

# How to play a role in Zimbabwe

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# Contents

- Executive summary** ..... iv
- Abbreviations and acronyms** ..... vi
- Introduction** ..... 1
- Chapter 1
- Parallel narratives and a converged trajectory** ..... 5
- Chapter 2
- Developing the narratives** ..... 9
  - The illegitimacy component ..... 9
  - Illegitimacy and the instability narrative ..... 11
  - Illegitimacy and the July 2018 elections ..... 12
  - Challenging the results ..... 15
  - Sanctions and economic stress ..... 19
- Chapter 3
- Strengthening the opposing narrative** ..... 29
  - Opposition to government and the suppression of dissent ..... 29
  - Achieving the opposite of the intended effect through polemics ..... 38
  - Twisting facts at an official level ..... 39
- Chapter 4
- Perpetuation of the narratives** ..... 41
- Chapter 5
- The January protests and the international response** ..... 42
- Chapter 6
- Breaking the trajectory** ..... 47
- Notes** ..... 51

# Executive summary

Countries such as Zimbabwe tend to be viewed through the lens of two crude and opposing narratives, one depicting a contest between a dictator and democracy, the other, a legitimate leader embattled by Western regime change agents. This monograph looks at events in Zimbabwe since the advent of Emmerson Mnangagwa and shows how each of the protagonists invites political allies, internally and internationally, to line up uncritically behind their chosen narrative, depending on ideological inclination or political expedience.

This is done by trying to advance particular components of the chosen narrative, which are seemingly fixed, like acts in a play in which the protagonists have set roles.

Thus, the main opposition group in Zimbabwe, the Movement for Democratic Change (Alliance) (MDC-A), has sought to demonstrate that Mnangagwa is in office illegitimately, having obtained power first through a coup and then through elections where the numbers were manipulated by the election management body to deprive party leader Nelson Chamisa of the presidency.

A second component of this narrative is that the country's economic travails are the result of misrule and corruption by the incumbent and his cronies, who maintain power by brute force and through multiple human rights violations. The way out of the crisis, this narrative has it, is through a national dialogue to determine a transitional governing authority that will lead the country to genuinely free and fair elections.

For its part, the Mnangagwa administration claims legitimacy through free and fair elections. It places the blame for the country's economic difficulties at the door of sanctions imposed by Western nations anxious to see the country led by a candidate more sympathetic to their interests.

To accomplish this regime change, Western powers provide financial and political support to the government's opponents and foster demonstrations and protests against the government in the hope that a populace suffering this Western-induced economic meltdown will rise up in an Arab Spring-style protest or colour revolution.

The firm hand applied by the government in the face of these protests occurs in the context of extreme provocation and violence by demonstrators and is necessary to prevent an unconstitutional change of government.

This monograph unpacks components of the set trajectory in each narrative and exposes strengths and weaknesses, which have their own particularities that vary from country to country. For example, in Zimbabwe the illegitimacy narrative, at least as it is advanced by the MDC-A, is unsustainable, as is the 'sanctions' narrative advanced by the government as an explanation for the country's economic turmoil.

In mid-January 2019 violent demonstrators took to the streets protesting a 150% increase in the price of fuel. The military was deployed to contain the situation and shot and killed a reported 17 people in the process.

Playing out the narratives, for the government, the protests were incited by regime change agents, seeking to take advantage of the country's economic difficulties to effect an Arab Spring. For the opposition, the killings were the action of a brutal, corrupt and illegitimate regime clinging to power with the help of the military, and the people rose up in spontaneous anger invoked by unbearable economic hardships.

South Africa's response to the events of mid-January was to call for the lifting of sanctions against Zimbabwe. The subtext was that people were violently protesting economic hardships caused by sanctions, and without the sanctions, the protests and killings would not have happened.

Given the weakness of the sanctions component of the narrative, the South African government's response was more a statement of political solidarity with the Mnangagwa government than an attempt to assist Zimbabwe or its people.

The monograph recommends that this approach be eschewed in favour of one where an objective assessment of each component of the narrative is followed by a response based on principle. If this approach were to be adopted by the international community on both sides of any ideological divide, the result would be to the benefit of all concerned, and would prevent policy conundrums when dealing with the Zimbabwe crisis.

# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CANVAS</b>	Centre for Applied Non-violent Action Strategies
<b>CIO</b>	Central Intelligence Organisation
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>EOM</b>	election observation mission
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FDI</b>	foreign direct investment
<b>G40</b>	Generation 40
<b>GNU</b>	government of national unity
<b>IDASA</b>	Institute for a Democratic South Africa
<b>IFI</b>	international financial institution
<b>MDC</b>	Movement for Democratic Change
<b>MDC-T</b>	Movement for Democratic Change (Tsvangirai)
<b>MDC-A</b>	Movement for Democratic Change (Alliance)
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NDI</b>	National Democratic Institute
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>OFAC</b>	Office of Foreign Assets Control
<b>RTGS</b>	real time gross settlement
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SDN</b>	Specially Designated National
<b>SBO</b>	sample-based observation
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>ZANU PF</b>	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
<b>ZBC</b>	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
<b>ZDERA</b>	Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act
<b>ZEC</b>	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
<b>ZESN</b>	Zimbabwe Election Support Network



# Introduction

The denouement of the battle within Zimbabwe's ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) to succeed aged and ailing president Robert Mugabe<sup>1</sup> came in dramatic fashion in November 2017.

In a manner carefully and skilfully choreographed<sup>2</sup> to provide plausible deniability of a coup, Zimbabwe's military intervened to pave the way for Mugabe's resignation and the accession to office of Emmerson Mnangagwa. The actual assumption of office was precisely as provided for in terms of the country's constitution, which provided that a nominee of ZANU PF would complete Mugabe's term of office until the next elections, due in 2018.

The obvious political stratagem for any successor to Mugabe would be to announce the start of a new era that would break with Mugabe's policies – policies that had dissolved the dream of economic prosperity cherished at independence in 1980 and instead caused drastic economic decline in the 'jewel of Africa'<sup>3</sup> and the acquisition of pariah status in the eyes of the global North.<sup>4</sup>

A marked feature of Mugabe's 37-year rule was his willingness to sacrifice economic rationality on the altar of political expediency, in proportion to the strength of opposition to his governance. Examples of this include:

- A large and unbudgeted pay-out to Mugabe's key allies, veterans of the country's liberation war, who had grown increasingly disgruntled over their impoverished conditions when compared to the lavish lifestyles of the ruling elite, causing the value of Zimbabwe's currency to plummet 70% in November 1997
- The intervention in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 1998 that not only proved costly but was also the start of soured relations with the United States (US)<sup>5</sup> and international financial institutions (especially the International Monetary Fund) and the withdrawal of budgetary support
- Land invasions from February 2000 – a response to Mugabe's loss in a constitutional referendum just months before a June parliamentary poll and a desperate and urgent attempt to regain control over ZANU PF's rural base – that later morphed into a land reform programme of sorts and was to destroy large-scale commercial agriculture and downstream industry<sup>6</sup>

- An ostensible policy of resource nationalism, dubbed ‘indigenisation’,<sup>7</sup> which killed any remaining possibility of foreign direct investment.<sup>8</sup>

Mugabe defended himself against the hostile backlash from Western governments’ objecting to the assault on private property rights that the invasion of white farmland and the indigenisation programme embodied, by developing a pseudo, pan-African narrative of an embattled African country brave enough to stand up to the imperialist agendas of the West as it sought to reverse the deprivations of colonialism and its legacy of inequality in the distribution of wealth and land.

His government developed a narrative around land and governance that many were to find attractive. The narrative went as follows: the violent land invasions of 2000 were not a desperate government-orchestrated ploy to secure ZANU PF’s rural base after the loss of the February constitutional referendum and ahead of the pending June elections. They were rather a spontaneous response by war veterans, angered by the rejection of a draft constitution (caused by farm workers in thrall to their white masters) that would, it was alleged,<sup>9</sup> have allowed the expropriation of white-held farmland without compensation.

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Sanctions were intended to inflict extreme economic hardship and cause the populace to rise up in anger

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The liberation war had largely been about the question of land, and the compromises in the Lancaster House Agreement (the prelude to the country’s independence) in this regard had only been made on the understanding that the British would provide funding to address Zimbabwe’s racially skewed landholding.

As this narrative had it, the perfidious British had reneged on this understanding. The war veterans thus took it into their own hands to remove whites from the land ‘stolen from their ancestors’ and return it to their rightful owners, so correcting a long-standing colonial wrong. The British then imposed sanctions against Zimbabwe as punishment and in an attempt to protect their kith and kin. These sanctions were intended to inflict extreme economic hardship and cause the populace to rise up in anger and remove Mugabe and ZANU PF from power. In short, they were part of a regime change agenda resulting from a bilateral dispute between Zimbabwe and Britain. The European Union (EU), heavily influenced by Britain, went along out of solidarity, according to the Mugabe administration.<sup>10</sup>

Various leftist academics who were prepared to sacrifice considerable academic integrity in supportive texts (that often airbrushed politics from the ‘fast track land reform programme’ as much as was possible),<sup>11</sup> lined up uncritically behind this narrative, joined by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and South Africa.

Solidarity with Mugabe on account of this narrative and in opposition to Western machinations against Mugabe informed then president Thabo Mbeki's 'quiet diplomacy' over much of the period (to 2008). SADC's communiqués on Zimbabwe after 2001 almost invariably called for sanctions against Zimbabwe to be lifted while ignoring endemic human rights violations and flawed elections.<sup>12</sup>

Mnangagwa promised a departure from misrule, a new rhetoric and new narrative. In three landmark speeches – his inauguration speech after succeeding Mugabe on 24 November 2017, a New Year's greeting to the nation, and his inaugural speech after his electoral victory in July 2018 – Mnangagwa assured the nation that his focus would be on repairing Zimbabwe's broken economy, re-engaging with the 'West', 'foster[ing] policies that would attract domestic and global capital'<sup>13</sup> and adopting a policy of political and economic openness. The prosecution of perpetrators of corruption would be carried out without fear or favour.<sup>14</sup> This was 'the dawn of the Second Republic of Zimbabwe', a 'new dispensation'<sup>15</sup> that would set Zimbabwe on a path

full of freedoms, democracy, transparency, love and harmony. A path of dialogue and debate. A path of unity, peace and development.<sup>16</sup>

While being careful not to criticise Mugabe directly, Mnangagwa went on to state:

[W]e must accept that our challenges as a nation emanate in part from the manner in which we have managed our politics, both nationally and internationally ...<sup>17</sup>

Recognising that the question of property rights was central to investment and re-engagement with the West, Mnangagwa said his government was

committed to compensating those farmers from whom land was taken, in terms of the laws of the land. As we go into the future, complex issues of land tenure will have to be addressed both urgently and definitely, in order to ensure finality and closure to the ownership and management of this key resource which is central to national stability and to sustained economic recovery.<sup>18</sup>

His government's Economic Policy would

be predicated on agriculture which is the mainstay, and on creating conditions for an investment-led economic recovery that puts a premium on job-creation. Key choices will have to be made to attract foreign direct investment to tackle high levels of unemployment while transforming our economy ...<sup>19</sup>

The speeches were a far cry from those of Mugabe, usually characterised by fulminations against 'illegal Western sanctions', which he held responsible for the country's economic travails, against Western intrusion upon the country's sovereignty and against the West's 'regime change agenda'.<sup>20</sup> For proponents of liberal democracy (or even 'neo-liberal' economics),<sup>21</sup> what was not to like?



## Chapter 1

# Parallel narratives and a converged trajectory

The narratives on Zimbabwe developed by Mugabe and the counter-narrative of the West bear close similarities to contemporary<sup>22</sup> political discourse on Venezuela. One narrative has it that President Nicolas Maduro is an illegitimate dictator, holding on to power with the help of a corrupt military and committing widespread human rights abuses in the process. These abuses suppress a citizenry rising up in protest against economic collapse engendered by rampant corruption and misgovernance.<sup>23</sup>

The other is that the US, supported by other countries in the global North, is using supposed concerns about human rights abuses and an alleged humanitarian emergency to spearhead regime change, motivated by Western interests (especially those of the US) in Venezuela's vast oil reserves. As part of this regime change agenda, the US (and others) have blatantly interfered in Venezuela's internal affairs by providing support to right-leaning opposition parties and candidates (to the extent of recognising an opposition leader as the country's president) who will advance their interests under a new administration.<sup>24</sup> This support takes the form of a debilitating sanctions regime and trade embargo.

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The narratives on Zimbabwe bear close similarities to contemporary political discourse on Venezuela

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With billions of dollars of Venezuelan oil receipts frozen in Western banks, the economic collapse, as this narrative puts it, has manifestly been engineered by the US to cause social unrest and strengthen opposition to the Maduro government. In addition, the Maduro government has been subjected to scurrilous and vicious propaganda in Western media that only presents (and embellishes) the first narrative.

These parallel narratives and seemingly fixed trajectories, which arise in the case of countries such as Zimbabwe and Venezuela, are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Parallel narratives**

	<b>Component</b>	<b>Narrative one</b>	<b>Narrative two</b>
1	A 'left-leaning' incumbent, or one inimical to 'Western' interests	The incumbent is legitimately in office	The incumbent is illegitimately in office
2	Elections	The incumbent gained power through free and fair elections	The incumbent is in office against the will of the people
3	Sanctions	Sanctions are imposed by the West to cause economic hardships, which will engender hostility and protests against the ruling party and incumbent, and to encourage the population to vote against them.  The country's problems all stem from sanctions-induced economic stress	Sanctions are imposed as an incentive for the government to improve governance and as punishment for human rights abuses and fraudulent elections. They will be lifted against benchmarks showing that the fundamentals of democratic governance have been met.  The country's problems all stem from politics, bad governance, etc.
4	Economic hardships	Sanctions are solely responsible for the country's extreme economic problems	The country's economic problems arise from mismanagement (often socialist-style redistributive policies) and/or rampant corruption
5	Opposition to the government	The West is trying to remove the ruling party from power by providing support to opposition parties, candidates and civil society organisations hostile to the government	The West is trying to improve democratic processes in the country and improve the poor state of human rights in the face of an authoritarian regime

	<b>Component</b>	<b>Narrative one</b>	<b>Narrative two</b>
6	Suppression of dissent	The government's firm response to protests against economic conditions is necessary because of the extreme violence and lawlessness of the protestors, who are not engaging in the democratic right to protest but trying to topple the government with the help of the West	The government is brutally suppressing citizens trying to exercise their democratic right to protest against misgovernance, corruption and the resultant unbearable economic deprivation. The violent response of the government is evidence that the country is run by a ruthless dictator, vindicating further support for democratic forces in the country and a tighter sanctions regime
7	Outcome	The incumbent will valiantly hold out against the machinations of the West and the majority who support him/her are prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to defeat the neo-colonial agenda	The regime will collapse in the face of the irresistible tide of popular will and a popularly elected government will be installed that adopts economic rationality
8	National dialogue	The opposition is using the economic crisis to call for a national dialogue so that it can get its hands on some levers of power through establishing a government of national unity (GNU) or some transitional arrangement as, without popular support, it is unable to get this through the democratic process	The country is in crisis and the government is unable to solve the problems alone. The crisis requires a coordinated effort by all stakeholders who must come together for the good of the country to agree how to improve governance and thus the economy

This monograph looks at political developments in Zimbabwe since the end of the Mugabe era through the lenses of these narratives. While Mnangagwa signalled a clear intent to break from the narrative in the left column, difficulties in implementing policy saw his administration reviving the left column rhetoric as a defensive shield and to garner regional support against the West.

The detractors of ZANU PF and Mnangagwa, on the other hand, had no intention of abandoning the right column narrative. The main opposition party in Zimbabwe (which by the time of the July 2018 elections had become the Movement for Democratic Change (Alliance) [MDC-A]) and several key governance non-governmental organisations (NGOs) did everything they could to ensure traction for the right hand narrative.



## Chapter 2

# Developing the narratives

### The illegitimacy component

Step one of the right hand narrative, as shown in the table, is to deny the incumbent the mantle of legitimacy. Mnangagwa's opponents set about this task immediately.

### Equating Mnangagwa with Mugabe

The vanquished faction in ZANU PF that had supported Robert and Grace Mugabe, Generation 40 (G40), had no intention of accepting its November 2017 defeat by the military and Mnangagwa's 'Team Lacoste'<sup>25</sup> and disappearing quietly. They immediately took on the task of undermining Mnangagwa, later to be joined in this by the main opposition party, the MDC-A<sup>26</sup> (headed by Nelson Chamisa since February 2018)<sup>27</sup> and sympathetic sections of governance NGOs.

This made considerable political sense as far as the G40 and MDC-A were concerned. The G40 sought to undermine Mnangagwa and so his, and ZANU PF's, electoral prospects, hoping to return to the corridors of power in a pact with the MDC-A. Rumours of this pact were rampant before the July 2018 elections.<sup>28</sup>

The MDC-A, for its part, had been placed in a difficult position ahead of the elections by the advent of Mnangagwa. The opposition's key campaign messages in past elections had been that 'Mugabe must go', that relations with 'the West' should be restored and policies to bring about economic recovery adopted. As one commentator sympathetic to ZANU PF put it a few months before polling:

Their mantra had been that 'Mugabe must go', and he has gone. They were saying the country should join the international community, and the new administration has re-engaged ...<sup>29</sup>

The election manifestos of the main contending parties ahead of the 2018 polls were in agreement on the need for economic reform, so much so that each accused the other of plagiarism.<sup>30</sup> A senior MDC member<sup>31</sup> commented on the ZANU PF manifesto as follows:

Zanu PF has a manifesto that speaks to infrastructure, transformation of the economy, social delivery and the general issues that confront our people. They (Zanu PF) have made these their issues and they are our issues too.<sup>32</sup>

Mnangagwa's November 2017 address suggested that ZANU PF's policies in government would be those for which the opposition had long agitated. When these were repeated at Mnangagwa's inauguration after the elections, Chamisa was constrained to say:

We know our colleagues in Zanu PF are very good at manipulating our policies, they have done so through President Mnangagwa, who has been literally copying and pasting our policies.<sup>33</sup>

The potential that this policy convergence had to bring the parties together to work for the country's development was never sincerely explored.<sup>34</sup> ZANU PF had no intention of sharing power if it won the elections and the MDC-A had no intention of being rendered irrelevant by the espousal of its policies by ZANU PF, or, more importantly, by their effective implementation, which would gain ZANU PF and Mnangagwa the consent of the governed. At several rallies Chamisa stated that they would 'spoil the party' for Mnangagwa if he was announced as a winner by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) – a policy referred to as *kudira jecha* ('to pour sand [into the porridge]').<sup>35</sup>

Immediately after Mnangagwa's November 2017 inauguration, before he had hardly governed for a day, those opposed to his governance asserted that Mnangagwa's rule would be no different to that of Mugabe. Nothing had changed or could change.<sup>36</sup> Mnangagwa, it was charged, was insincere. Nothing positive could result, it was said, given the track record of both ZANU PF and Mnangagwa.

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sharing power if it won the elections

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It was pointed out that Mnangagwa had been at Mugabe's side since the mid-1970s<sup>37</sup> and had played an important role in successive ZANU PF administrations that had ruined the country's economy. What could ZANU PF do, it was rhetorically asked, in the five years after elections, that it had failed to achieve in the last 37?

The criticism was easily deflected by a reminder that the MDC's own position was that Mugabe had been the albatross around Zimbabwe's neck, and Mnangagwa had been instrumental in getting rid of him at considerable personal risk and cost. However, less easily brushed aside was Mnangagwa's role in the Gukurahundi massacres of the 1980s.<sup>38</sup>

Thirty-year-old quotes of Mnangagwa's calling the targets of government soldiers 'cockroaches' were again<sup>39</sup> alluded to.<sup>40</sup> Never far below the surface, the Gukurahundi issue was brought to the fore, and a series of seminars and public meetings on the atrocities were convened by activists and civil society organisations, the timing of which hardly seemed coincidental.<sup>41</sup>

The subtext was that Mugabe had violently imposed himself as ruler on the people of Zimbabwe, and that Mnangagwa, had, and would, do the same.

### **Illegitimacy and the instability narrative**

In addition to ad hominem arguments against Mnangagwa and the highlighting of ZANU PF's unsavoury and inauspicious track record, an instability narrative was effectively inserted into Zimbabwe's political discourse.

As part of this narrative and to deny Mnangagwa a legitimacy that might be seen as coming from popular support, the enthusiasm with which people had taken to the streets on 18 November 2017 to welcome the military intervention was largely airbrushed from accounts of the events or presented in hindsight as folly. The military was accused of having removed Mugabe through a coup and the subtleties of the carefully choreographed events ignored.

All coups are 'militarily assisted transitions', but not all militarily assisted transitions are coups. The term 'militarily assisted transition' should thus have accommodated all views on the November events. However, 'militarily assisted transition' avoided the negative connotations of a coup and illegitimacy that the opposition was anxious to attach to Mnangagwa.

Whether one referred to a 'coup' or 'militarily assisted transition' became a way of declaring one's political colours in Zimbabwe. By using the term 'coup' those opposed to Mnangagwa characterised him as an illegitimate leader who had violated the African Union (AU) charter by coming into office by unconstitutional means.<sup>42</sup> Applying pure coup theory, antagonistic analysts pointed to the inherent instability of post-coup administrations and that 'coups beget coups'.<sup>43</sup>

Feeding into this, rumours were generated that Mnangagwa was at loggerheads with Constantino Chiwenga, the army commander at the time of the military intervention and later vice-president. There were deep tensions within the army and ZANU PF hierarchy, it was claimed, and Chiwenga planned to use this unhappiness with Mnangagwa to seize power – which, it was said, had always been his intention.<sup>44</sup>

Zimbabwe's most serious political weekly, the *Zimbabwe Independent*, carried front-page stories<sup>45</sup> on the supposed hostility between the president and his vice-president. The stories had the hallmarks of plants by the G40 and were singularly scant on evidence. This did not prevent them from becoming conventional political wisdom on Zimbabwe.<sup>46</sup>

In order to strengthen the notion that the events of November 2017 were nothing more than a power grab by Mnangagwa, word was put about, later to be supported by Mugabe himself on the eve of the 2018 elections, that Mugabe had planned to resign at the party's December 2017 congress.<sup>47</sup> Mugabe would, it was claimed, have put forward long-standing party stalwart Sidney Sekeramayi as his successor.

The 'coup' thus had nothing to do with fears of the ascendancy of Mugabe's erratic wife Grace and was instead a pre-emptive strike to prevent Sekeramayi's succeeding Mugabe (lawfully and in terms of the party constitution).<sup>48</sup>

Another thread of the narrative was that Mnangagwa was so lacking in popular support and a mandate to govern that he would lose the 2018 polls. Political gossip<sup>49</sup> would have it that a leaked internal survey by the Central Intelligence Organisation<sup>50</sup> (CIO) found that Mnangagwa would garner no more than 11% of the vote.

Mugabe, it was claimed, had massive residual support in ZANU PF's three stronghold Mashonaland provinces and the 40-year-old Chamisa would secure the votes of the country's youth, comprising 60% of voters.

Just before polling started Mugabe fed rumours of a pact between the G40 and Chamisa by stating that he could not vote for 'his tormentors' ZANU PF and Mnangagwa, and hinted strongly at voting for Chamisa.<sup>51</sup>

Mnangagwa would thus either lose a free and fair vote, which would be unacceptable to the military, or engage in fraud, resulting in elections that would be unacceptable to the international community. Post-election political instability was inevitable, it was said, and the elections would not 'cure the coup' or Mnangagwa's illegitimacy.

The purpose of the instability narrative appears to have been two-fold: firstly, to play spoiler by deterring investment, desperately required by the Mnangagwa administration, through the spectre of political instability; and secondly, to lay the ground for the argument that Zimbabwe required some form of unity government that included the MDC-A, or a 'national transitional authority' in order to move forward and return to constitutional government.<sup>52</sup> This was to be accomplished through a national dialogue to give the process legitimacy.

### **Illegitimacy and the July 2018 elections**

The obvious counter to the instability narrative and a means by which Mnangagwa could demonstrate the democratic credentials of the new dispensation and facilitate re-engagement and investment was to win the 2018 elections in a manner that was accepted as free and fair by the wider international community.

Mnangagwa's administration therefore embarked on a course to ensure that the 2018 elections would pass muster. International observers who had been barred from observing Zimbabwe's elections since 2002, most notably the EU,<sup>53</sup> were invited to send observer missions. Unlike past polls, opposition rallies were allowed to proceed unhindered, including in ZANU PF's traditional stronghold rural constituencies.

Senior government officials urged the state media to ensure that all political parties would have equal and fair coverage during the election period<sup>54</sup> and repeatedly appealed to supporters and the country to refrain from political violence, and to campaign and vote peacefully.<sup>55</sup> For the first time the election

would be held with an inclusive and accurate voters' roll, newly constructed using biometric data technology.

The MDC-A thus shifted its illegitimacy discourse to the elections. Opposition politicians and allied analysts and civil society members asserted that a Chamisa and MDC-A victory was inevitable, such was the popularity of Chamisa and lack thereof of the imposed Mnangagwa. The desire for change and 'mood in the country' was akin to that on independence in 1980, they said. Furthermore, it was claimed, the dynamics of the 'coup'<sup>56</sup> had resulted in ZANU PF's losing control over rural voters (comprising 70% of the voter population),<sup>57</sup> on whom ZANU PF depended.

Once this narrative had become entrenched, it was followed by threats that if the electoral management body, the ZEC, announced a victory for anyone other than Chamisa the count would be regarded as fraudulent, because Chamisa had 'already won'.<sup>58</sup> In this event, MDC-A officials warned, the country would become 'ungovernable'. On 11 July, senior party official Tendai Biti tweeted: 'Those planning to steal the election must know that this country will be ungovernable. And that is fact.'<sup>59</sup>

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In addition, Chamisa warned that if the processes that they had demanded to ensure a free and fair election were not implemented, 'there would be no election'.<sup>60</sup> The election was set for 30 July 2018 by presidential proclamation. Four days before polling Chamisa was reported as stating:

Fact is, if we say this country will be ungovernable tomorrow, we have the capacity. We're containing the pressure of the young people, young people want to go the extra mile for their freedom but we're not going to be adventurous. But if they rig or cheat, they will face the music. That, they should know. It's not a threat, it's a promise.<sup>61</sup>

The day after polling, at a press conference on 31 July, Biti stated that the MDC-A had collated the results from all except 21% of polling station returns, known as V11s, and that an extrapolation of the totals showed that Chamisa had won 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

All that remained, he said, was for the ZEC to formally announce the results but that these were deliberately being delayed. There were people, he said, who wanted to interfere with the democratic process. He warned them not to do so as it would 'plunge Zimbabwe into chaos'.<sup>62</sup> Chamisa expressed the same sentiments in a tweet on the same day:

ZEC seeks to delay the release of the results to buy time and reverse the people's presidential election victory. The strategy is meant to prepare Zimbabwe mentally to accept fake presidential results. We have more votes than E.D. We won the popular vote and will defend it.<sup>63</sup>

The statements of both Chamisa and Biti appeared to be part of an MDC-A tactic copying that used in Kenya's 2017 elections (and in Venezuela in 2013);<sup>64</sup> a spoiler strategy whereby the opposition 'declares victory early, and goes on declaring it'.<sup>65</sup>

In view of what had preceded these statements, the best that can be said of them is that they were exceedingly unwise.<sup>66</sup> Having acknowledged the volatility of the situation, the MDC-A leaders essentially stated that they had clear evidence that Chamisa had won and that the delay in announcing results was precisely on account of the 'shenanigans' that the party had said would result in the country's becoming ungovernable.

To those unaware of the ZEC's byzantine results transmission and collation process, there is no reason why the presidential election results should not be announced within one or two days of polling<sup>67</sup> – although there is a statutory five-day deadline. When they had not been released by 1 August, the assertions of Biti and Chamisa that the delay was on account of an attempt to manipulate the numbers gained increasing traction. Anger grew<sup>68</sup> when the parliamentary results released on 1 August suggested a sweeping victory for ZANU PF.<sup>69</sup>

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By the time the military had completed its task  
six people had been shot dead and 35 wounded

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Violent protests 'against election rigging' erupted on the streets of the capital Harare and the military swiftly deployed in the city. It contained the situation in the way the military contains such situations and not as a police force properly trained in riot and crowd control. By the time it had completed its task six people had been shot dead and 35 wounded. They were not the only casualties that day.

Until the 1 August violence Mnangagwa appeared to have hit the 'sweet spot' of competitive authoritarian elections, that is, 'allowing just enough freedom to make them appear credible but not enough to risk losing'.<sup>70</sup> Thereafter, Mnangagwa's efforts to present a dispensation different to that of Mugabe, to show a democratic government under civilian and not military control, to hold a clean election and to re-engage with the internal community, had been dealt a heavy blow.

Furthermore, every credible election observation report would have to include the taint of the post-election violence. The MDC-A's illegitimacy narrative had received a major boost.

## Challenging the results

The MDC-A continued with the illegitimacy narrative post-election, advancing the point by, as planned, claiming that Chamisa had won the election, and that the MDC-A presidential candidate had 'been robbed' of electoral victory through a manipulation of the results by the ZEC. They had the V11s to prove their claim, they said at a press conference.

Requests by journalists to see the V11s were declined on the basis that it would be imprudent to disclose these ahead of a planned Constitutional Court petition<sup>71</sup> to have Mnangagwa's victory voided.

Sections of civil society put out a call<sup>72</sup> for all those in possession of the V11s to submit scanned copies to a collection point to be compared with the ZEC results sheet.<sup>73</sup> Other governance NGOs said<sup>74</sup> that a panicked ZANU PF and ZEC had responded by forcing opposition polling agents to change V11s in their possession.<sup>75</sup> The claim was highly implausible.<sup>76</sup>

Ahead of the Constitutional Court petition every indication from the MDC-A was that the litigation would be based upon proof that the ZEC's results sheet did not match the V11 returns that had been signed by polling agents and issued at polling stations.<sup>77</sup>

In the event, the petition filed by Chamisa contained only two paragraphs on the issue out of nearly 150.<sup>78</sup> One alluded to an attached annexure<sup>79</sup> comprising a table that purported to show the doctored results, with one column listing the ZEC's results and the other the results it was claimed were reflected on the V11s. Not a single V11 was produced to prove the point.<sup>80</sup>

There appears to have been a good reason for this omission. An NGO, Citizens Manifesto, later posted some 3 600 of the collected and scanned V11s online. A comparison of a random dozen of these with the table in the Constitutional Court petition showed the ZEC's numbers were consistent with the V11s in every instance.<sup>81</sup>

Rather than basing the petition on allegedly falsified polling station returns, Chamisa relied instead on several demonstrably false suppositions and fanciful extrapolations.

The first of these was to demonstrate a mismatch between the votes cast in the parliamentary and the presidential elections.<sup>82</sup> Since voters are issued with a ballot for each election, the tallies should match. That they did not, with the presidential tally much higher than the tally for the parliamentary election, was clear evidence of fraud, it was claimed (when considered in light of the ZEC's manifest partiality towards Mnangagwa, which much of the petition was devoted to establishing).<sup>83</sup>

The argument could have been torpedoed immediately by pointing out that the petition compared the total votes for Mnangagwa with the total valid votes for the

National Assembly. Oranges were being compared with apples, given the large number of spoiled ballots in the presidential election.<sup>84</sup>

The second main claim was based on an announcement by the state television broadcaster ZBC, that, as at 5pm, 105 000 voters had voted in Mashonaland Central province. Given that the final tally in the province was 475 000, it was not possible for 370 000 people to have voted in the remaining two hours of polling.<sup>85</sup> The tally for the province was thus alleged to be fraudulent.

That was one explanation. The other is that the announcement by the ZBC was wrong. The opposition has frequently, and rightly, castigated the ZBC for its inaccurate and biased reporting. The MDC-A's sudden acceptance that the announcement by the ZBC as to polling numbers was unquestionably accurate was cynical.

Furthermore, a modicum of thought would have revealed that it was not possible that the ZBC could have the statistics it had announced. There were 972 polling stations in Mashonaland Central. The polling officer at each would have had to calculate the number of ballots issued,<sup>86</sup> be instructed to do so at a specific time and communicate the information to the ZBC or ZEC. The information would then have to be entered onto a spreadsheet and computed. The process would have taken hours and the announcement could not have been made when it was.<sup>87</sup>

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In addition, the process would cost time and resources, which neither the ZEC nor the ZBC could afford while in the midst of polling. It is highly unlikely that such an instruction would have been given to polling officers.

Unfortunately, neither the judges of the Constitutional Court nor counsel for the ZEC or for Mnangagwa sought to disprove Chamisa's arguments on the numbers when the petition was heard. The Chief Justice stated that the court 'deals in facts, not figures'. The infelicitous phrase was meant to convey that the court wished to see the evidence in the form of the V11s rather than speculate about the numbers or make deductions from them.

The court held that Chamisa should have applied to open the ballot boxes to obtain the V11s to put before the court. This suggestion was entirely impractical and not short of fatuous. Previous applications to inspect election residue in past elections had remained unadjudicated for weeks (i.e. outside the time limits for bringing a Constitutional Court petition), the highly restrictive statutory criteria needed for such an application<sup>88</sup> were not extant in the case, and applications to open the ballot boxes at 10 985 polling stations impossible.



For the purposes of the Constitutional Court petition, Chamisa also abandoned his claim that he had won the poll. The argument was quietly changed to one averring that Mnangagwa had not won the 50% plus one vote required to avoid a run-off. Here he was on much stronger ground.

The ZEC's tally had Mnangagwa with 50.8% of votes cast.<sup>89</sup> Chamisa was able to demonstrate clear errors in the ZEC's spreadsheet, compelling it to admit to the errors and revise Mnangagwa's tally downwards. It was insufficient to compel a run-off, however, at 50.67%.

The petition was dismissed in an 'interim' judgment given a few days later.<sup>90</sup> Unwisely, the court had refused to consider Chamisa's arguments on the figures, despite the ease with which they could have been discounted. This left the door open for the MDC-A to continue to claim that the ZEC had fiddled with the numbers in Mnangagwa's favour and that the Constitutional Court petition had been decided on a technical point of evidentiary procedure (Chamisa's failure to produce the V11s, 'the best evidence' rule).

The MDC-A rejected the Constitutional Court's decision as 'manifestly unjust'.<sup>91</sup> Its claim thereafter reverted to one that Chamisa had won the elections outright with 2.6 million votes,<sup>92</sup> rather than that Mnangagwa had insufficient votes to avoid a run-off.

Although the fact that there are flat earth theorists among us does not give rise to the media referring to the 'disputed spherical shape of the earth', this did not deter the 'opposition' press, after the Constitutional Court hearing, from almost invariably adding the term 'disputed' whenever the 2018 elections were mentioned.<sup>93</sup> The non-ZANU PF media were lined up behind the right column narrative.

Adding to the spin were frequent assertions that Mnangagwa had 'won' by a 'wafer thin' margin of 0.67% or just over 31 000 votes.<sup>94</sup> That of course, was the margin by which he had avoided a run-off against the combined votes of the other 22 presidential candidates. He had beaten his nearest rival, Chamisa (who had 44.3% of the total), by well over 300 000 votes.

Again the rumour mill was activated with a claim that the ZEC's computer had been hacked, and that Mnangagwa had in fact garnered only 33% of the vote.<sup>95</sup> The mechanics of how the ZEC could have changed the numbers beneath the noses of a host of international observers and polling agents and have these reflected on thousands of polling station returns did not, it seems, require explanation.

Treated as similarly irrelevant were the facts that highly respected opinion pollsters (Afrobarometer)<sup>96</sup> had estimated the outcome accurately – almost to the last vote – and that the polling numbers were within the range extrapolated by the Zimbabwe Election Support Network's (ZESN) Sample Based Observation (SBO).

The ZESN, the largest domestic election observer NGO, had worked closely with skilled statisticians from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) using proven

SBO methodologies to gather the data.<sup>97</sup> The conspiratorially minded whispered that Afrobarometer, the NDI and ZESN had worked with Zimbabwean and US intelligence agencies to manipulate the opinion poll and SBO so they would match pre-prepared and manufactured election results.<sup>98</sup>

The foregoing should not be taken to mean that the view held here is that Mnangagwa attained the presidency through free and fair elections. Far from it. Although the more obvious rigging methods, such as those used in 2013, had not been deployed,<sup>99</sup> Mnangagwa and ZANU PF had won the polls in the same way ZANU PF and its presidential candidate always won elections<sup>100</sup> – through an electoral playing field steeply tilted in favour of ZANU PF through the blatant abuse of state resources (particularly the media, food aid and agricultural inputs) and control of the rural vote through such means; the authority exercised over traditional leaders and by traditional leaders over voters; and subtle and overt intimidation of the vulnerable rural population. All of this was aided and abetted by a partisan electoral management body and judiciary.<sup>101</sup>

Furthermore, the elections were conducted in the shadow of November 2017. If it had not been obvious to everyone by then, the events of that month should have put it beyond any doubt that the military commanders regard themselves as the final arbiters of political power in Zimbabwe.

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After Tsvangirai defeated Mugabe at the polls,  
the military orchestrated a campaign of violence  
that amounted to a ‘veto coup’

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In a now notorious television appearance in 2002, the security sector commanders, with a singular lack of subtlety, warned that they would not allow then opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai to assume the presidency in the forthcoming poll.<sup>102</sup> The threat was carried out in March 2008, when, after Tsvangirai did in fact defeat Mugabe at the polls, the military orchestrated a campaign of violence that amounted to a ‘veto coup’.

Tsvangirai was compelled to withdraw from the run-off (the need for which many believe was engineered by doctored results) and Mugabe retained the presidency.<sup>103</sup>

In November 2017 the military again intervened to facilitate its chosen candidate’s ascendancy to the presidency. It was hardly likely that, having risked so much, it would not do whatever it took to ensure that he secured the presidency after the 2018 elections.

Significantly, the military had refused to state that it would accept the 2018 election results in the event of a Chamisa win.<sup>104</sup> With the electorate well aware of this dynamic, the poll could hardly be said to have been fair on this basis alone. Hopeful that an otherwise acceptable poll would allow a line to be drawn under

the long-standing Zimbabwe issue, none in the international community wished to raise the point.

The MDC-A chose to rest its challenge to the elections solely on the claim of manipulated numbers, and readers understood media references to ‘the disputed elections’ as alluding to this.

The ‘disputed 2018 elections’ caused the MDC-A to scale up the illegitimacy narrative. Mnangagwa, it was now said, had a ‘legitimacy crisis’. As this narrative would have it, Mnangagwa had seized power through a military coup and had failed to ‘cure the coup’ through the populace’s endorsement in a general election. Chamisa was the ‘people’s president’.<sup>105</sup> Mnangagwa was illegitimate.

The notion of illegitimacy having reached crisis proportions was taken up in several articles by respected political commentators.<sup>106</sup> Added to this was the assertion that Zimbabwe’s economic crisis was a result of the illegitimacy crisis – though the supposed nexus between the two was never clearly elaborated.<sup>107</sup> The intention being to prepare for the next step in the right hand column narrative.

Zimbabwe’s political and economic crisis could thus only be resolved (the final step of the narrative) through ‘national dialogue’ – or, as had been stated before the polls, a National Transitional Authority.

How a national dialogue would resolve Zimbabwe’s ‘Ponzi scheme-engendered’ currency crisis,<sup>108</sup> which lay behind the economic turmoil, was not stated. The MDC-A also never clearly articulated, if a national dialogue were to take place, what it was it wished to talk about or proposed to solve the ‘political and economic crisis’.

It did set a precondition, however, that the first item on the agenda of a national dialogue would be the question of Mnangagwa’s legitimacy.<sup>109</sup> As a result, its call for national dialogue gave every impression of being an attempt by Chamisa and the MDC-A to gain positions and influence in government other than through the democratic process, strengthening the last component of the left narrative. It was as if the mere presence of Chamisa in government would cause Zimbabwe’s problems to melt away.

## **Sanctions and economic stress**

The sanctions discourse was an essential component of Mugabe’s left column narrative. Despite its manifestly dodgy foundations it found considerable traction in the region and Africa as a whole, where leaders saw a political cost attached to attributing Zimbabwe’s rapid economic meltdown to its real cause – the land grabs of 2000 onwards when Mugabe gave the go-ahead for the invasion of white-held farmland. ZANU PF’s own slogan then was ‘The economy is the land, and land is the economy’.

The destruction of large-scale commercial agriculture, upon which much downstream industry depended, was the coup de grâce for an economy that

was already faltering.<sup>110</sup> The policies of successive Mugabe administrations was essentially to firefight and deal, ad hoc, with the fall-out and repercussions of this, while always putting political expediency before economic rationality.

As a matter of political logic, the MDC-A had no interest in seeing Mnangagwa engender an economic recovery, instead hoping that a continued decline would drive voters into its arms and compel Mnangagwa to bring the MDC-A into government.

While opposition stalwart Biti was reported as having said that the MDC-A had ways of ensuring that Mnangagwa ‘would not get a cent’<sup>111</sup> towards economic recovery from the West, the state of the economy in November 2017 was such that the MDC-A needed to do little more than fold its arms and watch the chickens hatched under Mugabe come home to roost.

### **The state of the economy**

The brief interruption to ZANU PF’s exclusive rule since independence in 1980, the period of the so-called ‘Government of National Unity’<sup>112</sup> (GNU), 2009–2013) began with the abandonment of Zimbabwe’s worthless currency in favour of a multi-currency basket (where the US dollar eventually dominated). This stabilised the economy and halted rampant inflation.

Biti, the Movement for Democratic Change (Tsvangirai) (MDC-T)<sup>113</sup> minister of finance, ran a cash-based ‘we eat what we kill’ economy. With the help of substantial inflows from Western donors to a ‘Multi-donor Trust Fund’,<sup>114</sup> he maintained a balanced budget until 2012, when there was a small budget deficit for the year.<sup>115</sup> The economy showed reasonable positive growth over this period, albeit coming off a very low base.

More positive recovery and investment was restrained by Mugabe’s<sup>116</sup> toxic ‘Indigenisation’ policy, which required 51% black Zimbabwean ownership of all new foreign investment vehicles and which was interpreted as requiring the same for established in-country enterprises.<sup>117</sup> The promise of ‘indigenisation’ was the main pillar of ZANU PF’s 2013 election campaign.

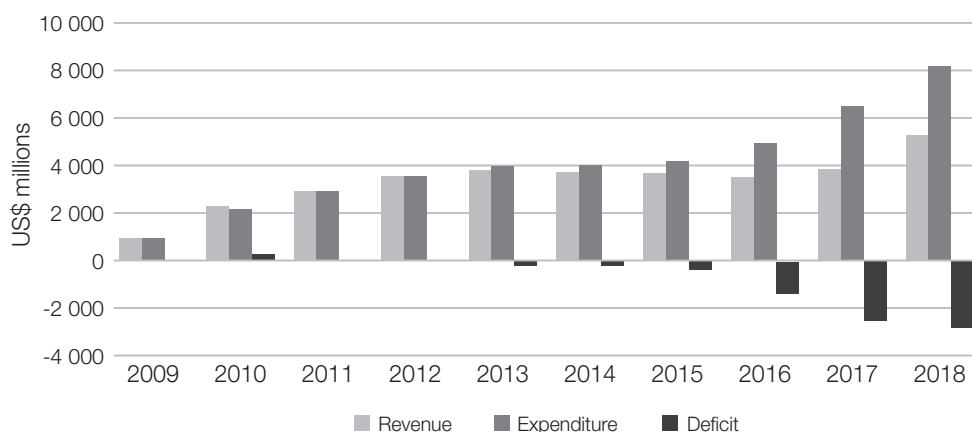
Zimbabwe’s economic decline continued where it had left off after the brief interruption of the GNU. Factory closures continued and there was little investment in mining. Other than the recovery of tobacco production, agriculture remained in the doldrums, and foreign direct investment (FDI) was minimal. Foreign currency inflows into the country fell far short of what was required.

Rather than responding with austerity measures to trim expenditure, the government did the opposite, with expenditures increasing sharply. By 2018 public expenditure had increased by 25% from 2016 levels, while gross domestic product (GDP) only had only increased by 7%. The result was a succession of budget deficits.

**Table 2: Budget deficits, in US\$ millions**

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 <sup>118</sup>
Revenue	933.6	2339.1	2921	3495.8	3741	3727.2	3727	3502.2	3870.4	5296.8
Expenditure	898.1	2143	2898.9	3505.3	3987.4	3911.6	4119.6	4923.2	6488.1	8161.4
Deficit	35.5	196.1	22.1	-9.5	-246.4	-184.4	-392.6	-1421	-2617.7	-2864.6

**Figure 1: Budget deficits**



Data Source: Ministry of Finance (MoF), 2010–2018 budgets<sup>119</sup>

Unable to secure budgetary support externally, the government funded this deficit through the prolific issuance of Treasury bills. Constitutional and legislative provisions<sup>120</sup> capping the quantum of government borrowing were ignored (with the complicity of the ZANU PF-dominated Parliament) in the process.

In order to ensure that these Treasury bills were absorbed, the government introduced a 30% liquidity requirement for banks and directed that the Treasury bills would be treated as liquid instruments.

CBZ Limited is the largest bank in Zimbabwe by asset base and enjoys a close relationship with the government.<sup>121</sup> By March 2017, 40% of its US\$1.9 billion asset register comprised Treasury bills.<sup>122</sup>

With the government, and in turn the entire financial system, heavily dependent on Treasury bills, it could not afford to default on maturing bills. Without the means to honour the bills on maturity,<sup>123</sup> the government resorted to the simple, albeit illicit, expedient of ordering the Reserve Bank to enter a credit into the books of the bank holding the maturing bill, to the extent of its value, against an IOU from the government to the central bank. It was nothing more than a book entry made electronically. In this way virtual, electronic money was created from nothing.

The money supply expanded rapidly without being matched by any inflow of real foreign currency. In essence the government created a billion-dollar Ponzi scheme – borrowing electronic money it had created and paying it back by creating more. The inevitable collapse of this Ponzi scheme would have severe and deeply negative effects.

When depositors tried to withdraw US dollars, the banks were in most cases only able to supply the virtual electronic money that had been created by the government. In accordance with Gresham's law, where bad money drives out good, hard cash largely disappears from the financial system.

Depositors queued for hours at ATMs to gain access to the little cash available, restricted to US\$20 per customer, and then sometimes received in the form of the ersatz US\$ currency the government had introduced in response to the shortage, the bond note,<sup>124</sup> or even coins.

Business turned to electronic transfers. By February 2018, 96% of all transactions were conducted using electronic payments.<sup>125</sup> Zimbabwe uses a Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system for electronic transfers. These electronic 'US dollars' thus became known as RTGS dollars, which gained the status of a quasi-currency.<sup>126</sup>

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The shortage of foreign currency created  
a downward spiral of further shortages

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The laws of supply and demand and of inflation (when M3 is increased in this manner), then made themselves felt. The value of RTGS dollars against real US\$ dollars declined, often characterised by sudden, steep and destabilising falls.<sup>127</sup> Officially, however, until February 2019 the government maintained the fiction that RTGS dollars were on a par with US dollars, and indeed were US dollars.

The government responded to the shortage of real US dollars by requiring that all foreign currency receipts from exports be surrendered to the Reserve Bank. The central bank then allocated the foreign currency so captured in accordance with an opaque priority list in an attempt to ensure the supply of essential imports – fuel, electricity, wheat, medicines, etc.

Exporters were given a percentage of their receipts as real US dollars. The remaining captured foreign currency portion was replaced with RTGS payments – at the official 1:1 rate. The percentages paid out in hard currency varied by sector, usually after tough negotiations. Across sectors, however, the percentage of foreign currency receipts captured was well over 50%, and sometimes rose as high as 85%.<sup>128</sup>

Various enterprises warned that their viability was threatened unless they received a greater proportion of their foreign currency earnings and that they were unable

to import components required for continued operations. Some cut back on production, so lowering export receipts and exacerbating the foreign currency shortages.<sup>129</sup> In this way the shortage of foreign currency created a downward spiral of further shortages.

There was thus insufficient foreign currency available to meet the demands of business, which resorted to the black market for survival. The black market premium was passed on to consumers. As most consumers, particularly civil servants and the security sector, received their income electronically, i.e. as RTGS dollars, the purchasing power of wages declined in proportion to the black market rate for real US dollars, creating considerable potential for social unrest with those in lower socio-economic brackets already struggling to make ends meet.

The retention of the 1:1 parity of the US dollar to RTGS dollars also created price distortions in numerous sectors of the economy.

For example, the price of fuel set by the government, and paid for in RTGS dollars by consumers, remained unchanged despite the decline in value of RTGS dollars. The Reserve Bank was obliged to supply real US dollars to fuel importers at 1:1. Yet the real value of the fuel was not recovered at the pump, declining as the actual (black market, RTGS) rate for US dollars rose.

Effectively, the Reserve Bank, or more precisely, every exporter, was subsidising fuel for the public – and eventually the region, as regional trucking companies realised they could change foreign currency on the black market for RTGS dollars and buy fuel with the RTGS dollars. Fuel was also taken across the border for resale.

Fuel consumes the largest proportion of foreign currency receipts. Fuel shortages resulted, despite a huge increase in the amount allocated for fuel by the Reserve Bank.<sup>130</sup> Opportunities for ‘arbitrage’ (the euphemism used in Zimbabwe for scams) abounded. A fuel importer allocated say, 1 million real dollars to import fuel, could make much more money by selling the money on the black market rather than taking the time and trouble of actually importing the fuel.<sup>131</sup>

There were numerous adverse effects on business. Government borrowing, through the issuance of Treasury bills, crowded out the private sector, leaving little financial support for commerce. Resultant company closures reduced tax receipts, placing further pressure on the government to issue Treasury bills to deal with fiscal gaps.

Foreign business, which included many South African companies, also faced singular challenges. South African Airlines (SAA) serves as a useful example.

The Reserve Bank pressured SAA to continue issuing air tickets against RTGS payments, with assurances that the RTGS payments would be exchanged by the Reserve Bank and given to SAA in real US\$ at 1:1. With the decline in the actual value of RTGS dollars well below the 1:1 rate, air tickets were essentially being subsidised in the same way as fuel.<sup>132</sup>

Yet fulfilment of the promise to pay SAA US dollars against the RTGS receipts at 1:1 was continually postponed, leaving the Reserve Bank owing millions of real US dollars<sup>133</sup> to SAA and straining the viability of SAA's operations in Zimbabwe. Other airlines later stopped ticketing in Zimbabwe or demanded payment in real dollars.<sup>134</sup>

This, then, was the state of the economy when Mnangagwa arrived at Munhumutapa Building to take up the Presidency. His 24 November 2017 speech made it clear that he was fully aware that Zimbabwe's economy required a massive infusion of real US dollars, whether this be through international financial institutions (IFIs), bilateral grants and loans, or FDI.

The former required re-engaging with countries Mugabe had done his best to alienate (which implied opening democratic space, improving governance and acting against corruption) and improving the investor climate and investor confidence.

The low-hanging fruit in the latter regard was the removal of the indigenisation legislation. In anticipation of this, and after this was accomplished,<sup>135</sup> numerous foreign trade delegations travelled to Zimbabwe to sound out investment opportunities under the 'new dispensation'.<sup>136</sup>

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The Mnangagwa government tried to hype Zimbabwe  
as a good investment destination with  
'abundant natural resources'

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They quickly learnt of Zimbabwe's treacherous macro-economic terrain, which raised key questions. Since products would be paid for locally in RTGS dollars and export receipts captured by the central bank, how would they service external debts (probably incurred in setting up in Zimbabwe) and remit dividends to offshore shareholders and investors?

Furthermore, any investment in foreign currency brought to onshore banks would become electronic money (RTGS dollars) and immediately lose significant value well in excess of any anticipated profits. Could government promises to ring-fence these accounts be trusted, given the past ZANU PF administrations' reputation of raiding foreign currency accounts – money which had yet to be repaid?<sup>137</sup>

In light of this situation, in what way was Zimbabwe a more favourable investment destination than other countries in the region? Without satisfactory answers to any of these questions, trade delegations returned whence they had come, interest quashed.<sup>138</sup>

In public, the Mnangagwa government tried to hype Zimbabwe as a good investment destination with 'abundant natural resources',<sup>139</sup> indicating that those who delayed would miss out. It claimed massive investor interest, saying that



billions of dollars in FDI had already poured into the country<sup>140</sup> and MOUs for ‘mega-deals’ were being concluded by the government to bring in more.<sup>141</sup>

More quietly, the reticence of investors was acknowledged, with the explanation that some investors were waiting for the political certainty and stability that it was thought the 2018 elections would bring.<sup>142</sup> Post-election violence, discussed below, meant that even the trade delegations stopped coming.<sup>143</sup>

The government of Zimbabwe took up the sanctions component of the left column narrative once more, even though Mnangagwa had specifically indicated, as part of changing the narrative, that this excuse for economic decline would be abandoned.<sup>144</sup>

## The sanctions

The US has two forms of sanctions against Zimbabwe. The first is imposed by Executive Order, with the president using powers under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act,<sup>145</sup> the National Emergencies Act<sup>146</sup> and section 301 of title 3 of the US Code.<sup>147</sup> The legislation is clearly broadly interpreted, as the provisions can only be invoked where there is ‘an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States’.<sup>148</sup> When first invoked in 2003, it was held that

the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe’s democratic processes or institutions, [are] contributing to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law in Zimbabwe, to politically motivated violence and intimidation in that country, and to political and economic instability in the southern African region.

That actions by these members posed an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the US is clearly stretching it a bit. Generally, the powers have been invoked against members of governments the US Administration regards as inimical.<sup>149</sup> The Executive Order prohibits

[a]ny transaction or dealing by a United States person or within the United States in property or interests in property blocked pursuant to this order is prohibited, including but not limited to the making or receiving of any contribution of funds, goods, or services to or for the benefit of any person listed ...<sup>150</sup>

Listed people are referred to as ‘specially designated nationals’ (SDNs). Monitoring falls to the US Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC). OFAC has made detailed regulations to effect the executive order.<sup>151</sup> The executive order has been continued every year since its introduction.

The second form of sanction is against Zimbabwe itself and arises from the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 (ZDERA).<sup>152</sup> The act requires the Secretary of the Treasury to instruct US executive directors

of major and specified IFIs to vote against the extension of any loans to the government of Zimbabwe or any cancellation of indebtedness owed by the government of Zimbabwe.

Before the amendment to the act, this requirement was only to be removed upon certification that Zimbabwe had held a free and fair presidential election, had shown commitment to equitable legal and transparent land reform, had fulfilled an agreement to ending the war in the DRC and that security forces were responsible to, and served, the elected civilian government. This was the stick.

The carrot was that if the conditions were met, institutions lending to Zimbabwe were to be encouraged to review ‘the feasibility of restructuring, rescheduling, or eliminating the sovereign debt of Zimbabwe’. The US representative at each institution was to propose financial and technical support for Zimbabwe.

Although several of these conditions precedent were surpassed by events over a decade ago, they were only revised following a bill introduced to the Senate in March 2018<sup>153</sup> by Foreign Relations Committee members Jeff Flake and Chris Coons.<sup>154</sup> References to the war in the DRC were removed and detailed conditions relating to the pending elections that year introduced.<sup>155</sup> These provisions showed close knowledge of Zimbabwe’s pre-electoral terrain, although the Amendment Bill had pre-dated what was presumably a fact-finding visit to Zimbabwe by five members of the Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee in April 2018.<sup>156</sup>

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Since 2015, Zimbabwe has been trying to develop  
a debt clearance strategy to gain fresh finance from IFIs

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Additional conditions placed by the amendment were that Zimbabwe held an election that is widely accepted as free, fair and credible by independent international and domestic civil society monitors; the president-elect was free to assume the duties of office; the government implemented the 2013 constitution – particularly by ‘aligning’ all legislation that predated the constitution with its provisions and implementing its devolution requirements; it demonstrated a sustained commitment to reforming Zimbabwe’s economy; and it accounted for diamond revenue in a transparent and credible manner.

A third measure is available to the US, as to all other countries, in visa bans. The US government placed a travel ban on Brigadier-General Anslem Sanyatwe,<sup>157</sup> who commanded the soldiers who had killed people in the post-election violence, basically holding that if the government of Zimbabwe were not going to sanction those responsible for the killing of civilians, it would do so.

The Executive Order against SDNs was continued in March 2018 without so much as a backward glance at the events of November 2017 or any attempt to revise

the now outdated list of SDNs, some of whom had since died. It appeared that the White House regarded Zimbabwe as being of little geopolitical or economic interest. US targeted sanctions currently apply to 84 Zimbabwean individuals and 56 entities (mostly farms and legal entities owned by the 84 individuals).<sup>158</sup>

The amendments to ZDERA of June 2018 suggested that policy on Zimbabwe was being driven by the Senate Foreign Relation Committee, and the two senators on the Committee with a special interest in Africa and Zimbabwe – Flake and Coons.

After the elections Flake, in an address to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,<sup>159</sup> commented that Zimbabwe ‘has yet to turn a page’, referencing, as a clear indication of this, the prosecution of Biti for unlawfully declaring that Chamisa had won the election before the official results were released.<sup>160</sup>

### **The ‘sanctions’ discourse**

The measures adopted by the EU and US neither constituted a trade embargo against Zimbabwe nor provided for the cessation of humanitarian aid to its citizens. Both the EU’s restrictive measures and the Executive Order of the US president placed asset embargoes on specified companies and individuals, and specifically (EU) and implicitly (US) travel bans.<sup>161</sup>

ZDERA has never been implemented. The question of financial assistance from IFIs for Zimbabwe has never arisen, as Zimbabwe is required to clear arrears before fresh financial assistance can be considered. With Zimbabwe unable to clear these arrears,<sup>162</sup> US representatives have never exercised the veto provided for by ZDERA.

However, since 2015<sup>163</sup> Zimbabwe has been trying to develop a debt clearance strategy to gain fresh finance from IFIs – a policy pursued with increased vigour by Mnangagwa’s finance minister.<sup>164</sup> ZDERA will need to be tackled in any debt clearance plan that involves financial assistance from IFIs.<sup>165</sup>

The EU’s ‘restrictive measures’ and provisions of the US’ executive order, although inconvenient to those affected, were, and were intended, to be largely symbolic in effect<sup>166</sup> – an expression of disapproval of the Mugabe administration. The implementing countries could thus be seen ‘to be doing something’. However, they would have contributed to Zimbabwe’s pariah status in the global North.

Furthermore, with Zimbabwe essentially dollarising, American banks became important in commerce with Zimbabwe to handle transactions or as correspondent banks for money transfers. Rather than trying to navigate through and interpret US Treasury and OFAC rules in this regard, it was simpler, safer<sup>167</sup> and cheaper for US banks to simply decline any Zimbabwean-affiliated transaction.<sup>168</sup>

The absence of a trade embargo or, indeed, any sanctions against Zimbabwe itself did not stop Mugabe’s spin doctors from asserting as often as possible that the country was ‘reeling under illegal Western sanctions’; building this component of

the left column narrative. The precipitous post-2000 economic decline after the land invasions of that year could conveniently be attributed to these 'sanctions'.

In 2013 the government claimed that the sanctions had caused a loss to the economy of more than US\$40 billion.<sup>169</sup> Some academics called for the removal of sanctions if only to remove this excuse from Mugabe's propaganda armoury.<sup>170</sup>

The actual effect, if any, of the measures imposed by the US and EU on Zimbabwe's economy or GDP, or linkages between the two, was never really elaborated upon. In 2017 the government awarded a US\$150 000 tender to a group of academics for research showing how the supposed US\$40 billion loss had arisen.<sup>171</sup> The subsequent report, which was sought for purposes of government propaganda, was never taken seriously.

There appears to have been only one genuine attempt to analyse the effect of the measures, undertaken by a South African-based NGO, IDASA, in 2010.<sup>172</sup> In contrast, there are ample economic data and studies that attribute Zimbabwe's precipitous economic decline to the sudden collapse of large-scale commercial agriculture. The economy shrank 5% in 2000, 8% in 2001, 12% in 2002 and up to 18% in 2003 in the immediate aftermath of 'land reform'.<sup>173</sup>

## Chapter 3

# Strengthening the opposing narrative

### Opposition to the government and the suppression of dissent

Opposition to the government and the suppression of dissent are circumstances of the narrative trajectories that give rise to the narrative components of the brutal dictator's suppressing legitimate dissent against hardships brought about by misgovernance (in the case of the right column), and the narrative component of Western countries intent on stoking unrest by sanction-induced hardships to incite the population to rise up and effect regime change (the left column narrative).

This section shows how the proponents of each narrative help strengthen the narrative of the other in the context of dissent. Furthermore, the players in the script of each narrative seem to act out their roles by rote, unable to shake off the parts in which they are cast and supporting the counter narratives in the process. To demonstrate this point, it is necessary to bring another player onto the stage.

The Centre for Applied Non-Violent Action Strategies (CANVAS) is an NGO born out of the movement to depose Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic. Its website indicates that it provides support and training to pro-democracy groups, and that *Foreign Policy* listed Srdja Popovic, one of the co-founders, as among 'the Top 100 Global Thinkers of 2011 for inspiring the Arab Spring protesters'.

CANVAS and Serbian pro-democracy activists have long had a presence among opposition groups in Zimbabwe. After the 2002 presidential elections in Zimbabwe, anonymous activist group Zvakwana! ('Enough!') emerged, copying the cry of the Serbian OPTOR! ('Resistance!') movement, and some of its tactics.<sup>174</sup>

In 2006 senior MDC leader Prof. Welshman Ncube, then disaffected with the mainstream opposition party, the MDC-T, revealed that top MDC activists had been sent to Serbia for training on mass action:

[O]ne of the things they were taught in Serbia was that in order to engage in successful mass action, you needed a core group of young people who had no stake in society, who had nothing to lose. They went ahead and

recruited these people when they came back – from Mbare, Highfields – pickpockets, thieves and all and trained them and they were supposed to be our core group ...<sup>175</sup>

These recruits emerged as the Democratic Resistance Committees and a group known as the Order of the Vanguard, or simply the Vanguard.<sup>176</sup> The groups, particularly the latter, became associated with acts of violence linked to the MDC, not least inter-party violence, as (so Ncube puts it)<sup>177</sup> ‘they then became a readily available army [for] anyone who wanted youths to hire against an opponent’.

In 2011 Popovic was believed to have engaged with the conveners of Zimbabwe’s prestigious Harare International Festival of the Arts to introduce political content into the stage shows at the festival. The conveners travelled to Serbia for social media training, sponsored by the Zimbabwean-based governance NGO Casals (itself headed by a Serbian) and the US government’s Office for Transitional Initiatives.<sup>178</sup>

CANVAS also offers training on ‘Dilemma Action Strategy’. The idea behind this training is to present regimes with a dilemma by engaging in non-violent protest that pushes the envelope of democratic space. The regime either allows the protest, appearing powerless and resulting in widened democratic space, or moves to repress the protest, thus exposing it as an autocratic, illegitimate and repressive regime.<sup>179</sup> It is difficult to see what the widened democratic space would be, besides the right to protest itself.

The strategy thus gains a subtext, whereby the unspoken intention seems to be to engage in protests of such a nature and extent (possibly threatening an Arab Spring effect) as to goad the authorities into a repressive response and so draw all the condemnation that comes with it. To put matters rather bluntly, the idea seems to be to pull the tiger’s tail, so that when it turns around and bites, one can point to it as a dangerous and brutal beast that must be removed.

It is also obvious that if the protests include a bit of wanton destruction of property, the possibility of a heavy-handed response becomes more likely. In the case of Zimbabwe, the state appears not only authoritarian and lacking the consent of the ruled, but also politically unstable and an unsuitable investment destination, so advancing the *kudira jecha* strategy.

While one may be sure that this is not officially part of the CANVAS training, it is unlikely to go unnoticed by would-be protestors or protest organisers. Some delegates at the CANVAS workshops became so uncomfortable with the agenda that they returned to Zimbabwe before the end of the training.<sup>180</sup>

If protests of this nature are widespread and well supported, a repressive and severe response is almost assured by an already insecure regime fearful of an Arab Spring-type uprising.

Any links between CANVAS and opposition groups in Zimbabwe would present the government with a propaganda coup in its effort to advance the regime change component of its narrative. The propaganda coup turns to propaganda heaven when combined with information that CANVAS is believed to have close links with Stratfor (Strategic Forecasting Inc.), which advertises itself as a 'shadow CIA' gathering intelligence for corporate clients and the US government. Popovic's wife was apparently employed by Stratfor for a year.<sup>181</sup>

Then there is the fact that CANVAS receives funding from a variety of US sources, including the National Endowment of Democracy. The CANVAS website provides the connection to complete the regime change narrative by referring to Venezuela as 'a place we have been'<sup>182</sup> (Popovic reportedly developed a strategy document to unseat Maduro for Guido, for whom he expresses great admiration)<sup>183</sup> and Zimbabwe as a place where training is 'ongoing'. CANVAS convened several training workshops for Zimbabwean activists before the elections, including one in April 2018.<sup>184</sup>

The CANVAS presence, coupled with the incendiary statements made before the elections (cited earlier) would have made the government extremely nervous and unwilling to take any chances of being overrun. There were other factors in the mix too.

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If the opposition had, in accordance with CANVAS strategy, set out to provoke a repressive response from the state, it might not have fully anticipated the deployment of soldiers rather than the police, but it certainly should not have ignored the possibility.

During the events of November 2017, with the police and CIO supporting, or perceived to support, the president, the military had moved to neutralise when it mobilised against both Mugabe and the G40 faction. The process of neutralisation was consolidated after Mugabe's departure. The police and CIO hierarchies were purged.<sup>185</sup> The military assumed a supervisory and directive role over both policing and intelligence.

As one purged CIO officer noted, the problem is that the military is a singularly blunt instrument to achieve the objectives of both institutions. As an example, he pointed to the disappearance and assumed murder of Itai Dzamara. The CIO, he said, had enough political nous to know that Dzamara's lone protest against Mugabe's rule at a square in the centre of the capital had little impact, and in fact could be used by the government to portray itself as permitting freedom of expression.

The abduction of Dzamara, according to the operative, was conducted by the military and horrified CIO strategists. It achieved little other than to bring widespread international condemnation of Mugabe's government, embarrassed governments that had been seeking rapprochement with ZANU PF, and vindicated claims that Mugabe was a dictator leading a bloody and ruthless regime.

The military, the CIO operative said, was unable to formulate a nuanced approach to state security. Soldiers are trained to attack and annihilate the enemy – and anyone opposed to ZANU PF is regarded as such.

The killings by soldiers on 1 August 2018 can be viewed as part of this *modus operandi* and an obtuseness with regard to Mnangagwa's re-engagement policy. It is also likely that the military had displaced the police in restoring order that fateful day, not because the police were overwhelmed or unable to do so, but because they could not be trusted to do so and were perceived by the military as being unwilling to do so.

It was somewhat contradictory for some opposition groups to refer to the events of November as a coup and simultaneously claim that little had changed from the Mugabe era.

Yet whether the events of November technically constituted a coup or not, many of the effects of a coup were felt in the polity. The military had always been an influential player in Zimbabwe's politics, particularly after the 2008 'veto coup'.<sup>186</sup> However, the strategy of the G40 group in Mugabe's latter years had been to try to 'renew' ZANU PF and ensure its survival, seeking to shift Mugabe's and the party's reliance on war veterans and the military to maintain their grip on power, to the police and the state's intelligence agency, referred to as the CIO.<sup>187</sup>

Recognising the changing demographics of the electorate, the G40 also sought electoral support from the youth rather than the party's old guard. The resultant marginalisation of the military was one of the main factors motivating its November 2017 intervention.<sup>188</sup>

The intervention in November 2017 did more than merely restore the military's influence in politics. It increased to unprecedented levels. Military commanders who had played a prominent role in facilitating Mugabe's departure took up important portfolios in the new Mnangagwa government. Chiwenga, the Defence Force commander, as has been seen, became Vice-President, and initially, albeit unconstitutionally, Minister of Defence. Perrance Shiri, the Air Force commander, became Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement and Sibusiso Moyo, 'the face of the coup' who had announced the military intervention on state television, became the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

These were merely symptoms and the most obvious markers of increased military influence in the management of the state.



The MDC-A was well aware of these dynamics. It should have been aware of the possibility of the deployment of troops and that to encourage any supporters to engage in violent protests was to put them in harm's way.

The 1 August protests were preceded two days before by the claim by Biti that he had evidence that Chamisa had won the election and an apparent tweet from Chamisa himself<sup>189</sup> that the only reason that the results had not been announced was that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission was attempting to manipulate them.<sup>190</sup> When, on 1 August, the presidential results were not released but parliamentary results were, showing ZANU PF with a massive lead, militant groups began gathering near the counting centre.

Reports of the numbers concerned diverge widely, with the police claiming that 4 000 protesters had assembled<sup>191</sup> and some eyewitnesses claiming only 200–300 largely passive demonstrators.

Evidence of the extent of the violence is also inconsistent. Government and ZANU PF supporters claimed that vehicles were burnt and damaged, ZANU PF buildings attacked, the police pelted with stones, roads barricaded with burning tyres and concrete blocks, and property looted.<sup>192</sup>

The decision to deploy troops was later justified on the basis that the epicentre of the demonstrations was adjacent to the ZEC Command Centre and that the centre could be overrun and results destroyed, with the MDC-A threat to ensure that 'there was no election' made good.<sup>193</sup>

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### The marginalisation of the military was one of the main factors motivating its November 2017 intervention

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The government also claimed that the police were unable to contain the situation and that the MDC-A intended to make the country 'ungovernable' as threatened. Regardless of where the truth lay, it is certain that the protest could not be characterised as peaceful. The tiger's tail had been pulled.

The events of 1 August had the effect of strengthening both the left column and right column narratives. The Mnangagwa government pointed to the incendiary statements made by senior MDC-A officials in the pre-polling period and immediately after polling – statements about the country being ungovernable if Chamisa was not declared the winner – and the violence of the protestors to assert that the protests were part of a regime change agenda. Later, CANVAS was specifically referenced as having influenced events.

The MDC-A pointed to the use of the military and live ammunition for purposes of basic crowd control that could and should have been handled by the police,

and that soldiers had seemingly been deployed without presidential authority as constitutionally required.<sup>194</sup>

The MDC-A advanced the view that the military had been deployed so that Mnangagwa could retain his hold on power despite losing the elections. Despite the poll, it effectively said, the military had ensured that Zimbabwe remained in the hands of a bloody, brutal and illegitimate dictator.

At considerable cost, the events of 1 August were precisely to the MDC-A's advantage. There is, however, scant evidence that the MDC-A leadership had directly incited the protests, though it seems clear that at least some party activists had participated.<sup>195</sup> The MDC-A distanced itself from the protests,<sup>196</sup> perhaps overdoing it somewhat, as Chamisa's claim that he was absent from the scene, having 'gone into the mountains to pray', seemed suspiciously convenient.<sup>197</sup>

However, responsibility for the deaths and injuries lay solely with the military, regardless of the extent to which its response to provocation could have been anticipated by precedent. The disproportionate response of the military played perfectly into the hands of the 'spoilers'.

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### Intensive damage control was required to rescue Mnangagwa's re-engagement strategy

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The election was irreparably tainted. The flow of trade enquiries by international investors in the months prior to polling dried up overnight.<sup>198</sup> The view was put forward that the international community, and particularly the British, had been naïve in supporting Mnangagwa and accepting his rhetoric at face value.<sup>199</sup>

Characterisation of the November 2017 events as a 'coup' in which the military had gained control of many, if not all, significant levers of power in government was strengthened, along with the assertion that the new dispensation was not new at all. It was the same bus, different driver.<sup>200</sup>

Furthermore, it was clear that the driver was not so different from Mugabe as not to countenance the deployment of the military against unarmed civilians – either that, or there was serious policy discord between Mnangagwa and Chiwenga (who was believed to have instructed the military to deploy), adding grist to the instability rumour mill. Questions were asked as to who exactly was in charge.<sup>201</sup>

Intensive damage control was required to rescue Mnangagwa's re-engagement strategy. That came in the form of a commission of inquiry, headed by former South African president Kgalema Motlanthe, into the violence and events of 1 August.

If the Motlanthe Commission did manage to control the damage to some extent, its effects were short-lived when, in mid-January 2019, less than a month after publication of the commission's report and recommendations (which included that soldiers should be deployed only as a last resort and that live ammunition should only be used in limited circumstances of a danger to public safety),<sup>202</sup> soldiers again took to the streets to quell protests, again leaving a trail of dead, unarmed civilians behind them.

The political reforms promised in Mnangagwa's November 2017 speech did not seem to have been pursued with any enthusiasm. The economy deteriorated considerably rather than improving, causing additional hardships to the vulnerable in society. By January 2019 the black market rate for RTGS money to real US\$ had increased to 3:1. Fuel was essentially being sold for about 45 real US cents. At this price, demand far outstripped supply.

The government fuel bill, which represents the biggest charge on the foreign currency allocated by the Reserve Bank to the import of essential commodities (over 34%),<sup>203</sup> had increased by over 100% from 2018. Kilometre-long and stagnant queues formed at petrol stations.<sup>204</sup>

For a government already strapped for foreign currency, the situation was unsustainable. Late on Saturday, 12 January 2019, the government hiked the fuel price by 150% to \$3.31. Although the price of fuel remained cheap in real dollar terms, for Zimbabwe's labour force, paid in RTGS dollars, the price hike appeared equally untenable.

On Sunday 13 January the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and 'This Flag' activist Evan Mawarire called for a three-day stay-away, from 14–16 January. By then<sup>205</sup> angry protesters had poured into the streets of the major cities. Vehicles (including police vehicles), a police base and tollgate were set ablaze.<sup>206</sup> Barricades were set up on major transport routes. The fears of ZANU PF and the military that a mass protest against socio-economic conditions could turn into an Arab Spring-style uprising would have grown.

This fear would have been extant despite the fact that demonstrations, mass protests, strikes and stay-aways in Zimbabwe are generally poorly supported by opposition groups. One of the more successful in recent times was that of July 2016. It was apparent that the success of the stay-away then was on account of the support of commuter omnibus drivers on whom most of the country's work force relies for transport.<sup>207</sup>

Those organising the mid-January protests of 2019 had learned this lesson well. Roadblocks were set up, with tyres and rocks, on all major routes into and

within the capital and other towns. Militant youths, armed with hoes and sticks, controlled passage through the roadblocks.<sup>208</sup>

It was foolhardy for any public transport operator try to move around the cities. Businesses and shops closed either voluntarily or after warnings of dire consequences should they fail to do so. Widespread looting provided further encouragement for shops to close their doors. The shutdown was total.

The number of protestors, the level of violence and looting, and the comprehensiveness of the shutdown were unprecedented in post-independence Zimbabwe. There were some indications that the ‘popcorn strategy’ had been deployed and social media used to establish hundreds of small groups to coordinate area-based protests and set up roadblocks.<sup>209</sup>

Mawarire had previously indicated that pro-democracy groups had received training on the strategy – a citizen-based organisational stratagem ‘where any member can spontaneously generate a campaign. Ideas come from the periphery, from the grassroots.’<sup>210</sup> The idea is thus that there is no central organising point for the protests and no single coordinator.<sup>211</sup>

The Zimbabwe government claimed that these training workshops on the popcorn strategy were funded by Germany and the US.<sup>212</sup> Internet access was shut down by government. The stated purpose was to contain the proliferation of these groups. The effect was to stop communication within and outside Zimbabwe on how the security sector was responding to the protests.<sup>213</sup>

The military responded with egregious brutality. A few accounts from a Human Rights Watch Report on the protest suffice to give a sense of the disproportionate use of force.

A 46-year-old woman said that nine armed men, six in army uniform, came to her house in Epworth on January 15 at about 9 pm. Two soldiers raped her without condoms in front of her teenage son. At the local police station, the police refused to record her complaint, telling her, ‘these things happen, these things are happening all over the country, so we cannot receive your report or open a police case docket’.<sup>214</sup>

and

The driver of a public bus, Morris Mukunga, said that on January 20, after the protests had ended, several armed soldiers in a white Isuzu pursued and fired on his bus in Budiro, Harare: ‘I had one passenger on board, and one conductor assisting me. I thought the soldiers would not shoot at a public transport vehicle with passengers on board, but the soldiers kept firing. They drove faster, came to the driver’s side, and shot at me through the door. Suddenly I felt like an electric shock to my right leg. I tried to control the vehicle to avoid crashing into houses. I eventually crashed into a tree, but the soldiers kept coming, shouting at me to come out of the bus, as they crashed

the windscreen with their rifle butts. They then dragged me out, pointing their guns at me. I saw I was bleeding a lot, and just before I passed out, I saw the soldiers beating my conductor and the passenger. When I woke up, I was in Harare hospital. My right leg had been amputated below the knee.'

In the manner of the 1998 food riots,<sup>215</sup> the military had determined not merely to crush the protests, killing a reported 17 people in the process, but also to teach the urban population a lesson on the consequences of violent dissent. Women were raped and people fitting the profile of protestors subjected to beatings and abuses. A total of 1 055 people were rounded up in dragnet arrests, many of them imprisoned with little regard by the courts and judicial system for due process.<sup>216</sup>

A draconian and repressive response is the payload of the dilemma action strategy, and the ZANU PF government provided it in spades. There is no sound evidence that the mid-January protests were in any way informed by the CANVAS training. However, they exactly fitted the dilemma action strategy and presented the government with the designed lose–lose outcome.

As had happened on 1 August, with the security sector concerned that an Arab Spring situation was developing, the military responded with extreme brutality to crush the protests.

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The events of 1 August 2018 could no longer be presented as an unfortunate lapse. The media commented that the last nail had been hammered into the re-engagement coffin, to be interred along with any possibility of Western investment, loans or aid.<sup>217</sup>

Proponents of the right column narrative duly pointed to the violent repression by the military as vindication of the view that Mnangagwa's new dispensation was the same as the old, as scripted. Re-engagement with and financial support for such a regime was unconscionable under the circumstances.

Proponents of the left hand column pointed to the protests as part of a regime change agenda by the West and 'conflated genuine concerns over imperial interventions in the developing world with the fight for democratic and human rights by national forces',<sup>218</sup> as scripted. CANVAS's dilemma action training was presented as evidence of the regime change agenda.<sup>219</sup>

Players in both narratives had thus provided the means for players in the counter narratives to act out their parts.

## Achieving the opposite of the intended effect through polemics

The narratives of each column create the appearance of proceeding in accordance with a set script. However, the degree of veracity of the various components of each may vary substantially and fluctuate over time. For example, in circumstance 3 in the table, attributing blame for the country's economic difficulties to sanctions is much stronger in the case of Venezuela than in Zimbabwe.<sup>220</sup> However, whatever position one takes on this, aligning with any one of the two narratives inserts the person, organisation or country so doing into the script.

In February 2019 an instructive debate illustrating the two narratives took place on the online pages of the *Daily Maverick*. The first was an article by the South African director of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Henning Suhr,<sup>221</sup> decrying South Africa's support for the Maduro government, which was likened to support for the Zimbabwean government.<sup>222</sup>

Suhr gave a strident exposition of the narrative in the right hand column of the table in relation to Venezuela and claimed that the ANC government seemed to insist on 'being on the wrong side of history'.

In his response, Aziz Pahad, former South African deputy minister of foreign affairs, advanced the narrative in the left column, pouring scorn on the idea that the 'US is trying to restore democracy in Venezuela, aiming to stabilize the region', as claimed by Suhr. Pahad pointed to the fact that 'the CIA has a long history of regime change operations in Latin America, including Guatemala (1954), the failed regime change activities in Cuba since 1961, the coup in Chile (1973), the intervention in Nicaragua (1980s) the invasion of Panama (1990) and regime change in Honduras (2009) – omitting, rather oddly, the US' documented involvement in the attempted coup against the democratically elected Hugo Chavez,<sup>223</sup> then Venezuelan president, in 2002.

South Africa, Pahad asserted, was quite right in refusing to support a regime change agenda carried out under the guise of a concern for human rights and democracy so that American multinationals could lay their hands on Venezuelan oil.

The last in the triad of *Daily Maverick* articles was co-authored by Greg Mills, of the Brenthurst Foundation think tank,<sup>224</sup> and Biti.<sup>225</sup> The opening salvo sets their position clearly: 'Aziz Pahad has, on these pages, attempted a defence of the murderous regime of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela. Anti-American antipathy trumps, it seems, empathy for human rights.' Mills and Biti complained that South Africa's support for regimes such as those in Venezuela and Zimbabwe, have encouraged anti-democratic excesses elsewhere in Southern Africa, notably Zambia and the DRC.

The problem with all three articles is that they are polemic and not analysis. Although each purports to respond to the other, they merely seek to advance their chosen narrative and do not address the points raised by those advancing the counter narrative. For example, Pahad ignored cogent arguments raised alleging anti-democratic practices by Maduro; Mills and Biti ignored the US' unflattering track record in South America which makes it seem obvious to some that '[r]egime change in Venezuela is not about the people's welfare, democracy or good governance but its vast oil reserves' – as Pahad asserts.

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In relation to the 2018 elections, the voters roll  
was in fact the most accurate for any of  
Zimbabwe's elections since independence

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As polemic, the articles thus unwittingly advance the positions they seek to undermine. Articles such as that of Biti and Mills are held up as an example of the propaganda war waged against governments antithetical to Western interests and articles such as that of Pahad as illustrative of a lack of concern with human rights and good governance. This situation is exacerbated by the disregard of fact in the polemics and deployment of spin. Mills and Biti's article in regard to Zimbabwe will be used to illustrate the point. In the article, the military in Zimbabwe are stated to have 'completely taken over', Mnangagwa is referred to as having first come to power through a military 'coup' and then through an election rendered 'dodgy' through 'an authoritarian playbook of fabricated voters' rolls, intimidation and violence, fake news, and fictional mathematics'. The claims about the military having completely taken over and the 'coup' are completely unnuanced and misleading. Similarly, in relation to the 2018 elections, the voters roll was in fact the most accurate for any of Zimbabwe's elections since independence with the deceased and duplicates removed;<sup>226</sup> Mnangagwa made repeated calls for a violence free election and much of the pre-election violence that eventuated arose from opposition primaries; all parties used fake news as a weapon; the fictional mathematics was demonstrably the domain of the MDC-A in their Constitutional Court challenge – ZEC's arithmetical errors paled by comparison.

This loose treatment of fact, serves little purpose other than to provide grounds for the Mnangagwa administration's complaint that it is subjected to extreme and hostile propaganda in the media. The media and articles such as this are not the only culprits.<sup>227</sup>

### **Twisting facts at an official level**

Perhaps more seriously and equally ill advised are other grounds given to the Mnangagwa government to complain of a negative Western agenda against it.

In February 2019 the question of the continuation of the EU's last few restrictive measures that applied to the Mugabes and remained suspended against eight other individuals<sup>228</sup> was to come up for consideration by the EU Council.<sup>229</sup>

In advance of the EU Council meeting the EU Parliament sought to influence the decision by passing a resolution on Zimbabwe. The preamble contained the following:

... whereas the final report of the EU EOM [election observation mission] states that the figures presented by the ZEC contained many anomalies and inaccuracies and raised enough questions to lead to doubts as to the accuracy and reliability of the numbers presented ...<sup>230</sup>

The resolution was copied and paraphrased from the EU EOM Report, albeit with the portion highlighted below elided:

The figures presented by ZEC contain many anomalies and inaccuracies. These did not bring in to question the results per se, but do raise enough questions to have doubt as to the accuracy and reliability of the numbers presented.

With this omission, the resolution of the EU Parliament made it appear as though the ZEC's determination that Mnangagwa had won the presidential poll could not be trusted. In so doing, it lent support to the MDC-A's claim<sup>231</sup> that Chamisa had won the election and that Mnangagwa was not legitimately in office – the first component for the trajectory set out in the right hand column of the matrix above.

The obvious deliberate distortion of the EU EOM Report to signal support for this chosen narrative provides grounds for the counter narrative that negative reports concerning the Mnangagwa administration are merely part of a hostile propaganda war by 'the West', unsupported by the facts.



## Chapter 4

# Perpetuation of the narratives

Once launched, the narratives gain a life of their own, with a variety of actors facilitating their perpetuation with little regard for the facts, or through deliberate fabrication. An example of the latter appears in the Motlanthe Commission Report.

The commissioners appear to have accepted the narrative that the MDC-A incited the violent protests as part of its *kudira jecha* strategy, holding that there was ‘overwhelming video evidence’ of this.

In support of the finding, the report quotes Chamisa as stating that he was ‘ready to take power either through votes or by any other means’ and that the MDC would ‘bring into the streets guys from Mbare Musika who were ready for violence’.<sup>232</sup> Mbare Musika is a tough, socio-economically deprived area of Harare. The ‘guys’ referred to are precisely the ‘lumpen’ elements who had nothing to lose that the MDC had been advised in Serbia to deploy for demonstrations.

Yet the quotes in the report are fabricated. The footnote in the report that ostensibly provides a link to the video of the rally where Chamisa is supposed to have made these statements, does not in fact direct to the video but to the Internet post of the Commission Report itself.<sup>233</sup>

The video of the rally is, however, available on *YouTube*.<sup>234</sup> The rally in question was held at Jerera Growth Point in April 2018 and Chamisa speaks in Shona throughout. At no time during the rally does he say the words alleged.

The report implies that similar statements were made at other MDC-A rallies, which are listed, but only two other statements are quoted, which do not convey the same inflammatory intent as the fabricated quote. The footnote links to the other videos are similarly defective.

Footage of the rallies shows them as conducted in Shona. There were only three Shona speakers<sup>235</sup> on the commission to check the veracity of the statements allegedly made in the videos and treated as fundamental evidence. One of the Shona speakers is well known in Zimbabwe as a ZANU PF apologist.<sup>236</sup>

The alleged quotes from the Jerera Growth point should have been treated as suspect since both Chamisa and Biti, as lawyers, are always careful to couch their statements in this regard in the passive voice – for example, that if Chamisa were not declared the winner of the election ‘the country would become ungovernable’, and not that he would make it so. The fabricated quote of Chamisa relating to the Mbare youths is likely to be re-quoted, citing the Motlanthe Commission Report<sup>237</sup> as a source, and so providing support for the regime change narrative.

Similarly, the fabricated quote ostensibly from the EU EOM Report, discussed above, will be quoted<sup>238</sup> to support the ‘illegitimacy’ component of the counter narrative, but referencing the EU EOM Report rather than the EU Parliament resolution where the elided misquote appears.

## Chapter 5

# The January protests and the international response

South Africa's response to situation in Zimbabwe came almost a week after the bloody mid-January protests had ended, in a statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa:

SA has made a clarion call to the international community to lift the unfair and unjustified sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe. We made this position clear at the World Economic Forum in Davos and recently at the European Union. We are pleased that the EU has lifted sanctions on some members of your government. We want more than just that, we want to see real support for Zimbabwe.<sup>239</sup>

Against the backdrop of events, the statement appeared almost as a non sequitur. A week later Ramaphosa, as leader of the ruling ANC party, dispatched an ANC (rather than government) delegation to Zimbabwe to assess the situation. ANC secretary-general Ace Magashule, leading the delegation,<sup>240</sup> stated:

This is our solidarity visit to Zanu-PF, to Zimbabweans. We undertake this visit because of the present situation we have observed at a distance ... And as former liberation movements, I think we have agreed that this is the time to consolidate and strengthen our relationship.<sup>241</sup>

Magashule was then widely misquoted as having said:

Zimbabwe is faced with this well calculated, well planned activities of insurrection, of ungovernability.<sup>242</sup>

In fact, Magashule said this was what he had been told by ZANU PF Secretary for Administration Obert Mpfu, and had commented on the information by stating, 'We want to understand so that when we look as to what is the way forward we have comprehended.'

ZANU PF made as much political hay from the visit as possible.<sup>243</sup> Described as 'a solidarity fraternal meeting by sister parties', ZANU PF spokesperson

Simon Khaya-Moyo indicated that a resolution has been passed where the parties acknowledged:

- The peaceful and credible manner in which the 30 July 2018 harmonised elections were conducted
- The subsequent deserving endorsement of the election results by regional and international observer groups, including the landmark ruling by the Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe
- That there is no legitimacy issue surrounding the Presidency
- That the parties continue working in common purpose towards strengthening their existing excellent relations
- That the parties acknowledge that the major challenges confronting Zimbabwe are a result of the illegal sanctions imposed by Britain and her allies over the bilateral dispute between Zimbabwe and the former over the land reform programme

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The resolutions contrasted sharply with those issued by the EU Parliament ahead of the EU Council's annual consideration of restrictive measures against Zimbabwe, due that February. The EU Parliament resolution, inter alia,

- Strongly condemns the violence that occurred during the recent protests in Zimbabwe
- Firmly believes that peaceful protest is part of a democratic process and that excessive force in response must be avoided in all circumstances
- Urges President Mnangagwa to remain true to his inaugural promises ... and to put Zimbabwe back on a path of reconciliation and respect for democracy and the rule of law
- Urges the Zimbabwean authorities to put an immediate end to abuses by security forces and to promptly and impartially investigate all allegations of excessive use of force and allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including rape and sexual violence, in order to establish individual responsibilities, with a view to ensuring accountability
- Urges the Zimbabwean authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners
- Is deeply concerned about reported violations of due process through fast-tracking and mass trials

- Condemns the Internet shutdown that allowed the authorities to conceal the human rights abuses committed by the army and internal security forces and to obstruct independent reporting
- Expresses particular concern at the economic and social situation in Zimbabwe
- Recalls that the country's main problems are poverty, unemployment and chronic malnutrition and hunger and considers that these problems can only be solved through the implementation of ambitious policies on employment, education, health and agriculture
- Reminds the Government of Zimbabwe that the support of the European Union and its member states in the context of the Cotonou Agreement, and for trade, development, and economic assistance, is conditional on its respecting the rule of law and the international conventions and treaties to which it is party, that long-term support hinges on comprehensive reforms rather than mere promises and that these reforms should be political as well as economic
- Encourages the government, the opposition, civil society representatives and religious leaders to engage on an equal footing in a national dialogue
- Calls on the EU delegation and EU member state embassies in Zimbabwe to continue their close monitoring of developments in the country and to use all appropriate tools to support human rights defenders, civil society organisations and trade unions, to promote the essential elements of the Cotonou Agreement and to support pro-democracy movements<sup>244</sup>

The US responded in a similar manner. On 17 January the US Embassy in Harare issued a statement<sup>245</sup>

- Urging all parties to exercise restraint and to make every effort to find a peaceful solution
- Condemning any disproportionate use of force and call[ing] on Zimbabwe's security forces to respond to civil unrest professionally and with respect for human life and constitutional rights
- Indicating alarm by credible reports that security forces are targeting and beating political activists and labour leaders

It was followed by a press statement on 12 February by the US Department of State<sup>246</sup>

- Calling [on the] government to immediately release the civil society activists who have been arbitrarily detained
- Calling for security force members responsible for human rights violations and abuses to be held accountable, reiterating its call for the Government of Zimbabwe to enact promised political and economic reforms

- Noting that the Government of Zimbabwe's use of violence against civil society and imposition of undue Internet restrictions betray promises to create a new Zimbabwe

The statement ended with a call by the US for 'all sides to come together immediately in national dialogue. The dialogue process must be credible, inclusive, and mediated by a neutral third party.'

The new British Ambassador to Zimbabwe,<sup>247</sup> Melanie Robinson, had posted an early tweet: 'Troubling scenes on the streets of Harare and Bulawayo today. Zimbabweans should be able to protest, but this should be peaceful. And security forces need to act proportionately and with restraint.' Minister of State for Africa Harriett Baldwin subsequently issued a statement:

While we condemn the violent behaviour of some protestors, and unlawful acts such as arson and looting, we are deeply concerned that Zimbabwe's security forces have acted disproportionately in response.<sup>248</sup>

The Zimbabwean ambassador was summonsed.<sup>249</sup> Later Baldwin indicated that she believed that there was a case for the EU to widen sanctions when they came up for review, that Britain would no longer support Zimbabwe's return to the Commonwealth because of behaviour incompatible with its values and that, in regard to a financial bailout for Zimbabwe 'we are a long way from that and we have gone further away as a result of use of violence by the security forces'. She urged South Africa to take a leading role in regard to Zimbabwe.<sup>250</sup>

## Chapter 6

# Breaking the trajectory

It should be readily apparent that the events of mid-January unfolded precisely according to script. The response of the Zimbabwe security sector was as per the dilemma action strategy, and international condemnation from the 'West' flowed freely.

As has been seen, the responses from the West cast doubt on the veracity of the election results,<sup>251</sup> suggesting that the security sector acted on instruction of an illegitimate regime; linked the protests to misgovernance and the political rather than the economic; downplayed or airbrushed the violence of the protestors; and implicitly urged the widening of sanctions. The condemnation was accompanied by a call for a national dialogue.

In short, the West lined up behind the right hand column narrative. In doing so, it had cogent evidence establishing one component of its adopted narrative – the brutal suppression of the protestors, the later crackdown on human rights defenders and opposition groups and members, and denial of due process to those incarcerated.

South Africa duly lined up with the left hand column narrative. In so doing it ignored the violent response of Zimbabwe's security sector, the killings and rapes,<sup>252</sup> and the crackdown on dissenters or potential dissenters that followed. Instead, the government chose to focus on the weak sanctions component of its chosen narrative and suggested sympathy with the 'regime change' component, then being pushed heavily by ZANU PF. This caused some outrage in South African media and strong criticism by South Africa's main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, and by opposition groups in Zimbabwe.<sup>253</sup>

A sense of *déjà vu* descended, with Mbeki's policy of quiet diplomacy in the face of Mugabe's excesses and regime change claims looming large. It appeared to many that South Africa had no developed policy on Zimbabwe, and had simply lined up with the left hand column narrative (as it has done over Venezuela) as its default position.

The adoption of default positions in relation to Zimbabwe (or other countries on the same trajectory) is unhelpful. It results in polarisation at a geopolitical level,

a 'you-are-either-with-us-or-against-us' attitude and zero-sum politics; creates policy dilemmas; and forecloses a nuanced approach to the problem.

For example, it has always been obvious that Zimbabwe would require a large infusion of cash in the post-Mugabe era if there were to be any kind of recovery. State violence then presents a dilemma for international relations. If punitive economic measures are imposed as a deterrent to human rights abuses, social unrest on account of declining living standards may result in further unrest, violence and political instability, driving away investment and continuing a downward spiral.

Yet financial support to stop the economic decline appears as the provision of succour to a brutal and undeserving regime and carries a domestic political cost to the government providing it.

There are obvious ways of avoiding this kind of difficulty. There should be no alignment with particular narratives on account of geopolitical allegiances or ideology, and a return to principle. Principles should then be applied, not to the particular narratives as a whole but the component part of each.

Thus, for example, there should be careful consideration as to whether, say, the 'regime change' component of the narrative in Venezuela has both cogency and significance. If so, a condemnation of this component should follow as a matter of democratic principle.

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Since the narrative with the regime change component is not accepted as a whole, acceptance of the regime change component does not preclude condemnation of rights abuses, misgovernance or corruption by the Maduro government if the evidence is similarly cogent and significant.

The approach adopted by South Africa in relation to Zimbabwe is clearly at odds with this approach, with the focus on sanctions and regime change components where the evidence lacks cogency, is insignificant or is more apparent than real. In the process, the component where the evidence is cogent and significant – state violence and human rights abuses – was ignored.

Appropriate criticism of the Zimbabwean government in this regard from South Africa will alert the former to the extreme folly of acting out the role written for it by the dilemma action strategy. Rather than falling into the trap and discarding human rights, the rule of law and due process in relation to the protestors, the Zimbabwean government should be advised to break free from its set script and



to deal firmly with the protests (with continued economic decline more protests are surely in the offing), but with scrupulous adherence to the rule of law and due process.

Similarly, appropriate condemnation of the failure of Zimbabwe's security sector to so react does not preclude the provision of financial assistance on the basis of the accompanying component in the same narrative set, that of misgovernance and corruption. It merely requires that government-to-government assistance should be eschewed until these problems are attended to.

South Africa can assist government-to-business and business-to-business transactions in Zimbabwe in a way that improves the flow of foreign currency into the country; the limited nature of which is at the root of Zimbabwe's immediate economic problems.

This can be accomplished, for example, by underwriting letters of credit to Zimbabwean businesses that require an initial infusion of foreign currency to produce export goods to generate foreign currency receipts, and so starting an upward spiral for the benefit of Zimbabweans, stimulating production in mines and factories (or keeping them open) to the benefit of workers and the population as a whole rather than the governing elite.

Carefully managed, helping Zimbabwe out of its current crisis in this way need not draw the approbation of assisting a rogue regime and will ultimately be to the benefit of South Africa itself and the SADC region as a whole.



# Notes

- 1 Then aged 93.
- 2 N Beardsworth et al., Briefing Zimbabwe: the coup that never was, and the election that could have been, *African Affairs*, 1–17, 2019. The choreography is referred to by the authors 'as carefully curated piece of political theatre' that failed to conceal what they regard as the reality of a 'coup'.
- 3 On Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, Tanzanian leader Julius Nyerere famously said to President Robert Mugabe, 'You have inherited a jewel in Africa, do not tarnish it.'
- 4 The reference to Zimbabwe as a pariah state is commonplace – see *Daily News*, ED faces uphill task to re-engage world, 20 January 2019.
- 5 US companies had substantial mining concessions in the DRC that were threatened by the end of Mobutu Seso Seko's regime and the incoming leader, Laurent Kabila. Later, the US made ending the war in the DRC a condition for financial support – see the comments on ZDERA below.
- 6 See D Matyszak, Introduction, in *Law, politics and Zimbabwe's 'unity' government*, Harare: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung/Research and Advocacy Unit, 2010, for a summary of these events.
- 7 D Matyszak, *Everything you ever wanted to know (and then some) about Zimbabwe's indigenisation and economic empowerment legislation but (quite rightly) were too afraid to ask*, Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU), 2010, <http://www.swradioafrica.com/Documents/indigenisation-report070410.pdf>.
- 8 See more on these aspects below.
- 9 The claim that such a clause had belatedly been added to the draft constitution was part of the government's justification for the land invasions and attempt to explain why the invasions occurred in the wake of what was effectively ZANU PF's first ever loss at the polls. There is no evidence that such a clause was added, although it is often assumed in the literature on Zimbabwe – see, for example, M Bratton, *Power politics in Zimbabwe*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014, 75.
- 10 The narrative is set out in detail in F Muchemwa, *The struggle for land in Zimbabwe (1890–2010)*, *The Patriot*, 2017 (serialised).
- 11 For example, I Scoones, *Land reform in Zimbabwe*, Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018; J Hanlon, *Zimbabwe takes back its land*, Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2012. Other notable authors leaning in this direction are Lionel Cliffe, Ben Cousins, Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros. The admitted tendency is to focus on the outcome of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme through case studies, rather than its provenance – see L Cliffe et al. (eds), *Outcomes of post-2000 fast track land reform in Zimbabwe*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2017.
- 12 Extra-Ordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government, Communiqué, Dar es Salaam, 28–29 March 2007 is a fair representation. The communiqué 'recalled that free, fair and democratic presidential election were held in 2002 in Zimbabwe' and 'appealed for the lifting of all forms of sanctions against Zimbabwe'.
- 13 Inaugural speech after the July 2018 polls.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 See *The Chronicle*, New dispensation ... ED takeover excites diaspora investors, 29 November 2017, for an early official use of the phrase. It does not appear in the referenced speeches.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Inaugural speech, November 2017.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Mugabe's post-2013 elections speech at the UN is a fair example: see *VoANews*, In UN address, Mugabe tells Britain, US 'shame, shame, shame', 26 November 2013.
- 21 Mnangagwa's policies have been criticised in several quarters as constituting a capitulation by ZANU PF to the forces of neo-liberalism – see, for example, D Hodgkinson, How to make sense of the early 2019

protests in Zimbabwe, Africa is a Country (blog), <https://africasacountry.com/2019/01/zimbabweshutdown-and-zanupfs-neo-liberal-turn-again>.

- 22 The monograph was written through the period April–August 2019.
- 23 See Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, Venezuela: UN expert analyses the economic embargo situation and the socio-economic crisis, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/venezuela-un-expert-analyses-the-economic-embargo-situation-and-the-socio-economic-crisis>
- 24 Right-leaning candidates seeking US backing (and that of Evangelical Christian Zionism) invariably seem to find that the most convenient way to do so is by indicating support for key US ally, Israel. This has been the case most notably with Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Mauricio Macri in Argentina and, more importantly for present purposes, Juan Guaidó in Venezuela ('First we will renew the relationship and then we will announce the appointment of an ambassador in Israel to be at the embassy in Jerusalem, and we very much hope that an ambassador from Israel will come to us' – *Hawar News*, We to renew our relations with Israel, open our embassy in Jerusalem, 12 February 2019. <https://www.hawarnews.com/en/haber/juan-guido-we-to-renew-our-relations-with-israel-open-our-embassy-in-jerusalem-h6853.html>) and Chamisa in Zimbabwe (At the launch of the party manifesto in June 2018 Chamisa said his party would deepen ties with Israel and open an embassy there. Chamisa then travelled to Israel a few weeks later).
- 25 As is now well known, the Lacoste moniker is derived from the fashion label, the icon of which is a crocodile, Mnangagwa's nickname.
- 26 Movement for Democratic Change – Alliance.
- 27 Though the party he leads did not adopt this title until June 2018.
- 28 *Daily News*, Zanu PF fretting over G40 threats, 8 June 2018; *Daily News*, Grace not welcome at MDC-Alliance June 8, 2018, 10 June 2018. Political gossip had it that the G40 was negotiating for a set number of seats in Parliament in exchange for political support.
- 29 *The Herald*, MDC Alliance manifesto finally out, 8 June 2018.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 Welshman Ncube.
- 32 *Newsday*, Chamisa fears manifesto theft by Zanu PF, 18 April 2018.
- 33 *Daily News*, ED has no original concepts, 4 October 2018.
- 34 There was credible talk (information supplied to the author by a person who said he had been involved in the process) before the elections that ZANU PF and the MDC-A had engaged in talks around a post-election power-sharing arrangement. It is most likely that if such talks took place, the arrangement was intended as a parachute in the event that Mnangagwa lost the poll. After Mnangagwa's win, there were denials that a power-sharing arrangement had ever been mooted post-Mugabe, and such an arrangement was in any event now out of the question. See *Newsday*, Transitional govt the key: Chamisa, 24 October 2018; *Daily News*, 18 govt dismisses Chamisa, 25 October 2018.
- 35 See *YouTube*, Chamisa seeking to explain his use of the phrase to the Motlanthe Commission, <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=13sOH7Yg9GU>; *Zimbabwe Independent*, Why Mnangagwa, Chamisa must find each other now, 1 February 2019. The MDC-A has sought to avoid being labelled as spoilers by stating that the *kudira jecha* phrase was intended only to apply to the Constitutional Court presidential petition – *Bulawayo24News*, Chamisa explains the meaning of 'Kudira Jecha', 5 April 2019. However, the phrase had been used at pre-election rallies to mean that Mnangagwa would not be allowed to enjoy an election win.
- 36 Compare the comments by US senators in the Foreign Relations committee, later in the text.
- 37 Mnangagwa had also been incarcerated with Mugabe after 1964, with the two sometimes sharing a cell.
- 38 *Zimbabwe Independent*, Dabengwa tackles Gukurahundi head on, 29 March 2018.
- 39 The issue had arisen again in 2016 after the publication of a book by David Coltart (D Coltart, *The struggle continues: 50 years of tyranny in Zimbabwe*, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2016) referring to Mnangagwa's role in Gukurahundi, which was met with denials.
- 40 *Mail & Guardian*, Gukurahundi ghosts haunt Mnangagwa, 24 November 2017.
- 41 For example, on 11 January 2018 SAPES Trust hosted a public dialogue themed 'Gukurahundi: Towards a National Dialogue'. Less than two weeks after Mnangagwa was first appointed president (on 12 February 2017), a group of Matabeleland-based churches and CSOs formed the Matabeleland Collective, which has Gukurahundi as a primary issue on its agenda.

- 42 The Constitutive Act of the AU provides in Article 4, 'Principles', that '[t]he Union shall function in accordance with the following principles ... (p) Condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments' and in Article 30, 'Suspension', that '[g]overnments which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union'. The SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections provide in Article 4, 'Principles for Conducting Democratic Elections', that states parties undertake to '[c]ondemn and reject unconstitutional change of government'. See also AHG/Decl.5 (XXXVI), Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government.
- 43 A Magaisa, Coups beget coups – white city a harbinger of darkness?, *Big Saturday* Read, 30 June 2018.
- 44 This instability narrative and planted stories of this nature continue. For an example of the genre see *Spotlight Zimbabwe*, Zimbabwe army generals read riot act to Mnangagwa, as he privately offers to resign as president, <http://spotlight-z.com/news/zimbabwe-army-generals-read-riot-act-mnangagwa-privately-offers-resign-president/>.
- 45 *Zimbabwe Independent*, Mnangagwa, Chiwenga fight explodes publicly, 10 August 2018; *Zimbabwe Independent*, ED, Chiwenga rift may paralyse govt, 7 September 2018; *Zimbabwe Independent*, New power struggle rocks Zanu PF, 23 November 2018. This is echoed in other non-state publications, e.g. *The Standard*, ED, Chiwenga feud escalates, 10 March 2019.
- 46 The *Financial Times* (UK) copy almost invariably presents this line: *Financial Times*, Zimbabwe intensifies crackdown on opposition, 5 August 2018; *Financial Times*, Mnangagwa cancels Davos trip to deal with Zimbabwe tensions, 20 January 2019; *Financial Times*, Zimbabwe crackdown revives echoes of Mugabe, 25 January 2019; *Financial Times*, Zimbabwe's economy is in slow-motion collapse, 31 January 2019.
- 47 The Congress was not in fact due until 2019. However, the G40, with Mugabe's consent, had succeeded in having the year party conference converted to a congress. The Lacoste faction believed that the intention was to use the congress to remove Mnangagwa from office as vice-president and to replace him with Mugabe's wife Grace, under the guise of gender representation in the presidium (see the forthcoming ISS report on the November events by Derek Matyszak).
- 48 *The Zimbabwe Mail*, I was going to resign at congress, Sekeramayi successor: Mugabe, 29 July 2018. Sekeramayi had long been thought to be the compromise successor to Mugabe, acceptable to all factions – see D Matyszak, *Succession and the ZANU PF body politic*, Harare: SAPES Books, 2016.
- 49 Related personally to the author on the close of polling.
- 50 This is the popular name for Zimbabwe's intelligence services, and has been carried over from the pre-independence nomenclature. The correct title is the Department for State Security in the President's Office.
- 51 *Mail & Guardian*, Mugabe speaks out: 'I won't vote for ZANU-PF. And it was a coup', 29 July 2018. Clearly Mugabe had been persuaded that Chamisa would win, and that this was a route back to political power, either for himself or for his wife. That he accepted this advice, given that his advisors obviously had only recently misjudged matters spectacularly, is remarkable.
- 52 The purpose of the National Transitional Authority (like the 'national dialogue') has been variously stated to 'resolve the worsening economic and political crisis engulfing the country' (*SABCNewsOnline*, Zimbabwe opposition calls for 'transitional' govt to fix crisis, 24 October 2018); to resolve Mnangagwa's 'legitimacy crisis' (I Mandaza and T Reeler, Towards the National Transitional Authority, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 1 March 2019); or as an interim governing authority to prepare the way for fresh elections (*Newsday*, Chamisa takes fight to AU, SADC, 30 November 2018), or all three.
- 53 *The Telegraph* (UK), Zimbabwe expels EU chief observer, 17 February 2002; *The Telegraph* (UK), EU poll observers quit Zimbabwe, 20 February 2002.
- 54 *The Chronicle*, VP Mohadi urges equal media coverage of parties, 14 June 2018. This never happened, however. See the EU EOM.
- 55 See, for example, *The Herald*, ED preaches peace ahead of elections, 20 June 2018, and references to this in Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1st of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, 13–14, <http://kubatana.net/2018/12/18/report-commission-inquiry-1-august-2018-post-election-violence/>
- 56 Shared with the author in conversations with several political analysts on diverse occasions in the months before the elections.
- 57 The percentage was calculated as an estimate by the author using official voter registration statistics.

- 58 *The Herald*, Chamisa threatens anarchy, 12 June 2018. The British Ambassador, Catriona Laing, who appears to have astutely identified Mnangagwa as the most likely successor to Mugabe, also seems to have anticipated the ‘spoiler’ tactic of the MDC-A – see *Bulawayo24News*, Mnangagwa’s victory not free, not fair, not credible, 29 March 2019.
- 59 @BitiTendai, Those planning to steal the election must know this country will be ungovernable. And that is fact, *Twitter*, 11 June 2018, <https://twitter.com/bititendai/status/1017077573191458816?lang=en>.
- 60 *The Zimbabwe Mail*, Chamisa reiterates threat to block elections, 17 July 2018, <https://www.thezimbabwemail.com/politics/chamisa-reiterates-threat-to-block-elections/>
- 61 *The Zimbabwe Mail*, Overwhelm ZEC, Zanu PF on Monday, Chamisa in rallying call, 27 July 2019.
- 62 *Pindula News*, Video: We have won this election but ZEC is not formally announcing the results – Tendai Biti, 31 July 2018, <https://news.pindula.co.zw/2018/07/31/video-we-have-won-this-election-but-zec-is-not-formally-announcing-the-results-tendai-biti/>
- 63 Cited in Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1st of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, 16, <http://kubatana.net/2018/12/18/report-commission-inquiry-1-august-2018-post-election-violence/>
- 64 *New York Times*, Victory proves gloomy for Venezuela’s new leader, 15 April 2013.
- 65 *Mail & Guardian*, Zimbabwe’s opposition copies the Kenyan playbook, 13 September 2018.
- 66 Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1st of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, 13, regarded them as part of ‘overwhelming’ evidence of an incitement to violence.
- 67 See the testimony of Tendai Biti in Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1st of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, 1191. There were 10 985 polling stations established for the polls, with no more than 1 000 voters out of a roll of 5 681 604 registered at each. See also *Business Live*, MDC slams ZEC for delaying results, 1 August 2018.
- 68 N Beardsworth et al., Briefing Zimbabwe: the coup that never was, and the election that could have been, *African Affairs*, 1–17, 2019, 12.
- 69 One report indicates that ZANU PF by then had 109 seats out of the 143 seats announced – *ZimEye*, ZEC ready to announce presidential election results, 1 August 2018. However, the Motlanthe Commission holds that protests began after only seven seats had been announced (at 15). ZANU PF went on to claim 145 of the 210 directly elected seats, with one awarded to ZANU PF on account of an admitted error by the ZEC that the body said it could not correct without a court order.
- 70 N Beardsworth et al., Briefing Zimbabwe: the coup that never was, and the election that could have been, *African Affairs*, 1–17, 2019, 4.
- 71 Eventually brought as *Nelson Chamisa v Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa Case & 23 Ors No CCZ42/18* (the Presidential Petition).
- 72 ZANU PF, with some justification, queried why these would be required if the MDC-A already had evidence that the results had been manipulated on the basis of the V11s – see *The Herald*, Coltart exposes V11 forms hypocrisy, 6 August 2018.
- 73 The ZEC responded to the claim that it had doctored the results in Mnangagwa’s favour by issuing a spread sheet showing the results of all 10 985 polling stations compiled from V11s.
- 74 The director of one NGO informed the author at the time that the NGO’s staff had seen scores of polling agents subjected to physical violence to force them to change the V11s in their possession.
- 75 Polling agents are entitled to a copy of the V11 at polling stations, signed by all political parties and the polling officer (section 64(1)(d1) of the Electoral Act [Chapter 2:13].
- 76 This modus operandi would have required hundreds of V11, V23A and 23B forms to be (consistently) changed, and that every polling agent in possession of the V11 was so coerced. It also required that these polling agents had not surrendered the V11 to their political parties or sent photographs of them.
- 77 At the mentioned press conference at a Harare hotel Chamisa held up a sheaf of V11s which he said did not match the ZEC results and would be used by the MDC-A to prove its position – see the video of the briefing (*The Citizen*, Chamisa declares he will be able to prove is the true president, 3 August 2018, <https://citizen.co.za/news/news-africa/1991123/chamisa-declares-he-will-be-able-to-prove-he-is-the-true-president/>) at 32.50.
- 78 See paragraphs 6.4.7 & 6.4.8 of the Founding Affidavit to the Presidential Petition.

- 79 Paragraph 6.4.9.
- 80 These were alleged (at paragraph 6.4.9) to be on an accompanying computer disc, which was never supplied.
- 81 The check was undertaken by the author shortly after the elections. The scanned V11s no longer appear to be available online.
- 82 The Presidential Petition claims (at paragraph 6.4.2) to set out the discrepancies between the ZEC's results and the V11s in an Annexure C. Annexure C does not carry this information. At paragraphs 6.4.9 and 6.5.1 of the Presidential Petition there is reference to Annexures F1 and F2, ostensibly a table which sets out the deflation of Chamisa's votes and inflation of Mnangagwa's, comparing the ZEC results to the V11s. No V11s support the claim.
- 83 Nearly one-third of the Founding Affidavit.
- 84 The number of spoiled ballots in the parliamentary election has not been disclosed by the ZEC. There were over 70 000 spoiled and rejected ballots in the presidential poll.
- 85 At paragraph 6.5.5.
- 86 Presumably from the serial numbers on the ballot counterfoils.
- 87 The information was posted on the ZBC website, according to the presidential petition, at 17.30hrs.
- 88 Section 70 of the Electoral Act.
- 89 Unusually, the percentage was calculated on total votes cast, rather than, as is usual, on the basis of total valid votes cast, which would have given Mnangagwa a more secure 51.5%.
- 90 The presidential petition was filed on 10 August 2018, the hearing was on 22 August 2018 and judgment given on 25 August 2018.
- 91 MDC Communications, MDC-Alliance rejects captured Constitutional Court ruling, 24 August 2018.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 See, as one of many available examples, *Newsday*, Zanu-PF thanks ANC for demanding the removal of sanctions imposed on Zim, 31 January 2019.
- 94 *Daily Maverick*, Southern Africa's problem of elite impunity, 11 February 2019.
- 95 Rumour had it that concrete proof of the data could not be obtained as the hack was discovered while it was in progress, and shut down. It is improbable that the computer with this data is not air-gapped.
- 96 *Afrobarometer*, Findings from a pre-election survey in Zimbabwe: June/July 2018, [http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/zim\\_r7\\_presentation\\_pre\\_election\\_survey\\_2018\\_20072018.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/zim_r7_presentation_pre_election_survey_2018_20072018.pdf).
- 97 The ZESN's 6 500 observers would also have had copies of the V11s or have recorded the results there, was able to check them against the ZEC's published results and could have confirmed or discounted the MDC-A's claims of manipulated results in respect of most V11s.
- 98 According to political gossip at the time, the ZESN was supposedly infiltrated by Zimbabwean intelligence, thus explaining its involvement in the conspiracy. Why the NDI and US intelligence would be part of it was not explained.
- 99 Hence the slim margin by which Mnangagwa had avoided the run-off.
- 100 The loss by Mugabe in 2008 was precisely because the playing field had been considerably levelled. See D Matyszak, *Back to the future: legitimising Zimbabwe's 2018 elections*, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Southern Africa Report, 17 November 2017, <https://issafrica.org/research/southern-africa-report/back-to-the-future-legitimising-zimbabwes-2018-elections>.
- 101 A detailed case study of this is provided by D Matyszak, *State capture and elections in Zimbabwe*, in M Meirotti and G Masterson (eds), *State capture in Africa*, Johannesburg: Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), 2018.
- 102 *IPS*, Army makes its views known on presidential candidate, 10 January 2002.
- 103 D Matyszak, *Back to the future: legitimising Zimbabwe's 2018 elections*, ISS, Southern Africa Report, 17 November 2017, <https://issafrica.org/research/southern-africa-report/back-to-the-future-legitimising-zimbabwes-2018-elections>.
- 104 When pressed as to whether the military would accept the outcome of the elections if Chamisa won, the military would state no more than: 'The position of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces is that we abide by the Constitution; our conduct is going to be guided by the Constitution' – a singularly ambiguous statement

given that the military regarded its actions in November 2017 that led to the departure of Mugabe as 'upholding the constitution'. See *Daily News*, We will salute Chamisa: army, 6 July 2018.

- 105 Again seemingly copying the Kenyan play book with the suggestion that Chamisa would be 'sworn in' as such – *Newsday*, 'People's president' Chamisa says to be inaugurated next week; thousands attend first post-election rally, 8 September 2018.
- 106 In private conversation two such authors (whose names and articles will not be referenced here) stated that they used the word 'illegitimacy' differently to the MDC-A and it was not founded on the MDC-A's claims about the numbers. Nothing in their articles, however, alerted the reader to this fact.
- 107 *Newsday*, Resolve legitimacy issue first, Ncube tells ED, 3 May 2019.
- 108 See below.
- 109 This is a recurring theme by the MDC-A in discourse around a national dialogue. See, for example, *Bulawayo24News*, Chamisa says, Mnangagwa's legitimacy key to dialogue, 30 January 2019.
- 110 For example, CJ Richardson, *The loss of property rights and the collapse of Zimbabwe*, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.535.501&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.
- 111 *Zimbabwe Independent*, Why Mnangagwa, Chamisa must find each other now, 1 February 2019.
- 112 Referred to as the GNU. Its official title was the 'Inclusive Government', which was more apt in an administration where 'unity' was notably absent – see D Matyszak, *Law, politics and Zimbabwe's 'unity' government*, Harare: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung/Research and Advocacy Unit, 2010.
- 113 The then mainstream MDC faction (the 'T' stood for Tsvangirai the party leader), which is now the MDC-Alliance or simply MDC.
- 114 Established so that funding bypassed direct government control.
- 115 It should be noted that these official government statistics do not match those of the IMF, which notes small deficits throughout most of the GNU period. The difference is probably accounted for by the fact that legacy debts are not taken into account in the official figures. After the GNU, the finance minister held payment of these legacy debts at least partially responsible for the ballooning deficit – Author interview with economist Dumisani Sibanda, place, 14 April 2019.
- 116 The Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act [Chapter 14:33] was passed in 2007 before the GNU, though implementing regulations were only introduced in 2010 – see fn 8 above.
- 117 The latter 'requirement' was legally impossible to implement as the convoluted regulations so misinterpreted bore testimony.
- 118 These figures were projected in the Ministry of Finance 2019 Budget Statement (see Government of Zimbabwe, The 2019 budget statement, 22 November 2018, [http://www.veritaszim.net/sites/veritas\\_d/files/Zimbabwe%202019%20National%20Budget%20Statement%2022%20Nov%202019.pdf](http://www.veritaszim.net/sites/veritas_d/files/Zimbabwe%202019%20National%20Budget%20Statement%2022%20Nov%202019.pdf)), with only actual figures for September 2018 available, when the deficit was US\$2.67 billion – see paragraph 62.
- 119 Set out in Parliamentary Budget Office, Ballooning budget deficits a threat to macroeconomic stability, <https://www.parlzim.gov.zw/component/k2/ballooning-budget-deficits-a-threat-to-macroeconomic-stability>
- 120 Section 300(1) of the Constitution provides that an Act of Parliament must set limits on borrowings by the State. Section 11 (1) of the Reserve Bank Act [Chapter 22:15] requires that Central Bank lending to government shall not exceed 20% of the previous year's Government revenues. Section 11 (2) of the Public Debt Management Act [Chapter 22:21] requires that the total outstanding public debt should not exceed 70% of GDP at the end of any year. Until the appointment of a new finance minister after the July 2918 elections, the provisions had been ignored.
- 121 Successive Reserve Bank governors have been former CBZ CEOs.
- 122 *Zimbabwe Independent*, CBZ Bank soaks up US\$760m Treasury bills, 17 March 2017.
- 123 The bills have a maturity period of two to five years. The government has acknowledged it will not be able to honour the US\$2 billion worth maturing in 2019 – *Newsday*, Mthuli's budget: the good, bad and ugly, 26 November 2018.
- 124 *Newsday*, Zimbabwe introduces bond notes, 5 May 2016. Officially the bond note was introduced as part of an export incentive scheme.
- 125 *The Herald*, Electronic money hits 96pc of transactions, 8 February 2018.
- 126 RTGS dollars were to officially become a currency in February 2019.



- 127 In September 2018 the rate fell against the US\$ from US\$1.6:1 to as high as 6:1. Panic buying set in as consumers sought to preserve the value of RTGS dollars in the form of hard assets and in anticipation of shortages (which would be caused by the panic buying itself if nothing else).
- 128 *Daily News*, Forex shortages hurt miners, 1 October 2018.
- 129 *NewZimbabwe.com*, RioZim revenues down US\$14 million as foreign currency shortages insist [sic], 2 May 2019.
- 130 *The Herald*, Grand fuel heist, 10 January 2019. Between June and November 2018 an extra US\$200 million was allocated to fuel, with consumption up by 77% over the same period in the previous year.
- 131 *Ibid.*
- 132 Until a change in policy in February 2019, up to which point travellers could purchase tickets at 25% of their real US\$ value – see reference in the endnote immediately below.
- 133 The Reserve Bank owes an estimated US\$150 million to international airlines, the bulk to SAA – see *Financial Mail*, SAA's Zimbabwe revenue up in the air, 25 October 2018, <https://www.businesslive.co.za/fm/features/2018-10-25-saas-zimbabwe-revenue-up-in-the-air/>
- 134 *The Financial Gazette*, Airlines threaten pull-out of Zimbabwe 9 November 2017; *ZimLive*, Kenya Airways' Zimbabwe future uncertain over blocked funds, 1 September 2018, <https://www.zimlive.com/2018/09/01/kenya-airways-zimbabwe-future-uncertain-over-blocked-funds/>.
- 135 On 14 March 2018 by way of Finance Act 2018 (No. 1 of 2018).
- 136 Information supplied on diverse occasions to the author by various 'Western' diplomats based in Zimbabwe.
- 137 See StartupBiz Zimbabwe, Forex bank accounts – can the government be trusted this time? A trip down memory lane, 5 December 2018, <https://startupbiz.co.zw/forex-bank-accounts-government-trust/>.
- 138 The difficulty of repatriating profits appears to have been a major concern – see, for example, *Business Daily*, Failure to remit funds scares away Zim investors, 15 March 2018, <http://businessdaily.co.zw/index-id-national-zk-41084.html>. This despite numerous attempts by the government to reassure investors in this regard – See *The Financial Gazette*, RBZ ring-fences investment funds, 16 February 2018.
- 139 The phrase 'abundant natural resources' + Zimbabwe brings up 42 000 hits on Google.
- 140 *The Herald*, Zim chalks up \$11bn FDI in five months, 4 May 2018. Shortly thereafter the amount was touted as US\$16 billion – ZANU PF Information and Publicity Department, President in Mash West, 20 July 2018.
- 141 See *The Herald*, Of mega deals, the new dispensation and ill-prepared opposition, 7 April 2018.
- 142 *Harare 24 News*, 'Investors eager to come to Zimbabwe,' claims Mnangagwa, 24 January 2018, <http://harare24.com/index-id-news-zk-71455.html>; *The Zimbabwe Independent*, Credible polls critical to investors, 6 April 2018. Detailed analysis of the reasons behind the failure of the Mnangagwa government to bring in significant FDI is discussed in a forthcoming ISS report by Ringsai Chikohomero.
- 143 Personal communication with several diplomatic missions on the point after August 2018.
- 144 *The Standard*, We can't continue blaming sanctions, says ED, 14 January 2018.
- 145 50 U.S.C. 1701.
- 146 50 U.S.C. 1601.
- 147 See the preamble to the order Federal Register Vol. 68, No. 46, Monday, 10 March 2003.
- 148 The National Emergencies Act 50 U.S.C. 16622(d).
- 149 Executive orders have been issued (and are currently in force) against persons in and governments of Iran, Sudan, the Western Balkans, Iraq, Syria, Belarus, the DRC, Lebanon, North Korea, Somalia, Yemen, Ukraine, South Sudan, the CAR, Venezuela, Burundi and Nicaragua – see Congressional Research Service, Declarations under the National Emergencies Act, Part 1: declarations currently in effect, 28 February 2019.
- 150 The list is available at US Department of the Treasury, Resource Centre: Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN), <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/SDN-List/Pages/default.aspx>. The layout is singularly user unfriendly, requiring some work by those seeking to check whether a person is an SDN, with the possibility of creating apprehension that the check may not be accurate. The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has provided a special application for searching for SDNs – see OFAC, Sanctions list search, <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/> – which yields different results to a visual inspection of the list (e.g. a search for Shuvai Mahofa, now deceased).

- 151 31 CFR Part 541.
- 152 The acronym is variously given as ZDERA and ZIDERA.
- 153 The bill was passed in June 2018. During Zimbabwe's GNU repeal bills were introduced by Senator James Inhofe in 2010, 2011 and 2013 that were read and referred to the Foreign Relations Committee, but went no further.
- 154 Republican (Arizona) and Democratic (Delaware) respectively.
- 155 The conditions were amended so that the restriction or supply of financial aid to Zimbabwe was contingent upon the establishment of pre-election conditions where:
- The voters' roll is released in printed and digital format
  - The ZEC is permitted to carry out its functions in an entirely independent manner
  - The Defence Forces of Zimbabwe are neither permitted to actively participate in campaigning for any candidate nor to intimidate voters, and must verifiably and credibly uphold their constitutionally mandated duty to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all persons and be non-partisan in character
  - International observers, including from the United States and European Union, are permitted to observe the entire electoral process
  - Candidates are allowed free and full access to state media, which must afford equal time and coverage to all registered parties, in an impartial manner, and must be able to campaign in an environment that is free from intimidation and violence
  - Civil society organisations must freely and independently be able to carry out voter and civic education, and to monitor the entire electoral process
- 156 The source of the information informing the amendments is thus of some curiosity. The Foreign Relations Committee had been briefed on Zimbabwe three months previously by Nelson Chamisa, Tendai Biti, Dewa Mavinga of Human Rights Watch and author and strident Zimbabwe government critic, Peter Godwin. A subsequent interview with Biti indicated that the discussions were very likely to have informed the ZDERA amendments (see *Newsday*, Biti, Chamisa open up on US trip, 18 December 2017). Biti's statement 'We will make sure they do not get a cent. I cannot tell you how but I can tell you we have done it before' seems relevant in this context (*Zimbabwe independent*, Why Mnangagwa, Chamisa must find each other now, 1 February 2019). Senators Jeff Flake, Chris Coons, Adam Schiff, Thad Cochran and Ben Cardin had visited the country in February 2016, but stated that the visit focused mostly 'on wildlife preservation and to combat trafficking and poaching'. The subsequent delegation to Zimbabwe in 2018 comprised Chris Coons, Jeff Flake, Cory Booker, Michael Bennet and Garry Peters.
- 157 Sanyatwe was appointed major-general on 18 August 2019 and then immediately retired, the promotion being a means of increasing pension benefits and commonly done. He was then 'promoted downwards' to ambassador to Tanzania.
- 158 As of 5 February 2019 – see US Embassy in Zimbabwe, US sanctions policy: facts and myths, <https://zw.usembassy.gov/u-s-sanctions-policy-facts-myths/>.
- 159 Available at *YouTube*, Flake encourages support, accountability for Zimbabwe, 13 December 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCOHmoCEsXI>.
- 160 *Newsday*, Chamisa won 2018 presidential poll: Biti, 5 February 2019; *NewsDay*, Biti convicted, fined \$200 for violating electoral laws, 19 February 2019.
- 161 ZDERA specifically requires the US to work with EU member states, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia in identifying these companies and individuals (section 6).
- 162 Zimbabwe cleared its arrears (US\$108 million) with the IMF in October 2016, but under the *pari passu* rule is required to pay all creditors pro rata or simultaneously secure fresh funding – *The Herald*, Zim ready to clear \$1,2bn WB arrears, 28 March 2018.
- 163 *Newsday*, Creditors approve Zim debt clearance plan, 9 October 2015.
- 164 Mthuli Ncube – See the Transitional Stabilisation Plan Ministry of Finance, Government of Zimbabwe (October 2018).
- 165 Something noted with increasing frequency – *The Herald*, Sanctions hurt ordinary people: experts, 24 April 2019.
- 166 *Mail & Guardian*, The European Union has failed on Zimbabwe – but it's not too late to change course, 6 February 2019.

- 167 I.e. to be certain of avoiding significant financial penalties, which could be equivalent to the amount transacted.
- 168 This was a fairly common approach, with even online transfer platform PayPal declining transactions with a Zimbabwean IP address.
- 169 *The Herald*, Sanctions cost Zim US\$42bn, 20 July 2013.
- 170 For example, influential academic Prof. Stephen Chan stated: 'Yesterday I disagreed in Parliament with the UK Minister for Africa on increased sanctions. I wanted all sanctions to be lifted. They are used as an excuse for the Zimbabwe Government's mishandling of the economy.' – *Pindula News*, Sanctions must be removed so that Zimbabwe's gov't has no excuse for mishandling economy – Stephen Chan, 6 February 2019, <https://news.pindula.co.zw/2019/02/06/sanctions-must-be-removed-so-that-zimbabwes-govt-has-no-excuse-for-mishandling-economy-stephen-chan/>.
- 171 *Daily News*, UZ wins bid for 'sanctions' impact study, 26 January 2017.
- 172 The date does not appear on the paper and is deduced. BM Sims et al., Restrictive measures and Zimbabwe: political implications, economic impact and a way forward, IDASA, [https://www.academia.edu/1861567/Restrictive\\_Measures\\_and\\_Zimbabwe\\_Political\\_Implications\\_Economic\\_Impact\\_and\\_a\\_Way\\_Forward](https://www.academia.edu/1861567/Restrictive_Measures_and_Zimbabwe_Political_Implications_Economic_Impact_and_a_Way_Forward).
- 173 *Ibid.*, 2. The cause of the decline of GDP is complicated by drought in 2001/2, but it is clear that the land reform was the main factor. GDP estimates thereafter are complicated by inflation, which had risen to 500% by 2003.
- 174 A pro-democracy website Sokwanele was also established. Sokwanele ('enough' in Ndebele) suggests that the website was run by people in the south-west of Zimbabwe – the Matabeleland provinces.
- 175 *The Insider*, The MDC is too violent says new book, <https://www.insiderzim.com/the-mdc-is-violent-too-says-new-book/>. The report draws the Ncube statement from 'a report' in May 2006 quoting Ncube addressing a rally in London. The report cannot be located. The quote was repeated in *Bulawayo24News*, Is Linda Masarira right on violent MDC militia?, 21 November 2018, though *Bulawayo24News* creates the impression that the quote is to be found in B-M Tendi, *Making history in Mugabe's Zimbabwe*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010, 210–211. The quote there concerns an admission that the MDC sent senior officials to Serbia for training in mass action.
- 176 *The Standard*, MDC-T 'vanguard': rogue militia or party guardians?, 18 March 2018.
- 177 *Ibid.*
- 178 Personal conversation with one of the delegates, May 2019.
- 179 A type of non-violent civil disobedience designed to create a 'response dilemma' or 'lose-lose' situation for public authorities 'by forcing them to either "look powerless" and concede some public space to protesters or make themselves look absurd or heavy-handed by acting against the protest'. JA Gould and E Moe, Beyond rational choice: ideological assault and the strategic use of frames in nonviolent civil resistance, in SE Nepstad and LR Kurtz (eds), *Nonviolent conflict and civil resistance*, Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, 2012.
- 180 Confided to the author by two delegates separately, who had attended two different workshops.
- 181 *Counterpunch*, Globally renowned activist collaborated with Stratfor, 3 December 2013.
- 182 See *Consortium News*, US regime change blueprint proposed Venezuelan electricity blackouts as 'watershed event', 12 March 2019, <https://consortiumnews.com/2019/03/12/us-regime-change-blueprint-proposed-venezuelan-electricity-blackouts-aswatershed-event-for-an-article-reporting-on-CANVASs-work-with-Venezuelan-opposition-leader-Juan-Guaid%C3%B3>.
- 183 *Counterpunch*, Globally renowned activist collaborated with Stratfor, 3 December 2013.
- 184 It was held in South Africa.
- 185 *Newsday*, Mnangagwa fires 17 top CIOs, 6 February 2018; *The Standard*, Police saga exposes ED, Chiwenga rift, 21 January 2018.
- 186 See I Mandaza, Securocracy to democracy: the rise and fall of the securocrat state, *The Zimbabwean*, 8 April 2016, <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2016/04/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-securocrat-state/>.
- 187 Central Intelligence Organisation. This title is obsolete, and the body is the Department for State Security in the President's Office.

- 188** One obvious instance of this was the state takeover of diamond mining in Chiadzwa, believed to be designed to remove the military from joint ventures there with Chinese business – see *The Zimbabwe Independent*, Succession rocks diamond mining, 18 March 2016.
- 189** Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, 16.
- 190** As many in the opposition believed had happened in the elections of 2008.
- 191** See Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, 25.
- 192** *Ibid.*, 17. While the Motlanthe Commission's findings cannot be uncritically depended upon (see D Matyszak, The Motlanthe Commission's anniversary of shame, *ISS Today*, 12 August 2019), an eye-witness present in the area of the ZEC Command Centre (the Rainbow Towers Hotel) told the author that the government of Zimbabwe was justified in believing there to be a threat to the counting centre, that at least one vehicle was burned and that the main road through the city, Samora Machel Avenue, was littered with concrete blocks – presumably unrooted from the municipal infrastructure.
- 193** Government of Zimbabwe, Brief on the political and security situation in Zimbabwe in the aftermath of the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 violent protests, 7, <https://zoomzimbabwe.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Zimbabwe-Government-Briefing-Document-on-January-2019-Protests.pdf>.
- 194** Constitution of Zimbabwe, Section 213(2)(b).
- 195** There are some claims made in this regard. For example, the Motlanthe Commission heard testimony that youths had been given money to commute into the city on 1 August by an MDC MP (Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1st of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, 246). The state media consistently blamed the MDC leadership (warrants of arrest for inciting violence were issued for nine); in the Zimbabwe government briefing (Government of Zimbabwe, Brief on the political and security situation in Zimbabwe in the aftermath of the 14th -16th January, 2019 violent protests, 7) Happymore Chidziva, the MDC national youth chairperson, is alleged to have urged youths to engage in public violence in the CBD and to attack the ZEC Command Centre.
- 196** Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1st of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, 20. Also see the evidence of Lovemore Chinoputsa in the Motlanthe Commission Record of Proceedings, esp. at 238 et seq. and Chamisa at 1214.
- 197** Putting together various parts of Chamisa's testimony, it appears that he was out of Harare (in Domboshava, an outlying area of Harare) and, as he put it, 'doing my issue to do with faith' (at 1226 of the Report of Proceedings), elsewhere in his testimony stated as praying. Chamisa has referred as going to this prayer retreat as 'going to the mountains to pray' – see *The Watchdog*, ED pours cold water on GNU rumours, 13 December 2018, <https://thewatchdog.co.zw/2018/11/12/857/>. Before the hearing Chamisa called the August protests 'stupid' – see *The Chronicle*, 'Protests were stupid' ... Chamisa ridicules supporters he incited, 16 November 2018.
- 198** Information given directly to the author on diverse occasions by Western embassy officials.
- 199** *The Times* (UK), Opposition accuses Britain of bias towards Mnangagwa in Zimbabwe election, 7 August 2018; *The Observer*, *The Observer* view on Britain's response to repression in Zimbabwe, 12 August 2018.
- 200** *VoANews*, Analysts doubt much has changed in Zimbabwe, 8 December 2018.
- 201** N Beardsworth et al., Briefing Zimbabwe: the coup that never was, and the election that could have been, *African Affairs*, 1–17, 2019, 15; *VoANews*, With mood volatile, Zimbabwe's Mnangagwa denies rift with deputy, 2 February 2019.
- 202** Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1st of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, 53.
- 203** *The Standard*, Zim struggles despite huge forex inflows, 17 March 2019.
- 204** *Zimbabwe Independent*, Fuel crisis needs urgent attention, 11 January 2019.
- 205** Most reports refer to the violent protests as having started on Monday 14 January 2019, and lasting through Wednesday 16 January 2019, coinciding with the call for a three-day stay-away. However, barricades had appeared on the roads in poorer suburbs the day after the announcement of the price hike, on Sunday 13 January 2019. See photographs posted on ZimEye, Live pictures of protests over fuel price hikes, what is going on?, 13 January 2019, <https://www.zimeye.net/2019/01/13/live-pictures-of-protests-over-fuel-price-hikes-what-is-going-on/>.
- 206** ZHRC report

- 207 *Newsday*, Riots rock Harare, 4 July 2016.
- 208 Observed personally by the author.
- 209 Anecdotal evidence given to the author of a cell phone with about 200 social media groups on the WhatsApp platform established for protest-related activities.
- 210 Waging Nonviolence, 'Our challenges are bigger than Mugabe' — a conversation with Zimbabwe's 'Protest Pastor' Evan Mawarire, 22 February 2017, <https://wagingnonviolence.org/2017/02/conversation-zimbabwe-protest-pastor-evan-mawarire/>. The Zimbabwean government claims that training workshops on the popcorn strategy were funded by Germany and the US — see Zimbabwe Government Briefing para 4.8., 13.
- 211 Waging Non-Violence, 'Our challenges are bigger than Mugabe' — a conversation with Zimbabwe's 'Protest Pastor' Evan Mawarire, February 2017, <https://wagingnonviolence.org/2017/02/conversation-zimbabwe-protest-pastor-evan-mawarire/>.
- 212 Government of Zimbabwe, Brief on the political and security situation in Zimbabwe in the aftermath of the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 violent protests, 13, para.4.8, <https://zoomzimbabwe.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Zimbabwe-Government-Briefing-Document-on-January-2019-Protests.pdf>
- 213 N Beardsworth et al., Briefing Zimbabwe: the coup that never was, and the election that could have been, *African Affairs*, 1–17, 2019, 15.
- 214 Human Rights Watch, Zimbabwe: excessive force used against protesters, 12 March 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/12/zimbabwe-excessive-force-used-against-protesters>.
- 215 Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, A consolidated report on the food riots 19–23 January, 1998 (undated).
- 216 Human Rights Watch, Zimbabwe: excessive force used against protesters, 12 March 2019.
- 217 *The Zimbabwe Independent*, Re-engagement drive up in smoke, 25 January 2019.
- 218 B Raftopoulos, Responses to Zimbabwe highlight gulf between the region and the West, *The Conversation*, 10 March 2019.
- 219 See Government of Zimbabwe, Brief on the political and security situation in Zimbabwe in the aftermath of the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 violent protests, 9, para.3.3, <https://zoomzimbabwe.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Zimbabwe-Government-Briefing-Document-on-January-2019-Protests.pdf>. CANVAS is not mentioned by name but the dilemma action training is referred to as provided by a Serbian national 'Sorien'.
- 220 Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, Venezuela: UN expert analyses the economic embargo situation and the socio-economic crisis, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/venezuela-un-expert-analyses-the-economic-embargo-situation-and-the-socio-economic-crisis>
- 221 H Suhr, South Africa vs people of Venezuela, *Daily Maverick*, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-01-30-south-africa-vs-people-of-venezuela/>. Though this too was a response to a critique of American foreign policy that had appeared in the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper.
- 222 And that of Myanmar.
- 223 Chavez won the election with 56% of the vote to the just under 40% of his main rival Romer.
- 224 Of the kind Pahad says is recruited to advance regime change agendas.
- 225 T Biti & G Mills, Southern Africa's problem of elite impunity, *Daily Maverick*, 11 February 2019, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-02-11-southern-africas-problem-of-elite-impunity/>
- 226 It could be criticised on only the basis that it may not have been as inclusive as it ought to have been.
- 227 Of course, their stance can be defended on the basis of freedom of expression, regardless of the wisdom of such an approach.
- 228 An arms embargo also remains in place.
- 229 This presented something of a dilemma for the EU. To remove the measures entirely seemed inappropriate after the state violence of mid-January, to bring measures into force only against those suspended also seemed inappropriate as leaving out many of those implicated in events while maintaining the Mugabes, who were not. Creating an entirely new and expanded list pushed the EU in a direction it did not want to go — see 169. In the event the measures were left unchanged.
- 230 2019/2563(RSP).
- 231 Of note is that in his testimony to the Motlanthe Commission, Chamisa quoted the same section and with the same elision — see Report of proceedings at 1212, where this is apparent despite the poor transcript.

- 232 Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018, para 3.1(a). The link in the report referencing the video where the statement was allegedly made is incorrect.
- 233 Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2018 Post-Election Violence, 18 December 2018 at 13.
- 234 *YouTube*, Chamisa & the MDC rally @ Jerera growth point, 14 April 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1gpk51CV44>.
- 235 Charity Manyeruke, Lovemore Madhuku and Vimbai Nyemba.
- 236 Charity Manyeruke.
- 237 As it was immediately in several sections of Government of Zimbabwe, Brief on the political and security situation in Zimbabwe in the aftermath of the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 violent protests, <https://zoomzimbabwe.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Zimbabwe-Government-Briefing-Documents-on-January-2019-Protests.pdf>.
- 238 In a letter to the *Zimbabwe Independent* (17 May 2019) the writer quotes the executive summary of the EU EOM Report, that the results provided by the Electoral Commission ‘contained numerous errors and lacked adequate traceability, transparency and verifiability’ without the later qualification that ‘the errors did not affect the results per se’.
- 239 *Sunday Times*, Mnangagwa happy as Ramaphosa calls for Zimbabwe sanctions to be lifted, 12 March 2019, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2019-03-12-ramaphosa-calls-for-zimbabwe-sanctions-to-be-lifted-to-praise-from-mnangagwa/>.
- 240 Included were senior ANC officials like Tony Yengeni, Thoko Didiza, Bongani Nongo and Justice Phiso.
- 241 *The Herald*, ANC throws weight behind Zanu-PF, 30 January 2019.
- 242 See, for example, *BusinessLive*, Ace Magashule sent to offer Mnangagwa and Zanu-PF SA’s support, 30 January 2019, <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2019-01-30-ace-magashule-sent-to-offer-mnangagwa-and-zanu-pf-sas-support/>
- 243 *The Herald*, ANC throws weight behind Zanu-PF, 30 January 2019.
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### About this monograph

Countries such as Zimbabwe tend to be viewed through the lens of two crude and opposing narratives – one depicting a contest between a dictator and democracy, the other, a legitimate leader embattled by Western regime change agents. This monograph looks at events in Zimbabwe since the advent of Emmerson Mnangagwa and shows how each of the protagonists invites political allies, internally and internationally, to line up uncritically behind their chosen narrative. This invitation should be declined as being unhelpful. Principle, rather than ideological solidarity, is more likely to be mutually advantageous.

### About the author

Derek Matyszak is a well-known writer on Zimbabwean politics, law and the interface between the two. He has authored two books on Zimbabwe, and numerous papers and journal articles. Some of his work has been published through the ISS, where he worked from May 2016 to August 2019. He writes from Harare, Zimbabwe.

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