

ZIMBABWE'S DEMOCRACY IN THE WAKE OF THE 2013 ELECTION: CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The startlingly definitive election victory for Zimbabwe's Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) at the end of July 2013 incorporated elements ranging from coercion, cheating, and regional connivance (with opposition's hapless performance) so seamlessly that many scholars and political practitioners have prophesied the near death of democracy there — and elsewhere on the continent. This article reviews the process of and the discourse on the election. Historical reflections based on recent archival research offer comparative perspectives. Democratic progress in Zimbabwe must be re-assessed soberly and without illusions.

1. Introduction

It is tempting to say that Zimbabwean democracy — in both its thin (liberal and multi-party) and thick (expanding modes of participation in all spheres of social existence) modes — has breathed its last.¹⁾ ZANU-PF's²⁾ tricks, coercion, populism, regional peers' collusion, and the opposition's lackadaisical campaign resulted in a 31 July 2013 'victory' so big that even the party that has ruled Zimbabwe since 1980 was flabbergasted. A 61 per cent presidential count for the 89 year old Robert Gabriel Mugabe registered against the 61 year old Morgan Tsvangirai's 34 per cent. ZANU-PF's 197 seats in the national assembly to 70 for the MDC-T³⁾ sealed nearly five years of a stalemated 'trans-

ditional inclusive government' (TIG), in which the two main parties 'shared' government (along with a deputy prime minister in a party splintered from the main MDC but that managed to keep its name: no one is quite certain how Arthur Mutambara, once the 'MDC's' leader but now without a parliamentary place got that post!) but in fact ZANU-PF used to rebuild its power (Raftopoulos 2013).

Little of a democratic process has arrived in TIG's stead. ZANU-PF may well hold on to the levers of state for the foreseeable future (Moore 2005; 2013b). The *Open Democracy* website positing 'farewell to Mugabe' just before the 2008 election has now been replaced by something like 'goodbye democracy' (Chan 2007; Bracking 2013 — the latter being the most interesting and creative of analysis among scores of commentary on the election). As Henning Melber (2013) wrote "if we accept this as 'African democracy', we can kiss good-bye to the free will of the people and surrender our right to make choices to those who do not care for the people anyway".⁴⁾ Melber then cited ZANU-PF's history of taking power even when losing popular votes, judicial malfeasance (most recently, the Constitutional Court upheld the ZANU-PF's request to hold the election far before meeting the stipulations of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) — the 'roadmap' to TIG — including, fundamentally, reform of the military-dominated registry and electoral commission), marshalling of the military and militia to its cause, torturing, killing, and raping (especially in the 2008 run-off), manipulating TIG, hiring a foreign gang of election mercenaries, and convincing its neighbours that such shenanigans⁵⁾ deserved regional and international support. For the Solidarity Peace Trust (2013), the July election was 'the end of a road'.

Yet democracy in Zimbabwe may not be dead. It might just be taking time to be born.

2. The explanation: Ideology or politics?

Even the most dilatory reader of Antonio Gramsci or collector of his quotes knows that morbid symptoms are thrown up whilst new socio-political orders are on their way. And as Marx might well have said about the array of revolutionary possibilities these days — and it could well be argued that 'democracy' *is* or *would be* 'revolutionary' in many African countries — there is a shortage of good midwives. Indeed, one must enter the rocky terrain of whether the problems in (liberal) demo-

cratic consolidation lie in its unsuitability for 'African' social patterns, culture, ideology or if it is 'politics' wherein the stumbling blocks occur. The two spheres are intertwined of course, but an ideological 'base' does not determine a political 'superstructure' (of course, one will note that the 'economic' base is being ignored here — and it will remain to the side for the duration of this article). Indeed, to suggest that it does is to elude the space of agency that is politics — and the hard work it demands.

ZANU-PF ideologue George Charamba (2013)⁶⁾ performs such an illusion. Soon after the election he picked up Gramsci gleefully, writing in his weekly opinion piece in the state-run *Herald* that sometimes ideologies — and by implication the politics accompanying them — just don't fit the societies on which they are imposed, or into which they are imported from the centres of empire, so they can act at best as a cautionary note to those working within and on them. The lines Charamba worked with were the following:

[O]ne must ... distinguish between historically organic ideologies, those, that is, which are necessary to a given structure, and ideologies that are arbitrary, rationalistic, or 'willed'. To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is 'psychological'; they 'organise' human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc. To the extent that they are arbitrary they only create individual 'movements', polemics and so on (even though these are not completely useless, since they function like an error by contrasting with the truth, demonstrates it) (Gramsci 1971: 367-8).

Charamba may not have wanted to delve further into Gramsci's fumbling between structure and sensibility. He might have discovered that the old conundrum of consent versus/with coercion did not spread far into the "backward countries or ... the colonies ... [where] ... the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous ... forms which elsewhere have been superseded and have become anachronistic are still in vigour" (1971: 238, 242-3).⁷⁾ In other words, Charamba's ZANU-PF may well fit into Gramsci's 'antiquated' category. Perhaps only the iron hand of contemporaneity-ZANU-PF style keeps the dead weight of its history alive; resurrected through repetitious rhetoric, hagiographical history, licentious cheating and vicious violence. These constitute one part of the "new, unique, and historically con-

crete combinations" that have come out of a history of pre-capitalist ideological and political formations — isn't the desire to rule forever, and with divine permission (Chinaka 2013), simply feudal? — colonialism and its 'special' variation offering 1 000 years of white minority rule, a vicious war of liberation laced with the oblations of the Cold War and internecine faction fighting (Mhanda 2011) and now, a backlash against the liberal imperialism levied in the post-Cold War's ephemeral 'peace dividend'.

It should not be forgotten that near the beginning of the armed phase of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, Joshua Nkomo, the man who eventually lost the battle to be 'father' of the new Zimbabwe signed as 'life president' in a letter to Alec Douglas-Home, temporary British prime minister, demanding the announcement of a constitutional conference by 16 March 1964 to forestall Rhodesia's Field government's plans to claim a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (Nkomo 1964). The letter was written soon after members of Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) who eventually formed Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) had been expelled. Nkomo, who had created a party called the People's Caretaker Council (PCC) in response to ZAPU's banning, also claimed to Douglas-Home that the PCC had the support of all Africans in the country. Since the Field government had banned the party's attempts to register its members, Nkomo wrote that "we now regard the registration as having been effected and I speak from the position of strength of the four million Africans ...". Not only do Zimbabwean politicians have a history of staying in power beyond reasonable terms, but they tend to over-estimate their public support. Old habits die hard.

Another part of the 'historically concrete combination' that makes up Zimbabwe, however, is a desire for freedom and choice, riding on the classes and fractions that will expand it. There is no structural necessity for one side or the other to win (and many 'sides' struggle within each side). This is the realm of politics. Perhaps it is what Terence Ranger meant when he said, as he arrived to see — and help — the waves of nationalism wash into Zimbabwe, that he wished "he was black, because for the black man everything is still open, everything is still to do — a new state and a new culture to build up ... whereas for the European everything has been done, there is nothing left" (Grundy 2013; Ranger 2013: 73). If Ranger's peers had thought they'd win through ideology alone, they would not have got very far.

Thus Charamba's assertion that *ideology* is the main issue risks much. If one believes ZANU-PF's victory is due to its organic rootedness in something almost inherently African, or even Zimbabwean, a slippery slide begins down a long slope. Many Zimbabwean intellectuals sing this refrain. At Brian Raftopoulos' *Journal of Southern African Studies* Annual Lecture at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (October 4, 2013; Solidarity Peace Trust, 2013), many attendees harped on ideological points. Indeed, Raftopoulos himself did not mention ZANU-PF's inordinate use of violence until George Shire, United Kingdom (UK) resident apologist for Zimbabwe's ruling party, discoursed at length on the inapplicability of 'western' ideologies to Zimbabwe: the sheer gravity of *politics* lost its weight as it was wished away into the clouds of culture and ideology — until Raftopoulos reminded the participants that this ignored ZANU-PF's violence. More broadly, those who focus too much on Gramsci's ideological discourse and thereby his emphasis on consent ignore the modern Machiavelli's concern with coercion and political *organisation* (Mouzelis 1978).

Of course, Charamba was not forthcoming about how Zimbabwe's modern (opposition) prince might learn lessons from the complexities of creating a democratic *modus vivendi politicus*. For Charamba, Zimbabwe's 'revolutionary party' (Mbeki in Moore 2010 and 2012) has demonstrated that it is privy to the right answers. It does not need to ask questions, leaving them to us. Has ZANU-PF's authoritarian populism become 'organic'? For those not believing Zimbabweans consent to this type of hegemony, serious probing is necessary to keep democracy from dying. If democracy is still alive, but needing surgery, how can it be revived? If it's being born, how can its midwives prevent its stillbirth? How can scarcity be turned into superfluity (there is never too much democracy!)?

3. The *politics* and analysis of losing the 2013 election

In the immediate sense, analysis of the 31 July 2013 election is necessary, along with deeper historical examination. The rest of this article will attempt to forage through these *problematiques*. Practically, the MDC-T's mistakes must be investigated alongside ZANU-PF's chicanery and hard work. The short answer to the above queries for

democrats might well be: work hard, and be *almost* as Machiavellian as the enemy. This includes the huge cheating factor, because assiduous effort could have gone some way to remedying it too.

Extensive public opinion polls in 2012 indicated substantial fall in support for the MDC-T (Booyesen 2012; Bratton 2012).⁸⁾ Yet in the days before the 31 July election — which was after many false starts finally called with less than a month's preparation time — most analyses indicated astonishment that it could take place without all the prescriptions of the agreed 'roadmap' having been met, and with increasing evidence of the ruling party-state's election machines' untoward activities (Moore 2013a). Just 11 days before the contest, the British *Mail on Sunday* alerted the world to the extent of the future fraud (Birrell 2013a). Many journalists doubted the authenticity of the documents on which it was based, but the warning signals were clearly begging for more investigation — South Africa's *Mail and Guardian* had published stories on the Israeli election managing company Nikuv as early as April (Sole 2013; Silverstein 2013). As usual, much hope was placed on the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) facilitation team — headed, at least for public relations purposes, by the democracy-friendly Lindiwe Zulu, pan-Africanist, Patrice Lumumba University graduate, *Umkhonto We Sizwe* veteran, former cell-phone company executive, and past South Ambassador to Brazil — cooling ZANU-PF's more disturbing proclivities and holding the signatories to GPA's roadmap to the well-meaning electoral niceties on its route. If ZANU-PF propagandists' spluttering indicated their fear of being stymied, Zulu's candour was working (Moore 2012b). But at the last moment, Ms Zulu challenged the revolutionary party's electoral plans too openly. Her employer hung her out to dry. The president of a country with an economy the size of a small South African city told the leader of the continent's most powerful country to shut her up. So she was. This move (discussed in more detail later in the article) may have lost this round for democracy made in Zimbabwe.

As the 31 July victory settled post-mortem analysis progressed from instant vituperative poured on the MDC-T — which rejected the elections as fraudulent — for poor preparation and stupidity whilst in TIG (neglecting party work for attempts to co-govern, while ZANU-PF did the opposite) to, weeks later, resignation. In turn there was a move into a revival of more serious investigations of rigging and other forms of underhandedness. Along the first lines, South African journalist

Ranjeni Munusamy (2013) wrote that Morgan Tsvangirai

bur[ie]d himself long before the elections ... [his] lack of political strategy and assumption that Zimbabweans would choose him over Mugabe led to a sweeping victory for Zanu PF ... [he] was arrogant enough to believe that people would naturally choose him over Mugabe, without him doing any heavy lifting in the run up.

This sort of analysis admitted to the many flaws in the electoral process and the vote itself almost as an afterthought, eager to remind readers that the MDC-T "still went into the elections like sheep to the slaughterhouse". The MDC-T's participation "in the flawed poll ... gave it legitimacy and [it] had no back-up plan to challenge Zanu PF if the elections swung in its favour".

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung analyst Jos Martens (2013) went as far as to entitle his diagnosis "what if there had been no rigging?", suggesting the MDC-T's tenure during TIG had not satisfied many people whilst small farmers and miners (artisanal and formal) had something to be thankful for from ZANU-PF — and ZANU-PF had carried out assiduous electoral preparatory work of both fair and foul means. Thus

common [sic] Zimbabweans unfortunately have jumped [note: 'jumped' not 'were pushed'] from the frying pan into the fire. They might have 'elected' to denounce exploitation by an MDC elite mainly driven by self-interest and foreign influence, but instead will be further manipulated by a vengeful and unscrupulous ZANU-dictatorship that, under the guise of nationalist and pseudo progressive rhetoric, will continue enriching itself and its cronies (Martens 2013: 8).

The Media Institute of Southern Africa's (MISA) journal *Thinking Beyond* (2013) was worse. It drove the nails into the MDC-T with nary a word about ZANU-PF's propensity for violence (more to the point in 2013 were the threats thereof) and trickery. Instead, with an NGOish sneer indicative of the sort that influenced Tsvangirai's distrust of intellectuals,⁹⁾ MISA's editorial opined that the "opposition forces scored own goals" as the election approached. This was attributable to "their false sense-of-arrival-mentality, complacency and imperviousness to constructive criticism from within and without their own ranks".¹⁰⁾ The media-watchers then claimed that ZANU-PF had "worked diligently and strategically to cleanse itself of its predilection to use violence as a

means to electoral victory" and "had its ducks in row — recruiting, mobilising and ensuring its supporters — both new and old, registered and voted in the elections". To top it off, it all worked because SADC, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) endorsed the election. The ruling party could hardly have put it better.

By the end of October, however, a new media offensive was launched. A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) interview brought Tsvangirai out in fighting mode, although he only barely answered the question "why did the MDC-T participate?" and he directed much of his anger towards journalist Audrey Brown (2013). When she asked why the MDC-T participated in an election that seemed doomed, Tsvangirai answered:

Firstly I don't think it was an election, from our perspective. I think it was just a contestation of those who were committed to an electoral, a democratic electoral process, which is the MDC, and those who were defending power by whatever means, which is ZANU-PF. In the end this *event* represented the most brazen electoral rigging that has ever been witnessed ...

After Tsvangirai was asked if he thought he should "step aside" given the number of elections his party had lost under his leadership, the dialogue proceeded thus:

MT: Step aside for what? How do you blame the victim? ... It is not a leadership crisis, not a leadership issue ... My dear sister: this is not an election. This was not an election. Can't you understand?

AB: But you participated in it

MT: Can't you understand that an election is a process whereby the people are able to express themselves willingly and openly?

AB: But you participated in it and gave it the stamp of approval ...

MT: No, it was not ...

AB: So for now to say that what we did is not what it was, it, it feels as if you are copping out of responsibility ...

MT: Do you think that Robert Mugabe is a democrat? Do you think that he will accept an outcome that is democratically, democratically expressed by the people?

...

MT: The whole rigging machinery was in place by 2012, not ...

AB: But you were in government though ...

MT: I was in government, yes, but no one was aware¹¹⁾ ...

AB: But why didn't you stop it, but surely ...

MT: No, no ...

AB: That's the sort of thing you would have been keeping an eye on

...

MT: We were keeping an eye ...

AB: Knowing who you were in bed with ...

MT: To tell you honestly we were keeping an eye on some of the major reforms. For instance we were insisting on media reform, we were insisting that there has to be military reform, we were insisting that the electoral reform had to be put in place. It is the extent of the rigging; that we thought with the momentum built on the ground, that it would be overwhelmed ...

The answer finally came out: the MDC-T leadership thought it had enough "momentum" to "overwhelm" what it later called "fraud". Regardless of non-action on what "we were keeping an eye on", three public opinion surveys indicating severe popularity problems, and indications from the SADC facilitation team leader that the non-fulfilment of the markers on the electoral "roadmap" might allow the MDC to pull out of the elections, the MDC-T thought it would win. Such a statement does not indicate huge degree of respect for due process — ZANU-PF's means could be overlooked if the end of victory was seen over the horizon — but it simultaneously suggests being caught in a wider process from which there was no escape.

To be sure, withdrawal would have been a very difficult option. Thus the leader of the party that lost the bet was left holding the (leaking) can. One staunch (foreign) supporter of the beleaguered party asked whilst arguing with young Zimbabwean critics, "could *any* party have beaten the ZANU-PF juggernaut?" However, then the question becomes not just "why continue?" but, how to continue in another way?

Media momentum picked up in the days around Tsvangirai's BBC interview. Although scathing about the MDC-T — "perform[ing] appallingly. Outwardly confident, it made the same mistakes it had in previous elections — as if internal reflection, self-criticism and learning from mistakes were impossible" — Stephen Chan (2013 — likely with more access to information about rigging than most) went on to indicate a careful scam. He criticised scattered approaches at detecting election theft:

the problem with the accusations of a stolen election was that evidence collated from local instances of electoral malpractice could not be extrapolated into one national picture.

All the accusations assumed a single 'rig' and none of the civic and observer groups examined the possibility of several strategies to ensure victory ...

Three strategies with three complementary but different outcomes constitute a perhaps more rewarding point of departure for those protesting the ZANU-PF victory and how it was won.

Chan was not clear on the relationship of the three different outcomes — a huge presidential win, parliamentary gains in which ZANU-PF's seats represented more than its percentage win (not unusual in 'first-past-the-post' single member constituency contests, but requiring careful calibration), and a "decimation of the MDC [sic: MDC-T] front bench" — with three strategies articulated to each result. Unless particular outcomes match strategies, one is at a loss. To be sure, busloads filled with voters from outside the constituency came to polling stations in MDC-T Secretary-General Tendai Biti's area with registration slips in hand, and in the early hours of the count it was said he had lost — but the most visible MDC-T front bencher won in the end, as did National Organiser Nelson Chamisa, perhaps the third most well-known MDC-T candidate. Other 'front benchers' such as Ian Makone, his wife Theresa, and Jameson Timba did indeed lose — although Theresa Makone and Timba remain on a 'shadow planning commission' and Timba is contesting his seat — but it cannot be said many MDC-T members and supporters were sad to see them go. Some have been accused of stopping initiatives regarding youth registration and efforts to unify the opposition parties, while others were widely regarded as working for the other side. Careful constituency by constituency registration since 2009 — a few hundred votes garnered here and there through intimidation and promises (sticks and carrots) combined with a score or more ghosts and a hugely inflated voters' roll — worked wonders for those parliamentary seats. So did gerrymandering. Assuredly the MDC-T was a laggard with registration but it is hard to believe, as Chan asserts, that it did nothing.

The dam nearly broke with a *100 Reporters* piece revealing unprecedented skulduggery including that carried out by the infamous Israeli election mercenaries Nikuv (for US\$13 million) synchronised with "parallel registration and mobilization for 'statistical maneuvering,

depopulation and population of hostile constituencies", led by a Chung Huwao of the Chinese Communist Party that included more than 52 000 militia recruits (Sharife 2013: 4).¹²⁾ *100 Reporters* states that over a billion dollars was pulled in from a number of Zimbabwean-Chinese diamond mining businesses and the presidents of Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) "among others". Relatively minor local funders included a Mohamed Mussa for a million dollars, and the Zimbabwe-based British businessman Nicholas Van Hoogstraten, called "Van Hoog", for US\$3 million.¹³⁾ One of the documents purportedly from the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) has Nikuv demanding three billion dollars "to secure 50% of possible adult votes", with a third of that going to "regional diplomacy (next SADC Chair, Liberation movements) to drum up support for poll credibility before, during and after elections". The billion may have been to counter the concerns in the documents that in early June South African president, Jacob Zuma, the formal head of the SADC facilitation team on Zimbabwe, Lindiwe Zulu, and British Prime Minister Mr David Cameron were engaged in "hostile communication ... through the US Embassy in Zimbabwe". No wonder rumours were flashing through Harare on the day after the election that the head of the AU delegation, former (once unelected, once elected) Nigerian leader Olusegun Obasanjo, had received a few million for his services.

Finally in early November the MDC-T released a dossier showing how ZANU-PF had spent over US\$100 million on ensuring an election victory (SWRadio Africa 2013) — a small amount compared to the *100 Reporters* file, and less than the estimated US\$132 million cost of the elections *per se* that neither the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), SADC, or the Electoral Institute for Southern Africa were allowed to fund due to their too stringent conditions, resulting in last minute funding from undetermined sources. The report illustrates an extremely sophisticated cheating strategy, ranging across all levels of the election. It utilised tricks from "special water marked ballot paper ... used in Zimbabwe's four selected provinces to fraudulently swing the vote in favour of Zanu PF candidates at all levels of the harmonised elections ... designed to give all the votes cast on it to Zanu PF candidates through sophisticated paper technology" implemented by the Chinese, to tactics such as "disenfranchis[ing] close to 950,000 voters in urban areas, known to be MDC strongholds". The MDC-T also claims that the election machine placed 7 000 rural resid-

ents' names on urban Masvingo's voters' roll, transported them in to help produce 10 928 votes to 10 424 for the MDC-T, and kept them on the rural list too! Tactics included "200,000 fake voter registration slips ... distributed across the whole country for use by youth militia and Zanu PF supporters to vote in constituencies they were not registered and in some cases used by persons who were not eligible to vote" (SWRadio 2013). Many of the funders listed are the same as those in the *100 Reporters* (although the MDC-T document has the president of Equatorial Guinea up for US\$10 million while the journalists' non-governmental organisations (NGO) source has him for US\$92 million) and *Mail on Sunday* documents, with added notes in the MDC-T file such as the Meikles Africa Group being "threatened with take-over and other forms of sabotage by Zanu PF" so making a "compromise by donating US\$2 million towards the election rigging budget", the information that the US\$3 million from the Zimbabwe Defence Industries comes from "illicit arms deals and making huge profits as a conduit for arms from China and Israel into the African region", and insider knowledge from the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission — essentially run by a senior CIO officer — about its rubber-stamp status (two of its members resigned after the election).

As in the many media reports before the election, Nikuv plays a big role in the MDC-T report. It claims Mugabe himself start negotiating with Nikuv as early as June 2012 (as he did with the Chinese), and that the MDC-T has evidence of bank transactions of around US\$10.5 million between the Registrar-General, a retired military officer who has been running the Zimbabwean elections for decades, and Nikuv. The dossier is also very clear about who was running the campaign: Emmerson Mnangagwa, one of two top runners in the race to succeed Mugabe as ZANU-PF's leader.¹⁴⁾

As if to complete the electoral post-mortems — although in early September an interim SADC submission came up with a noncommittal 'generally credible', indicating the decade's diminution of monitoring discourse — the AU mission's final report was released at about the same time as the media chronicles of the death of electoral probity. As is common in observer reports, suggestions 'for improvement' indicate the things that had gone wrong but cannot be punished. In Zimbabwe's case, it was advised that in the future election managers might not print off a few million more ballot papers than needed, they might get the voters' roll out and ready for inspection at least 14 days before

the election (unlike in this case, when it was ready two days before, and then only in paper format) with more "integrity and transparency" (that is, it should not have duplicate entries), they might not have to "assist" so many voters to find the correct spot on the ballot and turn away so many others to the Command Centre, they might allow more opposition access to the State media, they might get their funding and logistics in order, they could allow civil society to have a bigger role in pre-election education, and they could publish the list of polling stations earlier than two days before the vote. In short, the report is damning even though it does not read like *100 Reporters'* or the frustrated MDC-T's.¹⁵⁾ But damnation does not stop elections: those who oppose ZANU-PF are damned if they do and if they don't.

These media and observer reports are unlikely to change much in Zimbabwe's post-electoral world. *Mail on Sunday*, the *100 Reporters*, the MDC-T's list of sins, and the African Union's mild rebuke combined will not affect a lot. South Africa, the only power of note in SADC, is weary of Zimbabwe and in the wake of the death of its only relatively spotless leader its ruling party is pre-occupied with its own path to power. The kind of final judgement that emerges from power and compromise has already been made, and it is quite likely that Western forms of approbation (sanctions) will cease soon. When the European Union (EU) delegated observer roles to its well-funded SADC it said a lot: "we pay you, you decide". The 'West' has lost its post-Cold War moment enthusiasm, replacing gusto for democracy with shorter term worries about security and order. Its component parts are beginning to leave soft forms of 'aid' such as democratisation to regional powers (according to local norms) increasingly (Stuenkel 2013).

4. Five elements of an analytical mode

Thus for a mode of analysis one must calculate five components with about equal weight each, combining Machiavelli and Gramsci to get the best blend in an 'authoritarian populist' mode of political production — which incorporates 'electoral authoritarianism' (Masunungure 2011; d'Eramo 2013; Morse 2012).¹⁶⁾

First: chicanery and meticulous, expensive, care — including cheating ranging from rigged voters' rolls as only modern science and savvy mercenaries can manufacture, paying off regional referees with the proceeds of rather bloody diamonds, and simply long-term and

dogged preparation.

Second: coercion, which goes from sending more or less implicit messages of "you know what to do if you don't want a repeat of mid-2008" to reminding chiefs to line up their voters properly, and to marauding urban *chipangano* gangs of ZANU-PF youth.

Third: 'populist' strategies ranging from cancelling urban residents' rate payments to free inputs for the 'new farmers' who have already received free land — not to mention election promises that indigenisation policies will lead to more than US\$7 billion pouring forth (the MDC too promised untold wealth — through the equally chimerical illusion of unleashed foreign investment).

Fourth: the MDC-T's ill-preparedness. This ran the gamut from pushing the unity card far too late (it may have been an impossible task in any case: well-placed observers attest that one of the leaders of the small parties was being paid by ZANU-PF to keep out of a unity pact) to poor (or misunderstood — and if the latter not only the state's media domination can be blamed) performance during TIG. Hubris leftover from last election's 'victory' counted against the MDC-T too, as did the belief that overt violence would not follow this one even if the MDC-T was victorious. As well, far too much advice from external well-wishers (who failed to advise 'work hard on registration' etc instead of song and dance rallies) was accepted instead of the party working out its own strategy and tactics.

Fifth — and perhaps in the last instance, when a minute can be a long time in politics, most important: SADC's slipperiness.¹⁷⁾ As the drama of setting the election date came to a close there were signals that highly placed members of the regional consortium would have supported the MDC if it pulled out of the race, demanding the necessary reforms (listed by Tsvangirai in his BBC interview). If in late June or early July this 'offer' was actually made (a senior aide to South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Co-operation told this writer and a second observer that it was), then two series of actions likely ensued. The MDC considered the offer (two senior MDC members stated that the party had), but rejected it, thinking it would win and ZANU-PF's violence would be subdued, given that there was a UN tourism conference slated for Victoria Falls in early August, and SADC's response to the mid-2008 violence was so severe that a repeat was unlikely. It was also thought that the minor opposition parties in Matabeleland would take the contests there if the MDC-T withdrew. More-

over there were suspicions that the offer, far from 'formal', would not be backed up.¹⁸⁾ Regardless of the MDC-T's decision and when it was made, when ZANU-PF learned of this offer, or rumours thereof — and it must be remembered that even if Lindiwe Zulu had not suggested the 'no go' option she had certainly articulated dissatisfaction with the process publicly (Solidarity Peace Trust 2013: 12-15) — Mugabe laid down the law to his SADC peers. He immediately called her a "street woman" speaking out of turn, and demanded that Zuma shut her up — or he would leave SADC. Zuma and his press secretary, Mac Maharaj, followed Mugabe's exactions with untoward alacrity, either because the South Africans knew by then that the game was up or, as one Ottawa observer put it, Zuma's obsequiousness was rewarded monetarily. Weeks later, at the SADC meeting after the election whose results were foretold in all but their excess, they all kissed and made up, joking about Ms. Zulu's bride-price (Du Plessis 2013; Nicholson 2013). What choice did the MDC have but to keep up the democratic façade?

5. An historical precedent and a conclusion

Thus in the final moments it may have been outside powers that tipped Zimbabwe's fate (although in the final instance the local terrain is determinant). As we are reminded by Tim Scarnecchia's (2008: 112) archival discovery of Mugabe telling his American interlocutor at the beginning of the nationalist path to power that there is no way opposition parties can survive without external assistance, social and political movements in 'dependent' countries can do little when the global and regional powers block their steps.

As Nkomo's 1964 history lesson illustrates, Zimbabwe's past is strewn with examples foreshadowing the present. For a long time now, those who oppose the ZANU-PF leviathan have expected a lot of help from abroad but never get it. Just as with the MDC-T's baleful fate regarding too much reliance on foreign assistance in the crunches of 2013, so too was Zimbabwe's second party disappointed in 1980. As Zimbabwe's first fully-fledged election began, ZAPU's beleaguered leader Joshua Nkomo appealed to the British arbiters of the new dispensation to cancel the process because of his opponent's violence. The opponent was ZANU, neither the Rhodesians nor Bishop Muzorewa or Ndabaningi Sithole's 'auxiliaries' (1980). As Christopher Soames (sent

from London to Salisbury to supervise the process leading up to the April 1980 election) wrote regarding a 4 February 1980 meeting between Nkomo and British official Robin Renwick,

the main burden of his complaint [sic] ... was that throughout the Shona-speaking areas Zanu had instituted a reign of terror. A number of Zanu officials and supporters had been abducted. Some of them were believed to have been murdered. They were being threatened by Zanu elements or *mujibas* [young male 'messengers' recruited during the war but now armed] still carrying arms (Soames 1980).

The British advised Nkomo to go public with his concerns, but realised this would be a delicate undertaking.¹⁹⁾ It took the guardians of the diminishing empire slightly longer to refuse Nkomo than Robert Mugabe and Jacob Zuma's decision to throw Lindiwe Zulu off the democracy bus. Seventeen days after Nkomo visited Soames, the following words from Washington crossed the governor's desk — and that of many others in the British foreign policy making establishment (Henderson 1980). Summarising United States' (US) Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard Moose's analysis, the telegram says Nkomo's statements were "entirely in character ... quote vintage Nkomo opportunism unquote". Nkomo would "privately ... encourage measures against Zanu from which he would be the principal beneficiary" and be reluctant to "support such measures in public since he doubtless appreciated the danger of being branded in Africa as someone prepared to desert a former ally".

More broadly, Moose

acknowledged that the other parties had legitimate complaints about Zanu's activities, but laid equal emphasis on the need to keep Mugabe in play. ... the South Africans were coming to accept that it would be better to deal with a regime which included Mugabe than to see continued instability in Zimbabwe. He thought there might already have been a few tentative contacts between Zanu and the South Africans, and mentioned a report from the US liaison office in Salisbury that the South African representative had advised his government that it should not rule out the possibility of dealing with Mugabe.

Furthermore,

... the US administration remained committed to the establishment of a stable independence government. They therefore intended to send a US ambassador to Zimbabwe soon after independence. An announcement of this intention might be made before the elections in the hope that it would have a stabilising effect (Henderson 1980).

Five days later Soames told Nkomo that

1. I did not intend to take action to disqualify Zanu (PF) in any district, or to disenfranchise any district.
2. Nkomo asked how we could say that the elections were free and fair when he and his party and other parties had been completely unable to campaign in larger parts of Manicaland, Victoria Province and some parts of the the Midlands. Zanla were even preventing his party campaigning in some TTLs [Tribal Trust Lands] in Matabeleland South. Two more of his party workers had been murdered by Zanla yesterday (Soames 1980).

The United States was the first embassy opened in the new Zimbabwe — "only 12 hours after Zimbabwe achieved independence". According to Moose, "Robert Mugabe's election was probably the greatest reverse the Russians have suffered in Africa in years" (Thatcher, 1980).

Then as now, global and international powers perceived that Mugabe was likely to win power. *Realpolitik* and concerns for 'order' in the immediate term demand that internal power balances are not upset by the mere fact of a less than proper election. In 2013, the power was in South Africa's hands, not a tired imperialist unburdening an empire and worried about the Cold War, but the results were similar.²⁰⁾

This does not mean the MDC-T's efforts of the past decade and a half — or Zimbabweans' since the 1950s — have been in vain, for 'progress' has been made in Zimbabwe, as in the region, on a bedrock of complex struggles that have created tension-laden modes of accumulation and freedom (Moore, Kriger, Raftopoulos, 2012). Stephen Chan is correct to argue that it is a generation beyond the current power-holders that will place that battle on a new plane (Chan 2013), although he ignores that fact that ZANU-PF has groomed a nasty cohort of it in its Border Gezi schools for 'national service' and fearsome militias (Moore 2013d). Thanks in large part to the brave indi-

viduals who put their lives on the line to expand political space, democracy and its material co-requisites will inch forward in the years to come, unevenly, with more contradictions at each stage.

Endnotes

1. This article is a modified and expanded version of a research note in *Africa Spectrum* and a November 2013 paper presented to the African Studies Association annual meeting in Baltimore. I am grateful for the *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* editor's suggestion that it be included in this issue of the journal.
2. Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front. The history of its name, from 'ZANU' splitting off from the Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union in the early 1960s to forms of unity ranging from popular fronts for diplomatic purposes in the late 1970s to ZANU swallowing ZAPU after the Gukurahundi massacres of the 1980s, tells the story of one party's rocky road to dominance.
3. Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai. This name, too, tells a tale of debilitating division: the name of the original 'MDC' has been retained by a splinter group led alternatively by Welshman Ncube and Arthur Mutambara (and now the former), in classical 'divide and rule' moves mixing ruling party designs with opposition party wrangling — as in much of Zimbabwe's history.
4. Note Melber's question keeps the possibilities open: he did not write "this is African democracy", but said that if 'we' (presumably intellectuals committed to a broad idea of democracy) accede to ZANU-PF's idea we have surrendered to the latter.
5. To use a term employed frequently by the opposition when discussing the election.
6. "Nathanial Manheru" has been the *nom de plume* of highly placed officials in the information ministry writing in the *Saturday Herald*. Charamba, as permanent secretary in the information ministry, was in that writing post for most of TIG. Now it is likely Jonathan Moyo, erstwhile political science professor, author of a famous liberal book on the 1992 election and after losing the election for his seat appointed minister of the information and media portfolio (he also drafted ZANU-PF's post-election economic reconstruction plan — Shoko 2013), who pens those pieces. When Moyo was minister in the early 2000s he designed oppressive legislation *vis-à-vis* the media but is apparently offering peace to journalists now. On Moyo and the generational changes within the Zimbabwean intelligentsia see Moore 2007; 2013d. Thanks to Brian Raftopoulos for sending the Charamba piece.

7. These issues are discussed regarding the Zimbabwean media in Moore 2011 and in Africa more generally in Moore 2014, forthcoming.
8. In addition to the public public opinion polls, the International Republican Institute carried out one for the MDC privately. The South African government hired an American polling expert who predicted a narrow victory for the ruling party. Little wonder American stars such as Andrew Young and Jesse Jackson took trips to Zimbabwe wooing Mugabe, promising consideration of sanctions removal in return for correct electoral behaviour — and probably a revived TIG.
9. Tsvangirai's autobiography (2011) is full of criticism of Zimbabwe's intellectuals being prone to talk but take no action, or worse, to duplicity. This may be attributed to his deep hatred of Welshman Ncube, an 'intellectual' lawyer who led the split away from the main MDC to form the splinter party. This may have cost the MDC-T 18 Matabeleland seats in the 2013 election (Solidarity Peace Trust 2013). From May, many non-party affiliated activists attempted to broker unity. When overtures for unity were presented to Ncube he fobbed them off to less senior members of his executive. Interviews (2012, 2013) with two Zimbabwean security operatives and one analyst suggest that Ncube — and others — have been in the service of the ruling party for many years. Observers in Bulawayo relate that Dumiso Dabengwa, leader of a revived ZAPU, threatened war veteran members of his party with violence when they advocated unity: one reporter claims this is because Dabengwa hates the British intensely for ignoring the Ndebele people during their massacre in Gukurahundi — and sees the British as behind the MDC-T.
10. It is NGO common cause that their advice is often ignored by the MDC-T. Some — for example the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition — are accused of being too close to the MDC-T, although it must be said that its written material could be best described as constructively critical — and what more could be expected when 'civil society' is so closely imbricated with 'political society' in social formations with a 'bourgeoisie' that is far from independent and unions that are decimated? For possibly the best pre-election analyses see Zamchiya (2013) and Zamchiya and Chitanga (2013), published by the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition.
11. This is unlikely. The intelligence world in Zimbabwe is more about information sharing than secrets: it is almost inconceivable that the MDC did not know nearly every aspect of ZANU-PF's 'shenanigans'.
12. The documents supporting this report are the same as presented to Ian Birrell (2013a) for his Mail on Sunday story. *100 Reporters* claim two sources presented the documents, independently. Furthermore, *100 Reporters* allows reporters access to the documents (which have been passed on to this writer). As noted above, some journalists and analysts doubt their

- authenticity, saying they could have been made by members of the MDC or anti-Mugabe factions of the Central Intelligence Organisation. See Birrell (2013b) for another 'leak' that has ZANU-PF asking the Queen to assist in the removal of sanctions. She would get a game reserve in return; if not cooperative, UK business is threatened with takeovers.
13. Malone (2013) reveals more about one of a few white ZANU-PF supporters.
 14. Speculation in Zimbabwe ran rife about the dossier, which is published in full on the SWRadio site. The questions remain: why wait until so late to release such documents, and — as well-placed observers repeat — is Morgan Tsvangirai releasing them to absolve himself, in the face of challenges to his leadership?
 15. See Matyszak (2013) for a scathing review of observer reports and journalists' coverage.
 16. Morse illustrates how widespread — and vague — the concept is. D'Eramo suggests how contemporary notions of 'populism' connote authoritarianism: the people have become 'despotic' if allowed their way. The idea of 'authoritarian populism' signifies that the people can be democratic, too: no one suggests that Zimbabweans are despotic *pari passu*.
 17. See Pallotti (2013) for a nuanced view of SADC's petard between human rights cast in a neo-liberal mode and social justice articulated by authoritarians. Pallotti (2013: 19) interprets Moore's (2004) 'critical cosmopolitans' as in the neo-liberal camp, which was not the intention, thus indicating the care that must be taken in articulating a broad version of human rights discourse! Habib (2013: 167-200) also attempts to solve the social justice and human rights dilemma in this case, not with entire success unless one assumes that shifting the global order in favour of emerging powers is the same as enhancing both first and second generation human rights.
 18. It should be remembered that in mid-2004 the MDC said it would not run in the 2005 contest unless a host of changes were made in the electoral environment: that promise was soon forgotten for similar reasons as in 2013. In the deeper past, too, many small opposition parties that withdrew from elections at the last moment all but disappeared shortly thereafter.
 19. Interviews in 2007 and 2008 with Dennis Grennan, a long-time UK interlocutor in affairs Zimbabwean and host to Sarah Mugabe for many years in London (Moore 2008), who was part of the British team during the Soames transition, confirm long debates within the British team. Grennan claimed that Anthony Duff was in favour of cancelling the elections, but Grennan and others convinced the team that such action would simply prolong the war, given it was very likely Mugabe would win an election under any conditions.
 20. South Africa's slowing down of Zimbabwe's democracy is indicated by the

fact that in spite of high courts' demands the state has refused to hand over its second report on the 2002 elections and a retired generals' report on the brutality of mid-2008. The South African executive is also attempting to overturn a court's ruling that Zimbabwean torturers must be tried in concurrence with Treaty of Rome dictates (Bell 2013).

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