

# Zimbabwe<sup>1</sup>

Zimbabwe, like the case of Burma, presents one of the most dramatic examples of an intransigent ruler determined to fend off increasingly persistent international demands for democratic reforms. Even as all political, economic and social indicators point toward potential ruin of what was once one of southern Africa's more promising post-colonial states, Robert Mugabe continues tightening the screws on the political opposition and thwarting international efforts to force him to transition out of power. Cloaking himself as the liberator of Zimbabwe from the heavy hand of neo-colonial rule, Mugabe has outmaneuvered both domestic and foreign critics who remain divided and weak. Regardless of when or how the 81-year old autocrat departs the scene, Zimbabwe will face a long uphill climb toward consolidating democracy and repairing the economic damage wrought by their erstwhile leader. The international community, if it is serious about democracy promotion, should prepare the way now by ensuring a post-Mugabe democratic Zimbabwe has the resources and priority it needs to succeed.

## Background

Zimbabwe, a country with extensive natural resources and an agricultural sector that once exported large quantities of corn, tobacco and cotton, faces a severe crisis due to politically-motivated mismanagement of the economy.<sup>2</sup> Zimbabwe's economy, with one of the world's highest inflation

---

1 Principal author Elizabeth Marquez, Research Fellow, Democracy Coalition Project.

2 Much of the information summarized in this section was drawn from "Background Note: Zimbabwe" prepared by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, January 2006, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5479.htm>.

3 Zimbabwe's annual inflation rate for February surged to 782 percent, up 168.8 percentage points from January, according to figures released by the Central Statistical Office. UK Telegraph, March 10, 2006, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/03/10/blzim10.xml>

rates at over 700 per cent,<sup>3</sup> collapsed at an alarming -5 per cent in 2004 and is headed toward a major humanitarian crisis if the government is unable to find the funds necessary to import adequate supplies of food, fuel and power. Overseeing this precipitous decline stands President Robert Mugabe, one of Africa's independence heroes turned autocrat. Mugabe, a former rebel leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), came to power in February 1980 in the first post-independence elections in the former white-controlled British colony then known as Rhodesia.<sup>4</sup> While these elections were found by the British government and the United Nations to be free and fair,<sup>5</sup> ZANU had promised to return to war if it did not win the election.<sup>6</sup>

Mugabe promised early on to lead the nation in a process of reconciliation and reconstruction by integrating the armed forces, reestablishing social services and education in rural areas, resettling an estimated one million refugees and displaced persons who had fled during the guerilla uprisings, and redistributing land. To this end, Mugabe's first cabinet was comprised of members of his own ZANU party, the rival Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) party, including Mugabe's personal rival Joshua Nkomo, and independent white members of parliament and senators.<sup>7</sup> Tensions between the two factions worsened, however, leading to widespread violence and human rights abuses by the army with as many as 20,000 civilian deaths. During this time, Nkomo and his followers denied connections with the dissidents and, out of desperation for the violence to stop, negotiated an eventual merger of ZANU and ZAPU in 1989.

The 1990 elections, which saw voter turnout decline to 54 per cent, resulted in an overwhelming victory for the newly merged ZANU party which won 117 of 120 seats. International observers declared balloting fair but noted that the campaign itself was neither free nor fair.<sup>8</sup> Not satisfied with a *de facto* one-party state, Mugabe proposed single party rule in September 1990, but his gambit was strongly opposed by members of his

4 Independence was granted on April 18, 1980 and Rhodesia became Zimbabwe, named after the Great Zimbabwe ruins, built between 1100 AD and 1400 AD by the ancestors of the modern day Shona.

5 Ozias Tungwarara, Deputy Director, Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project, personal correspondence, January 18, 2006.

6 J. Chikuhwa, *A Crisis of Governance: Zimbabwe*, New York: Algora Publishing, 2004, pp. 91.

7 Under the original Zimbabwean Constitution the legislature was divided into two bodies — a 120-seat House of Assembly and a 40-seat Senate. The Senate was abolished when the Constitution expired in 1990. At that time a single legislative body, the National Assembly, was created. The Senate was re-established in 2005.

8 U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, op. cit.

own party and the proposition was taken off the table shortly after it was proposed.<sup>9</sup> Constitutional amendments in 1991 would strengthen government control – restoring corporal and capital punishment, and denying judicial recourse in cases of compulsory purchase of land by the government. Mugabe also maintained control of the media, the security forces, and a large parastatal sector. Formal political opposition to Mugabe was limited after the 1990 elections; however, discontent was growing due to widespread corruption, nepotism and economic mismanagement. After a series of student and labor union protests against the government in the mid-1990s, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), a new opposition party, was formed in 1999 in response to worsening economic and human rights conditions.

The first serious contest for the opposition came in February 2000 when a referendum was held on a draft constitution that would permit Mugabe to seek two additional terms in office, grant government officials immunity from prosecution, and authorize government seizure of white-owned land.<sup>10</sup> The constitutional referendum was soundly defeated, largely due to grassroots campaigning efforts by the MDC, heavily supported by white farmers. Less than two weeks after the electoral defeat, the government responded by sanctioning violent expulsion of white farmers from their land by an “informal” organization of “war veterans,” many of whom were too young to have participated in the war for independence. While Mugabe denied responsibility for the occupation and resulting violence, he publicly supported both the land invasion and violence, having already threatened violence against farmers who refused to give up their land. It is widely acknowledged that Mugabe and ZANU-PF artificially created this “crisis” to make land reform a more pressing issue in the months preceding the 2000 parliamentary election. In April 2000 the parliament amended the constitution stating that white farmers could seek compensation for seized land from the “former colonial power,” and

---

9 “Mugabe: Freedom Fighter Turned Autocrat,” *BBC News*, May 10, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.

10 Land tenure had long been a contentious issue in Zimbabwean politics. During the minority white government, approximately 6,700 white farmers owned over 40% of the land in Zimbabwe. Under the Lancaster Agreement land reform was to have taken place on a willing seller-willing buyer basis. However, despite goals to resettle 75,000 families within five years of independence, less than 40,000 were resettled by 1988. Mugabe and ZANU-PF continued to stall on promises of sweeping land reform well into the 1990s while using financial support for land reform from the World Bank and UK to award land to party elites. Chikuhwa, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-249.

in mid-May a law was passed allowing for more farm seizures without compensation.<sup>11</sup> These efforts were only partially successful as the MDC experienced a significant victory in the June 2000 parliamentary elections. Despite electoral irregularities, localized violence, and government intimidation of opposition supporters, the MDC gained 57 of the 150 seats in the National Assembly.<sup>12</sup>

ZANU-PF, however, maintained a majority of the seats in parliament and used its power to push through legislation aimed at limiting further opportunities for MDC victory. In 2001, for example, parliament passed the Broadcasting Service Act.<sup>13</sup> The act made the state-run Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation in effect the only legal electronic broadcaster in Zimbabwe.<sup>14</sup> Parliament also broadened the Miscellaneous Offences Act,<sup>15</sup> originally introduced under white rule in 1964, to allow police to make arrests at their discretion for almost any perceived offense.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the Public Order and Security Act was enacted, which made it illegal to criticize the president, publish a false statement that could endanger the nation's economy or security or threaten public trust in the government, and hold a public gathering without giving authorities a four-day warning. It also allowed police strictly to regulate public gatherings as well as stop meetings that they judged a danger to public order.<sup>17</sup>

It was in this highly restrictive context that presidential elections were held in March 2002. In addition to the laws cited above, the regulatory environment was in constant flux as new legislation governing the administration of the elections was being introduced and contested in court right

---

11 Chikuhwa, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-250.

12 Of the 150 seats in the National Assembly, only 120 of these are elected by popular vote. The rest are either appointed by Mugabe or are selected in a process highly influenced by him.

13 "Zimbabwe State of the Media Report," Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), 2005.

14 The Act created restrictive criteria on funding, licensing fees and ownership of media outlets that are nearly impossible to meet — including a ban on foreign investment and funding of the broadcasting sector. Media Institute of Southern Africa, *op. cit.*

15 Parliament of Zimbabwe, "Miscellaneous Offences Act," <http://www.parlzim.gov.zw/Resources/Acts/acts.html>.

16 The law covers riotous or indecent conduct; threatening, abusive or insulting language or action; and using any means that could "interfere with the ordinary comfort, convenience, peace or quiet of the public or which are likely adversely to affect the safety of the public or does any act which is likely to lead to a breach of the peace or to create a nuisance or obstruction" *see* Human Rights Watch, "Some of Zimbabwe's National Laws: Key Concerns," March 2005, <http://hrw.org/backgrounder/africa/zimbabwe0305/6.htm>.

17 *Ibid.*

up to the elections.<sup>18</sup> For example, until nine days before the election it was illegal for any civic organization to conduct voter education, leaving the government-appointed Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) in control.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the voter registration process disenfranchised many voters, as was evidenced in the large number of voters turned away at the polls. This partially stemmed from confusion in the registration process when the rolls were re-opened for supplementary registration after the original closing date, a move that was not publicized well enough to allow all parties to inform their supporters.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, campaigning by the opposition MDC was made difficult by the Public Order and Security Act which made it nearly impossible for the opposition to hold political meetings, while ZANU-PF campaigning was largely unaffected. Access to state-run media was also limited for the MDC in spite of guidelines set by the Broadcasting Services Act, and coverage was heavily biased towards the ZANU-PF.<sup>21</sup> Of greatest concern, politically-motivated violence took place throughout the country, including murder and torture perpetrated mainly by youth and war veterans groups thought to be sanctioned by ZANU-PF against MDC party members, supporters, and those suspected of being opponents of the ruling party. Police and party leaders did little to deny claims of violence.<sup>22</sup>

There were many complaints of unfair activity on the polling days as well. The majority of election monitors and supervisors selected by the ESC were civil servants, with a large number coming from the army and police forces. In contrast, many local and international observers had difficulty receiving credentials. The Zimbabwe Election Support Network reported that only 400 of its observers were credentialed, less than one-hundredth of the list they had submitted in advance of the election.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, many observers from the European Union, including those from Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, and the UK, were not

---

18 Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), "Press Statement Post-election Assessment," March 12, 2002, <http://www.africaaction.org/docs02/zim0203.htm>.

19 Crisis in Zimbabwe Committee, "Press Statement on Election Results," March 13, 2002, <http://www.africaaction.org/docs02/zim0203.htm>.

20 K. Vollan, *Presidential Elections in Zimbabwe 2002*, Norwegian Electoral Observer Mission, March 20, 2002. pp. 5-6.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

22 SADC Parliamentary Forum Observer Mission, "Statement on the Zimbabwe Elections," March 12, 2002, <http://www.africaaction.org/docs02/zim0203.htm>.

23 Zimbabwe Election Support Network, *op. cit.*

allowed into the country.<sup>24</sup> Information regarding polling station locations was not well publicized and in many urban areas the number of polling stations decreased nearly 50 per cent from the 2000 election. Notably, many of these decreases took place in MDC strongholds, particularly in the capital city of Harare. The lack of a suitable number of polling stations significantly slowed down the voting process, leading to an extension of the election period. However, thousands of citizens were still unable to vote, even after waiting in line for three days. Meanwhile, the number of rural polling stations increased and mobile polling stations, which are difficult to monitor and observe, were deployed. In regards to the rural vote, some questions have been raised concerning the validity of the officially reported numbers of registered voters and of voter turnout as these numbers failed to match reports issued by observers.<sup>25</sup> In the end, Mugabe easily defeated the MDC challenger Morgan Tsvangirai by a 56 to 42 per cent margin. The MDC issued a court challenge to Mugabe's victory that has yet to be adjudicated.

Immediately after the elections, the ZANU-PF-controlled parliament passed the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, creating a government-appointed Media and Information Commission (MIC). The MIC was entrusted with regulating the media, including accrediting journalists and publishers. Under this act, foreign journalists who were not working for specified time frames with the permission of the MIC were banned from the country, foreigners with permanent resident status were prohibited from working without the permission of the MIC, and Zimbabwean journalists and publishers were forced to register with the MIC.<sup>26</sup> The government then used this law to attack the Daily News, the only independent print newspaper in Zimbabwe, which had attempted to challenge the law in the court system. The paper was shut down in 2003 by order of the Supreme Court, after its presses had been bombed and several of its executives, editors, and reporters had been detained by the government.<sup>27</sup> In addition to the media restrictions, widespread violence and intimidation were reported during the by-elections in 2002 and 2003. Furthermore, MDC leaders Morgan Tsvangirai, Welshman Ncube, and

---

24 H. Sanomat, "Finnish election monitors not let in to Zimbabwe yet," February 13, 2002, <http://www2.hs.fi/english/archive/news.asp?id=20020213IE7>.

25 Zimbabwe Election Support Network, *op. cit.*

26 Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*

27 M. Glaser, "Zimbabwe's Daily News Fights Closure with Online Publication," *Online Journalism Review*, October 22, 2003, <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/glaser/1066860746.php>.

Renson Gasela were accused of treason in 2003, allegedly having sought to topple the Mugabe government through the organization of protests in June 2003. Charges against Ncube and Gasela were eventually dropped, and Tsvangirai was found not guilty in October 2004.

Parliamentary elections held in the spring of 2005 offered an opportunity for the opposition MDC, and the international community, to hold Mugabe accountable to his pledge to abide by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections.<sup>28</sup> On the surface it appeared that the government had made a number of changes that would lead to a more legitimate process - the creation of a new electoral commission, the establishment of an electoral court, one-day voting, the use of translucent ballot boxes, and counting votes at polling stations immediately after closing instead of transporting ballot boxes to a central counting location. The decision to enact these specific portions of the SADC Principles and Guidelines, however, was seen by many as a carefully calculated effort to further limit democracy. The electoral commission and court were appointed by Mugabe; polling stations were doubled to allow for one-day voting, making monitoring difficult; and translucent ballot boxes intimidated voters who thought the secret nature of their ballot would be compromised.

The opposition was once again limited in its ability to campaign by the Public Order and Security Act, which required the opposition party to register for a meeting permit four days in advance and to allow police representatives to attend meetings. Furthermore, while special election programming aired on public broadcasting allowed the opposition an opportunity to present its case, other programming such as news and current affairs programs strongly favored ZANU-PF. While reported cases of violence subsided, intimidation and threats of violence resulted in a coercive atmosphere. Particularly in rural areas, traditional leaders suggested that it would be possible to know which candidate voters selected and that those not voting for ZANU-PF would face reprisals. Additionally, the vote tally was called into question, as many election observers were not allowed to witness the counting and detailed election results by polling station up to the constituency level were not made publicly available. Finally, similar to the 2002 election, control over voter education was vested in the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, issues with voting rolls and therefore

---

28 Full text of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections can be found at [http://www.sadc.int/english/documents/political\\_affairs/index.php](http://www.sadc.int/english/documents/political_affairs/index.php).

large rejection rates persisted, and problems with the credentialing of observers remained an issue.<sup>29</sup>

ZANU-PF increased its parliamentary majority in 2005, gaining 16 seats for a total of 78 elected seats. The MDC's total seats decreased from 57 to 41. Interestingly, the number of total votes lost by the MDC from the 2000 election, 120,000, corresponded directly with the number of votes lost in Harare and Bulawayo, traditional strongholds that underwent a re-allocation of seats in accordance with voter rolls - rolls which largely underrepresented the number of voters in those districts.<sup>30</sup> While many states and organizations were excluded from observing the polls, reports from foreign diplomats who were able to observe elections (including those from the EU and US) suggest that the elections were not free and fair.<sup>31</sup>

Shortly after the election, Mugabe's government launched Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order), a crackdown on "illegally" built shantytowns and informal markets in the capital city of Harare, supposedly in an effort to remove criminal elements in these areas. The MDC claimed that the demolitions were targeted against the urban poor - the MDC's primary base of support - as a reprisal for the MDC winning almost all of the urban seats in the 2005 elections. They also claim that the government would like to see the homeless return to rural areas where they are easier to control. Others argue that ZANU-PF is engaging in this action in an effort to target the "war veterans" who have built illegal settlements on farms seized from white owners. It is also possible that this operation is an effort to maintain stability in the urban centers, as many of the targeted areas were previously sites of anti-government riots.<sup>32</sup> The UN estimated that the effort left 570,000 homeless, 98,000 jobless and directly or indirectly impacted over 2.4 million people. By December 2005, Operation Garikai/Hlalani-Kuhle, a corresponding government reconstruction initiative, had only constructed 5,000 homes since it was initiated in July 2005.<sup>33</sup>

---

29 K. Vollan, op. cit., pp. 1-2, 12-16.

30 Ibid., pp. 18.

31 Ibid., p. 1; Sokwanele Civil Action Support Group, "Mauritius Watch Summary," March 30, 2005, [http://www.sokwanele.com/articles/sokwanele/mwatch\\_sokwanelespecialreport\\_30march2005.html](http://www.sokwanele.com/articles/sokwanele/mwatch_sokwanelespecialreport_30march2005.html).

32 "What lies behind the Zimbabwe demolitions?" *BBC News*, July 26, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.

33 "Update Report No. 5 Zimbabwe," Security Council Report, December 19, 2005, [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.glKWLeMTIsG/b.1309395/k.3A6A/UPDATE\\_REPORT\\_NO5brZIMBABWEbr19\\_DECEMBER\\_2005.htm](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.glKWLeMTIsG/b.1309395/k.3A6A/UPDATE_REPORT_NO5brZIMBABWEbr19_DECEMBER_2005.htm).

In November 2005 the first elections for Zimbabwe's re-constituted Senate were held. The elections provoked a damaging split that had been broiling between rival factions of the MDC – one led by MDC president Tsvangirai and the other by the MDC secretary general, Welshman Ncube. Tsvangirai's supporters favor a strategy of mass action to prompt change while Ncube's followers favor a judicial approach or a negotiated settlement. Prior to the senatorial elections, 33 members of the MDC national council urged the party to participate in the election, while 31 favored a boycott. This resulted in the party filing to compete in the elections in the Matabeleland provinces while fielding no candidates in the Mashonaland districts. Overall, voter turnout was very low at 19.48 per cent.<sup>34</sup> ZANU-PF won 43 of the 50 elected seats with the MDC taking the remaining seven. The Senate has a total of 66 seats, and of the non-elected 16, Mugabe appointed six members while ten were awarded to traditional chiefs.<sup>35</sup>

Looking ahead, the octogenarian Mugabe has declared that he will not stand for re-election in 2008. While it is impossible to tell if he will abide by this decision, it is clear that ZANU-PF is thinking about its future in a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe. Leaders are jockeying for power and many of the factions within the party fall on ethnic lines.<sup>36</sup> Thus, for ZANU-PF itself, maintaining control of Zimbabwe after Mugabe steps down is a significant goal. The most immediate goal of what remains of the MDC is to participate in a legitimate, free, and fair election, and win that election. The MDC believes that it has the support of the majority of Zimbabweans but that the current system does not allow for the exercise of that support. Determining its future as a party has become the most crucial goal for the MDC in the wake of the 2005 elections. The party is fractured on many lines ranging from ideology to strategic goals and ethnic identity to leadership preferences.

In sum, Mugabe has manipulated legal tools and the mechanics of electoral democracy, backed up with violence perpetrated by his allies, to seize near total control of the country. In effect, Mugabe has created the one-

34 "Results of the 2005 Senate Elections and Gutu North Parliamentary By-election," Zimbabwe Election Support Network, 2005.

35 "Zimbabwe: A Year in Brief 2005," *UN Integrated Regional Information Network*, January 12, 2006, <http://www.irinnews.org>.

36 B. Unendoro, "Tribal Rivalry May Split ZANU-PF," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, March 21, 2005, [http://www.iwpr.net/?p=acr&ts=f&co=239371&capc\\_state=heniacr2005](http://www.iwpr.net/?p=acr&ts=f&co=239371&capc_state=heniacr2005).

party state he sought to impose when he consolidated power over his ZAPU rivals in 1990.

## The International Response

International responses to the ongoing political crisis in Zimbabwe generally have varied in relation to the geographic region of the actor. As the MDC gained strength, particularly after its success in the 2000 parliamentary elections was reversed by the fraudulent 2002 presidential elections, international actors such as the European Union (EU), the United States and the Commonwealth have become more involved in seeking to hold the Zimbabwean government accountable to basic democratic norms. Mugabe, on the other hand, has marshaled his own allies in the fight for legitimacy, mainly from the region, but also China. The actions of various UN committees regarding Zimbabwe have reflected African more than Western policy interests. This section provides an overview of action taken in response to the 2002 and 2005 elections, as well as Operation Murambatsvina and related human rights abuses.

### *The 2002 Elections*

International observers, including delegations from the Commonwealth states and Norway, declared the 2002 elections to be unfair citing the pre-election environment as well as significant fraud and rigging of the ballot.<sup>37</sup> The EU, prompted by the UK, decided even before the elections were held to impose sanctions in accordance with Article 96 of the ACP-EC Partnership agreement.<sup>38</sup> The EU decided to freeze the assets of and institute a visa ban on government and ZANU-PF officials and to prohibit export of arms and dual-use items that could be used for internal repression. Additionally, the EU suspended all aid to Zimbabwe except that which was determined to have a direct benefit to the citizens of Zimbabwe – a suspension of 127 million euros under the European Development

---

37 K. Vollan, op.cit.; “Africa ‘damaged’ by Mugabe poll,” *CNN*, March 15, 2002, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/africa/03/15/zimbabwe.africa/>; U.S. Agency for International Development, “Elections and Political Processes: Success Stories,” March 17, 2005, [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/democracy\\_and\\_governance/technical\\_areas/elections/ssl.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/technical_areas/elections/ssl.html).

38 This agreement states that one of the objectives of relations between the EU and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries is “promoting institutional reforms and development, strengthening the institutions necessary for the consolidation of democracy, good governance and for efficient and competitive market economies; and building capacity for development and partnership.” Article 20, Cotonou Agreement.

Fund. These measures were extended in February of 2003, 2004, and 2005.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, some European states continued to deal with Mugabe. For example, France welcomed him in 2003 for the Franco-African Summit, and for good measure, granted Mugabe a one-on-one audience with President Jacques Chirac.<sup>40</sup>

The United States, following a similar course as the EU, adopted sanctions in the form of a ban on current and new defense related exports.<sup>41</sup> In March 2003 the US also issued a travel ban on 76 Zimbabwean government officials and froze the assets of said individuals to complement EU action.<sup>42</sup> Other states following the EU and US bans include New Zealand, which has adopted a visa ban list covering 142 people, as well as Canada, Australia, and Norway, which have adopted policies identical to the EU position.<sup>43</sup>

The Commonwealth, an association of 53 states affiliated historically with the British crown, also took action against the Mugabe regime after the March elections. The association suspended Zimbabwe from membership based on the findings of its observer delegation that the election had been neither free nor fair and, therefore, a violation of fundamental principles of the Harare Declaration (ironically proclaimed in Zimbabwe in 1991).<sup>44</sup> The final decision to oust Zimbabwe was made by a troika of Commonwealth leaders: South African President Thabo Mbeki, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, and Australian Prime Minister John Howard. The original suspension lasted twelve months, with a six-month

---

39 European Union, "EU Relations with Zimbabwe," June 23, 2005, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/country/country\\_home\\_en.cfm?cid=zw&lng=en&status=old](http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/country/country_home_en.cfm?cid=zw&lng=en&status=old).

40 "Chirac, Mugabe Hold Private Meeting," *The Age*, February 21, 2003, <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/02/21/1045638482981.html>.

41 U.S. Department of State, "Suspension of Munitions Exports to Zimbabwe," April 17, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/9484.htm>.

42 U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, op. cit.

43 European Union "EU Relations with Zimbabwe," June 23, 2005, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/country/country/\\_home\\_en.cfm?cid+Zw&Lng=eng&status=old](http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/country/country/_home_en.cfm?cid+Zw&Lng=eng&status=old).

44 Article 4 of the Commonwealth's Harare Declaration states: "We believe in the liberty of the individual under the law, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief, and in the individual's inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which he or she lives." Available at <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=34457>.

review process established.<sup>45</sup> At the close of the one-year suspension, the organization decided that insufficient progress had been made by the Mugabe government; it chose to extend the suspension for an additional nine months, until the end of 2003. Mbeki and Obasanjo lobbied against extension of the suspension, but Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon of New Zealand stated that his conversations with other Commonwealth members had suggested broad support for the extension.<sup>46</sup> In December 2003 the Commonwealth voted once more to extend the suspension of Zimbabwe upon the recommendation of a committee consisting of Australia, Canada, Jamaica, India, Mozambique and South Africa. However, many African countries, led by South Africa, supported re-admission for Zimbabwe.<sup>47</sup> Shortly after this decision, Zimbabwe withdrew from the Commonwealth.<sup>48</sup>

South Africa, which has borne the brunt of the humanitarian crisis as the recipient of hundreds of thousands of Zimbabwean refugees, at times has supported dialogue between the MDC and Mugabe, leading to constitutional reform and new elections; at other times its inaction and even defense of Mugabe appears to be driven more out of a desire for regional stability than an overarching commitment to democracy. While South Africa initially endorsed the 2002 elections as being free and fair in a statement made by Vice President Jacob Zuma, the government backed away from that initial position and joined the Commonwealth troika that recommended Zimbabwe's suspension from the organization. South Africa then began efforts to encourage a government of national unity in Zimbabwe but was ultimately rebuffed, despite the economic leverage it held over its neighbor as a major source of power and fuel.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, when the one-year suspension from the Commonwealth was set to expire in 2003, South Africa lobbied in favor of Zimbabwe's return to the Commonwealth.<sup>50</sup>

---

45 Commonwealth Secretariat, "Meeting of Commonwealth Chairpersons' Committee on Zimbabwe," March 19, 2002, <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=34929>.

46 B. Phillips, "Zimbabwe ban extended," *BBC News*, March 16, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2855645.stm>.

47 "Zimbabwe's Commonwealth Suspension Extended," *The Independent*, December 8, 2003, [http://www.royalafricansociety.org/reports\\_publications/articles/independent\\_8-12](http://www.royalafricansociety.org/reports_publications/articles/independent_8-12).

48 "Zimbabwe Quits Commonwealth," *BBC News*, December 8, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3299277.stm>.

49 "Africa 'damaged' by Mugabe poll," *CNN*, March 15, 2002, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/africa/03/15/zimbabwe.africa/>.

50 "Zimbabwe's Commonwealth Suspension Extended," *The Independent*, December 8, 2003, [http://www.royalafricansociety.org/reports\\_publications/articles/independent\\_8-12](http://www.royalafricansociety.org/reports_publications/articles/independent_8-12).

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was much less involved in addressing the case of Zimbabwe than in other crises in the region, such as Togo, Madagascar, Sudan or Mauritania. The limp reaction to the 2002 election is not surprising given that “even the heads of state who were its members called the old Organization for African Unity a dictators’ club.”<sup>51</sup> The OAU, like many African groups and heads of state including the South African ministerial delegation, the Southern African Development Community (representing the region’s governments, not parliaments), former President of Kenya Daniel arap Moi, former President of Tanzania Benjamin Mkapa, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, and President Samuel Nujoma of Namibia, claimed that the elections did indeed reflect the will of the citizens of Zimbabwe. The President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, issued the lone African voice of dissent, stating, “From what I know, these elections do not conform to the norms that I would expect for elections.”<sup>52</sup>

The SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADCPF) made a rhetorical response to Zimbabwe, but has engaged in little concrete action. The group of southern African parliamentarians sent a seventy-person observer mission to Zimbabwe to monitor the 2002 elections and concluded that the elections failed to comply with the standards and norms set by the SADCPF. Most noteworthy was the SADCPF’s willingness to disagree with reports from other regional organizations, such as the OAU.

### *2005 Elections and Land Reform*

International actors pressured the MDC to participate in the 2005 parliamentary elections, arguing the party was able to moderate ZANU-PF policy in the parliamentary process.<sup>53</sup> While many states and organizations were excluded from observing the polls, such as the Commonwealth, the UK, EU, US, Australia and Japan, reports from foreign diplomats who were able to observe elections (including those from the EU and US) suggest that the elections were neither free nor fair.<sup>54</sup> No further unilateral

51 M. Wines, “Tough on Togo, Letting Zimbabwe Slide,” *The New York Times*, April 10, 2005.

52 “Africa ‘damaged’ by Mugabe poll.” *CNN*, March 15, 2002, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/africa/03/15/zimbabwe.africa/>.

53 M. Ibenzi, “Highlights of 2005,” *The Zimbabwean*, <http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/viewinfo.cfm?id=543>.

54 K. Vollan op.cit.; see also Sokwanele Civil Action Support Group, “Mauritius Watch Summary,” March 2005, [http://www.sokwanele.com/articles/sokwanele/mwatch\\_sokwanele-specialreport\\_30march2005.html](http://www.sokwanele.com/articles/sokwanele/mwatch_sokwanele-specialreport_30march2005.html).

action, other than renewal of current measures, was taken by Western and Commonwealth actors in the wake of the 2005 elections. However, the Zimbabwean press has stated that US and UK influence was crucial in a March 2006 decision by the IMF to continue the suspension of Zimbabwe's voting rights and access to the general resources of the Fund.<sup>55</sup> The suspension was enacted due to arrears in Zimbabwe's payments to the IMF since 2001. While the IMF had considered a compulsory expulsion of Zimbabwe, its payment in full of obligations owed to the General Resources Account led the Managing Director to withdraw his request for expulsion. Zimbabwe continues to owe US\$119 million to the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF)-Exogenous Shocks Facility (ESF) Trust Fund.<sup>56</sup>

Amid growing pressure from the G8, President Mbeki called for reforms in Zimbabwe including in areas of freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and rule of law in response to the elections.<sup>57</sup> Mbeki also hinted that future economic aid to Zimbabwe, including a loan offer from South Africa to assist in addressing Zimbabwe's current economic slump, could depend on Mugabe's willingness to pursue reform, including working with the MDC to draft a new constitution and hold new elections. In 2005 alone, Zimbabwe required nearly \$1 billion in aid to fund imports of food, fuel and electricity, and to pay off debt owed to the International Monetary Fund in order to prevent expulsion from the IMF. With China declining to provide a \$500 million loan that Mugabe requested in August 2005, Mugabe may eventually be forced to meet Mbeki's demands. However, as of this writing, Zimbabwe was still refusing South Africa's loan offer.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike the OAU, which was the primary regional organization responding to the 2002 election, the African Union (AU) was created with a set of goals that include the promotion of "democratic principles and

55 M. Huni, "Zimbabwe: U.S., UK block IMF Funds," *The Herald*, March 10, 2006. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200603100233.html>; "IMF Executive Board Upholds Sanctions Against Zimbabwe," IMF Press Release 06/45, March 8, 2006, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2006/pr0645.htm>.

56 "IMF Executive Board Upholds Sanctions Against Zimbabwe," IMF Press Release 06/45, March 8, 2006.

57 In the lead up to the 2005 G8 Summit in Scotland Tony Blair was under pressure from Members of Parliament to urge action from Mbeki. "Hoey Insists Mbeki barred from G8," *The Zimbabwean*, June 24, 2005, <http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/24-june-2005/kate-hoey.html>.

58 "Zimbabwe's Commonwealth Suspension Extended," *The Independent*, December 8, 2003. [http://www.royalafricansociety.org/reports\\_publications/articles/independent\\_8-12.](http://www.royalafricansociety.org/reports_publications/articles/independent_8-12.)

institutions, popular participation and good governance.”<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, the AU’s ten-member observer mission fell short of declaring the 2005 elections not free or fair retreating instead to describing them as “technically competent and transparent” and reflecting the will of the people, although it did note some irregularities such as the number of people being turned away from the polls.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, the ongoing crisis within the country was not placed on the agenda during the July 2005 AU summit. However, the African Commission on Human Rights and People’s Rights, an AU body, adopted a resolution condemning Zimbabwe’s human rights practices in December of 2005. This was the first time that a high-level African body had spoken out on the issue. AU heads of state, however, failed to take up the issue at a meeting held in late January 2006.<sup>61</sup>

Notably, the SADC Parliamentary Forum was not invited to observe the 2005 parliamentary elections, likely due to its condemnation of the 2002 election. SADC governments, on the other hand, have yet to condemn Zimbabwe despite the fact that Zimbabwe signed on to the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections in 2004 and failed to implement several key elements in advance of the 2005 elections.

Like the African Union, the United Nations as a whole has been largely inactive in the Zimbabwe case until recently when the Secretariat has become more engaged. For example, debate was adjourned without a vote on a draft resolution regarding the human rights situation in Zimbabwe submitted to the Third Committee of the 59th General Assembly in advance of the 2005 elections. Sponsors of the resolution included the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the US, and a host of EU members such as France and Germany. The move to adjourn was supported by many African states. Speaking in favor of adjournment, the South African representative criticized the EU and “the double standards witnessed in the tabling of country-specific draft resolutions in the Third Committee,” which “constituted a direct affront to the integrity of the African political leadership.” Similar resolutions brought for debate by the EU have failed to pass on three previous occasions.<sup>62</sup>

---

59 AU Charter, Article 3(g), available at [http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/Constitutive\\_Act\\_en.htm#Article3](http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/Constitutive_Act_en.htm#Article3).

60 “Post-Election Zimbabwe: What’s Next?” International Crisis Group, June 7, 2005.

61 “Zimbabwe: AU Slams Human Rights Record,” *UN Integrated Regional Information Network*, January 3, 2006, <http://www.irinnews.org>.

62 UN Security Council Resolution GA/SHC/3811 mandated by the EU, [www.un.org/ga/60/third/press.shtml](http://www.un.org/ga/60/third/press.shtml) - 213k.

The UN Secretariat became more active in the wake of the housing crisis caused by Mugabe's "Operation Murambatsvina." The report submitted by the Secretary General's Special Envoy Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka condemned the operation, noting that it was implemented in "an indiscriminate and unjustified manner, with indifference to human suffering."<sup>63</sup> The report also stated that "the international community should encourage the government to prosecute all those who orchestrated this catastrophe and those who may have caused criminal negligence leading to alleged deaths," while implicating the entire government as responsible.<sup>64</sup> This report opened up an avenue for continued pressure by Western nations, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, to push for action by the Security Council. The UNSC held an official private meeting in July 2005, despite the disagreement of some UNSC members about whether the issue fell within the scope of the UNSC. The body was briefed by Special Envoy Kajumulo Tibaijuka who presented her findings and recommendations and answered questions. The United Nations is also participating in the construction of shelters for those left homeless by the operation.<sup>65</sup> UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, traveled to Zimbabwe in December to negotiate the construction of housing for those left homeless by the operation.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, Kofi Annan announced plans to travel to Zimbabwe in spring 2006 to survey the situation personally.<sup>67</sup>

For years leading up to the current land crisis, the United Kingdom had been the most prominent advocate for protecting the rights of minority white landowners. The UK provided nearly 50 million pounds as well as technical assistance during the 1980s and 1990s to support land reform efforts. After most of this funding had been spent, proposals were issued for a new round of funding, resulting in a 1998 Land Conference in Harare. At this point the British government stated that it would be glad to support further land reform efforts provided that they met agreed upon criteria including, "transparency, respect for the rule of law, poverty reduction, affordability and consistency with Zimbabwe's wider economic inter-

---

63 "UN condemns Zimbabwe slum blitz," *BBC News*, July 22, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.

64 *Ibid.*

65 Security Council Report, *op. cit.*

66 *Ibid.*

67 "Kofi Annan due in Zimbabwe in March," *Mail and Guardian Online*, January 6, 2006.

ests.”<sup>68</sup> Progress continued to this goal until 2000 when bilateral relations soured due to Mugabe’s “land reform” efforts – government-backed, violent expulsion of white farmers from their land.<sup>69</sup>

Currently, the British government is signaling a willingness to normalize relations with Zimbabwe. Recently appointed British Ambassador, Dr. Andrew Pocock has stated, “the commitment of the British government to the people of Zimbabwe is profound,” but “before we build bridges, we need to do a lot of work to lay the foundation.”<sup>70</sup> Many of those bridges to improving bilateral relations will rely on Zimbabwe’s response to international concerns, which the UK has played a leading role in shaping. According to a spokesperson for the British government in Harare, these include the issues raised by the UN report on Operation Murambatsvina and adherence to the principles agreed to at the 1998 Land Conference.<sup>71</sup>

### Assessing the International Response

Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe has effectively divided the international community and left its citizens little hope for external help as they struggle to cope with the exhausting challenges of surviving the crisis. Zimbabwe’s continued refusal to heed calls for political reform from the international community, including neighboring South Africa, is leading the country to an abyss as economic conditions deteriorate and a humanitarian crisis slowly unfolds. Mugabe’s desire to secure financial support without accepting reforms has sent him to China, a long-time ally with no democracy promotion agenda. Furthermore, the strong nation-wide grassroots campaign that led to the defeat of Mugabe’s constitutional referendum in 2000 no longer exists in Zimbabwe and currently there is no opposition party that can viably contest national elections.

The rhetoric of the African nationalist independence struggle has characterized the differences between Western and African actors in approaching the democratic crisis in Zimbabwe. This, however, is only part of a larger trend of a division between African leaders and the West on the issue

---

68 Foreign & Commonwealth Office. “Zimbabwe: UK Approach to Land Reform.” <http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1019745050212>

69 “Zimbabwe: Laying Foundation First Step in Building Bridges: UK Envoy,” *The Herald*, March 24, 2006, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200603240662.html>.

70 Ibid.

71 “UK Sets Terms for Building Bridges,” *Financial Gazette*, April 5, 2006, <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200604060306.html>.

of democracy, even though many African nations and regional organizations have made commitments to the promotion of democracy. Zimbabwe, and until recently South Africa, have spoken out against Western actors trying to impose their will on African peoples, and even democratically-oriented groups have criticized the West for failing to understand the needs of "African democracy."

While the West pushes for liberal democratic reforms, some African leaders claim the need for a different style of democracy, one shaped to conform to cultural tradition and the needs of a developing economy. This split is not a new development, but results from years of distrust and resentment, mostly due to negative colonial experiences under oppressive white "democracies." Thus, when Western governments, NGOs and international organizations provide funding, training, and support for democracy-building activities based on an American/European model, African governments balk, while those who do accept aid, often opposition parties, are portrayed as tools of oppressive neo-colonial powers. Although the negative experience that many African countries had under colonialism cannot be discounted, African leaders such as Mugabe regularly employ the rhetoric of "African democracy" to defend their de facto "elected" dictatorships. Additionally, many African leaders avoid calling attention to Zimbabwe's crisis out of fear that their own governments - many of which are quasi-democratic at best - will be scrutinized more carefully by domestic and international actors alike.

Despite its stated commitments to democracy, the AU seems content to watch the action from the sidelines most likely out of deference to Mugabe, who is the last remaining leader from the days of African nationalist struggles. Similarly, respect for national sovereignty and deference to Africa's wish to take care of its own problems has hindered action by the UN General Assembly.

Western responses to the crisis in Zimbabwe, while well-intentioned, have been generally ineffective in promoting democratization. Western sanctions have not appeared to influence Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party in any visible way; nor has it brought Mugabe and the ZANU-PF any closer to abandoning their anti-democratic practices. Conversely, Mugabe and his allies have used the sanctions to their advantage by characterizing Western actors as imperialists with designs of continuing to exert their influence over Africa. Similarly, Mugabe has twisted Western support for democratic reform into backing for the MDC in the eyes of his supporters, suggesting that a vote for the opposition is a vote for a return to colonialism. Perhaps the only positive result of Western action

is that the Zimbabwean crisis has received international attention, which has in turn lowered economic investment. In the 1990s foreign direct investment hovered at \$300-500 million, but has fallen to approximately \$10 million.<sup>72</sup> While this is generally detrimental to the people of Zimbabwe, economic leverage ultimately may provide inroads for successful international intervention.

The main problem with the limited sanctions currently employed by the EU, New Zealand, Canada, and the US is that they do little to impede Mugabe's ability to rule the country; nor do they significantly impact his personal standing. Unless the sanctions move Mugabe and the ZANU-PF closer to relinquishing power and accepting democratization, they cannot be characterized as effective. The problem lies largely in the fact that successful sanctions, such as those against South Africa in the 1980s, were accepted by most countries in the world, and were more extensive and restrictive. In contrast, sanctions on Zimbabwe are limited and only adhered to by a small portion of the world's countries. Arms are widely available on the black market and through legal sales from countries that have not imposed arms embargoes. Post-Soviet Russia remains one of the largest suppliers of small arms worldwide and has supplied Zimbabwe when other countries have refused. Personal assets are easily rebuilt in a country with a large state-owned sector and rampant corruption. While investment from the West has fallen, Zimbabwe has turned east and begun dealing with China and Malaysia in the agricultural, mineral, and hydroelectricity sectors. Finally, visa bans do not legally apply to official trips, allowing Mugabe and others on the visa ban list to travel on official business to those countries that have adopted sanctions.

Far from hindering Mugabe, Western measures may have weakened and divided the opposition while helping to legitimize him. Due to Mugabe's equating of Western democracy promotion with oppressive colonial rule and the clear relation between democracy assistance and support for the MDC, Mugabe and the ruling party have effectively linked external support for democracy and the MDC with support for oppressive colonial rule. Elections have not helped. Despite the foreknowledge of serious flaws that compromise their fairness, the opposition's participation added legitimacy to an illegitimate process and to Mugabe's regime. Moreover it provoked a crisis within the MDC regarding how to approach the election, with portions of the party arguing for a boycott. While it did manage to

---

72 U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, *op. cit.*

provide candidates for the parliamentary election, the MDC began campaigning late in the game, making the already difficult campaign even more problematic. The party finally did split on the issue of providing candidates for the 2005 Senate elections and only fielded candidates in the Matabeleland provinces. There is no evidence to suggest that this rift will be easily overcome and it is possible that the MDC could split into multiple parties. This development could present serious difficulties for further democratization efforts, as the MDC was the only viable opposition party in Zimbabwe.

African responses have fared little better, although it is perhaps too early to judge the effectiveness of South Africa's recent attempt to tie offers of financial assistance to political reform. Mugabe still refuses to agree to South African terms of political and economic reform in exchange for financial assistance. With South Africa traditionally being a strong supporter of Zimbabwe and the Mugabe regime, it is possible that Mugabe suspects that South Africa will lift its reform requirements if economic collapse leads to an even more severe humanitarian crisis. It is also possible that Mugabe expects that recent attempts at engaging China may produce more fruitful results in the future and will not require democratic reforms. Regardless of Mugabe's assumptions, it is clear that his refusal to accept the conditions attached to South African aid could have an impact on his ability to rule. Without access to the food, fuel, and power that foreign aid would supply, Mugabe's ability to govern Zimbabwe may decline due to his inability to provide spoils for his supporters.

The UN and AU have been much more active in the wake of Operation Murambatsvina, but the exact impact of their actions remains questionable. It is clear that the report of the Special Envoy to Zimbabwe gave Western nations more leverage to bring the discussion of the human rights crisis to the UN Security Council; however, opposition by China and Russia will hinder any meaningful action there. The results of Kofi Annan's planned visit, or pressure by African nations, may influence China and Russia to abstain, but that remains to be seen. The result of the AU's winter 2006 meeting was disappointing to the international democracy promotion community and the continued refusal of the AU ministerial body to address the crisis in Zimbabwe remains of great concern - both in regards to the body's continued failure to live up to its democratic commitments and the increased legitimacy that its action would lend to worldwide democracy promotion efforts in Zimbabwe.

Healing the divide between Africa and the West is crucial for any effective multilateral democracy promotion policy in Zimbabwe. While South

Africa has now adopted an attitude towards Zimbabwe that is more reform-oriented, the divide between the two regions remains strong, as evidenced by AU and UN inaction until recently. This is not to suggest that the West must drop its sanctions or that the African community adopt them. Rather, the two groups must begin to work together to coordinate a more unified approach in order to support greater democratization in Zimbabwe. The first step would be to achieve support for the goal of democratization in Zimbabwe among the AU member states, and if not endorsement of stronger collective action, then at least not outright contempt for Western policies. The second step is for all actors to agree on a set of carrots and sticks to encourage reform. This is already happening to a certain extent with South Africa, the promise of aid being held out as a reward for democratic reform. However the stick must be stronger, and if this method is to work, it is imperative that other parties, such as China, not further complicate the situation by providing aid and assistance that would allow Mugabe and ZANU –PF to stay in power.

### **Recommendations**

The first step for the international democracy promotion community is better to articulate the goal that it is pursuing. Currently different actors seem to be pursuing a range of different, sometimes competing, aims which results in less effective action than a united front. These include Mugabe's abdication of the presidency, a new constitution written in collaboration with the MDC, reform of the electoral process, repeal of the Public Order and Security Act, holding of a free and fair election, and even an MDC-controlled government. The actions taken by the international community should be informed by a single goal: building a genuinely democratic opposition capable of challenging ZANU-PF, and creating a dialogue between ZANU-PF and the opposition, with the intention that it will lead to the creation of a new constitution and free and fair elections. Policies adopted and actions undertaken by the international democracy promotion community should all have a clear connection to the pursuit of this goal. Additionally, governments and multinational bodies working toward this aim should coordinate their activities at all possible levels to increase the effectiveness of their policies and programs.

The international community must become committed to constant vigilance and consistent action in Zimbabwe. This means that government and nongovernmental actors should monitor progress and setbacks in the field and that governments should be prepared to act in the event that undemocratic laws, such as the Public Order and Security Act, are passed

or strengthened (as they have when election results are declared fraudulent). Similarly, any democratic opening must be seized upon. This is an important lesson from recent experience when the international community failed to engage in serious action during the 2000-2002 period until after the moment had begun to pass. Governments, NGOs, and multinational bodies should be prepared to offer technical assistance well in advance of elections, whether it be to help facilitate the implementation of pro-democracy policies or to assist in civic education, legislative training and development, formation of professional political parties, voter registration, independent media development, training of local election monitors and ensuring a free and fair campaigning environment. Should the goal of constitutional transition be achieved, the international community must play a role in that transition as well, serving as a third-party guarantor that power-sharing agreements are respected and that the new government comes to power via a process that is free, fair, and non-violent. This will require both a commitment on the part of governments and the political will of their citizens to support continued involvement in Zimbabwe.

In considering more specific recommendations, any effective policy solution must bear in mind the political and economic landscape of Zimbabwe. Mugabe's poor relations with the West suggest that he is unlikely to respond to incentives to change that come from Western governments led by "unholy men." For such incentives to work, Mugabe would have to completely change his own domestic image and would risk seeming weak when faced with the might of a former colonial power. This shift is unlikely, as it would equate him with the opposition MDC party, which Mugabe and ZANU-PF characterize as puppets controlled by Western imperial powers. Thus, change in Zimbabwe requires a widespread, unified African response, led by South Africa and other African democracies, including demands for reform and offers of incentives. With the MDC crippled, perhaps permanently, a strong, democratic party must emerge to compete with ZANU-PF for a transition to democracy to occur. This will require engagement of Zimbabweans at the grassroots level and in exile, something which has been made extremely difficult with restrictions on free speech, press and assembly. The international community must be prepared to enact measures that can circumvent Zimbabwe's anti-democratic practices, such as providing external space and support for party building. Finally, policy solutions must take into account and be prepared to take advantage of the current economic crisis in Zimbabwe. Given Mugabe's desperate need for external aid, further targeted sanctions

could be used to induce Mugabe to loosen some of the restrictions that make organizing a viable opposition nearly impossible.

- *Pressure African states and organizations to support a joint approach.*

Lobbying by the G8 seems to have worked to some degree in getting South Africa to join calls for political reform. Such lobbying needs to be applied in other African states and organizations, particularly SADC and the AU. Incentives to adopt a harder line with regards to Zimbabwe, particularly in terms of limiting support for the current government, would have to be decided on a case-by-case basis. In pursuing this approach it is crucial that Western governments remain consistent and not offer significant aid to other non-democratic governments.

The need to close the gap between the Western and developing worlds on the appropriate form of democracy promotion falls largely on Western actors – African leaders concerned with their own image and maintaining power are unlikely to take the first step towards meaningful dialogue.

- *Link financial and material aid to reform.*

Given Zimbabwe's current financial and economic situation, linking financial aid to domestic political reform is crucial. South Africa has already begun to move in this direction, and other states and organizations must follow. In particular, should Zimbabwe once again become eligible for IMF funds, the organization should impose governance reform conditionality on any loan disbursement in accordance with the IMF Executive Board's Guidance Note concerning the Role of the IMF in Governance Issues.<sup>73</sup> While the international community cannot allow a humanitarian crisis to take place in Zimbabwe, all essential humanitarian aid should bypass the government entirely and be distributed directly through the supporting organization. Precedent for this move in Zimbabwe exists in the current UN effort to build housing for the urban poor who have been displaced by Mugabe's Operation Murambatsvina.

---

73 While the Guidance Note states that "the IMF's judgments should not be influenced by the nature of a political regime of a country, nor should it interfere in domestic or foreign politics of any member," the IMF does support the use of conditionality when governance issues have a direct macroeconomic impact. There is little argument that Mugabe's corrupt economic policies have had a substantial impact on Zimbabwe's macroeconomic stability. Full text of the IMF Guidance Note can be found at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/exrp/govern/govindex.htm>.

Linking financial aid to reform would serve as an incentive for Mugabe and ZANU-PF to engage in democratic reform to the extent that they are concerned about the well-being of their citizens or, more likely, require such aid to maintain the support of their own party members. Without such conditions, the only incentives to pursue democratic reform would be a benevolent willingness to share power, which both Mugabe and ZANU-PF seem to lack, or a desire to gain legitimacy in the pro-democracy international community, which is unlikely given Mugabe's attempts to establish relations with undemocratic states like China.

- *Offer support and training to opposition parties in Zimbabwe.*

With the split experienced by MDC there is no opposition in Zimbabwe capable of legitimately contesting ZANU-PF for power, even in free and fair elections. Democratic opposition must be rebuilt at the grassroots level, a task that will not be easy in a country with severe restrictions on freedom of speech, press and assembly. Any group which hopes to contest an election will require a great deal of support including, but not limited to, training in grassroots organizing, creation of a political agenda and message, acquisition of infrastructure that can more easily avoid detection by the government (i.e., radio transmissions, internet communication where feasible, text messaging), and financing. The international community can offer all of these to help jumpstart the creation of an opposition movement.

The international community should also look to promote action outside of Zimbabwe that can assist the formation of a Zimbabwean opposition. As Mugabe and ZANU-PF have stripped away all rights in Zimbabwe that would allow any opposition party to form, those hoping to create an alternative to ZANU-PF will likely need the support of neighboring countries where they can operate with some flexibility. The international democracy promotion community can pressure neighboring states to assist with these efforts, including allowing trainings and political meetings to be hosted on their soil, hosting internet sites that would be blocked in Zimbabwe, and broadcasting radio news programs from external transmitters with enough power to reach Zimbabwe. The international community can be instrumental – although not primary – in these pursuits by providing funding and technical know-how as well as assisting in negotiations with neighboring governments.

- *Focus on the importance of civil society action.*

Increased action and perhaps more importantly increased visibility of Africa's democracy promotion and human rights community is necessary to keep African states and regional actors focused on Zimbabwe. While African democracy promotion and human rights groups no doubt have an interest in the future of Zimbabwe, their message seems to be ignored by their home governments and multinational organizations or they are otherwise preoccupied with problems closer to home. African civil society groups can more legitimately speak for democratic change or partner with their Zimbabwean counterparts than Western groups. Increased visibility of civil society demands, particularly through widely accessed media networks, will be crucial for the success of this strategy.

When considering the actions of international actors, the primary focus tends towards states and multinational bodies. However, civil society has an important role to play as well, as seen by their effective campaign to deny Sudan its turn as chair of the AU. South African critics of Thabo Mbeki's policies towards Zimbabwe were crucial in pushing for his shift of position, and civil society influence will likely be extremely important in getting other heads of state to act. To this end the creation of a sub-regional civil society mechanism, much like the West Africa Civil Society Forum, could help further the efforts of civil society in southern Africa and Zimbabwe by providing a sub-regional advocacy and coordinating body which would consult with member civil society organizations on governance issues. Such a body would be a clear target for foreign aid and technical assistance. Additionally, any sub-regional civil society organization should promote the role of election monitoring as a civil society activity - taking responsibility for election monitoring out of the hands of government officials who may overlook questionable practices in accordance with their own self-interest.

- *Expand existing sanctions on Zimbabwe to include imports, exports and the financial sector.*

As the US, UK, and Germany combined represent 30 per cent of Zimbabwe's total trade, a more effective sanctions regime would have the effect of further crippling the Zimbabwean economy.<sup>74</sup> These sanctions can be modeled after those currently being used by the US on Burma, includ-

---

74 U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, op. cit.

ing but not limited to a ban on exported goods and financial services, on imports, and on investment in Zimbabwe. While attempts to ensure that this would not cause a humanitarian crisis would be necessary, weakening the Zimbabwean economy would remove some of the power that Mugabe wields vis-à-vis the parastatal sector which dominates the economy, limiting his powers of patronage. It would also strengthen the offers of aid for reform, such as that being offered by South Africa. The difficulty of this approach is the growing importance of China in Africa as evidenced by its relationship with the Sudanese government through its oil purchases and its stated interest in Zimbabwe's chrome and platinum deposits.<sup>75</sup>

A sanctions regime that could more easily by-pass the Chinese would be an even stricter round of targeted sanctions aimed at party elites, instead of just government officials, and the families and known associates of elites and party members. This could include limiting where wives of ZANU-PF elites could travel to shop or children of government officials could attend schools. Countries that currently have a sanctions regime in place should also seek to end Zimbabwean individuals' investment in firms under their jurisdiction and any business activities between firms under their jurisdiction and the ruling elite of Zimbabwe.

- *Pressure the UN General Assembly to support action by the Secretariat.*

While specific Western states and organizations are no longer welcome in Zimbabwe, the UN was invited to send election observers to the 2005 parliamentary elections. The UN should offer its expertise to Zimbabwe, and the UN Democracy Caucus should be prepared to support a General Assembly or Security Council resolution for a major electoral assistance mission with an eye to elections in 2008. Additionally, those countries committed to democracy should not cease in pushing for consideration of the Zimbabwean crisis in all relevant committees and should work to engage their African counterparts in addressing the crisis.

As the UN Secretariat has been more successful in engaging in substantive action, the democracy promotion community should offer all possible support to the initiatives of the Secretariat that could increase the opportunity for democratization in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, member states and democracy-promotion NGOs associated with the UN should press the Secretariat to address more directly the human rights abuses and anti-democratic practices perpetrated by ZANU-PF.

---

<sup>75</sup> "Report Puts Pressure on Zimbabwe," *BBC News*, July 22, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.