

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME IN ZIMBABWE FROM 1980 TO THE PRESENT DAY

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Zimbabwe has long been a focus of study for historians, political researchers and economists due to its evolution from British colonial rule, building an Independent Republic and its disputatious “democracy”, “broken-democracy” or “authoritarianism”. Every decade during its sovereignty has been specific: from an initial quasi cooperation between black and white politicians until the end of last century, to the racially and mainly economically motivated conflicts between members of the ruling party, white farmers and businessmen from the beginning of the new millennium. The one-party system predominated throughout the whole of its modern history – with the dominant autocratic ruler Robert Mugabe. The democratic opposition was always weak, with a short exception around the elections of 2008. And this is still the case today. What will happen to “democracy“ or “broken democracy” in Zimbabwe following this year’s parliamentary and presidential elections, which led to its old autocrat being ousted at the end of last year by a military coup and his longtime accomplice Emmerson Mnangagwa being inaugurated as the new president?

Key words: Rhodesia, Independent Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, ZANU(PF), one-party system, democratic opposition, MDC, Morgan Tsvangirai, Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Southern Rhodesia, the Unilateral Declaration of the Independence of Rhodesia by whites, Rhodesia-Zimbabwe, the first non-racial elections and the Independence of Zimbabwe

After the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1963, a new history of three southern African countries began. The former Northern Rhodesia became the Republic of Zambia and Nyasaland the Republic of Malawi in 1964. The former Southern Rhodesia became Rhodesia the next year after the proclamation of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Ian

Smith's white government. Three years later, the Republic of Rhodesia was declared with a new constitution and state president. The dominant political role was played by Ian Smith's white political party, the Rhodesia Front. Despite the claim of white Rhodesians that the political system had all the attributes of a democracy, it was a racist regime.

Not only the black citizens of this country but even the whole world was again the Rhodesian regime. Many international conferences followed between the Rhodesian white government, the British government and the British Commonwealth, even in the end with black politicians. The main question was to find some solution concerning cooperation between whites and blacks on how to govern their state. During this time, conflicts between the Rhodesian army or police and black African partisans escalated. The situation for all Rhodesian inhabitants, white or black, became even more critical. Many white and black citizens lost their lives. One of the most brutal acts by the black guerrillas was the shooting down of two Rhodesian civilian aircraft near Victoria Falls and Kariba Dam including the murder of its injured travellers on the ground.¹

Despite all the difficult circumstances in the country, after elections based on the principle of "one man – one vote" in 1979, a new Transitional Government and then a new Constitution were accepted. In the new parliament, there were twenty-eight white Members of Parliament and seventy-two black ones. The new state of Rhodesia-Zimbabwe was proclaimed. The main task of the new prime minister, Abel Muzorewa, president of the United African National Council (UANC) was to safeguard the ceasefire. Joshua Nkomo, head of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), Robert Mugabe, head of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the High Command of guerrillas abroad (*Dare re chimurenga*) were strongly against it. It was mainly Robert Mugabe who openly proclaimed many times that it was necessary "to bring down the white government by military force and set up a socialist Zimbabwe". In contrast with this threat, the interim regime announced a "safe return" policy for the black guerrillas.²

The other main task of Muzorewa's government was to find a solution with Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe and other radical black opposition leaders to set up a new democratic government of the Independent Republic of Zimbabwe. Nkomo and Mugabe began to collaborate in the so-called *Patriotic Front*. During the second half of 1979, long debates were held in London's *Lancaster House* between black African leaders, Rhodesian white representatives and

¹ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 278–280.

² *The Rhodesia Herald*, 3 May, 1979.

British state officials. The most crucial issues concerned putting a stop to the killings by black partisans, resolving the land problem and many other questions on how to govern the new state. Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe were, *inter alia*, against a special law to secure guarantees of land tenure for whites. Both preferred only the Bill of Human Rights as part of the new Constitution. The problem of land tenure were crucial for both sides, whites and blacks alike, and the British government pledged at this conference to provide (with American help) substantial financial help for the future government to accomplish land redistribution with enough money to buy land for new black farmers. Robert Mugabe also affirmed his desire to change future government from a former representative democracy style of government to a presidential one. He did not succeed at that time.

One of the main outcomes of the *Lancaster House* conference was to bring about free elections in March, 1980. Unlike the previous agreement between Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe to participate in the common political party *Patriotic Front*, both of the leaders then went into the election campaign as heads of their traditional parties: Robert Mugabe took part with his new altered party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) – ZANU(PF) and Joshua Nkomo with his old party, the Zimbabwe African People Party – ZAPU. The great problem concerned their ethnic affiliations: Nkomo's party with its smaller population of Ndebeles and Kalangas was not as numerous as Mugabe's one with the much larger ethnic group of Shona.

The result of the election was as follows: Robert Mugabe won fifty-seven parliamentary seats out of eighty possible seats, Joshua Nkomo twenty and the whites all twenty from the special white ballot. The former prime minister Abel Muzoreva won three seats and the other candidates none. Robert Mugabe won more than half the parliamentary seats and became the Prime Minister of the so-called the Government of National Unity. He nominated two white ministers in his cabinet, four of Nkomo's nominees with Joshua Nkomo as the Minister of Home Affairs. But Robert Mugabe was not only the Prime Minister, he also held the post of Minister of Defence.

In defiance of everybody, Robert Mugabe was considered the most unpredictable political figure in the new Republic of Zimbabwe proclaimed on 18 April, 1980. To calm the local and international public, his first radio address was very conciliatory. He promised not to declare a "socialist" political system in the country, to secure good governance and peace for everybody. He also promised national integrity, the protection of private ownership including an assurance not to nationalise farms, mines and factories in the future.

Zimbabwe's political system was set up on the basis of a democratically elected government answerable to a bicameral Parliament and with an elected President. The first one was Reverend Canaan Sodindo Banana.³

Initial political and economic development in an independent Zimbabwe until *Gukurahunda*, the new constitution and the end of parliamentary democracy

Zimbabwe's post-independence experience tells us a lot about state "weakness" or "failure", the "democratic" or "authoritarian" state system there. Zimbabwe is neither a weak nor a failed state. But is it "democratic" or "authoritarian"? It reveals the excesses of the nation-state form in its continued upholding of an ethno-racialist mode of rule based on exclusion, inherited from its colonial experience. This has resulted in acute levels of human insecurity, exacerbated by post-independence global governance arrangements. "Zimbabwe is a strong, unstable state facing numerous challenges to human security".⁴ Is this the case, as the Marxist-orientated Timashe wrote not so long ago? We need to find enough facts about Zimbabwe's development during its independence and answer the crucial question: is it an authoritarian regime? Only then can we ask: is Zimbabwe weak or failed? Well, nothing in the world is "black-and-white" as a very well-known proverb says!

At independence, the predominant element in the government was the "old guard" of the nationalists who had been in the movement since the 1950s and 1960s, many of whom had spent long periods in detention. But the government was also able to take advantage of the numerous Zimbabweans who had obtained university degrees while in exile. Such people were seen to represent more technocratic views. The "pragmatic" approach of the new regime towards the realities of the capitalist world economy was understood to be largely due to these technocrats.⁵ The main figure from these technocrats was, *inter alia*, Robert Mugabe. His first cabinet reshuffle took place at the beginning of 1981. Josua Nkomo was transferred from Home Affairs to Minister without Portfolio. In exchange, ZAPU was given the Transport Ministry. The Minister of State, Emmerson Mnangagwa, from the ZANU(PF) became chairman of the Joint Command in charge of integrating the armed forces. His main task was to

³ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 289–290.

⁴ TINANSHE, J. *African Realism: Reconceptualising Notions of State Weakness in Western Thought*, p. 227.

⁵ LAAKSO, L. *Research Debates in Zimbabwe: From Analysis to Practice*, p. 3.

consolidate the Zimbabwean armed forces. It was a very difficult task for him, since the integration of former black guerrillas from the ZANU (PF) (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army – ZANLA) and the ZAPU (Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army – ZIPRA) into the regular army was very complicated, as many former black war veterans were not satisfied with the strict rules governing it. Furthermore, their former political leaders had many unresolved disagreements from quite a dark past.

In 1982, armed and dangerous clashes broke out between former partisans from the ZANLA and ZIPRA. Very soon, in Bulawayo and part of Northern Matabeleland the organised looting of some farms began, and a special section of the Zimbabwean army began to operate there with the help of South African soldiers. Then a special type of “party militia” from the ZANLA, the so-called Fifth Brigade, trained up by North Korean army specialists, was sent by Robert Mugabe to the western part of Zimbabwe and operation *Gukurahunda* began. Many thousands of Ndebele civilians were killed or tortured as we can see in the main report of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ), stating that within the space of six weeks after the arrival of the Fifth Brigade in the Matabeleland North Province, more than 2,000 civilians had been killed, hundreds of homesteads had been burned down and thousands of civilians had been beaten.⁶

That the Government sanctioned the killing of civilians suspected of harbouring so-called “dissidents“, was tragically illustrated by Mr. Mugabe himself when he told cheering supporters at a rally in Zhombe in north-western Zimbabwe on 8 April, 1983 that the security forces were entitled to kill anyone caught aiding the dissidents: ‘When dissidents are active in an area, that makes it a war zone and in a war zone the price of supporting dissidents is death. People who feed dissidents are starting a war with the Government and they should not complain when their relatives die. When men and women give food to dissidents, our soldiers will come and eradicate them. We cannot select who we fight in this kind of war because we cannot tell who is a dissident and who is not’.⁷ In the same year, Joshua Nkomo secretly left Zimbabwe for London as he feared for his life. He returned home after a couple of months to continue in his service as MP. The anti-democratic evolution of Zimbabwe had well and truly begun.

The reflection of Mugabe’s practical efforts to change the political situation could subsequently be seen in the 1985 elections. There were no ZAPU’s pre-election meetings in Matabeleland due to the war situation and in other parts of the country sympathizers of this party were intimidated, sometimes even killed

⁶ *The Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice in Zimbabwe*, 2007, pp. 8–9.

⁷ Mugabe Urges Death for Aiding Dissidents. In *The New York Times*, April 9, 1983.

by police or ZANU's agitators. The result of the election was thus favourable for the ZANU(PF) which won sixty four seats in Parliament (that is 77% of all votes) and ZAPU won only fifteen seats.⁸

It was not easy for Robert Mugabe to expunge Nkomo's name from official politics. So he began to prepare a coalition between both parliamentary parties, and Joshua Nkomo saw no other way than to react positively. There were many discussions during the two subsequent years and on 22 December 1987, both politicians put their signatures to the *Unity Accord*, creating the new ZANU(PF) party. Robert Mugabe himself characterized the significance of the *Unity Accord* between the two liberation parties as a step towards political stability and a one-party state! The distinction between the party and the state became even more unclear than before, and the government stated that all civil servants should be or become party members. Very soon the Parliament had amended the constitution by creating an executive president. Mugabe had no difficulty in becoming the first executive president with the support of the united ZANU(PF).⁹ Parliamentary democracy was over.

For all that, the judiciary in Zimbabwe was still quite independent of the executive and was able to open up and safeguard space for civil society in spite of the strengthening power of the executive. Also there still existed an independent press (in opposition to the state *Mass Media Trust*, formed very soon after Zimbabwe's declaration of independence in 1980). The role of academics, journalists, writers and NGO activists was not yet diminished. They had enough opportunities to point to corruption among officials, including some ministers. And on April 18th 1988, the Government even announced an amnesty for all "dissidents" in Matabeleland.

However, despite the population's democratic power, Mugabe's political power at the beginning of the 1980s was strong enough to modify the electoral system. During the preparations for the next elections, a new political party emerged. One of the Mugabe's closest friends, the very well-known war veteran Edgar Tekere, once the general secretary of Mugabe's party, founded his own party, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM). He mostly denounced corruption within society, mainly among the highest state representatives and was also a great critic of Mugabe's idea of forming a one-party state in Zimbabwe. He was immediately "excluded" from Mugabe's old party ZANU(PF). Mainly during the election campaign, he and his collaborators were intimidated with the help of the state media for their alleged sympathy and collaboration with former

⁸ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malkawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 422–423.

⁹ LAAKSO, L. *Research Debates in Zimbabwe: From Analysis to Practice*, pp. 132–133; SACHIKOYE, L. *The Protracted Democratic Transition in Zimbabwe*, p. 32.

white politicians from Zimbabwe or South Africa. Also many students from Harare University had started campaigns and were demonstrating mostly against corruption. Alongside them, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) also went on strike, together with its secretary general Morgan Tsvangirai who was a self-educated former mine worker. Many participants and some heads of those organisations were arrested; even Harare University was closed for a short time.¹⁰

In this conflictual situation, new elections were held in March, 1990. Robert Mugabe and his government had prepared special changes for the new parliamentary vote and also for the new president's role: the special twenty whites-only seats were removed by Amendment No. 6 (Act 15 of 1987), and the number of Members of Parliament was raised to 150. Out of this number only one hundred and twenty were elected; thirty MPs were nominated from among the chiefs or headmen by the president himself. The result was as expected. After the afore-mentioned political changes and the physical intimidations of opponent politicians, including the attempted murder of one of ZUM's main campaigners, the ZANU(PF) was the winner with 117 seats. At the same time, in the first presidential election, Robert Mugabe received 78 % of the vote. The one-party state was consolidated in ZANU(PF)'s and president Mugabe's eyes.

The course of the 1990 election received much attention from Zimbabwean scholars. They considered the general election as not free or fair because the opposition parties had not been given equal opportunities to outline their programmes in the media and in public rallies, and because violent harassment of opposition candidates by police or ruling party activists had taken place. Furthermore, they pointed out the increasing level of apathy among Zimbabwean voters: only 54% of the registered electorate voted. They also pointed out several legal and institutional constraints on the conduct of free and fair elections. Their surveys of electoral rolls provided indisputable evidence of rigging. They also look at the course of the primary elections, an often forgotten but in practice the most important forum, in which the actual competition takes place in a *de facto* one-party system.¹¹

This means that the facade of Zimbabwean "democracy" was clearly recognized by Zimbabwean civil society, the independent media and civic groups. Internal factors related to the expiry of the *Lancaster House* agreement, which stipulated a multi-party system, and an increasingly vocal civil society, help to explain why democracy had become such a topical theme in Zimbabwe.

¹⁰ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 427–428.

¹¹ ZVOBGO, Ch. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, pp. 278–279.

The problem of land tenure and the economic situation in Zimbabwe from the *Lancaster House* agreement until the nationalization of land and industry and the seizure of whites' farms at the beginning of the new millennium

In the first two decades of independence, the ruling nationalist class had enjoyed an alliance with settler capital, forged during peace negotiations in 1979 at *Lancaster House*. On the contrary, to the internal meanings of black negotiators strongly opposed former white colonial period as racist, oppressive and unfair-minded, the help of inner circles, mostly whites industrialists mainly in mine industry, businessmen or farmers, was great and so welcome. The Zimbabwean state, being essentially a national neocolonial establishment, promoted interests and values that were opposed to those of the peasants, rural and urban inhabitants and marginalised war veterans who comprised the land movement. War veterans led the land movement, culminating in intense political and social conflicts based on divergent interests, challenging settler capital, the emerging black middle class and the ruling elite, transforming it into a powerful revolution.

The first Zimbabwean government and its Ministry of Land had initially to resolve the problem of land tenure. The point of departure was the urgent need redistribute white owners' land to black small farmers. Beginning with the Land Tenure Act from 1898 to the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the amendments of 1941, 1945 and 1953, this left the European settlers in control of the most fertile areas of the country with high rainfall while shunting the African majority to the over-crowded Native Reserves with infertile soil and low rainfall.¹²

At independence in 1980, about 6,000 white commercial farmers owned about 42% of the most productive areas of the country in contrast with the black citizens who constituted 96 per cent of the population of Zimbabwe. There were more than 15,500 hectares in white hands as farming land (40% of the total land surface), 18,000 hectares as African, mostly communal, land (50%), and the rest (10%) was so-called National land.¹³ The Zimbabwean government was bound by the Lancaster House agreement to prohibit the compulsory acquisition of private property including land unless such an acquisition was accompanied by 'prompt and adequate compensation' in foreign currency; land could only be acquired on a 'willing seller – willing buyer' basis. Very soon, a land resettlement programme begun. It was intended to resettle some 18,000 families

¹² HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 154–157, 252 and 356.

¹³ *Land apportionment in Rhodesia*. Wikipedia 8/2007.

from the overcrowded communal areas (formerly called Tribal Trust Lands) onto 1.1 million hectares of former white commercial farmland over a period of three years. The total cost of the programme was estimated at Z\$60 million to be shared equally between Zimbabwe and Britain. At the end of 1980, two totally different views were published: the Minister of Development said the government had spent about Z\$12.8 million in purchasing 320,000 acres of white farmland but on the same day, the Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, said the government had purchased more than 800,000 acres for the resettlement of 15,000 landless families.¹⁴

From the beginning, there were problems with the settlement of black farmers on private farm land, as their habits with the ownership and cultivation of soil were based on historical common use of land tenure under the chief's rule in a great contract. In their minds, the land was common to all the inhabitants of the village and all the families receiving part of the land according to their number, mainly how many wives or children lived there. In addition, soil cultivation practices were not at a high level, mainly using only hoes and no fertilisers. They were mostly not suitable for the commercial farming sector. War veterans were not at all trained to work on the land.

But the main problem was always, in the eyes of Zimbabwean politicians, the lack of money. For that reason, the government organised a great Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development (ZIMCORD) the following year, inviting around 400 delegates representing 45 potential donor nations, 12 international organizations and 16 United Nations agencies. The purpose of the Conference was to raise about £780 million towards the cost of public sector programmes to be carried out from 1981 to 1984. It was decided that most of this money would be devoted to agriculture. The conference ended on 27 March, 1981 with a massive sum of £636.73 million having been pledged by aid donors for development projects over three years. When aid commitments already made before the conference were taken into account, it meant that Zimbabwe had attracted £889.58 million in foreign aid since independence in 1980; out of this total, slightly less than half was in the form of grants and the rest in loans.¹⁵

Problems on a 'willing seller – willing buyer' basis continued. White farmers gave preference to selling infertile, difficult to cultivate land as the government still wanted more and more hectares. Over the course of several years, white farmers increased twofold the price of land. On 9 October, 1983, Robert Mugabe firstly threatened to confiscate white-owned land for the resettlement

¹⁴ ZVOBGO, Ch. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, p. 274.

¹⁵ ZVOBGO, Ch. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, p. 276.

of peasants if the British Government refused to give the promised compensation. On the other hand, it was very soon clear that the reform of land tenure had encountered serious difficulties: new black owners were not sufficiently prepared and capable of working the land and as time went on, more and more hectares remained free and uncultivated. By 1986, the impact of the programme was marginal, benefiting less than 5 per cent of the estimated 800,000 peasant families in the communal areas and taking up 16 per cent of commercial farmland. At the same time, the population increase in the communal areas far outstripped the numbers of those who had been resettled. The land problem therefore persisted. The British Government argued that it would not to send any more money as promised earlier for this unsuccessful Zimbabwean land policy. During the first one or two decades of an independent Zimbabwe, the government had enough money to develop rural schools and health care, so the schooling and health of the masses improved. Also, Harare University had enough money for the higher education of a steadily increasing number of Zimbabwean students.¹⁶

At the end of the 1980s, the time came for a major change in political culture. The constitutional amendment of 1987, which created the position of Executive President, vested near-absolute powers in the latter in critical areas of the constitutional and political process in Zimbabwe, creating a 'presidential monarch'. Henceforth, Robert Mugabe became an autocrat by the highest law. And he used it without restriction.¹⁷

On March 16, 1992, the Government announced that it was forging ahead with its plan to forcibly acquire 20 million out of the estimated 50 million acres of white-owned farmland. White farmers, however, opposed the government by saying that there were about 12 million acres of under-used fertile land which the Government could distribute to black farmers without resorting to compulsory acquisition.¹⁸

In the same month, Parliament passed the Land Acquisition Act. Very soon the Government's land resettlement programme was severely damaged morally and politically in the wake of the land scandal: the revelation that many ministers, members of Parliament, top civil servants and high-ranking army officers had also been awarded leases on choice state-owned farms. Robert Mugabe took some formal steps against these abuses but after his new election

¹⁶ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 451–452.

¹⁷ SACHIKONYE, L. *The Protracted Democratic Transition in Zimbabwe*, p. 123.

¹⁸ ZVOBGO, Ch. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, p. 279.

as president in 1996, receiving 92.7 per cent of the votes cast, he began to argue for the need to give sufficient land to “black farmers”.

The year 1993 marked a turning point in Zimbabwe’s history. In the face of growing political opposition, which he claimed was financed by whites, Mugabe encouraged war veterans to forcefully seize white-owned land without compensation. This movement destroyed any remaining respect for the rule of law and thoroughly weakened the country’s democratic institutions. Mugabe gained the love and admiration of the rural masses, but earned the opprobrium of the West. Next year the government gave landowners a list of 1,772 mostly white-owned farms totalling 12 million acres which it planned to seize and turn over to landless black peasants. The path to the nationalisation and seizure of all white farmer land lay open.¹⁹

After laying waste to agriculture, Mugabe’s economic policies – often incoherent applications of Marxism-Leninism – subsequently degraded other sectors of what had once been a flourishing economy. At times, near-famine conditions prevailed and hyperinflation became pervasive. Many Zimbabweans fled the country as economic refugees and spread across southern Africa. Vast swathes of the country’s economy, notably diamond production, fell under the control of Chinese companies and Zimbabwean politicians.²⁰

As remarked earlier, among the main factors behind the pressure to seize forcibly whites’ land were the demands of war veterans. They were not satisfied with state financial allowances which were, from the point of view of the Ministry of Finance unjustifiably very high. War veterans were each awarded Z\$50,000.00 as disbursement for unpaid demobilisation backdated to 1980. Soon after the *Unity Accord* was signed between the ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU, the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) was set up in 1989. Then more and more acts of rebellion against the state took place. But not all their requirements were legitimate. Many “war veterans” were not participants in the guerrilla wars as they had been very young at the time, as was the head of ZNLWVA Chenjerai “Hitler” Hunzvi.²¹

Major internal opposition to the ruling elite developed in the 1990s. Coupled with an economic downturn and social strife, the stage was set for a war veteran-led land occupation revolution, which took shape in 1997/8 and

¹⁹ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], p. 356.

²⁰ CAMPBELL, J.

²¹ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 445–446.

especially in 1998 with food riots and which spearheaded occupations of white-owned land up to and beyond the eruption of 2000.²²

The labour movement represented by the ZCTU began to be active in politics in the 1990s but unlike war veterans, it preferred constitutional change in order to strengthen democratic rule in the country. The ZCTU head, Morgan Tsvangirai, and some University of Zimbabwe activists such as Lovemore Madhuku forced the government to institute a Constitutional Commission in April 1999 to change the Constitution.²³ The greater part of the year was therefore spent working on the new constitution and land occupations were carried out with limited media publicity. The main task for the future was to circumscribe Mugabe's autocratic role and to turn Zimbabwe back into a real parliamentary democracy with the prime minister as head of government. However, Mugabe's ZANU(PF) was prepared to add to the Constitution a clause that his government could nationalise white farmland for the purposes of black farmers and that the British government must pay compensation to the former owners.²⁴

In the same year, Morgan Tsvaigirai decided to form a new political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Its main slogan was *Chinja maitiro – maitiro chinja*, which means "we need a change". The new party was prepared to fight corruption, guarantee human rights, the freedom of assembly and speech. Of course, it also wished to make land-tenure reform but without acts of violence. However, war veterans believed that the new constitution would have clauses that would allow land to be expropriated from white farmers to resettle those hungry for land. As such, war veterans had a particular interest in the constitution for this reason. The MDC became the main opposition to Mugabe's government at the end of the last century. On the one hand, the white farmers took the government to court in that year and resisted compulsory acquisition; on the other, war veterans started mobilising peasants to occupy white land nationwide.²⁵ The referendum on the new constitution was not accepted. But new parliamentary and presidential elections lay ahead.

The land question was not the only problem of the Zimbabwean government at that time. There were also problems dealing with whites' property of mines, factories and businesses. Former Southern Rhodesia was very rich in mineral

²² COMPAGNON, D. *A Predictable Tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the Collapse of Zimbabwe*, p. 52.

²³ SADOWBA, Z. W. *A Decade of Zimbabwe's Land Revolution: The Politics of the War Veteran Vanguard*, p. 83.

²⁴ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 450–451.

²⁵ LAAKSO, L. *Research Debates in Zimbabwe: From Analysis to Practice*, p. 134.

resources and Zimbabwe had inherited them. Mining, industry and business were well developed. Before the Declaration of an Independent Zimbabwe, more than 180,000 tons of asbestos, around 650,000 tons of chrome ore, 4 million tons of coal, 20,000 tons of copper and 17 tons of gold were exploited, all for a total value of £ 30 million. Foreign, mostly British or multinational owners such as the Rhodesian Iron and Steel Company, Pretoria Portland Cement Co., Anglo-American Co. or British South Africa Co. and many others sold most of the mineral resources abroad and the country then received only a small part in taxes and duty. Only a small part of local mining was fully processed at home, such as iron ore, limestone, kaolin, quartz or quartzite, manganese ore, tin ore or phosphates.²⁶ At the end of the 1990s, four hundred British concerns were active in Zimbabwe, and at the time Britain was the biggest investor in the country and also the biggest donor with nearly one hundred thousand American dollars donated as development aid. This stopped before long, as a result of Mugabe's government.

By July 1992, unemployment in Zimbabwe stood at more than 40 per cent, inflation at nearly 40 per cent and interest rates at 36 per cent in addition to critical food shortages caused as much by bad government policies as by a devastating drought. Malnutrition soared in a country which usually exported food; many children were being turned away from state schools because their parents could not afford the fees. In the country, there were not only high levels of unemployment but also high and prolonged inflation and, as a result, mass poverty.

In June 2000, the parliamentary elections began. European election observers condemned the ruling party for supporting a campaign of violence and intimidation before the vote and obstructing the work of thousands of local election monitors. The new party, the MDC, won 57 of the 120 contested parliamentary seats; Mugabe's ruling party won 62 seats. On the other hand, this election resulted in something exceptional: Morgan Tsvangirai lost his race for Parliament together with several Cabinet Ministers, including the Minister of Justice, Emmerson Mnangagwa. Robert Mugabe lost a two-thirds majority in Parliament despite the possibility of increasing the number of his MPs since the amendment to the Constitution allowed him to appoint 30 MPs, including 8 Provincial Governors and 10 traditional chiefs. President Mugabe bowed to the election results and welcomed the MDC into Parliament with promises of cooperation which were short-lived. On numerous occasions, the MDC legislators found themselves outnumbered and ignored. As the frustration increased, the opposition warned that its supporters might turn to violence if the ruling party continued to block their efforts to make fundamental changes;

²⁶ HULEC, O. *Rhodesie*, pp. 87–88.

disillusioned members began to call for mass protests to force President Mugabe to leave office before the presidential election in 2002. But the main problem was again and again with land-tenure.²⁷

Contrary to Mugabe's pre-elections promises to international and internal communities that he would consolidate relationships between white farmers and the state, and stabilize the critical situation by providing decent living conditions, at the end of the century, the president openly urged black Zimbabweans to unite against whites on the grounds that they were at the centre of the country's deepening economic crisis: "Our party must continue to strike fear in the heart of the white man, our real enemy. They think because they are white, they have a divine right to our resources. The courts can do what they want, but no judicial decision will stand in our way. My own position is that we should not even be defending our position in the courts. The white man is not indigenous to Africa. Africa is for Africans. Zimbabwe is for Zimbabweans".²⁸

The last elections indicated most people's growing dissatisfaction with Mugabe's one-party government and pointed to the growth of opposition politicians from the MDC. Their role in Parliament was always artificially decreased. And in the end, the president yet again got his way, contrary to the lawful Supreme Court's judgement on the unlawful land-tenure movements. He said *inter alia*: "The Court decisions are of no consequence if they are meant to interfere with the current programme". The Government also described the whole MDC as a terrorist party!²⁹

During that time, the ZANU-PF and the state orchestrated occupations of white-owned land were mainly invasions of land already occupied by revolutionaries, aimed at dispossessing occupiers in order to give it to ZANU(PF) elites, senior civil servants, or relatives of those in the system. It was carried out by the Land Settlement Act, 2000 and the new Land Occupiers and Protection Act, 2001 which were amendments by Section 8, giving a maximum period of 90 days to wind up operations and vacate a designated farm. War veterans dubbed this wave of occupations *jambanja on jambanja*, meaning that they were occupations of land already occupied by them. This economic situation swiftly changed at the commencement of the occupations after 2000.³⁰

There was a sudden capital flight resulting from the imposition of sanctions and as a backlash to the expropriation of settler capital. The workers also, just as

²⁷ ZVOBGO, Ch. J. M. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, p. 290.

²⁸ *The New York Times*, 22 December, 2000.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ SADOMBA, Z. W. *A Decade of Zimbabwe's Land Revolution: The Politics of the War Veteran Vanguard*, p. 96.

suddenly, moved from formal to informal self-employment. Land occupations in the urban and rural areas called by President Mugabe as *Third Chimurenga* were a major turning point since the formation of the MDC in 1999 and they eroded its base, which relied heavily on trade union politics. The regimentation of the workers was no longer possible for both the state and the MDC. Structural changes among the workers explain the failures of stay-aways called for by the MDC after 2000 that had succeeded earlier. February 2000 was a turning point: the intensity of violence and, more importantly, the cynicism of the state's obvious involvement, its lack of respect for the law also meant that the regime had thrown off its mask in the fight for survival with no prospect of reversing such policy. Violence is part and parcel of the "one-party-state" culture, which remains to date the ZANU-(PF)'s ideological mould.³¹

Very soon, during the following year, the International Monetary Fund and other foreign donors including the European Union and all British Commonwealth countries suspended their financial help, and Zimbabwe fell into a very deep economic crisis with all the negative consequences on the population. In the new presidential elections in 2002, Robert Mugabe defeated Morgan Tsvangirai by 56% to 42% votes after much cruel intimidation of pro-Tsvangirai helpers and voters carried out by the police and by war veterans. According to eyewitnesses, vote buying, intimidation, and other typical ZANU-PF methods of canvassing support were used.³² The ZCTU also naturally condemned the official results of the presidential elections, adopting the MDC's stance in their analysis of the fraudulent ballot, and tried to organize a three-day protest strike in April 2002, but without much success. The preparations were derailed by the actions of the police, which interfered with a meeting of the ZCTU national executive, alleging it was a political meeting. Under the new Public Order and Security Act, police had to be notified in advance of all political meetings, and the government interpreted this as the power to ban all public gatherings.

During this time, the European Union and very soon the USA, too, proclaimed 'soft sanctions' against Zimbabwean politicians including President Mugabe and his ministers because of human rights abuses. The above-mentioned politicians could not travel to EU countries or the USA. These countries also banned the export of all weapons to Zimbabwe. In June 2003, Morgan Tsvangirai was arrested for organizing a mass protest demanding President Mugabe's resignation. Along with him at least three hundred people were arrested, including MPs. After one month, the High Court ordered the

³¹ COMPAGNON, D. D. *A Predictable Tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the Collapse of Zimbabwe*, pp. 47, 49 and 91.

³² *Commonwealth Observer Group's Report*, 14 March, 2002.

release of Morgan Tsvangirai and the others. However, it took more than two years for all the allegations in this case dismissed as illegitimate. This shows that unlike the political repressions of the state or the ZANU(PF), in both cases highly influenced by Robert Mugabe, judicial established practice had not yet been completely paralysed.³³

A minor affair concerning the elections is not without interest, when Mugabe's opponents from within his party attempted to elect Emmerson Mnangagwa, the head of the Parliament, as Vice-president and thus create something like a shield against the president's despotism. It was as usual unfeasible. A year later, president Mugabe announced the country's departure from the British Commonwealth of Nations as he was afraid his country would soon be expelled.³⁴

Very soon, in 2005, new parliamentary elections were to follow, but without the presence of mainly international observers from the European Union, the British Commonwealth and even without the astonishing return of the South African Trade Union (COSATU)'s observers from the border crossing. Within the ruling party, some interesting anti-Mugabe resistance was born out of some his critics, but this opposition was very soon mercilessly nipped in the bud. The ZANU(PF) triumphed with 60% of voters or 78 MPs. The President designated a subsequent thirty MPs and then had more than a two-third constitutional majority in the House of Parliament. Tsvangirai's party received only forty-one seats and the last one was taken by one of Mugabe's former party opponents. Once again, Mugabe's one-party rule was inaugurated. Mr. Tsvangirai rejected the result, making the charge that ZANU(PF) had stolen the election through intimidation and vote rigging. Soon the Second House of Parliament (Senate) was reinstated and the previously rejected law enabling the nationalisation of all the land and the expropriation of white farms without compensation was passed.³⁵

During the following year, a negative event in the MDC occurred; the party split. Although some other factors such as the Shona/Ndebele antagonism played a role, the lack of a common, democratic culture – rather than a common ideology – was the main cause of the MDC split. Although the MDC was not the first opposition party in Zimbabwe's history to stand up for democracy and better governance, it was the first to seriously challenge Mugabe's personal rule

³³ ZVOBGO, Ch. J. M. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001– 2008*, p. 311.

³⁴ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 469–470.

³⁵ ZVOBGO, Ch. J. M. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, p. 313.

and the ZANU-PF mafia's grip on Zimbabwe. The stronger part, under Tsvangirai's "leftist" leadership, known as the MDC(T) and the part with a mostly Ndebele membership part led by Professor Arthur Mutambara MDC(M), were then victimized by the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) and the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO). Some of them, including Morgan Tsvangirai, were arrested, injured and remained in Harare hospital, some with broken bones and other serious injuries. In the end, they were released into the custody of their lawyers.³⁶

Not only opposition politicians became thorns in the ZAPU(PF)'s flesh after the 2005 election there were also former war veterans who had earlier occupied white farmers' land, or impoverished urban or rural inhabitants who had lost their jobs or had to move from outlying villages to find a livelihood in the capital or larger towns in informal small business. The government took their revenge on them with the so-called *Operation Murambatsvina* (Restore order). The operation started by demolishing the houses of cooperatives in urban areas. The demolition was carried out by local authority operatives using earth-moving equipment accompanied by the police and army. 'Illegal' structures in high-density housing were also razed to the ground as were the established informal sector production sites and workshops. As there was not enough warning, property was lost and, worse still, the means of urban livelihood were destroyed as the means of production for the small-scale manufacturers were crushed in the process. Above all, the operation was life-threatening as it left many thousands of families without housing, exposed to the cold winter winds.³⁷

Operation Murambatsvina was not the only such operation during this period. Another one was *Operation Chikorokoza Chapera* that was carried out in 2006. This was a rural operation that focused on specific occupied farms and mineral exploitation sites that had become the new source of livelihood for dispersed *Murambatsvina* victims and the rural masses under economic siege. The *Chikorokoza Chapera* was countrywide, but the most brutal attacks were in the Chimanimani gold and the Chiadzwa diamond mines, both in Manicaland, the war veteran stronghold. More than 10,000 properties at different stages of development were destroyed, including and especially those of the war veterans. This anger, disillusionment and mobilisation by *Murambatsvina* and *Chikorokoza Chapera* victims changed the traditional voting behaviour in rural areas, leading

³⁶ CAMPAGNON, D. A. *A Predictable Tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the Collapse of Zimbabwe*, pp. 115–116.

³⁷ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], p. 470.

to the ZANU(PF)'s general defeat later, losing its parliamentary majority to the MDC.³⁸

As a result of the evolution of the above-mentioned tragic political and economic issues, a very deep economic crisis swept the whole country. The main reason was disastrous land reform which led mainly to widespread food shortages, and due to the drastic policy of Mugabe's government against internal and international 'colonialist and imperialist enemies' it led to the isolation of the entire country from access to financial resources. The Government admitted for the first time that the country was running out of food and needed foreign aid to help it to buy grain from abroad. Not so long ago, Zimbabwe had been very well-known as a granary. The request was first sent to the United Nations Development Programme, detailing the huge food demands facing the country and asking for more than US\$ 360 million.³⁹

The production of cereals for consumption decreased over the course of two years (2001 – 2002) by 60–70% and maize production by no less than 80–90%. (*BBC News*, April 30, 2003). It is necessary to dwell on the food crisis engulfing Zimbabwe from 2001 till 2008 to underscore the Mugabe government's utter failure to provide adequate food for the majority of the people. Its chaotic fast-track land reform programme was largely responsible for the widespread food shortage. It is unimaginable that during that time, the government made nearly 3,000 white farmers vacate their farms for redistribution to black elites, mainly senior government officials, senior members of the uniformed forces, party loyalists, relatives and the ruling oligarchy, who were given whole farms to themselves, measuring hundreds or even thousands of hectares. When some of the white farmers refused, they were arrested by the RSF or CIO.

The European Union and the USA proclaimed new sanctions against Zimbabwean politicians including President Mugabe and his ministers because of human rights abuses. Very soon, the United Nations Security Council voted to impose sanctions on Zimbabwe, but Russia and China vetoed the motion. The African Union was also very strongly against such sanctions. The dramatic downward spiralling of the economy, industry and commerce continued during the first decade of the new millennium. The worst situation was in the mining sector; gold production declined mostly by six percent every year, mainly due to the mines being taken over by war veterans or because of the shortage of foreign currency. Fuel prices rose and very soon there was no petrol whatever. The fuel crisis remained the single biggest threat to the efforts to save the

³⁸ SADOMBA, Z. W. *A Decade of Zimbabwe's Land Revolution: The Politics of the War Veteran Vanguard*, p. 101.

³⁹ ZVOGBO, Ch. J. M. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, p. 317.

economy. There was no foreign currency to buy petrol abroad as the Zimbabwean dollar lost its value every month. During the first years of the 21st century, this was a loss of more than one hundred percent of its value. After 2006/7, the economic situation became worse and worse, inflation was rapid and so-called 'paper coupons' were issued, some with a value of many billion Z\$. The following year, it was even twenty five billion.⁴⁰

Robert Mugabe's fight for his political survival in 2008 until his enforced fall ten years later

Due to the ever worsening living conditions for most of the Zimbabwean population (with the exception of top political and military cadres), the MDC(T) and MDC(M) opposition parties prepared themselves, despite hard infighting, for the new elections in 2008 to bring an end to Mugabe's despotic rule. With the help of the South African President Thabo Mbeki and the Southern African Development Community, both sides, the government and the opposition, agreed to change the Election Law. There would be more parliamentary seats (210) and the President would not be able to appoint thirty extra members as had been the case before. The elections were called "harmonized" as four elections were prepared en bloc: one to the House of Assembly, one to the Senate, one municipal and one presidential. The new Election Law also shortened the term for the President from six to five years.⁴¹

Mugabe's government and the ZANU(PF) tried hard to weaken the opposition with all sorts of intimidations. In March 2007, the police cracked down on a major anti-government rally near Harare killing one protester and arresting several others including the president of the MDC(M), Professor Mutambara, and the president of the MDC(T), Morgan Tsvangirai, who suffered deep cuts to his head and a badly-battered right eye during his two days in jail. Very swiftly, fifty anti-government protesters were arrested and beaten by the police. Among them were also some MDC Members of Parliament and in June the police beat up lawyers who had gathered outside the High Court in Harare; among them was the President of the Zimbabwe Law Society.⁴²

On the other hand, to strengthen the ZAPU(PF) in the eye of the public, at the end of 2007 the Government proposed to *indigenize* the economy through

⁴⁰ HULEC, O., OLŠA, J. *Dějiny Zimbabwe, Zambie a Malawi* [The History of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi], pp. 475–476.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

⁴² COMPANGON, D. *A Predictable Tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the Collapse of Zimbabwe*, p. 47.

the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Bill which would ensure that at least 51% of the shares in every public company and other businesses, including mines and banks, would be owned by indigenous Zimbabweans. At the turn of 2008, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe issued \$10 million bank notes. Inflation galloped to more than the \$100,000 mark. At the same time, ZANU supporters and many war veterans marched on the streets of Harare in a “million man” march. They also marched in support of President Mugabe’s candidacy. The ZAPU(PF) organizers promised to donate ox-drawn ploughs to their supporters in rural areas or else they would not be required to repay their loans. One day prior to the election, the security chiefs said they would support no-one but President Mugabe.⁴³

The country continued its downward spiral in the months leading up to the elections; support for Mugabe appearing to waver. The former finance minister and ZANU-PF stalwart, Simba Makoni, announced that he was running against Mugabe for the presidency and the MDC, with Tsvangirai as its presidential candidate once again, saw its popularity increase throughout the country, even in areas that were traditionally ZANU-PF strongholds. As the elections drew near, both opposition candidates and their followers were subject to harassment and attacks by the police and ZANU(PF) loyalists. The elections were held on 29 March, 2008. Unofficial preliminary results indicated a favourable outcome for Tsvangirai and the MDC, but, as days passed with only a slow, partial release of parliamentary results (and the complete absence of presidential ones), many feared that Mugabe and ZANU-PF were manipulating the outcome of the elections in their favour.

The results were then as follows: in the Parliamentary elections, the MDC(T) won 99 seats (47.86%), the ZANU(PF) 97 seats (46.86%), the MDC(M) 10 seats (4.83%) and the independent Jonathan Moyo 1 seat. Three seats were vacant due to the deaths of three candidates and then (in the June by-elections) ZANU(PF) won 2 seats and the MDC(T) one more. Morgan Tsvangirai with Arthur Mutambara thus won a total of 110 seats. This meant that the opposition had won a majority in the House of Assembly, for the first time in the long modern history of Zimbabwe. In the Senate, the numbers of seats were 50 : 50. But the results of the Presidential election kept being delayed. In the meantime, on 2 April, the MDC presidential candidate and his political party released its own count of the presidential election results, which indicated that Tsvangirai had won slightly more than half the votes. The MDC’s claims were dismissed by the ZANU-PF and the country continued to wait for the official results. They were officially published on 8 May and according to them, Morgan Tsvangirai

⁴³ ZVOBGO, Ch. J. M. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, pp. 331–334.

had won 47.9% of the votes, Robert Mugabe 43.2% and the two other candidates 8.9%. So a run-off election would be necessary, which was later scheduled for 27 June.⁴⁴

In the weeks and months leading up to the run-off election, MDC supporters were harassed and victimized by violent attacks, which the MDC asserted were sponsored by the ZANU(PF)-led government; the government in turn claimed that the MDC was responsible for the violence. An increasingly tense climate was further heightened by several government actions, including the detention of Arthur Mutambara, Morgan Tsvangirai, and several other MDC officials and supporters, as well as several diplomats from the United Kingdom and the United States who were in the midst of investigating reports of pre-election violence, the suspension of all humanitarian aid operations in the country, and statements from Mugabe implying that “he would not cede power to the opposition if he lost the run-off election”. During this time, until the runoff of the election, a reign of terror was experienced by members of the opposition in the rural areas and also in many towns. ZANU(PF) supporters told the electorate there that they knew who had voted for the MDC and would deal with them accordingly. In practice, some victims in rural areas sought refuge in the mountains and watched as their belongings were looted and their houses torched. Incidents of fresh farm invasions were started by war veterans. Some chiefs warned people that they would be excluded from government relief programmes if they continued to support the MDC. The Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) treated 157 cases of injury resulting from organized violence and torture by members of the ruling party against members of the opposition. The organisation (ZADHR) called on Mugabe’s government to stop these “grotesque, cruel and shameful acts of violence”. The Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights reported that from 14 to 16 April at least 150 people had been arrested and detained by the military at Harare Central Police Station. The nationwide campaign of terror was being perpetrated against persons suspected of having voted against the ruling party. Until the runoff election, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Harare observed that suspected opposition supporters were being randomly selected, beaten and forced to flee from their homes; at least 33,425 persons were confirmed to have been displaced.⁴⁵

In the course of June, Morgan Tsvangirai himself was detained by the police many times for long hours on his way to election meetings and was then

⁴⁴ COMPAGNON, D. *A Predictable Tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the Collapse of Zimbabwe*, pp. 117–118.

⁴⁵ ZVOBGO, Ch. J. M. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, pp. 339–341.

released without charge. His party associate, Tendai Biti, was also arrested many times. At the end of June, the MDC stated, among other things, that since the parliamentary and presidential elections, President Mugabe and his supporters had “been waging war against the people of Zimbabwe”. Their retributive agenda had seen over 200,000 people internally displaced, over 86 MDC supporters killed, over 20,000 homes destroyed and over 10,000 people injured. In these circumstances, the MDC believed that a credible election was impossible. The run-off of the presidential elections was marred by organised state violence, resulting on 22 June in Morgan Tsvangirai’s withdrawal from the race and seeking refuge in the Dutch Embassy in Zimbabwe. The elections that put President Mugabe back into power were widely condemned regionally and internationally. Nevertheless, Mugabe was declared the winner despite assertions from independent observers that “the election was either free nor fair”.⁴⁶

A new power-sharing government was inaugurated in February of the following year with Morgan Tsvangirai as one of its Prime Ministers, side by side with Robert Mugabe. Zimbabwe’s legislature promptly passed the necessary constitutional amendment that altered the structure of the executive branch, allowing for the creation of the prime ministerial post. It was truly a curious situation, showing Mugabe’s determination to rule in all circumstances. The *Mail & Guardian* (13 – 19 February 2009, p. 28) also reported: “Approaching Mugabe to be sworn in, Tsvangirai prematurely raised his hand, and Mugabe, in Shona, said: ‘No, I go first’, before reading him the oath. Secondly, the rhetoric used is revealing: Mugabe does not use the phrase ‘Unity Government’ as Tsvangirai does, but ‘Inclusive Government’”. Robert Mugabe claimed one month after the new government came into existence: “I am still in control and hold executive power”. Morgan Tsvangirai seemed to understand that he was second behind Robert Mugabe. He did not become as influential as he would have liked.⁴⁷

Robert Mugabe remained as President and also as Prime Minister together with Morgan Tsvangirai, a strange arrangement. It is clear that the above agreement was inherently unworkable because, firstly, Robert Mugabe remained President, the MDC had legitimized his rule *in spite of* the fraudulent run-off presidential election of 27 June, 2008; secondly, because both the President and Prime Minister would exercise executive authority over the same Cabinet, the arrangement was unlikely to produce any positive results. Two Vice Presidents

⁴⁶ COMPAGNON, D. *A Predictable Tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the Collapse of Zimbabwe*, pp. 104–105.

⁴⁷ WELTZ, M. *Zimbabwe’s ‘Inclusive Government’: Some Observations on its First 100 Days*, p. 4.

were nominated, two Deputy Prime Ministers and 31 ministers were elected: 15 from the ZANU(PF), 13 from the MDC(T) and 3 from the MDC(M). But the main problem was with allocating the new key ministerial posts between the parties. Tsvangirai's "victory" was to name his close collaborator Tendai Biti as Minister of Finance. And also, for the first time in the modern history of Zimbabwe, the Speaker of the Parliament was not a member of ZANU(PF).⁴⁸

The above-mentioned changes were mostly politico-academic. But Zimbabwe's main problem was its catastrophic economic situation known as the *Food Crisis*. A special FAO/WFP report, dated 18 June, 2008 stated among other things that for the second consecutive year, the combined impact of adverse weather, the lack of the timely availability of imports and severe economic constraints had caused enormous hardships and food insecurity among both the rural and urban population. The report estimated the total domestic cereal availability for the 2008/09 marketing year at 848,000 tonnes, about 40 per cent below the previous year's domestic supply. The primary factors responsible for the decline in addition to adverse weather were the government's disastrous land-reform programme, the delivery of seeds and shortages of fertilizer, a deteriorating infrastructure, and most importantly, unprofitable prices for most of the Grain Marketing Board-controlled crops. The newly-settled black farmers cultivated only about half the prime land allocated to them due to shortages of tractor/draught power, fuel, and investment in infrastructure/improvements. The large-scale commercial sector was producing less than 10 per cent of the maize it had produced in the 1990s and about 2 million people in rural and urban areas would be food insecure between July and September, in 2008 rising to 3.8 million people in October and peaking at about 5.1 million (one third of the whole population) at the height of the hungry season between January and March, 2009.⁴⁹

Annual inflation was equally bad: in Zimbabwe, it rocketed past the 100,000 per cent mark in February, 2008. In March, it soared to 355,000 per cent. In June, it galloped to 11.25 million per cent. The highest bank note issued by the Reserve Bank in July was ZW\$50 billion with an exchange rate of ZW\$64 billion for US\$1. It was in the context of the food crisis and the crumbling economy that President Mugabe signed the 15 September agreement on the Government of National Unity. It was his last opportunity to ask international financial organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which he had previously denounced as "imperialist institutions", for help. In the first year of its Unity Government, Zimbabwe had to cancel its currency,

⁴⁸ ZVOBGO, CH. J. M. *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890 – 2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001 – 2008*, p. 351.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 352–353.

the Zimbabwean dollar, and begin to use the US Dollar, South African Rand or Euro to combat hyperinflation.⁵⁰

The Unity Government was not able to change all the political and mainly economic mistakes made for many reasons by its predecessors. Mugabe's ministers from the ZANU(PF) were especially interested in serving their ruler and themselves. Tsvangirai's ministers were young and (with the exception of Tendai Biti as Minister of Finance) not statesmanlike. Despite this, the economic situation did not worsen; in some parameters, thanks to the American dollar being the "national" currency and partially thanks to a slight recovery in business and direct or indirect foreign investments, Zimbabweans could provide for their families. But still more than three million of them worked abroad, mainly in South Africa, sending their wages or consumer goods home.

During the whole period of the Unity Government's work, the main task was to change economic laws and especially to amend the Constitution. For Mugabe, to "improve" the Constitution was a lifelong endeavour. So the draft Constitution and its acceptance was the main task until the new elections in June 2013 were scheduled. Its result was very bad for the opposition MDC, which received only 34 percent in the National Assembly and also lost in the Senate. It was due not only to repeated ZANU(PF) perpetrators during the election campaign, but mainly to defection within the MDC, specifically by Tendai Biti leaving the party and founding his new People's Democratic Party. Morgan Tsvangirai and the whole MDC totally rejected the results of the election, which the former characterized as "fraudulent and stolen". The 89-year-old Robert Mugabe was soon inaugurated again as President. From this date onwards, the tension mounted, concerning up *inter alia* who would replace elderly old president in the future.⁵¹

In July, the parliament amended the constitution to give the president absolute powers to appoint the chief justice (the head of the judiciary), the deputy chief justice, and the judge president of the high court. Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU(PF) party used its parliamentary majority to approve the amendment despite the opposition's objections. Then-president Mugabe signed the retrogressive constitutional amendment into law, further eroding the rule of law through executive control over the judiciary. The amendment also undermined Zimbabwe's international human rights legal obligations to respect judicial independence under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).⁵²

⁵⁰ MWANAKA, R. *Zimbabwe: The Urgency of Now*. 2015, pp. 105–106.

⁵¹ Reuters, February 5, 2018.

⁵² Human Right Watch: 2 February, 2018.

Very soon, the economy had started to deteriorate because of the drought after 2014/2015, a weak export performance, and too much money being spent on the public servant wage bill and debt servicing. A shortage of cash led to the introduction of new bond notes (plastic money) in 2016. More and more Zimbabweans began to show openly their dissatisfaction not only with the bad economic situation, but also with domestic political quarrels inside the government and mainly in the ZANU(PF) politburo.⁵³

Robert Mugabe was always an archetypal African “strong man” – wary of competition and constitutional rule. The centralization of state power around Mugabe made him a formidable opponent to contenders both within and outside his party. Ignoring the spirit of the constitution that envisaged only two terms, he saw no problem with his holding on to power for seven consecutive terms. Mugabe represented an obstacle to reform both in his party and in the wider Zimbabwean state. It is against this somewhat bleak background that it was not idle to consider the possibility of a *Grand Coalition* against Mugabe in an election in 2018.⁵⁴

Most of the problems were connected with this problem of succession, most importantly after the probable death of the elderly president Robert Mugabe. One of the future presidential candidates to apply for this post was Joice Mujuru, one of Mugabe’s Vice-Presidents. She was not only the wife of a high-placed but retired army general (and a rich “new farmer”) but a life-long politician in government or the ZANU(PF) politburo. She was the first presidential candidate for the 2018 election against whom Mugabe’s wife, Grace, began a series of verbal assaults on her reputation, accusing her of being involved in corrupt activities. Joice Mujuru was soon fired from her post as Vice-President post and then expelled from the party. She was replaced by another party stalwart and war hero, Emmerson Mnangagwa. In 2016, she formed a new political party, Zimbabwe People First, with some of the other ousted ZANU(PF) members. The following year, she founded the National People’s Party and flirted with the idea of forming a coalition with Morgan Tsvangirai’s MDC and other opposing parties against the ZANU(PF) in the upcoming election.⁵⁵

Grace Mugabe, who was forty years younger than her husband and a former typist in the presidential office, rapidly became a significant player on the political stage after 2013. In the following year, she was named head of the ZANU(PF)’s Women’s League and this position also made her a member of ZANU(PF)’s politburo. Among its younger members, she was glorified and soon the so-called ZANU(PF) Generation 40 (G40) was set up there. During the

⁵³ The New York Times: 3 March, 2017.

⁵⁴ SACHIKONYE, L. *The Protracted Democratic Transition in Zimbabwe*, pp. 129, 136.

⁵⁵ The Zimbabwean: 22 August, 2017.

same period, she was awarded a PhD in sociology, only months after beginning her studies. She was condemned by Zimbabweans mostly for her unbridled passion for shopping, especially abroad, purchasing highly luxurious goods costing thousands and thousands of dollars. She travelled once or twice a year to Hong Kong or Singapore where her husband spent much time receiving medical treatment and where their children could study. She had a haughty attitude to assistants in shops and sometimes assaulted them in her great fury.⁵⁶

Her attitude to ordinary people at home was also very arrogant, mainly on her rich farms (in total twenty one!) where sometimes anti-riot police demolished the homes of poor black farmers who were using small plots of land to cultivate crops for themselves. On several occasions, she ordered some hundreds of families to forcibly leave “her farms” without mercy and against a High Court order stopping the eviction. The anti-riot police demolished their homes, destroyed their property, and beat up those who resisted.⁵⁷

She always fought for her husband to participate in the presidential elections of 2018 despite his age. She graciously told the nation that “he would be willing to captain the ship of state from the comfort of a wheelchair” – such were the fawning pleas of his lieutenants and subordinates at the Zanu(PF) congress in December 2016 for him to stay on and impart his wisdom. (BBC: 3 August, 2016). In March the following year, she said at the ZANU(PF) rally in Buhera that he was so popular that if he died, he could run as a corpse in next year’s election and still win votes. “You will see people voting for Mugabe as a corpse. I am seriously telling you – just to show how much the people love their president”.⁵⁸

But the political process in Zimbabwe changed quickly. In 2017, Emmerson Mnangagwa was also subjected to verbal attacks from Grace Mugabe and was dismissed from the Vice Presidency on 6 November, 2017. She was betting on the December ZANU(PF) congress further bolstering her power. But a week after Emmerson Mnangagwa was sacked and went into hiding in South Africa, the chief of the Zimbabwean army, Gen. Constantino Chiwenga, launched a coup d’état to end Mugabe’s purges of senior ZANU(PF) officials, which ultimately resulted in Mnangagwa returning and assuming the presidency. Robert Mugabe and his wife were placed under house arrest. He did not want to resign, but when the Parliament met to discuss his impeachment, the speaker halted proceedings, saying he had received a letter entitled “notice of resignation”.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ BBC: 12 February, 2017.

⁵⁷ Human Right Watch: 2018.

⁵⁸ The Zimbabwean: 2 November, 2017.

⁵⁹ BBC: 22 November, 2017.

The inauguration of the 3rd Zimbabwean president took place on 24 November, 2017. President Emmerson Mnangagwa – who is nicknamed “*Garwe*” or “*Ngwena*”, which means ‘The Crocodile’ in the Shona language, initially because that was the name of the guerrilla group he had founded, but later because of his political shrewdness – was cautiously welcomed in the hope that he would place Zimbabwe on a more democratic trajectory. He has spoken of a “new democracy” unfolding in Zimbabwe and about Robert Mugabe as “a father, mentor, comrade-in-arms and my leader”, who will be “left in peace with a ‘lucrative’ retirement package”. However, Emmerson Mnangagwa also said that “no-one had been granted immunity from prosecution”.⁶⁰ It remains to be hoped that this will not happen as in the case of the University of Zimbabwe’s Vice-chancellor, Professor Levi Nyagura, who was arrested for allegedly awarding former first lady Grace Mugabe a doctor of philosophy degree “corruptly” in 2014. Levi Nyagura was arrested on Friday, 16 February and granted bail the following day.⁶¹

President Emmerson Mnangagwa swore in soon after his inauguration two Vice-Presidents, Gen. Constantino Chiwenga and Kembo Mohadi. He also quickly changed his government, naming on 30 November the former general Sibusiso Moyo as the foreign minister and the former air force chief Perence Shiri as minister of agriculture and land affairs.⁶²

Emmerson Mnangagwa’s first official visit abroad was to South Africa and then to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he declared: “Zimbabwe is now open for business”. But a reporter’s comment was: “Mugabe may be gone, but his aides still run Zimbabwe.”⁶³

There are three major barriers to a decisive break from the corrupt and dysfunctional political system and autocratic rule that has been playing out in Zimbabwe: the ruling ZANU(PF), its president and what has been their main source of support – the military. None of the above would want to oversee real change because facilitating democratic rule with real contestation for power would mean running the risk of electoral defeat. This would endanger the networks of self-enrichment that have been put in place over decades. There are some uncertain whispers about the rivalry between the highest military representatives, mainly concerning the efforts of Vice-president Constantino Chiwenga as a leading figure during the coup d’etat to strive for the highest position as President.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ BBC: 24 January, 2018.

⁶¹ KUDZAI, M. In *University World News*, 14 March, 2018.

⁶² Pindula News: 28 February, 2017.

⁶³ The Zimbabwean: 3 February, 2018.

⁶⁴ HAMIL, J. The three barriers blocking Zimbabwe’s progress: Zanu PF, Mnangagwa

In the ZANU(PF), there are some older or new anti-Mwangagwa currents connected on the one hand with Joice Mujuru and her National People's Party, and on the other with some members of the G40 (Grace Mugabe's friends), mainly retired Brigadier Ambrose Mutinhiri who said he had visited Robert Mugabe at his Blue Roof mansion to update him on his new role as presidential candidate for the National Patriotic Front (NPF), which is made up of former Zanu-PF members who had been ousted alongside Robert Mugabe in November.⁶⁵

The main opposition party MDC has been much weakened by the death of its leader Morgan Tsvangirai on 14 February, 2018 and then by three endlessly splintering alliances. Mr. Nelson Chamisa replaced Morgan Tsvangirai but the party was emasculated for the next elections. A new democratic opposition led by the young pastor Evan Mawarire, leader of the #ThisFlag movement, also believed in success.⁶⁶

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has said that there are 107 political parties or movements running in the 2018 elections, comprising mostly an assortment of small parties.⁶⁷

A general election was held on 30 July 2018 to elect the President and the members of both houses of Parliament. It was held eight months after the 2017 coup d'état and was the first since independence in which former President Robert Mugabe was not a candidate.

On 1 August, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission released the preliminary results with sufficient delay, mainly those of the presidential one. They are as follows: for the House of Assembly (270 seats), the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) received 52.3% of the votes (179 seats including 35 women). The party lost 17 members compared to the last election. Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC-A) received 34.3% of the votes (88 seats including 24 women), the Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T) 3.4% (1 woman) and the National Patriotic Front (NPF) only 1% (one man).

In the Senate (80 seats), the ZANU- PF won 34 seats, meaning that the party had lost 3 seats, the MDC- A won 25 seats, the MDC – T only 1, the Chiefs 18 seats and the People with disabilities 2 seats.

In the presidential election, Emmerson Mnangagwa, who became President following the 2017 coup d'état, ran for reelection as the ZANU–PF candidate.

and the military. In *M&G*, 1 January, 2018.

⁶⁵ Zimbabwean, 12 March, 2018.

⁶⁶ BRATTON, M., MASUNUNGURE, E. *Zimbabwe's Dying Dictatorship. The Country Prepares for Life After Mugabe.*

⁶⁷ Daily news: 12 March, 2018.

Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC–T leader expected to run against him, died in February 2018, so Nelson Chamisa, the new party leader, replaced him as the MDC Alliance candidate. The results were disputed by the MDC Alliance as Mnangagwa won by only 50.8% (later changed to 50.7%) of the vote to Chamisa’s 44.3%, giving him the majority needed to avoid a run-off. Mnangagwa won six of the country’s ten provinces, while Chamisa won four, including the two metropolitan provinces, Harare and Bulawayo.⁶⁸

International monitors largely praised the conduct of the election itself, although EU observers said that Mnangagwa, a former long-time Mugabe ally, had benefitted from an “unlevel playing field” and some voter intimidation.⁶⁹

After the ZEC’s official results, a violent demonstration by many Zimbabweans was held in the streets of the capital Harare on 1 August, 2018. There were 6 deaths and many injured people in the street after the armed soldiers under police command (!) opened fire. Politicians from the MDC were accused of organizing the demonstration, in particular its former minister of Finance, Thendai Biti, who then tried to go into hiding in Zambia. He was seized at the border and arrested. He was quickly released on bail.

Zimbabwe’s presidential inauguration was postponed due to this demonstration and also because the MDC party had lodged a court bid to overturn the results that had given Emmerson Mnangagwa a narrow victory until 26 August, 2018.⁷⁰

President Mnangagwa and his government began their rule with many promises, the same ones as had been articulated during the president’s first inaugural speech some months ago. This time not only “new jobs, jobs and jobs”, but also promises to change the disrupted economy and to solve the land problems. For example, the Parliament adopted in this year a new law dealing with the land. It declared the possibility for former foreign (white) farmers to lease the nationalised land for a 99-year period. But so far, no farmers have returned to their former property as, over a decade later, the arable land has turned into the bush, the houses have fallen into ruin and agricultural machines have been destroyed. So far no more than ten farmers have considered doing so. But they are also afraid to try it due to the great danger of physical assault by black hooligans or former war veterans.

The President also promised radical economic reforms aimed at attracting foreign and domestic investment. His country is waiting for a change in foreign investors mind to do so, in spite of the very bad economic situation in Zimbabwe. Foreign and domestic debt rose in 2018 to \$14 billion, according to

⁶⁸ Zimbabwe Election Commission. In *New Day Zimbabwe*, 7 August, 2018.

⁶⁹ Zimbabwean, 10 August, 2018.

⁷⁰ Zimbabwean, 11 August, 2018.

its Treasury. That is over 70 percent of GDP, up from 39 percent in 2013. And the country is one of six African nations that the International Monetary Fund judges to be in debt distress for many years to come. This is mainly due to Zimbabwe's big mistake of adopting the U.S. dollar as its currency in 2009 in response to hyperinflation. With neither the foreign exchange reserves nor the government fiscal discipline to back it up, the policy became a rod for Harare's back. Zimbabwean exports are uncompetitive and dollars have been sucked out of the country. The central bank has resorted to working around this problem by crediting commercial banks which then pay public sector workers with electronic "zollars". The dollarised system might have had some credibility in 2009, when hard cash backed 49 percent of bank deposits. But that proportion is now down to 1 percent. Hence quasi-dollars trade at a discount of over 40 percent to real ones.⁷¹

USA government has not so far ended sanctions against most Zimbabwean industries and especially against some politicians; in fact it added some new names to the list. But the European Union removed most of its sanctions against Zimbabwe in August, 2018.⁷²

As far as genuine democratic transition is concerned, it will be very difficult due to the preservation of the one-party rule and disabled meaningful opposition, not to mention the preservation of its own corruption networks. It is impossible to tell whether the autocratic rule in Zimbabwe will come to an end. Everything we can see at present on the political stage in Zimbabwe is very alarming – and the future of the country is uncertain.

Conclusion

Robert Mugabe, who ruled Zimbabwe for 37 years as an autocratic ruler, began his career in 1980 as the victor of the first non-racial parliamentary elections with the picture of a gun on his electoral prospectus. He once told the people: "Our votes must go together with our guns. After all, any vote we shall have shall have been the product of the gun. The people's votes and the people's guns are always inseparable twins".⁷³ With this creed, he never deviated from this attachment to brute force. We can see it not only during the 2008 elections, when he was very close to losing his position as president – but through his whole life. He has crushed opponents and critics who stood in his way,

⁷¹ The Zimbabwean, 19 December, 2018.

⁷² BBC, 26 August, 2018.

⁷³ MEREDITH, M. *Mugabe's Misrule. And How It Will Hold Zimbabwe Back.*

sanctioning murder, torture, and lawlessness of every kind. He hysterically shouted out: “I will never, never, never, never surrender. Zimbabwe is mine”.⁷⁴

As a result of his long governance and that of his government, Zimbabwe has damaged not only its original economic vigour but also the whole sphere of democracy and human rights issues. At the age of 93, he was prepared to stand for another presidential term in 2018 or help his younger wife to replace him in office after his death. Just as he always was counting on the army and police, at the end of his political career, it was this very force which put paid to his plans. It is not certain whether something will change for the better, since the same sort of politicians, his close collaborators and friends, will be ruling with the help of the army. And furthermore, there is not enough strong democratic opposition – quite the opposite. Since its leader’s death, Morgan Tsvangirai’s MDC has been in tatters. And the new president Emmerson Mangagwa, supported by the ruling party ZANU(PF), is Mugabe’s lifelong comrade.

Zimbabwe will perhaps suffer just as it did years ago. Robert Mugabe is leaving his position as autocratic leader just as the corrupt president Jacob Zuma in South Africa, whose favourite song was “give me a gun in my hand”, was forced to leave his post to his follower Cyril Ramaphosa, and in Burundi President Pierre Nkurunziza has been named the “Eternal Supreme Guide” by his political party. It remains an open question as to whether Africa, and in particular Zimbabwe, will be affected again by so great a misapprehension of democracy and human rights as was the case during Robert Mugabe’s long autocratic rule.

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⁷⁴ MEREDITH, M. *Mugabe’s Misrule. And How It Will Hold Zimbabwe Back*.

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