



The Role of the Opposition Political Parties in facilitating Change in Zimbabwe between 1999 and 2010

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to examine the role of the opposition political formations in Zimbabwe in facilitating changes between 1999 and 2010, which was the period that saw political activism rising beyond the expectations of the government. Apparently, all the other parties had been either neutralized or 'banned' before posing any threat to ZANU PF government. The paper that was influenced by the Gramscian Model of Hegemony intended to establish whether the opposition parties were necessary in Zimbabwean politics in as far as influencing democracy is concerned. The paper had been necessitated by the pressure from the civil society and the electorate on government to allow other political players free space.

INTRODUCTION

Opposition politics in Zimbabwe has been in existence since independence in 1980. However the reason for its existence has not been clear, so much so that its influence could not be felt. This is unlike the current situation where the opposition has the majority of the seats in Parliament and to some extent determines the direction of Political events. Since independence, Zimbabwe has witnessed the overturn of over 35 opposition political formations that have either contested in one election or just vanished after a short period of existence. Opposition political formations are establishments outside government that seek to constitutionally, and through elections, replace the government. These formations will be as good as a government in waiting. According to Moore, (Undated),

“A political party is a political organisation subscribing to a certain ideology or formed around very special issues with the aim to participate in power usually by participating in elections”.

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The role of opposition politics differs with the country's constitution and the level of maturity of the local politicians. In some countries, particularly African developing nations, politics is characterised by severe suppression of the minority, character assassinations and even torture and murders of the opponents by the ruling party members. These acts of violence are sometimes perpetrated by the secret service and the armed forces.

Background

Since independence in 1980, the political playing field in Zimbabwe has been considered not conducive for any significant opposition largely due to the authoritarian – nature of the constitutional provisions, and the liberation spirit that has existed in the minds of a section of the community (war veterans) who have never thought that they could allow multi - party democracy to prevail. This was evidenced after the 1987 Unity Accord that led to the merger of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union Patriotic Front (PF-ZAPU), when President Robert Mugabe advocated for a 'one-party state'. However, according to Mandaza and Sachikonye (1991), this move was blocked by other senior members of ZANU-PF party such as Edgar Tekere who was subsequently dismissed from the party in 1989.

In 1990, an opposition party was formed, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) led by Edgar Tekere. This movement attracted a large following, particularly from those who were fighting corruption, and the proposal for a one-party state, and those sections of the society that viewed the political arena as uneven. However this party died soon after its defeat during the 1990 general elections where it got 23% of the total votes. However the votes were scattered through out the constituencies.

For writers such as Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau and Gramsci, Friedmann (www.idscivilsociety.org), posited that opposition politics has been a core element in the development of social movements. For Gramsci, the thinking was underpinned on the nature and role of social mobilisation through his model of hegemony. The Gramscian model of a civil society is a conflict model with a potential revolutionary outcome. It is the same model that inspired followers of South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) anti-apartheid movement and similarly, in 1999, also inspired the formation of a civil society and labour-led party that was launched under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). During its first contest, the MDC won 57 of the 120 contested constituencies largely in urban areas where the working people had already started feeling the effects of maladministration, corruption and the effects of overstaying in power by the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and President, Mugabe. In 2005, the MDC split into two formations, MDC-T led by Tsvangirai that did not support the introduction of the Senate chamber in parliament, arguing that this was a deliberate plan by

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Mugabe to find a retirement home for his close cronies who would have lost their 'best before' value. This faction was largely a Shona composition as it enjoyed support from the Mashonaland region. Professor Welshman Ncube and Gibson Sibanda who both originated from the Matebeleland region and enjoyed support from the Ndebele people led the other formation which retained the title MDC. These, feeling that the party could look very tribal and that the Ndebele were a minority, decided to co-opt a non-politician who was based in the USA, Arthur Mutambara to lead it. This faction supported the creation of the Senate chamber, contested and won in the Matebeleland region and other urban areas.

Again in 2008, Simba Makoni of ZANU-PF broke away from the party to form an independent movement, Mavambo, under which he contested for the Presidency but lost. Makoni argued that he had observed that there was very little room for democratic change in the party leadership involving those who were interested in contesting from within ZANU-PF. The subject of who should succeed as a leader of the party had been continuously deferred during all the party congresses. As a result, Makoni decided to leave and show the nation that change could also be achieved from outside ZANU-PF.

In the face of executive dominance, the opposition serves to apply some control mechanisms on the activities and plans of the ruling party in the interest of the people who would have voted them into office. During the February 2000 Referendum, the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), in coalition with the MDC, managed to mobilise the electorate to vote against the government-drafted constitution in apparent defiance of a tradition of invincibility on the part of ZANU PF. In 2005 when the Senatorial chamber was introduced in the Parliament of Zimbabwe, the MDC-M faction that contested the election managed to win convincingly in the Matebeleland and some urban regions.

The opposition should depict itself as a better alternative government in waiting. It is against this background that this paper discusses the role that opposition politics did play in Zimbabwe during the period under review in facilitating change and development.

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An opposition is an interested and influential participant that liaises with the public by way of public lectures, demonstrations, leaflets and through the media. In-order to defeat the incumbent or present itself as an alternative option,

“the opposition must engage in shocking and dramatic acts aimed at portraying the incumbents as dilettantes, incompetents and ill-equipped to run the country, Cavehill (Undated).

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World-over, opposition political parties have been perceived differently, in some quarters as progressive while in less democratic states as rebellions or anti-developmental. These views and positions have been raised in different literature. Opposition political parties especially in the third world achieve their goals largely by engaging in the following amongst others; dialogue, violence, demonstrations, strikes, civic mobilisation, distribution of fliers and related literature and simple persuasion.

According to Cavehill, the opposition is just as important as the incumbent government and avoids a permanent majoritarian system that completely shuts out other players. In-order to keep other players onboard, the opposition suggests amendments to the legislation and policies wherever the people are not comfortable with the existing ones and also elicits information, arouses, educates and moulds opinion within the constituency. However, various authors present these roles differently and argue that these varying approaches depend on the prevailing political environment. Friedman (1990) looked at the changing political terrain in South Africa prior to the coming of majority rule in 1994 particularly touching on the changes that were imminent. Friedman noted that South African politics was on the verge of change as the signs were beginning to appear when the National Party (NP) leadership was changed. The new NP leadership showed signs of willingness to rethink policies and strategies, which had been non-negotiable. In SA, the government and extra-parliamentary movements (African National Congress, United Democratic Front and all other allies), in 1989 were under pressure to negotiate, as the need for change was inevitable. It is evident that the pressure by a united opposition force scored the success that forced the NP leadership to the negotiation table.

Olukoshi (1998) detailed the roles and importance of opposition politics in Africa and how democracy was brought about in Africa. Olukoshi further observed that particularly after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, 38 of the 45 states in Sub-Saharan Africa were under one party or military rule. In 1990, over half of these states had promised to hold multi-party elections. Between 1990 and 1994, 31 of the 42 states held elections and of these, 14 resulted in the defeat of incumbent governments, (ibid).

Nkiwane in Olukoshi (92:1998) looked at the politics in Zimbabwe, which he said never, seemed to be democratizing,

“deriving from the logic of the ZANU-ZAPU Unity Accord, where Mugabe and the ZANU hierarchy were openly contemplating making Zimbabwe a ‘de jure’ one party state”.

Nkiwane also discussed the merging of political parties in Zimbabwe contrary to the ideals of democracy that also amongst other issues promotes competition amongst contesting parties. It is also acknowledged that external pressure from the demonstration effect of the events that unfolded in Eastern Europe and World Bank led to the formation of opposition parties in an effort to attain ‘good governance’. There is also some narration on the role of the

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Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) in the 1990 elections when it fielded 107 of the 120 contested parliamentary seats and managed to win 2 seats and 23% of the popular vote. According to Nkiwane (1998), ZUM proved to the Zimbabweans that there could be opposition political formations despite a politically unfriendly environment. As a result of the above, ZUM also proved that the opposition could also effect changes in Zimbabwe.

The opposition is expected to relieve the citizens of bad governance and monotonous leadership that the ruling party continuously provides. However, as the Zimbabwean economy began to crumble, Smith (2008) indicated that about 60-70% of productive adults left the country seeking better lives elsewhere. The MDC seemed not to have an alternative option for the people as the crisis had reached alarming levels particularly in 2008. Generally, young professionals wait for their leadership to reshape their vulnerable societies, substitute old-fashioned governance ideology with that of democracy and respect for human rights and steer the economy to greater heights through macro and micro-level socio and economic policies. Banseka (2006) alludes to the above and cites other reasons that have motivated Africans to emigrate, like corruption, social service decay and poor governance. The African Development Report (2003) also attributes corruption and service delivery inefficiency to weak accountability by office bearers and lack of political competition that would have been caused by the party in government. It would seem that all the studies agree that the economy can go down if there is no competition among the contestants who may be holding different political views. However, in the case of Zimbabwe, the economy still collapsed despite the existence of the MDC and even at some point, the existence of the two MDC formations, and the Mavambo Movement. It is however evident from other scholars' perspectives on the reasons for the collapse of Zimbabwe's economy and infrastructure, that it was mainly because the party in government did not encourage other ideas and advice.

(The Zimbabwean), Conwell (2003) and The Zimbabwean (2008) aptly posit that inflation rose sharply mainly because of the Land Reform exercise that reached its peak in 2003. This was the period when the entire infrastructure had already been devastated so much so that there were neither exports nor meaningful production to keep the industry running.

Melber and Southall (2006) discuss a phenomenon that has become common in Africa where former Presidents carry a belief of indispensability and decide to cling on to power. The writers look at the attempts by African Presidents to cling on to power and their blunders citing Fredrick Chiluba of Zambia, Sam Nujoma of Namibia, Bakili Muluzi of Malawi, Jerry Rawlings of Ghana and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. The belief in these presidents and former leaders is that no other leader particularly from the opposition can perform better than them hence their refusal to leave office. However, the general feeling of the political commentators is that all the Presidents who replace the outgoing seem to perform better and even introduce democratic principles in their governance systems. In Zambia, after the defeat of the

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incumbent President, Kenneth Kaunda in 1990, Chiluba improved the economy during the early period of his tenure. Similarly, when the late President Levy Mwanawasa of Zambia took over from Chiluba, he also made some improvements socially, politically and economically.

Melber and Southall (2006:xxii) also briefly touch on The Bamako Declaration of the African Statesmen Initiative adopted on 08 June 2005,

“that democracy is the sole form of government that permits the development of the range of national institutions needed to ensure sustainable peace, security, economic growth and social well-being ...”.

However, most of these Presidents do not recognize any of the Bamako principles as they continue to defy their agreement in maintaining democracy.

In Melber and Southall (2006:121) notes that Zimbabwean opposition is more democratic than in most of Africa given the ruling party that is not democratic enough to have developed an evolutionary and ordered succession procedure. Despite a government that Moore (Undated) describes as repressive, the local opposition has still managed to survive and has even influenced some positive developments. Moore (ibid) indicates that all things being equal, the Zimbabwean opposition political parties could influence positive developments. The scholar is as far as one can go towards the politics of ‘personal rule’ dominating ‘Africanist’ political science.

Mbabaali (2005) gave out that the opposition in Uganda has fought against the political movement system in that country that was introduced by President Yoweri Museveni in 1986 as a way of doing away with the opposition parties. However, the opposition Democratic Party has petitioned the courts in the spirit of defending and promotion of constitutionalism, the rule of law and basic human rights. Like in Uganda where they petitioned the court in 2002 against the Political Parties and Organizations Act, in Zimbabwe, the MDC struggled to have Public Order and Security Act (POSA) reviewed in 2008. In Uganda, political parties are not allowed to sponsor individual candidates. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, political parties are not allowed to receive financial sponsorship from abroad.

Nyongó (1987) details histories of the failure of the development of independent Africa, failure at economic development and popular nation states due to lack of democracy. According to Nyongó, Africa has failed to develop largely because it did not allow criticism and opposition political formations that could apply pressure and give advice to the ruling parties. The absence of opposition parties in Africa is a result of lack of democracy. The author also looks at the unequal and uneven economic and social development in African states. Nyongó also states that African states cannot develop because the leadership, apparently from the same regions, has overstayed in office. Similarly, African leadership that has not allowed other parties to exist has invited insurgency or civil wars by disgruntled activists from other regions.

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Poor governance, bred by a long spell of opposition repression saw Zimbabwe sinking socially and economically as aptly observed by Zimbabwe News (www.havenworks.com) in its Failed States Index report. The report indicates that Zimbabwe is the 4th most vulnerable country after Sudan, Iraq and Somalia out of the 177 that were examined and ranked by the Fund for Peace's Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST). Instead of the opposition parties helping to develop the infrastructure, it is instead shut out of the arena where it would have contributed towards development.

The coming of the MDC in 1999 was viewed by the ZANU (PF) government as retrogressive and as a puppet of the West as articulated in *The People's Voice* (1999:3),

“That their ties with ex-Rhodesians and Western powers who have been working against the realisation of our people's aspirations and goals such as land reform is clear testimony that they are enemies of our revolution. To be more precise, they are puppets of these imperialists who want to re-colonise Zimbabwe”.

There was actually a deliberate propaganda project meant to depict the opposition as unnecessary and sent by the former colonial powers to recolonise the nation. However, Makumbe (2009), in his speech at Africa University, pointed out that the local opposition parties had long failed to deliver or just tilt the playing field because of the constitutional provisions that did not allow other players to freely contest. He however indicated that the MDC had influenced a variety of changes so much so that the party had built its base. Makumbe cited the defeat of ZANU PF during the 2000 Referendum, failed land redistribution programme, collapsed health and education systems and the Coalition government as some of the failures by ZANU PF. Makumbe also indicated that it was now difficult for ZANU PF to neutralise the MDC as it usually does to the opposition since it had already established a solid base that was even threatening the ruling party.

Problems on the Ground

There has been great expectation on the part of the electorate that any opposition political party that came would deliver and far outdo the ruling party. The political situation in Zimbabwe has been stagnant whether there is an election or not as the ruling authorities seem not to improve on anything. Particularly, Zimbabwe's constitution has been amended over 19 times as at February 2009 and yet there have always been calls for a complete overhaul of the fundamental law. Presently, the Constitution Select Committee (COPAC) is working towards drawing a new constitution as per the requirements of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) that was signed on 15 September 2008 by the ZANU PF, MDC and MDC-T.

After all the previous major opposition political parties (ZAPU, United African National Congress (UANC), and ZUM) had failed to effect a change of government, in 1998, the civil society teamed up with the labour

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movement and heightened the calls for a new constitution. This marriage culminated in the formation of the MDC in 1999 ahead of the 2000 Parliamentary elections. The MDC subsequently formed a coalition with the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) whose thrust was to call for a new constitution and campaigned against a Constitutional Commission (CC)'s government-drafted constitution ahead of a Referendum that was held in February 2000. During this election, the Constitutional Commission draft was defeated thus marking the beginning of the end of ZANU PF dominance. The defeat of the government and ZANU PF in this referendum served as a warning bell to ZANU PF that the opposition was likely to win in any election that came, as people now wanted change.

The government continued to constrain opposition activities and people-oriented projects that were designed to transform people's lives. Harassment and torture of the opposition political activists continued while parliamentary results petitions were either dragged or thrown out by the courts without due hearings. More than 20 parliamentary court petitions were dragged up to the next parliamentary elections in 2005 while the 2002 Presidential election dispute also prolonged till the 2008 election.

After the coming of the MDC in 1999, Danserean S. and Zamponi M. (2004) reveal that the government embarked on political populist projects meant to win back the hearts and minds of the people and regain political legitimacy and these included the land reform programme, indigenisation of the local industry, impunity on ZANU PF faithfuls for whatever crimes, farm mechanisation programme and agricultural loans that were not paid back, farm restocking and sponsorship to the Far East for purported business deals. As a result, these projects drew a lot of capital so much so that the Central Bank had to print money to meet the financial demands. Eric Bloch, a Zimbabwean economist, in his weekly column in the *Zimbabwe Independent* (12:21-27/03/08) remarked,

“It has long been apparent that government has a dogmatic conviction that the only manner of operating an economy is by absolute and total control of every facet of that economy. The result has been ever deteriorating infrastructure, and accelerating economic collapse”.

Because of those money-printing measures, Conwell (2003) and Ministry of Finance (MOF) (2001), inflation figures rose from around 56.9% in November 1999 to 175% in November 2002 before reaching over 231million % as at July 2008.

The crisis period starting in 1999 also resulted in massive job losses and an exodus of about 60%-70% of the Zimbabwe's skilled labour force to other countries, Smith (2008). According to the *Zimbabwe Independent* (2008), the 2005 election results led to the Operation Murambatswina (Operation Restore Order) in all the urban areas where MDC had won in the elections. This was similar to the 1983 arbitrary round up of suspected prostitutes, the 1984 Gukurahundi operation that left over 20 000 people dead and the land

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reform, where according to Buur et. al. (ed) (2007) in all the operations, was the identification of the enemy, cleanse by fire, demolition or displacement or contain by imprisonment, intimidation, torture or death. This operation saw the destruction of houses thereby leaving over 700 000 people homeless. Water also became scarce due to electricity shortage and so was fuel as a result of hard currency shortages. This also resulted in the closure of health institutions owing to a shortage of staff and drugs thereby exacerbating the cholera epidemic. Equally surprised by the situation in Zimbabwe, the Botswana President Ian Khama, in a televised interview on BTV on 5 December 2008, described the Zimbabwe situation as;

“Zimbabwe is like a big refugee camp where there is no government, no water, no hospitals, and no food”.

These remarks had followed inaction on the part of the government in trying to attend to the problems that the nation was faced with and which severely reduced efficiency in service delivery.

The Need For The Opposition

Zimbabweans had long awaited the coming of a viable opposition political formation. This was expected to transform the political landscape, which had long tilted in favor of the ruling party, ZANU-PF. The formation of the MDC in 1999 was received with a lot of excitement and hope for a quick change for the better. However, this was not to be owing to the constitutional provisions and a culture of political intolerance that prevailed on the ground. Besides, there were also several other factors that hindered a smooth revival of the situation on the ground. These were:

1. Militarisation of the public institutions like the election management body Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Grain Marketing Board (GMB), National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), Air Zimbabwe (AZ), Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) and National Parks and Wildlife Authority (NPWA). It became difficult for political parties to operate in an environment that had been militarized so much so that ZANU-PF existed without any meaningful competition. This however eroded government’s capacity and credibility to manage its systems. African Development Report (2003) revealed that all legal mechanisms and principles within government could no longer regulate the conduct of public servants.
2. A media system that did not accommodate other political players. The enactment of AIPPA in 2001 completely disabled MDC information and publicity mechanism.
3. A malfunctioning financial services sector also worked to the disadvantage of the opposition. These could not access funds for daily operations and the much needed election campaigns.
4. Health and education services literally collapsed. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (www.news.bbc.co.uk), 41%

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of all active Zimbabweans had left the country to South Africa and UK through official channels as at 2007 only. As a result, mass gatherings were now a risk health wise particularly when the cholera pandemic broke out. Similarly, when the education sector closed, peoples' morale went down.

5. The transport sector also collapsed due to two main elements: fuel shortage and inaccessible road network.

6. Food shortage was another issue that was observed and considered to have been very critical.

Mavambo Movement met with the fate of an uneven political playing field when it was launched in January 2008. Though this party re-invigorated the people's minds, it was quickly considered to be a ZANU-PF project meant to split MDC vote.

Achievements

Indeed the coming of the opposition political parties in Zimbabwe since 1999 helped the situation as there were some noticeable changes that the ordinary people could identify. With the coming of the opposition political formations in 1999, the government has been pressured to unilaterally amend some of the constitutional provisions in an effort to keep the opposition parties under close check. These provisions covered the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) that suppressed the activities of the opposition, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) that also restricted the opposition from using the media in their activities and the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) that shut out other potential broadcasting players. The Electoral Act was also contentious as the opposition parties felt that it was repressive and unfair to the opposition elements. However, the opposition exerted pressure for a review with amendments in 2008 ahead of the September Global Political Agreement (GPA). During the same period, service delivery deteriorated so much so that almost all services were closed like hospitals, schools, social amenities and postal services. The opposition also ensured that they proposed policies that guaranteed continuity and improvement in the services. The review of the Electoral Act at least allowed other players unhindered political existence albeit without freedom for activities.

The competence by the MDC-T led to the establishment of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2008, which provided for the creation of a government of national unity, bringing together the three main political parties in Zimbabwe; ZANU PF, MDC-T and MDC. Under the GNU, the economy has drastically improved with the inflation rate reducing from over 50 million percent to 6% in less that a month. Even the remuneration for most of the workers except for civil servants, was improved to well above the poverty datum lime which is presently pegged at US\$ 550 per month. Generally, most of the social services have improved and are readily available country-wide.

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Because of the pressure from the opposition political formations, ZANU PF and the government have had to account for their actions to the electorate. The government has also had to sacrifice some of its faithfuls like the former deputy minister of Finance Christopher Kuruneri, ZUPCO board chairman and Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT) Vice Chancellor Charles Nherera and Grain Marketing Board (GMB) Chief executive Officer (CEO) Martin Muchero for corruption. These moves were meant to outdo the opposition in transparency and accountability to the people.

In 2000, Morgan Tsvangirai, MDC President, urged the international community to impose economic sanctions on Zimbabwe for alleged human rights abuses and failing to deliver on democracy. As a result, Europe, Australia, USA and other developed countries responded to the call and Zimbabwe's economy deteriorated. In 2003, the MDC also called for a mass protest dubbed 'The Final Push' which also received a positive response from the electorate. Again, in 2005, after the establishment of the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA), MDC in collaboration with Bulawayo Agenda (BA), a civil society organization based in Bulawayo went around the Councils and Municipalities discouraging them to let go the water administration to the new body, which MDC viewed as a political entity. According to MDC, the entity was meant to control Councils and Municipalities, the majority of them being under the management of MDC administration and generate income for the ailing government. To some extent, the local authorities resisted the coming of ZINWA till threats were used to coerce them (local authorities) into the deal. However, that arrangement failed in 2008 when there was an outbreak of cholera and water management has been returned to local authorities. This just explains how much the opposition wields power and has control over the lives and direction of events in Zimbabwe.

The opposition ensured that all the legislation received 'due process of parliamentary deliberation'. The opposition also supervised all expenditures by exposing to the public any anomaly or deviation from the agreed programme and acted as a mouthpiece for the people who might be considered as voiceless or the oppressed and influenced changes in all spheres or administration and development. The opposition also fought against the bureaucratic empire that in the majority of cases delays in the delivery of service to the electorate. It also suggests amendments to the legislation and policies wherever the people are not comfortable with the existing ones and also elicit information, arouses, educates and moulds opinion within the constituency. The opposition parties attempt to re-interpret whatever government would have interpreted in a way that it feels its constituency can easily understand.

According to The Crisis Group (www.crisisgroup.org), the MDC was the first opposition party to have an almost majority in parliament with 57 seats in 2000, 41 seats in 2005 and 99 seats in 2008 elections. This election marked the beginning of the end of ZANU-PF political dominance in

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Zimbabwe. In fact, MDC was the first opposition party to make ZANU-PF a minority in Parliament.

The opposition in Zimbabwe also had to force the government to attend to some matters through coercion or arm-twisting. According to Africa News (www.newsfromafrica.org), in 2005, MDC threatened to withdraw from the election contest as way to force the government to apply minimum electoral conditions that had been set by Southern Africa Development Committee (SADC). In 2008, according to the Zimbabwe Election Watch (ZEW) (www.sokwanele.com), MDC also threatened to disregard new constituency boundaries that had been drawn for the 2008 harmonised elections. In a related matter, according to Jackson, (www.henryjacksosociety.org), President Mugabe was also pressured into the talks with opposition leaders in 2008 by the impact of the sanctions that were called for by the MDC. The MDC also played an important role in the same year of 2008. ZEW, (www.sokwanele.com) reported that after the government had delayed to release election results for the harmonised elections, MDC threatened to mobilise its supporters and all those who would have grown impatient to go on strike in an effort to force the announcement of the results.

The coming of the opposition parties pressured the government to improve its policies (Indigenous Empowerment and Anti Corruption) and that inculcated a feeling that ZANU PF government could be challenged and defeated politically. Because of the competition that was brought about by the two MDC factions, ZANU PF adopted a populist political strategy of randomly issuing out agricultural equipment, a policy that benefited several households economically though on the national fiscus, it was retrogressive. Health and education sectors had literally collapsed despite the fact that Zimbabwe was once one of the best countries in health delivery and education provision. According to The Zimbabwe Independent (2001), 20000 nurses and 100 doctors had immigrated to the United Kingdom alone citing poor remuneration, poor working conditions and political violence. The Financial Gazette (2008) also indicated that in 2008, 40% of teacher's posts in Zimbabwe were vacant due to the emigration. With the coming of MDC, the two sectors have now opened and are expected to grow steadily. Similarly, in 2006, the government tried to enact a law that was meant to closely regulate non-governmental organizations' activities. This also meant cutting on relief food that the people so much needed in the face of repeated droughts and severe food shortages. The opposition particularly, MDC campaigned for the freedom of these NGOs in distributing food and other social services.

It should be observed that while there were noticeable changes due to the influence from the opposition elements, these varied depending on where the beneficiaries were located, their ages, level of literacy and political inclination amongst others. However, on the whole, there were vast changes in the way the political environment was leveled.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are of importance to politicians, academics, various government departments and some NGOs that relate with the opposition political parties in their operations/activities, planning or policy making. It is recommended that there be a new constitution, which COPAC is doing though at a snail pace or even review the existing one with the interests of the masses at heart. Amongst the issues to be considered is the issue of excessive Presidential powers. The government can establish a political party's regulatory body whose mandate will be to monitor, advise, mediate and chair inter-party disputes. This body will probably level the political playing field and hold accountable all perpetrators of political atrocities and crimes.

It is also recommended that all militarized institutions be gradually demilitarized in order to allow professionalism in their conduct of duties. Particularly, ZEC's top executive was drawn from the security services. The government could also allow other media players so that there can be a choice for consumers other than the government regulated radio and television stations. This can be achieved through opening airwaves and offering media operating licenses at affordable rates so that locals can take up the challenges. In order to give all political players an equal footing, finances and other resources should be availed accordingly. As such, the Political Parties Finance Act (PPFA) should be repealed to allow funding from other donors. Similarly, there should be a deliberate policy to educate all political parties' supporters to be tolerant of divergent views and activities. This will be expected to reduce political violence. Similarly, all war veterans should be closely regulated so that they always follow set regulations and laws particularly prior and during election campaigns. It is also recommended that the government seeks/allows foreign funding regardless of the conditions for the reconstruction of the country till the economy improves. The country needs funding for health, education, infrastructure reconstruction (roads, housing and water) and this can also come from the neo-liberal financial institutions.

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