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Exploring New Directions on the Future of Zimbabwe

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Progress and Challenges for the GPA

GPA's interim government has been characterised by a battle for state control. The government has also been starved of investment and development assistance and this has challenged the ability of the two MDC formations to deliver. The issue of economic recovery and international assistance poses the challenge on the way forward.

ZANU-PF is winning the battle for control of the state against the MDC and is also winning (within the region) its propaganda war against the West over the issue of sanctions and regime change. As long as sanctions remained Africa would support ZANU-PF.

ZANU PF has been effectively using the transition arrangement to regroup and reorganise. Overall, ZANU-PF is generally powerful than it was in 2008, more organised and has been shrewd in its engagement with the transition process. Its economic coffers have also been boosted by the revenue from the sale of diamonds and the 'gifts' from the various Chinese, Russian, Indian and Malaysian companies seeking to have an economic foothold over the country's rich mineral resources.

It has been using the GPA institutions, including the inclusive government and the new commissions, to legitimise itself and push its own agenda. A number of the bodies established under the GPA, such as the Electoral Commission, the Media Commission, the organ on National Healing and the Rights Commission, are sites of intense contestation they are partisan bodies promoting a particular ZANU PF agenda.

¹ The original version of this policy brief was presented by the ZI Research Manager (James Muzondidya) at a planning workshop- SADC-CNGO/NANGO National Policy Dialogue, Holiday Inn, Harare, 26-27 October 2010.

ZANU PF looking beyond the GPA government and has been in electioneering mode for a long time. The opposition movement, on the other hand, has not adequately explored opportunities presented by the GPA to push its agenda. So far, it has been outfoxed by ZANU PF on the constitutional reform process (which it ironically was pushing for and ZANU PF was reluctant to embrace).

Constitution: There were likely to be three likely outcomes from the constitutional process- A Good constitution (unlikely); A variation of Kariba Draft – with its positives & negatives; No constitution and elections held under the old framework

A 'No' vote would only occur if the political parties pushed for that scenario. Civic society has insignificant influence on the process because of their lack of participation and capacity to mobilise the masses.

Elections: Elections imminent in 2011 or early 2012, under a new constitution or old constitution.

ZANU PF hopes to (a) to regain total control of state power and legitimise itself through a 'decisive victory' in the elections (b) have more time to resolve its succession crisis through another term of 5 yrs gained through an electoral victory.

The MDC is not ready for elections and has not done enough to push for the levelling of the playing field. ZANU PF is aware of this and that is why it is gunning for early elections. However, MDC might reluctantly agree to elections in the hope of gaining absolute power- 'popular mandate'.

Given that the elections in 2011 or early 2012 are imminent, CSOs should campaign for minimum standards for free and fair elections. They should also try to ensure that SADC/AU observers are critically involved not only in the observation of elections but also in the negotiations for conditions for free and fair elections in Zimbabwe.

The objective of such involvement is to ensure that political parties commit themselves to respecting the outcome of the election by signing an electoral pact agreement before the holding of elections. The electoral pact will have to clear agreements and undertakings on the electoral behaviour of parties before, during and after the elections, the consequences of violating the agreement as well as timelines for the release of the results.

The electoral pact agreement might also include an agreement on how other parties that would have participated in the election are accommodated in the new government. It will also have to have security agreements for those who will be outside government, i.e. constitutional-guaranteed agreements on political, economic and personal security.

Scenarios for the Future and Role of National and International Actors

Scenario 1: Elections in 2011; MDC victory.

ZANU PF, under the direction of the securocrats, is most likely to refuse to hand over power. The result will be another political impasse that can only be resolved through another negotiated settlement. The MDC has to be prepared to negotiate power, and has to ensure that it comes out with a fair deal this time around.

The civics, churches and other political parties have to make sure that they are included in the negotiation process this time around. The civics, churches and trade unions have to make maximum use of the extended transitional phase to open up more democratic space, strengthen institutions of transparency and accountability, rebuild their organisational and mobilisational capacity and help communities to be re-empowered.

SADC/AU has to play a mediating role and ensure that the dispute does not degenerate into political chaos. The international community has to help the transitional

government stand on its own be extending more political and economic support than now. This will also involve lifting all current economic restrictions affecting the transitional government to deliver.

Scenario 2: Elections in June; MDC boycotts.

ZANU PF will try to form a government on its own. It will, however, still have a problem of legitimacy but will probably try to go it on its own. The result is the increased marginalisation of MDC, coupled by increased use of repressive means to finish it off. ZANU PF will most likely try to finish the MDC and any other opposition activists by outlawing their organisations or silencing activists through secret arrests and detentions. The situation will be similar to that after the 2008 election when MDC refused to recognise the legitimacy of ZANU PF's June 2008 Presidential rerun and unilateral government, and securocrats responded by launching 'Operation Chimumu'/Operation Deafness that was aimed at silencing dissent by rounding up critics.

The MDC will have little space to manoeuvre outside parliament. NGOs, the church, labour etc will also have little space for political advocacy but will have to play a more important role to support the vulnerable sectors of society.

EU/USA will tighten restrictions against ZANU PF and will probably try to have imposition of UN sanctions. The economic situation will obviously deteriorate but sanctions will not bring regime change. At best, sanctions will weaken the capacity of the population to organise and mobilise and strengthen repressive structures of the state. To date, economic pressure has failed to achieve this but the securitised state has managed to secure support largely from China in exchange for natural resources of which diamonds are the basis for the economic relationship.

SADC/AU will have to play a more important mediating role to prevent the situation from deteriorating. Frustration with restrictions and harassment might lead some members of the MDC to commit certain acts of banditry.

The role of civics and political parties in this scenario is to continue mobilising the population for popular action and to find effective and innovative ways of lobbying the AU and SADC to pressurise ZANU PF to reform. ZANU has remained very sensitive about what the region thinks about it, and it is pressure from Africa rather than Europe or America which can force ZANU PF to yield to a reform agenda.

Scenario 3: ZANU PF wins a disputed election

Option 1: The fundamentalist agenda takes over: Consolidation of ZANU PF power through silencing of dissent. The same developments described above will occur and both civil society and the opposition will have to look for new strategies of democratising the state. Such new strategies will have to involve reaching out to pragmatists in ZANU PF to ensure that the country does not descent into chaos and that ZANU PF begins processes of renewal and reform.

Option 2: The pragmatist agenda prevails: Attempt to legitimise rule by reaching out, and co-option of some members of the opposition. The opposition will have to be receptive to such overtures and hope to reform/democratise from within.

Civil society will have to play a more supportive but vigilant watchdog role to ensure that the emerging political arrangement does not compromise principles of democracy, transparency and accountability. But for this to happen, civil society will need to rebuild and reorganise society in a much more vibrant manner than the present.

Suggested Intervention Strategies

An election is imminent in 2011 or early 2012 because ZANU PF is determined to hold the election now rather than later. ZANU PF, viewing Mugabe as their trump card against Tsvangirai, is worried that Mugabe's age and health might not allow him to go through the gruelling task of campaigning across the country if the election is held later. An early election, in the view of ZANU PF strategies, gives ZANU PF the perfect chance to consolidate its hold onto power through an electoral victory and the needed time to resolve its succession crisis. An early election would thus largely benefit ZANU PF.

However, an election held without a new constitution will put the country back in a similar scenario prior to 2008. The issues that remained central to any election were

- a legitimate undisputed contested result at the polls
- respect of election outcome and transfer of power
- security guarantees for those who lose power

A smooth transfer of power is unlikely and an early election is not the panacea to the country's problems. If anything, it is likely to exacerbate tensions. Elections should be seen as a mere step in the road towards democratisation rather an end in itself.

SADC and the AU need to look at their mandate on Zimbabwe and find a way of concluding the process that they started- a negotiated inclusive government. The regional bodies need to focus on the next elections rather than the outstanding issues of the GPA. There is, however, need for caution on expectations from the AU/SADC in view of their failure to deliver in other contexts.

The period of transition would be ongoing beyond 2011 and would be in place for at least a decade.