



# **Zimbabwe since the elections in July 2013: The View from 2017**

**Research & Advocacy Unit**

**August 2017**

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## Background<sup>1</sup>

This paper is a review of developments since the Harmonised elections in 2013, and builds on previous analyses. A comprehensive analysis by RAU in May 2016 - *Conflict or Collapse?*<sup>2</sup> painted a rather forlorn picture. As we commented:

*It seems evident from all the foregoing that the ship of state, and all who sail on her, (including the passengers in steerage), are heading into deeply troubled waters. In the context of deflation and drought, there seems to be no-one at the helm, and, rather, everyone is fighting to get their hands on the wheel.*

*As was pointed out, the succession struggle can lead not only to chaos, but even to complete paralysis in government, and the distinct possibility that Zimbabwe moves from predatory state to failed state. It is a very dangerous outcome when central government fails to govern, and the institutions of the state no longer have direction. This is not the case at present, and, as Bratton has pointed out, Zimbabwe is not a failed state: fragile it might be, but state employees continue to turn up for work despite the poor and erratic pay. But there is at least a paymaster at present.*

*The most disturbing problem at the moment is that a manifestly national crisis is not producing a national response. If ever there was a time, as was the case in South Africa in the late 1980s, for all political forces to come together to work out a political settlement for the good of the nation, it is now. However, the party in government is splintering, opposition parties cannot agree on a common front, and it appears that all these parties now have their eyes on an election in 2018. Elections do not seem to be the solution to Zimbabwe's problems, at least not in the past, and it would seem more sensible for the political leadership to be thinking about a national consultation.*

*Perhaps the major problem lies in there being no effective political settlement in Zimbabwe (Reeler, 2016), and, in fact, there has never been such. Until Zimbabweans define in absolute clarity the rules of the political game, with rigid adherence to constitutionalism, reform of state institutions and an electoral process that losers will accept willingly, Zimbabwe's political crisis will continue to handicap all attempts at economic reform and the growth of democracy. In the short term, it seems unrealistic to hope for a national consultation and a political settlement that would put Zimbabwe on the road to deep democracy, the political forces are too fractured and scattered for there to be any likelihood of them coming together to address a national crisis. Perhaps conflict and collapse might force this in the end, and those looking on could prepare for this.*

From the respective 12 months on, little seems to have changed, and perhaps the crisis is deepening even. This report examines the current state of play in the Zimbabwean polity.

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<sup>1</sup> Report written by Tony Reeler & Kudakwashe Chitsike.

<sup>2</sup> RAU(2016) *Conflict or Collapse? Zimbabwe in 2016* May 2016 HARARE: RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY UNIT

## 1. The state of the economy

By the end of 2014, it was evident that the Zimbabwe economy was in deep trouble again, after the small recovery under the Inclusive Government, but with little sign that the government would address the problems. The solution was evident to virtually all except ZANU PF. From the time of the SAPES Conference in May 2014<sup>3</sup>, the call has been for five policy interventions:

- Develop clear policy consistency, and reflect this in all the public statements of the government. This means an end to all the contradictory statements endlessly emerging from the President and the ministers in his government, which would be a first step to creating confidence;
- Make a clear commitment to defend property rights. It is not just a problem for land, but for any investor in Zimbabwe that there seems no interest in protecting legally acquired property rights;
- Develop a coherent policy on “indigenisation”, and one that is consonant with balancing the rights of the country to derive benefit from its resources with incentives to invest and recoup fairly on that investment;
- Undertake a land audit in order to develop a coherent agricultural policy. It is evident to all that, with the collapse of the manufacturing sector, agriculture will have to be a major driver in the economy, and this requires a comprehensive understanding of the state of the land and its occupancy in order to develop a coherent policy on agriculture;
- Fix the parastatals with urgency. A number of these are critical to the efficient running of the country, and are also critically inter-dependent. ZESA, Hwange, Kariba, the National Railways of Zimbabwe and Sable Chemicals are all locked into each other, and are fundamental to agriculture, commerce and, in fact the whole economy.

Little seems to have changed by 2017, despite the claims about the Lima Agreement<sup>4</sup>, and all observers continue to refer to the same recipe as in 2014, whilst the economic situation worsens almost daily. The parlous state of the Zimbabwe economy has been outlined in detail in a recent World Bank report (World Bank. 2017).

The views of the previous SAPES conference, as well as the views of the World Bank, were generally endorsed at the more recent SAPES/NED conference in June 2017. There is little necessity for RAU to detail all the problems in the economy as these have been covered in great detail by a plethora of commentators, agencies and governments, but one small table illustrates the serious state of affairs.

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<sup>3</sup> SAPES & NED (2014), Report of the International Conference on: “ZIMBABWE GOING FORWARD: CONSOLIDATING THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS AND REINFORCING RE--ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY”. 5<sup>TH</sup> & 6<sup>TH</sup> May 2014, Rainbow Towers, Harare.

<sup>4</sup> This Agreement was designed to liquidate the country’s arrears with both multilateral and bilateral creditors but this has not happened.

### Balance of Trade (US\$ Billions)<sup>5</sup>

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Q1/16	Q1/17
<b>Imports</b>	7.46	7.70	6.38	6.00	5.21	1.300	1.340
<b>Exports</b>	3.88	3.50	3.06	2.70	2.84	0.625	0.724
<b>Balance</b>	<b>-3.58</b>	<b>-4.2</b>	<b>-3.32</b>	<b>-3.3</b>	<b>-2.37</b>	<b>-0.675</b>	<b>-0.616</b>

Zimbabwe buys more than it sells, finances the government by increased borrowing, spends most of the fiscus on recurrent expenditure in paying government employees, is increasing debt at an alarming rate, and is fostering informalisation of the economy at remarkable speed. Turning the economy around is both simple, and simultaneously very difficult, hinted at in the preface to the World Bank report:

*Sustaining this reform program will require broad multi-stakeholder consensus and steady political will. This is essential if we are to unlock Zimbabwe's long-term growth potential, alleviate poverty, and expand economic opportunities for the country's diverse and well-educated workforce.[Paul Numba Um]*

Quite simply, Zimbabwe has serious economic difficulties, but underlying all the problems is the even more serious political crisis. As the World Bank quote indicates, *stakeholder consensus* and *political will* are critical to solving the economic crisis, but neither seems to be possible in the current climate. Hence, this report will concentrate upon the impediments to resolving the economic crisis.

## 2. Governance in Zimbabwe

As suggested above, the “deep structure” in the Zimbabwe crisis is political and a result of a governance crisis. The crisis was expected, as is always the case with authoritarian states: when the centre of authority starts to fail, as has been predicted for Zimbabwe (Bratton & Masunungure. 2011), the trouble is bound to emerge. For Zimbabwe, the centrality of the presidency in controlling political power, the age and failing health of the President, his failure to name a successor, questions of legitimacy for the ZANU PF government were the inevitable conditions for crisis.

Zimbabwe ticks the boxes in most respects, but more seriously exhibits all the conditions for a slide into instability. As we pointed out in our previous report, ‘*partial democracy*’, ‘*faction fighting*’, and the existence of a leader in power for more than 30 years, are all conditions that presage instability and the possibility of serious violence (Goldstone et al. 2010). These conditions have not changed, and certainly ‘*faction fighting*’ has worsened considerably within ZANU-PF (see Section 2.2 and 3 below).

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<sup>5</sup> Chakravati, A (2017), *Zimbabwe Economy: Pitfalls and Prospects*. Presentation to Post-Liberation Southern Africa Programme. ZIMBABWE IN TRANSITION: REFORM AND RECONSTRUCTION. Conference held at Rainbow Towers, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017

There are nuanced aspects to this prognosis that deserve unpacking, for the contribution of the different issues can have a determining effect upon the way in which the crisis unfolds.

### **2.1 The consolidation of “securocracy”**

There is little actually to add to the analysis of the “securocrat state” proved by Mandaza (Mandaza. 2016), or the pessimistic predictions provided by Bratton or Southall (Bratton. 2014; Southall. 2013). The analysis by Ibbo Mandaza, in fact, is almost prophetic about the current state of affairs, and, in particular, the outlining of the growth of the securocrat state, the capture of state institutions, the increased centralised power under the presidency, and the manner in which the security sector has become indispensable to maintenance of political power.<sup>6</sup> More recently, and apart from merely supporting the conflation of state and regime, has the very serious insertion of the security sector into the politics of the country, a factor that has been alleged for particularly elections, an allegation supported strongly by the assertions of senior members of the security forces (Rupiya. 2011). It is even given further weight by the statement of the president himself, as we pointed out in our previous report.<sup>7</sup>

It is crucial here to remember that both the law and the constitution are explicit about the non-partisan position that must be adopted by the security forces. An early analysis of the legislation governing the security forces, and in existence prior to the new (2013) Constitution, made it very plain that comments by senior army officers were in breach of the law, but with total impunity (Matyszak. 2011).<sup>8</sup> This behaviour is now strongly prohibited by the Constitution in both Sections 208 and 211, but it is still the case that senior members of the security forces continue in their partisan attitude, and with complete impunity.<sup>9</sup> However, it seems that this has even occasioned criticism from the President.<sup>10</sup> The President did not criticise the security forces in previous years when they dabbled in politics, now that it appears not to suit him, he waves the Constitution to bring them into line.

What is of increasing concern is the manner in which the security sector is inserting itself into the problems around succession,<sup>11</sup> and there are obvious dangers to a democratic state when the military and the security sector generally starts to play king maker in choice of governments.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This analysis has been built upon and corroborated by recent analyses presented at a recent conference, *ZIMBABWE IN TRANSITION: REFORM AND RECONSTRUCTION*. See Kagoro, B.B.T (2017), *Reform and Reconstruction in Zimbabwe: The Role of Political Parties in Determining the Way Forward* & Bomba, B (2017), *The role of civil society*.

<sup>7</sup> “Mugabe remarks expose military”. Elias Mambo. *Zimbabwe Independent*. April 15, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> “Army general, Nyikayaramba vows not to salute Tsvangirai”, *The Zimbabwean*, 29 May 2011 [<http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2011/05/army-general-nyikayaramba-vows-not-to-salute-Tsvangirai/>]

<sup>9</sup> “The Security Sector and the Constitution”, *RAU*, 7 July 2017.

[<http://researchandadvocacyunit.org/blog/2017/07/07/security-sector-and-constitution/>]

<sup>10</sup> “Mugabe guns for generals as succession battle hots up”, *The Standard*, 30 July 2017 [<https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2017/07/30/mugabe-guns-generals-succession-battle-hots/>]

<sup>11</sup> “Gen Chiwenga reads the riot act • Warns anti-Command Agric lobby • Security services aware of saboteurs,” *The Herald*, 27 June 2017. [<http://www.herald.co.zw/gen-chiwenga-reads-riot-act-%E2%80%A2warns-anti-command-agric-lobby-%E2%80%A2security-services-aware-of-saboteurs/>]; “Chiwenga is ‘offside’”, *Daily News*, 13 April, 2017. [<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/04/13/chiwenga-is-offside/>]

<sup>12</sup> “Mugabe succession: Military involvement raises the stakes”, *Zimbabwe Independent*. 17 July 2017.

The bitter conflict within ZANU-PF undoubtedly fosters this desire with the military, but it is also not evident that there is cohesion within and between the various security services about the political heir to the president, and here a number of commentators have warned of the dangers of extensive political violence.

A short observation, that we made previously, is pertinent to this last point. Analysis of the probability of political violence in the SADC countries currently governed by former liberation movements – Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe – suggests that, since all attained stable independence,<sup>13</sup> Zimbabwe is significantly the most violent of the five countries, and mostly in respect of elections and the possibility of losing political power (RAU. 2016). It should be noted here that the violence accompanying elections has largely been State sponsored targeting the opposition political parties, but, with the expulsion of one faction of ZANU-PF and the conflicts between the remaining factions, it seems that intra and inter-party violence is probable. This could become very serious if the military should become embroiled in taking sides.

It is for this reason that the “succession crisis” is possibly the paramount political problem facing Zimbabwe in the short-term.

## ***2.2 Failing central power***

At the heart of the succession crisis a central problem has been, and still is, the manner in which political power has been concentrated in the presidency, and has led to what Brian Kagoro has termed the three tragedies of Zimbabwe:<sup>14</sup>

- *A crisis of leadership and followership;*
- *Leaders with power have no ideas and those with ideas have no power;*
- *A country that runs on memory and not imagination.*

This diagnosis seems remarkably apt in the current state of Zimbabwe, and applies more widely than merely to the ruling party. However, it is the ruling party, and its centralised power, that is fundamentally responsible for the tragedies. This centralisation of power is also evident in the opposition MDCT and this has been said to be one of the reasons the opposition has failed to take over power.

Notwithstanding some limitations placed upon presidential powers by the 2013 Constitution (Matyszak. 2013), the president retains enormous powers in virtually every area of Zimbabwe’s governance structures, which has serious implications if the holder of the post and the driver of the executive begins to show signs of weakness or lack of authority. This has increasingly seemed a major problem. Certainly, the signs of weakness have led to a major preoccupation with the President’s health, encouraged by his frequent external trips for alleged medical treatment, but equally, in a man of very advanced age, the preoccupation about failing capacity merely due to age, which is entirely reasonable.

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<sup>13</sup> Here it is meant not merely the independence from the former colonial power, but the attainment of a stable government and then political contest only by elections.

<sup>14</sup> Taken from presentation by Brian Kagoro, *Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem Memorial Lecture: Reflections on Pan-Africanism Liberation Politics, and Democratisation in Southern Africa*, The Pan-African Lecture Series, *SapesTrust*, 25 May 2017.

However, the central problem, underpinned by either or both of the above factors, is the extent to which normal government takes place at all. The normal work of government is generally opaque in Zimbabwe, and, a little like Plato's cave, observers have to rely upon shadowy reports, leaks, and, all too often, rumour. Additionally, it has been the case for many years that it is uncertain as to where decisions are actually made – in cabinet, politburo, or wholly in the executive, and dominantly by the president. As Mandaza (2016) points out:

*With the passage of time, critical issues of policy were made less in Cabinet than between the President and the individual Minister responsible for the sector: sometimes, after the Cabinet meeting itself, as Ministers queue with their files outside the President's office, to have their respective matter cleared, far from the glare and scrutiny of collective responsibility; and, at other times, President and Minister will meet as circumstances or expediency demands, to deliberate and decide upon a policy issue that might have otherwise been rejected in Cabinet. (Mandaza. 2016. p23)*

This seemingly *ad hoc* approach to governance can only be exacerbated by the amount of time that the president is outside the country, for his absence, in the situation of all power being centralised in his office, must create major problems for effective government.<sup>15</sup> For example, in 2017, by 16<sup>th</sup> May, Robert Mugabe had spent more time out of the country than in it: he had been out of the country a total of 77 (57%) days out of the 136.<sup>16</sup> The motive for this exaggerated travel need not detain us here, as the point is that its effect must be to worsen the crisis in governance, and undoubtedly raises the temperature in the succession battle.

This is not trivial in the current crisis, and, as for example over the vexed issue of indigenisation, we are therefore all too often treated to widely differing statements by ministers, and, thus, until the executive pronounces upon the matter, we remain in the dark about what is government policy. As another example, he is alleged to push once again for further alienation of white-owned commercial farms, only to make somewhat contradictory comments very soon afterwards. It may well be that in one case he is recognising the influence of the South African government in protecting the property rights of a very large South African company, but less interested in the rights of ordinary Zimbabwean citizens, but, as the economists try to point out continually, property rights are property rights whether of a company or a private individual. Foreign investors will be only too happy to point this out to the government.

These seem to be symptoms, and increasingly obvious symptoms, of failing central power, but it is very hard to pin point what lies behind this, and also to what extent the “succession” clash is a determining factor. The key question is, how is this going to be resolved, and we doubt the general belief that death or total incapacity of the president is the only pathway to a changed politics. The fact that the president is mortal is trite: the question is what is he or the party going to do about this?

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<sup>15</sup> “Factionalism renders govt dysfunctional”, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 21 July 2017.

[<https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2017/07/21/factionalism-renders-govt-dysfunctional/>]

<sup>16</sup> “Mugabe spends a staggering 77 days out of Zim in 2017”, *The Standard*. 28 May 2017.

### 2.3 The “succession” clash

In fact, the “succession” crisis generates considerably more heat than light in the eyes of the media, and there remains ignorance about all the legal niceties that surround the issue of what happens when the President dies, becomes too infirm to govern, or even decides to retire. All of these eventualities have been covered in detail, even beginning prior to the 2013 election and ZANU-PF’s “surprising” victory (Matyszak. 2012). The unfortunate concatenation between the national constitution and the ZANU-PF constitution have been analysed in considerable detail (Matyszak. 2016), but, as always in Zimbabwe, the legal will run second to the political reality, and succession to the presidency is increasingly complex, beginning with the purge of Joice Mujuru and eight cabinet ministers in 2014.

This began a bitter struggle between two so-called factions, *Lacoste* and the *G40*, and has led to the interminable discussion about who is in which faction; who is moving from one faction to the other; which faction has the ear of the President and his wife; and so on and so on.<sup>17</sup> However, it cannot be denied that there is huge acrimony between the two alleged factions as evidenced by Minister Jonathan Moyo’s address recently to SAPES, and the sustained fallout that has followed this.<sup>18</sup>

Whilst there is considerable evidence, to suggest that there is indeed a faction fight going on within the party, and an alternative construction might suggest that this has been rather a slow purge of Emmerson Mnangagwa and his backers. This too is difficult to verify, but the rationale is that, rather than the blunt expulsion that was the mode for removing Mujuru and associates, this has been a sustained attempt at weakening the Mnangagwa faction prior to a planned resolution of the succession problem.

Whichever construction is correct, it is obvious that the effect has been to split the party in perhaps terminal fashion, and has sucked in all manner of other players, and fractured other groupings allied to ZANU-PF. For example, a faction of the war veterans have split from ZANU-PF, albeit ambiguously, and the battle for control of the provincial structure of ZANU-PF has become increasingly acrimonious and violent.<sup>19</sup> There are now suggestions that the ambiguous allegiance of the war veterans might be clarified by their forming a political party of their own, which would further exaggerate the splits within ZANU-PF.<sup>20</sup>

It has been evident for some time that, as far as the presidential election is concerned, there are only two plausible candidates, Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai. Although there are many political parties with party presidents, the only other name mentioned with regards to the presidency is Nkosana Moyo but he is regarded similarly to Simba Makoni in 2008 as a rank outsider. Whilst both Mugabe and Tsvangirai have reputedly serious health problems, we will

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<sup>17</sup> “Mnangagwa, Moyo square-off”, *NewsDay*, 21 July 2017. [<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/07/21/mnangagwa-moyo-square-off/>]

<sup>18</sup> “Moyo backs Sekeramayi”, *The Independent*. 2 June 2017. [<https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2017/06/02/moyo-backs-sekeramayi/>]; “Fire Prof Moyo: War vets”, *The Herald*, 4 July 2017. [<http://www.herald.co.zw/fire-prof-moyo-war-vets/>]

<sup>19</sup> For example, a reputed supporter of Emmerson Mnangagwa, Nathaniel Mhiripiri, was apparently murdered earlier this year. “Nathaniel Mhiripiri: Lived by the sword, died by the sword” *The Standard*. 26 March 2017. [<https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2017/03/26/nathaniel-mhiripiri-lived-sword-died-sword/>]

<sup>20</sup> “War vets forming political party”, *Daily News*. 18 July 2017. [<https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2017/07/18/war-vets-forming-political-party>]

concern ourselves with the former and the risks inherent in having a very elderly candidate who might not make it all the way to the poll. Assuming Tsvangirai is still a contender for 2018, and Mugabe not, how can ZANU-PF find a candidate, notwithstanding all the speculation that the election could be rigged for this candidate, that can meet the test of political plausibility? It is difficult to believe that a party as generally organised about elections as ZANU-PF would not have an alternative strategy, and this is submitted as the core of the succession dilemma.

Here a number of scenarios seem plausible if elections are ZANU-PF's central strategy, each with inherent risk for the party.<sup>21</sup>

First, and the most serious, with the comments advised earlier about the intrusion of the security into the actual political arena, there are indications that a "silent coup" is being prepared. According to Mandaza<sup>22</sup>, serving soldiers have been deployed in order to influence the structure of the Provincial Co-ordinating Committees (PCCs). The problem here is that any such attempt at re-arranging the current government will require a constitutional lever, such as the death or infirmity of the president, and this seems unlikely at present. Given the second construction of the nature of the faction fight, this "silent coup" may represent a defensive manouver against a possible purge rather than the confidence to take over the state with strong party support.

The second scenario is the one that will certainly occur, whether or not Robert Mugabe does remain able to contest an election in 2018: mortality will have its day, and then the complications attendant of the conflation between the two constitutions, national and ZANU-PF, will come into play. As pointed out above, this option has been explained in detail by Derek Matyszak in *Succession and the ZANU-PF Body Politic* (Matyszak. 2015). Since the replacement of the president lies within the party and not the parliament, those that control the party will control the succession. This might be termed the "uncontrolled" succession, and is fraught with danger and a high probability of political violence, albeit intra-party violence. However, there must be concerns here about the possibility for violence and disturbances escalating as suggested by the research on state instability mentioned earlier (Goldstone et al. 2010), and, although this is discounted by these authors as a risk factor, the "youth bulge" may also predispose towards serious instability, as other research has suggested (Urdal. 2006; Urdal. 2004).

Thirdly, there is the option of calling an early election and hence pre-empting the difficulties of an aged and frail candidate. This has recently been suggested by Minister Ignatious Chombo, but it is not evident that this view emerges from the heart of the state.<sup>23</sup> This might forestall all the faction fighting temporarily, but still suffers the danger that the party might not have Robert Mugabe as a candidate. However, it must be said in all fairness that there is no credible evidence about the state of Mugabe's health, and the health issues may well be a ploy: equally it is

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<sup>21</sup> The following section below derives from a recent analysis of the likely options. See "Why elections won't solve the crisis", Ibbo Mandaza & Tony Reeler, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 2 June 2017.

<sup>22</sup> "Hot Seat: Mugabe thwarts "coup attempt" says political scientist Ibbo Mandaza", *The Zimbabwean*. 30 April 2017. [<http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2017/04/hot-seat-mugabe-thwarts-coup-attempt-says-political-scientist-ibbo-mandaza/>]

<sup>23</sup> "Poll dates President's prerogative:Chombo", *The Herald*. 10 July 2017. [<http://www.herald.co.zw/poll-dates-presidents-prerogative-chombo/>]; "President stresses unity ahead of polls", *The Herald*. 20 July 2017. [<http://www.herald.co.zw/president-stresses-unity-ahead-of-polls/>]

undoubted that age remains a risk factor. Other commentators have suggested the possibility of an early election, with a variant on the “controlled” succession theory.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, there can be a “controlled” succession, through the president pre-emptively calling an elective congress and electing his successor, something he has alluded to on several occasions. The First Lady has waded in the succession battle, first saying that there is no need for a successor as Mugabe will rule as a corpse to her most recent statement, where she is calling Mugabe to appoint his successor and that his word will be final.<sup>25</sup> She said that this will end all the clanderstine discussions about succession and factionalism. Grace Mugabe’s call for appointment of a successor could be an admission of failing health of the President and positioning herself for appointment.

The successor, whoever he or she might be, would then be the candidate of choice for the 2018 poll. There are suggestions from ZANU-PF sources that this is the preference for at least one faction in the party, and, whilst it would seem that it might be risky to allow the party to vote for the candidate of their choice(s), and that this may well be a reason for all the conflict over the composition of the PCC’s, it also is the case that the party has stage-managed intra-party elections and constitutional changes very successfully over the years (Matyszak. 2015; Matyszak. 2016).

It may be assumed that such a scenario is a preliminary to elections in 2018, but an alternative construction is that it would rather be a preliminary to avoid this:

*It is not so clear that this approach to succession necessarily aims at fighting an election: it can also be argued that it is a preliminary to setting up a government of national unity. A possible modification here is that the arrangement may also create a GNU, with an arrangement similar to that of the GPA, except with a titular presidency and an executive prime minister, a reversal in roles from the previous Inclusive Government.<sup>26</sup>*

This it can be plausibly suggested is the alternative strategy and one that seems too easily dismissed by most commentators and observers, especially amongst the opposition political parties.

#### **2.4 Possible alternatives for a “soft landing”**

Given all the above, and additionally the parlous state of the economy, Zimbabwe would seem to be heading for a “hard” landing, and certainly exhibits all the signs of “fragility”, as much as this is denied by the government.<sup>27</sup> Zimbabwe would nonetheless show most of the features of “fragility” according to the Fragile States Index:<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “Big Saturday Read: Brace for an early election”, Alex Magaisa, 22 July 2017. [<https://www.bigsr.co.uk/single-post/2017/07/22/Big-Saturday-Read-Brace-for-an-early-election>]

<sup>25</sup> First Lady Urges President Mugabe to Name Successor (<http://www.herald.co.zw/latest-first-lady-urges-pres-mugabe-to-name-successor/> 27 July 2017)

<sup>26</sup> See again “Why elections won’t solve the crisis”, Ibbo Mandaza & Tony Reeler, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 2 June 2017.

<sup>27</sup> “No crisis in Zim: Mugabe”, *NewsDay*, 5 May, 2017. [<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/05/05/no-crisis-zim-mugabe/>]

<sup>28</sup> See RAU (2017), *Is Zimbabwe A Fragile State*, 18 May 2017.

- **Demographic Pressures** - Pressures on the population such as disease and natural disasters make it difficult for the government to protect its citizens or demonstrate a lack of capacity or will (includes youth bulges);
- **Refugees and IDPs** - Pressures associated with population displacement. This strains public services and has the potential to pose a security threat;
- **Group Grievance** - When tension and violence exists between groups, the state's ability to provide security is undermined and fear and further violence may ensue;
- **Human Flight** - When there is little opportunity, people migrate, leaving a vacuum of human capital. Those with resources also often leave before, or just as, conflict erupts;
- **Uneven Development** - When there are ethnic, religious, or regional disparities, governments tend to be uneven in their commitment to the social contract;
- **Poverty and Economic Decline** - Poverty and economic decline strain the ability of the state to provide for its citizens if they cannot provide for themselves and can create friction between "haves" and "have nots";
- **Legitimacy of the State** - Corruption and lack of representativeness in the government directly undermine social contract;
- **Public Services** - The provision of health, education, and sanitation services, among others, are key roles of the state;
- **Human Rights** - When human rights are violated or unevenly protected, the state is failing in its ultimate responsibility;
- **Security Apparatus** - The security apparatus should have a monopoly on use of legitimate force. The social contract is weakened where affected by competing groups;
- **Factionalised Elites** - When local and national leaders engage in deadlock and brinkmanship for political gain, this undermines the social contract;
- **External Intervention** - When the state fails to meet its international or domestic obligations, external actors may intervene to provide services or to manipulate internal affairs.

Any even cursory examination of these indices in respect of Zimbabwe suggests a national crisis of some magnitude, and it does not seem that elections will be the panacea, especially when elections in Zimbabwe seems to cause more problems than they solve: a party always wins a majority, but either the result is disputed – as in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2013 – or the winner is unable to ascend to office as in 2008. Furthermore, assuming that ZANU-PF does not call for an early election, then the election is nearly 12 months away, with the prospect of continued economic decline, and, thus, even when a grand coalition is able to grasp political power, 12 months before sensible steps can be taken to arrest the decline. This does not appear to be an urgent response to the crisis of growing fragility.

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[<http://researchandadvocacyunit.org/blog/2017/07/07/zimbabwe-%E2%80%9Cfragile-state%E2%80%9D>] ; see also *The Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index*, Zimbabwe: Country data [<http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/country-data/>]

At best, elections are an indirect way of addressing a national crisis, and it has been suggested that an alternative is to seek a national political settlement, and there is good evidence that comprehensive political settlements are an effective method of solving a national crisis. (Menocal. 2015; Khan. 2010). It can be argued with some force that Zimbabwe has already attempted a number of political settlements – in 1980, 1987 and 2008 – but none have created the kind of “inclusive” basis for either sustainable peace or inclusive economic development. It was in this understanding that some Zimbabweans have argued for a National Transitional Authority,<sup>29</sup> and it may well be that the one scenario outlined earlier, a GNU out of “controlled” succession, is a variant of this suggestion.

Which may be the more attractive or implementable of the two suggestions, they do have the merit of more immediate addressing of the crisis, but it is very doubtful that the second, the GNU, will bring about the kind of political settlement that will facilitate sustainable peace or inclusive development.

### 3. The state of the political parties

We need not expend much more text on the issues around the ruling party, ZANU-PF, as this has been covered in detail above. The “succession” crisis, the faction fighting, the split in adjunct organisations such as the war veterans, and the status of the president are all notorious. Much will depend upon whether the party decides to take the election route to try to maintain political power or seeks an alternative through “controlled” succession, but it does seem that the party will not give up political power easily. The question that arises is what opposition political parties can do to deal with the determination of ZANU-PF to keep power, and certainly one ZANU-PF stalwart, Professor Jonathan Moyo, has been scathing in his assessment of the ideology and capabilities of the opposition.<sup>30</sup> His assessment apart, it is still the case that the MDC-T did win a majority of seats in the 2008 elections, but were demolished in 2013.

There have been in the past 18 months, sustained efforts by the major opposition political parties to develop a coalition capable of challenging ZANU-PF at the polls, but whilst there are many encouraging signs, there are equally many problems that still need to be addressed. A significant number of Zimbabweans in the latest Afrobarometer survey (Round 7 in February 2017) support the idea of a “grand coalition”: 45% of all respondents agreed that “*in order to win the 2018 presidential election, opposition political parties should work together under a grand coalition*”. Given Zimbabwe has a separate presidential poll, one key problem that the “grand coalition” has yet to solve is who will lead the coalition in challenging ZANU-PF for the presidency.<sup>31</sup> Despite this, there are few signs that the central problem – who will lead the coalition – has been resolved.<sup>32</sup> The penchant in the press for over-exaggerating conflicts between parties does not mask the difficulties in forming a coalition, and it is not evident that a more fundamental

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<sup>29</sup> “Looking for keys under streetlights”, Ibbo Mandaza & Tony Reeler, *The Independent*. 21 October 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Moyo, J (2017), *Whither the Nationalist Project in Zimbabwe?* The Pan-African Lecture Series, *SapesTrust*, 1 June 2017.

<sup>31</sup> “Dabengwa bemoans Tsvangirai dictatorship”, *The Herald*. 21 July 2017. [<http://www.herald.co.zw/dabengwa-bemoans-tsvangirai-dictatorship/>]

<sup>32</sup> “Mujuru tears into Tsvangirai”, *The Daily News*, 19 July 2017.

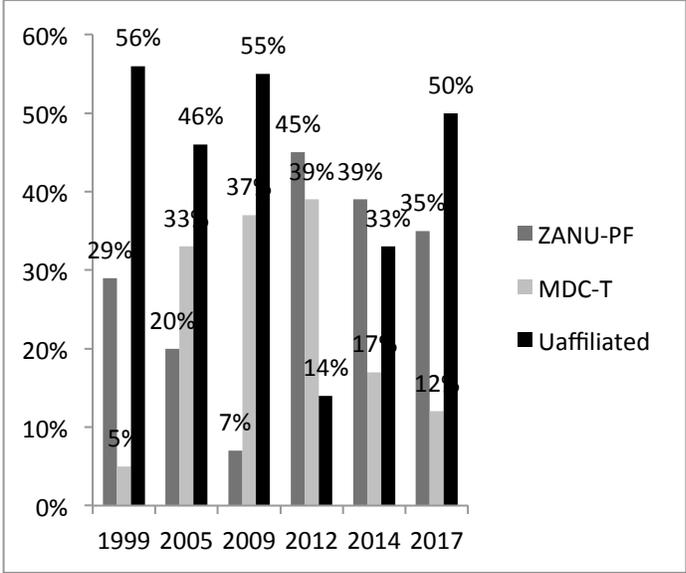
[<https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2017/07/19/mujuru-tears-into-tsvangirai>]

problem than leadership, that of declaring the principles, values and policies of the coalition, has been resolved.

The chicken-and-the-egg problem of which comes first, leadership or policy, needs to be clarified if voters are to have any confidence in the coalition, and the signs, at least from the AB surveys, are not encouraging.

It is always problematic to discern voting support from survey data, and even more problematic to determine the meaning of the “unaffiliated”. There is evidence to show that often the “unaffiliated” are supporters of opposition parties, but unwilling to state this due to the “fear” factor” (Bratton et al. 2015).

**Figure 1: Expressed support for political parties**

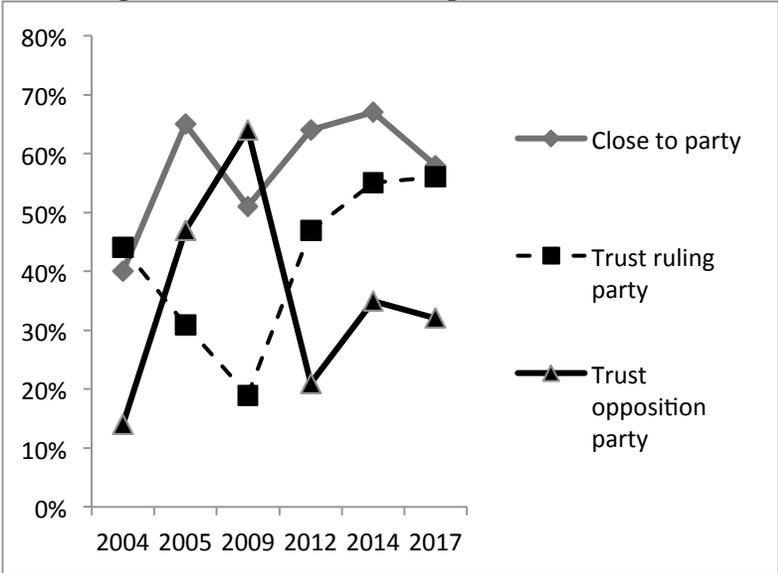


In the latest AB poll, a very high percentage (50%) was unwilling to state their political affiliation. The distribution was little different in answer to the question, *If presidential elections were held tomorrow, which party’s candidate would you vote for*: 38% would vote for ZANU-PF, 16% for MDC-T, 22% for all opposition parties combined, and still 40% would not vote (11%), refused to answer (24%), or did not know (5%). Elections in Zimbabwe are often marred by violence and always by intimidation, and hence attributions of the “fear” factor are usually justified, but, as seen in Figure 1, there has been at least one time in the past 17 years in which support for the ruling party declined significantly. Round 3 took place six months after the very violent elections in 2008, and this decline in support for ZANU-PF can be too easily attributed to the violence in the 2008 elections. However, the declining support was taking place prior to the election, and resulted in ZANU-PF losing both the presidential poll and its majority in parliament. The extreme violence that accompanied the presidential runoff might well explain this decline in support, but it seems that the combined effects of *Operation Murambatsvina* and the precipitous decline in the economy between 2006 and 2008 might also have been significant in this decline (RAU & MPOI. 2017).

It seems that one lesson learned by ZANU-PF from 2008 was the dangers of overplaying the violence card and resorted to a wholly different approach in 2013, but the other factor, economic decline is not easily controlled and should play to the advantage of the opposition. However, it is one thing to have the advantage of government’s failure to arrest the decline in the citizenry’s

welfare, and another to be able to capitalise on this, and some indicators from the recent AB survey suggest that the opposition is failing here.

**Figure 2: Political trust & political affiliation**



Asking the less invasive question, *are you close to a political party*, and then contrasting this response with questions about trust, the dilemma for opposition political parties becomes clearer. From 2009 onwards, trust has been growing in the ruling party (Figure 1). While a majority of Zimbabweans are generally close to a political party, there was precipitous decline in trust in opposition parties in 2012, just ahead of the 2013 poll, in trust and there remains a significant gap between the ruling party and the opposition parties.

It is difficult, of course, to interpret what this trust or lack of trust is due to, especially when the government seems unable to arrest the hardship facing most Zimbabweans, but it seems that evoking the “fear” factor is implausible. It is still the case that, although a smaller number (35%) express overt support for ZANU-PF, a larger number (56%) state that they trust ZANU-PF, and thus are these former opposition political party supporters losing faith in these parties? Have the splits and faction fights in the opposition had a more serious effect on their support base than the similar processes within ZANU-PF?

In summary then, there seems to be a danger for opposition parties relying on a negative vote against ZANU-PF for the election in 2018. Assuming that the government’s inability to manage the economy plays to the advantage of an opposition may be a necessary condition for gaining support, but it may not be sufficient for winning an election. The point about trust (and confidence) needs to be addressed, and talking about a grand coalition is not the same as having one, having clear principles, policies, and, above all, demonstrating that a coalition has confidence itself in its leadership.

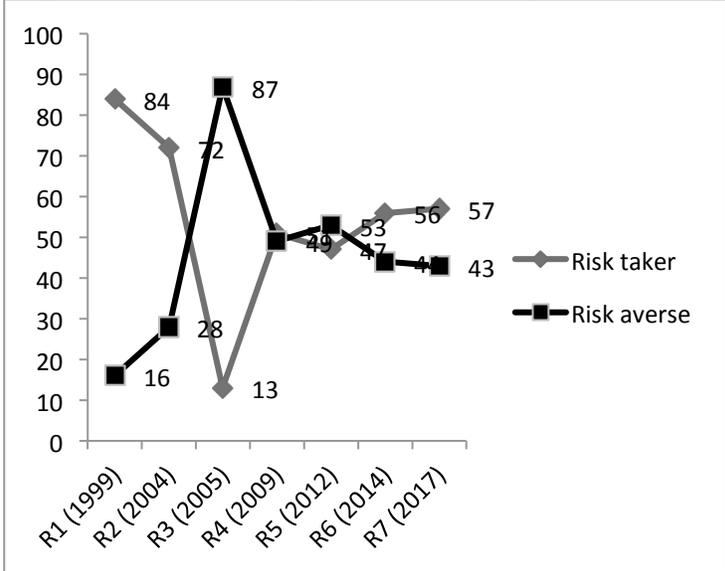
**4. The rise of the citizen?**

Since our last report, and especially in 2016, Zimbabwe has witnessed the rise of citizen activism in a manner not seen in any sustained way since the heady days of the 1990s. Political parties

and social movements took to streets, sometimes in very large numbers, and virtually always resulting in heavy-handed police action. Exceptions to the usual state response were the very large MDC-T march in Harare on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016,<sup>33</sup> as well as in Bulawayo on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2016.<sup>34</sup> Whilst the MDC-T marches were an encouraging of a new energy in the party, most civic activism seemed to be driven by the various social movements, #ThisFlag, *Tajamkuka/Sesjikile*, and the *National Vendors' Union*.

A key question about the Zimbabwean citizenry has, for many, been its apparent passivity in the face of conditions that elsewhere produce public protest and civil unrest. There are the objective conditions for serious instability (Goldstone et al. 2010), but it is frequently argued that the coercive capacity of the state provides the restraints on public protest. Hence, Zimbabweans can be described as “voters, but not yet citizens” (Bratton. 2014), or, reflecting the “fear” factor engendered by state repression, as generally “risk averse” (Masunungure.2006): Zimbabweans, until very recently, will vote but rarely protest.

**Figure 3: Risk Taking, Seven Rounds [1999 to 2017]**



Recent work has attempted to understand “risk aversion” (Masunungure et al. 2017), and the most recent data shows that the trend towards citizens becoming less risk averse is sustained. However, there were many anomalous findings contained within this general trend. The standout finding was the sustained difference between rural and urban citizens from 2009 onwards, with urban citizens being more risk averse than the rural.

This trend has reversed in 2017, however, and it is now the case that rural residents are more risk averse than the urban, which may have implications for growing instability. The point here is that serious instability – strikes, protests and even violence – are always more likely to emerge in

<sup>33</sup> *Thousands march in Harare in rare mass protest against Robert Mugabe*, The Guardian, 14 April 2016. [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/14/thousands-march-harare-rare-mass-protest-against-robert-mugabe>].

<sup>34</sup> *Thousands march against Mugabe*, Zimbabwe Standard, 29 May 2016. [<https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2016/05/29/thousands-march-mugabe/>]

urban rather than rural areas, and, given the above trend, as well as the increasing economic hardships, the challenges for maintaining peace may well increase. But there are other conclusions to be drawn here. An active citizenry is fundamental to sustainable democracy and development, and thus this trend bodes well for the future, provided that there is not another catastrophic decline such as that evidenced by the effects of *Operation Murambatsvina* in 2005. This may be unlikely as the ruling party has no doubt seen how this intervention (and the economic difficulties) resulted in a massive shift in allegiance away from the party, and seems now to concentrate on maintaining its support base through patronage in a variety of ways, e.g. the giving of residential stands to the youth as witnessed in the Norton by election<sup>35</sup>.

The growth of a more active citizenry should be welcome for civil society, and should provide the basis for thinking about the longer term possibilities that active citizenship can bring to the country. Two groups that are mostly marginalised in the polity are women and youth, and it is useful to see what has been happening to these groups in the past 18 months or so.

## **5. The state of organised civil society**

Organised civil society has been on the downward trend since the announcement of the election results in 2013 both in terms of legitimacy and funding. As was stated in previous research civil society had over confidence in the opposition, when they lost the election this had a domino effect; as civil society had to accept that they had to engage with the government they had invested so much time and money to remove. Donors who had supported civil society were also caught in this and many decreased their support to the democracy, human rights and governance sector. ZANU PF labelled civil society and their Western donors agents of regime change and when this failed funds were withdrawn. There were competing international interests and the Zimbabwe situation was not seen as requiring as much attention as before. The struggle for survival for civil society worsened in the last year as the realisation that there won't be as much money poured into this election as in previous years but still civil society is in election mode, despite the fact that any calls for electoral reforms have been ignored and we will most probably have elections under the same conditions as 2013 which will only benefit the ruling party. See below the section on elections.

The lack of political participation by citizens has been an issue following decades of human rights abuses and impunity. Research confirms that Zimbabweans are politically risk averse and fearful. This makes it extremely difficult for civil society to encourage citizens to participate in activities that are regarded dangerous, this however opened an opportunity for the social media movements, where one is engaging in the comfort of their homes or offices.

It became obvious with the rise of the citizen movements that civil society has to marry its agendas with the views of the citizens or they will cease to remain relevant. The movements that emerged, flourished and waned in the space of 12 months showed the importance of determining the meaning of engagement, both with the citizens and with the current government. The emergence of the social movements is a key threat to civil society as these movements are

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<sup>35</sup> ZANU PF hands over 5000 Norton stands Herald 20 October 2016 (<http://www.herald.co.zw/zanu-pf-hands-over-5-000-norton-stands/>)

reaching out and attracting groups that were otherwise not engaged in political spaces, particularly the young urban youth. This type of activism, the hashtag activism, was not being utilised adequately by civil society and therefore a whole demographic group was being left out. There have been calls for these movements to work together with civil society, however civil society has generally resisted the move to welcome the citizen movements, insisting that the two groups play distinct roles and they should not merge.

Finding the meaning of engagement in our current context continues to be a challenge as engagement does not necessarily mean agreement, particularly with government. The relationships between civil society groups and government remain contentious particularly with regard to adherence to the Constitution and ensuring that human rights are respected.

There is a lack of cohesion within civil society, which has resulted in a lack of consensus on critical issues, e.g. the legality of the MOUs with District Administrators. This lack of consensus compounded by the decline in funding from international partners, and civil society has had to downsize both in terms of programmes and operations. There however have been some positive partnerships, and collaborations have resulted because of the difficulties where organisations are pooling their resources together and forced to think creatively.

The socio-economic challenges facing Zimbabwe are huge: long-term economic stagnation, the cash crisis, unemployment, limited provision of basic services, threat of power outages, and lack of clean water, have affected the sector in the same manner as the rest of the country.

### **5.1 Women**

There are many issues affecting women in Zimbabwe, mostly stemming from the patriarchal nature of the society, i.e. gender based violence, discrimination, economic empowerment, access to justice, amongst others. The National Gender Policy<sup>36</sup> acknowledges that gender equality is a fundamental cornerstone for achieving development, but there is still work that needs to be done to achieve this using a multisectoral approach. The women's movement is tackling gender inequality and all its manifestations, the main focus of this section, is looking at women's engagement and participation in politics and governance.

In previous research conducted by RAU,<sup>37</sup> it is evident that women are interested in politics, but they are hindered by violence, fear and the attitudes towards women in politics. Political violence against women has been part of our history since the liberation struggle and it continues to affect women's participation whether the violence was experienced, witnessed or even just heard about, hardly a family in Zimbabwe has not been affected by the political violence in the past 17 years (RAU. 2010). That being said there are women who have braved the political terrain, The

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<sup>36</sup> The National Gender Policy, 2017

<sup>37</sup> RAU (2016), *Zimbabwean politics: Very Constrained and Confined. The lack of middle-class young women's voices in political discourse*. September 2016. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

RAU (2016), *Are middle-class women "disconnected democrats"?* A preliminary investigation into political participation of Zimbabwean women. November 2016. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit

RAU (2017), *Women and Active Citizenship in Zimbabwe: A preliminary investigation of changes over the period 2004 to 2014*. June 2017, Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit.

RAU & TWT (2014), *Does Encouraging Women to Register and Vote Make a Difference? A Preliminary Report on Women's Experiences with the 2013 Elections*. Report prepared by Caroline Kache, Researcher [RAU]. March 2014. Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit and The Women's Trust

National Assembly is comprised of 34% women including the 60 who came in through Section 124 of the Constitution, the Senate is at 48% because of proportional representation and Local Council is represented by 16%. These figures are nowhere near the 50-50 stated in the Constitution, but this provision gives strong impetus for advocacy to adhere to the Constitution and develop policies that will address these gaps.

There has been a push for the adherence to 50-50, particularly in decision making processes. As we draw closer to the 2018 elections, women in politics and the women's movement have been highlighting the slow pace by government to ensure equal representation. This, however, has been met with resistance as women are viewed as *benchwarmers*, and coming in through affirmative action and not merit. A key example being the 60 women who entered parliament through Section 124: these women are said to have contributed very little since their entry in 2013.<sup>38</sup> However, the participation of women in parliament has been shown to be actually better than men in a 2014 research<sup>39</sup>. For this parliament, WIPSU will be issuing out a report detailing the performance of female MPs, which will again show that women are outperforming their male colleagues.

Section 124 is based on proportional representation and it is a temporary measure which will lapse in 2023, being for only two parliamentary terms, 2013 and 2018. The coming elections will bring about the end of the quota. It is therefore important to start discussions now on how to increase women's political participation, as, without the quota, the number of women will surely fall as there is no political will to ensure the 50-50. One positive development is that women across the political divide have been speaking out about this, as reported in the media, but, without speaking out in their political parties,<sup>40</sup> these discussions will not go far if they are not supported by the parties, who are predominately male and see equal representation as a threat to their own participation.

In May 2017, eight opposition political parties launched a campaign under the broad title, *Women Elections Convergence*, to encourage women to participate in elections as candidates as well as being voters, and were also being encouraged to vote each other into political office. The campaign following the new trends is being disseminated as *#HerVoteWins2018*.

This campaign is a show of unity amongst opposition political parties; women are to motivate and encourage each other to participate in elections, both as voters and candidates.. Women are being encouraged to support other women in their political parties in order to feminise decision-making spaces. The leaders of these parties endorsed the campaign, but the true endorsement will be seen when they submit their party lists to the nomination courts.

The ZANU-PF Women's League Secretary-General, Grace Mugabe, called for 50-50 representation in key decision making positions in public institutions, in July 2017. It remains to be seen if this has any impact on the 2018 elections, if and when they are held.

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<sup>38</sup> RAU (2016) *Participation but no Voice* November 2016 Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit

<sup>39</sup> RAU(2014) *Parliament Performance and Gender* November 2014 Harare: Research & Advocacy Unit

<sup>40</sup> "Political playing field not level", *Women in Politics*, 16 May 2017 [<https://openparly.co.zw/2017/05/16/political-playing-field-not-level-women-in-politics/>]

The campaign for 50-50 is also supported by the drive to include young women in governance structures: this is being spearheaded by a social movement called *#shevotes2018*. Young women find themselves in a difficult position regarding leadership positions: they belong both to the youth and to the women structures of politics, but they are marginalised in both groups. The word *youth* in the Zimbabwean context refers to young men, and this is evident as no youth wing of any political party is led by a young woman. Coming to the women's structures, the young women are not visible as they are said to be too young, and they must wait and their turn will come. This group is increasingly becoming frustrated and agitated by the attitudes towards them, and they want their space recognised. Young women want to engage with the youth and older women to create a setting for intergenerational and inter-gender transfer of skills.

In research conducted earlier this year, young women indicated that they are interested in politics but do not trust political parties because they do not have agendas that are focused on young people, more so on young women (RAU. 2017). The emergence of young women indicating that they will stand as independent candidates in 2018 is indicative of the lack of trust in political parties. Both the ruling and opposition parties were painted with the same brush; politicians are self serving, corrupt, misguided and dictatorial. The young women stated that their interest in politics is a desire to see a different leadership, a younger and more people-centred leadership. The announcements of intention to stand as candidates by young women such as Fadzayi Mahere, Linda Masarira and Vimbaishe Musvaburi is a positive move as they break the stereotype of women in politics.

### **5.2 Youth**

The youth, like women, are a group that is extremely important, but often their views and concerns about governance are largely ignored. According to the 2012 Census, the youth, those under the age of 35, make up the majority of our population and make up about 41% of the eligible voters, but only constitute 14% of the registered voters in Zimbabwe<sup>41</sup>. They vote in less numbers than older age groups, and fewer young people stand as candidates in local and national elections<sup>42</sup>. In response to political violence and other informal sanctions, the youth often actively avoid participation to safeguard their informal enterprises (Osterroom et al. (2016).

Zimbabweans are faced with high unemployment and under-employment. The youth, in particular, are suffering the most as many of them are graduating from university with no prospect of employment, and they are forced into the informal sector and engaging in illegal activities. The youth have to content with an unresponsive government, corruption, social injustice and deepening poverty, knowing that this is the future they will inherit. These have become the key drivers of citizens' loss of confidence in the government.

As mentioned above, there is little space for citizens to engage the state as the attempts to engage are usually met with intimidation and violence, particularly if the engagement is to question governance issues. This results in citizens retreating into their safe spaces and becoming cyber

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<sup>41</sup> These statistics are anecdotal evidence from a concoction of informal analyses of the 2013 voters' roll and the Zimbabwean population. This is an area needing attention

<sup>42</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) "Youth participation in electoral processes: new roles for African electoral management bodies" Policy Brief, November 2015 at <http://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/youth-participation-in-electoral-processes-africa.pdf>

activists, particularly the youth. This is well-demonstrated by recent work on risk aversion, showing the youth are the most risk averse age in the country (Masunugure et al. 2017).

The youth have been used by political parties to perpetrate violence, especially during contentious periods such as elections, but recently there has been a new recognition of the importance of the youth as voters. This is evidenced by the youth rallies currently being held by ZANU-PF. For a 93 year old to make the effort to hold youth rallies across the country is an indication that their value to make a difference has been noted. There has been a drive to encourage youth voter registration from across the political divide, reflecting the notion that the youth are being regarded as a game changer, but, in reality, mainly to serve the interests of other people. The current youth drive is not geared to address youth exclusion, youth apathy, or to ensure that the youth are sitting at the decision-making table.

Although Zimbabweans are generally “risk averse”, the year 2016 saw the rise of the social movements -#Tajamuka/Sesjikile and #ThisFlag - which gave many people, primarily youth, their voice. Young people were inspired to openly express their displeasure with governance and politics. The influence of these movements has since waned and again elections are being viewed as a viable option for the youth to utilise their numbers and influence the governance process. This however comes at a cost, the levels of political violence are rising before an election date has even been set. However, the growth of “voice” is interesting and it remains to be seen whether this translates into greater agency.

Youth are seen as a game changer, but the political parties have not clearly established a youth centred agenda :what is in it for the young people, and especially young women? Questions such as why should the youth focus on mere participation in elections or rather on the benefits of participating in elections,<sup>43</sup> If the conditions present do not suit the attainment of any one of the possible desired outcomes, what should the youth do; does the focus on elections and youth voter registration downplay the role of the legacy of intimidation, violence, abductions and denial of drought relief food aid in shaping the outcomes of those elections? Without properly interrogating these issues,, it will be meaningless for the youth to participate in governance process.

## **6. On elections in 2018**

It can be cynically said that elections in Zimbabwe often create more problems than they solve, but, as in all democracies, they are a necessary evil. In previous reports we have covered all the issues that emerged out of the 2013 Harmonised elections (Reeler & Chitsike. 2014; Reeler & Chitsike. 2015), and, ahead of the poll in 2018, it is of great concern that all the problems then identified still remain. The comments about elections will necessarily be brief, given that there is a substantial literature already in the public domain.

### ***6.1 The electoral playing field***

Three key features emerged in 2013 that required important reforms, and they have been problems for the past decade. The first was the independence of the Zimbabwe Electoral

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<sup>43</sup> RAU(2017) *Framing the Debate: Youth Registration in Zimbabwe* April 2017 HARARE: RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY UNIT

Commission (ZEC), the second was the voters roll, and the third, and most important, were reforms to key state institutions, especially the security sector.

There is, and has been, strong and sustained pressure by both opposition political parties, through the Zimbabwe National Electoral Reform Agenda (Zinera), and a civil society coalition, the Electoral Reforms Working Group. The pressure is potentially aided by the 2013 Constitution, but is also evident that there is little movement towards the critical reforms needed in order to ensure a valid election. It is evident that the government is cherry-picking which laws are brought into conformity with the constitution (RAU. 2016 (d)), arguing that harmonising the legislation will take time, but also avoiding the most obvious implication behind the promulgation of the amended constitution: that every law that is *ultra vires* the constitution cannot be applied. There has been strong representation by political parties and civil society about the range of reforms needed for a genuinely democratic election.<sup>44</sup>

This problem apart, there is also the major problem that the government does not enforce the laws that are constitutional, and this applies particularly to the security sector above. Here it is necessary to re-iterate the importance of the security sector's non-partisan behavior during the elections. This is ostensibly guaranteed both under the Constitution and all the enabling legislation governing particularly the army and the police, but, as pointed out earlier, is ignored by senior members of the security forces and no attempt is made to deal with blatant breaches. It would create enormous confidence in the election if the President would issue clear directives to all security agencies to maintain absolute adherence to the constitution and the law, and even more if the heads of the security forces would additionally make public statements to the same effect.<sup>45</sup> Reform ahead of the elections will require more than this, however, and the partisan nature of many government agencies and bodies must be corrected if even a modicum of a level playing field can be created. This is not the place to outline the full gamut of reforms, but one other example, that of the role of the traditional leaders, can be cited.

The frequent references to the partisan nature of traditional leaders are well-known and this is in violation of Section 46(1) of the Traditional Leaders Act, which enjoins traditional leaders to be non-partisan, reinforced by Section 281 (2) of the 2013 Constitution. This too requires public statement by the government with supporting public reinforcement by the traditional leaders in the same manner as the heads of the security services. These two sets of confidence-building measures could be added positive steps to implement the devolution clauses of the constitution and the ad hoc powers of Provincial Ministers and District Administrators. All of these measures can easily be taken by the government, but it is highly unlikely that any will materialise.

There is no more vexed issue than the voters roll in Zimbabwean elections. For both the 2008 and the 2013 elections significant problems were identified in the voters rolls for those elections (RAU. 2009; RAU. 2013). For 2013, the irregularities in the voters roll were even noted by

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<sup>44</sup> “CIVIC SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS COMMUNIQUE”. STAKEHOLDERS DIALOGUE TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE CONFERENCE, 31 October -1 November 2016, Bulawayo. [<http://www.zesn.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ZESN-and-CSOs-Communique-Towards-Democratic-Elections.pdf>]

<sup>45</sup> Such statement should actually be pre-conditions set by opposition political parties for participating in the 2018 elections. See again, “Replies to the Critics”, Ibbo Mandaza & Tony Reeler, *Zimbabwe Independent*. 16 December 2016.

African electoral observation teams, and recommendations made for improvements to the roll. One major problem with the whole process of registration and the compilation of the roll has been the central position of the Registrar-General's Office, which it claimed has now been obviated by ZEC taking charge of both these functions.

The relationship between ZEC and the Office of the Registrar-General was a major area of concern in the past, and severely affected confidence in the independence of ZEC. The problems with the (now) Electoral Act were dealt with in considerable detail whilst discussions were taking place around the proposed Bill (RAU. 2016 (d)), and the reservations about the role of the "former Registrar-General" must remain. It is already the case that the by-elections are raising many of the problems seen with the 2013 roll.<sup>46</sup> There also seems considerable opacity about what relationship exists between ZEC and the Registrar-General's Office in respect of which roll is used in by-elections.

More seriously for any possible audit of the 2018 roll, whether it emerges out of the BVR process or is an amended version of the 2013 roll, is the fact that there is no copy of the 2013 roll available for scrutiny. As is well-known, the Registrar-General, and ZEC were unable to force him to do this, refused to provide an electronic copy of the final roll to political parties, and the MDC-T only received a hard copy of the roll on the eve of the election: analysis of the preliminary roll, provided earlier, showed all manner of problems (RAU. 2013). Subsequently the Registrar-General refused to provide an electronic copy, providing wholly implausible excuses that were accepted by the Zimbabwean court.

These shenanigans mean that it will be impossible to reliably audit whatever roll emerges in 2018, This has led civil society organisations, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) and the Election resource Centre (ERC) to request the discontinuation by ZEC of the use of the 2013 voters roll.<sup>47</sup>

There remains the problem with voter registration too. Whilst the Constitution, in Chapter Seven (Section 155) seems explicit about the burden on the state to facilitate ease of registration and voting, the continued conditions imposed on proving residence are at variance with this idea, placing the burden on the citizen rather than the state. This is leading to controversy at present, but at least one commentator argues that this unlikely to change.<sup>48</sup>

Much more can be said about all the changes needed to ensure a level playing field in 2018, but these are unlikely in the current dilemma that ZANU-F finds itself in. For the opposition, a sensible approach would be to specify all the reforms that the government is obliged to implement, given that the Constitution is peremptory in respect of all laws that are in violation of it: they don't need "harmonising", merely the acceptance that any law that is ultra vires the Constitution is invalid. The opposition parties merely need to demand immediate adherence to the Constitution in all areas that affect the elections and merely require the government to

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<sup>46</sup> "Zec blunders exposed", NewsDay, 18 July 2017. [<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/07/18/zec-blunders-exposed/>]

<sup>47</sup> ZESN (2017), *Preliminary STATEMENT: CHIWUNDURA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY-ELECTION*, 16 July 2017 [<http://www.zesn.org.zw/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/PRELIMINARY-STATEMENT-CHIWUNDURA-NATIONAL-ASSEMBLY-BY-ELECTION.pdf>]

<sup>48</sup> See again "Big Saturday Read: Brace for an early election", Alex Magaisa, 22 July 2017. [<https://www.bigsr.co.uk/single-post/2017/07/22/Big-Saturday-Read-Brace-for-an-early-election>]

publicly support this, set a deadline for conformity by the government, and to be clear what their action will be if there is non-compliance.

**6.2 Fears of political violence**

As pointed out earlier, Zimbabwe is the most violent of the countries governed by former liberation movements, and particularly so in respect of elections (RAU. 2016 (c)). Of the elections held since 2000, some have been very violent – 2000, 2002 and 2008 – whilst the others – 2005 and 2013 - have been marked more by intimidation rather than having high levels of overt violence. Neither violence nor intimidation are, of course, acceptable in a truly democratic election, and here the much more assertive role of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) is encouraging. Recently, the Chair of the ZHRC, Elasto Mugwadi, pointed out that the ZHRC could demand suspension of elections, at least by constituency, if there was serious violence during the 2018 elections.<sup>49</sup> He extended this to include *diatribes, hate speech and political incitement*, but the downside is that the ZHRC will only have power to recommend proposed suspension to ZEC, and the final power will still lie with ZEC. This is when the true independence of ZEC will be critical.

A feature, not present in 2013, that may be important for the prospects of political violence and intimidation in 2018 is the changed political terrain. In all past polls since 2000 the major electoral clash has been the MDC-T and a (then) united ZANU-PF, and hence all violence could be accurately described as “inter-party”. With the severe faction fighting within ZANU-PF, the purge of Joice Mujuru and the so-called “Gamatox” faction, and the fracturing of the war veterans, a new variable may now enter the equation; that of “intra-party” as well as “inter-party” violence.

There is some evidence that this is already happening, but it should be pointed out that intra-party violence in ZANU-PF is not uncommon in the past. “Intra-party” conflicts (violations) are most common in ZANU-PF (83%), as seen in Table 1, which lends credence to the view that this may be a bigger factor in the 2018 elections than previously.

**Table 1: Frequency of “intra-party” violations**  
*[Source: Zimbabwe Peace Project.2017 reports]*

	MDC-T	ZANU-PF	MD C	ZimP F	PDP	NPP
January	1	4	0	0	0	0
February	0	2	0	0	0	0
March	0	2	0	0	0	1
April	2	4	0	0	0	0
May	0	5	0	0	0	0
June	0	3	0	0	0	0
Total	3	20	0	0	0	1

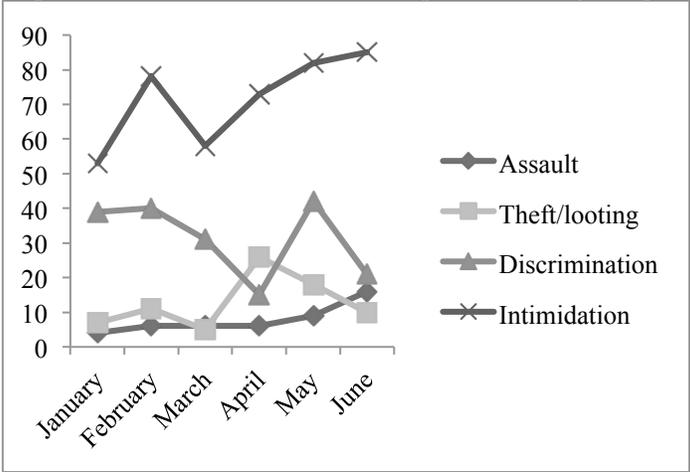
Nonetheless, the concern for many observers is a reversion to the kinds of election seen in 2000, 2002 or 2008, where political violence reached very high levels, and where the violence was significantly uni-directional: by the State or ZANU-PF supporters against the opposition political

<sup>49</sup> “ZHRC threatens to force Zec to suspend 2018 polls over violence”, *NewDay*, 3 July 2017  
[\[https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/07/03/zhrc-threatens-force-zec-suspend-2018-polls-violence/\]](https://www.newsday.co.zw/2017/07/03/zhrc-threatens-force-zec-suspend-2018-polls-violence/)

parties, and mostly against MDC-T supporters (CSVR. 2009). There may be some mediating factors possibly at play in 2018.

One of the lessons learned by ZANU-PF in 2008 was the rejection of the election outcome by African states, but also another crucial piece of learning was the manner in which its own constituency turned against it, probably due to the effects of the hyper-inflation as well as the further forced impoverishment produced by Operation Murambatsvina (RAU & MPOI. 2017). This may have been a lesson well-digested by ZANU-PF in the 2013 elections, and most credible observers have suggested that the massive victory in this was produced in greater part by electoral manipulation rather than violence (Bratton et al. 2015; Matyszak. 2013 (b)). This does not suggest however that political violence will not be a factor in 2018, and there is also some evidence that violations are increasing ahead of the elections in 2018.

**Figure 4: Selected violations (January to June 2017)**  
*[Source: Zimbabwe Peace Project.2017 reports]*



As can be seen there are discernible trends for both assaults and intimidation to have increased over the six months. The absolute numbers are not large, but it should be borne in mind that the elections are a little less than a year away. The unpredictable variable is what can happen if ZANU-PF finds itself threatened within its own constituency, and with the prospect of a serious challenge under a “grand coalition”.

A working hypothesis is that factions within the party might not pose too much of a problem, and especially if the opposition vote is split many ways between a multiplicity of parties: in this situation it can be hypothesized that violence will be minimal. The risk factor will increase markedly in our view if a “grand coalition” does materialize, and all opposition parties are united (and do not compete against each).<sup>50</sup>

**7. The international response**

Since our last report the world around Zimbabwe has changed significantly, and particularly in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The region could now be characterised as highly unstable, with South Africa caught up in serious political problems

<sup>50</sup> It is also very difficult to predict what will happen if both the two major candidates for the presidency, Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai, were unable to compete for (mostly) health reasons. This seems improbable on face value, but should not be discounted in analysing the probabilities of violence.

revolving around “state capture”; Zambia showing strong signs of a descent into autocracy; Malawi and Mozambique in conflict with international finance institutions over the misappropriation of funds; the DRC in the throes of an apparently interminable election; and neither Swaziland nor Lesotho looking very stable. By contrast, Botswana looks like a paragon of virtue, but has little success (and considerable hostility) with its foreign policy on Zimbabwe). However, a “fragile” Zimbabwe slumping towards being a “failed” state will have serious effects upon the region, but it is not evident that there is any urgency in SADC to address this possibility, and the 2013 election result was material in putting South Africa on the back foot after several years of trying to broker a way to a comprehensive political settlement (Raftopoulos. 2016). As Raftopoulos points out, the end of the GPA and the 2013 election result fundamentally altered the political context within Zimbabwe, and a recalcitrant ZANU-PF was unlikely to undertake the reforms necessary for any but minimal re-engagement by the West.

Thus, any attempt to profile Zimbabwe as exceptional is becoming increasingly difficult, as was pointed out in a recent Chatham House report on Zimbabwe (Chitiyo et al. 2016), but also argued by Zimbabwe observer, Stephen Chan, at a recent SAPEST Policy Dialogue.<sup>51</sup> Chan argued that the US would be very unlikely to change its current position on Zimbabwe, the EU and the UK would take a “wait-and-see approach”, with the UK probably down-grading its interest in the light of policy changes and arrangements on Africa, and China, whilst maintaining solidarity with a former liberation struggle partner, would be unlikely to provide the kind of economic support that Zimbabwe so desperately needs. However, as pessimistic as Chan was, he did concur that Zimbabwe’s regional position, in an increasingly unstable region, would nonetheless result in moves towards re-engagement.

So, as the flutter of enthusiasm over the Lima Agreement fades due to the paralysis within the state, and as elections are now more or less 12 months away, most international interest is taking a “wait-and-see” approach. As has been the case since 2000, the engagement with Zimbabwe follows the electoral cycle, with a brief period of moves around engagement in the hope of reforms, the increasing realisation that reform will not take place, a more-than-likely disputed election, and the cycle begins again. ZANU-PF has been extremely adept at playing this game, and the manner in which the state has created a laager of support within SADC has blocked the possibilities for any influence from the wider international community: this began with the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, the inflexibility with which the government blocked any substantive discussion under the Cotonou Agreement, and acceding to the peace treaty that was the Global Political Agreement (GPA). ZANU-PF has played its foreign policy cards with great skill, albeit to the total detriment of the economy.

The central problem in dealing with Zimbabwe is a lack of coherence amongst all those engaged with Zimbabwe. There is a pressing need to move away from the restraints of the electoral cycle into a more sustained approach aiming at a political settlement. As Mandaza points out:

*Historical precedents with respect to political “transitions” in Zimbabwe would suggest that such urgent and requisite engagement begins, as in the case of the Lancaster House talks of 1979, at the global level, with London and Washington, quietly and diplomatically, encouraging key factors in both*

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<sup>51</sup> Chan. S (2017), *ZIMBABWE IN TRANSITION: A VIEW FROM ABROAD*, Policy Dialogue Forum, 6 April 2017, SAPESTrust

*SADC in particular and the African Union in general, towards supporting an evolving National Plan of Action.[Mandaza.p29]*

Thus, while elections will be the probable development next year, with the likelihood that these will be again disputed, it seems that the international community should begin to focus on ways in which a comprehensive political settlement might be achieved. This will require a strong attempt to wield a coherent approach amongst all the internationals engaged with Zimbabwe, both regional (SADC) and international (the AU, the EU, the US and China). This should begin well in advance of the election outcome to avoid the kinds of problems that emerged in 2008 with that disputed election. Research on transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy suggests that many successful transitions build incrementally and that external players, as well as key internal political leaders, can play an instrumental role in this process (Lowenthal & Bitar. 2015). These authors, deriving their thesis from conversations with the key architects of transitions, suggest the following steps:

- Move forward incrementally;
- Have a hopeful and inclusive vision;
- Build convergence and coalitions;
- Create and protect spaces for dialogue;
- Constitution making (perhaps not crucial for Zimbabwe);
- Manage the political economy;
- Manage political parties;
- Achieve democratic civilian control of the military, police and intelligence services;
- Achieve transitional justice;
- Mobilise external support.

Mandaza raised earlier the need for a “soft landing” for Zimbabwe (Mandaza. 2016), but this has not had much popular response, apart from a small group, the Platform for Concerned Citizens (PCC) proposing a National Transitional Authority.<sup>52</sup> This position was also proposed by the People’s Democratic Party (PDP),<sup>53</sup> and even earlier by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition.<sup>54</sup> Whilst these ideas may have no current traction, and there may be other thoughts about how to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe, it does seem likely that there will a “hard” rather than “soft” landing, and hence it will be important to plan for a future political settlement at the least.

## **8. Conclusions**

Zimbabwean politics may well confound the pundits, as it has done in the past, and show a decided contempt for the best tenets of political science, Posner and Young, in analysis of the changes taking place, theorised that no African “big man” would attempt to continue in power if

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<sup>52</sup> *POSITION STATEMENT* by Platform for Concerned Citizens (PCC), 23 July 2016

<sup>53</sup> What will be the key functions of the NTA? Jacob Mapfume, *The Zimbabwean*, 3 October 2016 [<http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2016/10/what-will-be-the-key-functions-of-the-nta/>]

<sup>54</sup> *The yellow paper - A civil society position paper that sets out the conditions and objectives of any talks today, tomorrow or in future.* Crisis In Zimbabwe Coalition. July 2003.

his lead in opinion polls was less than 20%, was older than 60 years, and led a country that was very dependent on economic assistance (Posner & Young. 2007). This theory was wholly discredited in 2013 (Reeler. 2012), and probably will be discredited in 2018, even if the factors indicated by Posner and Young are still completely applicable, worse in some ways: the President is older, the economy is in the intensive care unit, but the President's popularity is arguably better than in 2013 according to the Afrobarometer at least.

The big question, as we have raised here, is why, part from the constitutional requirement to do so, would ZANU-PF, in its fractured state, be willing to take a chance on elections? Additionally, and given the debacle of 2013, and the complete lack of any substantial reform since then, why would opposition political parties be so determined to challenge in elections? The only reason that ZANU PF would take the election route, early or otherwise would be to decimate the opposition once and all and claim a legitimate hold on power. Unless something changes drastically in the next 12 months, there is little hope for an opposition win in 2018.

We raise here the suggestion that, all constitutional niceties apart, a national crisis requires a national solution, and a political settlement rather than the more narrow electoral solution. How this can be achieved has little serious discussion, but there are multiple routes to forcing a national solution, and the choice is between a "hard" or "soft" landing. Hopefully, either of these will involve the citizen more fully than in the past, as we hope that we have shown the citizenry is on the move in both passive and active ways.

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