

# ZIMBABWE



COUNTRY ANALYSIS

# ZIMBABWE ANALYSIS INDEX

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# I INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW



## INTRODUCTION

At its independence in April 1980, Zimbabwe held a great promise. Its gushing Zambezi River boasted wildlife and agriculture, with the Victoria Falls as one of the seven natural wonders of the world. Its lush soil was the envy of a continent. And, despite being landlocked, the country was modernized, with an incredible road network, four airports, and, partly because of Mugabe's leadership, a rigorous and inclusive education system (Power 2003). All these factors caused the average Zimbabwean to be able to live a decent life. Thirty-eight years later, only very few Zimbabwean citizens can still say they move through that same life in a carefree manner.

Several months away from the 2018-general elections, Zimbabwe has a formal-unemployment rate of somewhere between 85 and 95 percent.<sup>1</sup> The devaluation of stand-in currency 'bondnotes' represents the newest economic challenge for the country (The Economist 2017), as financial markets become more and more instable. The current situation starts to resemble that of 2008, when hyperinflation caused empty shelves and mass hysteria in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, civil-liberties and human rights are under severe pressure. In the last years, police continuously arrested and charged individuals who criticized former President Robert Mugabe under criminal-law provisions prohibiting insult or so-called nuisance crimes (Freedom House 2017). In October 2017, a ministry of "Cyber Security, Threat Detection and Mitigation" was introduced, clamping down on citizens who have been using social media to criticize their government (Dendere and Dionne 2017).

How did Zimbabwe end up in its current state of decay, and what are the perspectives towards the 2018 elections, and beyond? In this analysis, CANVAS will provide insightful reflections on the essential features of Zimbabwe's current position. In the first part of this analysis, we will combine factual content on the current situation in Zimbabwe, with more analytical reflections on the dynamics behind the political-, socio-economic-, democratic-, and human-rights situation in the country. We will shine our light on who makes waves in Zimbabwe and the international dimension to the situation. In the second part of the analysis, CANVAS will offer you our familiar, more formal pillar analysis and potential outcomes.

As this report was being written, the political situation in Zimbabwe changed dramatically. On 15 November 2017, the army takes control over the country, in what can be described as a silent coup. These actions are directed at the top of the ruling-party leadership, stopping the rise of Grace Mugabe and the G40-faction that is backing her. Negotiations are started with President Robert Mugabe, to peacefully hand over his power, and after a week of negotiations, the Head of State decides to step down. Former Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa is sworn-in as his replacement. It is too early to tell about the changes his leadership will bring, but we can at least conclude that there are no signs of a more inclusive political trajectory towards the 2018 elections. In the meantime, this analysis will provide the necessary background, to better understand Zimbabwe's current situation, and the direction the country might be heading towards.



## POLITICAL SITUATION

With the general elections in 2018 as the next point at the horizon, Zimbabwe's political landscape does currently not offer a very hopeful outlook. On one side of the spectrum there is ruling-party ZANU-PF. After the factional infighting resulted in President Robert Mugabe stepping down, the party seems more united than it ever was in the last four years. As President Emmerson Mnangagwa has only been in office since late November, his leadership-style and policy-priorities are slowly becoming clear. On the other end of the spectrum, the political opposition is fractured, but most importantly seems to have completely lost the trust of the Zimbabwean citizen. After hopes were raised high at the time of the Government of National Unity in 2009, especially the MDC lost a lot of public support, party explaining the landslide victory of ZANU-PF in the 2013 elections. Although the opposition tries to re-align and form a solid alternative to five more years of ZANU-PF after 2018, hope for change is far from omnipresent.



## A. POLITICAL SYSTEM AND HISTORY

Zimbabwean politics takes place in the framework of a presidential republic, in which the President is both the Head of State and head of the Government. Where legislative power is vested in both the government and parliament, both entities are strongly dominated by ruling party ZANU-PF, after their landslide victory in the 2013 elections. Zimbabwe's Parliament consists of the lower chamber, the 270-seat National Assembly, and the 80-seat Senate. Currently, ZANU-PF controls 57 (71%) seats in the Senate, followed by MDC-T controlling 21 (26%) and MDC-N controlling 2 (1%) of the seats. ZANU-PF also controls 196 (73%) seats in the House of Assembly, with MDC-T controlling 70 (26%) and MDC-N controlling 2 (<1%) of the seats.<sup>2</sup>

## PRESIDENT



Ever since Zimbabwe's independence, Robert Mugabe has had the tendency to lead Zimbabwe away from its parliamentary democratic formal being, towards a centrally ruled one party state. After Mugabe's ZANU merged with Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU in 1987, the role of Prime Minister (previously held by Mugabe) was eliminated and the Presidency in its current form originated. Mugabe has held the role of President of Zimbabwe ever since the position gained its current form.

For his full 37 years in power, Mugabe strived to retain absolute control over the ruling party. The President's leadership has been largely sustained by generating and manipulating factions, to weaken internal dissent in ZANU-PF and government. These factions make it difficult to unite against him (Msindo 2016: 148), as we saw happening in the recent succession-debate prior to the military coup.<sup>3</sup>

Externally to the ruling party, Robert Mugabe has not tolerated much dissent. Here, however, the former President used more (openly) repressive tactics. Although Mugabe's regime officially abandoned the one-party state idea after the 1990 elections (Msindo 2016: 160), op-



posing forces have usually been struck by “a coalition of political and military elites [who stand] ready and willing to employ violence to execute the Machiavellian vision of President Robert Mugabe and perpetuate his control of the state” (Masunungure 2011). Under Mugabe’s rule, ZANU-PF has muted criticism in any form, by criminalizing political opposition and creating fear among Zimbabwean citizens (Oberdorf 2017: 31).

Opposite to what the international image of the President might suggest, not only dictatorship has sustained Robert Mugabe’s political career, but also popular consent (Mamdani 2009). Mugabe’s land reform measures, however harsh, have won him considerable popularity. Furthermore, many Zimbabwean citizens, especially those who lived through Rhodesian times, generally believe in the “patriotic history” created by the Mugabe regime. This doctrine is used by the ruling party ZANU-PF to construct a Zimbabwean nationalism, rooted in the country’s history as a “product of a bitter and protracted armed struggle,” with Mugabe as its main protagonist. (Ranger 2004: 218).

Overall, the power of the Zimbabwean President heavily leans on a system of patronage, coercion and repression, in which criticism is muted and attempts to weaken the regime’s grip on power are answered with force and violence.<sup>4</sup> Mugabe’s post-independence rule has been characterized as “a militarized form of electoral authoritarianism” (Masunungure 2009: 82). The use of a patronage system and nationalist narrative are not likely to be abandoned by Mugabe’s successor Mnangagwa.



## ELECTIONS

Where several scholars have argued that elections have become little more than empty rituals in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012), we cannot neglect them as decisive moments in the course of the country’s development. Although ZANU-PF has not approached elections as the main source of the party’s political legitimacy and mandate to run Zimbabwe, we have seen highly competitive run-offs until 2013. Competitive or not, for the past two decades, elections in Zimbabwe have brought high tensions, fear, and sometimes violence to the Zimbabwean citizens.

- HEAD OF STATE
- PRESIDENT
- LEGISLATURE



In legal terms, the Zimbabwean people elect a head of State, a President and their legislature. The Presidential term is five years, and the President is elected by majority, with a second round if no candidate receives an absolute majority in the first round. In Zimbabwe's bicameral system, the members of the House of Assembly and the Senate get chosen every five years. Following the 2013 constitution, the House of Assembly has 270 members, of which 210 are elected by single-member constituencies and 60 additional seats are reserved for women. The Senate has 80 members: 60 are elected for five-year terms in 6-member constituencies representing one of the 10 provinces, elected based on the votes in the lower house election, using party-list proportional representation.<sup>5</sup>

Zimbabwe's first five general elections before the turn of the century, and the two presidential elections since 1990 simply continued ZANU-PF's electoral hegemony. Prior to the year 2000, the ruling party cannot be said to have ever adhered to the principles of multiparty democracy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012: 7). In this period, violence has kept opposition parties from serious campaigning and only independent candidates emerged to challenge the ZANU-PF monopoly on power (Sithole & Makumbe 1997: 123). The ruling party's *Gukurahundi*-policy of undisguised, intolerant, and deliberately violent policy towards the opposition made for no potent counterforce to remain. As for the ruling party itself, it consistently remained to the left of Zimbabwe's political spectrum, while no other party has portrayed a more nationalist position. ZANU-PF "skillfully articulated populist policies on land, employment, indigenization of the economy, [...] particularly on the eve of each election year" (idem: 132).

While the Mugabe regime faced growing unrest in the late 1990s, it was also confronted with the first real opposition to Mugabe's government. In September 1999, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was founded, initiating more than a decade of competitive opposition politics. After a ZANU-PF backed draft constitution had been rejected in a referendum early 2000, the MDC, led by former trade unionist Morgan Tsvangirai, won about half of the contested seats in the parliamentary elections that year.

Although ZANU-PF maintained firm control over Zimbabwe, the electoral developments in 2000 were a reason for Mugabe and ZANU-PF to toughen their stance. The association of the MDC with the white Zimbabwean electorate<sup>6</sup> gave ZANU-PF an opportunity to frame the opposition party as "a Trojan horse of imperialism and neo-colonialism", opposed to black economic empowerment (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012: 9). Mugabe's reaction in the form of severe land-redistribution policies then backfired. Property was often claimed by politically connected individuals with little or no farming experience, and this lack of experienced farmworkers contributed to a significant decline in agricultural productivity; this, as well as a drought, led to severe food shortages in Zimbabwe in the following years (Brittanica 2017).

Although Robert Mugabe gets reelected in 2002 and ZANU-PF wins 60 percent of the vote in the 2005 parliamentary elections, the MDC is now a serious competitor in the electoral field. However, their relative

successes had nothing to do with the availability of democratic space in Zimbabwe. As Robert Mugabe's popularity declines, repression and brutality are on the rise. Restrictive measures such as the Public Order and Security Act were crippling the MDC's political activities, as press freedom, freedom of expression and people's political rights were severely restricted.

Under severe pressure of the international community, the ZANU-PF government has to introduce electoral reforms. These developments cause ZANU-PF to switch tactics, from openly violent repression until 2002 to distortion of elections by manipulating voter registration, constituency borders, polling stations, ballot boxes and even food aid in 2005 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012: 9-10).



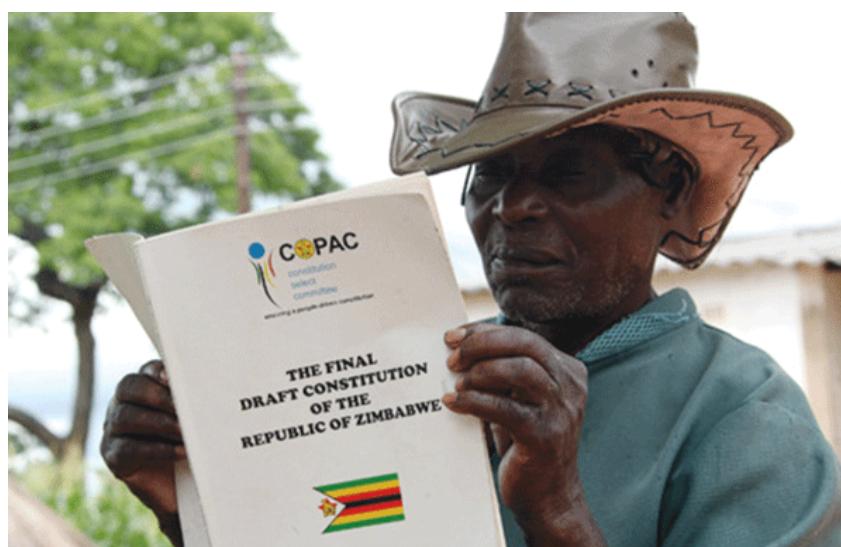
Contrary to what might have been expected, the March 2008 harmonized elections were deemed to be generally free and fair. The elections took place at a time of record inflation. Basic commodities were scarce, which made life almost unbearable for ordinary (and not so ordinary) Zimbabweans. The election-outcome was recognized as “representing the genuine expression of the voluntary will of the people” (Masunungure 2009: 79). Tsvangirai obtained the biggest share of the Presidential vote (47.9 percent), but neither candidate had reached the required majority threshold for victory under Zimbabwe's electoral laws. Therefore a presidential run-off was held in June 2008.

The period that then follows will be known as one of the most violent episodes in Zimbabwean history. Between April and June the country experienced violence and civil war – with battle lines drawn between “those who support the ballot and those who favor the bullet” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012: 11). Robert Mugabe did not make a secret out of the fact that he would defend his rule with the gun if necessary. And so he did. The episode of violence against opposition politicians, civil society members and simply everybody expected of not voting for ZANU-PF<sup>7</sup>,

together with the already severe economic crisis in Zimbabwe, caused a human catastrophe in the country, remembered to this day. Less than a week before the election, Tsvangirai announced his withdrawal from the run-off, citing the impossibility of a free and fair election in the country's current climate of violence and intimidation.

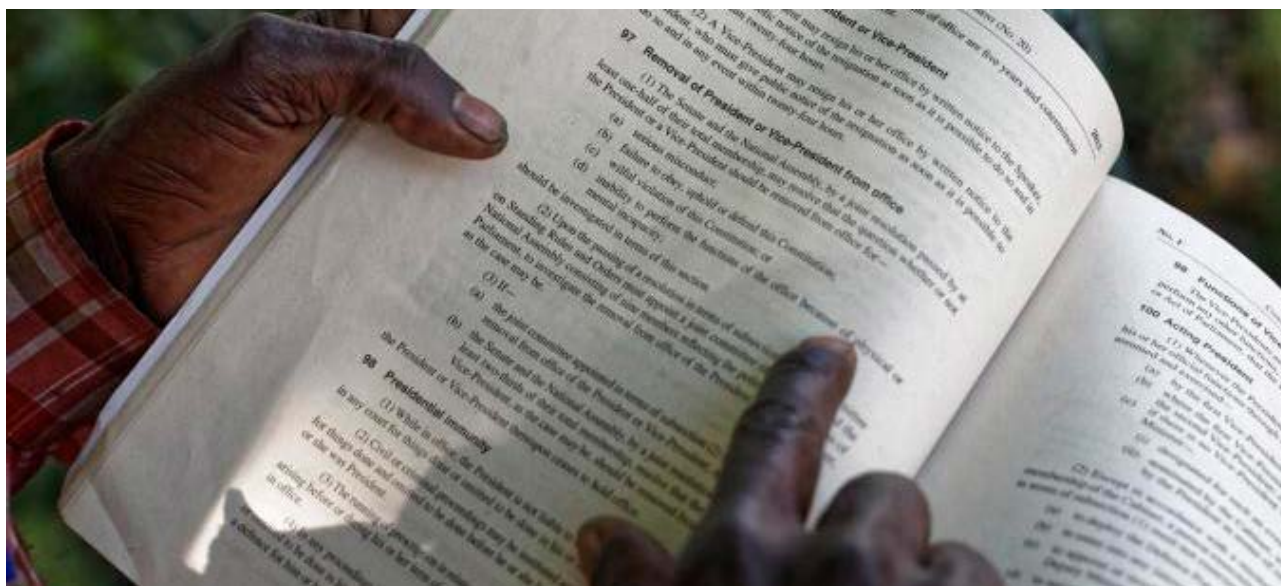
When, after this public display of government sponsored intimidation and violence, Mugabe was declared the presidential winner, the international community had to act. A team of South-African mediators mandated by the South African Development Community (SADC) brokered an interim power-sharing agreement between ZANU-PF and the two main opposition formations MDC-T and MDC-N (Aeby 2016). This 'Global Political Agreement' (GPA) raised the hopes of many Zimbabweans, expecting that with the MDC finally in power, the institutional and political environment could be reformed. However, the balance of power within the newly formed government remained heavily skewed in favor of ZANU-PF, and MDC's main point of electoral legislative reform could not be decisively achieved (Aeby 2016: 704). After the resounding electoral victory of ZANU-PF in the 2013-elections, the country (and its economy) began to erode once more (Raftopoulos 2013).

## CONSTITUTION



A key requirement of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) signed in September 2008 was the adoption of a new democratic constitution. The independent Zimbabwean state has known a long history of constitutional reform, for the details of which we refer to other, more extensive sources.<sup>8</sup>

The original Lancaster House Constitution arranged at the independence negotiations in 1979, essentially represented a symbol of British colonialism, undermining the visions that the country's liberation movements had for post-independence Zimbabwe (Mandaza 1986). In the past 30 years, that constitution had been amended 19 times, but without any comprehensive national constitutional-reform strategy (ZLHR 2011). Most amendments were engineered by ruling ZANU-PF to enable it to centralize its power and galvanize executive authority (Dzinesa 2012).



Therefore, the latest constitutional reform process was essentially focused on diminishing the executive, legislative and judicial presidential powers created by the constitutional amendments since 1987. The 2013 constitution-making process had to be executed in a deeply polarized political environment, and was definitely not without suppression of dissenting voices and acts of violence allegedly arranged by the ZANU-PF camp (Dzinesa 2012: 6-7).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, a new constitution was adopted by the Zimbabwean Parliament on 9 May 2013, after it had received 95% of the vote in a referendum held in March that same year.

The new constitution limits the President to two five-year terms in office and prevents that same President from vetoing legislation passed by Parliament. However, President Mugabe was de-facto excepted from this clause, initially allowing him to run for another term in office in 2018. The 2013 constitution abolished the post of Prime Minister and established an independent prosecuting authority, a peace and reconciliation commission and an anti-corruption commission. The new document contains a strong bill of rights, strengthening citizenship and the freedom of expression and assembly, “putting the aspirations of ordinary Zimbabweans at the centre of government.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite the fact that the new constitution was unopposed through both houses of parliament, and MDC-T’s Morgan Tsvangirai said the charter had set Zimbabwe “on a new path”<sup>11</sup>, the document also raises heavy critique. The new constitution has not brought the reform that was hoped concerning issues of land-ownership and compensation, the independence of the judiciary, and electoral and security-sector reform.<sup>12</sup> Until this day, another major point of criticism is that the new constitution will not bring any real yields if subsidiary legislation will not be realigned with the new norms and basic values that are stated in the Constitution (Nyabeze 2015: 19). Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights have called the new constitution a “paper tiger that is becoming increasingly meaningless and ineffectual,”<sup>13</sup> as there has been little political will to align existing laws with the new constitution, which would facilitate a more open democratic space (Bertelsmann 2016).



## B. RULING PARTY ZANU-PF

If we now move back to the current political situation, until recently we could see a ruling party in which there was more focus on the internal question of Robert Mugabe's succession, than on the goings on in the country they are supposed to govern. With the infighting between the two main factions making the headlines on a daily basis, it seemed like ZANU-PF was not thinking about the 2018 elections yet. The truth, however, is that on the sidelines of their internal clashes, ZANU-PF goal to stay in power is ultimately uniting the party, persevering in repression of dissenting voices towards 2018. To hold on to power, the ruling party uses a doctrine of patriotic history, intimidation and violence, and electoral fraud and corruption.

## HISTORY



ZANU-PF emerged in its current form after Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) absorbed the 'opposition' Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo. To be able to better understand the current dynamics in the country, one has to know about the origins of the party in the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. Through appealing to the problems that were faced by the black majority in the Rhodesian era (such as general segregation, discriminative policies and other disenfranchising practices), the precursors of ZANU-PF founded their popularity among the mass in the 1960s and 1970s. The ZANU armed wing the Zimbabwe Armed National Liberation Army (ZANLA), together with Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU then led the military struggle against the Rhodesian white minority rule, until independence in 1980.

ZANU-PF's status as liberator of the Zimbabwean people, and the blood that was spilled in their struggle, is still a very strong pillar under the power of the ruling party in this day and age. Terence Ranger introduced the concept of 'patriotic history' as a coherent doctrine, used by the ruling party ZANU-PF to construct a Zimbabwean nationalism, rooted in the country's history as a "product of a bitter and protracted armed struggle" (2004: 218). Zimbabwean nationalism here is monopolized by the post-independence political elites and then operationalized for their own ends. In the last decade, this historiography has drawn

## INTIMIDATION AND VIOLENCE



distinctions between those who can and those who cannot legitimately lay claims on Zimbabwe's nationalist history, producing insiders and outsiders (Munochiveyi 2011: 102, Kriger 2006: 1151). Every dissenting voice in Zimbabwean society is named 'unpatriotic' by the ruling party, and has thereby lost its credibility. For many, especially older generation Zimbabweans, that relation with the liberation struggle is still very real.

Besides this particular nationalist doctrine, ZANU-PF uses intimidation, violence and coercive tactics to put dissenting voices aside. The origins of its authoritarian rule can be traced back to the 1980 Lancaster House constitution (Coltart 2008). As the document was primarily designed as a compromise to put an end to a bloody civil war, it perpetuated many oppressive aspects of white minority rule, and allowed Robert Mugabe and the ZANU-PF to consolidate and later to monopolize power. Especially after the overwhelming 'no'-vote in the 2000 referendum discussed above, the ruling party began to erode civil liberties in Zimbabwe. According to Human Rights Watch, the Zimbabwean regime uses assaults, arrests and detention without charges, targeted against activist, human rights defenders and journalists specifically.<sup>14</sup>

The government's political oppression is enforced by three main groups. The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) use politically motivated harassment, intimidation, arrests, detention, raids, and beatings to influence the public's political decisions. In the past, the national army leadership has publically stated that the army was ready to defend then President Mugabe. After the late 2017 developments, however, we can conclude that the army is concerned for a continued ZANU-PF hegemony more than anything else. The military has also played a role in the doubtful food-aid schemes allegedly committed by the ruling party.<sup>15</sup> Finally, besides the actual manifestations of the repressive Zimbabwean state, the largely unknown structure of the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) also causes a mental 'culture of fear'.

## ELECTORAL FRAUD AND CORRUPTION



Despite an elaborate façade of democracy that was carefully constructed, the ruling party has used many repressive measures to skew the democratic playing-field. In essence, ZANU-PF has, since 1980, presided in a way which we could label democratic or competitive authoritarianism<sup>16</sup>, or a pseudo-democracy. Pseudo-democracies consist of regimes that "have legal opposition parties and perhaps many other features of electoral democracy, but fail to meet one of its crucial requirements: a sufficiently fair arena of contestation to allow the ruling party to be turned out of power" (Diamond 1996: 22, in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012). Zimbabwe perfectly fits this description, as the regime has been characterized as "a militarized form of electoral authoritarianism" (Masunungure 2009). ZANU-PF uses a destructive mix of patronage, electoral fraud, corruption, civil liberties violations, and abuse of state and media resources to curb the democratic framework of regular elections. Therefore, it is important to look beyond ZANU-PF's seeming cooperation in the democratic Zimbabwean process.

## PARTY VS. STATE



As a result of ZANU-PF's monopoly on power, finally, Zimbabwe has become a de-facto one-party state. With the ruling party being supreme over state institutions and structures, whatever happens in ZANU-PF directly affects the state (Msindo 2016). Through this de-facto one party system, the lines between the ZANU-PF party and the state have become blurred. The ruling party uses "both tangible and intangible" state-resources for its campaigns during elections, giving ZANU-PF a decisive advantage over opposition political parties (Chigora, Guzura and Ndimande 2015: 10). Furthermore, the party's thorough control over state institutions such as (parts of) the media, the Electoral Supervisory Commission/Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, and Registrar General's Department has enabled ZANU-PF to control the electoral process (idem 2015: 16). Finally, the party obscures the difference between ZANU-PF and Zimbabwean nationalism, in very subtle ways. Funerals of former ZANLA-fighters are turned into state-events, and the Zimbabwean flag is appropriated as a party symbol (Oberdorf 2017: 39). As the military coup seemed to be focused on re-structuring the power-divide in the state, what it essentially seeks to do is control the power-structure in the ruling party. This divide between ruling party and state should be clearly kept in mind.

## LATEST DEVELOPMENTS



Not too long ago, internal factions seemed to occupy the ruling party. This succession struggle dated back to the 2014 purge of former vice-president Joice Mujuru and eight cabinet ministers. Mujuru was said to become a too powerful force within the party. She was then accused variously of corruption, theft and even plotting to kill President Mugabe, and therefore she and her followers had to go. A practice that is said to be characterizing for Robert Mugabe's style of ruling ZANU-PF. Mujuru was replaced by Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Then, a bitter struggle between two factions within the ruling party began, which continued relatively silently until early November. The so called 'G-40'-faction represents the younger generation within ZANU-PF, and was allegedly led by former Education Minister Jonathan Moyo



and ZANU-PF political commissar Saviour Kasukuwere. The faction's main point of existence was to fight against Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa's succession of Robert Mugabe as party leader. G-40 backed Mugabe's wife Grace, who was more and more profiling herself as the main guard for anyone and anything planning to put the position of her husband under attack. Grace (nicknamed Gucci-Grace for her exorbitant shopping sprees), was never popular among Zimbabwean citizens. With the military coup and Grace Mugabe being expelled from the ruling party, the role of G40 seems to have played out.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand of the factional fight was the so called 'Team-Lacoste'-faction, which backed up Mnangagwa as Mugabe's successor for party-leadership. The former Vice-President has been with Mugabe from the start, as they worked together both during the liberation-struggle as well as during his ruling days. Mnangagwa has a strong following in Zimbabwe's powerful military and amongst war veterans, and has kept a lot of connections from his days as both Minister of Defense and intelligence chief. With the military coup, which happened right in the middle of the drafting process of this document, the balance of power was decisively altered towards the faction known as 'Team Lacoste'. With Mnangagwa as Zimbabwe's new President, and former military leaders in high positions of his administration, the power-struggle within the ruling party seems to have been decided.

Question now is how the ruling party will re-arrange its power-structures after a military coup. In his first weeks as Zimbabwe's President, Mnangagwa has articulated himself as strongly committed to the recovery of the country. However, the systems of patronage that has been build up by Robert Mugabe in 37 years of him ruling ZANU-PF will be something that has to be dealt with. The new leadership is sure to do anything but risk ZANU-PF's authoritarian power-position. The euphoria in the Zimbabwean streets after Robert Mugabe's resignation, no matter how truly representing citizens' relief, might have come too early.





### C. POLITICAL OPPOSITION

As for the political opposition, the military coup all of a sudden seemed to offer possibilities of which nobody had dared to dream a few months ago. None of the key players in the opposition has condemned the military coup, and some even dared to speculate on their role in the “roadmap back to legitimacy”.<sup>18</sup> Truth is, however, that the political opposition seems to have had no hand whatsoever in the current developments in Zimbabwe. After years of competitive elections and brave resistance, mainly led by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the political opposition is split and has completely lost the trust of the Zimbabwean citizen.

### HISTORY



Despite the fact that several opposition parties were formed in Zimbabwe in the last two decades before the turn of the century, none of them posed a real challenge to the political dominance of ZANU-PF. All general elections since independence have shown some sort of support for political parties opposing ZANU-PF (Laakso 2004). During the 1980s, Joshua Nkomo’s ZAPU changed from being a partner to ZANU, into a regionally based and heavily repressed opposition party. The early 1990s saw ZANU-PF ‘dissident members’ like Edgar Tekere forming the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM). The political campaign of ZUM was mostly about opposing Robert Mugabe’s authoritarian rule, and focused on the powers of the president, the deteriorating economy, and corruption. Despite the fact that ZUM could not make a real threatening political stance, it could be said that “ZUM opened up some space for political pluralism and criticism” (Laakso 2004).

After a period of very weak opposition politics, a deteriorating economy and a rising civil society actuated a new opposing movement. New pressure to check the powers of the president culminated in the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) by a group of NGOs, including the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). In September 1999, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai. After ZANU-PF’s loss in the 2000 constitutional referendum, the labor-based MDC soon developed into a mostly urban based political party, supported by Zimbabwe’s white minority and the international community (Asuelime & Simura 2014).

## MDC AS A ZANU-PF COMPETITOR



After the origination of the MDC, the Zimbabwean political landscape turned into a severely polarized one (LeBas 2006: 420). “While MDC called ZANU-PF a corrupt political party that had brought the meltdown of the economy, ZANU-PF claimed that MDC was an extension of British imperialism, a tool that was being used by the neo-Rhodesian and the British to reverse the gains of independence” (Asuelime & Simura 2014: 70). ZANU-PF responded to this new ‘dissenting entity’ with force and violence. Although the MDC had faced consistent repression, violence, and electoral manipulation throughout the 2000s, all elections after its origination can be labeled highly competitive.

The rising strength of the opposition political movement was cause for optimism about an eventual democratic transition in Zimbabwe (LeBas 2014). The SADC brokered 2008 ‘Global Political Agreement’ (GPA) raised the hopes of many Zimbabweans, thinking that it could end ZANU-PF’s abusive practices and lead to a gradual recovery in the country’s economic and social conditions (HRW 2009). However, the balance of power remained heavily skewed in favor of ZANU-PF, and the institutional and political environment could not be decisively altered by the MDC-factions (Aeby 2016: 704). Through their behavior in the GNU, and the failure to make real electoral changes happen, a big part of their following was severely disappointed. The landslide victory of ZANU-PF in the 2013 elections sealed their faith.

Towards the 2018 elections, now, the Zimbabwean citizens seem to have completely lost faith in the political opposition, mainly the MDC-T. A tendency of political apathy has arisen out of a fear for the state and the political arena, in the face of its massive display of repression (Oberdorf 2017: 44). The developments that caused Robert Mugabe to resign in November 2017 could be cause for a renewed optimism. However, this might be naïve and not based on objective analysis of the current situation of the political opposition in Zimbabwe. We can see a very broad spectrum of opposition parties and factions, who are still struggling to form a strong unity.<sup>19</sup> While suffering from severe health issues<sup>20</sup>, Morgan Tsvangirai does not seem to be willing to let go of the MDC-T leadership. Although the military coup definitely offered an unprecedented window of opportunity, the political opposition was not able to negotiate any alternative to a continued ZANU-PF rule towards the next elections. Until then, it remains doubtful if the opposition parties can regain the trust that was lost in the last decade.



## D. ZIMBABWEAN POLITICAL CULTURE

Finally, it is important to cover the subject of political culture in this section. With almost 60% of the country's population being below the age of 24, the majority of Zimbabwe's future electorate has not known anything else than an independent Zimbabwe.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, Zimbabwe's repressive circumstances have caused a major apathy towards political participation, mainly among young Zimbabweans (Oosterom & Pswarayi). To not only re-energize this section of Zimbabwean society, but especially to make them ambassadors of the transition from an authoritarian state to a democratic Zimbabwe, we have to fully understand that their apathy is a consequence of a Zimbabwean political culture.

A distinction which seems to be incredibly important for the future of Zimbabwe is that between short term political and economic gains and long term cultural impact. For at least the past two decades, almost every political voice outside of the ruling party has been about the replacement of the Mugabe-regime. The main objective of both Edgar Tekere's Zimbabwe Unity Movement and Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC(-T) was regime change (Laakso 2003).

Confrontational strategies by both ZANU-PF and MDC then turned the Zimbabwean political arena into a heavily polarized one (Lebas 2006), seen as completely inaccessible for most Zimbabwean citizens. This inaccessibility is strengthened by the behavior of the MDC once they were a part of the government between 2009 and 2013, and their inability to make changes for the Zimbabwean citizen (Aeby 2016).

Striving towards a change in power or a seat at the table for the opposition political parties is a short-term and essentially political goal. Now, because violence and intimidation are so ingrained in the political arena, and because the negative experiences of the GNU, the political

culture in Zimbabwe is interpreted as one in which those short term political and economic gains are paramount. This makes the sphere of party politics not only inaccessible, but also uninteresting for those who simply strive towards a better life (read: the Zimbabwean population aged 24 and below).

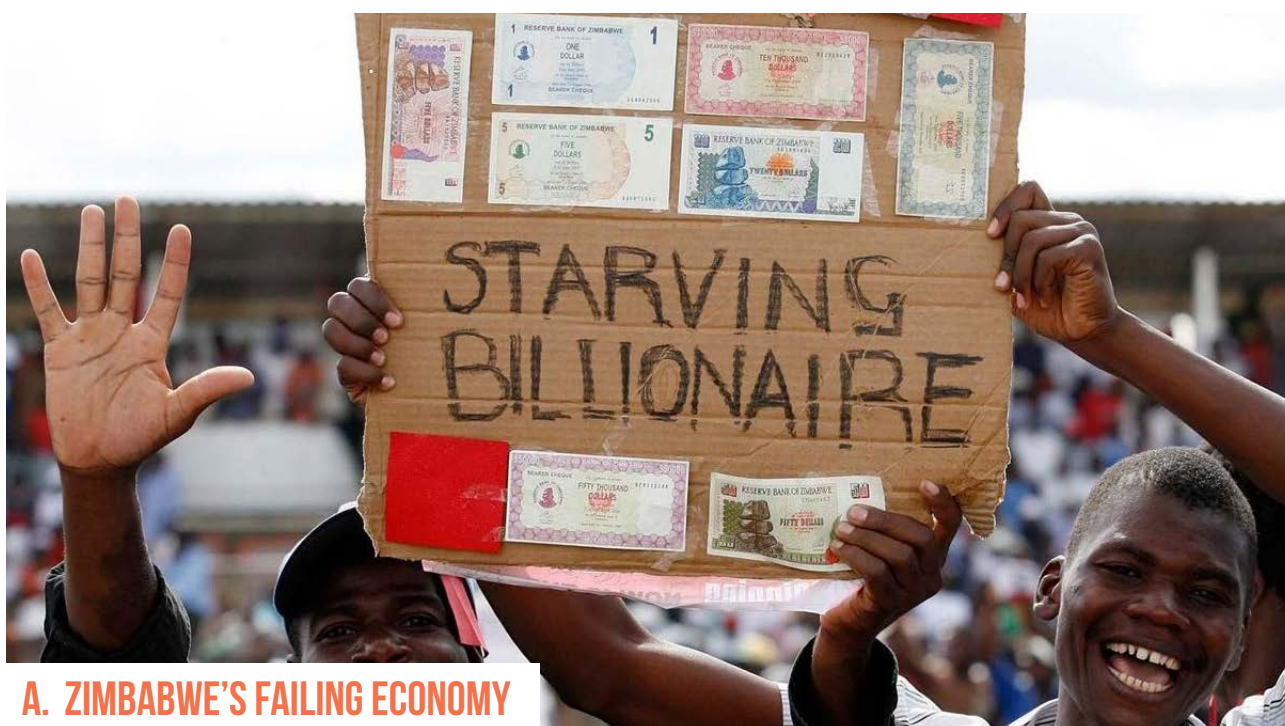
However, young Zimbabweans' political participation will play a decisive role towards a more democratic country. What seems to be necessary is a re-engagement of especially those youngsters in Zimbabwean politics, but in a radically different manner. This re-engagement should be about a change in political cultural, in which political participation is a means for long-term democratic change instead of short term gains through obtaining power. As will be argued below, #ThisFlag's focus on active citizenship instead of regime-change is a good example of this difference (Oberdorf 2017: 70).

As the change in leadership might feel like a new chapter for Zimbabwe, it does not seem likely that the Mnangagwa-administration will decisively change this political culture. His first month in office has been about re-engaging with those entities which can support Zimbabwe's economic recovery: the international community, foreign investors, white farmers, and the Ministry of Finance.<sup>22</sup> This, however, should not be mistaken for democratic change. Where there was the chance to include other actors in an inclusive transitional process after the military coup, Zimbabwe's new President could not be bothered.



### SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

In 2017, Zimbabwe is no longer the relatively prosperous and developed state it was at its independence in 1980 (Bond and Sharife 2012). Economic decline has been a consistent factor in the country since the late 1990s (Coltart 2008). The hyperinflation of the Zimbabwean currency, which reached a peak in 2008, has bankrupted the government, under a regime which is plagued by corruption. This has largely turned the Zimbabwean economy into an informal one, challenged with high unemployment rates and mass emigration. The introduction of 'bondnotes' represents the newest economic challenge for the country, as this non-official currency tries to offer a solution for the scarcity of hard cash in Zimbabwe (Amnesty 2017). It is important to understand that economic and social deprivation play an important role in people's emotions of anger, disappointment and apathy. Although newly inaugurated President Mnangagwa has promised to prioritize the Zimbabwean economy, this might prove a hard nut to crack.<sup>23</sup>



## A. ZIMBABWE'S FAILING ECONOMY

As Coltart argues, Zimbabwe's economic and humanitarian crisis is completely rooted in the country's politics (2008). Although the ZANU-PF government has sought to blame a combination of Western sanctions and drought, neither of those were the main cause of the problems that led the country to mere financial collapse. Failed government policies and mismanagement are at the heart of Zimbabwe's economic downfall.

Following a new compensation pack for war veterans, consisting of ZWD 50,000 (equivalent to US\$3,000 that year), and a monthly pension of ZWD 2,000 (US\$125), the economic downward spiral originated in 1997. With an cost of US\$27 million per month,<sup>24</sup> Zimbabwe's involvement in the Second Congo War was particularly damaging to the country. As there was no budgeted financing for neither of these policies, investor's feared uncertainty in the economic future of Zimbabwe, causing the Zimbabwean dollar to lose a lot of its value before the turn of the century. Mugabe was forced to act against his own socialist convictions as a result, and from 1990 onwards implement the first structural adjustment program's (SAP's). Characterizing for the influence these programs had on Zimbabwe's economy over the years was their "half-hearted implementation" (Bertelsmann 2016).

Mugabe's land reform program then vastly disrupted the farming sector and caused foreign donors to reduce their assistance, as well as the World Bank and IMF suspending aid. The next few years leading up to the 2007 crisis saw an incoherent governmental response to the worsening economic situation. Shortages of banknotes caused liquidity problems, and a lack of foreign currency made it difficult to print more. Furthermore, the printing of new currency without an economy to create value to back up the currency accelerated the process of inflation in the first place.

## 2008 CRISIS AND GNU



Zimbabwe's GDP declined by about 43 percent between 2000 and 2007, and key economic sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and mining were hit hardest. Finally, the rising repressive environment in that period also caused the tourist sector to collapse (Coltart 2008). Eventually, Zimbabwe ended up in a five-year period of hyperinflation. Because of the Zimbabwean dollar lacking a firm basis to back its value, and because Zimbabwean citizens lack confidence in the resilience of the currency, inflation peaked in mid-November 2008 with a rate estimated at 79,600,000,000% per month.

Zimbabwe's 2009 decision to replace the local currency helped end hyperinflation, as it cut off the government's ability to endlessly print money to pay debts. Despite the disappointing political outcome of the Government of National Unity, the GNU managed to stop inflation and initiate a recovery of the economy, mostly under MDC leadership (Bertelsmann 2016). However, the cabinet which was installed by Robert Mugabe in 2013 did not have the suffering of the Zimbabwean economy as their main priority, as the economy began to erode once more (Raftopoulos 2013). The President's 2013 pledge to create 2.2 million jobs turned out a mere fantasy and the continually worsening outlook on employment played an important role in the 2016-protest episode.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, the 2009 'dollarization' made it cheaper to import everything from food to clothing rather than produce them in a country still suffering from failed government policies. In an attempt to support domestic industries and effectively fight a currency deficit, the Zimbabwean government placed an import-ban on a list of basic goods halfway 2016. As many Zimbabwean citizens depended on imports from mainly South-Africa, to make a living or to simply survive, this decision faced severe protests.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the ban, imports remain high in Zimbabwe, as production capacity in almost all sectors is very low. As a result, a so called 'cash-crisis' became the latest challenge for Zimbabwean citizens.<sup>27</sup> Zimbabwe has been facing a cash shortage ever since the switch to foreign currencies. As the country is no longer in control of the money supply in circulation, all currency was gained through exports (for the government) or through remittance (for the citizens). Considering the huge import-surplus, and the struggling South African economy, the introduction of a substitute currency named 'bond-notes' turned out necessary. Although the currency was supposed to be pegged to the US-dollar, this proved a hard sell with the hyperinflation of a decade ago still fresh in mind.<sup>28</sup> Economic insecurity continued once more.

## SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

The depreciation of the Zimbabwean dollar, the economic mismanagement that caused it and the overall economic deprivation that followed, also caused a deep social crisis in the country. Millions of Zimbabweans experienced scarcity of food between 2008 and 2016, both in rural as in urban areas, with people surviving on just one meal a day. This situation worsened by severe droughts of the mid-2000s, showing Zimbabwe's fragile food security. Water supplies are insufficient in both urban and rural areas (Bertelsmann 2016).



The health system in Zimbabwe has taken several severe hits over the last decade, mostly coinciding with economic and political crisis. During the last year of hyperinflation, a cholera outbreak sent the already diminishing state of hospitals into total disarray. While approximately 60,000 people were being treated for cholera, a lack of hospital staff – particularly nurses – and a severe shortage of both drugs and medical equipment caused a challenge for treatment.<sup>29</sup> Since then, improvements have been made, but the system is still struggling.

In recent years, the number of doctors and nurses increased dramatically, and the spread of HIV and AIDS was stabilized (UNECA 2016). A 2016 hit for the healthcare system coincided with a wave of protests. A strike by nurses, who were protesting not getting paid their salaries from the prior month, temporarily halted hospitals. The above mentioned import bans caused depleted hospital supplies to remain in low quantity, with a majority of Zimbabwean hospitals currently running at under 30% of their capacity.<sup>30</sup>



**B. CORRUPTION AND PROPERTY RIGHTS**

The failing Zimbabwean economy cannot be fully understood without a comprehensive idea of the role patronage and corruption play in the country. Purposeful embezzlement of public funds has contributed to Zimbabwe’s economic decay, and impunity has further exacerbated corruption across all sectors of society. Closely linked to corruption is the issue of private property in Zimbabwe. In the last two decades, both land-reform and broader indigenizing-legislation have been crucial to Zimbabwe’s socio-economic deprivation.

## CORRUPTION



In the patronage-system which Robert Mugabe had carefully built over his 37-years in office, corrupt practices and policies should always be understood in their political context. At the root of Zimbabwe's (economic) problems is a corrupt political elite, which has behaved with utter impunity for several decades (Coltart 2008: 1). Cabinet-positions and other public sector appointments are based "more on patronage than meritocracy", with the newly appointed official submissive to the ruling party (Bertelsmann 2016: 8). These elite then sacrificed the country's economic and social wellbeing for the establishment and survival of their political rule. With a 22/100 score on the Transparency International Index, Zimbabwe finds itself among the 15 percent most corrupt countries in the world. The organization's Zimbabwe-branch reported in 2016 that "it would be surprising if the value (of corruption) were less than \$1 billion annually," a number which would mean close to 6 percent of the country's GDP.<sup>31</sup>

Corruption is characterized by the deeply entrenched system of political patronage and the tight grip of the ruling party over the security forces (CPI 2015). Diamonds are the best example of a state-resource which is plundered through a complex network of army, police, Central Intelligence (CIO) and senior ZANU-PF officials (Bertelsmann 2016: 11). Although the Kimberley Process imposed a temporary ban on diamond exports following reports of widespread human right abuses and high-level corruption in 2009, most sanctions were lifted again in 2013 (CPI 2015: 6).

The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) is publically perceived as the most corrupt institution in the country, as most Zimbabweans believe that all or most police officers are involved in corruption. Police forces are ill equipped, underpaid and poorly trained, resulting in corruption and police extortion at the lower levels. Armed police routinely erect road-blocks to extract bribes or arbitrarily seize goods for their own benefits, which hits the public eye directly and on a daily basis. Impunity here also encourages corruption (idem: 5).



Perhaps the most disturbing and inherent political form of corruption has been the use of food-aid as a ZANU-PF tool. Over the course of many years, Zimbabwe has seen several allegations of citizens who were facing discrimination in the distribution of food aid and agriculture inputs on the basis of their political affiliation to opposition parties. A 2017 Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission report described how food aid distribution commissions are being “controlled by ZANU-PF party officials who dictate who should or should not be given food aid”.<sup>32</sup>

The abuse of public offices has become so rampant that parts of Zimbabwean population have grown accustomed to it, and accepted it as part of the culture that is often institutionalized (Bertelsmann 2016). The alleged involvement of the MDC in corruption cases during the Government of National Unity has strongly contributed to that acceptance of corruption as inherently linked to political power (Oberdorf 2017: 45, Bertelsmann 2016: 39). Impunity has further exacerbated corruption. A Zimbabwean Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) was established in 2004, but is highly inefficient, under-funded and has limited authority to effectively fulfill its mandate (CPI 2015: 8). In several instances it also seems to simply lack political will.

## LAND REFORM



Linked to the use of corruption by the country’s elite is the issue of private property in Zimbabwe. It has to be understood that the policy in itself is widely considered a just and necessary measure for the reverse of the crooked divisions in land-ownership which grew under the Rhodesian regime. While the white Zimbabweans accounted for only 4,500 of the population in 1979, they owned approximately 40% of the total Zimbabwean land and almost three-quarters of the most fertile farmland.<sup>33</sup> The ZANU-PF regimes official rationale behind the policy is that it corrects colonial imbalances that marginalized blacks in Zimbabwe in the past.

However, the Mugabe-regime mainly used land-reform as a means of rewarding political allies, and punishing political opponents. The year 2000 saw the official start of the fast-track land reform. From this moment, the “willing buyer, willing seller” stage from 1980-2000 developed into an aggressive campaign (Moyo 2014). Besides government-led seizures, war veteran’s led militant groups and began violently forcing white farmers off their land, with the government claiming that they were simply righting a historical wrong. The policy seriously undermined the validity of private property rights in Zimbabwe and put further strain on the economy as most large-scale commercial farms were kicked out of production (Bertelsmann 2016: 32). Moreover, some 300,000 black farm workers lost their jobs as a result of the land-reform.<sup>34</sup>

## INDIGENIZATION



Further constraint is put on the economy by another private-property regulating legislation. The 2008 Indigenization and Empowerment Act requires companies to have at least 51% of their ownership in the hands of “indigenous” Zimbabweans, echoing the rationale for the fast-track land-reform. The Indigenization-policy further detracts foreign investments. Industrial capacity utilization was almost to 60% in 2011, but has fallen to 36% in 2014 (Bertelsmann 2016: 26). Furthermore, as several Chinese enterprises were exempted from the regulations, the policies are also seen as a tool to reward non-hostile countries, mostly Zimbabwe’s Eastern Allies.

Until this day, land-reform and other indigenization-policies are used as a political tool. As recent as 2015, Emmerson Mnangagwa, threatened to evict the remaining white farmers (Bertelsmann 2016: 21). However, wanting to regain the favor of Western governments and investors, the acting President recently promised compensation for the white farmers whose land was seized under the Mugabe regime.<sup>35</sup> Mnangagwa’s appointment might relieve the strain on private-property in Zimbabwe, as the President has persistently claimed that the country’s economy will be one of his main priorities for the near future.





### C. RECONFIGURATION OF ZIMBABWE'S POLITICAL ECONOMYS

Over the last decade and as a result of Zimbabwe's economic situation, the country's political-economy has been reconfigured almost completely. The stagnation of almost all the country's sectors has transformed Zimbabwe's economy into a largely informal one, taking up an estimated 60% of the overall economy. Leading voices in the civil society sector suffer from this informalization, as well as other financial institutions (Bertelsmann 2016: 14-17). This has strong implications for several aspects of Zimbabwean society, meaning different things for different sectors.

Unimaginable high unemployment, first of all, has been characterizing for Zimbabwe's economy for the last two decades, with current rates being estimated somewhere between 80 and 90 percent.<sup>36</sup> The informal economy has become an income mainstay, with informal employment covering more than 80 percent of labor. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, civil society would generate political and social power by actively focusing on material questions that affected the everyday life of people. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trades Unions (ZCTU) used to be at the heart of the civic movement due to a combination of its national organizational reach, strong leadership and technical capacity (Raftopoulos 2014). Now, with its formal membership declined by at least half, "the central force of the labor movement has been largely lost to civic struggles" (Raftopoulos 2014, Aeby 2016: 707).

The informalization of the economy then caused a serious challenge for Zimbabwe's monetary policies. According to several sources, more than US\$7-billion was circulating in the informal sector in Zimbabwe in 2016.<sup>37</sup> As this money is not in the banks, but in the informal direct trade, this money cannot be accessed by small to medium enterprises for loans. The informal sector then also blocks the way for taxation and thus for broadening the country's revenues. Finally, it partly adds to Zimbabwe's liquidity problem, causing difficulties to come by hard cash for consumers.

Besides challenges, the reconfiguration of Zimbabwe's economy also offers new opportunities. As the old class of leaders, activists, NGO-workers and labor-activists became complacent, and former platforms for contentious political action become inaccessible, new opinion makers are on the rise. Social movements, with a strong online presence, are building influence to a very wide audience (Chirimambowa & Chime-dza 2017). By including social groups that have been politically inactive and at times indifferent, #ThisFlag, #Tajamuka/Sesijikile and #Occupy Africa Unity Square show that not only the "tent" with the biggest numbers will have influence. Other organizations, like the National Vendors Union Zimbabwe (NAVUZ), respond to and work with the new tide, and mobilize the newly formed groups in society.



#### D. BULK EMIGRATION

A final consequence of both the economic crisis and the political repression we want to highlight in this country-report has been an unprecedented movement of Zimbabweans out of their country. Economic deprivation, as well as government repression, has caused many millions of Zimbabwean nationals to seek refuge in neighboring countries or other parts of the world. This emigration has influenced Zimbabwean society at all levels.

A large part of emigrants try to find refuge in neighboring countries, mainly South Africa. Where temporary labor migration to South Africa has long been a feature of Rhodesian and then Zimbabwean society, permanent resettlement is a relatively new phenomenon. Although official numbers of Zimbabwean migrants seem to be lacking, in South Africa alone estimates run up to as much as 3 million, with a population of just over 16 million.<sup>38</sup> During both border-crossing as well as their quest for work and income, migrants risk abuse and exploitation.<sup>39</sup> Migrants' low incomes and domestic policies interact to limit their access to health services in host countries (IOM 2015).



Zimbabwe's political landscape and the resulting economic state of the country also led to a so called 'brain-drain', or the migration of relatively highly educated individuals from developing to developed countries. Where Zimbabwe's school system once flourished, students from the primary up to the tertiary level now lack access to the education they would like. Many students consider migrating to mainly the UK or other commonwealth countries during or soon after their studies (Janse Van Vuure 2012). Combined with the repressive Zimbabwean environment, many educated youngsters choose to stay abroad after finishing their studies. Teachers, doctors and nurses are also leaving in droves, as they are in high demand abroad, earning far better salaries than their Zimbabwean counterparts.

At the same time, the remittances from diaspora remain a very important source of income for many Zimbabweans. In 2016 the seize of this source grew to 1 billion US-dollars, approximately the same amount being generated in the informal system, according to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ).<sup>40</sup> For the Zimbabwean government, remittances provide much-needed foreign exchange and alleviates liquidity challenges, especially in a time where policy inconsistency surrounding indigenization and high levels of corruption form bottle necks for Foreign Direct Investment.

Important to understand is the role Zimbabweans outside of Zimbabwe could play for political change in their home-country. The reason for migrants leaving would form the very same motivation for voting against the ruling party, ZANU-PF's more than logical reasoning seems to be. Therefore, it tries to do everything to keep this part of society from voting. Late 2016, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has confirmed that non-resident Zimbabweans could not vote in the 2018 elections unless they return home; first to register and then to cast their ballots.<sup>41</sup> Disabling non-resident Zimbabweans to vote from their countries of residency could have a decisive impact on the outcome of the 2018 elections.

## GENERAL STATE OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS + VULNERABLE GROUPS



In this sub-section, we will have a more focused look at the status of several political rights and civil liberties in Zimbabwe, as well as the position of vulnerable groups. Some rights and groups have been implicated in other parts of this report already, and will therefore not be the focus of this section.

### A. RULE OF LAW, ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPUNITY



Both the executive as well as the legislative branch are firmly in the hands of ZANU-PF. Bertelsmann points out that a new parliamentary committee system has made Parliament more vocal and assertive and parliamentary debates more open. With cabinet ministers failing to attend sessions in parliament, however, the executive branch seems to lack respect and deny effectiveness to legislative business, making the legislature little more than “a talking shop with limited oversight over government” (Bertelsmann 2016). Newly installed President Emmerson Mnangagwa has vouched to end these lacking attitudes among Zimbabwe’s parliamentarians.

The executive ruling party is known to pressure the judicial branch of government to support their rule over Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, Freedom House signals an increasing judicial independence, concluding so after a recent series of rulings that objected government policies. Suspensions of demonstration-bans and the acquaintance of human-rights activists in 2016 and 2017 make for a seemingly positive development of the strength of the judicial system.<sup>42</sup> The process of appointing judges through public interviews has also been a positive step towards minimizing political manipulation. Unnecessarily long pretrial detention and prison conditions remain problematic in Zimbabwe.

Impunity is most problematic related to abuse of public office. Corruption by public officials has been endemic in Zimbabwe, while the major perpetrators have in most cases escaped prosecution, fueling corruption across all sectors of society (Bertelsmann 2016). Although chapter 12 of the Zimbabwean Constitution provides for the establishment of key commissions focusing on the media, human rights, elections and corruption, these commissions lack the necessary resources to function properly and fulfill their mandate of safeguarding democracy.

Violence, especially in election periods, has gone unpunished. President Mugabe also fueled impunity for criminal acts by public statements, making committing and prosecution of certain crimes politically laden. As recent as August 2017, the former President for example stated that “all locals implicated in the killings of white farmers during the land reform program would not be prosecuted.”<sup>43</sup> With the new President’s background in extrajudicial killings in the 1980s, violence perpetrated in the name of ZANU-PF might not be likely to stop.<sup>44</sup>



## B. POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND PARTICIPATION RIGHTS, FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

After almost two decades of political intimidation, exclusionary rhetoric, and violence, the Zimbabwean sphere of party politics has become one which is completely polarized. As we argued above, this development caused the average Zimbabwean to see political and economic developments through the heavily tinted lens of party affiliation (LeBas 2006). Moderate opposition does not seem possible, as you are either with or against the ruling party. Despite the fact that this has not kept several opposition political parties to originate over the last few years, participation of a broader spectrum of Zimbabwean citizens is far from the reality. This apathy towards party politics which was described above does not stem from a direct lack of rights, but nevertheless severely threatens Zimbabwe’s democratic process.

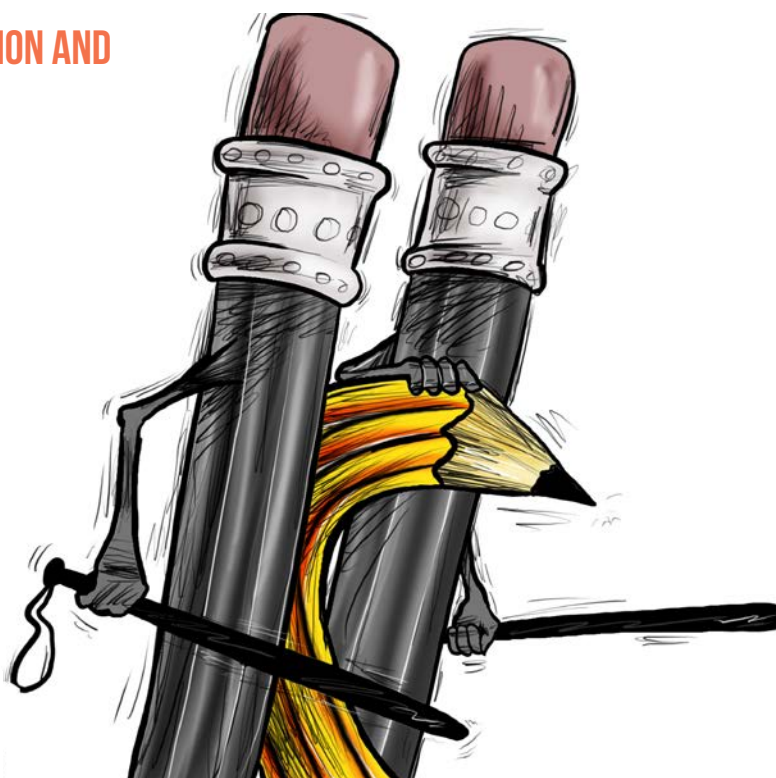
It remains to be seen if anything here changes with the ousting of Robert Mugabe. The military coup which brought Emmerson Mnangagwa the presidency was committed to secure ZANU-PF’s power position in the first place. There are few logical reason to assume that the man who has been at the top of the ZANU-PF pyramid along Mugabe for almost four decades will now endorse a more democratic and inclusive policy toward political opposition.

Freedom of assembly and association, although guaranteed in Chapter four of the new constitution, are subject to restrictions. In legal terms, the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) is used and abused to control voices opposing the ruling party regime. According to Bertelsmann (2016), POSA has to be understood as “a draconian law rooted in Zimbabwe’s colonial past.” The act is routinely used by the police to deny protest permits. While the Harare High Court upheld a 30-day ban on protests in October 2016, large ZANU-PF rallies were permitted to take place. Mainly MDC-supporters and civil society activists are limited in their assembly- and association rights, and the space for them to operate in has been slowly shrinking amid this state harassment.

Starting from 2014, with a peak in 2016, citizens engaged in public protests at which they expressed their dissatisfaction with economic difficulties and poor governance, and demanded electoral reforms. Prominent protest movements included #ThisFlag and #Tajamuka/Sesijikile, and tactics covered street-theater as well as a July 2016 general strike that shut down normal activities across large parts of the country for a day. In response, the police and army violently dispersed future protests, arresting hundreds of demonstrators over the next few months (Freedom House 2017).



## C. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF – FREE PRESS



Although Zimbabweans enjoy some freedom and openness in private discussion, there is a well-known saying in the country that Zimbabweans only talk on combi's and in bars. This is not without a reason. Under Robert Mugabe, the Zimbabwean government has produced an increasingly repressive legal framework, in which the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Official Secrets Act, the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (CLCRA) severely restricted freedom of expression. According to Freedom House (2017), police continued to arrest and charge individuals who criticized Mugabe under legal provisions prohibiting insult or so-called nuisance crimes, throughout 2016.

Social Media is the newest source on which information and opinion are spreaded fast and to a large audience. With a mobile penetration-rate of close to 90%,<sup>45</sup> many Zimbabweans use online platforms to access their daily information. In September 2017, Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa stated that the government will tighten control over use of social media, as authorities blame social media for fueling shortages of basic commodities and bank notes in the country. The minister claimed, 'faceless saboteurs' caused panic in the country, by making 'false' claims over social media.<sup>46</sup> After a re-shuffle of ministerial positions in October, a new ministry responsible for Cyber Security, Threat Detection and Mitigation originated, making online surveillance a hot topic in Zimbabwe.<sup>47</sup>

Another primary target of intimidation is the traditional media. While the repression ramps up during the election cycle, intimidation is present for reporters, journalists, and their companies year-round. A large portion of media is state-owned, and refrains from criticisms of either Mugabe or ZANU-PF. The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Company (ZBC) runs

almost all the broadcasting media; the outlets are subject to intense censorship and have strong biases in favor of ZANU-PF. The same could be said for The Herald and The Chronicle daily newspapers. While there are several independent and trustworthy media available<sup>48</sup>, their freedom is not guaranteed. While the 2013 constitution has made steps towards press freedom – providing for both freedom of expression and access to information – the implementation of these laws is lacking. The Zimbabwean newspapers the Daily News, NewsDay, and Zimbabwe Independent have all been sued for published articles. Journalists themselves also face intimidation; they live in fear during election season and consistently face arrests.<sup>49</sup>

After the ousting of Robert Mugabe, two prominent Zimbabwean activists got acquitted from their charges in long lasting legal disputes after their public expression of discontent with the ZANU-PF regime.<sup>50</sup> As phrased by the BBC, some Zimbabweans see these acquittals as a symbolic victory, coming just after Mugabe's resignation and the inauguration of his former deputy, Emmerson Mnangagwa, as president.<sup>51</sup> If these symbolic deeds also mean concrete improvements for Zimbabwean's freedom of expression, however, will only become clear in the period including the 2018 elections.





#### D. WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND LGBT-RIGHTS

According to Freedom House, women enjoy extensive legal protections in Zimbabwe, and serve as ministers and deputies in the country's national and local governments. In the first two terms of parliament under the 2013 constitution, 60 additional House of Assembly seats have been provided for women. However, societal discrimination, domestic violence, and sexual abuse are widespread. The weak base of the economy is a major hurdle for those who fight for equality of opportunity for women. The most recent economic crisis and the connected breakdown of the health sector also severely affected women. However, Zimbabwe is making small steps forward. The World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index 2017 ranked Zimbabwe at 50 out of 144 countries, an increase compared to 2014 (63th place) and 2011 (81<sup>st</sup> place), driven by improvements economic and political participation.

Despite the fact that there is no legal discrimination against sexual orientations or groups, same sex marriages are illegal in Zimbabwe. The former President publicly talked disdainfully about homosexuality, stating that homosexuals are "worse than dogs and pigs" in 2015.<sup>52</sup> It is widely known that the police persecute homosexuals, and LGBT groups have been subject to regular harassment by security forces (Freedom House 2017). Access to legal representation, education and health care for homosexuals is limited (Bertelsmann 2016). At the same time, organizations that work to improve the position of LGBT's do exist in the country. For example, Male Sex Workers in Zimbabwe is a lobby group with 300 members that helps economically disadvantaged gay men, and the group Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, an organization that advocates for equal rights, has over 7000 members in the country.<sup>53</sup>

## E. ETHNIC DISPUTES

There is no de jure discrimination against certain social, ethnic, or religious groups in Zimbabwe, but the Shona remain dominant in government. The main ethnic cleavage between Shona and Ndebele remains a sensitive one. This tension has been omnipresent since the 1980s Matabeleland genocide, allegedly committed by a brigade of the Zimbabwean national army under supervision of Robert Mugabe. Bertelsmann claims that employment opportunities for the Shona, the largest ethnic group to which Robert Mugabe belongs, are greater than for other ethnic groups. Further tension allegedly arises between subgroup of Zimbabwe's majority Shona ethnic group. Emmerson Mnangagwa is a member of the minority Karanga ethnic group, where former President Mugabe hails from the Zezuru. These different groups were allegedly deeply entangled in a controversy on the issue of who should succeed Mugabe, adding another dimension to the intra-party factionalism (Bertelsmann 2016).



## F. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

A final victim of the political and economic deprivation in Zimbabwe is the environment. As the Zimbabwean economy deteriorated to an informal survival economy, "concerns over sustainability and the environment became irrelevant" (Bertelsmann 2016: 27). Despite the fact that the Zimbabwean economy is not even close to being fully industrialized, pollution of air, water and soil is significant. Chemicals are dumped in rivers, polluting soil and water, and endangering the health of people and livestock.

Where the country's rich wildlife resources have been well managed in the past, poaching is becoming more of an issue.<sup>54</sup> Poaching is now practiced for personal enrichment, with the astronomic increase in the world price for ivory driving the poaching of elephants and rhinos. Again, the malpractices are intertwined with politics, as show the allegations that high-ranking ZANU-PF officials are involved in the illegal trade of ivory.

## WHO AND WHAT IS MAKING WAVES IN ZIMBABWE

Before moving towards a focused analysis of the pillars of power in Zimbabwean society, this report will look at some of the actors in or features of that society that have been able to influence the behavior of the Zimbabwean people. In this sub-section, we will solely focus on those entities or dynamics which have been insufficiently exhibited in the rest of this country report. We will look at social movements, civil society actors, social media and the emotion of fear.



### A. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Starting from late 2014, Zimbabwe saw an episode of social movements engaging in political contention, which the country had not experienced before.<sup>55</sup> In October that year, a journalist named Itai Dzamarara hand-delivered a petition to the presidential office, in which he demands that Robert Mugabe dissolves his government and engages all national stakeholders in finding a new solution to the current challenges.<sup>56</sup> Dzamarara notifies President Mugabe and the police that he will be at the Africa Unity Square in downtown Harare and is not planning to leave until he gets a response. Physically occupying the square, the #OccupyAfricaUnitySquare (OAUS)-movement is born that day.<sup>57</sup> Dzamarara's actions mark the beginning of the social movement episode, a starting-point for more creative forms of protest. Dzamarara was abducted on the 9th of March 2015 and has not been seen until this day.

Where OAUS only managed to mobilize a hand full of people, Zimbabwe saw mass-mobilization around new movements in 2016. From the end of May, several protests are staged all over the country. There is a second version of #OAUS, which ends with the origination of above named #Tajamuka/Sesjikile.<sup>58</sup> The National Vendors Union Zimbabwe (NAVUZ) stages a protest at a hotel in Harare to remove then Minister of Energy and Power Development Samuel Udenge, who has been living there for



over a year, on the tax-payers expenses.<sup>59</sup> Unemployed graduates stage a demonstration under the name of #ThisGown, playing soccer in the streets wearing their graduation-gowns, protesting President Mugabe to honor his 2013 election promise to create 2.2 million jobs.<sup>60</sup> Other forms of protest in this contentious episode differ from one-man-protests to sit-ins, and thematic protests, which continue into 2017.

The #ThisFlag-movement plays a central role in Zimbabwe's new field of social movements. The movement originated in April 2016, with a Facebook-video by Pastor Evan Mawarire. Mawarire moves through the colors of the Zimbabwean flag, asking where the values and beliefs each color represents have gone. He ends the video by stating that "a change must happen" and promises he will stop standing on the sidelines and start fighting for his country.<sup>61</sup> After this initial video went 'viral', Mawarire headed an online campaign, urging Zimbabweans to wear their national flag around their necks and speak-up against their government. The central #ThisFlag-message is that citizens have the right to express themselves and criticize poor governance freely and easily. June and July are the peak of movement-mobilization for #ThisFlag. Protests described above lead to a mass 'stay-away', also referred to as '#Shut-DownZimbabwe', on 6 July, followed by mass assaults and arrests.<sup>62</sup> When a new shut-down is scheduled for the next weekend, Pastor Evan Mawarire is arrested and charged with 'inciting public violence'.<sup>63</sup> This causes thousands of people to meet at the Magistrates Court in downtown Harare, culminating in a gathering of people standing in solidarity with the #ThisFlag-leader, which is seen as a key-moment in this episode until today (Oberdorf 2017: 18). After Mawarire's release, and his departure from Zimbabwe, the movement finds itself on a downward trajectory.<sup>64</sup>

All the different entities and their actions, that make-up this new era of social movements in Zimbabwe, carried several characterizing features. Analyzing these features helps us to better understand their relative success and their periods of decline. First of all, the movements and campaigns in this episode were not linked to a political party. They formed a fresh wind of new players in the above described polarized field of party-politics. Several of the actors in the episode used the language of citizenship instead of political party affiliation. Then, their protests were creative, opposing the more old-fashioned way of rallying people behind a common goal through political party rallies and marches (Chirimambowa & Chimedza 2017). Finally, non-violence is a value adopted throughout the contentious episode, although several actors do not shun reactive violence against state forces.<sup>65</sup>

## B. CIVIL SOCIETY

As Bertelsmann concludes, there is an “extensive sector of voluntary and autonomous cultural, environmental and social associations” in Zimbabwe, but “these organizations do not challenge state hegemony” (2016: 15). In the early days of independent Zimbabwe, restrictive laws from colonial times still prevailed over any form of solidarity association. From the 1990s, civil society experienced a major upswing, as a consequence of the social impact of the structural adjustment programs and rising disgruntlement with the authoritarian rule of the ruling party. This civil movement contributed to the “no” vote campaign in the 2000 referendum, mainly building on a strong labor-movement, which then eventually launched the MDC (Aeby 2016: 706). Especially political associations are restricted in their operations. Although the situation slightly improved during the Government of National Unity, it has regressed since July 2013 (Bertelsmann 2016: 15).

The extensive field of social associations that make up the Zimbabwean civil society consists of several core groups. These include humanitarian or service-delivery groups, faith-based and community-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, women and youth groups and also human rights advocacy and good governance organizations. The student-movement was able to play an influential role in the past, but due to hardening state repression and changing circumstances, only has a marginal role in the present (Hodgkinson 2013). The position of trade-unions has been weakened due to Zimbabwe’s reconfigured economy as described above.

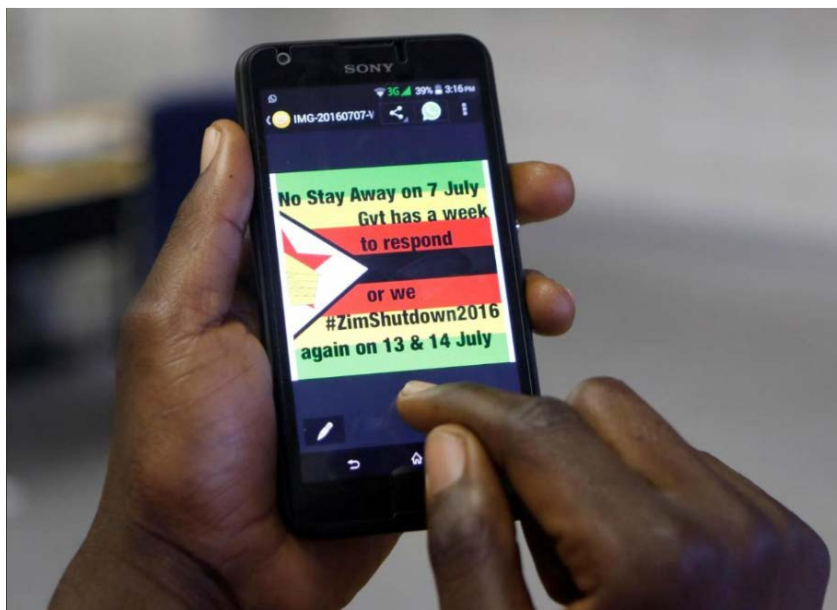
Where most CSO’s organizational strength subsequently declined due to economic crisis and repression, faith-based entities showed a particular resilience, but mostly preferred to keep away from the political spectrum when possible. Nevertheless, a concerted effort was made by ZANU-PF to cultivate support amongst indigenous churches during the 2013 election campaign (Bertelsmann 2016: 6). War veterans, who used to organize under the wings of the ZANU-PF party, currently form a more and more independent group in Zimbabwean society, who openly split from Mugabe halfway 2016.<sup>66</sup> Finally, Zimbabwe’s women’s movement has played a relatively stable role in civil society from the late 1990s (Essof 2013).

The circumstances for civil society to thrive slightly improved during the Government of National Unity. Between 2009 and 2013, civil society groups were invited to nominate candidates for commissions created according to the GPA, for the first time in Zimbabwean politics. However, ZANU-PF made sure to strategically appoint party loyalists. As Bertelsmann concludes, there seemed to be little political will, even on the part of the MDC, to open up space for civil society participation in the legislative process (2016: 37). The side-lining of civil society from the negotiations put tremendous strain on the MDC-T’s relations with the civic movement that had brought it to life, and eroded the popular support for the GPA. Organizational fragmentation and disunity, divergent strategies, and sustained repression also laid severe constraints on civil society’s strength (Aeby 2016: 724).

## C. SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET



A final aspect of civil society which has to be taken into consideration is the ZANU-PF practice to form its own civil society organizations, sponsoring the ruling-party in different forms.<sup>67</sup> ZANU-PF youth- and women's-league, trade-unions and war-veterans are very strong forces against what we could call mainstream civil society. By incorporating independent civil society groups into party structures, (or infiltrating them) ZANU-PF has found another way to shape the public discourse within Zimbabwe (Bertelsmann 2016: 30 and 37).



With the introduction of a new ministry responsible for Cyber Security, Threat Detection and Mitigation in October 2017, the Zimbabwean government affirms what many in Zimbabwe already knew: social media, as a tool for dissenting voices, is on the rise in Zimbabwe. For many, it is an almost indispensable tool to rally their following.

Especially for the social movements discussed above, platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter have been essential in their mobilizing effort. Social media offers the opportunity to slowly but steadily build a commitment among people who are favorable towards your ideas, but are too afraid to immediately take it to the streets. In the first place, social media offers new ways of creating agency; liking or sharing a video becomes a solution to the problem. Secondly, social media then capitalizes this steadily built commitment, by offering the communicative tools to organize bigger and bigger events. The #ThisFlag-movement was able to shut down Zimbabwe for a day in July 2016, but only because it started with calling on people to simply post, share or like their message three months earlier.<sup>68</sup>

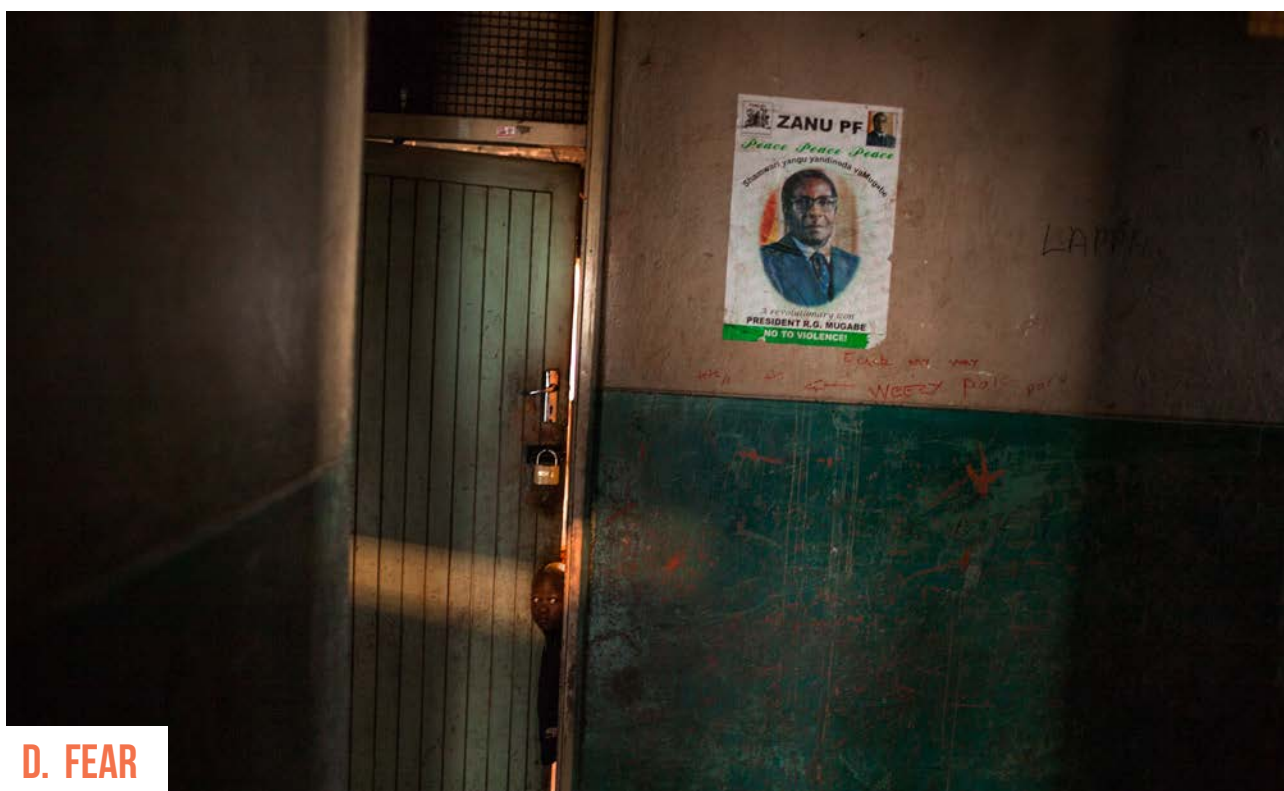
According to the Washington Post, Afrobarometer data collected in 2017 shows that, most Zimbabweans (84 percent) own a mobile phone; 41 percent of Zimbabwe's 16 million citizens use the Internet,<sup>69</sup> and more than a third (36 percent) does so on their phones; and 71 percent reported that they use their phones every day. In the third quarter

of 2016, the mobile penetration rate in Zimbabwe reached 97% while Internet penetration stood at 50% (CIPESA 2016). As of June 2017, Zimbabwe had 850,000 users on Facebook, and TechZim estimates that at least 5.2 million Zimbabweans use WhatsApp.<sup>70</sup> The concentration of social-media use is higher in the urban areas, as well as among Zimbabweans between 15 and 30 years old. According to Bertelsmann, this growing public access to alternative online news sources and social media has been “steadily undermining the monopoly position of state media” (2016: 10).



After Mnangagwa’s takeover, Supa Mandiwanzira now leads the Information Communication Technology Ministry, with cyber security added to it. At the origination of the ministry, the government claimed it was created because of growing abuse of social media, including cyber-bullying. The real reason, however, seems to be a newly invented government frame, in which contentious social-media statements are a direct cause for social problems, like shortages of basic commodities, fuel and bank notes.<sup>71</sup> Linking these social media posts to good old “regime change agenda” then provides an excuse for the introduction of new legislative means<sup>72</sup> to clamp down on movement leaders and other citizens who’ve been criticizing the government as causing the country’s economic instability online.<sup>73</sup> Media watchdog MISA-Zimbabwe warned that the new ministry will increase self-censorship by the media and by citizens on social media.

As their failure to use social media effectively forms a hold-back, traditional opposition was simply bypassed by social-media movements. As Chirimambowa and Chimedza write, the older generation of politicians seems stuck in their conviction that it is “the ‘tent’ with the biggest numbers” that matters most. However, the terrain is shifting as new forms of social movement contestation are emerging (2017). Without arguing that social media should replace the more traditional modes and strategies of organizing, like public display of political power and engagement like rallies, door-to-door campaigns and street protests, the opposition would be smart in learning from their social-movement counterparts on this point.

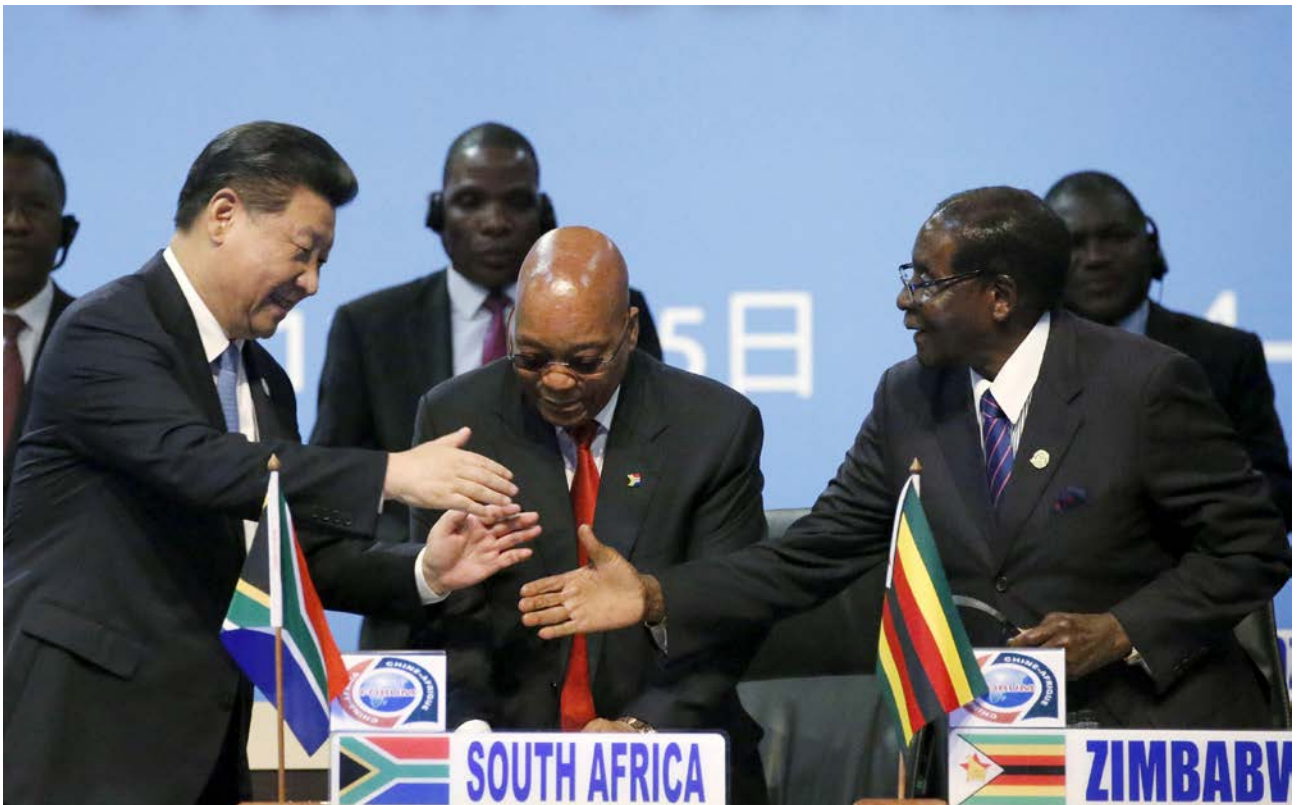


## D. FEAR

Finally, the emotion of fear plays an important role in Zimbabwean society. As Brian Kagoro writes, the presence of the ruling party in all layers of society has made the Zimbabwean citizen very familiar with the emotion of fear (2005: 20). This emotion is installed by two main causes. First of all there is the public display of violence and repression. The “reign of terror” after the 2008 elections is still fresh in the memory of most Zimbabweans (Masunungure 2011:54). As discussed above, the short-run strategies of polarization, intimidation and violence in the sphere of party politics also contributed to fear (LeBas 2014: 53-54). And the disappearance of activists like Itai Dzamara, whose brought-daylight abduction in March 2015 goes unsolved until this day, adds to the idea that the ZANU-PF regime will do everything to suppress dissent.<sup>74</sup>

Secondly, and almost as important for the influence fear has on Zimbabwe, are those structures of Zimbabwean society that are largely unknown. The ‘Central Intelligence Organization’ (CIO) plays an important role in the Zimbabwean state force. The CIO works as a national intelligence agency or secret police. The organization is under direct control of the President’s office, and has been characterized as a ‘Mugabe-ally’, openly supporting ZANU-PF (HRW 2013). However, the CIO’s work is inherently classified and statements about their mandate, structure and size are therefore not available. Within Zimbabwe’s security forces, the CIO alone has no legislative framework guiding its institutional set up and operations (Veger 2015: 18).

The largely unknown structure of the security apparatus, combined with the horrors experienced in the past, causes a mental ‘culture of fear’. Within this culture, negative emotions connected to past experiences make people believe that the same horrors can happen at any moment and that they run a constant risk (Aly & Green 2010: 270). Those beliefs have an influence on Zimbabwean society - on speaking out, on political participation, and on voting - which should not be underestimated. The fact that Zimbabwe’s new President has been heavily involved in creating this culture will not help to overcome that fear.<sup>75</sup>



## INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Despite the euphoria caused by Mugabe's disappearance from the political stage, the economic crisis persists in Zimbabwe. Already in 2016, then Finance Minister Patrick Chinamasa toured the European Union, presenting Zimbabwe's re-engagement with the international community, mainly to access loans and extricate itself from the present crisis. Now, the newly installed Cabinet uses the frame of their "new agenda for the country" to kindly demand Western sanctions to be lifted and direct investment to be stimulated.<sup>76</sup>

President Mnangagwa has made economic development and creating a better life for the people of Zimbabwe one of his top priorities. To do so, reengagement with the international community seems to give that same community strong leverage over the country. Several, mainly Western states have made it clear to the Zimbabwean government that re-engagement will only be possible once it has demonstrated a stable commitment to economic and especially political reform. However, not all players in the field are as rectilinear in their engagement with Zimbabwe.

## A. ZIMBABWE'S POSITION IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY



Zimbabwe has followed a policy of 'active nonalignment' since its independence. Especially in the region, Zimbabwe strongly supported movements fighting for liberation and the rights of their black majority populations. The country took a particularly supportive stance on Namibia's quest for independence from South Africa and in turn was vigorously against the policies of apartheid in the latter country. Zimbabwe became a strongly involved player in several international organizations, such as the informal so-called Front-Line States of Southern Africa, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Chosen by the latter body, Zimbabwe even held one of the non-permanent seats in the UN Security Council from 1982 until 1984.<sup>77</sup> Robert Mugabe was the Chairman of the African Union in the year 2015.<sup>78</sup>

When we fast forward to the start of this century, Zimbabwe's role in the international community turns more and more into a contested and disputed one. The last two decades of suspensions, sanctions and convictions were mainly caused by the country's strong emphasis on its sovereignty. As repression and authoritarianism slowly increased, the Mugabe regime strongly opposed any meddling in its 'internal' matters.<sup>79</sup> Almost every Presidential election since 2002 has led to allegations of human rights abuses by state authorities. The central question for the relation with the international community then became if the state could justifiably claim sovereignty where there were allegations of flagrant and systematic violations of human rights.<sup>80</sup>

## B. REGIONAL RELATIONS



Regionally, relations with neighboring countries and IGO's have been dynamic, to say the least. Zimbabwe plays an active role in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), especially applauding those organs that deal with inter and intra-state conflict resolution while recognizing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states.<sup>81</sup> Although under pressure of the international community, Zimbabwe allowed the SADC to broker an interim power-sharing agreement between ZANU-PF and the two main opposition formations MDC-T and MDC-N after the 2008 election violence (Aeby 2016). However, serious challenges with the implementation of the GPA could be partly contributed to SADC's failure to establish impartial structures which could effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of the GPA (Dzinesa & Zambara 2011).

Former South African President Mbeki for years relied on "quiet diplomacy" in an attempt to stabilize his neighbor, with differing success (Adelmann 2004). With the resignation of Mbeki in 2008, and his replacement by Jacob Zuma in 2009, Zimbabwe lost a particularly kindred relation between two heads of state. Despite South Africa's prevalence as a regional superpower, the two countries are mutually dependent. When Grace Mugabe chose to assault a 20-year old South African model

in August 2017, many analysts speculated that her husband would likely have made things very difficult for Pretoria, when not granted immunity.<sup>82</sup> Where pride trumped over reason with Mugabe, Mnangagwa's regime might be expected to act more rational. For economic survival,

## C. WESTERN INTERNATIONAL SPHERE

Zimbabwe is largely dependent on its Southern neighbor, as the most powerful country in the region, giving it a considerable amount of leverage.

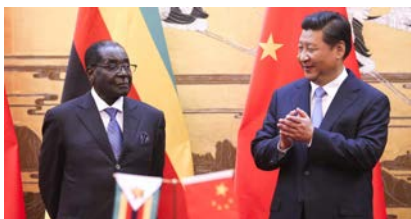
However, solidarity (and the yearn for stability) often trumps justice in (Southern) Africa, a rule which we have seen confirmed by the handling of the recent military coup by the African Union. Building on the landmark 2000 Lome Declaration, the AU has been hailed for its zero tolerance policy towards unconstitutional changes of government since its formation in 2002. Furthermore, the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, empowered the AU Peace and Security Council to police incumbent “infringements on the principles of democratic change of government”. In the case of Zimbabwe, the AU was confronted with a coup that had the potential to cause a political transition that was popularly supported domestically and in the region. With the organization’s choice to accept a military intervention that absolved Zimbabwe of Mugabe’s dictatorial rule, it not only waged its credibility concerning the use of force in politics, but also showed its choice for pragmatism over the rule of law.<sup>83</sup>

Historically, Zimbabwe’s most important link in the West has been with its former colonial power Great Britain. Although, the past decades have witnessed a hardening shift in this relationship,<sup>84</sup> many Zimbabweans continue to live, work and study in Britain on a private basis. UK’s souring relation with the country has been exemplary for the ties between Zimbabwe and the rest of the Western international sphere. Mugabe’s stance towards “the West” was unfavorable, while he viewed many Western governments with suspicion.

Over the years, both the European Union as well as the United States have used different forms of sanctions to condemn human rights violations and political violence. The EU upheld sanctions that were imposed on Zimbabwe after the 2002 elections for more than a decade. Rather than forcing Mugabe to change his policies, however, critics have said that the sanctions simply strengthened his regime with a propaganda weapon, blaming all Zimbabwe’s economic ills on western imperialists seeking regime change.<sup>85</sup> In 2015, after 12 years, the European Union lifted the sanctions and set on a course of normalizing relations and working with Mugabe rather than against him.

In the last two decades, the United States has imposed targeted measures on the Zimbabwean government, including financial and visa sanctions against particular individuals, an arms-embargo, and a suspension of non-humanitarian government-to-government assistance. Despite the strained political relations, the United States continue to be the leading provider of humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe.<sup>86</sup>

## D. TURNING EAST — RUSSIA AND CHINA RELATIONS



As relations with the Western block strained, the government of Zimbabwe has over the years adopted a “look east” policy, which led to the deepening political and diplomatic relations with East Asian countries and Russia.<sup>87</sup> Relations with Russia and China date back to the Rhodesian Bush War and Zimbabwe’s fight for independence. Currently, mainly China’s approach, in not making aid and investments conditional on performance in human rights and good governance, has forged a strong relationship with Zimbabwe. The increased alliances also paid off for Zimbabwe in the political arena. China and Russia together vetoed two resolutions in the United Nations Security Council in 2005 and 2008, which would have imposed targeted sanctions on the country. The fact that China also supports the Zimbabwean regimes with weapons has caused some uproar in the past.<sup>88</sup>

As several analysts have argued, however, one could argue that, with the increased reliance on “the East”, Zimbabwe has substituted one form of imperialism for another.<sup>89</sup> A 2016 poll showed that Zimbabweans are divided over China’s role in the country, with 48 percent saying its influence was positive as opposed to 31 percent who perceived it as negative. Cheap Chinese products and even labor are flooding the Zimbabwean market. Zimbabwe exported \$766 million worth of goods to China in 2015, but besides some more labor-intensive tobacco and cotton, Zimbabwe’s exports were mostly restricted to minerals and metals.<sup>90</sup> Although Chinese investment is much needed, their economic agenda is likely set on extracting more wealth and value out of the country than putting in it.

The new government, under President Emmerson Mnangagwa, is confronted with an economic crisis which ways heavy on Zimbabwe’s socio-political structures. Making economic recovery a priority means a need for reconciliation with the international community. Newly installed Foreign Minister Sibusiso Moyo has claimed that the new administration now is “focusing on reassuring our friends and creating new friends, reengagement with those who were sitting on the fence before.”<sup>91</sup> If nothing else, his stance seems to offer a new window of opportunity for the United States, the European Union, and others who had pulled away from Zimbabwe in the past.



## II PILLAR ANALYSIS



To influence society using nonviolent strategies, one should identify the institutions and organizations that support the existing power structure and social functions, and those that could support your vision of social change. Derived from Gene Sharp's work 'Waging Nonviolent Struggle' for the purpose of this analysis, we define pillars of support as "institutions and sections of the society that supply the existing regime with sources of power required for maintenance and expansion of its power capacity" (2005). The other two categories described below then list similar institutions and sections of society, who are ambivalent or even possible allies to counter the existing power structures. For the use of these concepts, it should be noted that a pillar-analysis should not particularly list social functions (such as the "economy" or "religion") but rather "the institutions that create and carry out social functions" (Canvas Core Curriculum 2007: 34). In describing these entities, this part of the country report heavily builds on the broad analysis in the first part of this report.

## PILLARS IN SUPPORT OF THE EXISTING POWER-STRUCTURES

### A. RULING PARTY ZANU-PF

After 37 years of ZANU-PF as Zimbabwe's ruling party, state and party are completely intertwined, and the power structures that have upheld several corrupt and incompetent governments are strongly built on ZANU-PF. Strongly building on their credentials in the liberation-war, the party uses a heavily polarizing narrative of insiders and outsiders. Despite allowing democratic reforms over the last two decades, ZANU-PF will never allow their long-term legacy to be contested. The recent coup and replacement of President Robert Mugabe have confirmed this. The military intervention was motivated more by securing the continued rule of the party than by Mugabe's mismanagement of Zimbabwe.

If anything, these recent events have strengthened the ruling party as a whole. Until November, ZANU-PF seemed like it was crumbling, distracted by two warring factions, competing over the succession of Robert Mugabe. Mnangagwa's rise to power has seemingly decided the infighting within the ruling party for once and for all. Instead of engaging other players in an inclusive process towards the 2018 elections, the new President has rewarded the loyal military forces with positions in his administration.<sup>92</sup> Many Zimbabweans simply value those who have redeemed them from Robert Mugabe, expecting that now, everything will be better. Mnangagwa's early moves are definitely hopeful for these people, but give no guarantee for a better life. Nevertheless, without any serious political opposition forces as of yet, ZANU-PF seems to be sailing smoothly towards electoral victory in 2018.

### B. MILITARY



As the recent developments in Zimbabwe have shown once more, the military is a highly politicized institution, which acts on behalf of ruling party ZANU-PF. The military also has strong ties with other groups in Zimbabwean society, which are in support of the ruling party. Since 2000, militia bases have been established throughout Zimbabwe. Here, war veterans and youth militias have been ideologically indoctrinated and were trained by military personnel, to support the ruling party, mainly during election periods (Bertelsmann 2016: 5).

Where the Zimbabwean military should be a state-force, its direct link to the ruling party is undisputed. With both serving and retired officers deployed in the bureaucracy, parliament, judiciary, public enterprises, media, sports and culture bodies, the military clearly is ubiquitous in the economic, public and social spheres in Zimbabwe. State forces have acted as protectors of ZANU-PF, while unlawfully arresting MDC officials and activists, journalists, civil society activists and ordinary citizens (Moyo 2014: 69). With Zimbabwe's new President as a former Minister of Defense, and former military commanders on key positions in the Mnangagwa administration, shifting this pillar will be unlikely. Recent reports are suggesting that the military generals now even have the upper-hand over Mnangagwa.<sup>93</sup>



## C. POLICE

Like the army, the Zimbabwe Republic Police is heavily politicized. The heads of the police force have close ties to ZANU-PF, and accumulated wealth and power under the party's rule. Where the army has gained significant credits for their role in ousting Robert Mugabe, the ZRP is not very popular among the Zimbabwean citizens. Besides its role as the most visible and widely used power force to crack down on dissenting voices, the police are also known as one of the most corrupt institutions of the country. Over the last few years, there have been few Zimbabweans who have not been harassed at roadblocks for bribes.

Besides its strong relation with the ruling party, the police-forces have always acted as the gatekeepers to power for President Mugabe specifically. Only in August, there were clashes in central Harare between the Zimbabwe Republic Police – loyal to first lady Grace Mugabe and her allies in a ZANU-PF faction, G40 – and soldiers loyal to Mnangagwa.<sup>94</sup> During the November 2017 coup, the ZRP played a somewhat strange role. Because of police officers' apparent preference for the Mugabe's, the army occupied a large paramilitary police support unit depot in Harare and disarmed police officers. With Emmerson Mnangagwa in power, the ZRP is undergoing some changes in command and discipline.<sup>95</sup> However, one must remember these reforms are all meant to align the institution with the new ZANU-PF regime.

## D. CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION

As mentioned above, the CIO stands under direct control of the President's office, and has openly supported the ruling party in the past. The CIO has operated more as a ZANU-PF intelligence office and has been accused of playing a serious role in human-rights abuses against ruling party political opponents as well as civil society activists (HRW 2013). Allegations include torture, abductions, beatings and harassment. All the information about the mandate, structure and seize of the CIO is confidential; the "invisible factor" plays an important role here (Veger 2015). Speculations about what the institution is capable of causes fear among Zimbabwean citizens.

In 2013, Mnangagwa claimed that "those who speak of security reforms are driven by the illegal regime change agenda to remove us [ZANU-PF] [from power] and install their puppets" (HRW 2013). Soon after his inauguration, Mnangagwa appointed a former Zimbabwean ambassador to South Africa as the new director-general of the CIO, a former Mugabe point-man.<sup>96</sup> As Human Rights Watch already stated in 2013, security sector reform will have to be an essential part of the democratic transformation of Zimbabwe. However, with the current President of the country presiding over the intelligence organization he led all the way through the 1980s, this seems unlikely.

## E. ZIMBABWE ELECTORAL COMMISSION (ZEC)

The Zimbabwean Electoral Commission's performance in the most recent elections has nurtured an environment of distrust and anxiety among opposition parties and civil society towards the organization. ZEC lacks credibility, with personnel being compromised by their close affiliation to ZANU-PF. Furthermore, its chairperson is appointed by the president and the organization's secretariat includes a number of people who are reported to have strong links to the military and security services (Bertelsmann 2016: 7). The commission, finally, lacks the resources and professional personnel to operate independently.

One of the central efforts of the GNU was to change the electoral laws in a way that would create a level playing field for future elections. In September 2012, the Electoral Amendment Act was passed, and ZEC became responsible for implementing measures concerning voter registrations and electoral result announcements. However, as Bertelsmann concludes, there has been no significant improvement in how elections are managed by ZEC, as the results of the July 2013 election were highly contested. The commission is one of those institutions that allow ZANU-PF to uphold an apparent democratic appearance, while giving the party enough room for massive rigging when necessary.

## F. STATE CONTROLLED MEDIA



The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) still maintains a monopoly over television-broadcasting, and is subject to overt political interference and censorship. Where in Zimbabwe many people rely on the radio for information, this media-sector is also strongly state-directed. The ZANU-PF administration sustained its refusal to grant licenses to community radio stations. According to Freedom House, no community radio stations have been licensed since 2001 (2017). The government also controls two daily newspapers, the *Chronicle* and the *Herald*, whose coverage generally favored Mugabe and the ZANU-PF, and will be likely to fully support the new President as well. Although there is a vast amount of alternative, independent newspapers available, they are relatively expensive and have poor distribution networks outside urban areas (Freedom House 2017a).

## AMBIVALENT OR SPLIT ALLEGIANCE

### A. WAR VETERANS



In the ZANU-PF narrative, which strongly builds on its war credentials, veterans of the liberation war have traditionally played an important role. Many of them felt that they were misled into believing they would receive military pensions and land expropriated from the country's white minority in the event of a military or political victory. To represent the veterans, the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) was formed in 1989. Although the organization is not considered an official state-entity, war veterans are members of the Reserve Force under the Ministry of Defense, which makes them an element of the formal security structure under the banner of ZNLWVA (Southern Africa Report 2011: 2). Since the turn of the century, the war veterans became an instrument of the ruling party. The organization is largely dependent on the (financial) support of ZANU-PF. The members of the ZNLWVA have spearheaded electoral campaigns for ZANU-PF in all elections since 2000. War veterans became instrumental for ZANU-PF in suppressing the opposition through the use of harassment, intimidation, and violence.

War veterans, who used to organize under the wings of the ZANU-PF party, currently form a more and more independent group in Zimbabwean society. Along the lines of the internal ZANU-PF factionalism, war veterans have been deeply divided about Mugabe's succession for some time. Halfway 2016, the group openly split from Mugabe.<sup>97</sup> As Emmerson Mnangagwa has taken office, it is still unclear if the War Veterans will align with his administration, or keep on their own, more independent course. With the entire staff officer corps and most middle-level commanders of the army, air force, police, prison service and CIO as members of the ZNLWVA (Southern Africa Report 2011: 8), the recent increase in military influence over Zimbabwe's rule might push the war veterans back to supporting the regime.

## B. JUDICIARY



Where the Zimbabwean Constitution provides for a clear separation between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of government, excessive use of executive power has blurred these lines over the last decades (Bertelsmann 2016: 10). Mainly presidential powers have been used to influence the judiciary. The President is allowed to appoint and remove key positions, such as the Attorney General, the Chief Justice, Judge President of the High Court and all other judges in consultation with the Judicial Services Commission. The 2013 constitution potentially provides a more conducive atmosphere for an independent judiciary. An improvement in this regard has been the introduction of a requirement that the positions mentioned above must be publicly advertised followed by public interviews of the candidates.

The strong ZANU-PF infiltration in the judiciary has not kept judges from ruling at the expense of the ruling-party. Major blows against the government's tight media control came in October 2013 and again in June 2014, with judge's ruling in favor of journalists charged with defamation.<sup>98</sup> Where these cases were only minor setbacks for ZANU-PF, Pastor Mwarire's July 2016 acquittal from the charges of acting to overthrow a constitutionally elected government was more prominent.<sup>99</sup> This ruling showed even further independence of the judiciary, as Mwarire and his #ThisFlag movement were forming a serious threat to Mugabe. With the recent acquittal of two prominent Zimbabwean activists in long standing legal disputes after their public expression of discontent with the ZANU-PF regime,<sup>100</sup> there might be some cause for optimism about Zimbabwean's independent judiciary.

## C. INTERNET



As mentioned above, Zimbabwe has a relatively well developed mobile penetration infrastructure, and internet is spreading to almost all corners of the country. The internet is used mainly by nonpartisan players, such as social movements and civil society, to inform and mobilize supporters. More and more, the internet is also becoming a source for everyday news in Zimbabwe. The only important player who seems to have not understood the importance of the internet is the political opposition.

With these developments, come government interferences. After Mnangagwa's takeover, cyber security was added to Supa Mandiwanzira's Information Communication Technology Ministry.<sup>101</sup> The ZANU-PF regime has proven to possess the means to block internet-access and manipulate popular opinion through the use of online platforms.<sup>102</sup> However, so far it has not been able to decisively alter the free expression of dissenting voices, let alone stop it. The internet will become one of the main battlefields for democratic reform in Zimbabwe.

## D. CHINA



Besides being Zimbabwe's top trade partner, China is often described as being the country's all-weather friend. Although this might sound like an equal relationship, China's stakes in Zimbabwe are way higher than the other way around. And while China still holds its noninterventionist foreign policy dearly, the country's support for the Zimbabwean military has continued since independence in 1980. These close military ties have led to speculations about China's role in Zimbabwe's recent coup, especially since Beijing has not explicitly denied foreknowledge of the coup, nor has it condemned, or made any other comment, on Mugabe's removal from power.<sup>103</sup>

China's stakes in Zimbabwe are mainly economic, and as the Zimbabwean economy is heavily tied to the country's leadership, economic and political stability will be the top priority. Democratic means to reach this stability might not be on that same priority-list. However, if the movement opposing ZANU-PF autocracy will force the ruling party into a position where continued repression will lead to more instability, China might use its power to get what it wants. In that way, it might align its interests with those of the democratic movement.

## E. RELIGIOUS LEADERS



In Zimbabwe, religious authorities are widely respected by the political leadership as well as the general population. Although Zimbabwe is a mainly Christian country with small Islamic and indigenous religious minorities, Catholicism and Protestantism have been losing ground to "white garment" and Pentecostal churches, which mushroomed as a lucrative business during the economic crisis (Bertelsmann 2016: 6). In the 2013 election campaign, a concerted effort was made by ZANU-PF to cultivate support amongst indigenous churches by making various promises to them, causing the cooption of these churches into the political party.<sup>104</sup>

With Pastor Evan Mawarire as the main example, however, we can also see an effort of the church in supporting the democratic project, which is too big to handle for one or several individuals.<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, those who actively move against the current regime as part of social movements use their religion and church-groups as a base to do so. Young religious leaders also use the internet to build a network among the young Zimbabweans in their church, outside of the church-building. These strong networks could be pulled towards the democratic movement leading up to the 2018 elections

## POTENTIAL ALLIES FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM

### A. POLITICAL OPPOSITION



### B. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS



The political opposition movement has had no hand whatsoever in the toppling of Robert Mugabe, and as it turns out, has also not been able to profit from the small window of opportunity that the coup brought with it. There are several reasons for that. As mentioned above, the opposition is fractured, but more importantly has lost its popular support over time. Due to big divides between political parties and coalitions<sup>106</sup>, and a very ill Morgan Tsvangirai desperately holding on to the leadership of the MDC-T, ZANU-PF might be looking forward to another walk-over electoral victory in 2018.

Where the change in power might offer new opportunities to build their support towards the 2018-elections, it would be naïve to think that a new ZANU-PF leadership will allow its power to be taken away by the opposition. Also, the opposition has to re-invent itself. In the last two decades, their message was one of regime-change. ‘Mugabe Must Go’ is a mantra used often.<sup>107</sup> As the opposition will learn, even now Mugabe is gone, the strongly authoritarian ZANU-PF regime is still in place and by the looks of it, is stronger than ever. MDC and the other opposition parties will have to re-build their support-base by offering alternative solutions to regime change. Building a new, politically engaged generation of young Zimbabweans will be a priority. It might have to look beyond the short term of the 2018 elections to do so.

The nonpartisan social movements can play an important role in mobilizing and engaging this younger generation. In the last two years, these movements have shown that a narrative of reform instead of revolution might be the only way to engage people in a polarized, repressive and sometimes even violent political arena (Oberdorf 2017: 49). The spectrum of social-movements and actors within those movements is very broad in Zimbabwe. As with many things in the country, all of these players have their own agenda. Creating a common sense of purpose and real unity among the movements will be essential towards the future.

Especially 2016 was a year in which social movements proved their ability to mobilize thousands of people around common goals. The use of social media, a new narrative of patriotism in which the love for Zimbabwe is central, and strategies that play with the re-configuration of the country’s socio-economics have proven to be very effective in the past. Building a new generation of politically engaged youngsters, however, will prove much harder than rallying these people around a short term goal. Despite this challenge, there might not be another way, as ZANU-PF 2.0, after the military coup, seems so be more powerful than ever.

## C. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY



Where former President Robert Mugabe renounced almost every effort to re-engage his regime with the West as a regime-change attempt, his successor might be a little more pragmatic. Emmerson Mnangagwa has promised to make the recovery of the Zimbabwean economy his top-priority and to be able to live up to those words, he will also need the help of regional and Western countries. As mentioned above, regional actors might favor stability over democratic change, and Western countries and international organizations are only just now beginning to re-engage with Zimbabwe.

But the movement for democratic reform desperately needs a strong international community on their side. “Right now we are trying to get an authoritarian, quasi-military Junta under dictatorial control to agree to change the rules for the next election,” says MDC MP Eddie Cross.<sup>108</sup> “If they agree, they will lose control of the State [...] Why should they do that? Has any dictatorial regime anywhere in history done that voluntarily?” With a newly installed regime looking for future partners to develop the Zimbabwean economy, the international community could play an important role, if they are ready to step up to the plate.

## D. INDEPENDENT MEDIA



Being a journalist in Zimbabwe is still not a walk in the park. Despite the new constitution, several restrictive laws inhibit the activities of journalists. The 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act and the 2007 Interception of Communications Act limits what journalist may publish and allows state-officials to intercept and monitor communication. AIPPA also requires all operating media and journalists to register with the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC), to which the President appoints the chair and members (Bertelsmann 2016: 9). One of the most relied-on sources for news, the radio, remains heavily controlled by the regime. Finally, the ZANU-PF regime uses biased advertisement, a ban on foreign investment in the media-sector, intimidation, physical attacks, accreditation fees and even car radio license renewal schemes to upset the independent media (Freedom House 2017a).

Despite all this, Zimbabweans in 2018 have a wide spread of independent news sources available to compete with the propagandistic news-platforms. Star FM and ZiFM (radio), NewsDay, the Standard, the Zimbabwe Independent and the Daily News (newspapers) produce independent and sometimes even opposition-favoring opinion, which reaches a very wide spectrum of Zimbabwean society. Finally, the vast expansion of the Internet has widened the possibilities for these and other forms of media to reach their audience even further.

## III POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

### DISASTER SCENARIO



As a worst case scenario, we could see a 2018 election which is characterized by violence, repression of opposition political forces, and intimidation of those citizens who won't vote for the ruling party. We could call this the 2008-scenario. With the increasing military influence in the Zimbabwean government, the chances of the use of force could be said to increase correspondingly. The military leadership has a particular idea about the way Zimbabwe should be ruled, and as Robert Mugabe's ousting has shown, they are not afraid to use their striking power to enforce this vision. The heroes of today could become the villains of tomorrow. Furthermore, the economic crisis in Zimbabwe is still far from restrained, and could send the country back in the direction of hyperinflation.

However, such a scenario does not seem likely for several reasons. First of all, after everything which happened in the last decade, openly repressive and violent tactics will not be the ruling party's first choice. After the 2008 violence, and the GNU, ZANU-PF in 2013 knew it needed different means to win. In those elections, and continuing until this day, the regime has mastered the tricks and the trades of rigging poles and suppressing opposing entities within a seemingly democratic framework. What William Dobson would call the "dictator's learning-curve" describes exactly that process, replacing more brutal forms of intimidation with seemingly "free" elections and talk of human rights.<sup>109</sup> The ever-morphing, technologically savvy, and internationally connected Zimbabwean regime is not likely to resort to another campaign of violence and intimidation, because it now has other means to secure its rule. Second of all, there needs to be a strong counterforce to make the ruling elite use these extreme measures. Where the apparent MDC victory in the March 2008 elections sparked ZANU-PF-incited fury, there is no reason to believe that the ruling party will face any significant opposition in the 2018 polls.

## STATUS-QUO SCENARIO

Especially because of this lack of partisan or nonpartisan political opposition, a status-quo scenario seems more likely for Zimbabwe. This scenario, for many people, might prove to be the disaster scenario after all. As we have seen with the resignation of Robert Mugabe in November 2017, the Zimbabwean citizen is desperately waiting for change to come. But now, after the coup that was not a coup, international attention for the situation in Zimbabwe has diminished rather quickly, allowing President Mnangagwa to install his cabinet without any seat at the table for opposition forces. After the dust has settled, there is no inclusive transitional authority, no seat at the table for opposition parties or civil society, and no international community which pressures the ruling party to change its ways.

Therefore, what might be the most disastrous and frightening scenario for Zimbabwe, is a repeat of the 2013 elections, in which ruling party ZANU-PF used electoral rigging, but also oppositional malfunctioning as the means to book a walk-over victory. Five more years of unchanged ZANU-PF rule might be what scares most Zimbabweans at this point, and they might not be all too far off. In this scenario, the general public will remain disillusioned with politics in general, remain passive, and in that way allow ZANU-PF to roll smoothly towards another victory in the 2018 polls.

This scenario becomes even more likely when we consider the place where Zimbabwe is coming from. With Robert Mugabe off the stage, his successor will not have a hard time to do at least a slightly better job. With the relief that the end of the Mugabe-era has brought, and the relatively popular military in office, small developments compared to the last two decades under Mugabe could almost certainly guarantee ZANU-PF the victory in 2018, even in a free and fair election.<sup>110</sup>

## DEMOCRATIC AUTHORITARIANISM SCENARIO

A different, more long term scenario would be that of Zimbabwe developing into a regime that looks like some of its neighbors to the West, mainly Botswana and Namibia. In both of these countries, there is a very strong ruling party, with credentials from their respective liberation struggles. In these countries, political opposition against Namibia's South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and Botswana's Democratic Party (BDP) is allowed, and elections are considered relatively free and fair. Despite the fact that these countries know mild and more controversial authoritarian features, they have been thriving economically and are stable players in Southern Africa for decades now.

Their strong one-party-dominance resembles features of what the Levitsky and Way call competitive authoritarianism. This concept suggests that, while in competitive authoritarian regimes formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority, incumbents violate those rules so often and to such an extent, that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy (2002: 52). What makes these regimes so durable is the fact that they are organized around at least one non-material sources of cohesion, such as ideology, ethnicity, or solidarity rooted in a shared experience of violent struggle. Add to this a relatively prosper-

ous society, and these regimes are ready to rule for a long time. After reading this analysis, one could strongly recognize several of these features in the Zimbabwean society. An apparent democratic system, with an authority that violates the rules of that system, building on a strong ideology based in the liberation struggle. In the 1980s and early 1990s, before the country went downhill in socio-economic terms, this recipe allowed a large part of Zimbabweans to thrive. ZANU-PF will never give up its power voluntarily, or through completely free and fair elections for that matter, if they stand the chance of losing. If Mnangagwa is able to recover Zimbabwe in an economic sense, a scenario which developed the country in a competitive authoritarian one the likes of Namibia or Botswana might be possible.



## MODERATE / POSITIVE SCENARIO

From our Western perspective, a free and fair election, leading to a coalition (or at least more inclusive) government and subsequently the development of democratic institutions and regulations, would be the most positive scenario. For that to happen in the short term, the ruling party would have to voluntarily agree to major reforms in the electoral<sup>-111</sup> and security system, to allow a political level playing field to develop. With the most positive intentions in the world, this is not likely to happen in the near future.

The longer and heavily winding path towards a democratic and fair political field would be the result of an electoral victory by opposition political parties, after which these changes can be coerced through the legislature and the executive. For this to happen, Zimbabwe needs an involved and committed electorate. What they have right now is a passive and disillusioned citizenship, muted by a decade of disappointment and repression. The political opposition, civil society, social movements and all other players in Zimbabwean society will have to turn their efforts towards the long-term goal of re-engaging especially the youngest generation of citizens with the political arena (Bertelsmann 2016: 41). Although this might sound less attractive than the short term solution of regime-change, it might be the only possibility when a durable democracy is the end goal.

## IV CONCLUSION

In 1997, Sithole and Makumbe wrote “the greatest asset ZANU (PF) has had, thus far, is its leader, President Mugabe himself. He is disciplined, articulate, learned, and a very shrewd politician. But he is now 75. Therefore, the choice of his successor and the manner in which this is done is likely to determine who will be able to galvanize the independents and the weak opposition groups into a strong political party outside ZANU (PF).” At the beginning of the process that has led to this CANVAS country-report, its author concluded that, twenty years later, Zimbabwe basically still found itself in that same situation. A lot has changed in the meantime, and the MDC has been able to create that strong political body outside of the ruling party. Nevertheless, early November it was not a strange thing to conclude that the only real thing we have learned in these past twenty years is that Mugabe would not live to see any successor take his place, and the choice of his successor and the manner in which this is done seemed to still have a decisive influence on Zimbabwe’s future. Whatever the outcome would be, Zimbabwean citizens were hoping to see it happen fast.

And now, two months later, Mugabe is gone, and Zimbabwe has a new leader. Even though it took twenty more years after Sithole and Makumbe’s article, the day so many Zimbabweans had waited for finally came, causing outrageous scenes of happiness all over the country. The hope for better times is still there. However, the last couple of weeks have also been sobering. Emmerson Mnangagwa offered short term solutions and improvement, as is expected from a new leader. But permissiveness on the power of the ruling party is not to be expected. Despite the new President’s guarantee there will be free and fair elections in Zimbabwe in 2018<sup>112</sup>, there will be no doubt in his mind that ZANU-PF will come out on top.

Maybe, we are simply expecting too much from Zimbabwe. For many if not most Zimbabwean citizens, free and fair elections, rule of law, and democratic institutions in their country are not the main priority. Right now, they need a stable leadership, which can guarantee economic recovery, and in that way alleviate their suffering and hardships. And that is precisely what Mnangagwa is offering the country now. So let us get the priorities straight. The new ZANU-PF leadership, although infested with military power, and confronted with a system of patronage and corruption that was built in the last 37 years (and which they were a part of), offers at least some perspective for improvement. Now the small window of opportunity for other parties to claim a seat at the table offered by the military coup has passed, the development of the democratic values and structures in Zimbabwe might have to take a back seat, for now.

This does not mean that the struggle for a more democratic and free society has to stop. On the contrary, the pressure should be kept on the regime to comply with the new Constitution, and to adapt the Zimbabwean laws accordingly. The 2018 election is the next point at the horizon, and the opposition movement will have to do everything it can to compete with the ruling party in those elections. But the political opposition might have to change tactics and look far beyond “regime-change” in these elections to raise a new generation of Zimbabweans that can claim to be bold citizens and take charge of their own development. Only with real patience and the focus on the long term, those combined efforts can cause a real Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe.

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- 5 See footnote ii
- 6 The unprecedented support that the MDC received, including from white commercial farmers, incensed ZANU-PF, which had never managed to attract the votes of white citizens. One explanation for the popularity of the MDC within the white electorate was that it was seen as a liberal political formation that had fully embraced the post-Cold-War values of the rule of law, democracy and human rights, and that it could help reverse the fast-tracked land-reform program being pushed by ZANU-PF (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012: 9)
- 7 The ZANU-PF regime unleashed militias, central intelligence officers, regular army officers, war veterans and ZANU-PF youth on citizens under the code-name 'Operation Mavhoterapapi' (Operation Who Did You Vote For?). Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni claimed that this episode of violence should be seen as "a shameless continuation of Gukurahundi policy adopted in 1979, and underpinned by the philosophy of the annihilation of political opposition." Michael Bratton and Eldred Masunungure (2008: 51) have described the two Mashonaland provinces as the epicenters of the strategy of 'election cleansing', that is, of the liquidation of all those suspected of having voted for the MDC.
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