



Zimbabwe Conflict Insight

Situation analysis

Between gaining independence from the British in April 1980 and 21 November 2017, the Republic of Zimbabwe was ruled by Robert Mugabe, the leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Two decades after independence, Zimbabwe had fallen into an extended period of economic decline and crisis, which was primarily linked to the implementation of a controversial land reform in 2000 - a policy that led to low agricultural productivity, high unemployment and hyperinflation. In January 2008, the government statistics office announced that inflation had risen to 100,580 per cent from 66,212 per cent the previous month. GDP contracted by more than 72 per cent between 2000 and 2008, causing a fifth of the population to live in extreme poverty. This chain of events, in turn, became a recipe for growing frustration and protests against the government.

On 14 November 2017, the Zimbabwean Defence Forces (ZDF) took control of the government and placed Mugabe under house arrest. Although the military intervention was criticized by some commentators as unconstitutional, it was widely supported and celebrated by a section of the public that blamed Mugabe for the country's acute socio-economic stagnation. After two weeks of steadily rising tensions, Mugabe officially resigned on 21 November, and three days later Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa was sworn in as President.

ABOUT THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis and policy implications to assist the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Member States and Development Partners in decision-making and in the implementation of peace and security-related instruments. The opinions expressed in this report are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies.

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POPULATION	GDP PER CAPITA (PPP)	LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (YEARS)	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI)	NEIGHBOURS	RECS
15.6 million	\$1,688	59.2	Index: 0.516 Rank: 154/188	Mozambique South Africa Botswana Zambia	COMESA SADC

Figure 1: Country profile and demographicsⁱ

Since assuming office, Mnangagwa has pledged to make extensive changes in the government and revive the country's economy by introducing new policies to attract foreign investment. He is faced with high expectations from citizens to bring about the desired economic, social and political changes, and also to repair Zimbabwe's international reputation.

On 30 July 2018, Zimbabwe conducted its first ever election without Mugabe on the ballot. The election was monitored by several international and regional Election Observation Missions (EOMs), who later endorsed the election as free and fair with a few reports of irregularities in certain parts of the country. The immediate aftermath of the election was marked by public demonstrations and violent conflict between the government and opposition supporters - a clear manifestation of the people's demand for real change.

Overall, the unpopular economic reforms in the early 2000s acted as a catalyst - resulting in turmoil, economic decline, suppressive measures, public protests and ultimately, the military intervention that overthrew Mugabe's government in November 2017.

Causes of the conflict

Issues of democratic governance

From the late 1990s onwards, Zimbabwe became a significant focus of the West due to concerns over government accountability, transparency, the rule of law and human rights infringements. Almost all power was concentrated in the hands of the then President Mugabe, who was the oldest sitting president in Africa at the time of his resignation. In practice, there was no clear separation of power between the state, ZANU-PF and the military. The human rights provisions in the country's constitution were ignored, neither did the government enact or amend existing laws to bring them in line with Zimbabwe's constitution or its international and regional

human rights obligations. As a result, there were instances where the police received express instructions "not to investigate or arrest ZANU-PF supporters and their allies implicated in political violence."ⁱⁱ

In the 2008 general election, opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party garnered 47 per cent of the vote compared to Mugabe's 43 per cent, necessitating a runoff election. The time leading up to the runoff was marred with violence, forcing Tsvangirai to withdraw his candidacy. The country nevertheless went ahead with the election and, despite assertions by independent observers of the process being neither free nor fair, Mugabe was proclaimed the winner. This prompted widespread condemnation from international and regional actors and resulted in a power-sharing deal between ZANU-PF and MDC. However, in the subsequent election in 2013, ZANU-PF regained their full domination in the government, which resulted in a deepening of public grievances and protests.

Economic factors

Zimbabwe's economic decline originates from 1997/1998 when the country became involved in a war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Returning war veterans demanded to be paid a gratuity as high as ZWD \$50,000 per year, causing a budget crisis and an increase in expenditure. Two years later, a controversial land reform law triggered severe development challenges across all sectors of the economy. The four main commercial field crops - wheat, tobacco, soybeans and sunflowers - experienced reduced cultivation and output levels due to low uptake and use of land, combined with a lack of experience and resources on the part of new farmers. Although the exact number is still contested, the Commercial Farmers' Union claimed that more than 1,600 commercial farmlands were repossessed and occupied by war veterans in 2000 alone. Such drastic changes in the economy in general, and land ownership in particular, widened income inequality gaps among citizens. In addition, the middle class was virtually

ⁱ Sources: Human Development Index (HDI) 2016.

ⁱⁱ Human Rights Watch, "Our Hands are Tied" Erosion of the Rule of Law in Zimbabwe, 8 November 2018.

guttled during the post-2000 crisis, as sectors such as health, education and other basic services, once regional models, collapsed. In 2009, the government was forced to adopt the US dollar as its national currency, but with frequent shortages, it had to resort to the introduction of bond notes denominated in the US dollar currency despite stiff resistance from citizens. In the subsequent years, economic and social problems such as hyperinflation, massive unemployment and weakened social service provisions became bottlenecks in the country, greatly contributing to increased public grievances and support for the November 2017 military intervention.

Power struggles within the ruling party

Factionalization within ZANU-PF goes back to the 1990s when members of the party were torn between factions loyal to Mnangagwa (Lacoste faction) and those loyal to the late army general Solomon Mujuru. After Mujuru's suspicious death in 2011, his wife (who was then a Vice President), was sacked out of fear that she might plot a coup against Mugabe. Generation 40 (G40), a faction consisting of younger party members, became prominent in 2014. 2017 saw an escalation in the internal feuding within ZANU-PF over who would succeed President Mugabe, particularly between the Lacoste faction supporting Mnangagwa and the G40 faction who threw their support behind Grace Mugabe, wife of President Mugabe. This ruction eventually resulted in Mnangagwa's dismissal from his position for allegedly plotting against the government and being disloyal.

Actors

Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)

The ZANU-PF party has been the main and most prominent political party since Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980. ZANU was originally formed in 1963 while the PF was born out of a political and military alliance with the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in 1976. The party achieved its primary goal of ousting the predominantly white minority government following the Lancaster House Agreement in December 1980. Historically, the dominant players in the inner politics of the party were the veterans, who had played a major role in the fight for independence from 1964 to 1980. The veterans believed that they were the legitimate leaders of the country and aimed to maintain dual authority both in government and within the party. Even

when Mugabe's authority began to wane in the eyes of the public, the veterans continued to express support for the aging leader. As the party's grip on power began to falter, several splinter factions, including Lacoste and G40, emerged to replace Mugabe. His advanced age, poor health and weak public performances only further fuelled the succession battle between the First Lady and Mnangagwa.

Lacoste faction

Mnangagwa was long-viewed as Mugabe's right-hand man until Grace became politically ambitious and began to edge him out. He has strong support within ZANU-PF and the veterans in the military. After replacing Mugabe as president in 2017, Mnangagwa appointed Constantino Chiwenga, a former Commander of the ZDF and Commander of the Zimbabwean National Army, as the ruling party's Vice President. Unlike MDC, ZANU-PF managed to gain support from the rural areas due to its patriotic role during the liberation fight for independence and its strong influence over traditional leaders. Due to his reformist government manifesto, Mnangagwa is also winning back the white and Indian minorities in the country, with whom wealth is concentrated.ⁱⁱⁱ

Generation 40 (G40) faction

The Grace Mugabe-led Generation 40 is a group of young leaders within ZANU-PF. Vying to succeed Mugabe, the group is mostly comprised of party members who are younger and more educated than the veterans. The G40 wanted to side line Mnangagwa, who saw himself as Mugabe's heir apparent, though the president had frequently and clearly indicated that he was not going to easily hand over power to any specific individual. After the military intervention in November 2017, ZANU-PF expelled the "G40 cabal", including Grace Mugabe, Kudzanayi Chipanga, Jonathan Moyo, Saviour Kasukuwere, Patrick Zhuwao and Ignatius Chombo. There is no doubt that Mnangagwa's electoral win caused the group to lose a credible stake in post-Mugabe Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwean Defence Forces (ZDF)

The main actor in the November military intervention was the ZDF. The security forces have had a long history of partisanship on behalf of Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Led by General Chiwenga, ZDF undertook 'Operation Restore Legacy', the code name for the controversial

ⁱⁱⁱ Interview with governance expert in Harare, 28 July 2018.

ousting of Mugabe that lasted two weeks and culminated with his resignation. The removal of Mugabe is by far the greatest testament to ZDF's ability to intervene and influence politics in Zimbabwe now and possibly in the future. The appointment of senior military officials in the cabinet denotes the continuity of the military to influence the new government and strengthen collaboration between the old guards in ZANU-PF and the military. The alleged excess use of force by the military to contain post-election violence in the July 2018 election shows the close collaboration between the government and the military.

Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance

The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is the main opposition party founded in 1999 and was led by Morgan Tsvangirai until his passing in 2018. It was, from its inception, openly against the 2000 constitutional referendum, which was mired in controversy for giving too much power to the government to expropriate land without compensation. In 2005, however, the party broke into two factions, the Movement for Democratic Change Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and the Movement for Democratic Change Ncube (MDC-N). MDC-T became the main opposition party in Zimbabwe and also challenged ZANU-PF to resolve the myriad political and economic crises in the country. The MDC-T won a narrow majority in the first round of the 2008 elections, for the first time disrupting the status quo. In February 2016, MDC-T instigated protests against Mugabe, leading to clashes

with the ZANU-PF youth wing. The incident took place in Mbare, a suburb of Harare, and left several members on both sides injured. Throughout 2016, security forces, supporters of the ruling ZANU-PF and supporters of MDC-T, frequently clashed on political, economic and social matters. In the wake of the 2017 military takeover, the MDC-T called for the replacement of Mugabe through free and fair elections in 2018. In preparation, an MDC-Alliance was formed in August 2017 alongside other opposition groups including MDC-N, the People's Democracy Party, Transform Zimbabwe and ZANU Ndonga.

On 14 February 2018, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai died of cancer. His death came at a critical time of transition in Zimbabwe's politics. Immediately after his death, co-Vice President Nelson Chamisa, one of three vice presidents, was elected as acting president of the party by the National Executive Committee (NEC), the decision-making body in years where a party congress is not held.

Support for the party derives mostly from urban areas, yet some argue that MDC is losing its base and is not as unified as a political party should be.^{iv} Furthermore, donor fatigue has also contributed to the decline of MDC as international funders such as the British government switched their support to Mnangagwa. MDC's history of splinters and divergent ideologies weakened the party significantly. In addition, the different parties that formed the alliance in 2017 would have made it difficult to distribute power had they won the July 2018 election.

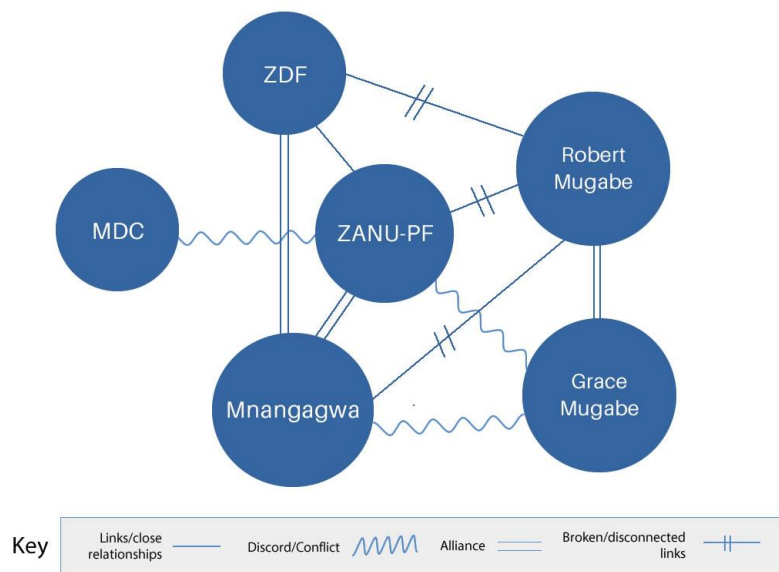


Figure 2: Actors mapping

^{iv} Interview with a political analyst in Harare, 29 July 2018.

Conflict dynamics

The land reform that took place in 2000 was the turning point for the crisis in Zimbabwe. Although the policy was intended to rectify the disparity between the white minority and the black majority, it led to a major decline in agricultural production. Failed monetary policies and the imposition of sanctions by Western governments further accelerated the deterioration of the country's economy.

On the political front, even though Robert Mugabe was renowned for employing heavy control over public institutions and the opposition through security forces, the country experienced an unprecedented level of violence and political crisis in the aftermath of the highly disputed 2008 presidential elections. During the first round of voting, Morgan Tsvangirai (who later became Prime Minister in a power-sharing agreement) won by a small margin. By the second round, pockets of violence had erupted between ZANU-PF and MDC-T supporters, with the two sides blaming each other for orchestrating the violence. Subsequently, Tsvangirai withdrew his candidacy, allowing Mugabe to win as the sole candidate. Election observation teams from the South African Development Community (SADC), the SADC Parliamentary Forum, and the African Union (AU) condemned the violence and submitted unanimous reports not to recognize the presidential election results. During the 2008 AU Summit in Egypt, the AU passed a resolution calling for shared political authority and a transitional government arrangement to be supervised by SADC.^v

In an attempt to reach a compromise, in September 2008, the main opposition parties and the ruling party signed a peace agreement, mediated by the then South African President Thabo Mbeki, to establish a unity government in February 2009 with Mugabe as President and Tsvangirai as Prime Minister. Following the establishment of the Government of National Unity (GNU), citizens hoped for better democratic exercise in the country. However, ZANU-PF was not willing to

implement the agreements of the GNU and evoked suppressive laws that targeted the media and respect for the political freedoms and human rights of citizens.^{vi} In 2013, the same year the GNU came to an end, the country organized the next election with ZANU-PF winning over 60 per cent of the presidential vote and 160 House of Assembly seats, compared to the MDC-T's 49 seats. Again, noting several irregularities, the 2013 election poll was roundly condemned by key Western countries as well as observers from the AU and SADC.

As economic decline and Mugabe's power excesses deepened, 2016 witnessed a corresponding increase in the number and intensification of civil protests. Involving a coalition of civil society actors, including trade unionists, workers and taxi drivers, popular protests were mobilized against the mismanagement of the economy and high levels of corruption by prominent ZANU-PF stalwarts. In this regard, the #ThisFlag campaign - an online movement that lasted for 25 days (1-25 May 2016) - was widely used by citizens to expose the problems and failures of the government on online platforms.

In a controversial turn of events, on the evening of 14 November 2017 the military took control of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and key areas in Harare. ZDF delivered a statement read by Major General Sibusiso Moyo to the effect that their actions did not constitute a coup but instead was intended to target "criminals"^{vii} responsible for the country's socio-economic problems. On 17 November, a high court in Zimbabwe ruled that the military takeover was legal.

Though many Zimbabweans are happy to see an end to Mugabe's rule, some argue that the transition was tantamount to a coup, referring to the Zimbabwean constitution which grants the sole responsibility of deploying defence forces and declaring a state of emergency to the President. The constitution also requires security forces to act within the constitution and in a non-partisan manner.^{viii}

As Zimbabwe's new leader, Mnangagwa composed a cabinet^{ix} that included several senior military officers,

^v African Union Summit Resolution on Zimbabwe, available at: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Zim%20AU%20Resolution%20%201%20July%2008.pdf>, as accessed on 14 July 2018.

^{vi} Dizva et al (2013) A critique of the 2008 government of National Unity and Human rights protection in Zimbabwe, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science invention.

^{vii} Statement from Zimbabwe Military on Situation in Zimbabwe, available at: [https://www.scribd.com/document/364481100/Full-](https://www.scribd.com/document/364481100/Full-Statement-From-Zimbabwe-Military-on-Situation-in-Zimbabwe)

[Statement-From-Zimbabwe-Military-on-Situation-in-Zimbabwe](#), as accessed on 14 July 2018.

^{viii} Zimbabwe's Constitution, 2013, available at: <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/zim127325.pdf>, as accessed on 14 July 2018.

^{ix} For example, Major General Sibusiso Moyo is the new Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade; Air Marshal Perrance Shiti, the new Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement. The Chairperson of the Zimbabwean National Liberation Veterans Association (ZNLWA), Christopher Mutsvanga, is now in charge of the Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services.

promised to embark on sweeping changes in the government, and pledged to introduce new policies to attract foreign investment and revive the ailing economy. Underlining the pivotal role exports play in generating foreign currency, he indicated that his government will ensure a relaxation of export procedures while and a reduction in the costs associated with international trade. Mnangagwa also promised to compensate farmers who had lost their lands and has already complied with this to some extent.^x

Although it will take time for the fruits of the reforms to be fully harvested, there have already been some important achievements. For instance, aiming to attract foreign investment - with the exception of companies involved in the diamond and platinum extractive industries and the economic sectors reserved for Zimbabwean citizens - the new administration has amended and scaled down the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act.^{xi} A national healing and peace commission, headed by the Vice President, has also been established to deal with the grievances of civilians in Matabeleland, where a series of massacres on Ndebele civilians were carried out by the ZDF in the 1980s. Though the commission's work plan is congenial and there are people in the commission who recognize the challenges that need to be addressed, the magnitude of the problem necessitates healing and addressing the multiple layers in a constructive and systematic manner.^{xii}

In mid-December 2017, ZANU-PF endorsed the candidacy of President Emmerson Mnangagwa for the 2018 elections. In order to create a conducive environment for the conduct of a free and fair election, and as a stark departure from the past, Mnangagwa invited 46 countries and 15 regional bodies to observe the elections, including Western countries. In the lead up to the election, MDC strongly demanded for electoral reforms including the process of designing, printing and storing of ballot papers as well as the presence of an external audit of the voter register and provision of equal coverage on state media. In June 2018, opposition supporters marched in Harare calling for electoral reforms ahead of the July 30 vote. Although the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) is not required by

law to divulge information on the ballot papers, some argue that, the electoral body could have been more transparent and used the opportunity to build public confidence on its institution.^{xiii}

The environment in the pre-election period had been relatively fair, with respect to freedom of speech and association, as well as freedom to organize, campaign and access media.^{xiv} Unlike previous elections, the opposition parties were able to organize campaigns in the areas that are known to be ZANU-PF's strongholds. However, according to media monitors, "while the election agenda dominated on all media platforms, coverage of political players was largely unbalanced and favoured established political parties, particularly ZANU-PF".^{xv} The coverage of ZANU-PF was also high in state-controlled news platforms. This skewed coverage was mostly linked to the ownership patent of the electronic media by the ruling party, hence granting ZANU-PF a clear advantage in controlling the messaging of these platforms. Private media outlets were more balanced and more critical of the two parties. Members of the public also expressed concerns in support of MDC's demands for transparency in the ballot papers, the presence of an external audit of the voter register and the provision of equal coverage on state media. Although ZEC introduced new steps aimed at building public confidence, including the organization of a stakeholder consultative forum, many argue that the commission failed to ensure transparency in the preparation and conduct of the election.^{xvi}

While the day of the election was pronounced by observers and voters as peaceful and orderly, the post-election period was marred by violence and demonstrations. ZANU-PF secured two-thirds of parliamentary seats, which allows the party to make constitutional amendments. Subsequent to the announcement of the preliminary election results by ZEC, opposition supporters went on the streets disputing the result. The incident was met with disproportionate use of force by the ZDF that left six civilians dead. Following ZEC's announcement of the final results, which declared Mnangagwa the winner with 50.8 per cent of the vote, Chamisa claimed the election to be fraudulent and

^x The Times, November 25, 2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/>

^{xi} Previously, the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act required indigenous Zimbabweans to have majority ownership across most sectors of the economy.

^{xii} Interview with human rights expert in Harare, 28 July 2018.

^{xiii} Interview with election expert in Harare, 1 August 2018.

^{xiv} Interview with the public and election observers, 31 July 2018.

^{xv} Media monitors assessed mainstream media coverage of the electoral period from 30 May – 22 (date?) to assess the nature of election coverage during the election period, with a focus on fair

and balanced coverage of political players; the media's role in informing the public on electoral processes; and professional and ethical conduct by the media.

^{xvi} Given its history, it was vital for ZEC to build the public's confidence. For many stakeholders that have interacted with ZEC, the challenge has been the legalistic approach that was taken by the commission in interpreting provisions of the law. Unless it was in the law, ZEC was unlikely to make concessions that would promote transparency.

illegitimate and filed a court case challenging the election results. With the court having 14 days to make a judgement, the presidential inauguration was postponed until the court decision was announced.

Despite the endorsement of the election process by several EOMs including the AU, SADC and COMESA, several experts argue that the process was marred by irregularities ranging from use of state resources and intimidation to manipulation of traditional leaders/local chiefs and impartial coverage in the state media.

One important trend that emerged in the pre- and post-election period is the dispute between supporters of the two main opponents with regard to the election process, results and deployment of the army to quell demonstrators. For many who were looking forward to a more democratic and open system of government under Mnangagwa's rule, the continuation of ZANU-PF rule has dimmed their hopes for a new Zimbabwe. The long simmering grievances of the public, in tandem with their mistrust of public institutions, are additional issues that have significantly undermined the political environment in the country. If Zimbabwe is to move forward and ensure sustainable peace and stability, it is imperative that the new leadership go beyond economic reforms and address deeply entrenched insecurities by, among others, building the public's confidence in state institutions and minimizing the military's role in the country's politics.

Scenarios

Best case scenario

The best case scenario for contemporary Zimbabwe would be the opening up of political space for increased democratization in the country. Although ZANU-PF won a majority seats necessary to establish a government, this alone will not address the grievances of the public or the protests by the opposition parties and civil society actors demanding for further democratization. The government should continue to push for further economic reforms that can allow the country to turn around its economic misfortunes, increase foreign direct investment flows, reduce its debt and enable it to borrow money again. The country could also change its tenacious political strategy to receive wider acceptance from the international community. This would involve the restoration of political and economic relations with the international community, including with key Western governments whose sanctions are yet to be lifted. The country could also effectively implement a national healing and peace reconciliation process to mend the divide in the society

as a way of curbing future possibilities of conflict and ensuring sustainable peace.

Worst case scenario

The worst case scenario for Zimbabwe would be the country relapsing to shrunken political space for opposition parties and civil societies. Because Mnangagwa's close win has become a point of contestation, the country could continue to remain highly divided. Zimbabwe could also see an increase in violent demonstrations and political and economic instability, which would negatively impact investment and prompt further decline in the economy. Although the newly appointed leadership has announced big plans to revive the country's economy and stem the tide of mass accumulation of wealth by a few, it might be difficult to do so in the short term. Post-election, there could also be no or low acceptance by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), which would further prevent economic revival. Zimbabwe might also be unable to reverse the currency shortage, bring down inflation, attract investors, and improve the lives of its citizens. The role of the military in politics has additionally become more conspicuous since its part in removing Mugabe from power. With the appointment of senior military officers into the government cabinet, support from the military constituency is almost assured for the Mnangagwa administration. The inadequate implementation of the national healing and peace agenda might also threaten the sustainability of the country's peace and stability.

Most likely scenario

Following the post-election protests, it is most likely that ZANU-PF will take modest political reforms to keep in check public grievances and address demands coming from the opposition parties and civil societies. This may create room for MDC to maintain its influence in the urban areas and prepare a better strategy for the next election. This scenario would mend relations with the international community and, with the lifting or easing of sanctions, could lead to modest progress in reviving the economy and improvements in the infrastructure and agricultural sectors.

Current response assessment

The international community, led by key Western governments, pushed for economic sanctions after the controversial land reform in 2000. After the 2008 elections, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) attempted to impose sanctions against President

Mugabe but failed when two of the five permanent members – China and the Russian Federation – voted against the draft resolution. Some of the sanctions eventually imposed by the UN and the European Union include an arms embargo, taking assets out of the country, and freezing of assets. Sanctions against Zimbabwe imposed in 2000 by the United States (US) are to continue in conformity with Washington’s national emergency policies. The US Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) implemented the targeted sanctions policy that began on 7 March 2003 when the US President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13288, blocking property of persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe. In April 2018, US Senators Christopher Coons and Jeff Flake, who were behind a proposed amendment to the US Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA), visited Harare to explore ways of strengthening the bilateral relationship. Although the lifting of sanctions will likely take time, the senators’ visit symbolizes the warming relations between the US and Zimbabwe.

Following the military intervention in November 2017, the AU insisted on a smooth power transition. The Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, urged “all stakeholders to address the current situation in accordance with the Constitution of Zimbabwe and the relevant instruments of the African Union, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.”^{xvii} After Mugabe eventually signed his resignation letter, the AUC Chairperson welcomed the decision and stated that it “will go down in history as an act of statesmanship that can only bolster President Mugabe’s political legacy.”^{xix}

The SADC Organ Troika on its part reaffirmed SADC’s commitment to the AU’s Constitutive Act and SADC’s Democratic Principles as they relate to the unconstitutional removal of democratically elected governments, and called upon all stakeholders in Zimbabwe to settle the political challenges through peaceful means. The SADC Secretariat commended Mugabe for his “bold decision to step down from his position of Head of State of the Republic of Zimbabwe,

and his lifetime commitment to serving Zimbabwe and the SADC region.”^{xx}

The 2018 election was one of the most observed elections in Africa with 46 countries and 15 regional and continental bodies involved. The general consensus among most observers was that the election was orderly, relatively fair and credible. However, some experts indicated that the absence of election observers in some of the polling stations, especially in remote areas, undermined the electoral environment.^{xxi}

The EU EOM, together with diplomats accredited in Harare, was expected to deploy about 140 observers from all 28 EU member states on the day of the election. On 6 June 2018, a core team consisting of 10 analysts arrived and were joined by 44 long-term observers on 20 June 2018. The team indicated that the political environment prevailing in Zimbabwe was conducive for holding credible elections. In addition, also acknowledging MDC’s concerns over the alleged opaqueness of the ZEC, the mission urged the contending parties to resolve their grievances in an inclusive and transparent manner in the multi-party liaison committee.

In February 2018, Mahamat undertook a visit to Harare to express the AU’s solidarity with Zimbabwe. During his visit, ZEC requested for technical assistance and in response, the Commission’s Department of Political Affairs deployed a 5-person independent electoral assistance mission to Zimbabwe from 15 June 2018 to 8 July 2018. The AU EOM deployed four core team members, 10 long-term observers and 40 short-term observers to observe the election in July 2018. The AUC Chairperson also appointed former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn to lead the mission. In its preliminary statement, the AU EOM concluded, “by and large, the process was peaceful and well administered.”^{xxii}

After the violent incident on 1 August, Desalegn, “called on all stakeholders, including political leaders and their supporters as well as security agencies to exercise restraint and avoid violent confrontation.”^{xxiii} This was followed by a joint observer team meeting convened by Desalegn, which culminated in the release of a joint statement expressing grave concern about the

^{xvii} Statement given on Thursday 16 November 2017, available at: <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/statement-by-the-chairperson-of-the-african-union-commission-on-the-situation-in-zimbabwe,accessed,as%20accessed%20on> 14 August 2018.

^{xviii} Africa news, Zimbabwe takeover 'seems like a coup' - A.U. chair Conde worried, 15 November 2017.

^{xix} Statement of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union on the Situation in Zimbabwe, 21 November 2017.

^{xx} SADC, Statement by the Executive Secretary of SADC Following the Resignation of President Robert Mugabe, 24 November 2017.

^{xxi} Interview with political analyst in Harare, 1 August 2018.

^{xxii} AU EOM Preliminary Statement, 1 August 2018.

^{xxiii} [Statement of the Head of the African Union Election Observation Mission to Zimbabwe on post-election developments in Zimbabwe](#), 1 August 2018.

regrettable outbreak of post-election violence.^{xxiv} In the statement, the team condemned vandalism and destruction of property as well as denounced excessive use of force by the police and army.^{xxv}

SADC also observed the pre-election and election process. It deployed a Pre-elections Observation Mission in March 2018 and following the mission's results, SADC's 15 ambassadors endorsed preparations for the country's July election. In its preliminary statement on 1 August, SADC explained, "the pre-election phase and the voting proceeded in a peaceful and orderly manner, and were largely in conformity with key legal and constitutional provisions and the revised SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections."^{xxvi} The Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation also called on all political leaders and their supporters to, "rise above their unfortunate challenges of the immediate post-election period to ensure the country aspires to a new and promising era."^{xxvii}

Strategic options

To the AU and SADC

- ❖ Promoting and encouraging democratic practices, good governance and the rule of law are all within the purview of the Constitutive Act of the AU. In line with these principles, the AU should encourage the opposition parties, including MDC, to submit their grievances through formal procedures and also pressure the ruling party to allow for the investigation process to take place without interference.
- ❖ In line with Article 12 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU (PSC Protocol), the PSC and SADC should closely monitor early signs of political tensions/developments to prevent conflict and facilitate apt responses by the Panel of the Wise in case of escalation/continuation of election-related violence.

- ❖ The AU should encourage Zimbabwe to ratify and vigorously implement the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance to improve the democratic governance and human rights situation in the country.
- ❖ In line with the African policy framework on Transitional Justice (ATJF), the AU should provide technical support to the national healing and peace commission to ensure effective implementation.

To the national government

- ❖ The military must quickly reduce its active and day-to-day involvement in the politics of the country in line with the provisions of the constitution, which forbids members of the armed forces and security sector from participating in politics.
- ❖ The government should create a conducive environment to attract FDI that is aimed at reducing inflation and unemployment. Since instability could detract foreign investors, it is vital for the government to work on stabilizing the country through peaceful means.
- ❖ Zimbabwe should indicate its commitment to resuming its place as a responsible member of the international community, including by quickly ratifying instruments such as the Africa Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.
- ❖ The government should undertake to fully implement the healing and peace commission set up to rectify past grievances.
- ❖ It is essential for the government to regain public confidence through the strengthening of public institutions like the judiciary, the human rights commission and ZEC.

^{xxiv} The AU, SADC, EU, Commonwealth, IRI and NDI, COMESA, the Carter Center and ECF.

^{xxv} Joint statement by international election observation missions to Zimbabwe's harmonized elections 30 July 2018, released on 2 August 2018.

^{xxvi} SADC, 2018.

^{xxvii} Statement of the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, his Excellency H.E João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço on Zimbabwe's Harmonised Elections, 30 July, 2018, 4 August 2018.

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Zimbabwe Conflict Timeline: 1980-2018

1961 December 17	The Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU) is established.
1980 April 18	Zimbabwe gains independence from Britain.
1980 April	Robert Mugabe (ZANU leader) assumes office as the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe.
1982 February 17	Joshua Nkomo, Minister without portfolio in the unity government established after independence, is accused of planning a coup and is dismissed from office by Mugabe.
1987 December 31	Mugabe becomes the first President of Zimbabwe.
1987 December	ZANU and ZAPU agree to merge and form ZANU-PF.
1997 November 14	The Zimbabwean dollar, stock market and economy crash.
1999 September	The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is established by trade unionist Morgan Tsvangirai.
1999 December 18	Mugabe announces that land would be seized from the white minority.
2000 February 12	A referendum is held to draft the constitution and is challenged by the MDC.
2000 April 6	The bill empowering the government to seize white-owned land without compensation is approved, making Western donors cut aid.
2001 July	The Finance Minister of Zimbabwe announces an economic crisis and warns of serious food shortages.
2002 January 25	A new bill is passed in parliament that gives the government extensive powers over licensing journalists, registering media organizations and ability of foreign reporters to work freely.
2002 March 13	Mugabe is re-elected as President.
2005 March	ZANU-PF wins two-thirds of the parliament but is accused of rigging by MDC.
2007 March 11	MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai is arrested for the planned demonstrations in Harare against the government.
2007 March 22	Zimbabwe's Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube presses citizens to stand up to the government.
2008 March 31	MDC wins 60 per cent of votes in the presidential election.

2008 May	A run-off election is announced to determine the winner.
2008 June	Mugabe is declared winner, but Tsvangirai pulled out days before the poll claiming he had been intimidated.
2008 July	Power sharing talks held between government and MDC.
2008 August 6	ZANU-PF and MDC urge their supporters to end the political violence.
2008 September 11	After months of power sharing negotiations, Mugabe and the opposition reach an accord where equal power is given in a unity government.
2008	Hyperinflation hits the economy.
2011 March	Tsvangirai, the Prime Minister, proclaims that the unity government is weak and that ZANU-PF exercises violence in violation of the power sharing deal.
2013 January 18	A deal is reached between the political leaders on a new draft constitution.
2013 March 22	A new constitution is approved.
2013 July 31	Presidential elections are held where Mugabe is elected for the seventh time.
2015 January	President Mugabe replaces Mauritania's President, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, as the Chairperson for the African Union for a year.
2016 April 19	An influential video, posted on Facebook by Pastor Evan Mawarire, acts as milestone for Zimbabweans to speak up against the government.
2016 July 6	Stay away protest against the government of Zimbabwe begins.
2016 July 21	The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) breaks ties with the government and denounces Mugabe's leadership.
2016 August 8	Peaceful demonstrators holding placards that read 'President Mugabe must go' are suppressed.
2016 November	Despite resistance from the public, a new national currency using bond notes is introduced.
2017 April	MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai and Joice Mujuru sign an alliance agreement to contest in the 2018 general election.
2017 August	A woman accuses Grace Mugabe of assaulting her in a hotel in South Africa.
2017 September	Pastor Evan Mawarire is charged with inciting a crowd to violence.

- 2017 November 6** Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa is fired.
- 2017 November 14** Army moves in and takes control of the state-owned broadcaster.
- 2017 November 15** The military announces that Mugabe is under house arrest.
- 2017 November 21** Mugabe resigns from the presidency.
- 2017 November 24** Mnangagwa is sworn as President.
- 2018 February 14** MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai dies.
- 2018 June 23** A bomb targeted at Mnangagwa explodes at a rally in Bulawayo, killing two people and injuring several.
- 2018 July 30** Presidential elections are conducted.
- 2018 August 1** Violent demonstrations erupt before preliminary results are announced.
- 2018 August 2** Zimbabwe Electoral Commission declares Mnangagwa winner of the presidential election.
- 2018 August 10** Nelson Chamisa files a constitutional court challenge against President Mnangagwa's electoral victory.
- 1961 December 17** The Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU) is established.
- 2018 August 24** Top court in Zimbabwe dismisses opposition to have presidential election results annulled over claims of vote rigging.
- 2018 August 26** Emmerson Mnangagwa is officially sworn in as President of Zimbabwe.