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ZIMBABWE: A REGIONAL ANALYSIS

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commissioned by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,
Emergency and Technical Support Service**

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Acronyms

AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
ANC	African National Congress
CIO	Central Intelligence Organization
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning System Network
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADC	Southern African Development Community
WFP	World Food Programme
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZEC	Zimbabwe Election Commission

Executive Summary

Zimbabwe has been in a state of permanent political and economic crisis since 2000. President Robert Mugabe has responded to popular unrest and the threat of electoral defeat with a series of policies that have increased violations of human rights and destroyed much of the social and economic fabric of the country.

This crisis has had a considerable impact elsewhere in Southern Africa. Business confidence for the entire region has been affected. Food security has been compromised, with one of the region's biggest grain exporters now unable to feed itself. The chronic lack of foreign exchange has affected Zimbabwe's capacity to pay for energy imported from its neighbours. And many Zimbabweans – more than three million according to some estimates – have left the country, fleeing persecution and seeking an income. Most have gone to South Africa, with smaller numbers in Botswana and Zambia.

Yet, until March 2007, there was little regional involvement in resolving the crisis. South African President Thabo Mbeki's "quiet diplomacy" had been ineffective. At a special summit the Southern African Development Community (SADC) initiated a process aimed at resolving differences between President Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). These took place under the auspices of President Mbeki. The negotiations succeeded in introducing some minor changes to repressive legislation, but Mugabe has simply refused to introduce a new constitution prior to the parliamentary and presidential elections that took place on 29 March 2008. Neither SADC nor South Africa has put effective pressure on Mugabe to comply.

The 29 March election is unprecedented in two important respects. First, *four* elections were held simultaneously: presidential, parliamentary, senatorial and local. This is doubtless contributing to a general sense of chaos, but may also increase opposition chances in the parliamentary contest. Secondly, a split in the ruling party has seen the emergence of a third serious presidential candidate after Mugabe and the MDC's Morgan Tsvangirai. Simba Makoni is a former finance minister who is believed to have the backing of the party faction led by retired army commander Solomon Mujuru.

The election campaign has been marked by intimidation, while manipulation of electoral boundaries and the voters' roll do not bode well for the prospects of the elections being accepted as free and fair. Widespread vote rigging is expected. The electoral outcome is enormously skewed in favour of Mugabe and ZANU-PF, and although the opposition insists it has been victorious the outcome of the crucial presidential contest is still not entirely certain. It is possible that the presidential contest will go to a second round, while confusion may help the election of dissident ZANU-PF members of parliament.

If there is a second presidential poll, violent intimidation by the ruling party is likely in the campaign period. No mass exodus of Zimbabwean refugees is predicted, although the steady flow of migrants fleeing persecution and economic hardship will continue.

1 Introduction

Zimbabwe has been in a state of permanent political and economic crisis since 2000. President Robert Mugabe has responded to popular unrest and the threat of electoral defeat with a series of policies that have increased violations of human rights and destroyed much of the social and economic fabric of the country.

The relationship of this crisis to the rest of the Southern African sub-region has been a curious one. To some extent the challenge to Mugabe was a product of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) becoming enmeshed in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – an engagement that was deeply unpopular in Zimbabwe. The collapse of Zimbabwe has had important effects on its neighbours for two reasons: because Zimbabwe had the second largest economy in the sub-region and because an estimated half of its workforce has left the country in search of employment. Yet active Southern African engagement in resolving the crisis has been minimal – until last year.

In March 2007, a special SADC summit appeared to offer for the first time an acknowledgment that the Zimbabwe crisis was a threat to the stability of the region as a whole. It mandated the South African President, Thabo Mbeki, to convene negotiations between the Zimbabwean parties. Many felt that this created an unprecedented opportunity for a settlement of the crisis. Yet, after extracting concessions from the opposition on the timing of elections, Mugabe has gone ahead without enacting the new constitution that was to accompany it, snubbing both Mbeki and the opposition.

Preparations for the 29 March elections appeared to be following the pattern set down in all elections since 2000: intimidation, rigging of the electoral process and political manipulation of food aid. However, a dramatically new element has emerged with the candidature of Simba Makoni, a senior member of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Suddenly Zimbabwean politics has been thrown into disarray and the ultimate election outcome – although still strongly weighted in Mugabe's favour – is no longer certain. The opposition is claiming victory, based on initial reports from polling stations, but official results are slow in appearing.

2 The Political and Economic Crisis

2.1 Background on the Crisis

The severity of Zimbabwe's political crisis first became apparent to the wider world in early 2000, when veterans of the country's liberation war began to seize white-owned commercial farms in the run-up to parliamentary elections. The immediate trigger for the "land invasions" was the government's first electoral defeat since independence, in a February 2000 referendum on proposals for a new constitution. On the strength of this result, there was widespread expectation that a recently formed opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), might secure a majority in the June 2000 elections.¹

¹ This section is based on the fuller analysis in Carver, R., *Zimbabwe: A Strategy of Tension*, Writenet, 2000 and Carver, R., *Zimbabwe: A Situation Analysis and Trend Assessment*, Writenet, 2003 (both available at UNHCR Refworld, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain>)

The campaign of ruling party violence, followed by manipulation of the June 2000 election to secure a ruling party majority, set in motion a chain of events that has entailed a permanent political crisis in the past eight years, a collapse of the economy and the exodus of up to a quarter of the country's population. Yet the roots of this crisis go back to the immediate post independence period in the early 1980s.

Since 2000, President Robert Mugabe and his government have presented the fundamental issue as being safeguarding the independence of Zimbabwe from interference by Britain, the former colonial power, and completing the independence struggle by transferring land from a wealthy minority of white farmers to the landless black majority. The independence constitution negotiated at Lancaster House in London in 1979 contained guarantees against arbitrary seizure of land without compensation. It did not, however, restrict government purchases of land for redistribution and the British government donated funds for that purpose. Yet the funds were not spent. The failure to complete land reform – which was undeniably necessary – could not be laid at the door of the “former colonial master”. Rather the white commercial farmers benefited from the opening of the economy after independence and developed a close relationship with the ruling ZANU-PF. Occasional anti-colonial rhetoric on the land issue was not accompanied by any action against the white farmers – hence the considerable shock when the violent land seizures began in 2000.

The immediate rationale behind the land seizures actually escaped many observers at the time. The target was not the farmers themselves, but the farm workers. The largest sector of the labour force, the rural working class was unionized and overwhelmingly supported the opposition. The mass displacement of farm workers to the cities (where they could not vote) had the effect of skewing the rural vote back in favour of the ruling party.

The autocratic character of ZANU-PF rule was also clear from the early 1980s. The first use of emergency powers to detain political opponents came only a few months after independence in 1980. Through the mid-1980s, the army massacred thousands of civilians in Matabeleland, the support base of the rival Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), ostensibly as part of a counter-insurgency campaign. However, Mugabe made it clear that his aim was a one-party state as soon as the entrenched clauses of the Lancaster House constitution expired. A *de facto* (though never *de jure*) one-party state was achieved in 1987 when ZAPU merged with the ruling party under pressure from repression in Matabeleland.

The extreme bloodiness of the Matabeleland episode prompted relatively little international outcry – especially when compared with the response by many governments and multilateral organizations to events of recent years. Zimbabwe was seen as a strategic and economic linchpin of the region and there was little inclination to alienate its government. For example, Britain maintained its close military involvement with Zimbabwe throughout this period, training the army and selling it hardware.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s a series of constitutional amendments concentrated power in the hands of President Mugabe. A ceremonial presidency gave way to an executive one and the president had the power to nominate a substantial number of members of the legislature. The latter was changed from a bicameral to a unicameral House, increasing the power of the president. At the same time, the welfare based policies of the early years, with heavy investment in health care and universal education, gave way to a World Bank-dictated Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP).

By the late 1980s, when the single-party system was all but in place, a series of important social and political changes began that were to culminate in the emergence of the MDC at the end of the 1990s. First, civil society began to emerge from a period of hiding. The first independent newspapers were to be seen in the late 1980s (although the government maintained its monopoly of broadcasting and, for the moment, of the daily print media). There was a growth in non-governmental organizations, including those monitoring human rights. Second, the judiciary began to emerge more boldly, with the Supreme Court, sitting as a constitutional court, striking down a number of laws and becoming a leader of progressive human rights jurisprudence in the region.

At the same time, and most importantly, the trade union movement, under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai, emerged as an independent voice, leading popular opposition to the impact of the structural adjustment programme. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) had been established, in effect, as an adjunct of the ruling party. (Its first general secretary was Mugabe's brother.) Tsvangirai, with a background in the powerful mineworkers' union, led a serious challenge to government policies – all the more effective for not being based upon the ethnic policies that had hitherto characterized political opposition to ZANU-PF.

The timing of all these developments was not coincidental: the influence of the South African civic and trade union movement, which was just entering into the transitional period of the early 1990s, was very apparent.

Two developments helped these various strands to coalesce into a coherent political opposition. Both factors had clear regional dimensions. The first was Zimbabwe's involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This costly military intervention was widely perceived in Zimbabwe as having the sole aim of enriching members of the political elite (and there is evidence that both the ruling party itself and individual members of the leadership did benefit from this). The DRC war was therefore deeply unpopular and helped to catalyse opposition. The other unifying element, as in South Africa, was the quest for a new constitutional dispensation. All the various oppositional currents – civic, trade union, legal and social – coalesced under the banner of the National Constitutional Assembly, which sought to replace the much-amended and discredited Lancaster House constitution with a new, democratic constitution with greater accountability and protection of human rights. The government responded, at the end of the 1990s, by calling a constitutional conference.

However, the draft constitution produced did not adequately reflect the national consultation that the constitutional conference had undertaken, nor did it satisfy demands for fuller accountability of the presidency. Essentially, it was perceived as a vehicle to keep Mugabe in power. When it was put to the popular vote it was decisively defeated.

In parallel with the constitutional developments, the ZCTU had launched its own political party. What became apparent in early 2000 was that this new party, the MDC, was likely to win a parliamentary majority. Mugabe and ZANU-PF embarked on a strategy that contained a number of elements that succeeded in keeping the MDC from power not only in June 2000 but in all subsequent elections. Its main elements were the following:

- mobilization of liberation war veterans (and later a national youth brigade) in violent attacks on the opposition; this also had the effect of marginalizing critical elements within ZANU-PF;
- physical displacement of potential opposition voters;
- strong anti-colonial rhetoric, which was fairly unpersuasive within the country, but which discouraged most African governments from criticizing Mugabe;
- once land had been seized, using commercial farms as a form of political patronage;
- when food security had declined to the point where a large part of the population was dependent upon food aid, making provision of grain contingent upon allegiance to ZANU-PF;
- purging the judiciary and the state apparatus of independent elements (and rewarding loyalists and new appointees with farms);
- militarizing many normal state functions including, critically, the organization of elections;
- rigging election results through intimidation, redrawing of constituency boundaries, falsified voters' rolls and ballot stuffing under the supervision of a presidentially nominated election commission.

Mugabe was, in effect, prepared to make the country ungovernable in any normal sense in order to avoid relinquishing power.

2.2 The Economic Crisis

The principal effect of these last eight years of chaos has been the collapse of the economy, with very serious human consequences. In fact, two parallel processes have been at work, resulting in the present situation of record hyperinflation, currently estimated at more than 100,000 per cent each year.² This is a level of inflation unprecedented anywhere in the world and it makes any form of normal financial or economic management impossible. On the one hand, the productive base of the economy has shrunk dramatically, while on the other hand the country's main economic assets have been turned to the purpose of patronage. This was most evident in the granting of leases for commercial farms to members of the elite – party leaders, judges, journalists and media managers, and others playing a vital role in keeping ZANU-PF in power. In fact, this trend was already in place before the crisis of 2000 and in large degree contributed to it. In 1997, Mugabe ordered a large unbudgeted payment to the liberation war veterans, essentially for political purposes, and with serious inflationary consequences. At the same time the war in the DRC was costing the country an estimated US\$ 1 million a day, prompting the International Monetary Fund to withdraw balance of payments support.³

A small wealthy elite has been created that is sucking cash out of the system. In January, Reserve Bank governor Gideon Gono said that 67 trillion Zimbabwe dollars were in circulation but could not be traced (US\$ 33 million at that time). The banks had only 2 trillion Zimbabwe dollars, a situation to which Gono's response was to print more money.⁴ Not only are basic services and commodities lacking for Zimbabweans. There is even a shortage of cash with which they can pay for it.

² Berger, S., Zimbabwe's Official Inflation Hits 100,000pc, *Daily Telegraph* [London], 21 February 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2008/02/21/wzim121.xml> [accessed March 2008]

³ Carver, *Zimbabwe: Situation Analysis*

⁴ Bond, P. and Kwinjeh, G., Zimbabwe's Political Roller-Coaster Hits Another Deep Dip, *Pambazuka News*, 11 March 2008, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/46561> [accessed March 2008]

A decade ago, Zimbabwe had the second largest economy in the sub-region. It was based upon thriving agricultural exports, mining, tourism, and a manufacturing sector that had developed under the protectionism of the pre-independence period. With the partial exception of mining, all these have collapsed. The country turned rapidly into a net food importer, as the agricultural estates almost ceased to produce. Violence, political uncertainty and collapse of the infrastructure have put paid to both tourism and manufacturing. Mining survives – coal, gold, platinum, asbestos – only because of the political power of the multinational mining houses and the difficulty of rapidly disinvesting. The fundamental problem with the Zimbabwean economy is very simple: it produces very little, and funds the opulent lifestyle of its elite through printing money.⁵

For ordinary Zimbabweans, none of the goods and services that they took for granted are available. Fuel oil has been only sporadically available for nearly a decade. Water and sewage processing has collapsed for lack of investment. Imported medicines and many foodstuffs are not available.⁶ Electricity supplies are becoming increasingly irregular, even by the uncertain standards of the sub-region. Mozambique's Cahora Bassa hydroelectric power station recently cut off supplies to Zimbabwe because of an unpaid US\$ 26 million debt, while South Africa's Eskom has also been cutting power.⁷

The economic collapse of Zimbabwe is sometimes discussed as though it were something about to occur at a particular moment – that at some given point the economy would implode and the population (presumably) depart. The reality is simpler and less dramatic. The economy is in a state of constant contraction, with the only real question being whether this decline might be arrested and, if it is not too late, reversed. Although there is an elite that profits from the economic disaster, a substantial part of the ruling party sees that repair and normalization are necessary. The reason that life continues in the least fortuitous of circumstances is that Zimbabweans apply various survival strategies that may be difficult to detect and measure within the metrics of the formal economy. Subsistence farming, informal trading and performance of services (such as prostitution – aggravating the country's serious HIV crisis) are obvious steps. The crucial one, however, adopted by up to a quarter of the population, has been migration.

The colonial economies and societies of Southern Africa were built upon migration. Most of the countries of the region functioned as labour reserves for the mines, large-scale agriculture and industries of South Africa and, to a lesser extent, Rhodesia (pre-independence Zimbabwe). Within each country also, certain rural areas were designated as labour reserves, whence seasonal and migrant labour was supplied to the colonial economy. Within this regional division of labour Zimbabwe was a net importer of labour, given the size of its economy, both before and after independence. This position was only slightly qualified by two factors. One was the export of labour to South Africa, although this was always less from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe than from other countries. Also, in the 1960s and 1970s the Zimbabwean liberation movements and their supporters found refuge in neighbouring

⁵ Amid Roaring Hyperinflation, Zimbabwe Sets New Cash Holding Limits, *VOA News*, 4 March 2008, <http://voanews.com/english/Africa/Zimbabwe/2008-03-04-voa56.cfm> [accessed March 2008]

⁶ Ndlovu, M., Blowing Away the Rhetorical Smokescreens in Zimbabwe, *Pambazuka News*, 24 October 2007, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/43971> [accessed March 2008]

⁷ Moz Reconnects Zim Power, *News24* [Johannesburg], 18 February 2008, http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447_2272859.00.html [accessed March 2008]

countries, principally Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania. After independence Zimbabwe became a magnet, with farms especially depending upon migrant workers from Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia.⁸

One of the immediate effects of Zimbabwe's economic collapse was that there was no more employment for Mozambicans, Malawians and others, with knock-on effects for those economies. There was also an attempt by ZANU-PF to make scapegoats of Zimbabwean families of Malawian and Mozambican origin. The larger impact, inevitably, has been the flight of probably at least three million Zimbabweans, mainly to South Africa, although secondarily to Botswana and Zambia.

Confusion has arisen from the fact that only a small proportion of Zimbabweans have sought refugee status in South Africa and Botswana. There are a number of reasons for this. In Botswana, the number of asylum-seekers is extremely low, probably because of the government's policy of detaining those seeking asylum.⁹ In South Africa the number is larger but Zimbabweans are discouraged from applying because of long delays in processing applications, as well as the lack of success of many applications. However, the overwhelming factor discouraging applications for refugee status in all cases is the restrictions that this might place upon working and repatriating earnings to families remaining in Zimbabwe. The issue is not whether Zimbabweans are fleeing persecution. In many instances they would have a good claim for refugee status under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. Arguably, they should be collectively designated as such under the 1969 African Refugee Convention. Until such a step is taken, the reality is likely to remain that the vast majority of Zimbabweans fleeing the country will do so as illegal economic migrants, since this represents their best chance of securing a livelihood both for themselves and for families remaining behind in Zimbabwe.

Economic migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa did not begin with the economic collapse of the 2000s. Traditionally a male activity, associated with agricultural and mine workers, in the 1980s petty commodity traders, often women, became significant cross border migrants. Prior to the liberalization of currency controls they played an important economic role too, since they bought scarce goods, such as motor spares, in South Africa and brought them back into the country. Economic migration accelerated with the introduction of the ESAP and growing hardship not just among the poorest but also among slightly wealthier social strata.¹⁰ This process accelerated dramatically from 2000 onwards, although reliable statistics are impossible to come by. South Africa operates a highly restrictive immigration policy, reinforced by xenophobic attitudes in the mass media and among sections of the public. Hence it is difficult to document the presence of illegal migrants.

What is without doubt, however, is the impact on Zimbabwe of the loss of a very substantial proportion of the labour force. If the commonest estimates of three to four million Zimbabwean emigrants are correct, then this constitutes more than half of the labour force. Inevitably the vast majority of those migrating are unskilled labourers, but these might be expected to return if there were to be a lasting political settlement and economic stability.

⁸ Carver, *Zimbabwe: A Strategy of Tension*

⁹ Makusha, J., Zimbabweans Till the Land in Kgatleng East, *Mmegi* [Gaborone], 8 February 2008, <http://www.mmegi.bw/2008/February/Thursday7/1.php> [accessed March 2008]

¹⁰ Tevera, D. and Zinyama, L., *Zimbabweans Who Move: Perspectives on International Migration in Zimbabwe*, Cape Town: Southern African Migration Project, 2002

What is even more worrying for the long-term economic future is the growing proportion of skilled and educated Zimbabweans who are leaving.

The most obvious skilled sector that has departed is the commercial farmers (some of whom have been snapped up by Mozambique and Zambia). There has been concern about the flight of skilled whites since independence in 1980 – the white population declined from some 200,000 at independence to 30,000-40,000 in 2000. Today it is no more than a few thousand. However, commercial farmers apart, white skills were easily replaced by a new generation of highly educated Zimbabweans, including in health, education, business and technology. Inevitably those with transferable and marketable skills have departed, for South Africa or Europe and North America, with the danger that they will never return. The problem is not unique to Zimbabwe – it is a particular problem in relation to South African health professionals, for example. Yet research at a relatively early point in the present crisis suggested that educated Zimbabweans were far more likely than their South African counterparts to migrate.¹¹

There is, however, another paradoxical dimension to the migration of Zimbabweans. The economy depends entirely upon their earnings. Remittances from migrants have become the largest source of foreign exchange earnings and serve, ironically, to keep the government afloat. Again, the phenomenon is not exclusive to Zimbabwe and has been documented throughout the Southern African region. However, no country in the region is so dependent upon the earnings of its migrants for survival.¹²

2.3 The Food Crisis

Food production in Zimbabwe is in crisis each year. The structural causes of this are not hard to identify: the commercial farming sector is producing less than a tenth of the grain that it did in the 1990s, and less than five per cent of the country's total maize production.¹³ The situation has been exacerbated, but not caused, by persistent drought throughout the 2000s, and by floods during the last planting season. (Maize, the staple food crop, is planted in the latter months of the year depending on rains and is harvested in about April.)

Maize stocks are extremely low because of the poor 2006-2007 season, when there was a grain deficit of 891,000 MT (metric tons). According to the FAO/WFP, this was a result of adverse weather, economic constraints leading to a shortage of key inputs, deteriorating infrastructure, especially in irrigation, and financially unviable government-controlled prices.¹⁴ The government has brought in maize from Malawi, but imports from Zambia have been delayed by lack of transport. Lack of transport and fuel shortages also affect the capacity of the Grain Marketing Board to distribute food inside the country.¹⁵ The 2007

¹¹ Tevera, D. and Crush, J., *The New Brain Drain from Zimbabwe*, Cape Town: Southern African Migration Project, 2003

¹² Pendleton, W. [et al], *Migration, Remittances and Development in Southern Africa*, Cape Town: Southern African Migration Project, 2006

¹³ IRIN, Zimbabwe: More Food Shortages Anticipated, Johannesburg, 13 March 2008

¹⁴ FEWS NET, Zimbabwe Food Security Update Feb 2008: Heavy Rains Impact Crop Production, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/RMOI-7CH386?OpenDocument> [accessed March 2008]

¹⁵ Mugabe Accuses Zambia of Slowing Down Food Delivery, *Zim Online* [Johannesburg], 6 March 2008, <http://www.zimonline.co.za/Article.aspx?ArticleId=2824> [accessed March 2008]; Govt Report Projects Massive Grain Deficit, *Financial Gazette* [Harare], 6 March 2008, <http://www.zwnews.com/issuefull.cfm?ArticleID=18333> [accessed March 2008]

harvest determines current stocks. The prospects for the 2008 harvest are unclear. Flooding in December 2007 affected the ability of some farmers to plough and plant, but the overall prognosis is an improvement on 2007 because of better rainfall.¹⁶

Food security in urban areas remains critical because of inflation and shortages of goods. For example, the price of a loaf of bread increased by over 300 per cent between October 2007 and January 2008. Basic foodstuffs are generally unavailable through formal channels, although they can be bought at inflated prices on the informal market.¹⁷

In rural areas the WFP and the Consortium for Southern Africa Food Security Emergency have been providing food aid. The greater problem, however, is the control exercised by the state-controlled Grain Marketing Board over food distribution. Perceived MDC supporters, teachers, farmers and human rights activists are reported to be denied access to subsidized grain and to government agricultural mechanization programmes, as well as to seed and agricultural credit.¹⁸ There have been frequent reports that possession of a ZANU-PF card has been a requirement for distribution of food.¹⁹ This has been a feature of election campaigning in Zimbabwe over the years and, of course, has had a particular impact since around 2000, when it has been accompanied by serious food shortages.

2.4 The March 2008 Election and Recent Political Developments

The last few years have apparently demonstrated Mugabe's growing political ascendancy. Repression against the MDC has proved a highly effective response. The opposition leadership has judged that a campaign of mass civil unrest would either be ineffective or unacceptable to the mass of the population. Its share of parliamentary seats has shrunk, many of its members and hundreds of thousands of its voters have been driven out of the country. The party has become plagued by infighting and, in 2005 split into two distinct factions, one led by Tsvangirai and the other by former student leader Arthur Mutambara. The split was, in part, along ethnic lines, with leading Ndebele members of the party, including president Gibson Sibanda and secretary-general Welshman Ncube, forming the core of the Mutambara faction. The two factions are effectively separate parties, standing candidates against each other and splitting the opposition vote.

Historically ZANU-PF has been federal and faction-ridden. However, Mugabe's growing authoritarianism – and especially the use of violence and intimidation – has ensured that potential opposition within the party has remained hidden. Internal party politics are conducted in terms of who will be Mugabe's successor. This is conducted in a whisper, since the topic is a forbidden one. Aside from a circle of committed Mugabe loyalists there are, broadly speaking, two factions within the party. One coalesces around Emmerson Mnangagwa, once a very close confidant of Mugabe's who was a guerrilla leader during the liberation struggle, security minister during the Matabeleland massacres, and subsequently responsible for managing the party's business interests. The other faction centres on Solomon Mujuru, a senior military commander during the liberation struggle who became commander

¹⁶ FEWS NET

¹⁷ Ndlovu, *Blowing Away*

¹⁸ Zimbabwe Peace Project, *Partisan Distribution of Food and Other Forms of Aid: A National Report, October 2007*, Harare, 17 January 2008

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, *All Over Again: Human Rights Abuses and Flawed Electoral Conditions in Zimbabwe's Coming General Elections*, New York, March 2008

of the Zimbabwe National Army. Since his retirement he has become a very wealthy businessman.

The Mnangagwa faction showed its hand first. In 2004, Joyce Mujuru, wife of Solomon Mujuru, was appointed Vice-President. The appointment was shrewd since it was a nod in the direction of the Mujuru faction, who are from Mugabe's own Zezuru clan, but left the question of the presidential succession unresolved. Joyce Mujuru herself seemed an unlikely candidate, partly because she is not a particularly impressive figure, but also because she is a woman (despite the flurry of anti-sexist rhetoric that accompanied her nomination at the expense of Mnangagwa). The apparent advance of the Mujuru faction prompted Mnangagwa's supporters to break cover. In June 2007 six men, including an army officer, appeared before a Harare magistrate charged with plotting to overthrow Mugabe and install Mnangagwa. However, relations between the Mujurus and Mugabe were simultaneously souring. In March 2007, ZANU-PF re-adopted Mugabe as its presidential candidate, despite increasing speculation that he would step down.

This factional manoeuvring provides the background to the most dramatic political development of the 29 March 2008 election campaign: the candidature of a senior ZANU-PF figure, Simba Makoni. Makoni announced on 5 February that he was running for President and was promptly and unsurprisingly expelled from the ruling party. The unanswered questions behind his candidature are two: who in the ruling party backs Makoni and what impact will he have on the election?

The worst kept secret in Zimbabwean politics is that Makoni is supported by the Mujuru faction. Yet there has been no open statement of endorsement from either of the Mujurus, nor from most of the other senior party figures said to support him, including the influential former army chief, General Vitalis Zvinavashe, and even the current head of the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), Happyton Bonyongwe. The only ZANU-PF leader who has openly declared himself for Makoni is former Home Affairs Minister Dumiso Dabengwa.²⁰

Makoni's position is clearly that of a stalking horse. Although he is widely respected both inside and outside the party, this reflects his image as a competent technocrat rather than influential political player. Presumably the assumption on the part of Makoni's backers is that he is unlikely to win the election, otherwise he would have garnered more open support. On the other hand, were he to pull off an unlikely victory he would depend on these powerful interests to govern subsequently. The Mutambara faction has backed Makoni, improving the latter's chances, but Tsvangirai continues to run as the MDC candidate. It remains to be seen how important the split in the anti-Mugabe vote is likely to be, although changes to the electoral system, allowing a run-off in the event that no candidate has an overall majority, make its impact less decisive.

Before considering the likely outcomes of the 29 March elections, it is important to review the conditions within which they will be held, which militate strongly against any possibility that they will be free and fair. All parliamentary and presidential elections since 2000 – that is, since the emergence of serious political opposition – have been held in similar circumstances with an identical outcome.

²⁰ Makoni Expects More Defections, *Zimbabwe Independent* [Harare], 7 March 2008, <http://www.thezimbabweindependent.com/> [accessed March 2008]

The legal framework for the elections is, however, slightly different as a result of the SADC-sponsored regional peace initiative, which will be discussed in greater detail below. The important point to note here is that Mugabe extracted an important concession from the opposition with their agreement that parliamentary and presidential elections be held on the same day. They also agreed to an expanded parliament (requiring new delimitation of constituency boundaries) and conferred on it the power to choose the new president should an incumbent be unable to complete his term. This, crucially, would allow Mugabe to choose his successor. In exchange for this, Mugabe conceded almost nothing. President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa had personally guaranteed to the MDC delegation that a new constitution would be in place before the elections, or SADC would hold Mugabe to account. The MDC was widely criticized for this concession, Mugabe called elections too soon for a new constitution to be enacted, and SADC has made no effort to hold him to account. The only concessions, which amount to very little in the lawless atmosphere of Zimbabwe, were amendments to the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Broadcasting Services Act.²¹ The two latter acts provide for newspaper and broadcasting regulation. Although the amendments are marginal liberalizations they come too late to have significant impact on this election campaign. (For example, AIPPA was used to close down the independent *Daily News* and there was no possibility that the paper could have been re-registered in time.) The amendments to the POSA slightly ease police powers to ban public events and create a right of appeal against a ban to a magistrate rather than the Minister of Home Affairs. This is a positive step that may represent a marginal benefit to opposition candidates. However, this must be weighed against a long list of factors that suggest that the conduct of the election will not be fair:²²

- the election will be supervised by the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC), which is directly appointed by the President; the chairperson, Justice George Chiweshe is a former army officer and Mugabe loyalist, as is the Registrar General, Tobaiwa Mudede;
- only the ZEC is allowed to conduct voter education, while civic groups such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network are prohibited by law from carrying out this work;
- access to the media in past elections and in this election campaign has been severely limited for opposition parties; the government retains its effective monopoly of the broadcast media and even paid advertising by opposition candidates is restricted, let alone impartial news coverage of their election campaigns;
- constituency boundaries, drawn unilaterally by the ZEC while negotiations were still under way in Pretoria, have been devised to maximize the rural advantage of the ruling party at the expense of the opposition, which has won almost every urban parliamentary seat since 2000; of the expanded 210 seats, 143 will go to rural areas, even though the demography of recent years has seen pronounced urban drift with the collapse of the rural economy;²³
- voter registration has been chaotic, partly because of a lack of clarity about the respective functions of the ZEC and the Registrar General, but primarily for the same reason as in previous elections – namely, a carefully calculated chaos that results every time in the absence from the roll of many eligible voters and the presence of many who are ineligible

²¹ International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe: Prospects from a Flawed Election*, Pretoria/Brussels, March 2008

²² *Ibid.*; Human Rights Watch, *All Over Again*; Kibble, S., Electoral Shambles Highlight the Zimbabwean Crisis, *Pambazuka News*, 12 February 2008, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/46041> [accessed March 2008]

²³ Associated Press [Harare] Rural Voters Said Favored in Zimbabwe Election, Opposition Has Strongest Support in Cities, 11 March 2008

- on account of being dead (most notably, on this occasion, a celebrated and long-deceased Rhodesian Minister of Justice); people have been turned away from voter registration centres and opportunities to register or inspect the roll have been limited;
- Zimbabweans in the diaspora – estimated at more than three million, most of whom would be of voting age – are not allowed to vote (unless they are embassy officials or members of the armed forces); Zimbabweans abroad could be expected to vote overwhelmingly for the opposition;
 - it is widely alleged that past elections have seen ballot-rigging, either through stuffing of boxes or through irregularities in the count; either possibility persists on this occasion; the MDC alleges that the secure government printer has printed some three million excess ballot papers; if this is true it is hard to imagine any explanation other than ballot stuffing; the count is likely to be incredibly protracted, since is the first time that presidential, parliamentary, senatorial and local elections have been held on the same day;²⁴
 - only foreign election observers from “friendly” countries will be permitted, which will considerably reduce the independent scrutiny of voting and the count;²⁵
 - the election campaign has been conducted in an atmosphere of government and ruling party intimidation that periodically spills over into outright violence;
 - food aid is constantly used as a lever to secure loyalty to ZANU-PF.

Given all these factors it is unlikely that the MDC could win either a parliamentary majority or the presidential election. Its official share of the vote has been in decline since the high-water mark of June 2000 (or perhaps, more accurately if less precisely, the referendum of February 2000). This partly reflects declining popular support resulting from the exodus of many adult Zimbabweans and the perceived lack of effectiveness of MDC strategy. But it also, fundamentally, seems to reflect the impossibility that the people could defeat the government/ZANU-PF electoral machine.

However, there is one change in electoral procedure in these elections – a result of SADC pressure – which will undoubtedly favour the opposition, though to what extent remains to be seen. Election results are to be posted outside each polling station, although results will be issued centrally. This will provide a basis for challenges if the count is blatantly rigged.

2.5 The Election Results and Political Prognosis

These are the first Zimbabwean elections in eight years where it has not been possible to predict the result with any certainty. As soon as the scale of the MDC challenge became apparent, the ruling party employed a combination of intimidation and carefully calibrated electoral manipulation to ensure victory. The same tactics are being employed this time too. The difference, however, is the split within the ruling party. The party machine is not unanimously behind the Mugabe candidature, whatever the party leaders may say publicly. Although a defeat for Mugabe is improbable, Makoni’s emergence has created²⁶ various imponderables to which no one, not even the party managers, knows the answers.

²⁴ Zimbabwe May Take Week to Announce Poll Results, *Zim Online* [Johannesburg], 4 March 2008, <http://www.zimonline.co.za/Article.aspx?ArticleId=2814> [accessed March 2008]

²⁵ Fabricius, P., Election Observers Are a Thorny Issue for Zimbabwe, *Sunday Independent* [Johannesburg], 24 February 2008, <http://www.zwnews.com/issuefull.cfm?ArticleID=18268> [accessed March 2008]

²⁶ IRIN, Zimbabwe: Military Rattle Sabres In Support Of Mugabe, 12 March 2008; ANC Pleads with Zim Forces, *News24* [Johannesburg], 17 March 2008, http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/Zimbabwe/0,,2-11-1662_2289907,00.html [accessed March 2008]

The first imponderable is the loyalty of those within the party and state apparatus who are necessary to ensure a victory for Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Crucial to this is the role of the army, police and intelligence service. The heads of both army and police have stated that they will not tolerate the victory of anyone other than Mugabe – essentially the threat of a coup d'état if the election result is not to their liking. But there are signs that the army, at least, is unhappy. The apparent presence of General Vitalis Zvinvashe in the Makoni camp is significant, as is the rumoured position of CIO chief Happyton Bonyongwe.

All state employees have been given an incentive to be loyal with a substantial pay increase just weeks before the elections (which has had unfortunate inflationary consequences).²⁷ The larger question, however, is whether state employees and party members see a positive future with the present mismanagement of the economy. When the choice was between Mugabe and Tsvangirai, the question hardly needed to be asked. The emergence of Makoni means that the answer cannot be taken for granted.

The next imponderable is the electoral impact of the three presidential candidates on each other. It is to be assumed that Makoni will take votes from both Mugabe and Tsvangirai. His most obvious base of support is the same urban demographic as Tsvangirai's supporters, so it may be that the MDC leader will be harder hit. Given the new electoral system where any candidate must gain a 51 per cent share of the vote in the first round, this should not disadvantage the opposition, although there is a potentially dangerous contradiction between Section 110 of the Electoral Act and the Second Schedule to the Act, which sets out the procedure for announcing the winner.

Thirdly, this is the first time more than one set of elections have been held at the same time – there are in fact four. This has several potential implications, none of which can be predicted with any confidence. One is that the voting procedure itself will be more complicated, something that may increase the number of spoiled ballots, but which is likely, on balance, to benefit the opposition with its better educated urban constituency.²⁸ On the other hand, chaos in the polling system – and the extra long period that will be required for the count – clearly benefits the ruling party. The other factor, however, is that no one knows how many of the ZANU-PF parliamentary candidates are Mugabe loyalists and how many are Makoni supporters. The number is presumably not fixed and many will decide where their loyalty lies *after* the result of the presidential election. The interesting aspect of this is that not only will it be technically more difficult to rig the parliamentary election – 270 contests with 976 candidates – but it may be politically very difficult to know exactly what is being rigged. Given that members of parliament now have a vital role in choosing a new president should Mugabe stand down or die mid-term, this opens up an interesting possibility that Makoni may secure the presidency by the back door, even if he loses the election.

Of the three likely election scenarios, each one is likely to result in a victory for Mugabe. It remains clearly possible that Mugabe will win outright on 29 March, but run-offs against either Tsvangirai or Makoni are also possible. It is difficult to envisage Mugabe losing a run-

²⁷ Agence France Presse [Harare], Big Pay Rises for Zimbabwe Civil Servants ahead of Polls, 12 March 2008; Zimbabwe Gives Army, Teachers Pay Boost ahead of Elections, *Business Day* [Johannesburg], 27 February 2008, <http://www.businessday.co.za/articles/world.aspx?ID=BD4A715089> [accessed March 2008]

²⁸ So Many Candidates, Only 4 Xs, *News24* [Johannesburg], 24 February 2008, http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/Zimbabwe/0,,2-11-1662_2276541,00.html [accessed March 2008]

off when the stakes for the ZANU-PF are very clear – unless Makoni’s support has emerged into the open and the party fractures.

It should be said very clearly that, in the event of a Mugabe victory, a Kenya-style scenario of post-election violence instigated by the MDC is highly unlikely. Unlike Kenya, there is a high level of popular demoralization with politics and no expectation that Mugabe will be defeated.

3 The Zimbabwe Crisis in the Southern African Context

3.1 Overview of Regional Dimensions of the Zimbabwe Crisis

For the past eight years the response to the Zimbabwe crisis by governments in the region has been a curious mixture of material self-interest, ideology and personality. The lack of coherence in any regional response has been, in part, a result of the failure to untangle these various factors. But it must also be attributed in no small measure to the skill and boldness of Robert Mugabe in exploiting regional divisions.

The Southern African Development Community was established at the moment that Zimbabwe came to independence, since the emergence of a new powerful independent economy seemed for the first time to offer the possibility of a regional counterweight to *apartheid* South Africa. Hence Zimbabwe’s existence as an independent nation is closely bound up with SADC and creates a powerful emotional and ideological obstacle to any criticism from its neighbours – a factor that Mugabe plays on skilfully with his constant references to internal political opposition as agents of the “former colonial master” Britain.

The anti-colonial rhetoric of course serves a broader function. Not only are African leaders reluctant to expose the shallowness of such talk, even half a century after the decolonization process began. It also has a very effective impact in civil society, as Zimbabwean political and non-governmental activists have discovered when they travel the continent trying to win support for their cause.

At the governmental level anti-colonial language also ties into to one of the cardinal principles of pan-African politics: non-interference in the internal affairs of other members of the African Union. There is a strong sense of self-interest in the refusal of African leaders to condemn political repression or electoral manipulation in their neighbour’s country. Overt intervention can only be conducted under a multilateral banner – as with ECOWAS in Liberia or SADC in the DRC.

For some governments in the Southern African sub-region, another factor comes into play: the legitimacy of anti-colonial liberation movements. In four other SADC countries other than Zimbabwe – South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and Angola – the government is still formed by the political movement that waged armed struggle against colonial rule.²⁹ There is a very strong sense, clearly articulated for example in the statements of Zimbabwe’s army and police commanders, that any alternative government is not merely undesirable but illegitimate. This sentiment has proved highly influential in the region, especially in Namibia – a particularly close ally of Mugabe’s – and South Africa, as will be discussed below.

²⁹ Mbeki, M., Why SADC Leaders Keep Backing Mugabe, *Sunday Tribune* [Johannesburg], 17 February 2008, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200802250343.html> [accessed March 2008]

So, if there are strong political factors that incline the governments of the region to do little about Zimbabwe, there are other considerations pushing them to act. There are also some political factors to consider here. At any early stage of the crisis it was apparent that the government of Botswana, for example, democratically elected and with a strong human rights record, was concerned about international perceptions of a region where its neighbour was allowed to proceed in a lawless and brutal manner. Regional and sub-regional mechanisms have been introduced to improve the credibility of the African political process: the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections and the African Union peer review mechanism, for example. In both cases it was assumed that these collective procedures would be an effective and non-controversial means of bringing pressure to bear upon Mugabe. In practice, regional governments seem to have lacked the political will to enforce them.

Indeed, there is a convincing case to be made for the proposition that the crisis in Zimbabwe originated, in part, in a failure of regional governance. The incoherent policy of SADC towards the war in the DRC allowed regional armies, including Zimbabwe's, to plunder on behalf of their political leaders. Disgruntlement with this, both among the rank and file of the army, as well as the urban middle and working class, was an important factor in catalysing opposition to Mugabe in the late 1990s.

The strongest factor that should be pressing SADC governments to act, however, is the disruptive impact of the Zimbabwe crisis on the region. These can be summarized as follows:

- general loss of credibility of the region as a target for trade and investment: SADC had been making concerted efforts to present a newly liberated Southern Africa as an exception from the African stereotype of coups, rigged elections and bad governance, but Zimbabwe has undermined this; an index of this has been the poor exchange rate of the South African rand against major currencies since 2000;
- reduced food security: Zimbabwe was until 2000 a major exporter of food to the region; the first decade of this century has seen a series of droughts and poor harvests across the region, with no surplus of Zimbabwean grain to meet the shortfall – indeed, Zimbabwe has become a major importer, usually in the form of food aid;
- Reduced income from remittances: while, as noted above, Zimbabwe's foreign exchange position is maintained only by the remittances of its nationals working abroad, other countries that depended on income from their migrant nationals working in Zimbabwe have been hard hit; Malawi and Mozambique are particularly important here (and it is no surprise that Malawi's then President, Bakili Muluzi, was an early critic of Mugabe);
- unpaid bills: Zimbabwe is dependent upon power supplies from neighbouring countries, particularly South Africa and Mozambique; the lack of foreign exchange means that bills frequently go unpaid – in a context of general regional shortages of power where national suppliers are already having to apply “load-shedding” measures domestically;
- migration: the impact of the Zimbabwean exodus is a mixed one; politically, governments in South Africa and Botswana must contend with xenophobic attitudes (among the political class as well as the public), although the migrants appear to have been largely absorbed into the economy.

Given this list of reasons for action, the feebleness and incoherence of the regional response has been difficult to comprehend.

3.2 Zimbabwe and South African Domestic Politics

It would appear that the South African government, above all in the region, had a strong interest in resolving the Zimbabwe crisis. It has been heavily affected by many of the factors listed above, notably the general loss of business confidence, unpaid bills and migration – especially the latter, with most Zimbabweans choosing South Africa as an easy destination with an apparent abundance of work. In addition there is an important political factor: President Thabo Mbeki has staked his leadership of the continent on his capacity to resolve the Zimbabwe conflict.

Various explanations have been advanced for Mbeki's failure to persuade Mugabe to moderate his behaviour. One explanation, used domestically, is that Mbeki is basically sympathetic to Mugabe and that he too would chose to seize white-owned land and lock up political opponents if he were able. This is scarcely worthy of consideration. Another explanation stresses the importance of the "club" of liberation movement presidents. There is, as indicated, some credibility in this, yet Mugabe's ZANU and Mbeki's African National Congress (ANC) have not historically been close allies. The historical relationship – one of tension and hostility – is better illustrated by the attitude of Mbeki's predecessor. Nelson Mandela had a very low opinion of Robert Mugabe and was never shy of expressing it.

It will be argued here that Mbeki's main concern, far from a desire to emulate Mugabe, was in fact to ensure that there would be no mirroring of the rise of the Zimbabwean opposition in South Africa. Mbeki's aim throughout has been to develop an alternative to Mugabe from within ZANU-PF, rather than negotiating a victory for the MDC. The reasons for this are clear when seen through the prism of South African politics.

The ruling ANC is still formally part of a tripartite alliance, comprising itself, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The SACP, as might be expected, provides a disproportionate number of the leadership cadres of both the ANC and COSATU and pursues a policy that is broadly, though only cautiously, to the left of the government position. Since 1994 – and particularly since the government made a sharp turn to the right on economic policy in the mid-1990s – COSATU has been a highly vocal in-house critic of the ANC.

As the years pass, the ANC has lost much of its shine as the party that led the country to liberation, especially among younger South Africans who cannot remember *apartheid*. The crucial factor is becoming its failure to deliver its promised social and economic transformation. Yet the main political opposition does not have the credibility or the social base to offer an alternative, being descended from the right-wing and liberal white parties under *apartheid*. It has become apparent that any serious alternative to the ANC would come from within the ranks of the tripartite alliance. The big fear of the Mbeki camp was that this would coalesce around COSATU. At that very moment, an exactly parallel development took place in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions – which whom COSATU had cordial relations – established its own political party, the MDC, and but for intimidation and manipulation would have won a parliamentary majority. For Mbeki this was a nightmare scenario.

Mbeki followed Mugabe in presenting the main political issue in Zimbabwe as being race and the legacy of colonialism. In this he was assisted by the white-led Democratic Party, South Africa's liberal opposition, which was vocal in its condemnation of Mugabe. COSATU,

however, continued to present Zimbabwe in a different light, organizing frequent solidarity actions in support of its brothers and sisters north of the Limpopo.

The following comment is from a former trade union official and SACP leader who is now deputy chairman of the South African Institute of International Affairs. (He also happens to be President Mbeki's brother.):

The second group of casualties has been South African workers, especially the poor and the unemployed. The meltdown of the Zimbabwe economy has led to declining exports from South Africa to that country. In practice this meant loss of jobs by South African workers whose companies were exporting to Zimbabwe. Secondly, due to repression and the meltdown, millions of poor Zimbabweans have fled to South Africa and have been compelled to live in South Africa's slums, thus putting further pressure on the limited resources South Africa's slum dwellers have access to. The third casualties were South African companies that, besides losing export markets, have lost their investment which became devalued in the meltdown. Many of the South African companies invested in Zimbabwe are listed at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and several of their shareholders are ordinary South African workers whose pension savings are invested in these listed companies. South Africa's workers have thus taken a triple blow from Mugabe's attempt to impose his dictatorship. They have lost jobs; they have had to share meagre resources with fleeing Zimbabweans and they have had their pensions undermined.³⁰

In one sense, the emergence of Simba Makoni represents the culmination of Thabo Mbeki's strategy – a sane and credible alternative to Mugabe from within ZANU-PF ranks. It is probably not a coincidence that the most senior figure to declare for Makoni has been Dumiso Dabengwa, the Zimbabwean politician closest to the ANC. (Dabengwa was ZAPU intelligence chief during the liberation struggle, nicknamed the "Black Russian" and close to his ANC counterparts.) Pretoria has also maintained much better relations with the Mutambara wing of the MDC. Welshman Ncube is on very good terms with Mbeki, who appears to have a low opinion of Morgan Tsvangirai.

The irony, however, is that this has happened at the very moment when Mbeki is beginning his departure from power. Because of his failure to deliver on social and economic transformation, the ANC rank and file in December 2007 replaced him as party president with Jacob Zuma, a figure from the left. It remains to be seen whether Zuma will in fact be the ANC's candidate for the national presidency, with outstanding court cases against him. If he does succeed to the presidency it will be interesting to see how far he takes a different line to Mbeki. Zuma is closer to COSATU and a former political prisoner. All the indications are that he is less well disposed towards Mugabe. However, he was also ANC representative in Harare for some years and all public statements so far indicate a continuity of policy with the Mbeki government.³¹

³⁰ Mbeki, M., Regime Change in Zimbabwe Is Critical for SA Labour and Business, *Cape Argus* [Cape Town], 5 March 2008, <http://www.zwnews.com/issuefull.cfm?ArticleID=18328> [accessed March 2008]; see also Benson, K., Solidarity with Zimbabwe: Another Side to the Xenophobia Story, *Pambazuka News*, 30 August 2007, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/43112> [accessed March 2008]

³¹ ANC Pleads with Zim Forces

3.3 Regional Efforts to Resolve the Zimbabwe Crisis

By early 2007 it became apparent that both international approaches to resolving the Zimbabwe crisis had failed. On the one hand there was the hard-line response led by the United Kingdom, Australia and the European Union. This entailed targeted sanctions against ZANU-PF leaders, including travel bans and freezing of bank accounts, and the *de facto* expulsion of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth. Sanctions were seized upon by Mugabe as a badge of honour and, incorrectly, as the source of Zimbabwe's economic woes. Little was achieved.³²

On the other hand was Thabo Mbeki's "quiet diplomacy". Pretoria took the position that it could not alienate any party publicly in order to keep open lines of communication. This may have been sincere and correct, but after seven years of the crisis "quiet diplomacy" had been as ineffective as the louder sort. The problem with the South African approach was that when, for example, it used its seat on the UN Security Council to block debate on Zimbabwe, it was seen to be doing Mugabe a favour without ever extracting concessions in return.

Finally, in March 2007, a third possibility was launched. SADC convened an extraordinary summit in Dar es Salaam. It issued a statement in "solidarity" with Zimbabwe, called for a lifting of sanctions and for the UK to "honour its compensation obligations" on land.³³ More significant, however, was the decision to mandate the South African President to facilitate dialogue between government and opposition – in effect the first official recognition that there was a problem in Zimbabwe requiring a regional response. The SADC executive secretary was also required to make recommendations on how the regional body might help with economic recovery.

Early progress seemed promising. An agenda was agreed that covered all relevant issues, including constitutional reform, electoral reform, repressive laws and the general political environment. At the Lusaka SADC summit in August 2007 a glowing report of progress was presented. The report on the economy, presented by SADC executive secretary Tomaz Augusto Salamao, made rhetorical concessions to Mugabe, but included a package of sweeping economic reforms that were unpalatable to the Zimbabwe government. Although the public position remained that there were no political conditions for economic assistance, in reality it was apparent that South Africa and other key players were setting precisely these conditions. Mbeki was also in contact with Western governments to ensure that sanctions would be lifted when an agreement was reached.³⁴

Ultimately, however, Mugabe outmanoeuvred Mbeki and the MDC by a number of simple tactics. First, the delegation at the Pretoria talks was not senior enough to agree anything important, so progress was slow. Second, Mugabe created time pressure by his insistence that elections should be held in March 2008. Once the MDC had conceded this point it had lost any leverage that might have forced the necessary precondition for such elections: a new interim constitution and reform of the electoral laws. All it extracted, as noted above, was amendments to three pieces of restrictive legislation. Mugabe must also have calculated, correctly, that Mbeki was not suddenly going to break the habit of the past seven years and take an intransigent position.

³² International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe: A Regional Solution?*, Pretoria/Brussels, September 2007

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

On 17 January 2008, Mbeki flew to Harare to try to persuade Mugabe to adopt one of three compromise options on the elections – one involved postponing the elections, the others the speedy adoption of a new constitution. Mugabe rejected all three, as well as Mbeki’s proposal for a meeting with Tsvangirai and Mutambara. Essentially Mbeki had failed and Mugabe had achieved everything he wanted.³⁵ A week later Mugabe set the 29 March election date.³⁶

At an extraordinary SADC meeting in February, the “good progress” in the Zimbabwe negotiations was noted, although it did add that the “only outstanding matter” was the constitution. Early statements by the SADC election observation mission, to the effect that a free and fair election remains possible, have only diminished further the regional organization’s credibility. Neither faction of the MDC will trust it as an honest broker in the future, while Mugabe will continue to believe that he can resist pressure from his regional peers.³⁷

No doubt part of the reason for Mbeki’s weakness was that he is a lame duck president, with Zuma elected to replace him shortly before the negotiations on Zimbabwe concluded. But the record of recent years suggests that this was not the decisive factor.

3.4 Forced Migration and Other Humanitarian Consequences

Forced migration is not simply a consequence of the Zimbabwe crisis. It has, at various points, been a deliberate element in ZANU-PF policy. In 2000 and thereafter, seizures of commercial farms had as one of their aims the displacement of farm workers from the rural areas where they were likely to cast their votes in favour of the MDC. Displaced persons camps became a regular feature of the Zimbabwean cities during the period of the land invasions.

Again in 2005, Operation Murambatsvina aimed, in effect, to do almost exactly the opposite. It cleared all informal housing from the high density suburbs of Harare and Bulawayo – areas of intense political support for the opposition. The intention was to disperse opposition support. There is a philosophy behind this approach – chillingly stated by Didymus Mutasa, one of Mugabe’s closest confidants: “We would be better off with only six million people, with our own people who support the liberation struggle; we don’t want all these extra people.”³⁸ In other words – those who vote for the opposition are not properly Zimbabwean. Except that the opposition is not delineated along ethnic lines, this approach is reminiscent of the “ethnic cleansing” that has taken place elsewhere.

However, these forcible movements of population have hitherto only taken place within Zimbabwe’s borders. The migration of Zimbabweans outside the country, primarily to South

³⁵ SA Says Zimbabwe’s Political Issues Are Solved, *Mail & Guardian* [Johannesburg], 5 February 2008, http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=331561&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_national/ [accessed March 2008]

³⁶ Wily Mugabe Deceives Mbeki, *Cape Argus* [Cape Town], 30 January 2008, <http://www.zwnews.com/issuefull.cfm?ArticleID=18165> [accessed March 2008]

³⁷ Associated Press [Johannesburg], Zimbabwe Opposition Details Breakdown of Mbeki’s Mediation Efforts, 21 February 2008, <http://www.zwnews.com/issuefull.cfm?ArticleID=18256> [accessed March 2008]

³⁸ Quoted in Coltart, D., Zimbabwe Has the Lowest Life Expectancy in the World, 3 November 2006, <http://davidcoltart.com/archive/2006/283> [accessed March 2008]

Africa and Botswana, has been described above. Because migration is an essential survival strategy, not just for the individual but also for the family remaining in the country, migrants seldom identify themselves as refugees. To do so would probably be to place themselves in detention (Botswana) or under a bureaucratic and unpredictable status determination process that could see them returned home. Most therefore choose to travel and work illegally.

The problems that arise are twofold. First, there is a very high chance of being detected and returned to Zimbabwe, sometimes after detention in poor conditions. Second, although illegal Zimbabwean migrants may undercut the wages of local people, there is still no guarantee of work. Many Zimbabweans in South Africa are unable to provide for themselves (let alone their families back home) and are dependent upon churches and other charitable organizations for support.³⁹ Contingency planning by international organizations often appears to be based on the false assumption of a potential “hundreds of thousands of people crossing the border in a few weeks”, triggered by the election results, post-election violence or other decisive events.⁴⁰ In the case of Zimbabwe this has not been the pattern. Even in the event of a dramatic post-election (which this writer does not consider likely) it is improbable that this migration pattern will change. All the evidence of recent years suggests that migrants from Zimbabwe, although they doubtless meet the criteria for refugee status under the African Refugee Convention and probably the UN Convention as well, will not seek recognition as refugees in their destination country. They wish to retain the flexibility of being informal economic migrants, in order to be able to send food and cash back to their families. There is no step that could be taken, short of group recognition of Zimbabweans as refugees under the African Refugee Convention, that could alter this pattern.

The implication of this conclusion is that assistance and support for Zimbabwean migrants will have to be tailored to the reality that they are overwhelmingly illegal and will not be accommodated in formal centres such as refugee camps. The chief obstacle to providing assistance to migrants is the fact that the authorities will deport them if they are detected. Yet many Zimbabwean migrants subsist in very poor circumstances, lacking basic shelter, food and health care.⁴¹ International agencies would therefore need to work with those national bodies – usually religious and other non-governmental organizations – that are providing practical assistance to Zimbabwean migrants. These bodies are effective because receiving help from them does not prejudice a migrant’s continued presence in the country. Of course, this is more politically difficult for international agencies, but it remains the most effective way to provide effective assistance to Zimbabweans fleeing their government.

There is a school of thought that says that within Zimbabwe itself the humanitarian consequences of the political and economic crisis have been so serious that they could not now get any worse. There may be evidence to support this approach. The life expectancy of

³⁹ Hosken, G. and Otto, H., They Must Go Or We Will Kill Them, *Pretoria News*, 21 February 2008, <http://www.zwnews.com/issuefull.cfm?ArticleID=18255> [accessed March 2008]; Refugees International, Zimbabwe Exodus: Too Little, But Not Too Late, Washington, 7 November 2007, <http://www.refintl.org/content/article/detail/10280?mission=10212> [accessed March 2008]

⁴⁰ Refugees International, Zimbabwe Exodus: Key Facts on Humanitarian Assistance, Washington, 7 November 2007, <http://www.refintl.org/content/article/detail/10282> [accessed March 2008]; New SA Plan for Receiving Zimbabwe Refugees, *Business Day* [Johannesburg], 19 February 2008, <http://www.zwnews.com/issuefull.cfm?ArticleID=18241> [accessed March 2008]

⁴¹ Refugees International, Mission to Assess Humanitarian Response to Zimbabweans, Washington, 1 October 2007, <http://www.refintl.org/content/mission/detail/10212> [accessed March 2008]

Zimbabweans – in a country that once led the continent in health care and food production – is 37 years for men and a year less for women. But still it is falling. The particular reason for this is the very high level of HIV infection, about a third of the population, and the absence of resources to buy anti-retroviral drugs, combined with the poor nutritional status of those affected.

But of course worse is always possible. Economic indicators continue to plummet and this trend will not be reversed without political change. The worst that is likely to happen, in humanitarian terms, is that the government will not change and, in consequence, social and economic policies will not change either. The only small saving grace is that the coming maize harvest is likely to be an improvement on last year.

4 Conclusion

The split in ZANU-PF and Makoni's candidature is the most significant recent development in Zimbabwean politics. Many commentators had seen a split in the ruling party as being the most likely first step towards a resolution of the political crisis, especially once it became clear that, whether through internal division or electoral malpractice, the MDC was not likely to be able to take power through the ballot box. The emergence of a new, moderate ZANU-PF is the preferred outcome throughout the region.

However, Mugabe's utter intransigence in the face of the SADC peace initiative means that there will be no simple transition. It remains very difficult to envisage any circumstances in which Mugabe's loyalists will allow Makoni or Tsvangirai to win the presidential election. This may only occur if it transpires that Makoni and the Mujuru faction behind him have succeeded in loosening Mugabe's grip of the party-state machinery. In practice, the most favourable outcome for Makoni and the MDC is that the confusion caused by multiple elections and multiple candidatures will result in an increase in the number of independent or opposition parliamentarians. What can be predicted with certainty is that SADC will not condemn the inevitable electoral manipulation and intimidation, nor will it provide much support or solace to the opposition representatives in the new parliament..

It was noted above that Makoni is essentially a stalking horse. This means that he is standing in order to measure the degree of support in the country – and within the party – for an anti-Mugabe ZANU-PF candidate. His backers will plan their next move depending on the support that he garners. So will Mugabe.

Zimbabwe is not Kenya. There will be post-election violence as there has been in every election since 1985, visited by the victors upon the vanquished. If the presidential election goes to a second round it can be expected that there will be considerable ruling party violence against the opposition. But supporters of Makoni and the MDC will not rise up in anger if Mugabe retains power. Anger was burned away in 2000 and 2002 to be replaced by demoralization and disappointment.

Zimbabweans will continue to go hungry. They will continue to struggle to find employment and shelter and they will continue to pay ludicrously inflated prices for increasingly scarce goods. And so an increasing number of them will continue to travel over the southern border – and to an extent the western one too – in search of a livelihood.

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