

Original Paper

Post Mugabe Era and Feasibility of Regime Change in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Barely a year after Zimbabwe's long serving President Robert Mugabe was ousted through a military coup which replaced him with his erstwhile trusted ally and vice president Emmerson Mnangagwa, the army shot six civilians caught up in the crossfire of protestors alleging ZANU PF electoral theft of the 2018 July 30 polls. Although the military has always been in the background of Zimbabwe's politics in general and the ruling ZANU PF affairs in particular, the shooting of protestors incident which occurred on the 1st of August 2018 left the world shell-shocked on the prospects of any peaceful change of government or even transfer of power, confirming to all and sundry that Mugabe could have exited the political stage, but the system he presided over for 37 years is still intact, if not even more perfected in the aftermath. This has since rekindled debates on the feasibility of regime change in Zimbabwe and in that context the validity and essence of having an election in the first place if any outcome unfavourable to ZANU PF and its candidate is likely to witness the unleashing of armed soldiers and the subsequent killing of citizens in the process. With the security sector involved in politics in contrast to the old adage that politics lead the gun, it thus comes as a paradox that for the umpteenth time, regime change in Zimbabwe shall remain an elusive dream.

Keywords

regime, regime change, ZANU PF, MDC-T, Government of National Unity, Zimbabwe Defence Forces

1. Introduction

On 13 November 2017, the then Commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces General Constantino Chiwenga called for a press conference whose central objective was denouncing President Robert Mugabe's sacking of his vice president and long-time confidant Emmerson Mnangagwa. Events of the unfolding week finally pressed Mugabe to announce his resignation following the impeachment proceedings that had started early morning of November 21. The whole political process took Zimbabwe and the world by surprise and occurred in the context of 'democratic fatigue' where all attempts to unseat and or remove Mugabe and his ZANU PF party had proved to be a pipe dream for the opposition. The main opposition of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was in massive disarray, financially constrained and had dismally failed to morph a unified coalition that could dethrone ZANU PF in the forthcoming 2018 harmonised elections later held on July 30. It is against this background that there is need to interrogate the feasibility of regime, which in essence occupies the attic on the menu of the socio-economic and political problems bedevilling Zimbabwe. With the visible military-ZANU PF conflation now the new political order, toppling ZANU PF from power in the immediate, precisely in the aftermath of the ZANU PF 2018 electoral victory is to a greater extent proving to be an elusive dream.

2. Background

On 3 August 2013, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) declared Robert Gabriel Mugabe winner of the July 31st harmonised elections with his party Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) having swept a two thirds majority in parliament (Note 1). Mugabe retained the throne he has held since 1980, months after Zimbabwe's independence from Britain following the protracted liberation struggle and negotiations that culminated into the Lancaster House Agreement. The Lancaster House Agreement gave birth to a constitution whose longevity was only terminated in 2013 after a new constitution was crafted by the three parties which were then in a coalition government (Note 2) comprising of ZANU PF led by Mugabe, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) led by Mugabe's main challenger Morgan Tsvangirai as well as a splinter MDC group led by Arthur Mutambara (MDC-M) (Note 3). Despite romping into victory and successfully decimating the Opposition, no-one ever predicted a scenario where Mugabe would be toppled through a military coup, four years after, ironically before finishing his term as what later ensured. The concept of regime change has been a hotly contested issue in Zimbabwe since the attainment of the country's independence from Britain in 1980. Regime change can occur through voting a government out of power, conquest by a foreign power, revolution, coup de tat or reconstruction following the failure of a state. Trajectory of the feasibility of regime change in Zimbabwe can best be understood in the socio-economic and political upheavals bedevilling Zimbabwe since 1980.

3. Methodology

This paper is largely reflective in its approach, although reference is made to various reports of surveys conducted in Zimbabwe by a variety of institutions. As such, the methodology that formed the basis of this paper was largely qualitative. Documentary review of books, journal articles, press statements, media publications and research reports seek to provide the background and statistical data for analysis and synthesis. The paper is thus a broad brush, based on a critical filed opinion survey, which builds on the existing literature and adopts a multidisciplinary approach.

4. The Genesis of Regime Change Rhetoric

The adoption of the Bretton Woods-engineered Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) under the leadership of President Mugabe saw massive retrenchments of workers both in public and private sector, slashing and at times scrapping of government subsidies in critical sectors such as health and education. This did not augur well with the trade unions, precisely the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), the students under the banner of Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), farmers under the banner of Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) as well as some sections of the business community and the middle class mostly comprising of teachers, nurses and lecturers. These groups cascaded into a formidable alliance that was critical of government's policies. This subsequently gave birth to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and Tsvangirai, former ZCTU secretary general became the president of the new political party deputised by Gibson Sibanda who was ZCTU's president during Tsvangirai tenure as secretary general. Other leaders of the MDC were drawn from the civil society and the students' organisation of ZINASU. The opposition MDC was officially launched on September 12 1999 at Rufaro Stadium in Harare, the very same place Zimbabwe celebrated its first independence from Britain on April 18 1980.

Prior to this development, signs of civil rejection of the government had already been laid when in 1990 one of the founding members of ZANU PF, Edgar Tekere heavily resisted the party's proposals of a One-Party State and after being expelled from the party went on to form the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) that contested ZANU PF in the 1990 general elections. ZUM gained its strength from the disclosure of widespread corruption scandals, the deteriorating economy and increasing unemployment, which mobilised against ZANU PF, the very people Mugabe had proclaimed as favoured by the government, particularly students and trade unions in the urban areas (Cowen & Laasko, 2002). Thus, the 1990 elections, with ZUM fielding up candidates throughout the country, provided people with an opportunity to vote against the ruling party and its plans to establish a One Party State (Ibid). ZUM's attempts to hold public rallies were almost always systematically rejected. Although the lifespan of ZUM was short-lived, it laid the foundation of challenging ZANU PF's monotheistic hegemony (Cowen & Laasko, 2002).

In 2000 the MDC came out with full political force, winning 57 of the 120 contested seats of Parliament in the June 2000 parliamentary elections (Note 4). This was a symbolic victory given that the party was only nine months old. Prior to this political development, in February of the same year, majority of Zimbabweans mobilised by the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) (Note 5), a crusade alliance of the MDC had rejected the ZANU PF proposed draft constitution to replace the Lancaster House Constitution. This was perceived as a litmus test to ZANU PF legitimacy and the popular No Vote triumph was regarded a victory for the MDC. ZANU PF responded emotionally to MDC's victory, labelling them agents of the West up for an 'illegal' regime change project, with the MDC's president himself labelled a puppet of Britain. The ruling party then embarked on a land reform programme that was dubbed the "fast track" land reform, perceived as another war, coded the Third Chimurenga (Note 6). The execution of the land reform was spearheaded by the war veterans - former soldiers of the 1970s liberation struggle. As such it turned out to be an ugly platform of human rights abuse that was condemned by the international community. Other elections came in 2002 and 2005, but the level playing field was uneven (Note 7).

In 2008, harmonised elections were held and the presidential race had three contesters who were Robert Mugabe of ZANU PF, Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC as well as Simba Makoni who stood as an independent candidate after his defection from ZANU PF. The elections were inconclusive because in the first round Mugabe was defeated by Tsvangirai but the opposition leader did not garner enough votes amounting to 51 percent as stipulated by the Constitution so as to form a government (Note 8). This paved way for a run-off slated for June 27, 2008, but citing persecution of his supporters, Tsvangirai pulled out of the race (Note 9). The Africa Union (AU) and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) intervened and recommended the formation of a coalition government. The inter party talks were mediated by SADC-appointed former South African president Thabo Mbeki. The talks were concluded on September 15 2008 following the investiture of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) signed by Mugabe and the two MDC formation leaders. Since 2005, MDC had splintered into two formations following a dispute to contest the 2005 senatorial elections. The Government of National Unity (GNU) commenced on February 9 2009, after Tsvangirai's swearing in as Prime Minister together with Arthur Mutambara and Thokozani Khupe as Deputy Prime Ministers. Governmental ministries were shared under agreed proportions stipulated in the GPA (Note 10).

5. The Rationale for the Feasibility of Regime Change Study

Zimbabwe's political strife has largely been inconclusive. Five years after unveiling of the GPA, the agreement largely remained on paper as it was never fully implemented. The security sector consisting of the Army, the Air Force, the Police, the Intelligence and the Prisons had on several counts backdating to 2002 maintained it would never cast its allegiance and or obedience to any one whose

motives exhibit “a threat to Zimbabwe’s national values”. Tendi (2013) has gone further in buttressing the security sector’s position by quoting the late Commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces Vitalis Musungwa Zvinavashe in 2002:

We wish to make it very clear to all Zimbabwean citizens that the security organisations will only stand in support of those political leaders who will pursue Zimbabwean values, traditions and beliefs for which thousands of lives were lost in the pursuit of Zimbabwe’s hard-won independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and national interests. To this end, let it be known that the highest office in the land is a strait jacket whose occupant is expected to observe the objectives of the liberation struggle. We will therefore not accept, let alone support or salute, anyone with a different agenda that threatens the very existence of our sovereignty (Note 11).

The statement which was perceived as a direct aim at Tsvangirai, who did not participate in Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle, came two months before the March 2002 presidential elections Tendi (2013). Apart from the military-security dynamics largely viewed as the citadel of ZANU PF’s power in general and Mugabe’s political survival in particular, Raftopolous (2013) postulates that the long perceived alternative to ZANU PF and Mugabe’s rule—the MDC and its leader Tsvangirai seem to have reached a dead end. Tsvangirai tragically died in February 2018, resulting in succession wrangles that further split MDC apart. One might therefore subscribe to a thesis that the politics of political and civic opposition that emerged in the late 1990s and continued through the first 13 years of the 2000s has come to an end in its current form (Note 12). Indeed this is so given the fact that the political economic power base of the MDC or any other political party has gradually changed over the past decade and a half and even regionally, SADC saw 2013 elections outcome as an opportunity for the regional body to shift away its focus from the decade-long concern of the Zimbabwean crisis Raftopolous (2013). Faced with no immediate threat as confirmed by the garnering of two thirds majority in Parliament and disintegration of the MDC, ZANU PF factions turned on each other and a series of expulsions which claimed the job and ZANU PF membership of Mugabe’s deputy Joice Mujuru ensured in 2014. This witnessed the ascendancy of Mnangagwa as the Vice President but factionalism actually became intense with others pressing for Mnangagwa to take over the reins of power. This did not go down well with another faction perceived to have a backing of Mugabe’s wife Grace. On the 6th of November 2017, then vice president Mnangagwa was dismissed from government. The reasons for his demotion as spelt out by his appointer Mugabe, in justifying his dismissal, were that “his conduct in the discharge of his duties had become inconsistent with his official responsibilities. The Vice President has consistently and persistently exhibited traits of disloyalty, disrespect, deceitfulness and unreliability. He has also demonstrated little probity in the execution of his duties”. Mnangagwa’s dismissal triggered a vicious response by the army which placed Mugabe under house

arrest which eventually forced him to resign of 21 November 2017. Mugabe was replaced by Mnangagwa as president who upon his inauguration promised political and economic reforms and announced that elections would be held as per the constitution the following year in 2018.

6. The Concept of Regime Change in the Pre-colonial Context

The Regime Change Agenda is not a new phenomenon in the political discourse of Zimbabwe. As long as political power was contested regime change was always a hotly contested issue. In the pre-colonial era, as accorded by Needham et al (1984), the legendary Nyatsimba Mutota had to defect from Great Zimbabwe State, with a few followers, following alleged leadership and succession disputes. The grievance subsequently gave birth to the formation of a new regime—the Mutapa State. In the Ndebele State, historians allege that its founder Mzilikazi executed his own son, Nkulumane, who was also heir to the throne after Nkulumane's botched coup. The military conquests and blood wars fought by colonial agents were all quests in pursuit of usurpation of power, Needham et al (1984).

7. Regime Change in the Post-colonial Context

Genesis of regime change can be understood in the context of 1980 when President Mugabe and Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) dislodged the colonial white rule under Ian Smith—who on November 11, 1965 had declared Rhodesia's (now Zimbabwe) Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain (Note 13). Perhaps the most threatening regime change agenda in Zimbabwe is the one that started at the turn of the new millennium, when the newly-formed labour-backed party the MDC organised civil unrests to protest against President Mugabe's political administration. According to Maphosa et al the goal of regime change agenda in Zimbabwe was to remove Mugabe and ZANU PF from power (Ibid).

8. Internal Factors of Regime Change in Zimbabwe

The United States Peace Institute Special Report of 2009 postulates that since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the ruling ZANU PF government has used its anti-colonial legacy and its role in the war of liberation to build a nationalist platform with a stated commitment to rectify colonial injustices—a theme that garners support from many leaders in developing countries and Zimbabwe's rural populace (Note 14). As early as 1982, the only meaningful threat to ZANU's rule in form of Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), was coerced into a unity pact dubbed the Unity Accord of December 22, 1987 (Note 15). On the economic front, Brett notes that ZANU PF emerged from the civil war – the Gukurahundi crisis (Note 16)) as a centralised party that operated on Leninist philosophical principles, and gave precedence to decisions taken by its Politburo and Central Committee over those taken in Cabinet. As noted by Bratton and Masunungure (2011) it began with

leaders pushing for a *de jure* one-party state, a move ultimately made unnecessary by ZANU-PF's easy *de facto* dominance at the polls. The regime grew increasingly intolerant of dissent and ever more willing to use violence as a campaign tool. The failure by Mugabe's regime had more to do with the lack of commitment, corruption and the absence of fiscal discipline on the part of his government. The above situation resulted in excessive borrowings, which fuels inflation and poverty in a country.

Bratton and Masunungure (2011) further note that the millennium marked the onset of Zimbabwe's descent into political terror and economic collapse. A Joint Operations Command (JOC) of security chiefs usurped key policy making functions from the Cabinet and the Reserve Bank became a slush fund for the ruling party and armed forces. The predictable results of these ill-advised policies were economic contraction, disintegrating public services, runaway inflation, and widespread public discontent. President Mugabe diverted attention and criticism of his government's policy failures to the land question. He has consistently argued that the regime change agenda was motivated by the land redistribution exercise which sought to redress colonial land imbalances. However the social, political and economic effects of the land reform were colossal in that they resulted in food security crisis. Socially, the reform led to unemployment and poverty while politically it polarised Zimbabwe's relations with the international community, which resulted in the imposition of economic sanctions against Mugabe's government. As such Bond and Manyanya (2003) note that the efforts of trade unions and new political parties to engage with ZANU PF over these issues were ignored by a regime that was becoming increasingly authoritarian. Mugabe's arrogance could also have contributed to the regime change agenda in the county.

Prior to 1989, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) had reacted to the economic turmoil in the country by establishing alliances with other civil groups such as student organisations. The ZCTU had made linkages between the economic problems in the country with issues of governance and democracy. The ZCTU leadership had become more ambitious and pushed for regime change culminating in its leaders leaving labour politics to venture into national politics. The regime change agenda is also attributed to ZANU PF government's poor political governance as shown by the absence of accountability and transparency in their leadership style. Raftopolous (2013) states that the decision to award generous pay-outs to war veterans was reached with no consultation with the public – which in the eyes of the proponents of regime change was undemocratic. More than that, Mugabe's unilateral decision to commit the country's meagre financial resources and machinery to the Mozambique conflict in the late 1980s and to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) conflict in the late 1990s attracted much criticism from the public.

The above scenario is summarised by Bond and Manyanya who claim that there has been little citizen participation in decision making and planning in Zimbabwe's politico-economic landscape; when the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was adopted there was little consultation and

debate, the ZANU PF- dominated parliament simply rubber stamped the resolutions of the executive. In the same vein, Maphosa et al., argue that the regime change agenda is rooted in that ZANU PF government thinks itself omnipotent to the extent that economic development decisions and projects have been top-down and not bottom-up in approach. Yet, public involvement and participation in decision making is crucial for regime stability.

In 2005, the ZANU PF-led government again embarked in yet another exercise which analysts believe contributed to the increasing unpopularity of ZANU PF and hence set the tone for the regime change agenda. The exercise which was dubbed Operation Murambatsvina was carried under the justification that illegal structures had mushroomed in the country mainly in Harare, to the extent that the overall urban planning programme was distorted. Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Drive Out Rubbish) according to United Nations 2005 report on Zimbabwe's displacements, affected at least 700 000 through loss of their homes or livelihoods and the exercise could also have indirectly affected around 2.4 million people (Note 17). President Mugabe and other government officials characterised the operation as a crackdown against illegal housing and commercial activities, and as an effort to reduce the risk of the spread of infectious diseases in these areas. However, the campaign was met with harsh condemnation from Zimbabwean opposition parties, church groups, non-governmental organisations, and the wider international community. The United Nations described the campaign as an effort to drive out and make homeless large sections of the urban and rural poor, who comprised much of the internal opposition to the Mugabe administration. A report written by Anna Tibaijuka, the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme was handed to the Zimbabwean government on July 21, 2005. Excerpts from the report, which called for all demolitions to be stopped immediately, were made public the following day and described the operation as a 'disastrous venture' which had violated international law and led to a serious humanitarian crisis.

This therefore can heavily be correlated to the regime change agenda in Zimbabwe. On March 11 2007, opposition party leaders and some of the civil society, including Tsvangirai and NCA leader Lovemore Madhuku were heavily assaulted by the police following the disruption of a prayer meeting organised by local churches calling themselves the Christian Alliance that was dubbed The Save Zimbabwe Campaign. Quoting Tsvangirai's article the veteran opposition leader retorted "*My vision is to see the attainment of a new political dispensation in which people's freedoms are extended and respected, and our potential as individual citizens is unlocked* (Note 18)". According to Tsvangirai basing on his opined piece, Zimbabwe's vision could only be attained with the democratic toppling of the ZANU PF government, and thus through overall democratic regime change. The beatings of members of opposition by the police were largely condemned in Africa, prompting the SADC, to call for an extraordinary summit in the Tanzanian capital, Dar es Salaam on March 28-29, 2007, to discuss the political, economic and security situation in the region which was thereafter followed by the release of a communiqué.

9. The SADC Communiqué on the Political Situation in Zimbabwe (28-29 March)

The summit reaffirmed its solidarity with the government and people of Zimbabwe and mandated President Thabo Mbeki to continue to facilitate dialogue between the opposition and the government and report back to the SADC troika on peace and security, made up of Tanzania, Botswana and Namibia, on the progress. The summit also encouraged enhanced diplomatic contacts [with international community] which will assist with the resolution of the situation in Zimbabwe and propose measures on how the SADC can assist Zimbabwe recover economically (Note 19). In other words the summit's acknowledgement of political crisis in Zimbabwe, through putting it on its agenda as well as making resolutions for continued mediation efforts through mediation of Mbeki, indicates the legitimate acceptance of the MDC by crucial organisations such as SADC and thus the internationalisation of the Zimbabwean political crisis which since 2000 was largely considered an internal strife.

10. Zimbabwe's 2008 Harmonised Elections and the Nexus with Regime Change

Reflecting on Zimbabwe's 2008 harmonised elections Badza noted, *"The unprecedented harmonised elections that Zimbabwe conducted on 29 March 2008 were generally accepted as relatively free though not necessarily fair"*. The elections thinly complied with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. The controversial presidential election run-off of June 27 2008 was inexcusably flawed and therefore discredited, particularly by the West (Ibid). It was also condemned at regional level. Yet, despite that condemnation, and the growing crisis of legitimacy, Mugabe began his fourth presidential term of office on June 29 2008. Inevitably, under the circumstances, this triggered a political impasse among ZANU PF, MDC-T and MDC-M which was eventually solved, albeit temporarily, by an elusive power sharing agreement that was signed formally on September 15 2008 by these three political parties. The arrangement was a result of a long SADC-facilitated mediation process led by South Africa's former president, Mbeki. In the interim, for over 10 months, until the power-sharing government was finally formed in February 2009, Zimbabwe was under an illegitimate de facto government.

11. External Factors of Regime Change in Zimbabwe

On July 4 2004, President George Bush's then secretary of State, Colin Powell, announced that the US and European Union had "ended all official assistance to the Government of Zimbabwe", and that they were lobbying other governments to do the same (Note 20). This, he stressed, was punishment to President Mugabe and the Government of Zimbabwe for what he termed "authoritarian rule" and for pursuing "wrong policies", principally "his cynical land reform programme", which Powell alleged had rendered "millions of people desperately hungry".

12. The 2007-2013 Kenyan Experience in the Context of Feasibility of Regime Change

After a long and contentious election campaign, Kenya held general elections on December 27, 2007. Despite concerns about serious flaws in the counting and tallying of votes and a long delay before announcing the results, the incumbent Mwai Kibaki was announced the winner of the presidential vote on December 29, by a narrow margin, over the opposition candidate, Raila Odinga (Note 21). The announcement of the election results sparked widespread violence in many parts of Kenya. Looting, arson, and property destruction were rampant throughout January and February 2008. According to Long, the violence is estimated to have resulted in about 1,200 deaths and the displacement of 500,000 or more people. After weeks of negotiation, a power sharing agreement was finally signed on February 28, 2008, and general calm was restored. The human toll was high. A few months after the end of the civil conflict, 30 percent of the population reported a specific personal impact of the post-election violence (Ibid). These impacts included personal injury, displacement, property destruction, and the death of friends or relatives. In addition to the direct effect on the victims of the violence, the political crisis and resulting civil conflict led to massive economic disruptions in January and February, as commercial transport was halted through much of the country and market centres were closed. Dercon and Gutiérrez-Romero (2010) observed that areas dependent on transportation and imports or exports were particularly hard-hit. While election-related violence is not unprecedented in Kenya, all evidence suggests that the intensity, duration and geographic reach of the 2007-08 crises were unparalleled and generally unanticipated. Although previous elections have resulted in casualties and in the displacement of people (particularly in 1992 and 1997), those disturbances were nowhere near the scale of the 2007 election (Ibid). Moreover, the previous election (in 2002, in which Kibaki was originally elected) was marked by relative peace. While people might have expected some disruption in advance of the 2007 election, it seems reasonable to assume that the severity and length of this crisis was unanticipated by most people (Ibid).

13. Uhuru Kenyatta Wins Kenyan Election by Slimmest Margin

Kenya's election commission announced early Saturday on March 3, 2013 that Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta had prevailed in the country's presidential elections by the slimmest of margins, winning 50.03% of the vote according to provisional figures (Note 22). The ballot went off relatively smoothly on Monday March 4, 2013, despite widespread fears of violence. Apart from a few coastal skirmishes, this time the elections were peaceful, winning praise from international observers. However, the count was marred by delays and technological breakdowns. The problems began almost immediately when thousands of electronic voter identification devices failed, forcing poll workers to use the slower method of printed lists. Once voting finished, bigger problems started, beginning with a glitch in an electronic transmission system designed to securely send results to the national tallying

centre in Nairobi. The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) identified the problem as low disk space, which caused a slowdown in transmission, and declared the issue solved. But by Wednesday March 6, 2013 afternoon, only 40% of results were in, so IEBC chairperson, Ahmed Issack Hassan, decided to scrap the whole apparatus and call the 291 constituency officers to Nairobi for a manual tally. From the outset, Kenyatta had kept ahead, hovering around 50% of cast votes compared with Odinga's rough 43%. If Kenyatta had not broken through the 50% barrier he would have faced a runoff. Kenyans hoped this vote would restore their nation's reputation as one of Africa's most stable democracies after the tribal slaughter that followed the disputed 2007 vote that Odinga said Mwai Kibaki stole from him. The Kenyan context fits well under the context of the feasibility of regime change as both countries have had coalition governments preceded by electoral violence and succeeded by the retaining of the incumbent leaders.

14. Whither Regime Change in Zimbabwe?

When the MDC entered into Zimbabwe's political arena in 1999 they could have underestimated and at times fantasised on the feasibility of regime change. When they started dining and wining with ZANU PF through a coalition government and tasted the trinkets and junkets of power, they lost focus and became part of the problem that they purported to solve- that is getting rid of ZANU PF's modus operandi of governance. MDC did not fully and exclusively pushed for electoral and political reforms which could have at least levelled the contesting field during their tenure in the GNU. Five years after Zimbabwe entered into a new political dispensation of the GNU; the arrangement largely remained on paper and was highly inconclusive by the time of going for the harmonised elections in July 2013. Feasibility of regime in the contemporary political context of Zimbabwe from the researchers' point of view has proved to be a façade and an ideological illusion of the opposition's MDC. Whilst ZANU PF, party in authority since 1980 has been riddled with escalating factionalism, as well as a world record of governance failure, it has successfully remained tactful in confronting external threat and political challenge poised to dislodge it from power. Prospects for a united front of the MDC remained bleak and by the time of the 2018 polls, the MDC had failed to charm all political players and form a grand coalition that would dislodge ZANU PF.

15. Conclusion

Our conclusion is that prospects of regime change appear to be farfetched. On 1 August 2018, the military unleashed bullets to fleeing protestors who were questioning ZEC's "delay" in announcing the elections results and accused the electoral body of sinister agenda to rig the elections in favour of ZANU PF. The incident which was widely condemned by all election observer groups did not do anything meaningful to stop the militarisation of Zimbabwe's politics and electoral context. After the

MDC's failure to provide sufficient evidence of electoral theft at the Constitutional Court, the highest Court declared Mnangagwa the electoral winner of the 2018 presidential polls. This marked yet a closed chapter of political contest at the highest level until 2023, at least unless if some accidents of history occur. With the increased demonstration of contempt of civilian liberties by the security sector that has on several times, pounced and shot on protestors ever since Mnangagwa came to power, it remains to be seen whether, without the involvement of external forces and players, Zimbabwe will ever witness regime change.

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Notes

Note 1. On 3 August 2013 the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission attested that Robert Mugabe had won Zimbabwe's presidential election with 61 percent of the vote, compared to 34 percent for his challenger Morgan Tsvangirai. Mugabe's ZANU-PF party won 158 of the 210 parliament seats, giving it a two-thirds majority.

Note 2. The coalition government came after the three parties entered into an agreement (Global Political Agreement) which resulted from the country's presidential run-off elections of June 27 2013 which were regionally and internationally discredited. Under the GPA Mugabe retained presidency with a new portfolio of Prime Minister created for Mugabe's erstwhile rival Tsvangirai whilst leader of the smaller MDC Mutambara became one of the two Deputy Prime Ministers. The other was Khupe, Tsvangirai's deputy at the MDC.

Note 3. The Constitutional Referendum was held on 16 March 2013 and was one of the toping agendas of an agreement (the Global Political Agreement, GPA) between the three main political parties consisting of ZANU-PF, MDC-T and MDC-M to craft a new Constitution which would replace the Lancaster House Constitution under which Zimbabwe had been governed since independence in 1980 and submit it to the nation for approval.

Note 4. In compliance with the Constitutional provision (Lancaster House Constitution) Section 60, the Delimitation Commission divided the country into 120 common roll constituencies. Of these ZANU PF won 62, MDC won 57 seats whilst 1 seat went to an independent candidate.

Note 5. The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was founded in 1997, and officially launched in 1998 at the University of Zimbabwe, by Zimbabwean individual citizens and civic organisations,

amongst which were trade unions, opposition parties, student groups, women's groups, representatives of the informal sector, and church groups. Its major thrust was the crafting of a people-driven constitution which it believes was the panacea to Zimbabwe's political crisis.

Note 6. Chimurenga is a Shona term denoting to war. It has been used in Zimbabwe particularly by ZANU PF's narrative as a way of invoking memory of indigenous people's resistance to colonial rule, thus we have the First Chimurenga of 1896-7, the Second Chimurenga (1960s – 1980), which was a struggle for independence as well as the so called Third Chimurenga—the ruling party's land reform programme.

Note 7. A presidential election was held in Zimbabwe between 9 and 11 March 2002. The election was contested by the incumbent ZANU PF leader Mugabe, MDC leader Tsvangirai, ZANU-Ndonga leader Wilson Kumbula, Shakespeare Maya of the National Alliance for Good Governance and independent candidate Paul Siwela. Mugabe won, claiming 1 685 212 voters that is 56.2 percent. Tsvangirai's votes were 1 258 401 amounting to 42.0 percent.

Note 8. A 2002 amendment to the Zimbabwe's Electoral Act (Chapter 2: 13) Section 110 (3) states: "Where two or more candidates for president are nominated, and after a poll taken in terms of subsection (2), no candidate receives a majority of the total number of valid votes cast, a second election shall be held within 21 days after the previous election in accordance with this Act".

Note 9. Tsvangirai announced the decision to pull out of the election on June 22, 2008 following the disruption of his rally by pro-ZANU PF militia groups.

Note 10. Under the GPA, 31 Ministerial portfolios were created; 21 Deputy ministerial posts; 10 Provincial Governors (Provincial Ministers); 8 Ministers in the President's Office, Vice Presidents' Offices, Prime Minister's Office, Deputy Prime Ministers' Offices.

Note 11. Statement by Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) Commander Vitalis Musungwa Zvinvashe, Harare, 9 January 2002.

Note 12. For an overview of this vast MDC's demise literature, see B. Raftopolous, "The End of A Road: The 2013 Elections in Zimbabwe", Johannesburg, Solidarity Peace Trust, (October 2013).

Note 13. East Africa and Rhodesia Newspaper, November 18, 1965, pp. 204-205.

Note 14. With the formation of the MDC ZANU PF's support stronghold has consistently remained to be in the rural areas because part of the populace either participated or witnessed the war which mainly took place in the country side.

Note 15. PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF entered into an agreement (the Unity Accord) following a five-year civil war pitting the Government on one side and PF-ZAPU supporters on the other. It is estimated that at least 20 000 people were killed by 5th Brigade a Government regiment formed specifically for the task. The atrocities have popularly come to be known as the Gukurahundi. The Accord saw the merging of two liberation movements to form ZANU PF with Mugabe retaining presidency and Joshua Nkomo

becoming one of the two vice presidents.

Note 16. The Catholic Commission for Justice estimates that at least 20 000 people were killed by a North Korean trained brigade that was unleashed in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces which were the strongholds of ZAPU.

Note 17. Un Special Envoy on Human Settlement Issues in Zimbabwe Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka's report.

Note 18. Tsvangirai, M, "I will soldier on until Zimbabwe is free", the Independent, 16 March 2005.

Note 19. The SADC Communiqué on the political situation in Zimbabwe (28-29 March).

Note 20. The democracy facade of politics of regime change, New African, Summer 2007.

Note 21. In many instances a comparative analysis is often drawn between Zimbabwe and Kenya. In both countries coalition governments came after disputed elections marred with violence, and after the end of coalition tenure in both countries the previous ruling parties prior to the coalition retained power.

Note 22. Kenya's Election Commission announcement of presidential elections March 3, 2013.