



SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

After three years of protracted political crisis and precipitous economic decline, what are the prospects for nonviolent change and societal reconstruction in Zimbabwe? This report examines the obstacles to change and considers the roles of key domestic actors, their strategies, and their interests in a new Zimbabwe.

It assesses the current mechanisms for change and potential outcomes. The report was commissioned by the Institute's Research and Studies Program and written by three scholar-analysts currently living and working in Zimbabwe. They are not named for reasons of personal security.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect views of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policies.

Zimbabwe and the Prospects for Nonviolent Political Change

Briefly . . .

- Since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government has used its anti-colonial legacy and its role in the war of liberation to build a nationalist platform with a stated commitment to rectify colonial injustices—a theme that garners support from many leaders in developing countries and Zimbabwe's rural populace.
- ZANU-PF has relied on the use of violence and coercive tactics to consolidate and maintain its power for more than two decades. The primary opposition party following independence, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was coercively merged into ZANU-PF in 1987.
- A new rise of opposition politics in the late 1990s through the civic-born Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) posed the first serious challenge to the ZANU-PF government. In the June 2000 parliamentary elections, the MDC won almost half the contested seats, prompting a strong repressive backlash towards the opposition and its supporters.
- The land occupations and farm takeovers, coupled with the government's fast-track land reform exercise, were premised on the widely agreed need for land reform to address a profoundly disproportionate colonial land tenure system. Although violence and chaos accompanied the process, there appears a widespread societal consensus that this process is largely irreversible. At the same time, there is a strong sentiment that the corruption associated with politicians and their supporters acquiring vast amounts of prime land must be rectified.
- ZANU-PF was declared the winner of the March 2002 presidential elections amid widespread local and international observer claims that the election was "unfree and unfair." The MDC mounted a court challenge to the result and international actors have imposed "smart sanctions" against the regime.
- A severe economic crisis characterized by an acute food shortage has resulted in rolling strikes in almost all sectors of the economy. This crisis builds on years of economic decline resulting from varied internal and external sources, including natural disasters.
- Since March of this year, mass actions have taken the form of job "stayaways," with some attempts at street protest led by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU)

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and the opposition MDC. They have been widely heeded by the populace, paralyzed the economy, and prompted strong government repression.

- Morgan Tsvangerai, the leader of the opposition MDC, and two other leaders have been charged with treason for allegedly plotting to assassinate President Mugabe. After a June 2–6 stayaway called by MDC, Tsvangerai was arrested and detained under a second treason charge, this time for “seeking to violently overthrow a democratically elected president.” If convicted he could be sentenced to death.
- Several attempts have been made to mediate, led by South African and Nigerian presidents. So far no significant progress has been made in the face of the entrenched party positions: President Mugabe has insisted that he be recognized by the opposition as the legitimate president of the country, while the MDC will only enter into dialogue unconditionally.
- Discussions of President Mugabe's early retirement and succession are commonplace; a number of individuals in ZANU-PF, including the speaker of Parliament, Emerson Mnangagwa, and the former finance minister, Simba Makoni, are considered likely successors.
- Several scenarios have been mentioned as strategic forms for transition and possible outcomes. A transitional government with constitutional revisions to electoral law followed by early presidential elections appears to be the most favorable option.

Introduction

The late Masipula Sithole, a senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace and respected Zimbabwean intellectual, argued recently that Zimbabwe was facing a “blocked transition.” Though the ruling party and the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) have very different ideas about the values at stake in the current impasse, continued stalemate is not inevitable. Sithole set out several possible political futures for Zimbabwe, including a preservation of the status quo, an election re-run, military interference, advancing the electoral timetable, and mass action leading to regime collapse.

At the beginning of 2003 it appeared unlikely that any of these possibilities—other than the status quo—would come to pass. Recent events, however, suggest that changes may be underway. Three large-scale mass actions have reinvigorated the opposition party and its supporters. Further, there are increasingly critical comments from President Robert Mugabe's allies in the region. In early May, three African presidents arrived in Harare to discuss the ongoing political and economic crisis with the president—and, significantly, with the opposition.

Unlike mass actions held in 2002, a two-day work “stayaway” on March 18–19, 2003 called by the MDC to protest the government's human rights abuses and its failure to ensure the security of its citizens was supported with nationwide participation rates of over 70 percent. A labor action followed on April 23–25, organized by the country's major union confederation—the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)—to protest the government's unilateral decision to raise the price of fuel by 300 percent. Again, there were high degrees of compliance across the country. An even larger June 2–6 mass action virtually shut down the main cities of Harare and Bulawayo for a full week, although this was met with a severe government clampdown on all forms of perceived efforts for change.

These actions demonstrated the strength of opposition support just as indications were emerging from the ruling party that its grip on power is weakening. Despite murmurings from South African leaders that ongoing dialogue is secretly being held, both parties reject the notion that any formal talks are taking place. However, there are (as of mid-July) tentative advances being made by church leaders acting as intermediaries to lay the ground for formal dialogue between the two parties. While both parties appear interested, negotiating positions still remain far apart and there remains high degrees of

political polarization at all levels. Economic conditions, particularly shortages of fuel, electricity, and cash, make the bare functioning of the country inconceivable without fresh infusions of foreign currency. While a culture of respect for law and belief in democratic governance persists within some segments of society, this could well deteriorate if substantive political change is not forthcoming.

This report examines the roles and strategies of key domestic actors in recent years and provides insights into the possible nature of transition. These are the players who will build Zimbabwe's peace—or continue destructive patterns of polarization and conflict—in a post-transition era. Their importance is underlined by this report's finding that international pressure is not sufficient to yield peaceful change. As the conclusion argues, international mediation must be coupled with forms of domestic pressure if a transitional authority—the preferred peaceful option—is to be attained.

Obstacles to Change

Several contextual challenges undermine Zimbabwe's prospects for peaceful change. These have worked independently and together to produce the political impasse described above.

Politics as War

Due in part to a brutal colonial history and a prolonged period of white-minority rule, violence is an established feature of Zimbabwean politics. The 1896 Chimurenga (war of liberation), the first attempt to throw off colonial rule, gave rise to a mythology and language of war. In the second Chimurenga—the war for Zimbabwe's independence from colonial rule (late 1960s and 1970s)—combatants used typical guerrilla warfare tactics. The white-minority Rhodesian government brutally retaliated and the war took an immense toll on the population.

ZANU-PF came to power after independence in 1980 with over 60 percent of the popular vote. These founding elections were flawed by irregularities, violence, and intimidation—patterns that have persisted throughout the post-independence era. Though ruling party structures have allowed for a degree of participation, that participation has been rigidly circumscribed. In essence, ZANU-PF has functioned as a hegemonic party; it has attempted to blur lines between party and state and to limit political activism outside the party.

The drive toward party dominance was not merely pursued through the ballot box. In 1983, the country's major opposition party, Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), was accused of stockpiling arms and planning a violent overthrow of the government. The government deployed the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade to the southwestern region of the country, Matabeleland, to hunt down "dissidents." Up to 10,000 civilians, mostly ethnic minority Ndebeles, were killed. A government-forced form of "reconciliation" followed in 1987, and ZAPU merged with the ruling party. Despite some formal inclusion of ZAPU leaders in government, Matabeleland has, to the present, received a disproportionately small share of government resources and development funds.

By the late 1990s, ZANU-PF's control was slipping. Economic deterioration prompted rising popular discontent. A public sector strike in 1996, a ZCTU strike in 1997, and mass stayaways at the end of 1998 pushed a revitalized labor movement to the forefront of politics. In late 1999, this labor movement supported by a broad coalition of civic groups launched the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Facing its first viable electoral challenge, ZANU-PF responded with violence. As in 1983, ethnic scapegoating and claims of violent destabilization from within were used to legitimize state-sponsored violence.

Partly in response to the "no" vote in the public referendum on the government's new Constitution, an extensive land redistribution exercise followed, accompanied by an intensive government propaganda campaign. Coined "Chimurenga 3," the occupation and takeover of commercial farms by war veterans and peasants, often with the direct

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encouragement and material support of government officials, in many cases turned violent. Those suspected of supporting the MDC were beaten, driven from their homes, and forced to attend ZANU-PF rallies as a means of "re-education."

The June 2000 parliamentary elections were preceded by large-scale violence and the internal displacement of several thousand people. Violence continued throughout 2001 and intensified before the March 2002 presidential elections. Though government never took formal responsibility for the violence, the state openly encouraged such violence with rhetoric invoking war and depictions of whites as a group as traitors, occupiers, and colonial oppressors.

The violence and inflammatory rhetoric did not cease with Mugabe's contested victory in the presidential elections. Throughout 2002, government television and radio continuously played a celebratory song for the land reform program entitled "Chave Chimurenga." This roughly translated as "now it is war," which had blatantly anti-white overtones. At a recent state funeral Mugabe launched a blistering attack against the MDC, accusing the party of terrorism, comparing himself to Hitler, and concluding that "those who play with fire will not just be burned but will be consumed by that fire."

In this culture of impunity, violent threats against the country's core democratic institutions, including the judiciary, have become commonplace. The late Chenjerai Hunzvi, a war veteran leader and member of Parliament, said that "the judiciary must go home or else we will chase them and close the courts indefinitely." The threat was followed by a physical "invasion" of the Supreme Court in November 2000 by war veterans and supporters of the ruling party. No action was taken against them by the state.

Judicial Tampering and Legislative Engineering

Informal attacks on judicial independence have been coupled with state interference in the operation of the judiciary. Those who support these actions argue that the previously existing judiciary was stacked with conservative white judges from the colonial era who would support existing property rights at all costs—despite the social demands and need for land reform. On this premise, to ensure court rulings in its favor, the government has forced the resignation of several judges, especially whites. It has also refused to carry out the court orders of other judges, and state officials have repeatedly made public statements questioning the loyalty and the honesty of sitting judges. In 2000, government relations with the Supreme Court came to a head following a number of rulings. First, the court struck down provisions of the colonial-era Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA), which restricted the holding of public meetings and prohibited the publication of false news. In December the court ruled in accordance with Section 16A of the Constitution that land may only be acquired for resettlement within the confines of the law. In early 2001 the court made a ruling that the "president could not use his extraordinary power to annul the right of unsuccessful candidates to present election petitions challenging the results of the previous general elections."

Forced to resign in July 2001, the chief justice was replaced by Godfrey Chidyausiku, who publicly declared his support for the government's fast-track land reform policy. Three other High Court bench positions have been since filled by ruling party stalwarts. Despite this creeping politicization of the courts, some judges continue to hand down rulings unfavorable to the government. The Supreme Court struck down provisions of the much-vaunted Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) in early May, and the High Court has accepted several petitions filed by the opposition MDC. The Magistrate Courts have also remained relatively professional.

As the government has sought to refine its repressive rule, it has enacted laws to legalize and legitimize its behavior. The Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the AIPPA, both passed in early 2002, have placed onerous restrictions upon citizens' basic rights. POSA substantially constrains the free exercise of rights to assembly, speech, and association. Public meetings have to be authorized by the police, and debate on "polit-

ical” issues is effectively prohibited. A number of journalists have also been arrested under POSA. The High Court declared the June stayaway to be a violation of POSA, paving the way for mass arrests.

AIPPA, while professing to grant access to information, presents numerous obstacles to press freedom and has been used to severely curtail access to, and presentation of information in, the country. In particular, the law prevents foreign journalists from working inside Zimbabwe and requires all Zimbabwe journalists to be accredited by a government-appointed commission.

Economic Crisis

According to the government’s own figures, the economy has shrunk by 19.3 percent in the last three years. The collapse of the real value of wages in the country has led to rising criminality, homelessness, domestic violence, and increasing numbers of street children. Unemployment is currently estimated at 75 percent; inflation is at 365 percent and projected by economic analysts to rise to 1000 percent by the year’s end. The agriculture sector, which accounted for 16.5 percent of GDP and 30 percent of foreign exchange earnings, has been severely crippled by the fast-track land reform exercise and two years of successive drought. Between 6 and 8 million people now depend on international food relief. There are severe shortages of foreign exchange, resulting in a lack of fuel and erratic electricity supply. Recent government increases in wages brought the average salary to about Z\$45,000 a month, which is Z\$80,000 below the poverty line of Z\$125,000 calculated by the unions. The buying power of wages is further eroded by the unavailability of basic commodities. Government price controls have created a thriving black market with exorbitant prices. The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe recently reported that a family of six needs approximately Z\$200,000 (US\$100) monthly to afford a decent standard of living. These problems are compounded by the shortage of bank notes, which makes it more difficult to cash paychecks or withdraw money.

In the last two years workers have responded to these conditions with rolling strikes in the medical, education, and mining sectors. These strikes did not secure cost-of-living adjustments commensurate with the rate of inflation. The ZCTU’s April stayaway protesting the 300 percent increment in the price of petrol was prompted by the fact that workers would not be able to afford transport costs—which would comprise over half their salaries.

While there is much disagreement on the causes of Zimbabwe’s economic crisis, there is widespread acknowledgment among Zimbabweans and even the World Bank and wider donor community that structural adjustment policies (SAPs) of the 1990s, combined with lack of support for comprehensive land reform, greatly contributed to putting the economy on a steep path of decline and severely undermined advances made in the social services—namely health and education. The country’s cyclical droughts of 1982–83, 1992–95, and 2002–2003 as well as internal economic mismanagement and corruption have contributed to its economic difficulties.

The decision of the International Monetary Fund to withdraw balance-of-payment support in 1998 following the government’s default on its loan obligation, the imposition of “smart sanctions,” and the withdrawal of international donor support that followed have crippled the government’s ability to resuscitate the economy. This has contributed to a decline in real wages and the erosion of the standard of living of Zimbabweans, which has long-term social consequences, especially given the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the country. Already, the country is witnessing an immense brain drain, which might be irreversible. On June 6 the IMF stopped Zimbabwe’s access to credit facilities because it had not sufficiently strengthened its cooperation with the IMF in areas of policy implementation and payments.

Why has this dire economic need not translated into political protest? Fear of violent state response has certainly played a part. In addition, government propaganda has consistently portrayed economic problems as the result of western destabilization and sanctions.

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Key Actors, Strategies, and Impacts

The Government (ZANU-PF)

Until 2000, ZANU-PF's combination of harassment, cooptation, and creative election management ensured that opposition parties would remain on the fringes of political activity. Following ZAPU's merger with ZANU, party competition did not take on an explicitly ethnic-based character, as it had in the past. The two significant electoral challengers in the 1990s, Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) in 1990 and the Forum Party in 1995, received no more than 20 and 6 percent of the vote, respectively. These parties drew their support almost entirely from urban constituencies and were not able to penetrate rural areas, even in the western, Ndebele-dominated portion of the country.

Despite this seeming strength, ZANU-PF was by no means a tightly controlled party. Perhaps as a result of declining patronage resources or intra-party opposition to SAPs, factional struggles within the party intensified over the course of the 1990s. By February 2000 the party was divided and, according to some, in active decline. This situation prompted both a vast exercise intended to rebuild party structures and a review of party strategy. The re-evaluation of party strategy resulted in a sharp shift in government attitude toward civil society and opposition; ZANU-PF decided that support of the urban constituencies was largely dispensable, and it used the land issue to polarize the electorate and win back the loyalty of the rural areas.

Until now the land has been the party's pivotal strategy to remain in power. Land redistribution is popular with ZANU-PF's core rural constituency, up to 300,000 of whom have benefited under the small-scale farming scheme. Since the beginning of 2003, increasing evidence has emerged that the best farms in the country's prime agricultural areas have been given to party officials, members of the military leadership, and businessmen and elites tied to the ruling party. This has served as a powerful means of promoting government unity and preventing defections.

As the economy deteriorated and food shortages worsened, the government came to increasingly rely on coercive strategies to retain power. In addition to the violence associated with the land reform exercise, a national youth training program was established in 2001. The graduates, known popularly as "green bombers," served as an informal party militia and led attacks on opposition party supporters and civil society activists. They were deployed to rural areas in the run-up to elections, and reports of torture and rape in and around the training camps in the last year were commonplace. Youth militia are increasingly found in urban centers and marketplaces, where they "enforce" government-mandated price controls by seizing the property of those not in compliance.

Over the past year the state security forces have also been enlisted in what could be seen as political operations. Military presence in urban areas, particularly during election periods, has increased markedly. The military has become involved in food distribution and elections monitoring, especially prior to the presidential elections. In the past six months, formal police and military roadblocks have increased throughout the country, as the government attempts to clamp down on the thriving black market in maize, petrol, and other commodities. Finally, following the March MDC-organized stayaway, military personnel and members of the police Law and Order Section perpetrated a series of attacks against MDC party activists and members of Parliament (MPs).

This militarization has contributed to deteriorating human rights conditions in the country, as has the increasing impunity demonstrated by non-state actors like the youth militia and war veterans. Recent events, particularly a series of conflicts between the police and party militia, suggest that the proliferation of actors involved in security operations has led to increasing disorder and lack of state control. Ruling party MPs report that the youth militia regularly set up illegal roadblocks and refuse to comply with police orders. Police attempting to serve court orders on war veterans have been violently attacked, and police have stated that they will not evict youth militia from illegally occupied public buildings.

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The Movement for Democratic Change

Upon its formation in 1999, the MDC comprised a coalition of civil society organizations, with a core leadership from within the labor movement—whose existing union structures accounted for most of the party's organizational reach prior to the 2000 parliamentary elections. In its first group of parliamentary candidates, the MDC made conscious efforts to incorporate visible civic sector representatives, in particular women and youth, and those efforts paid off. Despite serious violence and restrictions on the party's ability to campaign, the MDC captured nearly half of the contested seats—a startling success given the history of opposition politics in Zimbabwe and the youth of the party itself.

In the aftermath of the parliamentary elections and continuing state repression, rural areas became no-go areas for the MDC and for civic organizations. The MDC did not initiate any large-scale mass action or any new strategy of confrontation with the government, contrary to public expectations. The party leadership said it remained quiet for fear of violent state repression and a breakdown in law and order. Instead, the party turned to the courts and to international advocacy as a means to expand the political space available to the party and to place increased pressure upon the government.

While not a new strategy for civil society, the use of legal action has increased in the past three years. Following the parliamentary elections, the MDC filed a barrage of legal challenges to the election results, including 37 individual petitions in constituencies where ZANU-PF won. This was followed by MDC member challenges to aspects of the electoral code, including restrictions on the right to access voter rolls, and the continued delay of Harare municipal elections. The impact of this strategy has been limited by repeated court delays and the challenging of litigants' legal standing in some cases.

Following the collapse of the May 2002 inter-party talks promoted by South Africa and Nigeria to address the political crisis resulting from the contested elections, the MDC's faith in the ability of external pressure to promote internal change looked increasingly misplaced. African countries, particularly those within the region, largely rallied behind the Mugabe regime, and targeted sanctions put in place by the United States and other western governments had little tangible effect on government action. By the end of 2002, the tenor of public meetings had grown increasingly negative, and participants repeatedly expressed frustration with what they saw as paralysis within the MDC and civil society. It was becoming difficult for the party to resist demands from the grassroots for some form of mass action.

The MDC's mass strike on March 18–19 was motivated in part by the timing of upcoming elections. By-elections in two important Harare constituencies were to be held at the end of March, and MDC concluded that it might lose those two seats through extensive fraud by the government. Demonstrating the party's strong popular support before the by-elections, it was hoped, would make fraud less likely. The action was also intended to generate momentum for sustained opposition pressure on the government. The MDC's list of demands immediately after the stayaway suggested that sustained mass action would continue until the government made substantive policy changes.

However, violent government repression after the stayaway seems to have disrupted MDC plans. A reported 400 individuals accused of involvement in planning the stayaway were arrested, and 250 received medical treatment after violent assaults by youth militia and state security personnel. The state's targeting of MDC party officials and sitting MPs, intending to seriously weaken the party's organizational capacity, may have achieved that end. The MDC did not initiate further mass action until the June 2–6 protest actions described as the "final push" to force the resignation of President Mugabe or compel him negotiate with the opposition. That action did not achieve its goal and was followed by severe levels of violence by state security apparatus.

In the past, MDC has been criticized for the party's relationship with external donors and "white, capitalist" interests. Though the details of party funding are unknown, it is likely that the MDC has received significant international donor support. The party is

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based upon a traditional social democratic constituency and its policies are largely social democratic. MDC economic policies include a minimum wage based upon the poverty line and a large role for the state in the provision of social services and economic stimulus. However, it is unclear whether the party would be able to implement such policies if they came to power. The MDC has repeatedly stated that a resumption of relations with the IMF would be a first necessary step to economic recovery.

War Veterans

Since 1997, veterans of Zimbabwe's liberation war have drastically reshaped the political and economic environment. Their high-profile series of protest actions began that year and resulted in government monetary compensations for their war service. They have consistently argued that land redistribution is a necessary fulfillment of the liberation war aims. The occupations of commercial farms in 2000 were, therefore, at least in part, a grassroots response to continued government inaction on the issue.

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The war veterans are not a monolithic, unified entity with consensus on strategies or demands. A decade or so following independence, they organized themselves under several groupings, the largest being the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), which led the land occupations of 2000. When formed in 1989 as a welfare organization, the ZNLWVA had the aim of improving the lives of war veterans economically and socially. Today the ZNLWVA represents about 55,000 war veterans, about 25 percent of them women, who are dispersed geographically across the country and conduct their affairs through national-, provincial-, and district-level structures.

By 1997, factionalism emerged within ZNLWVA and divisions widened over the land issue, with some war veterans opposing the leaders' strategies and the violence accompanying the land occupations. The current leadership, whose term of office has expired, is closely aligned to the ruling party. Another faction is pushing for new elections as provided for in the group's constitution. A separate organization, the Zimbabwe Liberator's Platform (ZLP), emerged in May 2000; it now comprises 12,000 paying members and has a stated commitment to promoting democratic values and respect for the rule of law. It is opposed to the land occupations and fast-track distribution, which it sees as highly chaotic.

Some veterans speak of the need for another kind of Chimurenga 3—the removal of politicians from the land and redistribution to the rural poor.

Despite divisions, the ZNLWVA retains significant political power due to its ability to mobilize large numbers of war veterans and its support from the ruling party. Despite much collaboration with government in the land exercise, many war veterans are now concerned that the government's fast-track program has resulted in much "grabbing" of huge and quality farms by politicians and chiefs. These land grabs seemed to betray the core aim of the supposed third Chimurenga—giving land to the poor of Zimbabwe. Dissatisfaction amongst war veterans also appears to be growing in response to political elites forcibly evicting war veterans and other settlers from farms that had previously been designated for small-scale resettlement. Some veterans speak of the need for another kind of Chimurenga 3—the removal of politicians from the land and redistribution to the rural poor.

Many members of ZNLWVA are in fact impoverished peasants who exercise leadership roles and hold public legitimacy in many rural areas. They have, however, alienated many former supporters with their sometimes violent and intimidating tactics, and they recognize their failure to articulate "an ideology that is relevant and compatible with the interests of the urban people" (interview with prominent war veteran, March 2003). While they possess some incipient capacity to hold government accountable to rural constituencies, their contribution to democratic governance is undercut by their methods and by their own internally autocratic politics. Ultimately the ability for war veterans to have a positive impact on the transition might lie in their ability to reform themselves. This would mean consolidating their power around the faction that is arguing for a new leadership that is a result of elections, and a pursuit of Chimurenga 3 through nonviolent political or legal means.

Labor

The ZCTU is the largest labor organization in the country, representing 35 affiliate unions throughout the country. ZCTU was established in 1981 by the government, but a new leadership began to assert its independence in the late 1980s. Labor relations with the government have been severely strained since the mid 1990s, when ZCTU protested SAPs. Strained relations with government culminated in the February 1999 National Working People's Convention. At the ZCTU-organized convention, trade unionists and other civil society activists voted to launch a workers' party, the beginning of a process that would eventually lead to the formation of the MDC.

Labor has since sought to engage government along with business through dialogue within the framework of the Tri-partite Negotiating Forum (TNF). In January 2003, the TNF issued the "Kadoma Declaration," which examined the perilous economic conditions in the country and suggested a way forward. It called on the government to ensure the application of the rule of law; enforce the prevention of corruption act, comply with budgetary limits, and cautiously begin to implement an agreed macro-economic stabilization program, among other provisions.

In April 2003, when the government announced an increase in the price of petrol, making it impossible for workers to subsist, the ZCTU withdrew from the TNF, citing the lack of consultation with stakeholders about the price increment. This move was combined with a stayaway to protest the hike in fuel prices. According to a senior ZCTU official, the TNF is now meaningless as it has been overtaken by the current political conditions in the country, that is, talk of an exit plan for government leaders and dialogue between the government and the MDC. ZCTU officials are planning new protest actions against the government and in early July they called for the government's resignation because of its mismanagement of the economy. While labor actions alone are unlikely to bring political change, their support is pivotal to any successful opposition mass action.

Non-Governmental Organizations and Networks

In the late 1990s, civic coalitions began to emerge, build consensus, and gain collective strength around the need for nonviolent political change. Two major impacts of civic organizing during this period were the "no" vote on the Constitution and the emergence of opposition politics in the form of the MDC. This newer focus of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on governance, advocacy, and political change departed significantly from the earlier civic orientation. This change is at the heart of concerns by government and some social critics that NGOs are involved in politics, and are too closely aligned with, and compromised by, western donor interests.

In 1997, several civic organizations formed the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) to press for a constitutional reform process driven by grassroots demands and popular participation. The NCA is a coalition of church groups, urban-based NGOs, community-based organizations, and associations representing women, youth, and workers. Unlike the more collaborative strategies employed by civil society in the early 1990s, the NCA adopted a directly confrontational approach to government in its demands for a new people-driven constitution. The strength of its organizing and its ability to fill meetings nationwide prompted a government response: the establishment of a government Constitutional Commission and a parallel process to develop a new constitution. With the government announcement that a referendum would be held on the commission's draft constitution, the NCA organized a surprisingly effective "no" vote campaign, which won 54 percent of the vote. This first major defeat of ZANU-PF government interests provided, particularly in rural areas, a degree of voter education and political discussion that had been rare. It also facilitated the development of opposition politics. The NCA was closely linked with the MDC, as the party's leadership had been very active within the NCA before 1999.

While labor actions alone are unlikely to bring political change, their support is pivotal to any successful opposition mass action.

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This expansion of political space soon evaporated with the land occupations. Many NGOs coped by limiting or halting activities associated with civic education or human rights; essentially, such organizations adapted themselves to the government's expectations of an NGO—to be developmental, complementary to the state and, above all, "non-political."

The changed political climate created conflicts within and among civil society coalitions. Some have remained active, continuing to challenge the restrictive NGO operating environment. Despite continued harassment from government, the NCA is the only civic organization (ZCTU aside) consistently embarking on public protests, which many civic organizations believe are not well strategized. The NCA's consistent demand for a new constitution as the first necessary step in any transition has also led to some conflict with the MDC, as the NCA opposes any election re-run under the existing constitutional framework.

Conflicts over strategies, relationships with government and the MDC, and struggles for power within existing organizations have also created a demand for new forms of civil society activism and cooperation. The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, established in 2001, is a broad coalition of more than 300 NGOs and 15 national coalitions presently working on various fronts to facilitate the development of a proactive and broad-based agenda and process for change. More than any other civic group, the Crisis Coalition is embarking on international advocacy efforts, particularly within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region; they are seeking to ensure that the defining and projection of the Zimbabwean situation is not left to the government at a time when journalists have little access and the SADC governments have largely publicly accepted the government's position.

Currently, key civic networks are strategizing their role in the transition process, aiming to ensure that they are not left out of, and not reacting to, government and MDC initiatives. Some are arguing that any mediation efforts and transition dialogue must formally include representatives of civil society to ensure the talks move beyond narrow balance-of-power concerns of ZANU-PF and the MDC. Others are working to create a broader, multi-leveled process to build societal consciousness and capacity to participate in a national dialogue about Zimbabwe's future. Continued restrictions on public meetings and organizational operations, particularly in the rural areas, will place serious constraints on civil society's ability to achieve these aims.

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Churches

Zimbabwe is a deeply religious country, and the churches are important social institutions. The churches played a role in the liberation struggle, and government has considered them an important partner. The largest and most influential church has traditionally been the Catholic Church, partly because of the extensive system of mission schools that educated most of the country's older political and economic elite. More recently, the expanding membership and vitality of evangelical Christianity has somewhat eroded the Catholic predominance, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) has assumed new importance.

Since 2000, the Zimbabwean churches have shown evidence of the same polarization and politicization as other sectors of society. The leadership of the country's three main church bodies—the Protestant Zimbabwean Council of Churches (ZCC), the Catholic Bishops Conference (CBC), and EFZ—initially took conciliatory positions vis-à-vis government. For example, although the ZCC was a founding member of the NCA, it decided to work with the government-appointed constitutional commission.

As political and economic conditions worsened, divisions between a more conciliatory church leadership and a more activist grassroots and laity became increasingly visible. In 2002, divisions within the Zimbabwean Anglican Church over some pastors' overt support for the ruling party reached the point of death threats and the banning of the congregational leadership from the grounds of the church's Harare cathedral. Other church leaders, notably Catholic archbishop Pius Ncube, have been criticized by their own

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church hierarchies for vocal criticism of government misuse of food aid, “youth training” programs, and human rights abuses.

Some local church leaders are increasingly at risk of arrest, and they view positive engagement with government as less and less likely. President Mugabe's invitation to Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndugane of Cape Town to mediate in the crisis has been viewed as a transparent strategy to bolster his legitimacy with the religious community. More recently, Sebastian Bakare, president of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and bishop of the Anglican Church in Manicaland; Bishop Patrick Mutume of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference; and Trevor Manhanga, president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, met separately with leaders of both parties to attempt to lay the groundwork for talks. While it is unclear what role they will continue to play, the potential role of church leaders as mediators remains challenged by the government's perception of them as “enemies of the state,” as witnessed in government press.

The International Community

In February 2002, the United States government imposed “smart sanctions” against the Zimbabwean government that included a travel ban on government officials and a freezing of their assets. Similar sanctions were imposed by the European Union in March 2002. The Commonwealth suspended Zimbabwe in 2002, immediately following the March presidential elections. A troika including John Howard, the prime minister of Australia and current chair of the Commonwealth, President Olesegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa were invested with the responsibility of mediating between Zimbabwe and the Commonwealth. The one-year suspension was renewed for nine months by Howard in consultation with other Commonwealth leaders. This approach ignored opposition from South Africa and Nigeria and led to claims by the ZANU-PF government and other African leaders about western colonial domination of the Commonwealth. Sanctions have severely undermined the Zimbabwean government's ability to deliver social services—most donors have stopped their assistance except for humanitarian relief and HIV/AIDS programs.

The United States and European Union (EU) have tried to isolate Zimbabwe, but the government continues to enjoy friendly relations with various countries around the globe. Nationalist and pan-Africanist rhetoric is utilized by the ZANU-PF government to fuel North-South divisions and promulgate the notion that the West is against Mugabe because of the land reform exercise. At the same time, Mugabe has visited New York and Rome to attend UN functions, France to participate in a Franco-African summit, and Belgium to attend a convention of the EU and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries.

In early May, with increasing concerns about the deteriorating situation in the country, Presidents Bakili Muluzi of Malawi, the current chair of the SADC; Mbeki, the current chair of the African Union; and Obasanjo visited the country and held talks with President Mugabe and the MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai. While the two parties retained intractable positions following these talks, processes for continued dialogue and pressure are underway. Britain and South Africa have indicated that they are in full agreement about how to tackle the crisis. Moreover, international actors including the United States are reportedly preparing an economic package to ensure some measure of stability in the transition period. It is envisaged that this package would reopen credit facilities, reschedule or even retire Zimbabwe's foreign debt, and provide funds for fuel and power imports. This package would be given to a transitional government whose head would not be eligible to run in fresh elections.

On June 24, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell wrote in the *New York Times* that President Mugabe's “time has come and gone.” He argued that ZANU-PF and the MDC could together legislate constitutional changes to allow for a transition. In his early July visit to South Africa, however, President George Bush stopped short of calling for a transitional government and said that President Mbeki will be his “point man” on Zimbabwe.

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Mbeki's quiet diplomacy has been seriously questioned by opposition leaders in the country, which casts some doubt on his ability to promote change. Media reports suggest that Mbeki convinced Bush that Mugabe will leave power within six months to one year—reports denied by Mbeki.

Possible Outcomes

Several scenarios for change are under discussion in Zimbabwe. The first is change via military involvement. The second involves a negotiated transition of power within the party, either with or without the voluntary involvement of the president. A third scenario involves the MDC in a transitional government, which would probably govern until a fresh round of elections.

Military Option

A military coup or declaration of military rule by the military high command would circumvent constitutional provisions on elections. In late 2002, this plan seemed to have the support of some within ZANU-PF as a means of avoiding the uncertainty that elections could bring. Such a transition would be advantageous to current state elites, preserving party control over the state and existing flows of patronage. It is unlikely however, to result in substantive policy change.

In contrast, a military action by the junior officer corps or military rank-and-file could potentially reshape the political scene. Unlike the military high command, these groups do not benefit from continued ZANU-PF rule. They received few of the benefits of the military's involvement in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) that accrued to higher-level military officials, and the DRC operation did not result in a large number of promotions. As for the rank-and-file soldiery, conditions of service and real wages have deteriorated sharply over the past decade, as have the physical infrastructure of bases and military equipment. There are also allegations that some soldiers who served in the DRC have not been paid. These factors have affected morale and created some degree of resentment and alienation in the lower levels of the military.

In other African countries, coalitions of junior officers blocked from advancement and underpaid or otherwise disgruntled rank-and-file soldiers have been the source of several military coups. In Zimbabwe, this coalition is impeded by a strong demonstrated respect for the chain of command and the lack of a history of military involvement in politics. Also, the non-barracks nature of much of the armed forces makes any collective action more difficult to organize. Instead, divisions between command and rank-and-file are likely to be expressed in other ways—for example, by lower-ranking soldiers refusing to obey orders to attack unarmed demonstrators or stop mass actions.

A breakdown in command within the military would not be a positive development, either for those within the state or for the population more generally. Any political interference by a military coup would set back the prospects for democratic governance in Zimbabwe. Further, the international community, including the African Union and SADC, would not sanction such an action.

Succession (The 'Reformed ZANU' Option)

The second possibility for change from within the regime is more likely. In January armed forces chief General Vitalis Zvinvashe and speaker of Parliament Emmerson Mnangagwa approached the MDC via intermediaries to explore transition scenarios. The MDC immediately rejected and made public the overture, which involved an early retirement for Mugabe and an interim government under Mnangagwa until elections in 2005. President

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Mugabe unambiguously stated soon after the revelations that he was not considering early retirement, and Mnangagwa subsequently denied approaching the MDC.

The early retirement of Mugabe is supported by many in the party who see it as a prerequisite for economic recovery. The succession of Mnangagwa to the presidency however, is far from certain and he faces opposition from a coalition of ZANU-PF heavyweights, including several members of the military high command and the powerful party chair, John Nkomo. The International Crisis Group's March 2003 report suggested that factional maneuvering over the succession had intensified over the first months of 2003, suggesting that Mugabe's retirement is indeed becoming more imminent.

On the other hand, the lack of a clear consensus within ZANU-PF may make inter-party talks less likely or, should they occur, less likely to result in agreement. Until the succession battle is resolved, the anti-Mnangagwa faction has a strong incentive to block talks mediated by South Africa or other regional powers, which are seen to favor Mnangagwa—although he is not supported by the European Union. It is in the interests of most of the party leadership to block MDC involvement entirely. The handover of power by Mugabe to a reformed ZANU-PF government would insulate ruling party elites from investigations of the acquisition of personal wealth and from potential prosecution for human rights violations.

The major stumbling block to the "reformed ZANU" outcome is the constitutional provision governing presidential resignation, which requires a fresh presidential poll within 90 days of the president's resignation or death. Recent parliamentary by-election defeats for the ruling party make it unlikely that ZANU-PF will obtain the necessary 100 seats to amend the Constitution in their favor. Alternatively, some arrangement could be made to suspend this section of the Constitution. It is hard to imagine this action being palatable to the international community without the agreement of both parties.

The reformed ZANU option is fraught with a number of difficulties. If Mnangagwa does remain Mugabe's chosen successor, it is uncertain that he would be able to win a general election. Mnangagwa does not have a visible national following, lost his own parliamentary seat to an MDC candidate in 2000, and is somewhat damaged by UN allegations of corruption and profiteering from the DRC conflict. International actors and domestic civil society would likely prefer a moderate, less compromised member of the party, such as Simba Makoni, the former finance minister.

While President Mugabe has called on his party members to discuss succession issues, and the government-owned *Sunday Mail* has been running profiles on likely contenders, the lack of expressed interest suggests to political analysts that Mugabe has not signaled sufficiently to his party members that he will step down any time soon.

Transitional Government Leading to Early Elections

The idea of a government of national unity was proposed by South Africa and Nigeria as a way of resolving uncertainty about the fairness of the recent presidential election. This option lost ground after the breakdown of inter-party talks in April 2002. The majority of Zimbabweans regardless of political affiliation appear to support this option, as indicated by a December 2002 public opinion poll by the Mass Public Opinion Institute.

Now that a unilateral solution to the impasse is increasingly impracticable, movement towards a transitional government or some form of power sharing is gaining ground. There are rumors that both parties are giving serious thought to the idea of power sharing, with early elections—possibly as early as the end of 2003. This scenario might include joint parliamentary and presidential elections, as well as various constitutional amendments curtailing the executive presidency and changing electoral laws.

The role that the MDC would play depends on many factors, including the degree of division and fear within ZANU-PF and the MDC, the amount of international pressure

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exerted on both parties, and the degree of domestic pressure placed on the current regime by mass action or other means.

Tsvangirai has said that he supports a short transition period, as transition governments tend to be unstable. He claims that the vital balance-of-payments support from the international community needed to revitalize the economy will only come after a legitimate government is in place. It is believed that Mugabe would opt for a longer transition period to ensure time to groom his successor. As reports about this option increase, so do concerns about transparency and stakeholder participation. Civil society organizations are making public demands about conditions for talks, and analysts—even in the government press—are speaking about the need for stakeholder participation. Many MDC activists and rank and file members express similar concerns.

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Strategic Forms of Transition

Though some ZANU-PF members seek to maintain the status quo, most actors in Zimbabwe support some form of political change. Historical strategies for change have included armed struggle, negotiated settlement, mass action and other forms of public protest, and legal challenges. Three positive strategies for nonviolent political change stand out in the current context.

Mediation

Since the presidential elections of March 2002, several different actors have offered to facilitate dialogue between the government and the MDC. The first attempts by South Africa and Nigeria after the presidential election were largely unsuccessful, as the government refused to meet with the MDC unless the party withdrew its electoral challenge from the court. The MDC refused and the talks collapsed.

Recently, perhaps due to disintegrating conditions in the country, there is revitalized interest in international mediation. In January 2003, the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndugane, was invited by President Mugabe to facilitate negotiations between Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom. Though details of his meetings with Mugabe are unclear, the visits seemed to address political issues, including government constraints on the activities of the MDC and civic organizations. On the second trip, Ndugane met with Tsvangirai and members of civil society and emphasized the need for mediation initiatives to restore peace and stability in the country. But subsequent mediation efforts led by Mbeki, Muluzi, and Obasanjo were treated with some caution given their general support for Mugabe at several points over the past three years.

There are increasing reports that informal talks are underway—through the bishops and possibly other intermediaries. Media reports in both government and independent press speak of finding a “home grown solution” to the crisis. It seems the MDC may be willing to meet Mugabe’s negotiating precondition that his presidency be recognized as legitimate. Last month Tsvangirai and MDC MPs attended the opening of Parliament—unlike their previous boycott of these events. There are also rumors that the government could let Tsvangirai’s treason charge fall aside.

A negotiated or mediated strategy holds the strongest prospects for breaking the deadlock between the two parties and for charting nonviolent political change in Zimbabwe. It is unclear, however, who might have sufficient confidence of both parties to carry through the negotiations. Both home grown actors and international ones will have to overcome doubts about their neutrality if they are to be accepted as reliable mediators by the opposition and civil society. Many civic leaders also warn that an elite settlement will only be accepted as legitimate by the broader society if the voices of other stakeholders are incorporated into the process.

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Early Elections and / or Constitutional Revision

Before discussions about a transitional government, MDC focus was on an election re-run. Within civil society and the MDC, there were debates about which should take place first: an election re-run or constitutional reform. The NCA has consistently maintained that constitutional reform is a necessary condition for free and fair elections and for building a democratic society—in particular, curtailing the powers of the executive president. The MDC seems to be arguing for a constitutional amendment to address problematic electoral laws but the party is concerned that constitutional reform would prolong the longevity of the Mugabe regime.

Given broad awareness of the problems in the electoral process, it seems likely that some reform of the electoral code would accompany a transitional settlement. Minimally, this would involve a constitutional amendment establishing an independent electoral supervisory commission and limiting presidential powers over electoral procedure. Of course, these changes would still require passage by the Parliament, which is dominated by ZANU-PF. It is unlikely that this minimal amendment would win support from major civic groups, who want fuller constitutional reform prior to elections.

Mass Action

Though the MDC promised a prolonged period of mass actions beginning in June, it seems that this strategy has become less favored as the potential for dialogue increases. This, however, does not mean that mass action would not be taken back up as a primary strategy should talks fail.

The June 2–6 week-long mass action—the “final push”—was to involve both staying away from work and street protest—the latter a departure from the relatively “safe” norm of work stayaways. The planned day-one assembly in the city center and march on the State House, President Mugabe’s official residence, was foiled by strong police and military presence and heavy handedness. Roadblocks at all major arteries into the city prevented the congregation of any large group, and consequently marches did not materialize or were quickly and violently dispersed during the week. The mass action remained an effective mass strike: in Harare and Bulawayo, the participation rate was nearly 100 percent for four of the five days of the action. In other cities, participation rates were very high at the beginning of the week.

Although the large-scale bloodshed that was feared did not materialize, up to 800 people were reported arrested, beatings and human rights violations were commonplace, and at least two deaths resulted. Large student protests at the University of Zimbabwe were met with tear gas, dormitory raids, beatings, and looting of student property. Credible witnesses reported that injured party activists were abducted by Zimbabwe Republic Police from a treatment clinic. Youth, party militia, and government security forces attacked patrons of beerhalls, restaurants, and clubs during and after the stayaway, and theft was a regularly reported incident. The government is now making good on its threat to revoke business licenses of those that participated in the stayaway—a seemingly counter-productive strategy in the current economic crisis. According to government sources, the economy lost about Z\$250 million each day the protest lasted.

As in the last stayaway, military personnel arrived at MDC party activists’ homes late at night, abducting or violently assaulting them and members of their families. The MDC leader, Tsvangirai, has been charged with treason a second time, this time for “seeking to violently overthrow a democratically elected president.” Tsvangirai is already on trial for an earlier treason charge for “plotting to assassinate President Mugabe.” Both charges carry the death penalty.

Following the five-day stayaway, President Mugabe launched a nationwide tour during which time he made threats against the opposition party, saying that any future demonstration will be crushed. He blamed the British for trying to undermine his regime

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For more information on this topic, see our web site (www.usip.org), which has an online edition of this report containing links to related web sites, as well as additional information on the subject.

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and accused the British high commissioner to Zimbabwe, Brian Donnelly, of financing and assisting the MDC in planning the June protest, and threatened to expel him. Donnelly denied the allegation and restated the British government's support for the fundamental rights of Zimbabweans to freedom of expression and association. The Zimbabwe government appears to have backed off on this issue, as the high commissioner was not expelled.

While it may be too early to determine the impact of this recent mass action, the government's resolve to violently prevent any public demonstration was amply demonstrated. Moreover, there are intensified efforts to clamp down on opposition activities. Among civil society and the opposition, these efforts have perhaps brought an unwelcome reality check that mass action alone is unlikely to result in substantive change. While there is still a popular view that mass action may be a necessary condition for continued dialogue, there is perhaps even greater fear of a violent government clamp-down—particularly against students, who are usually at the forefront of any such action.

Conclusions: Toward Nonviolent Change

While the balance of power in Zimbabwe appears to be shifting away from the ruling party, it has not shifted sufficiently yet for change to occur. The party's incumbency, its ability to capitalize on historic grievances, and its liberation credentials make many Zimbabweans feel that ZANU-PF's continued involvement in any government is inevitable.

The best means of ensuring the peaceful establishment of a transitional authority is a combination of increased international and domestic pressure on the sitting government. Mediation by international or domestic third-party actors, particularly the African troika, is probably a necessary but not sufficient condition for peaceful change. There is a growing consensus that President Mugabe is the stumbling block to constructive dialogue, although increased calls for his resignation may have the unintended effect of strengthening his resolve to stay in power. Though there is a danger that mass action could turn violent, a prolonged domestic campaign may be necessary to loosen Mugabe's hold on power and to increase the MDC's position at the negotiating table.

As for whether a transitional authority will lead to peaceful and sustainable governance in Zimbabwe, several factors need to be taken into account. Stakeholders have urged both parties to make an explicit commitment to a new constitution, the cessation of political violence, the depoliticization of food distribution, and an independent land audit aimed at bringing the land situation to a just closure. The immediate abrogation of repressive legislation, such as POSA and AIPPA, is a prerequisite for democracy and respect for human rights in Zimbabwe. Above all, a mechanism must be created to ensure that civic and other stakeholders can have input into the transitional process.

The international community can encourage these aims by pursuing diplomatic strategies that respond to broad national concerns. African and western governments can work together to complement each other's efforts, rather than fuel polarization. Put simply, if mediation by African governments is necessary to bring parties to the table, western governments can provide the necessary financial assistance for implementing transition agreements and facilitating post-transition economic recovery—in particular through debt relief. Moreover, western governments can support longer-term domestic initiatives that build societal ownership over the transitional process and peace within society at large.



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