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Zimbabwean Politics in the Post-2013 Election Period

Brian Raftopoulos

Abstract: The 2013 elections in Zimbabwe confirmed the grip of Mugabe and ZANU-PF on Zimbabwean politics. The electoral outcome was the result of a combination of factors that included not only the long-term legacy of ZANU-PF's coercive politics, constructed through a radical nationalist discourse, but also the changes in the social structure of the country as a result of the reconfiguration of Zimbabwe's political economy since the late 1990s. In the aftermath of the 2013 elections, the enormous economic constraints confronting the country have forced the Mugabe regime to take a more conciliatory tone as it seeks to re-engage with the West in the search for economic assistance. In its attempts to find a path through these economic challenges, ZANU-PF must also contend with the growing battle for succession within the party as Mugabe's rule draws to an end.

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Keywords: Zimbabwe, domestic policy, international relations, ZANU-PF, MDC

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The euphoria of ZANU-PF's 2013 election victory in Zimbabwe was short-lived and subdued. The beginning of 2014 witnessed the launching of a revealing debate on corruption in the party-state from within ZANU-PF, by the party's controversial Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Jonathan Moyo. War veterans had raised the issue over corruption within ZANU-PF in the 1990s, but in what became known as the 'salarygate' scandal, Moyo confirmed media reports that outrageous salaries were being paid to heads of certain parastatal bodies. As examples, Moyo noted the chief executive of the Public Service Medical Aid Society, who drew a salary of 230,000 USD per month, while middle managers in the organisation were earning between 15,000 and 30,000 USD per month. Moyo railed against the "false, corrupt salaries" in the public sector and declared: "We have got to see the new thinking and the politics that inform the new economy, that is not being afraid of doing and saying the right things."¹

It soon became clear that this debate was not just about attempting to show a new face to the world, but also, perhaps more importantly, about the succession battles within ZANU-PF. At a Provincial Women's Conference in February 2014, Deputy President Joice Mujuru, viewing Moyo as the mouthpiece of the Mnangagwa faction in the party, warned her audience to "be careful" about reports on corruption in the parastatals, as this was "another tactic being used by those keen to destroy the country."² Robert Mugabe, who has fuelled the politics of ethnic balance in ZANU-PF and ensured the provincialisation of potential contenders to his leadership throughout his tenure as head of the party, pontificated to his party members about the dangers of factionalism within ZANU-PF.³ At the funeral of national hero and former Minister of Information, Nathan Shamuyarira, Mugabe launched a vitriolic attack on factionalism in his party and, more specifically, branded Jonathan Moyo as "the devil incarnate" and a "weevil ... in our midst", "our minister of information wanting to put people one against another".

In May 2014 the Zimbabwean Government and the private sector crafted a National Code of Corporate Governance in an attempt to begin to deal with "Salarygate", declaring an interim cap of 6000 USD for top earners in state enterprises and local authorities. However, it is

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- 1 *Southern Eye*, We don't care: Prof Moyo, 24 January 2014, online: <www.southerneye.co.zw/2014/01/24/dont-care-prof-moyo/> (27 January 2014).
 - 2 *daily news*, Mujuru must resign, 11 February 2014, online: <www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2014/02/11/mujuru-must-resign?pg=1> (13 February 2014).
 - 3 *The Herald*, I don't want to leave the party in tatters, 24 February 2014, online: <www.herald.co.zw/i-don't-want-to-leave-party-in-tatters> (24 February 2014).

difficult to accept that ZANU-PF is deeply committed to this fight against corruption, both because it is so deeply embroiled in the party's succession politics and because the Zimbabwean state has a long history of not confronting this issue comprehensively. While corruption scandals have been a feature of Zimbabwe politics since the 1980s, the politics of the crisis period in the 2000s and the changes in the architecture of the state that accompanied it, including the loss of state capacity and professionalism and the consequences of informalisation, new forms of elite accumulation and patronage, brought a new intensity to state corruption (Alexander and McGregor 2013: 749).⁴ Thus, it would be naïve to think that the “devil incarnate” or any other key elements within ZANU-PF had suddenly stumbled across the problem of corruption.⁵ Indeed, parastatals have long been used as part of ZANU-PF's patronage network in the public sector.

The battle over corrupt state bodies represents one of the broader economic challenges facing the Mugabe regime. These include an unpayable external debt, an adverse balance-of-payments position,⁶ capital flight from banks and the stock exchange, a national budget consumed largely by recurrent expenditure,⁷ a massive need for infrastructural development, and a GDP rate that has declined from 10.5 percent in 2012 to just over 3 percent in 2013 (IMF 2014). For over a decade now, the manufacturing sector has been confronted with major obstacles such as working capital constraints, power and water shortages, ageing equipment and low domes-

4 For more detail on various corruption scandals since 1980, see Ken Yamamoto, *Mugabe Fighting Corruption? Forget It*, in: *New Zimbabwe*, 9 April 2014, online: <www.newzimbabwe.com/news-15219-Mugabe+fighting+corruption+Forget+it!/news.aspx> (10 April 2014).

5 *Zimbabwe Independent*, *Govt Fingered over “Obscene Salaries”*, 31 January 2014, online: <www.theindependent.co.zw/2014/01/31/govt-fingered-obscene-salaries> (31 January 2014).

6 *ZimTrades's Export Manufacturing Capacity Survey for 2013* reported that 71.4 percent of companies that used to export five to ten years ago have stopped exporting due to the obstacles in the exporting process and producing for export, the fall in the quality of products, the lack of skilled labour and the erosion of prices due to dollarisation. See *Zimbabwe Situation*, *70% of Zimbabwe's Export Firms Closed*, 14 April 2014, online: <www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_70-of-export-firms-closed> (15 April 2014).

7 The government's salary bill amounted to 2.6 billion USD in 2013, which was 68 percent of its total budget. See Paul Nyakazeya, *Govt in Fiscal Stress after Salary Hikes*, in: *The Financial Gazette*, 13 February 2014, online: <www.financialgazette.co.zw/govt-in-fiscal-stress-after-salary-hikes> (21 February 2014).

tic demand.⁸ Additionally, because of dollarisation, the Reserve Bank admitted that it had no instruments to provide the fiscal stimulus to deal with a drift towards a deflationary economy.⁹ Finance Minister Chinamasa is under no illusions about the Herculean task that faces him and his government. In a statement in May 2014, Chinamasa made it very clear that the Government of Zimbabwe was “very alive to the fact that systematic engagement with all nations will be key to unlocking funding” and dealing with the country’s tight liquidity problem. In line with the Government’s continued negotiations with the IMF, which were “geared towards macro-economic stability”, Chinamasa proclaimed:

In short, Zimbabwe is open to Foreign Direct Investment from all Nations of the World, whether these be in the North, South, East or West. [...] Let the message go out loud and clear that Zimbabwe is ready to re-integrate into the global economy. Zimbabwe is looking for new friendships, new opportunities while consolidating old ones. We are looking for mutually beneficial economic relationships not confrontation. We are too small a country to pursue a policy of confrontation.¹⁰

This move back to a discourse of “normalisation” in relations with the West is not the first such attempt in the crisis era since about 2000. In the post-2003 period, attempts were made to seek an accommodation with international capital (Saul and Saunders 2005; Moyo and Yeros 2007). However, given the persistent questions around ZANU-PF’s electoral legitimacy and the continued hope that the MDCs would be able to defeat ZANU-PF in an electoral contest, these attempts were curtailed by the sanctions measures that Western countries put in place against the Mugabe regime. The greater acceptability of the 2013 elections, notwithstanding the continued reservations of the EU and the US and the greatly weakened state of the opposition, changed the balance of forces in the country and allowed for a new dialogue to emerge with the inter-

8 See the Annual Confederation of Zimbabwean Industries Manufacturing Survey Reports (Harare, 2009–2013).

9 Address by Kupukile Mlambo, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, in: SAPES Trust/National Endowment for Democracy, *Report of the International Conference on Zimbabwe Going Forward: Consolidating the Democratisation Process and Reinforcing Re-engagement with the Global Community*, Harare, 5–6 May 2014.

10 Keynote Speech by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Hon. P. A. Chinamasa, in: SAPES Trust/National Endowment for Democracy, *Report of the International Conference on Zimbabwe Going Forward: Consolidating the Democratisation Process and Reinforcing Re-Engagement with the Global Community*, Harare, 5–6 May 2014.

national players. Equally important, the recalcitrance of the economic impediments facing ZANU-PF, and the waning efficacy of its empowerment discourse in the face of these tribulations, forced a change in the tone and policy positions of the victorious regime.

While the Government of Zimbabwe is still negotiating an investment deal with the Chinese Government for an estimated 10 billion USD based on the securitisation of Zimbabwe's gold and diamond reserves, even Mugabe's closest ally has spoken out against the Government's inconsistent policy positions.¹¹ Based on their own experience, the Chinese are well aware of the need for suitable and evolving institutions and the need for long-term political stability (Zhan Shu 2014). In the face of Western and business criticisms around its empowerment programme, the Government softened its rhetoric, particularly regarding its indigenisation programme (Chitiyo and Kibble 2014: 10). A policy framework for the latter was first put in place in February 1998 and revised in October 2004 to deal with the historical imbalance of indigenous ownership in areas other than low-value and low-profit sectors of the economy. This process culminated in the enactment of the Indigenisation and Empowerment Act (Chapter 14:33) in March 2008, the main objective of which was to "endeavour to secure that at least 51% of the shares of every public company and any other business shall be owned by indigenous Zimbabweans" (Chipika and Malaba 2011: 3). In February 2010, the Government of Zimbabwe promulgated the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (General) Regulations. These provided that all businesses with a net asset value equal to or above 500,000 USD located in Zimbabwe should put in place plans that would result in 51 percent of the company's shares being transferred to indigenous shareholders within five years from the date of operation of the regulations. Moreover, the regulations required affected companies to submit a structure of their shareholders and a plan for empowerment implementation within 45 days of the regulations coming into effect (Chipika and Malaba 2011: 2-3).

11 Sarah Logan, Should China Bailout Zimbabwe?, in: *New Zimbabwe*, 11 June 2014, online: <www.newzimbabwe.com/opinion-16199-Should+China+bailout+Zimbabwe/opinion.aspx> (11 June 2014). Presidential Affairs Minister Didimus Mutasa recently expressed some frustration with the Chinese Government: "The Chinese have not been forthcoming. We cannot look East or West. We need to look within ourselves." See *The Zimbabwe Mail*, Mutasa Blasts China for Making False Promises, 23 April 2014, online: <<http://thezimbabwemail.com/mutasa-blasts-china/>> (24 April 2014).

In response to the many criticisms over ownership issues and the application of the regulations to different sectors, Mugabe attempted to allay the fears of investors by stating the Government did not have either nationalisation or expropriation in mind, but rather that “any equity that an indigenous person takes up will be disposed of at fair value”.¹² The minister of finance and economic development further qualified the position by noting that there would be no one-size-fits-all position and that the threshold of indigenous ownership would be decided on a sector-by-sector basis. Furthermore, the investor would have the power to choose the local partner and determine the share price.¹³ In order to increase the competitiveness of the economy, the minister of finance also promised more flexible labour relations by amending Chapter 28.01 of the Labour Act to deal with constraints in retrenchments, terminal benefits, downsizing, working hours and arbitration.¹⁴ As part of the process of increasing labour flexibility, the Government also announced its intention to re-establish Special Economic Zones (known during the ESAP period as Export Processing Zones), where enterprises would be allowed to operate under more flexible special regulations.¹⁵

Donors such as governments of EU countries have shown some recognition of the new messaging emerging from the Zimbabwean Government. Evidence of this is the move away from the “restrictive measures” and the promise to lift Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, thereby barring any new major human rights violations in the country (Raftopoulos 2014). The EU is currently preparing a country cooperation programme that, while not including budgetary support because of the dire state of public finance management by the state, will be composed of support for health, rural food security and governance, priorities jointly agreed to with the Zimbabwean Government. A further significant development is that, in 2013, Mugabe signed an interim Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU that, if effected, would add to the liberalisation impetus underway in the current period. These developments are taking place notwithstanding the EU’s discomfort at the mixed policy messages still coming out of the state, including the ambiguities of the indigenisation legislation, the violation of bilateral invest-

12 Chinamasa, Keynote Speech (see fn 10).

13 Chinamasa, Keynote Speech (see fn 10).

14 Christopher Mahove, ZCTU Rejects Labour Law Review Proposals, in: *News Day*, 24 March 2014, online: <<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2014/03/24/zctu-rejects-labour-law-review-proposals/>> (24 March 2014).

15 *Veritas*, Bill Watch 18/2014, Special Economic Zones, 16 April 2004, online: <www.veritaszim.net/node/907> (17 April 2014).

ment agreements in the land occupations of conservancies in Chiredzi and Triangle in May, and Mugabe's boycott of the EU-Africa Summit in Brussels in 2014. According to the Australian Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Mathew Neuhaus, investing in Zimbabwe remains akin to "swimming in the Zambezi between crocodiles and hippos".¹⁶

The mixed policy messaging of the Mugabe regime can be attributed both to the challenges of seeking fuller international re-engagement while holding on to its empowerment programme, and the tensions within ZANU-PF about how to proceed with such a re-engagement. The tropes of sovereignty, liberation history, regional solidarity and empowerment have been integral to ZANU-PF's political imagery and "language of stateness", in both the party's "practical languages of governance" and the "symbolic languages of authority" (Hansen and Stepputat 2001: 7). However the exposure of the limits of the state's capacity to effect its indigenisation programme has led to the dual strategy of seeking a rapprochement with the West while promising to export the Zimbabwean model to the SADC region. Under the severe structural limitations of the current period and perhaps with his eye on the emergence of Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Fighters on to the South African electoral stage, the grandiose promises of the discourse of ZANU-PF's nationalism has more than ever pushed Mugabe to seek to promote his project and seek complementary policy initiatives from the region, as he moves towards his tenure as Chair of SADC.¹⁷ The view that SADC increasingly views Zimbabwe as an "anchor state" that could have more influence over bilateral and regional politics is likely to provide a further stimulus to these ambitions (Chitiyo and Kibble 2014: 29). The resonance of this ambition also draws on the common interests and perspectives shared by the liberation movements in the region.¹⁸ However, whatever the long-term potential of Zimbabwe's land reform and the "accumulation from below" model (Scoones et. al. 2010) – and the challenges around this remain monumental (Matondi 2012; Zamchiya 2014) – the desperate budgetary requirements of the state are soon likely to see the persistence of schizophrenic policy pronouncements linked to a gradual drift towards re-engagement with the West.

16 SAPES Trust/National Endowment for Democracy (see fn 10).

17 *Zimbabwe Situation*, Mugabe to Use SADC to Promote Indigenization, 10 June 2014, online: <www.zimbabwesituation.com/news/zimsit_g_mugabe-to-use-sadc-chairmanship> (12 June 2014).

18 For a very good discussion of the commonalities and differences between the liberation movements in Southern Africa, see Southall (2013, 2014) and Melber (2014).

The Descent of Opposition Politics

Even as ZANU-PF has faced major challenges around the politics of succession and the enormous structural problems in the economy, it has had the space to ponder these obstacles in the presence of an opposition politics that faces even more arduous difficulties, and is temporarily paralysed by another debilitating split in its ranks. The potentially damaging public revelations of corruption and ineptitude in the party-state have been conducted as though the opposition were invisible, as the corrosion of its capacity has become all too apparent. Apart from the immense challenges of state repression and political obstruction faced by the MDC-T in particular, both since its formation and under the GPA, the long-standing, problematic internal dynamics of the party (Raftopoulos 2007; LeBas 2013) combined with a weakened electoral strategy in 2013 (Zamchiya 2013), has induced a further crisis.

In early 2014, the Deputy Treasurer-General for the MDC-T, Elton Mangoma, wrote a letter to the president of the party, Morgan Tsvangirai, stating that there was a “crisis of leadership, crisis of expectation and above all a crisis of confidence in the party, externally and internally”. Crucially, while Tsvangirai was still holding on to the view that the “underlying cause of our current predicament is the disputed election”,¹⁹ Mangoma went on to propose that it was time for Tsvangirai to “consider leaving the office of the president of the movement”, and that in order to reinvigorate the connections with the base of the party, it was best for the president to “step aside and allow progress by the democratic forces”.²⁰ Following the public revelation of this letter, Mangoma was physically abused by MDC-T party youths, suspended for “provoking divisions and bringing the movement into disrepute”, and finally expelled from the party.

In the aftermath of these events, Secretary-General Tendai Biti condemned both developments and confirmed his support for the positions taken by Mangoma. In a countermove, in his capacity as secretary-general, Biti convened a national council that voted for the suspension of Tsvangirai and several other leaders. The statement from this meeting expressed opposition to the use of violence, abuse of power and patronage and the

19 *The Zimbabwean*, MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai’s State of the Nation Address, 21 January 2014, online: <www.thezimbabwean.co/news/zimbabwe/70188/mdc-president-morgan-tsvangirais-state.html> (27 January 2014).

20 *news.africa.co.uk*, Full Text of Elton Mangoma’s plot to oust Tsvangirai, 27 January 2014, online: <<http://news.africa.co.uk/full-text-of-elton-mangomas-plot-to-oust-tsvangirai/>> (27 January 2014).

use of all forms of “intimidation, duress and malice” against those in the party who were speaking out for “democracy and renewal”.²¹

These events were followed by further counter-suspensions and expulsions from the Tsvangirai leadership,²² with the constitutionality of Biti’s national council meeting being questioned²³ and Tsvangirai stating that he could only be removed at a national party congress. Accompanying these developments in the MDC-T have been the complete marginalisation of the smaller MDC formation, reports of discord and defections from the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA),²⁴ constitutional movements turned political in the post-2013 election period, and the predictable emergence of new parties, with one party being formed from a Christian network group.²⁵

This palpable sense of disorientation and the desperate search for new forms of political renewal can also be felt in the formal organisations of civil society. Civic groups have been casting around for new ways to engage the state and citizenry in a new political context in which, as Ncube observes, the efficacy of deploying “human rights discourse to demonstrate the illegitimacy of the ZANU-PF regime” has been curtailed. Accordingly, these civic groups have had to rethink the articulation between rights and redistribution questions (Ncube 2013).²⁶ In response, organisations such as the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) and the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition have put out new position papers attempting to set out this challenge. For example, the

21 *The Zimbabwe Mail*, Full Text of Biti Statement on Tsvangirai Suspension, 29 April 2014, online: <<http://thezimbabwemail.com/full-text-of-biti-statement-on-tsvangirai-suspension/>> (29 April 2014).

22 *The Zimbabwe Mail*, National Council Resolutions, Harvest House, Harare, 29 April 2014, online: <www.thezimbabwemail.com/national-council-resolutions-harvest-house-harare-29-april-2014/> (30 April 2014).

23 Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), *Press Statement*, MDC Headquarters, Harvest House, Harare, 27 April 2014, online: <www.mdc.co.zw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=278:press-statement-mdc-headquarters-harvest-house-harare-27-april-2014&catid=79:latest-news&Itemid=659> (28 April 2014).

24 Veneranda Langa, NCA Members Ditch Madhuku, in: *News Day*, 27 January 2014, online: <www.newsday.co.zw/2014/01/27/nca-members-ditch-madhuku/> (28 January 2014).

25 Transform Zimbabwe was formed in December 2013 purportedly following a convention of the 12,000-member Christian network group Prayer Network Zimbabwe. See Mthulisi Mathuthu, Transform Zimbabwe President Abducted, in: *Nebanda Radio*, 12 June 2014, online: <<http://nehandaradio.com/2014/06/12/transform-zimbabwe-president-abducted/>> (13 June 2014).

26 For an early attempt to outline this challenge in Zimbabwe, see Raftopoulos 2006.

Forum has argued the “need to acknowledge that Zimbabwe human rights violations cannot be addressed separately from the broader political economy issues” (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum 2014).

Moreover, the reconfiguration of Zimbabwe’s political economy in the 2000s has forced both the opposition MDCs and the civic movement to rethink issues of social agency in Zimbabwe’s public sphere (Raftopoulos 2013). During the 1990s and the early 2000s, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trades Unions was at the heart of the civic movement due to a combination of its national organisational reach, its strong leadership and technical capacity, and the skill with which it built broad social alliances (Raftopoulos and Sachikonye 2001; Saul and Saunders 2005; McCorley 2013). With its formal membership declining by almost half, according to one estimate (Aeby 2014), the central force of the labour movement has been largely lost to civic struggles. The absence of such a central organisational force has led to some critical assessments of the neglected or marginalised aspects of civic actions. These include issues around gender, and the complex relationship between religion and politics.

Conclusion

The post-2013 election period has witnessed several significant developments in Zimbabwean politics. While ZANU-PF have presided over the implosion of the MDC-T, the complete marginalisation of the smaller MDC formation, the largely political irrelevance of the newly formed NCA political party, and the disorientation of the civic movement, the ruling party has also been marred by renewed internal factional struggles and widespread reports of corruption. Moreover, the radical rhetoric that marked ZANU-PF’s election campaign has again given way to a combination of such rhetoric with a new movement towards neo-liberal policies and re-engagement with the West. The constraints of victory have become clear as ZANU-PF struggles to find a path through the daunting economic and political challenges that confront it in the new era. A major factor that favours the ruling party is the fact that it is attempting to deal with these tasks in the presence of the debilitating weakness of the once-formidable Movement for Democratic Change. Once again, the task falls on the civic movement to rethink its structures and forms of interventions within this new context, and to provide the vibrancy required to re-imagine political alternatives for the country. In doing so, however, the civic movement should not lose sight of the real advances and contributions that were made by the MDC, which have permanently changed the political landscape in the country.

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Politik in Zimbabwe nach den Wahlen von 2013

Zusammenfassung: Die Wahlen in Zimbabwe von 2013 haben den Griff Mugabes und der ZANU-PF auf die Politik des Landes gefestigt. Der Wahlausgang ist das Resultat einer Kombination verschiedener Faktoren. Dazu gehören nicht nur die Langzeitwirkungen der ZANU-PF-Unterdrückungspolitik, die mit einem radikal-nationalistischen Diskurs begründet wird, sondern auch die Veränderungen der Sozialstruktur infolge der politischen und ökonomischen Umgestaltungen seit den späten 1990er Jahren. Nach den Wahlen von 2013 haben die enormen ökonomischen Probleme, vor denen das Land steht, das Mugabe-Regime gezwungen,

einen konzilianteren Ton anzuschlagen; auf der Suche nach wirtschaftlicher Unterstützung bemüht man sich um eine Wiederannäherung an den Westen. Beim Versuch, diesen ökonomischen Herausforderungen zu begegnen, muss die ZANU-PF auch mit dem zunehmenden Kampf in den eigenen Reihen um die Nachfolge Mugabes fertig werden, denn seine Regierungszeit nähert sich dem Ende.

Schlagwörter: Zimbabwe, Innenpolitik, internationale Beziehungen, ZANU-PF, MDC