

An Analysis of the Challenges to the Regime Change Agenda in Zimbabwe 2000-2010

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Abstract: The regime change agenda has dominated political discourse on Zimbabwe for more than a decade. The ruling party (ZANU PF) has since 2000 been intensely engaged in a fight to ward off regime change machinations by neo-liberal Western forces and domestic opposition groups seeking a transition from authoritarian rule to democratic governance. The study unearths several futile strategies and schemes that were hatched to remove Robert Mugabe and the ZANU PF regime from power. This study shows how the ZANU PF regime did not make sole use of authoritarian means to thwart the regime change agenda as has been argued by the West but equally relied on a mixture of repression, popularity and political dexterity to repel incessant regime change plots and remain hegemonic on Zimbabwe's political landscape. Strategies employed to ensure regime persistence include asset re-distribution, anti-imperialist rhetoric, media control and the teaching of nationalist patriotic history amongst others. These tactics presented massive challenges to regime change agents. The discourse grapples with these challenges to the regime change agenda in Zimbabwe. The study is premised on Gramsci's work to analyse the challenges to the regime change agenda. His theory aptly examines the struggles for hegemony and legitimacy, elements considered crucial to the survival of any political regime.

Key words: ZANU PF, regime change, regime change agenda, Robert Mugabe, repression, political dexterity

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the challenges to regime change agenda in Zimbabwe with specific reference to the periods 2000-2010. It examines the efforts of regime change agents such as opposition political parties the labour movement, student movement and civil society, Britain the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (USA) in their quest to remove an authoritarian neo-patrimonial regime from power. It centers on the difficulties faced by both domestic and foreign regime change actors in an endeavor to dislodge Mugabe's regime from power. The search for regime change in Zimbabwe began with the birth of the nation in 1980 but determined regime change attempts were set in motion in the year 2000 and came to be called the regime change agenda. It was triggered by Mugabe's government decision to pay an unbudgeted US \$450 million and a promise of land to restive war veterans seen as a threat to the President's incumbency. Thereafter, a swift economic decline set in characterized by regular price increases, inflation and an overall decline in the standard of living of the majority. This state of affairs activated a massive push for regime change by domestic actors sponsored by Britain and her allies who were unhappy with the move which threatened their economic interests.

In order to survive regime change, the ZANU PF government turned to a number of strategies that included repression, asset re-distribution and the use of anti-imperialist rhetoric and the teaching of nationalist patriotic history amongst others. Through the use of a variety of strategies challenges of a huge magnitude were presented to regime change agents. It is these challenges to regime change that the study analyses.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Calvert (1987) defines a regime as the name usually given to a government or sequence of governments in which power remains essentially in the hands of the same social group. To Fishman (2000) a regime is the formal and informal organization of the centre of political power and of its relations with the broader society. These definitions aptly capture the idea of a core of political authority which can be in the form of a set of political structures or set of rulers or even a specific ruler within a political system. Regime change can be described as a change in or abandonment of the principles and norms governing the nature of the regime. Contrary to regime change, governance change is an alteration in the manner of ruling within the agency mandated to govern without changing the centre of political authority in a state. In a regime the

hegemony or dominant power sets up a hegemonic system that determines the basic principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures of the system. The strength and prestige of the dominant power and the hegemonic system established play a crucial role in the persistence or change of a regime.

It is important to make a distinction between regime, state and government. Lawson (1993) says that the state is an inclusive concept that covers all aspects of policy-making and enforcement of legal sanctions while government is simply the agency through which the state acts in the political community. A regime is more permanent than a government but less permanent than the state, governments succeed one another and regimes come and go but the state endures.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study makes use of Gramsci's Theory of hegemony to analyse the challenges to regime change in Zimbabwe. It views the regime change agenda and resistance to regime change as a manifestation of hegemonic struggles. Gramsci defines hegemony:

As the ability of a social group to direct society both politically and morally. The hegemonic group acquires authority through the intellectual, moral and cultural persuasion or consent of the governed population without applying violent, political or economic means of coercion. Nevertheless, coercion is always latently used in support of its hegemony. In order to become a hegemony, a group must unite the features of coercion and consent through the notion of a dual perspective (Iseri, 2007)

Gramsci argues that a social group which intends to become the hegemony or the leader can either use the means of coercion or the means of consent by persuading society to accept and assimilate the norms and values of its own prevailing world-view. However, coercion does not always mean domination but may equally mean consent or the acceptance of the hegemony's leadership (ibid).

Researcher is of the opinion that a crisis of hegemony arises when the ruled no longer recognise the rulers as their legitimate representatives. According to Chigoro *et al.* (2010) in Mozambique the crisis of hegemony initially manifested itself in rural discontent with Frelimo policies which later escalated into military conflict while in Zimbabwe. The crisis of hegemony initially manifested itself in working class protest against

the ZANU PF's government's failure to deal with economic crisis. It is the working class which was instrumental in the formation of Zimbabwe's strongest opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), since independence which has championed the regime change agenda since then.

In line with Gramsci's Theory, it appears that the ZANU PF government is of the opinion that its policies and ideologies are the best and strives to obtain acceptance through consent. The failure to win the consent of the people is compensated for by use of force thus enabling it to remain in power. The above partly explains ZANU PF's relations with the people since 1980 in which it largely sought the peoples consent by using of various devices to remain in power such as embarking on massive post war reconstruction and social service provision to legitimise its rule. However, when the ZANU PF regime found itself unable to provide basic social services for the people from the late 1990s, its legitimacy was questioned and it increasingly turned to coercion for regime persistence.

ZANU PF's failure to deal with economic and political problems facing the country led to a crisis of hegemony which resulted in domestic opposition forces and civil society in general pursuing regime change to attain hegemonic power. Foreign players behind the regime change agenda see Mugabe as a threat to their plot to establish global hegemony as he resists Western political and economic political domination and therefore he does not get their consent.

Gramsci suggests that the ruling elite maintain control not just through violence and political and economic coercion but also ideologically through a hegemonic culture in which the values of ruling class become values of all. This has been evidenced in Zimbabwe where the government tried, from the 1980s to develop a consensus culture in which most of the governed identified their values with those of the rulers thus helping to maintain the status quo rather than revolting against the regime.

Gramsci's comprehensive work presents probably the most promising place to begin in an exploration of ZANU PF's stay in power through the use of consent where institutions like schools and the church amongst others have been used to foster ideologies that have enabled the government to establish hegemony. The distribution of land, the teaching of patriotic history, the control of the media and the promotion of economic indigenisation and empowerment can be cited as examples used by ZANU PF to win the support of the populace through non-coercive ways. Repression what Gramsci refers to as coercion includes the use of war veterans the police, army, police, Central Intelligence Organisation

(CIO) and judicial officers to prop up the regime is discussed but with less emphasis as this has been given widespread coverage in regime change discourse on Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was based on a qualitative approach. The methodology is best because it focuses on facts and opinions about challenges to regime change. It was largely descriptive and Ayr (1985) defines a descriptive research design as a research design that is designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomena. It is directed towards determining the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of the study. Based on the above definition, an ethnographic research plan suited this research well. An investigation of any process of political regime change is a major challenge in social science in any society. It requires a multidisciplinary approach and a variety of tools.

In this regard, the study combined theory with extensive field research it triangulated data obtained from desktop research, archival literature, questionnaires, analysis of texts and documents, interviews and audio recordings. Among interviewees were politicians, development practitioners, regime change actors and the general public. Questionnaires were employed in the research; questions were both open and closed. Most of the respondents were based in the major cities of Zimbabwe. This is because most officials from political parties and civic organisations and government are found in the country's major cities. In addition, use was also made of secondary sources such as published and unpublished books and research studies from both serious academics and journalists and development workers. Electronic sources were used in a bid to get as much of on-going debates on the topic as possible and where available file tapes were also used.

Challenges to regime change: Despite massive relentless efforts to remove ZANU PF from power by domestic and foreign regime change forces the regime has persisted in the new millennium. The government managed to withstand onslaughts from Britain, America and their allies despite being ostracized and demonized. In spite of sanctions which curtailed the government's access to international finance and aid the ZANU PF regime persisted. At home the government lost much of its credibility and legitimacy and ruled over a generally disenchanted and disgruntled population living under the world's highest inflation but this still did not culminate in the ejection of the leadership from power. The study

explains the reasons behind ZANU PF's endurance. It uncovers how ZANU PF mysteriously survived regime change against the odds that included a super power while simultaneously presiding over a collapsed economy. The study argues that political astuteness blended with repression and an ability to remain relatively popular in the face of international and domestic adversity was pivotal to regime persistence.

Political dexterity: ZANU PF and its leader President Robert Mugabe puzzled many political analysts by successively winning elections between 2000 and 2008 in the midst of serious economic and political decline not because of the popular explanation that it rigs them but because it is popular. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2006) ZANU-PF is led by a veteran of the liberation struggle whose liberation war credentials are not questionable because of this ZANU-PF and Robert Mugabe have been very popular since 1980 and this popularity continued well into the new millennium despite the economic and political crisis.

Maroleng (2003) is of the opinion that Mugabe's popularity is because of his ability to use culture as a political tool of mobilisation. He says that during the liberation war Mugabe identified with leading Shona spirit mediums like Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi and Chaminuka to add religious sacredness to his leadership and the liberation mission of ZANU PF. This strategy endeared ZANU PF more to the peasants who still strongly believed in the power of traditional African religion with its oracular shrines. Mugabe's stance on homosexuality also endeared him to the majority of Zimbabweans who are averse to homosexual practices regarded as ungodly and against traditional religious practices. Thus by identifying with the conservative and traditionalist rural folk Mugabe was able to garner important support from a demographically significant constituency in Zimbabwe.

In sustaining itself in power, Chigora and Guzura (2008) state that ZANU PF has used various strategies amongst them nationalist rhetoric based on its role in the war of liberation and independence thereby gaining the support of not only of the majority black Zimbabweans but also from many leaders in developing countries. Bond and Manyanya (2003) concur; they state that Mugabe reacted to the threat of the MDC and the British by reviving its dormant leftist rhetoric which he used to displace the Zimbabwean crisis to an international level which enabled him to project himself as the champion of African and third world rights. Mugabe's rhetoric touched on emotive issues that appealed to the developing world such as projecting land as an historic injustice,

neo-colonialism as an on-going legacy which needs to be dealt with economic exploitation as a major problem on the African continent and race as a problem which remains unaddressed in Zimbabwe.

The vindicates contributions from most respondents who regard Mugabe as a politically astute powerful orator. Mugabe's speech at the 2003 Earth Summit attacking Britain earned him wide acclaim from leaders in the developing world that lacked courage to tell the West of the evils of interference in the affairs of the developing world where he said: researchers have not asked for an inch of Europe not any square inch of that territory, so Blair keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe (Bond and Manyanya, 2003).

Mugabe's political dexterity has been crucial to the survival of the ZANU PF regime. Mugabe survived regime change by noting the need to redistribute assets selectively to groups among the poor who were threatening revolution but that could be persuaded to switch sides with such transfers. Facing increasing opposition and unpopularity in 1997 the regime awarded hostile and influential war veterans unbudgeted generous gratuities of ZW \$50 000 each not only to pacify them but also to legitimise the waning regime and to enlist their support in an assault on the opposition. The state also promoted black economic empowerment and embarked on a land redistribution programme in which war veterans were among the chief beneficiaries. By rewarding war veterans, ZANU PF managed to win over an important ally given that many war veterans serve in the army, police, CIO and other state institutions with a strong influence on regime persistence.

ZANU PF's success in thwarting the regime change agenda can be ascribed to Mugabe's deft use of neo-patrimonialism. Bratton and Van De Walle (1997) point out that in neo-patrimonial regimes the chief executive maintains authority through personal patronage rather than through ideology or law. The essence of neo-patrimonialism is the awarding of public officials and granting of personal favours by the patrons that is senior ruling party members. In return for material rewards, clients mobilize political support and refer all decisions upward as a mark of deference to patrons. Mugabe has managed to use the system of patronage to reward persons key to the survival of the regime by rewarding them with senior positions in the army, parastatals, government and with farms.

The study holds the opinion that it has been difficult to remove Mugabe from power because in the rural areas where the majority of Zimbabwe's population lives Mugabe has presented himself as a father figure (baba Mugabe). In a state like Zimbabwe exhibiting

neo-patrimonial tendencies the president's political authority is likened by some of the rural folk to that of a traditional African chief or patriarch who are not simply removed from power. To some it is taboo for anyone to intimate that Mugabe should leave power in the same way it would be taboo for a son to ask his father to relinquish his authority in the home. Moreover, it would appear that a significant part of the rural population has come to regard ZANU PF as their only political home and Mugabe as their only leader who they show undying loyalty. Some of the rural populace especially in the Eastern half of the country where ZANU PF's liberation war record is remarkable cannot imagine leaving under any other leader other than Mugabe.

Chigora and Guzura (2008) point to ZANU PF's use of mobilization as a strategy to maintain its hold onto power. Fearing the loss of voters after the 2000 referendum, ZANU PF decided to implement the Fast Track Land Reform Programme to gain the support of rural peasants who were now turning towards the opposition MDC because of increased poverty and hardships in areas that were not suitable for agriculture. Shaw (2003) agrees that ZANU PF's policy of expropriating white farms was a brilliant political move meant to keep the government in power at a time when the government's popularity was on the decline. From the redistribution of land the government received support from the peasantry while those starved of resources in the patronage system received fresh booty. He argues that the mechanism of expropriation and resettlement broke a rival source of authority in the countryside, namely the white farmers and also strengthened the government's paramilitary control of the rural areas via ZANU PF youth militias and war veterans.

In order to satisfy its elite class which had lost popularity with the electorate ZANU PF found a way of gratifying and strengthening the party by pushing through Constitutional Amendment Number 17 which reintroduced the senate to ensure that its senior members would open way for young Turks in the house of assembly. Chigora and Guzura (2008) argue that positions for both the young and the old were guaranteed and party unity was strengthened thus enhancing regime survival.

Having realised that the urban centres were a cauldron of opposition politics and support the Zimbabwean government launched Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order to clean up the rubbish in the cities and restore the economic order. Murambatsvina was an ingenious plan by the government to hit at the heart of the opposition vote by disrupting its urban supporter base. In <2 months Mugabe's government destroyed illegal housing structures thought to shelter

urbanites largely regarded to be against the government. According to Grebe (2009) >700,000 people were displaced from urban centres which affected their abilities to vote in their constituencies thus compromising the opposition vote in 2005 and 2008.

ZANU PF's ability to blur the lines between government and party was paramount in defining and sustaining the authoritarian regime in Zimbabwe. The late ZANU PF Minister of Gender, Youth and Employment Creation Border Gezi said if you want to research for the government you should be prepared to support ZANU PF (Bond and Manyanya, 2003). After 2000, the credibility of the Reserve Bank Governor Gono, Police Commissioner Chihuri and Register General Mudede became doubtful as they publicly professed to be staunch ZANU-PF supporters yet they held high level posts crucial to regime change or persistence. Furthermore statements by the service chiefs on the eve of elections in the new millennium stating that they would not accept any president without liberation war credentials was a tacit way of saying that they would not embrace any candidate other than Mugabe. This apparently had the effect of demoralising and mortifying the electorate who probably so no need to participate in an election that securocrats could determine.

Despite presiding over a regime at logger-heads with the mighty west and suffering debilitating economic and political crisis, Mugabe managed to remain popular through the use of an anti-imperialist and Pan-Africanist appeal by projecting race as central to the conflict. This enabled Mugabe to ensure the longevity of the ZANU PF regime by deflecting attention from the real issues behind the suffering of the Zimbabwean people to focus on the race issue. The opposition MDC found it difficult to deal with Mugabe's characterisation of the party as a creation to serve white interests after numerous complaints about the predominance of whites in some of the leading positions of the party. An MDC member lamented that ZANU PF captures seats because it tells the people that the MDC is for the white man and through ignorance the people believe and vote for ZANU PF (Raftopoulos, 2006). Mugabe's race message was also broadcasted across the world and this cost the MDC critical African support and regional sympathy crucial to removing ZANU PF from power. This underlines Mugabe's political ingenuity largely regarded by many to be the key ingredient in the survival of the ZANU PF regime.

According to Booth (2000) and Mesfin (2008) protracted regime crisis increases the likelihood of a negotiated settlement and major regime transformation with new political rules, redistributed benefits and the

inclusion of both the challengers and key old-regime actors. Power sharing is generally formed when the ruling party's confidence and legitimacy are severely weakened even though it remains strong enough to exercise control over the most important institutions.

ZANU PF's ability to secure the Global Political Agreement (GPA) which provides for power-sharing was a brilliant political move by Mugabe's regime which having lost the 29 March, 2008 first round election and won the bogus 27 June, 2008 presidential run-off needed legitimacy when the international community refused to accept Mugabe as head of state in the absence of a government of national unity. The argument that ZANU PF went to sign the GPA to forestall regime change has found resonance amongst many political analysts and academics.

According to Zaffiro regime control of broadcasting is evidenced by having power over appointments to senior posts in broadcasting, control over finance and evidence of partisanship of government influence in broadcast content, particularly news and current affairs. ZANU PF managed to control the media and use it to remain in power. The regime managed to twist the truth in order to gain political support and win votes. For instance, peasants were told that land for resettlement was unavailable because white racist farmers were reluctant to part with their land but were not told that they are multiple farm ownerships by ZANU PF heavy weights and government officials. They were also told that spiralling inflation, shortages of basic commodities, constant power cuts, high transport costs and intermittent disruptions of water supplies were all part of a well-calculated and orchestrated regime change agenda by Britain and its allies but were not told of the governments disastrous economic policies and corruption as reasons behind the failure to provide basic social services.

The Zimbabwean government also made effective use of the media during elections. In most elections after 2000 the national media denied the opposition much advertising space but everyday the main news bulletin on both television and radio were used exclusively for the governing party to extol the virtues of President Mugabe and his ZANU PF government and to advertise times and places of their campaign meetings. Smith says that opposition parties if lucky were compelled to pay for the space and time they used and at worst they had their submissions rejected because of criticism directed at government.

From the year 2000, the Mugabe's regime politicised the judiciary. The independence and partiality of the judiciary and court system was compromised by constant

political interference. Ruswa (2009) says that judges were accused of being unpatriotic, harbouring political agendas, siding with the commercial farmers and generally militating against the land reform process. Independent judges were sidelined and replaced with those more acceptable to the regime. For instance Chidyausiku a former ZANU PF minister was appointed Chief Justice after Anthony Gubbay was forced to resign. Chidyausiku had a record of chairing several politically sensitive commissions and ruling in favour of the ruling party, rulings that were frequently overturned by higher courts. This process constituted what could be regarded as the Zanzunisation of the judiciary. Therefore with the judiciary firmly in the hands of the ruling party regime change became a massive challenge for the opposition that had looked to judicial impartiality in its quest to oust the ZANU PF government.

The survival of Mugabe's regime in the new millennium can also be attributed to the appointment of Professor Jonathan Moyo, a brilliant politician and tactician who turned from government critic to its information minister. Moyo became the architect of a regime of tough media laws which led to the harassment of journalists, the expulsion of foreign correspondents and finally, the closure of newspapers including the popular Daily News. During his tenure Parliament enacted the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) (2001), the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (2002), Public Order and Security Act (2002) and the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (Commercialisation) Act (2003). These reforms curtailed the opposition's effectiveness and severely weakened their quest to unseat Mugabe's regime.

The appointment of Gideon Gono as the Reserve Bank governor early in the millennium went a long way in saving the Zimbabwean regime from collapse. Through Gono, ZANU PF managed to keep the economy going despite presiding over the world's highest inflation rate for most of the first decade of the new millennium. He knocked zeros off the Zimbabwean currency several times to avoid total collapse of the economy. Gono bankrolled the government by printing money which was used to buy foreign currency on the black market. Gono assisted the ZANU PF regime by oiling its patronage system he provided funds to buy the loyalty of the judges through the purchase of cars and an array of luxury goods that included plasma television sets. Chiefs were also given cars and had their rural homestead electrified in a bid to encourage their people to vote for the ruling party. ZANU PF attracted rural support through Gono who gave peasants agricultural implements and very cheap groceries in a programme dubbed Bacossi. It is alleged

that Gideon Gono also printed money to fund government repression by paying marauding ZANU PF youths and security services daily allowances for harassing the opposition to submission in the run-up to the June 2008 run-off election.

Another obstacle to the regime change agenda was the government ingenious use of the electoral laws which created an uneven electoral playing field. Smith asks, does anyone know where in this world so-called free and fair elections are rigged more efficiently than in Zimbabwe. Through the Political Parties Act (1987) ZANU PF was the only party which qualified for state funding in 2000. To Smith under these circumstances the party in power in Zimbabwe had the ground laid to win every election. In the years 2000 and 2005, the electoral system was loaded, in favour of ZANU PF because in addition to the 120 elected seats to parliament Mugabe controlled the appointment of an additional thirty seats. Over and above all the president appointed the delimitation commission and the electoral supervisory commission and its chairperson thus lending ZANU PF a huge unfair advantage over other parties.

The ZANU PF government managed to resist regime change by rejecting calls for constitutional reform. After the populations' rejection of the government sponsored draft constitution in 2000 most people thought that the National Constitutional Assembly's constitution would be adopted as the constitution for the country or a new one would be crafted. That was not to be the case, ZANU PF aware that Lancaster House constitution favours the regime in power refused to discuss constitutional review that would jeopardise its grip on power. The government simply reverted to the use of the Lancaster house constitution and closed the door on the discussion of a new constitution much to the chagrin of the opposition who knew that democratic change was to be a tall order under the old constitution.

Despite the imposition of sanctions Mugabe's government managed to survive by creating an alliance with white capital demonstrated in his relations with businessmen John Bredenkamp, Rautenbach and British businessman Nicholas van Hoogstraten who helped the government conduct trade in spite of trade restrictions imposed by the European Union and the United States and their allies. Grebe (2009) says that these business persons assisted targeted persons and companies to transfer relevant assets out of Washington's reach to safe havens in the East.

Sanctions forced the Zimbabwean government to rejuvenate relations with the orient that were formalised through the Look East Policy. The policy saw the development of cordial relations between Zimbabwe,

South-East Asia and far East countries such as the People's Republic of China, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, India and Pakistan. This also gave birth to several successful joint agreements between Mugabe's government and these countries. Chigora and Chisi (2009) say that volumes between China and Zimbabwe in 2002 were 191 million US dollars while China's exports to Zimbabwe totalled US \$32 million and imports totalled US \$159. Revenue generated from the Look East Policy has gone a long way in maintaining the ZANU PF regime.

Having noted that the MDC had strong with Western democratization forces ZANU PF fostered and encouraged stronger co-operation between former liberation movements in the SADC region. The result of this was SADC support for the Mugabe's government thus acting as a bulwark to regime change continuously giving public support to the repressive ZANU PF regime. To most SADC heads of state Mugabe is regarded as a liberation war hero having played a crucial role in bringing peace to Mozambique in the 1990s and denouncing apartheid in South Africa. Badza says that in the event that Zimbabwe's liberation movement-led government falls other similar governments in SADC would be in danger of the same fate and thus out of fear supported Mugabe's government. Bond and Manyanya (2003) are of the opinion that the ANC would like to see ZANU PF remain in power because it suspects that the white element backing the MDC could also help ANC's political rivals in South Africa such as the Democratic Alliance which is predominantly white.

REPRESSION

This study now turns to a discussion of the most widespread explanations given for the persistence of the ZANU PF government. Acemoglu and Robinson State that repression is an alternative strategy for authoritarian elite wishing to prevent democratic regime change. The ZANU PF government used repression as a vital instrument for its stay in power as it was confronted by massive economic and political down turns from the late 1990s. The repression strategy was effectively used in the 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008 elections to suppress regime change prompting the late Elphias Mukonoweshuro formerly a professor of politics at the University of Zimbabwe to note: this is no ordinary African dictatorship. It is a very strange regime which uses revolutionary rhetoric as well as armed military units against civilians (Bond and Manyanya, 2003).

According to Weitzer (1984) in Zimbabwe the central state machinery was taken over intact at independence and used for purposes of securing ZANU PF's

hegemony. The vast majority of Rhodesia's repressive powers were not abandoned by Mugabe's regime. For instance the Repressive Law and Order Maintenance Act was modified and a reincarnation of it introduced in the new millennium in the form of the Public Order Security Act (POSA). This provided the state with immense repressive capacity that encouraged it to use authoritarian solutions to political and social problems. POSA curtailed the people's freedoms and blunted the activities of opposition groups under POSA civil society meetings were categorized as political gatherings making it difficult for civil society to make a big impact on the way people voted. It became difficult to campaign for the opposition owing to the subjective interpretation of the law by partisan security forces.

Mugabe's regime has persisted for so long because of electoral authoritarianism which to Snyder (2006) is where the state holds regular elections for the presidency and for the legislative houses yet violates the liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness so systematically and profoundly as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule rather than instruments of democracy. The ZANU PF government it would appear has used the above to stay in power in the new millennium. Masunugure (2009) is of the opinion that ZANU PF's stay power hinges upon a destructive mix of ideology, patronage and violence it has come to rest upon what he calls militarised form of electoral authoritarianism. That is electoral authoritarianism accompanied by the use of violence from the state security forces as was witnessed in the June 2008 presidential run-off election which allowed Mugabe to resoundingly win the election with 85% of the vote thus guaranteeing the survival of the regime.

Violence has been the hallmark of the ZANU PF's stay in power the President Mugabe has even boasted of his party's degrees in violence which they use effectively at election time (Meredith, 2002). Meredith and Blair argue that to protect his regime Mugabe's *modus operandi* has been one of intimidation and ruthlessness he has utilised the security service, ZANU PF militias, youths and War Veterans to carry out assaults against the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and its allies. Through intimidation, the use of violence and coercive tactics originating from its liberation war legacy, Mugabe's regime managed to whip people into line to ensuring that its support base was strong enough at election time.

Raftopoulos (2006) states that in the integration of ZIPRA, ZANLA and the Rhodesian army to form the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), ZANU PF took advantage of flaws in the integration system to put

forward its factional forces as the national force. This has made it difficult to remove ZANU PF from power because the army loyalties are to ZANU PF and not the nation since the army is a ZANU PF creature. Trying to remove ZANU PF from power directly threatens the military which is quick to rush to the defence of ZANU PF ensuring its continued stay in power. This was evidenced by the security sector's intervention in the electoral process after ZANU PF's defeat in the first round of the March 2008 elections by launching Operation Mavhotera papi (where did you put your X) which involved the deployment of the military, war veterans and youth militias to intimidate people into voting for President Robert Mugabe in the second round of presidential elections which Mugabe won resoundingly after Tsvangirai pulled out citing violence against his supporters that left >400 dead (Muzondidya, 2009).

Civil society pursued regime change by providing civic education to Zimbabweans on issues relating to their voting, education, gender equality and other rights. Their outreach programmes were so effective that a significant part of the population began to turn against the government. The government responded by appropriating for itself sweeping powers over the activities of foreign funded NGOs in a bid to curtail their activities it regarded to be in pursuit of regime change. Various NGO's had their bank accounts raided for foreign currency other acts that severely restricted operations while their officials were harassed, arrested and beaten.

Raftopolous (2006) points out that the ZANU PF government used the draconian Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) to shut down five newspapers including the Daily News, an important daily study harshly critical of the government. The remaining newspapers remained essentially urban with major newspapers failing to circulate beyond the urban cities. As a result of this rural voters were starved of variant views essential for informed voting at election time. Through control of the media the ZANU PF government was able to maintain itself in power. The use of these and other repressive strategies went a long way in the attainment of regime persistence in Zimbabwe.

CONCLUSION

Having examined the challenges to the regime change agenda in Zimbabwe it has been noted that electoral obstacles, repressive institutional measures, state violence and tactical acuity deployed by the ZANU PF regime eroded the political effectiveness of domestic

opponents. On the international front Mugabe has used tact and powerful anti-imperialist and nationalist rhetoric to attract third world support and repel Western machinations. Therefore, perhaps the major problem facing regime change agents is how to confront an authoritarian state with strong regional support, liberation legitimacy and still retaining a significant measure of popularity which in essence makes Robert Mugabe's ZANU PF regime a tough nut to crack.

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