

Electoral Authoritarianism and One-Party Dominance in Southern Africa: The Zimbabwean Case

Tobias Guzura^{*} and Jefferson Ndimande^{}**

Abstract

One party dominance has existed both in democratic, hybrid regimes and undemocratic states. The paper sets out to interrogate the nature of one party dominance in Southern Africa, how incumbent party sustain its dominance and rule, the response of opposition parties and civil society to the dominance. To this end therefore the paper uses Zimbabwe as a case study and using a combination of historical analysis and the electoral authoritarianism as a theoretical framework, it investigates one party dominance, placing it in a historical context and continuum and projects into the future. It shows how one party dominance has been perpetuated by a plethora of tactics such as electoral manipulation, crushing of opposition political parties, undue influence of the judiciary, amendments to the constitution, control of institutions such as the media, security apparatus, use of state resources for party use, resource capture and control patronage and clientelism. However, equally important is the role played by opposition parties in aiding the perpetuation of one party dominance. The paper argues that weaknesses by opposition, the dominance by the leader, lack of coherent strategy and a lack of innovation in adapting to political dynamics serves to weaken their ability to usurp incumbents. Finally the paper makes a prescriptive study and projects the future prospects of democracy in the country.

Keywords: One-Party Dominance, ZANU PF, Zimbabwean Politics, Electoral Authoritarianism

Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War appeared to usher in an era of third wave democracy. Though these events took place miles away from Africa, the continent was to feel its impact as ‘...most former de jure on-party states reinstated multiparty political systems in the 1990s’ (Selolwane and Shale, 2008). Since the collapse of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, democracy has become the world’s leading political system (Diamond, Plattner, Chu et al, 1997). African states transformed from authoritarian into democracies although in reality they were quasi-democracies retaining the features of authoritarianism in the process. Carbone (2007) underscores the importance of the late 1980s and early 1990s by observing that this period led to the re-emergence of ‘an African version of the global third wave of democratisation processes...’ Organisations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) set conditionalities for

^{*} Senior Lecturer in Conflict, Governance, Peace and Development, Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe **E-mail:** waguzura@gmail.com, guzurat@zou.ac.zw

^{**} Adjunct Lecturer in Conflict, Peace and Development, Solusi University, Bulilimamangwe, Zimbabwe **E-mail:** jndimande@gmail.com

aid and this included democracy promotion and consolidation. According to Diamond (1997: xiv) the demise of the Soviet Union and the fall of totalitarianism ‘...established democracy as the typical form of government’ and Africa began to open up democratic space by allowing opposition parties. However, the continent’s elite’s commitment to genuine democracy has been called into question as they have continued employing Machiavellian tactics to hold on to power. A disturbing trend has emerged over the years and a spectre looms and haunts Africa’s democratic project as the desire to hang on to power by elites has witnessed incumbents turning to electoral authoritarianism to stay in power.

Intrigued by this dichotomy and paradox, the paper seeks to analyse the factors that contribute towards the creation and sustenance of one party- dominance in Africa with special reference to Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a nominal democracy and holds regular elections, allows for opposition political parties and city councils as well as some municipalities are run by the opposition. In fact opposition parties and operate freely and have over the years been able to make a splash and leave a mark in Zimbabwean political landscape. However, despite advances the opposition has not been able to dislodge the ruling ZANU PF party from power. The party has had close shaves with defeat such as in 2008 but managed to rejuvenate itself and deliver a crushing blow to the opposition in what is probably ZANU PF’s “finest hour”. In light of this, one is intrigued and would seek to understand how the dominant party has sustained itself in power, how it responds to adversity from within and without, lastly why its dominance continues. In essence ‘what are the characteristics of a one-party dominated state as well as that of the dominant party itself?’

The paper is organised as follows, preceding this introduction is the theoretical framework on electoral authoritarianism upon which the paper is anchored upon. Next will be a survey of liberation parties in Southern Africa and how one one-party has dominated each of the countries under review. This section helps set the tone and justifies why the case study approach has been chosen, as it helps establish a trend that exists in the region. The following section will be an in-depth case study on Zimbabwe where ZANMU PF has been in power for over three decades and has employed electoral authoritarianism to stay in power. This will be followed by a forward looking and reflective section on the future of democracy and one-party dominance in the country. Finally, the paper concludes by summing up its main arguments and postulates.

Theoretical Framework

To help understand the issues under discussion, the paper is predicated on the theory of competitive authoritarianism which will be buttressed by electoral authoritarianism. According to Levitsky and Way (2010:4) ‘competitive authoritarian regimes are civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power but in which fraud, civil liberties violations, and abuse of state and media resources so skew the playing field that the regime cannot be labelled democratic.’ This gives a semblance and camouflage of democracy as on the surface there appears to be political freedom as opposition political parties are permitted but the state already has an upper hand due to its control of key institutions. Schedler (2006:1) describes electoral authoritarianism as a situation where political regimes ‘...have established the institutional facades of democracy, including regular multiparty elections for the chief executive in order to conceal (and reproduce) harsh realities of authoritarian governance.’ What emerges from this observation is that the holding of elections alone is not sufficient to make a country democratic as elections and electoral management bodies are susceptible to undue influence by the ruling party thus manipulating the electoral process. Schedler (2006:3) asserts that ‘electoral authoritarian regimes play the game of multiparty elections by holding regular elections for the chief executive and national legislative assembly.’ Furthermore, Ghandi and Lust-Okar (2009:412) observe that ‘the logic of authoritarian elections creates a system that generally (barring exogenous shocks) helps keep incumbents in power.’ This then suggests that incumbents manipulate the system through

various methods to stay in power; this can be done by manipulating the rules that shape and govern elections (Ghandi and Lust-Okar, 2009).

Electoral authoritarianism has a number of inherent characteristics which help provide a framework for understanding the system. Schedler (2006:3) writes that ‘...elections are broadly inclusive (they are held under universal suffrage) as well as minimally pluralistic (opposition parties are allowed to run), minimally competitive (opposition parties, while denied victory, are allowed to win votes and seats, and minimally open (opposition parties are not subject to massive repression, although they may experience repressive treatment in selective and intermittent way).’ It is observable that regimes use a mix of subtle force, coercion and allows a modicum of democracy which is just enough not to be termed autocracy. Schedler (2006:3) terms this a ‘contradictory mix of democratic procedures and authoritarian practices’ indicating the subtle nature of manipulation.

In addition the regimes employ a plethora of methods to maintain their grip on power. Incumbents use an array of tactics such as; unfair electoral rules, restricting access of opposition parties to the electoral arena, restricting opposition to equal access to media coverage, redistribution of votes through electoral engineering and fraud, clientelism, use of force patronage are some of the tactics employed by incumbents to stay in power (Schedler, 2006; Diamond, Plattner, Chu et al, 1997; Dahl, 2006; Ghandi and Lust-Okar, 2009). Such practices render elections a sham, a farce and nothing more than window-dressing cosmetic exercises which do not enhance the quality of democracy or advance democratic norms, practices and institutions. In the words of Schedler (2006:3) despite a semblance of democracy such electoral contests ‘...are subject to state manipulation to severe, widespread, and systematic abuse that they do not qualify as democratic.’ therefore despite holding regular elections almost religiously, this does not translate to democracy instead it leads to one party dominance as the incumbents often control the institutions which wield power and run the elections.

Liberation Parties and One Party Dominance in Southern Africa

The legacy of colonialism and the fight against oppression witnessed a response from African nationalists who took up arms to challenges through force of arms the colonialists. This witnessed the creation of liberation parties which also had armed wing as part of their strategies of fighting the enemy. These parties played a pivotal role in liberating the oppressed from the yoke of colonialism and it was unsurprising that these parties won admiration and popularity from the populace. In light of this, these liberation movements won elections and assumed the reins of power. Most countries in the SADC region are ruled by former liberation parties and these have been in power since independence and their hold on power seems to know no end in sight. These have established de-facto one party states and their continued rule unchallenged is a threat to democracy, its genuine establishment and consolidation.

The idea of a dominant party system suggests authoritarianism and a democratic deficiency. This development is to be found in the region where even Botswana and South Africa two countries usually held up as beacons of democracy and good governance are de-facto one party states. Botswana and South Africa, the darlings, the pin-up girls and poster boys held up by the West as examples, paragons and beacons of democracy in the face of authoritarianism on the continent, are de-facto one party states. Selolwane and Shale (2008:4) note that ‘elections in Botswana since 1965 have been dominated by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)’ which benefitted in no small part from the discovery of diamonds which meant that she had resources to distribute and act as a benevolent benefactor to the population, this was a game-changer as opposition parties did not have access and control to these resources.

Despite multiparty politics both states remain de facto one party dominated states. Both countries are dominated by a single party whose grip on power is unlikely to loosen in the foreseeable future. According to Selolwane and Shale (2008:4) the de jure multiparty system in Botswana has consolidated de facto one-party domination. The same is equally true for South Africa where '...the dominant party system is so unbalanced in the favour of one recurring winner, opposition becomes discouraged' (Wieczorek, 2012:29). Despite multiparty politics, both parties have ruled unchallenged and unabated in their respective countries and it is inconceivable that opposition parties will dislodge them anytime soon. This is partly because the parties are weak and divided as is the case in Botswana where the opposition has been unable to make any headway because it is weak, disjointed, fragmented and lacks popular appeal (Selolwane and Shale, 2008). Though opposition parties operate freely in South Africa '...they have never posed a significant political threat to ANC dominance because they have no way to acquire the type of legitimacy the ANC has through its historic role in the liberation movement.' One-party dominance has therefore been perpetuated by the weaknesses of opposition parties as well as the independence credentials of the dominant parties and their role in bringing freedom.

On paper, both countries are democratic as opposition parties operate freely and their constitutions are described as progressive and enlightened. Though described as democratic, they fall within the minimally pluralistic form of democracy (Schedler, 2006), under this form of democracy, opposition parties are permitted and function seemingly freely and unmolested. This is so when one considers the competitiveness and comparative strength of opposition parties relative to incumbents (Schedler, 2006). It is noteworthy that in both Botswana and South Africa, the opposition parties are weak and do not have the pulling power of incumbents neither do they have the ideological power and emotional appeal of ruling parties.

From the onset post-independence South Africa was dominated by the ANC largely because of its liberation struggle credentials suggesting that it was the party of independence. Wieczorek (2012:29-30) notes that the ANC has over the past years '...solidified its role as the dominant party within South Africa...' and 'since the ANC's rise to dominance in South Africa at the end of apartheid, elections have been entirely predictable.' Part of its appeal has been its mantra that it delivered freedom to the South Africans who had laboured under the evils of apartheid (Harris, 2004). Its main rival was the New National Party which was a 'reconstituted or reformed' National Party and could never quite shake off the stigma of being associated with the party that brought in apartheid. However, the demographics and racial make-up of the country meant that the party would not be a threat to the ANC because its support base remained mainly Afrikaners who were in the minority compared to Blacks. The Democratic Alliance (DA) has emerged as the ANC's challenger but it does not have the pulling power and liberation credentials enjoyed by the ruling party, in any case the issue of race comes into play as its leader Helen Zille is white, its previous leader Tony Leon was white. This lends credence to accusations of it being an elitist party for whites.

Resource capture and control are critical in sustaining the dominance of one-party rule. In Botswana 'the discovery of diamonds soon after independence radically enhanced the capacity of the new government' to deliver services and make headway against poverty but this also '...meant that the party in power could use national development budgets to purchase moral authority and legitimacy...' (Selolwane and Shale, 2008). This was in sharp contrast to opposition parties who did not control resources thus had no financial base to tap into. Furthermore, the independence of the state broadcaster is questionable as it has to toe the ruling party line and towards elections, the incumbents enjoy massive coverage of their rallies. The abuse of state resources in broadcasting is evident in that the ruling party's congresses are beamed live on state television (for example the South Africa Broadcasting Commission broadcast the ANC conferences in Limpopo and Mangaung) whereas the opposition do not enjoy this privilege.

On the other side of the spectrum stand countries that have an image problem and have at some point in their histories been authoritarian. These include Angola and Mozambique who because of civil war and internal strife adopted strong arm tactic to deal with its political rivals. The dynamics in such cases is different from that of Botswana and South Africa and warrant their own examination. This has been the case in Mozambique where the *Frente Para Libertacao de Mocambique* (Mozambique Liberation Front - FRELIMO) has been at the helm since the country's independence, the same applies to another Lusophone country, Angola, where the Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola (MPLA) has wielded power since attainment of independence. According to Joseph (2011:325) 'the power and authority of the Angolan regime rests on decades of colonial and postcolonial armed struggle, enormous oil wealth, a petroleum industry that now competes globally...' , these have helped the party's longevity and seen it winning elections with resounding margins. The MPLA has been able to use 'petro dollars' to consolidate its position in Angola coupled with it being the party that brought independence to the country (Roque, 2011). One may then postulate that ideology and control of resources becomes vital in perpetuating one-party dominance. Its patronage system and its ability to distribute resources to its supporters and the population at large may suggest that its dominance will continue unchallenged for a while.

In Namibia, South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) has been the only party to rule since Namibia's independence in 1990. It has ruled unchallenged and as the party that brought independence to Namibia it has been able to consolidate its power and continues to win elections. It can be presented that its success lies in its 'control' of how to open democratic space thus creating a combination of both defective democracy and hybrid regime (Schedler, 2006). Malawi and Zambia seem to have been able to buckle the trend as at various points in their histories, incumbents have been defeated. However, electoral authoritarianism was practised in various epochs of their political existence first under Banda where Malawi was a de-jure one party state. The wave of democratisation saw Bakili Muluzi defeat Kamuzu Banda. Despite his early promise as a democrat and, Muluzi was soon perfecting the art of electoral authoritarianism and manipulating the constitution to stay in power. He was succeeded by Bingu Wa Mutharika who began employing the tactics of Banda and Muluzi by engaging in electoral authoritarianism. Under his rule, Malawi was sliding back towards intolerance, academics were arrested and detained, civil society found it difficult to operate as the regime was sensitive to criticism and did not take it well.

In Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) enjoyed a monopoly of power and was unchallenged. This was made possible by legislation which outlawed political parties, thus rendering Zambia a one party state (Phiri, 1991). In 1991 multi-partyism was introduced and the opposition Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) led by trade unionist Frederick Chiluba triumphed. However, Chiluba soon showed his disdain for opposition and also engaged in electoral authoritarianism, he banned his bitter rival Kenneth Kaunda from contesting presidential elections, attempted to strip him of his citizenship and pressed numerous politically motivated charges against him. Chiluba also amended the constitution thus serving more terms than what was stipulated by the constitution. He was succeeded by Levy Mwanawasa who flexed his muscles by prosecuting Chiluba perhaps as a way of sending across a message to political rivals.

Using a few case studies albeit not in depth, this section has established that there is a trend towards one party domination in the region. The next section will be a case study of Zimbabwe which will analyse how the ruling party has through electoral authoritarianism managed to maintain power for the past thirty-three years.

ZANU PF and One-Party Dominance in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe attained independence on the 18th of April 1980 with the promise of freedom, political expression, political plurality, space for participation and freedom to criticise the government and

disagree with its policies. Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's famous but forgotten speech seemed to indicate that the young country was starting on a positive footing where diversity and the freedoms so greatly cherished and that which had led to the sacrifice of life by believers in human dignity and freedom would be protected and respected. Levitsky and Way (2010:17) pen that Zimbabwe had '...maintained multi-party rule since 1980' but in the early 1990s it was a 'competitive authoritarian state.' This demonstrates that though on paper the regime allowed for multi-party politics, the reality on the ground was different and electoral authoritarianism as well as other tactics were employed by the incumbent to stay in power. Influenced by socialist as well as a fusion of Marxist-Leninist and Stalinist tendencies, the regime sought to establish a one party state where ZANU was the beginning and the end.

Adopting a socialist mantra and ideology borrowed from China and its relationship with North Korea, the regime had a fixation with ensuring a monotheistic hold on power with society. It believed that all institutions had to be subservient to the state and that the state was in essence the party, it is hardly surprising that its allies were one party states which did not allow for any political inclusivity, diversity or plurality. The ruling party was intent to create hegemony and this meant crushing opposition parties, controlling the media and co-opting civil society into the state project (Rich-Dorman, 2001). This was exemplified by the hounding and terrorising of ZAPU which provided opposition to it. Expression of the desire to implement political hegemony was visible as the regime embarked on a vicious campaign which amongst other aims sought to crush the opposition.

ZANU's intolerance and its intention to signal a one party state was made clear when Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU was targeted for liquidation. ZANU viewed ZAPU as its rival and was jealous of the party; this is evident when one looks at the 1963 split of ZAPU, which resulted in the formation of ZANU. Wielding a monopoly of violence through control of the security apparatus ranging from the intelligence services, police and the army, the government was in a position to abuse these state institutions to create a de facto one-party state (Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice, 1997). The Security sector was unleashed upon ZAPU and its supporters under the guise of fighting against insurgents and guerrillas sponsored by ZAPU. According to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (1997) records that 'the government responded with a massive security clampdown on Matabeleland and parts of Midlands' and that 'this was carried out mainly against unarmed civilians in those rural areas which traditionally supported ZAPU, it was also at times carried out against ZAPU supporters in urban areas.' One may adduce that the regime seized upon this as a golden opportunity to crush its political rival which was seen as an impediment to the establishment of a one-party state.

As the terror was taking place in the two regions, presidential elections were held in 1985. The ruling party employed force to harass ZAPU and also prevented it from campaigning freely. One notes the electoral authoritarianism employed by the ruling party. On paper, opposition parties, specifically, ZAPU, were allowed to exist as political entities and contest in the presidential elections. Yet, in practice, opposition parties faced both overt and covert restrictions thus preventing them from campaigning freely. Schedler (2006:3) advances the idea of minimally competitive (where opposition are allowed to win a few seats perhaps in their stronghold) and minimally open (where opposition parties are subject to repressive treatment in selective and intermittent ways), a combination of the two was visible in the 1985 elections. Ghandi and Lust-Okar (2009: 408) note that in electoral authoritarianism 'the playing field is so clearly skewed in favour of the incumbents -given their monopoly over patronage resources and use of force...' Succinctly, the competitiveness of ZAPU in relation to ZANU was reduced due to the state's use of repression, intimidation and violence. This also indicates how farcical and how much of a charade as well as a mockery to democracy these elections were thus adding the dynamic of violence as an explanation to the dominance of the

ruling party. Therefore, it was no surprise that ZANU won another term in office and would still press for the establishment of a one-party state.

With violence having brought ZAPU to its knees, the next step was to find a 'political solution' to neutralise it. Here we see the strategy of weakening opposition parties then bringing them and its support base into being part of a Government of National Unity. The Unity Accord of 22 December 1987 effectively marked the demise of ZANU's political nemesis and rival ZAPU as the two were to enter into a Unity government where in reality ZANU was to be the senior partner and wielding influence. The stage and match towards one-partyism was unchecked as there was no political party strong enough to unseat ZANU and parliament was too weak to effect checks and balances, thus making the country a de facto one party state. The state of affairs was akin to what can be termed illiberal democracy, guided-democracy, defective democracy, hybrid democracy and new forms of authoritarianism (Carbone, 2007; Schedler, 2006, Ghandi and Lust-Okar, 2009, Diamond, Plattner, Chu et al, 1997; Zakaria, 1997). More importantly, this set the tone and precedence for dealing with opposition in the future as a tactic was emerging-that of crushing the enemy through force and violence, then co-opting it thereby neutralising it as a political force. This was to be seen two decades later with the rise and threat of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

ZANU PF was bent on establishing a de jure one party state or if not possible a de facto one party system. According to Riggell (2013), 'in December 1989 the ZANU PF congress passed a resolution endorsing a single-party state. Mugabe announced intentions to call another congress to formally incorporate a single party state into Zimbabwe's constitution.' This move highlights how the ruling party was using its majority in parliament especially considering that ZAPU had been crushed and co-opted into ZANU, to strengthen its position and establish a one-party dominated state. However, this was resisted by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and the student body from the University of Zimbabwe who staged demonstrations against attempts to establish a one party rule. Another grievance was the insipient corruption and moral decay within the ruling party as Ministers and government officials were eating on the gravy train (Willowgate scandal being a case in point).¹ The regime was alarmed at the independence of the student body and the power it wielded in challenging the hegemonic one party project, unsurprisingly for a regime obsessed with regime security and its hold on power, moves were underway to rein in the students. Arrests, intimidation, expulsions, infiltration of student bodies with state security agents and control of university education was the response by the state (Riggell, 2013). Yet again the state had managed to close down an avenue of possible dissent thus ensuring a one-party dominance and de facto dictatorship. The elections of 1990 captured the public's imagination as one of the contestants Edgar Tekere had been expelled from ZANU PF following his condemnation of attempts to impose one party rule. However, as Ghandi and Lust-Okar (2009: 407) observe '...the fundamental stability of the regime is not at stake ...when incumbents hold elections; they have overwhelming advantages through their monopolies of state resources and the means of coercion.' Therefore the state was not worried with the entry of Tekere as an opposition figure because the playing field was and had always been heavily in favour of the ruling party. The state had the security agents at its disposal as evidenced by the shooting of Patrick Kombayi thereby able to wield violence against its opponents, a 'privilege' which opposition parties do not have. In other ways there is an asymmetric relationship as the state is able to call upon its apparatus to tilt the scales to its advantage, in the process there is no clearly defined demarcation between state and party as the party uses state instruments and resources to establish its dominance over the state and population at large.

The likelihood of incumbents losing elections they organise and run was seemingly impossible. However, as the emergence of an alternative voice in the political landscape seemed to indicate that the challenge to one-party dominance would come from within as opposed to without; this was to be a theme in the early to mid-1990s as Margaret Dongo was to leave the party due to internal

electoral fraud. The formation of the opposition Zimbabwe Union Movement (ZUM) was greeted with derision, contempt by the state revealing its discomfort, disdain and abhorrence for alternative voices other than its own. Despite a sudden appearance of political parties (FORUM, ZUD), some disappeared and fizzled out at the same speed at which they had appeared on the scene. The parties were too weak and often relied on the sheer force of the personality of the leader to sustain their survival. During this period none of the opposition parties made any substantial headway and one-party dominance continued. Bogaard (2004:173) observes that ‘...weak parties make it easier for the ruling party to win...’ and this was true for Zimbabwe during this period as there was no viable opposition to write home about. Perhaps this was because the ruling party had managed to severely weaken them as well as its own popularity at the time, this then rendered them useless in the process.

However, the regime was unbending and unprepared to open up democratic space to allow for genuine participation, and debate. The state crushed any form of dissent using its security apparatus, enacted laws to prevent any real development of democracy, muzzled civil society, intimidated student union, trade unions all in a bid to maintain political monopoly of power and hegemony. The media was controlled by the ruling party creating an unhealthy scenario where the state determined what the citizenry read and in the process filtering news and creating a version of reality pleasing the political elite.

The political playing field often favours the ruling party hence giving it an unfair advantage over its opponents. This is visible as ‘incumbents manipulate the system to insure prolonged rule’ (Ghandi and Lust-Okar, 2009:407). Though multi-party systems are in place and elections held religious every five years, the playing field is never level thus evoking the idea of ‘competitive authoritarian regimes’ (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 16). This is a system where elections are held, opposition parties exist yet the incumbents use subtle authoritarian means to circumvent democracy and stay in office.

The regime has created a ‘system’ which is permeated and dominated by the ruling party and its clients, the system results in loyalists being rewarded through posts in government owned companies, key and strategic organisations such as media, electoral bodies, delimitation commission, registrar general, the security sector and with the discovery of diamonds these have been captured by the state to fund its activities. Masunungure (2009:66) describes this as ‘state-financed patronage’ which serves to impair the objectivity of the individuals selected into organisations which are supposed to be apolitical and impartial. The regime has controlled and restricted media space as opposition parties are side-lined and deliberately granted very little coverage thus creating an ‘asymmetrical media terrain’ (Masunungure, 2009:66). This is achieved through appointing party loyalists to key positions in broadcasting and as editors of state owned print media. This resonates well with Gramsci’s idea of hegemony where the state creates consent by controlling the media thus restricting opposition’s ability to tell its side of the story or present its policies.

The delimitation of boundaries and constituencies enables the ruling party to have an unfair advantage over its rivals. Ghandi and Lust-Okar (2009:412) point out that ‘demographic factors appear to affect both the basis of voting and turnout. Citizens in rural areas are more likely than those in urban areas to appear at the polls and to vote for pro-regime candidates.’ This is applicable to Zimbabwe where a great majority of the population resides in the rural areas and the incumbent are able to use their access to resources to ‘buy and win’ the loyalty and vote of the constituency. Masunungure (2009:66) observes how state patronage through ‘politically motivated distribution of food aid to starving voters especially in the rural areas.’ It is common sight to watch news bulletins towards election time and see aspiring Members of Parliament making donations to the constituency all in an effort to woo and win votes. It is easy to buy the votes of the poor (Ghandi

and Lust-Okar, 2009:409) as there is also the element of fear that the ruling party may withdraw its patronage and in the process punish them for their defiance. When the Movement for Democratic (MDC) was formed in September 1999, and proved its popularity amongst the urbanites ZANU PF through the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) responded by reducing the constituencies in the urban areas and expanding those in its rural areas where there is traditionally support for it.

ZANU PF has been traditionally stronger and popular in the villages. This is due to a combination of its liberation war credentials, patronage system (such as selective distribution of food aid, farm implements) and use of coercive power and violence to keep the villages in line. The state's ability to project itself as the benevolent benefactor of the rural folk is captured in an observation by Masunungure (2009:66) 'traditional and community leaders were also mobilised to deliver the rural vote in exchange for perks such as vehicles, electrification of their homes, and most critically, the privilege to allocate scarce and highly valued food aid, farm inputs and equipment.' This is unlike the opposition which did not have access to state resources hence no leverage so as to say to use in wooing the rural voters.

The ruling party has often blurred the lines between state and party thus channelling state resources towards the party. Resource capture and control have been central to the continued survival of a one-party dominance as this projects the incumbents as the saviours and perpetuates a patron and benefactor type of relationship where the state acts as patron and the citizenry owe their prosperity to the goodness and benevolence to the state. The reality is that 'opposition parties usually cannot compete with the regime in offering material inducements...' as '...control over state resources [is] important in driving voter behaviour...' (Ghandi and Lust-Okar, 2009:408-9). One such resource has been land which is controlled by the state thereby enabling it to distributed partisan or more accurately claim all the glory for its re distribution. This was crucial in retaining the vote and loyalty of the peasants and rural folk who were increasingly becoming disillusioned with the regime in the face of the MDC making strides in the country. It can be argued that the land reform programme was partly a well calculated political move which bought the regime a new lease of life.

Furthermore, through control of the central bank where the party would doll tap into the treasury to fund its campaigns and buy implements for newly resettled farmers. Gideon Gono was the Reserve Bank governor and under his term of office, ZANU PF was able to access state reserves, used them to finance their campaigns, bought 'sweeteners' and 'presents' to woo voters such as computers, ploughs, tractors, fertiliser, grain all in a bid to win the vote of the newly resettled farmers (Masunungure, 2009). These would then feel a gratitude and sense of eternal loyalty to the party which gave them land and empowered them so as to speak. With the economy on free-fall, the discovery of diamonds a new dimension and dynamic was added. The country was now using American dollars and rands which meant that there was no more printing of money. However, the discovery of diamonds provided much needed financial injection into not only the state but the party itself. This enabled the party to go on a campaign blitz, a charm offensive and use its discovery as leverage to win votes through promises of empowerment and indigenisation.

The role of ZEC has to be analysed as they are a vital cog in the party's continued electoral successes. It is widely accepted that the holding of elections is not in itself an indication of democracy. One of the tactics employed by the regime has been of electoral engineering, rigging or what can be described as electoral manipulation. ZEC's integrity has been 'impaired' (Masunungure, 2009:66) as it does not have the people's confidence, it cannot be trusted to run a free, transparent and fair election due to its close and intimate relationship and connections to ZANU PF which is the ruling party as well as a contestants therefore an interested party with vested interests in the outcome of elections. ZEC which runs the country's elections has often been accused of being impartial as ZANU PF aligned individuals have over the years run the body (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2013;

Zimbabwe Institute, 2007; Makumbe, 2009). The country has held regular elections since its independence but these have often been fraught with allegations of voter irregularities. The sustenance of a one-party dominant system in the country has been the state's control of electoral management bodies.

The strategic importance to incumbents of electoral management bodies is great as they are key to the regime's survival and winning of elections. Put rather bluntly, electoral management body is at the epicentre of the continued one-party dominance as it ensures that incumbents do not lose elections. Ghandi and Lust-Okar (2009:413) observe that '...incumbents establish the composition and independence of electoral commissions that play a large role in the counting and certifying of final results.' ZEC's members are appointed by the President suggesting that the independence of the organisation is questionable (Makumbe, 2009:120).

The composition of electoral commissioners is worrisome as the greater bulk of them are beneficiaries of ZANU PF patronage as well as having links to the security sector (Zimbabwe Institute, 2007). Party loyalty more than competence is what seems to matter, furthermore, it is inconceivable that the ruling party would want independent-minded and reform oriented commissioners as this would expose the rot within the system thus weakening its position. Therefore through patronage and offering rewards and 'generous' perks to commissioners, the party is able to count on these handpicked individuals to deliver a result acceptable to the incumbent. This raises doubts about impartiality, transparency and openness within the electoral body. The stain of the March 2008 were ZEC in both comical and farcical manner delayed announcements of results coupled with the bungling of the running of the 2013 elections where the voters roll was availed a day before elections suggests that the body serves the interest of one party-the incumbent. This enables the ruling party to engineer results and engage in electoral fraud in collusion with electoral management bodies (Ghandi and Lust-Okar, 2009:413) and what Makumbe (2009:122) describes as 'playing a numbers game' as ZEC engineers results.

The independence of the registrar General's office has to be called into question. The Registrar General Tobaiwa Mudede has been at the helm as a result of the ruling party's patronage system which rewards him for a job well done. His office has presided over a shambolic voter's roll where the names of deceased and those outside the country still appear. Undoubtedly these 'voters' cast their vote for ZANU PF. Disconcertingly has been the link between ZEC and the Registrar' Office which is in charge of voter registration and most importantly the voter's roll. The office has no independence as it is subject to manipulation and undue influence by ZANU PF therefore it is an important body in ensuring the survival of the regime. This is exacerbated by the fact that the office is in reality a political appointment thereby its bearer tends to be more concerned with who butters his bread and serves the interest of his masters and his party. Infiltration of a civilian body by state security agents whose loyalty lies with the ruling party cannot be ruled out as these are important in providing the logistics to help run elections and deliver an acceptable result favourable to the incumbent. The 2013 elections the sub-plot of the shadowy Israeli company Nikuv who were hired as consultants by the Registrar's office to provide 'expertise' with the voter's roll (Sole, 2013). Eyebrows were raised because this same company has been accused of voter manipulation in Zambia as well as the lack of transparency with which it was hired by the government indicates that there could have been sinister dealings going on.

ZANU PF has often had a two-thirds majority in parliament which is what is needed to pass amend the constitution. It has used this majority to further its policies and interests. One method employed to ensure that parliament and parliamentarians are loyal to the party position is to carefully screen and select contestants in primary elections carefully. The regimes determination to stay in power is such that it is willing to manipulate even its own internal results to ensure that the 'right' candidate

wins and represents the party. This ensures that only the loyal and subservient are in parliament. One recalls how Margaret Dongo successfully challenged and exposed this vote manipulation when she lost her primary election and she argued that it had been rigged. As a result of such manipulation, parliament has often been too weak to effectively act as the police by providing checks and balances to ensure that the executive does not abuse its power and authority. However, because of clientelism, politics of patronage and a use of both formal and informal networks the state has been able to weaken the authority of parliament. The ruling party tended to have a majority in parliament thus leaving the door and path clear for changes to the constitution. Parliament became nothing but a talk shop and served to rubber stamp the decisions of the executive.

A weak parliament with virtually no powers to provide checks and balances passed laws and legislation were passed which curtailed the activities of civil society organisations thus closing space for any debate. For instance the NGO's Bill (though never passed) was an attempt to cower and scare civil society organisations which were becoming too vocal and were thus regarded as a threat by the state. Laws such as AIPPA were targeted at muzzling the media which was viewed as too close to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). These laws gave the ruling party an advantage over opposition parties as police could deny them permission to hold rallies and they could be detained under various laws limiting their freedom of movement and gathering.

No discussion on the regime's survival would be complete without making reference to the security sector. Security apparatus have been since independence been key to the regime's strategy of survival, this can be seen in the targeting and liquidation of ZAPU in the 1980s, the intimidatory tactics employed against the party, the intimidation of ZUM though not on a large scale, and after the year 2000 the sector became active politics. According to the Zimbabwe Institute (2007:7) after the referendum defeat in February 2000, Mugabe turned to the military to help him stay in power and key appointments of ex security personnel were made to the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC), and the security apparatus directed and orchestrated farm invasions and trained youth militia. The same period witnessed the rise to prominence of 'securocrats' indicating the militarisation and securitisation of the state.

Military commanders made began making political statements and never hid their party membership or allegiance. Security personnel drafted strategy, logistics and provided tactical training for non-state security machinery such as the ZANU PF militia the green bombers (Crisis in Zimbabwe, 2013). Former military personnel loyal to the regime and perhaps disconcertingly card holding members of the ruling party were placed in charge of key strategic institutions such as electoral management bodies, broadcasting (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2013). This indicates how vital the sector has been in sustaining one-party dominance as from time to time the incumbent has called upon it to intimidate and crush enemies of the state and send across a message to opposition. Furthermore, the inclusion of security personnel in electoral bodies, media regulatory body suggests that the regime determines and controls the rules of democracy in the country. It can be presented that this is akin to a guided democracy, a nominal democracy which is tainted with authoritarianism.

The opposition and one-party dominance-unwitting conspirators?

The paper has thus far examined how incumbents sustain themselves in power. However, it would be a great injustice and a travesty of academia not to explain how opposition political parties unwittingly contribute to on-party dominance. In this brief section; we argue that the internal weaknesses and fragmentation of opposition parties diminishes their competitiveness thereby enabling the continuation of one-party dominance in the country. we also consider the implications of the MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai having been at the helm of the party for more than a decade

and present a trajectory with regards to Zimbabwe becoming a truly multiparty state or it will remain a one-party dominated state.

Paradoxically opposition political parties have unwittingly aided the sustenance of one-party dominance in Zimbabwe through a lack of decisiveness. Carkoglu (2012:2) states ‘...a weak opposition is conducive to facilitating a dominant party’ and this has been visible in the country as the opposition has due to a number of factors been rendered weak. Internal strife and splits within the opposition have contributed to their weakness thus impacting negatively on their ability to dislodge the ruling party. This is in sharp contrast to ZANU PF which despite its own internal strife has been able to remain united therefore consolidating its power in the process. The importance of cohesion is stated by Levitsky and Way (2010:18) who note that a key determinant in ensuring the longevity and survival of a dominant party is its cohesion even in the face of economic meltdown or the rise of a popular political opposition.

The MDC was best by personality clashes and issues over policy as well as to some extent regionalism. This led to the party’s split in 2005 leading to a fragmentation and weakening of the party and in this benefitted ZANU PF which arguably emerged with the upper hand. Since then, the opposition has fragmented with Job Sikhala forming his own MDC-99 and other backers of the MDC such as Lovemore Madhuku forming their own parties thus crowding an already crowded field. The split meant that the vote would be split between both MDC factions thereby handing ZANU PF an easy victory. It then can be argued that the internal weaknesses of opposition parties are a major contributing factor to sustaining the political status quo and this has only served to benefit ZANU PF and its one-party dominance.

This is especially true when one considers the response to opposition claims of ‘stolen elections.’ yet surprisingly; they still participate in elections when the level field they require is still uneven. Given such a scenario, it is unforeseeable that one-party dominance will be broken. The Presidential elections of 2002 were marked by intimidation, threats of violence and violence perpetuated by the ZANU PF militia, war veterans and other state aligned organisations. The MDC argued that these elections were neither free nor fair citing intimidation, restricted access too campaign in certain areas amongst other reasons. The same was to happen in the 2005 elections which were preceded by Operation Murambatsvina which displaced a sizeable number of urban dwellers who it is argued were potential MDC voters. Yet again, the 2008 elections were characterised by violence, and this time there was ZEC’s incompetence as results for presidential elections were delayed by six weeks and when they were announced, they were rather suspicious (Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, 2013). The opposition has called into question the fairness of election results citing a number of irregularities such as the chaotic and shambolic state of the voters’ roll and in the case of the 2008 March presidential elections, there was a deafening and embarrassing delay of more than a month in announcing the results. Surprisingly opposition continue to take part in sham elections and by so doing contribute to the legitimacy and establishment of one-party dominance.

Opposition parties have not been able to form a strong enough coalition to unseat the regime. Though coalitions have been formed on paper, these have been with small and insignificant parties who do not have a huge support base. For example, the 2013 elections witnessed the formation of a coalition involving Tsvangirai’s MDC, ZAPU and Mavambo/Dawn/Kusile which was in all fairness a weak coalition as the other faction of the MDC led by Welshman Ncube which hypothetically could have been a game-changer was not part of the coalition. In essence, coalitions are not about numbers but the quality and substance which the various parties bring into the table. If a coalition is to work and be successful, then much time, planning and resources as well as a clear division of positions and posts as well as responsibilities should be given to each party. As things stand, one-

party dominance will continue because the parties are weak, divide and this plays into the hands of ZANU PF.

The MDC has been in opposition for the past fourteen years and what is disturbing is that Morgan Tsvangirai has been at the helm of the party since its inception. This is a cause for concern as it shows that Zimbabwe's evolution towards genuine democracy has not taken root. One fears the real danger of the opposition becoming like the ruling party and in the process continue the less than glorious 'tradition' of one party dominance in the event the opposition comes into power. It therefore appears as if hanging on to power even when this defies logic and common sense is one result of being continually beaten in elections by the ruling party. One observes how there is intolerance of views different to that of the opposition leader, purging of the party, rewarding of loyalists and a reluctance to step down from power are all signs pointing towards a system dominated by one party.

Conclusion

By virtue of having a majority in parliament, the ruling party was able to create a de facto one-party state unchallenged due to weakness of parliament as well as through its control of parliament achieved through control of electoral management bodies, collusion by ZEC, resource capture and control, security apparatus, monopoly of force, weakness of opposition, control of the central bank have all been important in ensuring one-party dominance in Zimbabwe. Nietzsche (1886) wrote and immortalised the words 'he who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster himself', advice which is particularly appropriate even to opposition parties. These are apt words and a stark reminder to observers, analysts, students of history and African politics, bearing in mind that those in charge of one-party dominated states started off with good intentions, they were fighting against various monsters, yet they became monsters themselves and use skull drudgery to stay in power. The opposition in Zimbabwe must take heed of this and renew itself first to bring multi-partyism and secondly to ensure that in the event it attains power, Zimbabwe will not be a one-party dominated state.

End Notes

¹ The Willowgate Scandal was a 1988-89 Zimbabwean political scandal in which the [Bulawayo Chronicle](#) revealed illegal resale of automobile purchases by various government officials. The ensuing investigation resulted in the resignations of five members of President [Robert Mugabe's](#) cabinet. One of the five, [Maurice Nyagumbo](#), later committed suicide after being charged with perjury. The reporters who had broken the story, [Geoffrey Nyarota](#) and [Davison Maruziva](#), were subsequently removed from their posts.

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