU PF. His downgrading is in line with the demotions of nearly all the key figures that tried to block the rise of Mujuru.
- 12 Chinamasa's previous record in this ministry must have been impressive enough to move President Mugabe to overlook his apparent disloyalty, having joined Moyo in trying to block Mujuru's rise.
- 13 *Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to Assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina* by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe. Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka. 18 July 2005.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 *ZIMBABWE: Stinging UN report condemns evictions*. IRIN. 22 July 2005.
- 18 See M Ayoob, The Third World security predicament in B Job, (ed) *The Insecurity Dilemma: Security of Third World States*, Rienner, Boulder, 1992, pp 63-80.
- 19 M Nicholson, The conceptual bases of the war trap, in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 13(2), June 1987. The earlier description of expected-utility analysis is taken from J von Neumann & O Morgenstern, *Theory of games and economic behaviour*, Princeton University Press, 1944 as cited in
- 20 B Buzan, *People and fear: An agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War Era*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1991.
- 21 Bhebe, Ngwabi & Ranger (eds) *Nationalism, Democracy and Human Rights*, Volume Two: *Colonial and Post-Colonial Legacies*, University of Zimbabwe Publications, Harare, 2003
- 22 These sentiments expressing his view of electoral democracy were uttered during a radio broadcast from Maputo in 1976. ZANU-PF has demonstrated this philosophy ever since it attained power in 1980, although admittedly this was power guaranteed it by its control of the gun. Zimbabweans have, therefore, been held hostage to the gun ever since Independence. The ZANU-PF regime consolidated itself in the 1980s through the use of the gun, crushing the rival ZAPU-PF and culminating in the forced “Unity Accord” of 22 December 1987. In each successive election since independence, the gun has been the “security officer”, the “guarantor” of the votes for Mugabe and ZANU-PF who have not hesitated to use it. ZANU-PF's commitment to the use of the gun has increased as its popularity has decreased, particularly since the party was defeated in the referendum held in February 2000 and the advent of a formidable opposition party in the MDC. For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see the late great Masipula Sithole's the fight for democracy needs commitment to democracy, *The financial Gazette*, 6 January 2002. http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/june14_2002.html.
- 23 S J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Dynamics of the Zimbabwe crisis in the 21st century, *Africa Journal in Conflict Resolution* 1, 2003.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 C. Maroleng, Closed Roundtable Report: *Prospects for Political Transition in Zimbabwe*. Institute for Security Studies, May 2003.
- 27 see, C. Maroleng. *Zimbabwe's Zezuru Sum Game: The basis for the security dilemma in which the political elite finds itself*. African Security Review. Vol.14. No 3. 2005.
- 28 P Bond & M Manyanya, *Zimbabwe's plunge: Exhausted nationalism, neoliberalism, and the search for social justice*, Weaver Press, Harare, 2002.
- 29 E. W Bloch. *Counting Mugabe's troubles*. *Mail and Guardian (SA)*, 12 August 2005.
- 30 Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe official website. <http://www.rbz.co.zw/about.inflation.asp>.
- 31 For more details see *President Mugabe visits China*, *The China Monitor*, a publication of the Centre for Chinese Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Stellenbosch. August 2005. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe was in China for a six day visit from 23 July, to meet for talks with senior leaders, among them Chinese President Hu Jiantao. Following sanctions and isolation by Western countries over the political crisis in the country, Zimbabwe adopted a ‘Look East’ policy, fostering new relations with Asian countries, particularly China, Malaysia and Singapore. Mugabe has won backing from China with Wu Bangguo, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, voicing support for his controversial land reform program on a visit to Harare last year.
- 32 *President Mugabe visits China*, Ibid. A Publication of: The Centre for Chinese Studies Faculty.
- 33 Other reports have indicated that the amount being offered by the South Africans is less than the US\$ 1 billion mentioned above, being for US\$ 500 million. It is also believed that part of this money will be utilised to pay off Zimbabwe's debt to the IMF, in a bid to halt its possible expulsion from this institution. It has further been suggested that the rest of the money may be used to supply Zimbabwe with commodities that are in short supply. This would include fuel and electricity to reduce the negative impact to the economy caused by Zimbabwe's energy crisis.
- 34 K. Brown, D. Muleya and J. Katzenellenbogen, *SA takes hard line on Mugabe bale-out*, *Business Day (SA)*, 19 July 2005.
- 35 Ibid.

