

CIVIL SOCIETY'S CONTESTED ROLE IN THE 2013 ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

A Historical Perspective

Tamuka Charles Chirimambowa and Tinashe Lukas Chimedza

Tamuka Charles Chirimambowa studied Political Science at the University of South Africa, Economic History at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and International Relations at the University of Zimbabwe. He has extensive experience working in Zimbabwe's civil society.

e-mail: tcchirimambowa@gmail.com

Tinashe Lukas Chimedza, a former Secretary General of the Zimbabwe National Students Union, studied Social Inquiry at University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

He is interested in development studies and political change in Africa.

e-mail: Tinashe.chimedza@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article is a critical and historical assessment of the contribution of Zimbabwe's burgeoning civil society to the restructuring of political and social relations in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The general objective is to contribute to the debate about how Zimbabwe's post-colonial civil society has theorised about change and, importantly, the deeply contested nature of the agency that this has generated. The article concentrates on how civil society structured itself and acted before the elections on 31 July 2013, which the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) 'won resoundingly'. What emerges is that while the economic despair of the 1990s and the breakdown in the national consensus mobilised an almost 'popular democratic front' this changed course in the subsequent decade, weakening the 'popular' and 'democratic' nature of civil society agency. The foundation of 'liberal rights' and 'democracy' and 'good governance' powerfully amalgamated in the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and the 'No Vote' in 2000 became theoretically feeble and revealed a debilitating post-colonial impasse – an interregnum during which an urban-based intelligentsia-led theorisation and agency was momentarily checkmated by a violent nationalist authoritarianism.

THE HARMONISED ELECTION IN ZIMBABWE: THE PROLONGED INTERREGNUM

On 21 February 2014, his birthday, Robert Gabriel Mugabe, now 90 years old, declared that the 'regime change agenda' was dead and that the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)¹ and the 'West' had been shattered by 'Chaminuka's lightning'.² Mugabe's invocation of the legend of Chaminuka was in keeping with what has been called 'patriotic history', which favours Zanu-PF and Mugabe (Ranger 2004; Tendi 2010). The insidious intention of that patriotic history however is to separate 'liberators' (read Zanu-PF) from 'sell outs' (read MDCs and civil society allies).

Before the harmonised election it was generally assumed that 'Zimbabwe was in transition' (Murithi & Mawadza 2012), was 'mired in transition' (Masunungure & Shumba 2012), on a 'hard road to reform' (Raftopoulos 2013) or in some sort of 'chaos and transition' (Kagoro 2008), or there was a 'transition to democracy' (Rupiya 2013). The result of the 2013 elections showed otherwise and it seems Mugabe and Zanu-PF continued to 'defy the winds of change' (Masunungure 2009).

How Zanu-PF managed to 'zig-zag' through questions of democratisation is the focus of our analysis. However, we do not necessarily analyse Zanu-PF and its apparatus for retaining power, instead we turn our attention to the contested terrain of 'civil society' because it is here that post-colonial political and social forces for democratisation have dominated and emerged. Civil society has become an important piece of the puzzle for the student of political change who wants to understand how such change evolves in post-colonial societies in general and in Zimbabwe in particular.

Zimbabwe's changing political landscape cannot be fully comprehended without taking into consideration the momentous yet contested role its 'sophisticated civil society' (Moore 2006, p 120) has played. We do not attempt to discount the rapaciousness of the state and the everyday violence with which civil society has had to deal since the 1980s but take a closer look at the terrain of civil society in Zimbabwe.³ Our intention is to look more closely at the terrain (civil society) which gave birth to the opposition and how its evolution (theory and agency) has contributed to the current state of affairs – a painful interregnum in which the old refuses to die and the new struggles to emerge (Moore 2008).

1 Here 'MDCs' will refer to all the factions. In cases where we need to delineate, the following will be used: Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T); Movement for Democratic Change-Mutambara (MDC-M); Movement for Democratic Change-99 (MDC-99)

2 See www.newzimbabwe.com/news-14549-MDC-,+West+hit+by+lightning+Mugabe/news.aspx. Here 'JUICE' refers to the MDC Manifesto entitled 'Jobs, Upliftment, Investment Capital and Environment'.

3 For an exploration of 'violence' and 'governing' in Zimbabwe, see Sachikonye 2011.

In order to set the stage for our analysis of how civil society has evolved and its contested role in the 2013 elections we take an historical perspective and revisit the concepts of the 'Unresolved National Question' (Moyo & Yeros 2005) or 'Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business' (Hammar, Raftopoulos & Jensen 2003) as they played out in those elections. It is this unfinished business that became central to the battles over the trajectory of the post-colonial polity, defined and determined state-civil society relations from the early 1980s, spurred the formation of the MDC and looks poised to continue haunting Zimbabwe long after Mugabe is buried.

The contradictions and contestations that emerged are considered from an historical perspective so that they are not stripped of their historical context. In this particular case the focus is on the 2013 elections to reveal how Zimbabwe's civil society became blind to historical questions of dispossession, dislocation and domination. On the other hand, Zanu-PF appropriated that history, combined it with authoritarianism and, in the process, stalled a transition to a more democratic Zimbabwe.

The approach of this article is intentionally historical in order to use theoretical lenses to further our understanding of the present 'moment'. An historical exposition is necessary as a starting point because it raises interesting questions about the 'time and space' within which political ideologies and political action evolved and how this crystallises into four phases: the formation of the MDC in 1999; the triumph of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA)-led 'No' vote in February 2000; the half-abandoned March 2008 election and the consummation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) and, finally, the advent of a new Constitution and the 2013 elections.

After the historical exposition we focus on the 2013 elections because they raise important questions about the analyses, strategies and actions of Zimbabwe's civil society in its attempt to resolve the 'Zimbabwe Crisis'. We set the stage with an historical perspective because, in a way, we are arguing for *history*, taking note of Hobsbawm's warning against being 'ahistorical' or even 'anti-historical' (1998, p 29).

EARLY INDEPENDENCE, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE RISE OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

In the early 1980s civil society was generally focused on 'development' or 'welfare' – examples included the Association of Women's Clubs (AWC) and the Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP). There were also white-dominated organisations like the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) and the Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ), which wielded a strong policy influence over the state

(Moyo 1993; Dorman 2001). The shift in civil society-state relations from this phase to tensions and eventual confrontation can be partly traced to the brutal suppression of what the government called 'dissidents' in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions, starting in the early 1980s.

In the guise of suppressing 'dissidents', the government deployed the 5th Brigade of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) in a campaign which is now infamously called *Gukurahundi* (meaning to clear the chuff). More than 20 000 civilians are reported to have been murdered and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resource Foundation (LRF) exposed the brutality and provided the basis upon which other civil society organisations would extensively document, expose and challenge the post-colonial government's record on human rights and the rule of law.

Apart from the suppressed and dissenting voices in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions, and the Zimbabwe African National Union (Zanu) Ndonga, largely dominant in Chipinge, limited voices opposed Zanu-PF's hegemony. The emphasis was *Gutsaruzhinji* ('Socialism') and *Gwara Remusanagano* (Zanu-PF's Path), with the prime minister promoting a 'one nation', 'one party' and 'one country' policy. Moyo (1993, p 7) argues that, 'all legitimate organisations were challenged by Zanu-PF to join the ruling party as a way of proving their revolutionary and patriotic commitment'. Overall, Moyo (1993, p 7) sums up the early independence period as follows:

Civil Society groups, such as trade unions and student movements, which had operated underground during the days of settler government and which had hoped to attain legitimacy after independence were left bleeding by the ruling party's tactics, and some organisations bled to death because they failed to find any political space for independent policy action arising from self-management and self-organisation without state tutelage.

This power construct by Zanu-PF was short-lived, as the women's movement rose to challenge the state's double standards on women's rights. When the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) rounded up and beat up women because they were 'loitering' as 'prostitutes' during operation 'Chinyavada/Scorpion' incensed women activists promptly formed the Women's Action Group (WAG) to challenge the state's paternalistic and patriarchal treatment of women.

The formation of WAG and many other women's organisations that would follow was almost inevitable because, after independence, the social and political progress that had been made during the liberation struggle when it came to women's rights quickly faced a conservative backlash. This was effected 'through

the powerful invocation of counter-revolutionary cultural-nationalist discourses, which portrayed women's organising as feminist, and feminism as anti-nationalist and pro-imperialist' (Essof 2013). The newly-formed WAG openly:

criticised government for violating rights of its own citizens as well as government policies and actions, thereby setting a stage for direct confrontation with the state and making a departure from supporting government and non-political engagement.

Mapuva 2013, p 265

WAG's social and political action emboldened women and accelerated the emergence of other women's organisations so that, by the end of the 1990s, one could clearly identify the presence of a powerful 'Zimbabwean women's movement' (Essof 2001, p 1). WAG clearly blazed the trail and as the 1990s began and the government implemented the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) more women's organisations emerged, openly identifying themselves as feminist. Despite the growing tensions and battles led by women, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), students, church organisations and some emerging human rights organisations, some argued that the prospects for civil society were 'gloomy' (Moyo 1993). This was clearly off the mark.

BREAKDOWN IN THE NATIONAL CONSENSUS: THE FAILED ONE-PARTY STATE AGENDA

The end of the 1980s heralded a breakdown in a very tenuous 'national consensus' during which state-civil society relationships were generally non-confrontational. The fissures opened up when Zanu-PF, having coerced the Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF-Zapu), at gun point, wanted to create a 'one-party state'. Dominant political elites under Zanu-PF argued that the 'one-party state' was 'African in character' and asserted that multipartyism was anti-development (Makumbe 1998).

Students at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) opposed the one-party state agenda, arguing that it would lead to 'a one man fascist dictatorship, a brutal, tyrannical, murderous, fossilised, bureaucratic political system' (UZ SRC, cited in Moore 2006, p 23). Church groups like the Catholic Bishops, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) also opposed the creation of a one-party state (Dorman 2001, p 83). When the one-party state agenda was abandoned it was partly because of the strong opposition from civil society and the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) (Sachikonye 2011).

By the end of the 1980s, with Zapu swallowed up by the Unity Accord of

1987, the women's movement, church affiliated groups, the student movement and the labour movement became increasingly critical of Zanu-PF, leading others to point out that the 'elite cohesion' had cracked (Makumbe & Sithole 1997). As the 1980s ended the state of affairs could only be summed up in these brilliant words:

Inside the new regime, however, there are various degrees of enrichment and acquisitiveness ... Favours abound, corruption triumphs, and morals decline. ... The party helps the State keep its grip on the people. It is increasingly an instrument of coercion and clearly antidemocratic.

Fanon 1961, p 116

The stage was set for further alienation and confrontation, a confrontation that was to be further deepened by the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program as the government abandoned the welfarist approach that had seen rapid expansion in education, health and social service delivery, and made a neo-liberal turn. Issues of the rule of law, governance and corruption became crucial, especially after the Willowgate Scandal (which involved government officials buying and selling cars for personal gain). The scandal led to the establishment of the Sandura Commission, with Thomas Mapfumo penning a popular song, 'Corruption in Society', and Lovemore Majaivana's, 'Love and Scandals', which reflected the public outrage at the abuse of public officials by government bureaucrats and party apparatchiks. The independence dream was clearly coming unstuck.

'LAST MAN': CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT ERA

The turn from the 1980s to the 1990s was also associated with a global 'neo-liberal turn' and in the 'developing' countries the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pushed for structural adjustment programs (SAPs). The Zimbabwe government, under pressure to meet rising social and economic demands, introduced ESAP, which was aimed at liberalising the economy. The effect of ESAP was devastating, with Saunders (1997, p 18) pointing out that one result of the programme was that:

workers' real incomes have plummeted by 60%. According to the ZCTU most workers' real wages are now only one-quarter of what they were at independence in 1980. Worse still, formal sector employment has been stagnant since 1990, if not shrinking.

The 1990s saw increased nationwide strikes by workers and students, leading Bond & Manyanya (2002) to call it the 'decade of IMF riots. In addition, the student

movement, mainly under the leadership of the University of Zimbabwe Students Union and the militant Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU), protested perennially and opposed privatisation (Zimunya 2007; Zeilig 2007). ESAP was a disaster and was given the mocking name, 'Extended Suffering of African People'.

The labour movement, opposed to ESAP, became an increasingly militant voice outside the state and was identified as the most powerful single non-state force (Bond & Saunders 2005). The ZCTU argued that ESAP was characterised by a complete 'market failure' and sought an alternative policy direction under what it called 'Beyond ESAP: Framework for a Long Term Development Strategy for Zimbabwe' (Kanyenze 2011).

The process of economic liberalisation had a contradictory corollary: on the one hand structural adjustment effected a liberalisation of the economy, on the other, the pressures it generated provoked the ruling elites to use force increasingly to silence the unsettled population (Bond & Manyanya 2002). The 1990s could be called the 'civil society decade' because in that decade opposition parties were weak, disorganised and lacked a social base and the burden of confronting the state was taken up by civic organisations led by the ZCTU; leading some to note that civil society was the most powerful opposition to the ruling hegemony (Sachikonye 2005).

By the end of the 1990s there was enough outrage against the government to give rise to the formation and collation of civil society coalitions, fulfilling Polanyi's prediction of a 'double movement', in which the expansion of the 'self-regulating market' also generates its opposition (Polanyi 2001, p 76). These coalitions included the Zimbabwe NGO, the Human Rights Forum; the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCZ), formed in 1999; the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), formed in 1998, and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), formed in 1999. The most powerful of these was the NCA, which became an important platform for advocacy of a new democratic constitution.

Ideologically, the introduction of ESAP, or Zimbabwe's 'neo-liberal turn', achieved another feat – it insidiously fed civil society with a 'neo-liberal' discourse and the logic of 'free markets', 'de-regulation', 'anti-statism', 'privatisation' and a belief in 'small' government. Effectively the 1990s achieved a dramatic shift in three ways:

- The political logic of 'structural adjustment' (re)presented the state and its apparatus as the guarantor of the 'rule of law', 'property rights' and 'markets' – what Harvey (2002) calls the 'neo-liberal state'. At the same time, the political ideology pushing structural adjustment strategically delegitimised the same state's capacity to be either 'interventionist' or '(re)distributionist' – Keynes was effectively killed. The state was recast

as a threat to 'freedom', 'individual liberty' and 'creative entrepreneurial activity' – and yes, sometimes it was definitely so. The conceptualisation of this sort of democracy, as Dansereau (2003) argued, is deliberately very narrow.

- Civil society internalised, with minimum challenge, an ideology which separates politics from economics and instead motivates limited battles over 'human rights', 'governance' and the 'rule of law', while quietly discarding the glaring inequalities in the economy often tied to historical processes of colonialism, imperialism, domination and dispossession. However, and this becomes glaringly obvious in an analysis of the role of civil society in the 2013 elections, the ruling elites have partially retreated and have become re-distributionist (if we are to count indigenisation and 'fast track land reform'); while civil society has remained stuck in analyses and activism which seek to separate politics from economics.
- Intensified global capitalist relations of production (what others call time-space compression) seems to have overwhelmed the 'nation-state' and, in its wake, supra-national institutions (World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund, etc) now decide economic policies. Those nation-states that wanted to be interventionist and redistributionist were threatened with 'capital flight', reduced 'foreign direct investment' and restricted access to global 'capital markets'. Some even argued, rather prematurely, about the 'death' of the nation-state. The net effect ideologically stifled civil society contestations as it seemed 'there was no alternative', and it is this state of delirium which haunted civil society organisations in the 2013 elections.

Zimbabwe's civil society thus found itself in a terrain in which its agenda was driven not only by local demands but by 'universalism'. However, this universalism dragged civil society political action and thinking into a pernicious situation where its demands were being disciplined to reflect a limited agenda of 'good governance' and 'democracy', which skirted contemporary and historical economic relations. The gap this created was filled by a liberation movement which pretended to be a party of 'revolution' and seemed to be solving historical questions, leading to Robert Mugabe being greeted with 'wild cheers' in South Africa and other African countries, while, at home, opponents were being murdered, jailed and excluded.

THE BATTLE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM: ENTER THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY

The convergence of civil society forces led to the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in 1998 and Zimbabwe's crisis was immediately

categorised as being the result of 'bad governance', with the solution, to guarantee 'good governance', being a new 'democratic constitution'. This was a half-valid analysis because the social and political forces challenging and confronting the state were driven by material demands as well as by questions of civil and political rights.

Through the NCA, understood here as a process of struggle and contestation, the demands of the social and political movements which had 'revolted' in the 1990s were (re)presented through a very limited 'ideology of human rights'. This is important to note because by the time of the 2013 elections civil society was generally not debating any material issues. This shift also permanently afflicted the MDC, which, in its attempt to be a modern post-nationalist movement, ignored policies that could be seen as 'interventionist' or 're-distributionist', leading Bond & Manyanya (2002, p vii) to caution that the MDC was 'a false start'.

Something else happened as the NCA tussled with the government. In a momentous move Zanu-PF broke its alliance with 'white agriculture' by inserting section 57 into the proposed Chidyausiku Draft Constitution, which pushed for the compulsory acquisition of land. This process pushed the white population back into the political process, forcing them to embrace and support the possibility of 'democratic change' under the MDC. Just as Zanu-PF intensified its onslaught on the 'colonial architecture' of white domination in land ownership, by rhetoric, corruption and much coercion, the MDC and civil society in general were retreating from this sphere, preferring a limited conception of 'democracy' and 'good governance'. When Zanu-PF further upped the ante to include 'indigenisation' in the 2013 election civil society was unable to build a cohesive counter-movement capable of mobilising a social base to sustain popular challenges to Zanu-PF.

In February 2000 the government was defeated by an NCA-led campaign for a 'No' Vote – a humbling moment for Robert Mugabe and the ruling Zanu-PF, which had never suffered such a humiliation. The NCA brought together on one platform a plethora of civil society organisations, forming a formidable 'united front'. Constitutional reform was viewed as a powerful process of disciplining the state, making it more democratic and less authoritarian (Kagoro 2008; Sachikonye 2011).

This united front was both a positive and a negative aspect of the constitutional reform movement. As a positive it presented a powerful amalgamation of social and political forces rooted in the community and thus had actual political and social power to act, including through collective action, when needed. However, negatively, in the process the more radical social and economic demands, including those for land redistribution, were drowned as the NCA's intellectual output shifted to 'liberal' university academics and lawyers.

The emphasis on 'constitutionalism', 'democracy', 'good governance' and 'human rights' had severe limitations, becoming an uncontested truth. Critical activist/scholars, like Professor Mukau Mutua, a former student activist at the University of Nairobi, has warned about the limitation of this particularised 'human rights ideology', stating:

The bias towards civil and political rights favours vested narrow political interests and kleptocracies which are entrenched in the bureaucratic, political and business sectors of society and represent interests that are not interested to challenge economic powerlessness of the masses in postcolonial Africa. Yet the human rights movement assumes the naturalness of the market and the inevitability of the employer-employee, capitalist-worker, and subordinated labour relations. It seeks the regulation of these relationships, but not their fundamental re-formulation.

Mutua 2008, p 34

As this 'ideology of human rights' took over, political analyses of the economy were drowned and civil society organisations (like the Women and Land Lobby Group) that were interested in historical inequities became ephemeral. The demand for a progressive land policy or for economic (re)structuring to de-colonise the economy were largely ignored within civil society, dismissed as 'a smoke and mirror issue' intended to divert attention from the increasing corruption and economic crisis from the late 1990s.

By the time Morgan Tsvangirai left the NCA to lead the MDC and write its manifesto, the 'social and economic' justice components had been whittled away. In addition, civil society split, as the indigenisation lobby groups, war veterans' movement, rural associations and landless people movement were captured by Zanu-PF, thus undermining the unity and coherence of civil society to put pressure on the state (see, Sadomba 2011; McCandless 2011). This split in civil society became crucial in the later preceding elections, until the 2013 elections; in particular the war veteran's movement became a vital cog in the Zanu-PF election machinery and 'Fast Track Land Reform' the epicentre of Zanu-PF's manifesto.

LAND REFORM, THE MDC AND CIVIL SOCIETY: NOW YOU SEE IT NOW YOU DON'T

When Zanu-PF responded with *Jambanja* (violent land invasions) the opposition MDC and the majority of civil society criticised its actions as a gimmick aimed at retaining power and deliberately targeted at white farmers. Zanu-PF's campaign, 'The Land is the Economy and the Economy is the Land' was rubbished as

ineffective and yet, in the process, Zanu-PF managed to re-ignite and use state power to organise what some have called the 'uncivil society', mainly comprising members of the Zimbabwe National War Veterans Association. On the other hand, civil society was not intensely interested in the land question, reflecting its urban bias, with Moyo (2004, p 11) noting that the demand for radical land reform was 'submerged, especially in recent struggles for democratization, by the proceduralist thrust of civil society activism, much of which is ensconced within a neoliberal economic framework'. MDC T-shirts carrying the slogan 'Land to the People and Not to Politicians' disappeared at the very moment that Zanu-PF was re-invigorating the 'unfinished business' of the liberation war.

The fact that Morgan Tsvangirai was captured by Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation Television (ZBC-TV) newsmen on video during the 2002 presidential elections campaign receiving signed bank cheques and money from white farmers at a political rally in Banket did not help. It perpetuated ZANU-PF's propaganda that the MDC was a front for white farmers and Western interests. On the other hand, calls from radical groups like the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), led by lawyer and Member of Parliament (MP) Munyaradzi Gwisai, to support radical land reform were ignored. While the MDC declared it would re-distribute '6-7-million' hectares, its plan was dependent on 'donor aid' and 'the willing buyer-willing seller' model, which had failed.

This fissure has continued to be an Achilles heel in the discourses of change and transformation in Zimbabwe because civil society's conceptualisation of democracy was pre-dominantly a battle over 'good governance' and 'human rights', narrowly defined and consistent with the global 'neo-liberal' framework. From 2000 to 2008 civil society discourse was dominated by the focus on political and civil rights as both a response to the deepening economic crisis in Zimbabwe and an attempt to challenge Zanu-PF's increased authoritarianism, if not outright militarism.

THE 'NEW' CONSTITUTION AND REFERENDUM: TAKE CHARGE OR TAKE PART⁴

The major political parties – Zanu-PF, MDC-T and MDC-M – signed a Global Political Accord (GPA), which resulted in a Government of National Unity (GNU)

4 Civil society in Zimbabwe was divided mainly into two camps. One camp was strongly aligned to the MDC-T and supported its participation in the Government of National Unity. This camp was called 'take part', in reference to its support of the MDC-T's participation in the GNU. The second camp, called 'take charge', was aligned to the NCA position of not supporting the MDC's participation in the GNU, for this group felt that the MDC had betrayed it by agreeing to a GNU with ZANU-PF. The, along with those civil society organisations and individuals who supported its position, launched a campaign called 'take charge and complete the change', which became known as 'take charge'.

or an Inclusive Government (IG), with the specific objectives of reform and policy implementation. In the process CSOs generally became close to the government, especially the two MDCs. Constitutional reform, a key component of the roadmap to 'transition' and democratic government, which had been guaranteed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was supposed to be carried out before any election was held. The parties to the GPA announced that the process would be handled by a government-controlled Constitution Select Committee (COPAC) and the draft Constitution was passed in a referendum. The process of publishing the draft Constitution and organising the referendum was very hurried, leading some to say that the Constitution had been 'rammed down our throats' (Whande 2014).

Only a weak NCA, a faction of ZINASU, the ISO and a faction of the ZCTU rejected the process and the outcome, arguing that politicians could not be in charge of constitution-making. The NCA and its allies did not differ with the civic and political rights discourse, their objections related to procedural matters regarding the process of writing a new Constitution. They were financially weak, and money from donors poured into those organisations that seemed to support the position adopted by the MDC-T. However, the civic organisations in general, whether or not they agreed with both the content and the process, were more concerned about the technical procedural aspects of the process leading to the referendum.

For example, the only major dispute over the draft Constitution emerged when ZIMRIGHTS was barred from being an 'observer', with civics threatening to 'boycott observing the actual referendum'; yet such radical positions were absent when the content was being debated. The NCA protested, making valid points, among them the fact that '95% of those who voted yes neither saw nor read the draft constitution, 95% of the "Yes" voters knew nothing about the contents of the Draft Constitution' (NCA Press Statement 2013). The process was railroaded, giving no opportunity for people to 'look at the bigger picture' (Magaisa 2013) and the principals themselves did not hesitate to point out that the Constitution might have to be tinkered with again after the election.

Those within the GNU and COPAC campaigned for a 'Yes' vote, with Theresa Mugadza, a commissioner in the GNU, arguing that she was voting 'Yes' because it was a 'better constitution' and because the government could not spend a lot of money and 'show nothing for it' (Mugadza 2013). The NCA's 'take charge' campaign was weak, under-resourced and easily sidestepped, as Zanu-PF, the MDCs and the dominant civil society organisations formed a 'united front'. Those who were critical of this new-found friendship felt that it pointed to the emergence of a 'permanence of elitist politics' (Zhangazha 2013).

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE GNU: PLAYING RUSSIAN ROULETTE DOES 'KILL'

As the blame game played around the economy shifted within the GNU, civil society in general was almost paralysed, either unable or unwilling to build grassroots campaigns to make the GNU accountable and responsive, check the abuse of power and force Zanu-PF to carry out the reforms outlined in the roadmap.

For example, the think-tank, the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for Zimbabwe (IDAZIM) was reduced to a technical partner in the prime minister's office, while the Zimbabwe Institute (ZI) played the same role within the MDC-M. Civil society mobilisation was feeble, coalitions became weaker and, in certain cases, the MDC-T played an active divisive role, with the result that the ZCTU and ZINASU split into factions. It seemed MDC-T had absorbed the lessons of the politics of divide and rule.⁵ Civic organisations that had coalesced in the NCA had long historical relationships with the MDC-T since a dominant section of the MDC leadership had emerged from civil society.

Furthermore, it seemed that a record of activism in the civil society arena was a stepping stone to the MDC leadership structures and many indeed used it as one. A very unhealthy revolving door now existed between the MDCs and organisations like the ZI, the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CZC) and IDAZIM. By the time the election was called these civil society organisations, including one faction of the ZCTU, led by George Nkiwane,⁶ was thoroughly embedded in the GNU and lacked an independent agenda.

In the pre-election period civil society organisations concentrated on the procedural and technical aspects of the election rather than on debating the substance of party manifestos. Prominent campaigns included 'Feya-Feya', headed by the CZC, which aimed to ensure the election was free and fair. The Elections Resources Centre (ERC) organised the 'XIG Voters' campaign, which aimed to make sure that first-time voters were registered. There was an obsession with the date of the election, the registration process, the composition of the ZEC, the state of the voters' roll, who was printing the ballot papers and how the counting was to be done.

In an interview, Dr Godfrey Kanyenze argued that 'the problem also with

5 Interestingly, Zanu-PF had constantly used this tactic. It had created the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions to counter the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, the Zimbabwe Congress of Student Unions to counter the Zimbabwe National Association of Student Unions and the National Development Association to counter the National Constitutional Assembly. The MDC, it seems, had learnt spectacularly well.

6 The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union elections were disputed and there was an 'invisible' hand of the MDC-T in the split as the MDC-T pushed to control who was elected (the matter was only resolved by a Supreme Court ruling).

donors is they were all focusing on elections, all the money was going towards the election. They forgot about the grassroots, building the grassroots, we forgot the basics that to win an election ... there must be a demand from below' (Kanyenze 2013).⁷

ZANU-PF VERSUS THE MDC-T ELECTION MANIFESTO

The MDC-T's manifesto, entitled 'JUICE', centred on the challenge of 'unemployment'. To meet this challenge the party, together with Morgan Tsvangirai's 'international friends', would create 'one million jobs in 5 years'. The manifesto was ahistorical, ignored the liberation struggle and instead focused on: (i) resuscitation of industry and trade; (ii) attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and donor assistance; (iii) 'free market'-related reforms and (v) the rule of law (MDC-T 2013). On the other hand, Zanu-PF's manifesto, 'The People's Manifesto', centred on 'Taking Back the Economy' by broadening the 'indigenisation' programme and was rooted in a radicalised, nationalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric (Zanu-PF 2013).

The MDC-T and its CSO allies formulated a message designed for a formal economy and not for a highly informalised economy, for which the authority rested either with local government officials aligned with Zanu-PF or even militias of sorts. In some cases, operating a business, owning a mining claim, access to community share ownerships schemes and the opening up of flea markets in Mbare, for example, were now directly approved and authorised by militias like Chipangano (Mawowa 2007; Biti 2014).

For instance, when President Mugabe made calls to decriminalise 'illegal gold mining', popularly known as *chikorokoza*, the MDC-M argued that 'unless this practice is brought to an end, Zimbabwe is going to be transformed into a wasteland and desert' and this would lead to 'long term ruin of our beloved nation' (Coltart 2012).

The informalisation of the economy had clearly escaped the MDCs. The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) estimated that about 500 000 illegal miners (EMA 2010) in Zimbabwe relied on being *makorokoza*. Zanu-PF realised that parcelling out land, giving people mining claims and protecting these miners would create thicker lines of clientelism, while, for the MDCs, such a system represented chaos and could not be allowed in a modern economy. Zanu-PF was not only 'tapping into the chaos' (Mawowa 2007) but was deliberately crafting that chaos. A significant chunk of the rural political economy (land and mining)

⁷ See Dr Godfrey Kanyenze interview, available at: www.solidaritypeacetrust.org/1369/an-incredible-election

has been incorporated into these networks of clientelism and voting for a Zanu-PF government guarantees the protection of the 'bounty'.

In addition, Zanu-PF became more populist before the election, with the Minister of Local Government, Dr Ignatius Chombo, suddenly realising that 'people are suffering' and directing local authorities and parastatals involved in basic service delivery (like electricity, water and rates) to cancel debts owed by residents (Matenga 2013). The response from the CSOs and MDCs was predictable, with the MDC-T mayor for Masvingo and president of the Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ), Femias Chakabuda, dismissing the directive and arguing that all local authorities should defy it (Mpfu 2012).

Mirroring the MDC-CSO alliance, Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) chairperson, Simbarashe Moyo, said the minister was 'just politicking. This is a populist statement that is not worth celebrating' (Mpfu 2012). A civil society activist, Masimba Kuchera, criticised the directive, saying that what 'the government should be doing is creating jobs and more industries, luring more investors so that people can earn and honour their obligations' (Moyo 2013). Civil society organisations failed to produce a *popular* counter-hegemonic front and message, while Zanu-PF (re)presented itself as a champion of the poor by 'cutting debts', providing land for urban resettlement, pushing for indigenisation and intensifying radical land reform. Professor Brian Raftopoulos, who previously chaired the management committee of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, stated that:

The deconstruction of former white-owned, large-scale commercial farms and their replacement by a preponderance of small farm holders has radically changed the social and political relations in these areas. The new forms in which Zanu PF and the state have penetrated these new social relations have affected the forms of Zanu PF dominance in these areas. The rapid expansion of small-scale, 'informal' mining companies has also brought a larger number of workers into the fold of Zanu PF's accumulation and patronage network. When these factors are combined with the greater political cohesion of Mugabe's party since the divisions that marked its campaign in 2008 – and the resonance of its messaging around empowerment and indigenisation particularly amongst the youth, it is apparent that there are multiple reasons for the political resurgence of Mugabe and his party.

Raftopoulos 2013

The lessons apply to civic organisations because they have to recognise the new shifts in the political economy and how those have created new social relations and

that any political or social mobilisation and collective action has to be informed by methodical rethinking. There has been an intense debate about the 'Zimbabwe crisis', which has pitted what Moore called the 'agrarian patriots' against the 'critical cosmopolitans' (2012, p 8). Uncritical arguments glorifying a 'revolution' or a 'radicalised state', pushed by the agrarian patriots, gloss over the *democratisation* part of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), as argued by Thabo Mbeki (cited in Moore, 2012) and ignore the way the state has been captured by an elite which uses state apparatus for coercive accumulation.

Mawowa (2007) and Zamchiya (2013a) have argued that the state has now become central to the facilitation of the coercive and illicit forms of accumulation that contribute to producing and re-producing networks, sites and thick lines of patronage and clientelism. With the intensified push for indigenisation these forms of illicit and coercive accumulation, especially in mining, are set to continue, and democratisation seems to have been abandoned. In that sense, Thabo Mbeki's support of Zanu-PF as the only party capable of advancing the NDR, becomes flimsy. 'Democratisation' must be situated, Wilfred Mhanda style, as the process of 'broadening of popular participation' in all spheres including the economy, politics, culture and social institutions (cited in Moore 2012). The post-colonial process of change cannot ignore democratisation, although it must be more broadly interpreted and applied, as Shivji (2003, p 12) points out:

There is no doubt that democracy is the central question of the African revolution today, but the question is how it is related to, or configured with, the national and social questions. Neither the National Question nor the Democracy Question can be addressed or interrogated outside of its social character.

The centrality of democracy is indispensable, yet it must be broader if it is to be useful in disciplining a state whose art of 'defying the winds of change' has shifted beyond Zanu-PF's technical manipulation of the electoral process. The sooner Zimbabwe's civil society realises this, the better it will re-configure its 'weapons of theory' and perhaps a useful *agency* will emerge. Perhaps this agency will deliberately re-join politics to economics because the process of separating the two was never inevitable, it was a consequence of a neo-liberal turn of mind which imposes its logic not only through and by the state but also through and by civil society, with the intention of entrenching and sustaining a particular hegemon.

CONCLUSION: FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

The result of the 2013 election, 'won resoundingly' by Zanu-PF, has befuddled civil society and the opposition in general to the point where it has descended into a

debilitating paralysis. Tendai Biti, Secretary-General of the MDC-T, pointed out this sorry state of affairs when he wrote that Zimbabwe's 'democratic forces are on auto pilot to self-destruction' (Biti 2014). In the case of the MDC-T, violence and threats of expulsion from the party have been the response to questions about its manifesto, strategies and leadership capacity.

On the other hand, in what might be seen as a calculated climb-down, the 'West' in general, apart from the United States, has started to relax economic and travel restrictions on Zimbabwe's political elite. The European Union (EU), for example, condemned the election as lacking 'transparency, plagued with irregularities and incomplete participation', yet it has shifted towards engaging the government (EU 2013). This shift can be understood in the context of contestations in broader geopolitics, especially as China has accelerated its influence in Africa and in Zimbabwe in particular. In Africa Zanu-PF's triumph seemed to have rejuvenated a certain radical approach to land and resource redistribution, at least in South Africa, where the popularity of Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Front (EFF) among alienated youth and marginalised poor is increasing.

Zimbabwe is now a complex matrix where, it seems, democratisation in the liberal sense has been sidestepped, while the economic structure is being partially restructured and the urban-based intelligentsia are blind to the realities of an emerging political economy. While that political economy is a result of Zanu-PF extending its clientelism and networks of patronage through a rabid coercive accumulation project, in the process new realities are emerging.

Some civil society organisations once imbricated with the MDC-T, for example, the IDAZIM, have closed shop altogether and some are attempting to re-chart an independent path. Others, like the Zimbabwe Coalition of Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) and the Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA), are attempting to re-mobilise around major issues like poor social service delivery. When news of what is now called Cashgate (in which the managers of some parastatals were exposed as paying themselves millions) started leaking, Zimbabweans were outraged, yet, surprisingly, only the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), the Restoration of Human Rights (ROHR) and a single protestor turned up at Harare Town Council to protest.

Interestingly, ZIMRIGHTS, which, in the 1990s, had been on a confrontation path with the government, applied for permission to march and, when permission was denied, restricted itself to a few murmurs and went back to business as usual. The lack of collective action across the country is partially the result of fear of the violent state apparatus but it is also the result of a civil society embedded in a politics of elitism. Importantly, one cannot ignore the fact that civil society organisations have become 'class mobility vehicles' (Petras 1999) rather than sites of struggle and, in the process, their leaders have become a 'neo-comprador' class.

In order for Zimbabwe's civil society to play a meaningful and critical role, lessons from elsewhere might be helpful. Shivji (2007, p 47) pointed out this need for civil society to be introspective, stating that if 'NGOs are to play that role, they must fundamentally re-examine their silences and their discourses'. Furthermore, issues of how civil society is resourced will continue to be a challenge, with Makumbe (1998, p 311) noting that civics 'are not capable of sustaining themselves without the support of either the state or foreign international donors' and that, in the process, they become 'mere implementers of the donor agencies agenda'.

Beyond questions of resources, accountability and sustainability there is an immediate demand for theoretical rigour in analysing how the Zimbabwe political economy has been re-structured, especially since 2000. The relationship between the MDCs has also been an albatross for civil society and there has been a call for civics to build vibrant social bases and assert independence (Masunungure 2009). The role of civil society as a buffer against state authoritarianism has been influential in the evolution of states from dictatorships to multiparty democracies, yet, in the case of Zimbabwe, and perhaps Africa as a whole, civil society has to fashion its theory and agency within the existing political economy and this means not merely copying the concept of civil society as projected in Western liberal democracies, but consciously re-configuring and reconceptualising the prevailing limited concepts of 'democracy', 'good governance', 'rule of law' and 'ideology of human rights' to (re)project them more usefully and construct a more robust framework of challenging Southern Africa's largely atrophying liberation movements. Perhaps that way the historical 'unfinished business' of transformation, rooted in the incomplete liberation projects, will become more possible.

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