



**“Southern African Development Community: A Part of the problem or a part of solution to Post-Millennium Zimbabwean conflicts and Political Crisis”**

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**Abstract**

*This study sought to investigate the role of SADC in abating or fuelling conflict in Zimbabwe between the period of 2013-2020. Conflict in Zimbabwe has been an on-going struggle and has negatively affected growth and development of the country's economy and the ability of the residents to recover or move on from past experiences such as Gukurahundi amongst other. This paper was largely qualitative study hinged on document analytic approach, interviews and questionnaires were administered to 385 participants. The major findings of this research indicated that SADC as a regional institution of peace and security has failed to adequately deal and address the socio-economic and political crisis bedevilling Zimbabwe. Mediation was employed as an alternative dispute resolution strategy in Zimbabwe's crisis but it has failed to address the conflict. The research recommends the full implementation and adoption of the protocol governing democratic elections in Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Electoral Commission must be apolitical.*

**Key words: Conflict, SADC, mediation, conflict intervention and conflict management**

**Introduction**

Zimbabwe has not been a victim of high intensity conflict except for when the country gained independence in 1980. During this period highly violent and life-threatening events occurred and claimed so many lives. Peace insight (2017) observes that the oracles of conflict in Zimbabwe is imbedded upon disputes over national power, economic hardship and pre-colonial disputes which have not been resolved. Citizens hold a lot of bitterness and this has necessitated conflicts to escalate to great heights as issues kept piling up and not being

effectively addressed. The African Union is which is a successor of the organization African Unity (OAU) had the mandate of institutionalising mechanism of continental governance with respect to conflict prevention, peace-making, peacekeeping and peacebuilding Moolakkattu (2010).

Zimbabwe has succumbed to so many conflicts which are politically motivated and have caused high levels of uncertainty in the country which has spilt over and impacted adversely on the economic conditions in the country. Dzimira (2018) observes that the Responsibility to Protect represents one of the key normative developments towards mitigating towards global human rights violation. This was an initiative spearheaded by the United Nations whose mandate was to eliminate controversies surrounding interventions by advocating global multilateralism. Dzimirai and Spies (2011) and Mwanalisa (2008) observes that AU and SADC adopted a multilateral approach to crisis. This had some legal justifications as stated in the AU constitutive Act (2000) article 4 (h) in which organizations pledge to intervene in member state in instances of severe violation of human rights. They further observe that AU Peace Security Council (PSC) pursuant to article 5 (2) of constructive article is mandated to deliver on collective security and early warning to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa. This meant that African Union had the mandate of arresting any political unrest taking place in Zimbabwe and try and bring in any mitigatory initiatives to arrest political turmoil and restore peace in Zimbabwe.

Moreover, Mashimbye (2017) observes that in fulfilling this conflict resolution role, regional organisations perform certain functions. First, as multilateral institutions, regional organisations perform the function of articulating and aggregating the feelings and positions of member states on conflicts in their respective regions. For example, this includes the desire of member states to managed or resolve the conflict in a peaceful manner by using the organisation as an arena and actor that expresses this common concern. Second and in addition to serving the aim of conflict prevention, regional organisations socialise member states on the need for and benefits of conflict resolution, while simultaneously promoting norms within the region that counteract the likelihood of conflict. For example, this includes democratic norms (supportive of the 'peace through democracy' thesis) and the settled norms of non-aggression and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The ongoing crisis in Zimbabwean crisis which has a long and standing history significantly noted post-independence awarded African Union a golden opportunity of living up to their standards and restore peace in the country

## Background

Conflicts in Zimbabwe can be traced back from during the post-independence era between the Zimbabwean African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Patriotic Front- Zimbabwe African Patriotic Union (ZAPU) as noted by their different ideologies, ethnic, territorial lines and constitutional limitations Cawthra (2010). These differences between the two parties was bounded by constitutional limitations set at the Lancaster House negotiations, and adopted a policy of national reconciliation with the white population. Despite these problems continued to manifest as noted by the manifestation of dissidents who operated in the PF-ZAPU stronghold of Matabeleland. Cawthra (2010) notes that the escalating levels of conflict saw leadership of the country who by then was Robert Gabriel Mugabe who was observed as an autocratic leader seeking for assistance from North Korea and releasing the ZANU-PF-dominated military units (notably the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade) in Matabeleland. conflict continued to escalate to greater heights and caused division as in the nations as citizens felt oppressed and unheard. This escalating bitterness saw frequent outbursts of fights and there being the minority and the majority. Mungwari (2017) observes that for the past three decades the country has been battling with political conflict crisis. This has even been observed by disappearance and death of so many people and allegations pointing or emanating to these conflicts. Mungwari (2017) further observes that Soon after independence there was conflict between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU from 1981 to 1987 but the conflict was resolved by the Unity Accord of 1987.

Furthermore, in 1989 there was yet another conflict between ZANU-PF and Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM). Although opposition political parties existed before, the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 was the first time that Zimbabwe saw the emergence of a credible and strong opposition political party. The result was that ZANU-PF faced its first strong election challenge from the then MDC in the 2000 parliamentary elections, and led to conflict that has been ongoing in Zimbabwe to this day. The political leader Tsvangirai effortlessly fort his party to run the country until he died. Allegations were made citing that elections were rigged and ZANU-PF had instituted some stunts to win elections hence them remaining in power to date despite evident and significant efforts of demonstration by the local citizen and frequent complaints about the difficult living condition in the country.

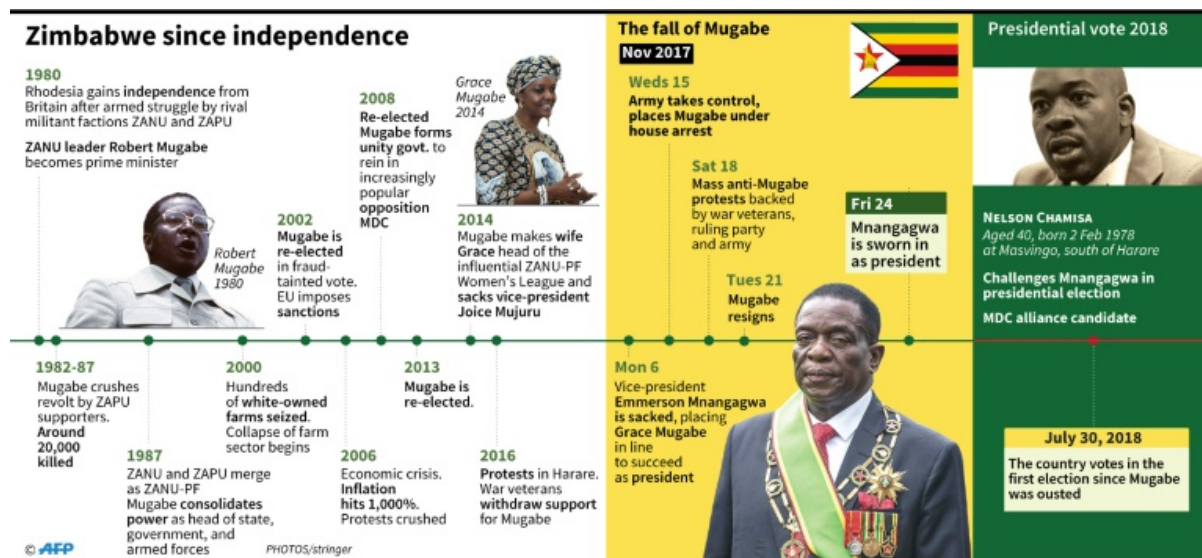
Following the signing of the GNU in 2008 that was described by the media and political analysts as a 'shaky marriage', the opposition shared power with ZANU PF and despite there

being outstanding issues that remained unresolved by the time of the elections in 2013; the domestic dimension of the conflict subsided during the period of the GPA only to pick up as the next general election approached. The opposition party MDC Alliance led by Mr Chamisa was accused by the regional body SADC of being sympathetic to the ruling ZANU PF for the purpose of maintaining the same status core in their respective countries a fact that has been vigorously denied by SADC. SADC emerged in 1992 out of what was then the Southern African as stipulated by Schoeman & Muller (2009); SADC Treaty (1992) Article 3). It was then preceded by the Front-Line States (FLS), a loose political alliance of Southern African states supporting liberation movements in their struggle against the South African apartheid regime. Amongst others, the promotion and defence of security and peace in Southern Africa features as one of the prominent objectives of SADC, as stated in Article 5 of the Declaration and Treaty of the Southern African Development Community, 1992 (SADC Treaty 1992). This meant that SADC had the mandate to act on any conflict in the region. Mashimbye (2017) observes that SADC had a big task to carry as it had about 16 countries as members as noted by Schenoni (2017).

According to Matlosa (2009) the political crisis that beset Zimbabwe following its harmonised elections in March 2008 and the controversial presidential run-off poll in June of the same year has triggered heated debate among academics and policy-makers alike. Although the candidate for the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the incumbent president, Robert Mugabe, persisted and ran a one-horse race, the credibility of the process and legitimacy of its outcome had already been irretrievably tarnished. The outcome of the election, therefore, became immaterial other than to ensure that externally propelled mediation would play a role in attempts to manage and resolve the post-election impasse. This mediation process was to be facilitated by then-South Africa President Thabo Mbeki, in his capacity as Special Envoy of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). SADC played a mediation role in trying to contain the Zimbabwean situation. The toppling of Mbeki plunged the power-sharing agreement into uncertainty at a time when the distribution of ministerial positions had led to a deadlock that would require particular intervention by the mediator. It is worth noting that the Zimbabwe talks had been facilitated by Mbeki (on behalf of SADC) in collaboration with the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN). The three inter-governmental organisations, which were also guarantors of the Zimbabwe power-sharing agreement, would now have to make a decision about Mbeki's role.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Timeline Analysis and conflict intervention theory**



Timeline of events in Zimbabwe since 1980 © AFP/File / John SAEKI

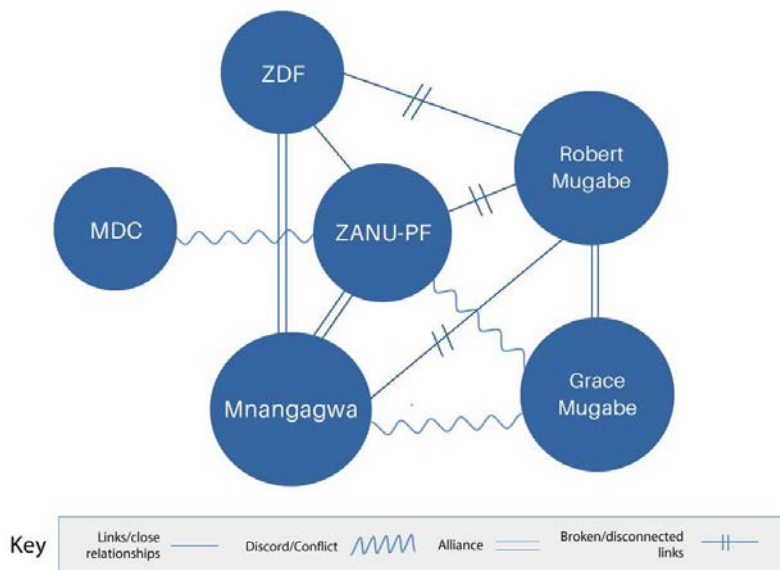
The profile the context that shaped the conflict of Zimbabwe's was the independence of Zimbabwe. According to Mashimbye (2017) there was a meeting at Lancaster House in 1979 where the primary objective was to create an agreement to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia war, secondly, the terms under which Zimbabwe-Rhodesia would be granted independence; and thirdly, the drafting of the Independence Constitution. The conflict was noted to be external conflict as Zimbabwe wanted its freedom. The next phase of the conflict was internal which saw human rights violations, mainly around land reform and election related, were a prominent feature of the Zimbabwe conflict. The use of the timeline analysis to track and analysis these happenings is a fundamental, as it ensures the effective tree diagram which illustrates the key player in facilitating for and those assisted in abating the conflict. Looking at and analysing the role of SADC in abating or fuelling conflict in Zimbabwe between the period of 2013-2020, it can be noted that they made efforts in trying to stop the conflict through sending representatives to try and mediate over the issue, that is Thabo Mbeki, then later Jacob Zuma. In 2002, after Mugabe fraudulently won the election the EU came in and imposed sanction, which further dilapidated operations in the country and saw a huge blow on the economic activities.

Moreover, looking at local citizens' frustrations towards militarization of government operations in Zimbabwe, it can be seen from the time lines that Zimbabwean got their independence on paper, but it was never something they enjoyed, as evidenced by the situation in 1982-1987 which was just after independence, which saw Mugabe crushing revolts by Zapu supporters and seeing a shocking 20000 being killed in that event. Another event which exhibited the opinions or expressed the emotion of the local citizens about the

militarization of government operations was the fact that war veterans, who were in full support of the work done by Mugabe began to protest against him. This is evidence of some form of dissatisfaction or feeling of things not being normal in the country and thus crying out for help. There was also another protest in Harare and this saw the killing of people and brutal beatings. The ordinary citizen has been silenced and is frustrated by the militarization of government operations as this does not open a platform for people to raise their concerns, and exercise their fundamental rights.

**Main actors**

The conflict had some key actors who played a major role in intensifying it and some who tried to create peace and stability in the country. Zimbabwe was seen as one country that was rich in land, minerals and natural resources and the UK which is the former coloniser had vested interests and wanted to control and own the resources. Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) (Zanu PF) was one of the leading key players in the conflict as they wanted to maintain power. The map of the actors will be illustrated on the diagram below. Conflict with externals was sorted and then the power struggles between political leaders that Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) (Zanu PF) and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance is in the country began. Mugabe was leading for ZANU PF and supported by Grace Mugabe and Emmerson Munangagwa.



*Designed by authors*

**Methodological outline**

The approach followed in this study is qualitative descriptive research methodology as it enabled the narration and interpretation of views from the participants. This approach was

appropriate to this study as it enabled to establish the role of SADC in abating or fueling conflicts in Zimbabwe. A total of 385 participants took part in the study. This article largely reviewed qualitative literature through a document analytic and snap survey. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents-both printed and electronic material (Bowen, 2009). This data was examined and interpreted in order to elicit meanings, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This technique was selected because of availability of data, its cost-effectiveness and convenience as compare to field research. Literature was sourced from the Constitution of Zimbabwe, books, journal articles and newspapers.

## Results and Analysis

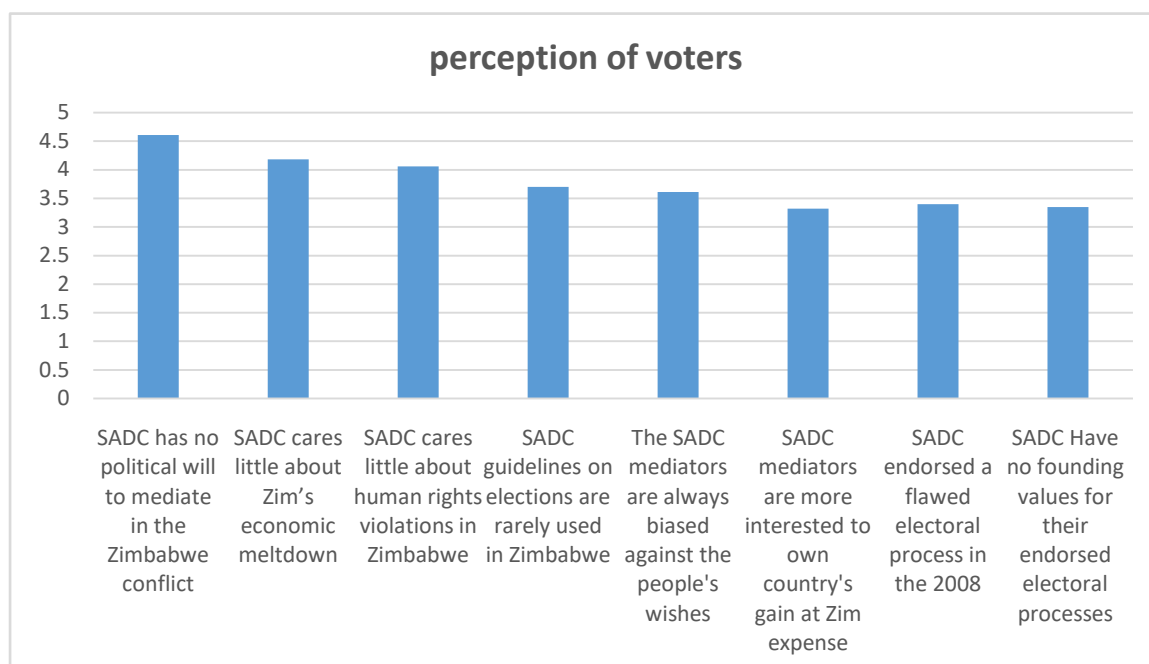
### Perceptions of Zimbabwe voters on SADC’S role in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe.

The study shifted its focus to perceptions of Zimbabwean citizens on SADC’S role in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe. So, in order to understand the perceptions of Zimbabwean citizens on SADC’S role in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe the researcher made use of descriptive statistics.

**Table 1: Perceptions of Voters on SADC’s conflict resolution role in Zimbabwe**

	N	Mean
SADC has no political will to mediate in the Zimbabwe conflict	385	4.61
SADC cares little about Zim’s economic meltdown	395	4.18
SADC cares little about human rights violations in Zimbabwe	385	4.06
SADC guidelines on elections are rarely used in Zimbabwe	385	3.70
The SADC mediators are always biased against the people’s wishes	385	3.61
SADC mediators are more interested to own country’s gains @ Zim expense	385	3.32
SADC endorsed a flawed electoral process in the 2008	385	3.40
SADC have no founding values for their endorsed electoral processes	385	3.35





The study took an interest on the perceptions of Zimbabwean voters on the SADC's role in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe. According to the analysis given on table 4.2.1, the majority of respondents *strongly agreed* that, SADC has no political will to mediate in the Zimbabwe conflict, also that SADC cares little about Zim's economic meltdown, SADC cares little about human rights violations in Zimbabwe, SADC guidelines on elections are rarely used in Zimbabwe, SADC mediators are always biased against the people's wishes, also they agreed that SADC mediators are more interested to their own countries gains at the Zim expense. However, the voters were *not sure* whether SADC endorsed a flawed electoral process in the 2008 and also, they were not sure whether SADC have no founding values for their endorsed electoral processes. The following verbatim quotes from University Lecturers, Opinion leaders, NGO Representatives and Political Journalists on the role of SADC in conflict resolution and peace building in the country of Zimbabwe?

*For one to understand the role of SADC in the Zimbabwe conflict one must first point out that in 2008, when Zimbabwe a general election and when the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission withheld the election result for three weeks, the SADC designated mediator on Zimbabwe, Thabo Mbeki denied that there was a crisis in Zimbabwe. Thabo Mbeki made the most infamous but ridiculous assertion that "Crises in Zimbabwe, what Crises?"*

*Look, an election is an important milestone in any country's trajectory, how any normal mediator cannot see a crisis when election results have been withheld for three weeks. When the results were announced the leader of the opposition had beaten the incumbent President by a very narrow margin, but failed to secure the proverbial*



*50 plus 1. Incidentally it was the SADC mediator who rushed to point out a second round of elections. When the second round was held everyone knows what happened as over two hundred opposition supporters were beaten to death during the election run-off period. It was SADC again who called for a Government of National Unity (GNU). I am sorry to say SADC's role in the Zimbabwean political impasse, I prefer to call it impasse, SADC's role is embarrassingly compromised (UNI<sup>LECT1</sup>)*

*-In Sothern Africa, we are lucky to have a regional grouping call called SADC, the Southern African Development Council. That organization was born out of the spirit of revolutionaries; thus, they know serious political parties and those that are championing the cause of imperialist powers.*

*As for the role of SADC in conflict resolution, I will be the first to give a thumb -up to their role in conflict resolution. Last time their point-man in conflict resolution was President Thabo Mbeki, a tried and tasted revolutionary. President Mbeki worked tirelessly to resolve a conflict in this country, he would meet with President Mugabe and Morgen Tsvangirayi who were leaders of their own respective parties. Through President Mbeki's tireless effort our country got a GNU which was spoiled by some individuals who could not make their decisions without consulting their imperial powers. To me without SADC's mediation role Zimbabwe would be doomed (UNI<sup>LECT 2</sup>).*

*-To me SADC has done a fair job as mediators in Zimbabwe's conflict resolution. If one looks back to the pre-GNU era, I remember President Mugabe used to sear that he NEVER, NEVER, NEVER recognize the MDC. But to see Mugabe capitulating and finally sitting down with his arch-rival was not an easy achievement (UNI<sup>LECT 3</sup>)*

*- To me this is a very difficult question **because**, I think SADC is taking too much on its plate. If one looks at their name, while they are called a development Council, they find themselves being delegated a mediator role. To me it's like SADC should have specialist divisions for their multifaceted roles (OP<sup>LEAD 1</sup>)*

**Verbatim quotes from Opinion Leaders in the media are presented below:**

*-As an opinion leader I can only say SADC have let us down dismally, on the conflict in Zimbabwe. Remember in 2008, before the Government of National Unity (GNU)SADC had designated one Thabo Mbeki, the then South African President to be a mediator in the Zimbabwean conflict. But his actions were so openly biased than on several occasions the Zimbabwean government would openly defy and he would pretend to understand their reasoning. Often, he would publicly express views that put to shame the concept of mediation. With all due respect to President Mbeki, during*

*his tenure as mediator I began to question the very foundation of SADC's understanding of the role of a mediator. Honestly, how can a mediator be so openly biased? The classic case of a biased mediation came when Zimbabwe held elections and held election results for over 21 days, he pretended not to know there was a crisis.*

*Thus even during the GNU, the Zimbabwe government would openly not play ball and with impunity openly refuse to implement provisions of the GNU agreement.*

*His Excellency President Mbeki was, in most cases so openly biased that even the benefactor of the favors would at times feel embarrassed. Of course the classic of biased mediation came after the Zimbabwean elections. Thus, I am sorry to say, every time SADC comes into the Zimbabwean conflict, they are biased, maybe they still suffer from the BIG MAN syndrome, where political players always believe that leaders are God anointed hence should not be challenged by other citizens.*

**Verbatim quotes from NGO Representatives on the role of SADC in Zimbabwe conflict resolution are presented below:**

*As NGOs we have tried to drum up support for the Zimbabwean cause in SADC sister states but the surprising thing is that during various meetings, we hold we can discuss any other country without a problem, but the minute we touch the Zimbabwe issue, all the cohesion and one voice in our grouping ceases to exist. It's like Zimbabwe has placed individuals at strategic points within the NGO community.*

*All other debates about other countries are robust and progressive, but the minute one raises that Zimbabwean issue for discussion, all hell breaks loose. What I mean is, even governments that are known to champion human rights, start dithering.*

*Let me give examples in 2011, three leaders in the Zimbabwean NGO movement were arrested in Namibia, before the SADC extraordinary summit. We have had instances in Tanzania where Zimbabwe NGO representatives were chased from the SADC extra-ordinary summit where they were trying to alert SADC member states of the state of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe, but*

**Verbatim quotes from Political Journalists on the role of SADC in conflict resolution in Zimbabwean are presented below:**

*The above verbatim quotes revealed that the causes of the conflict in Zimbabwe as economic mismanagement and failures of governance, leading to social alienation and dislocation to which the ruling party responded by increasing repression. The security structures remain powerful actors and seem determined to ensure that*

*ZANU-PF does not lose power. SADC seems increasingly divided over how to deal with the issue, and the future remains uncertain.*

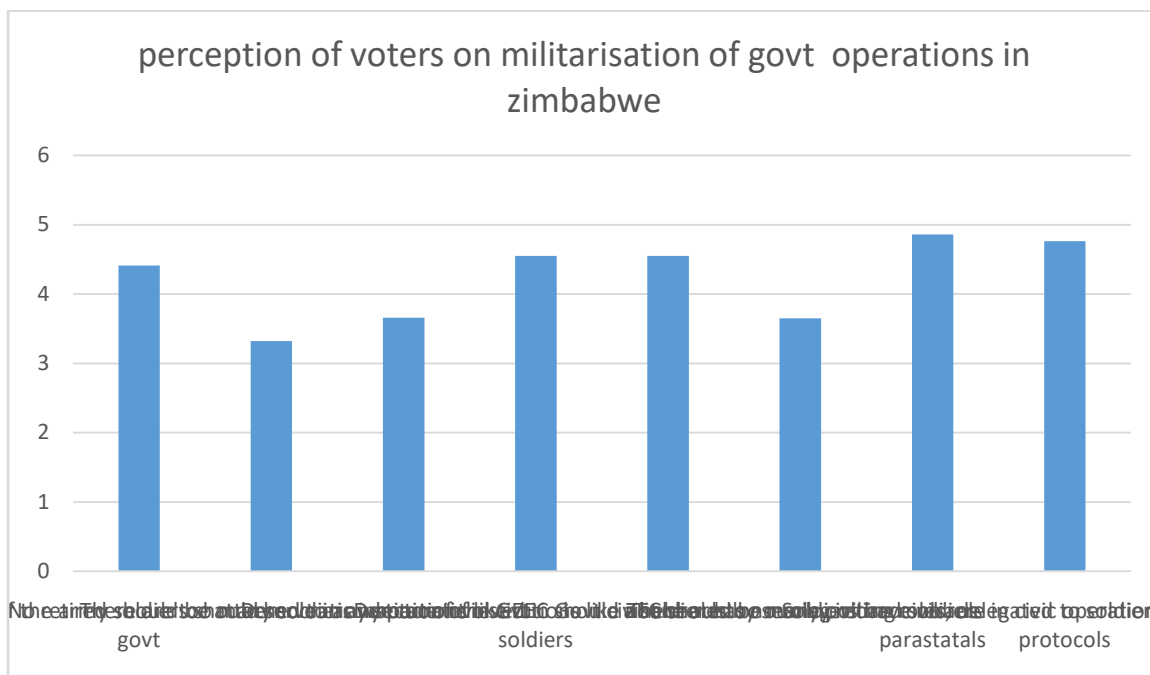
*The Zimbabwe government in most cases acts with impunity against democratic electoral standards, knowing very well that SADC is on their side. Right from day one, when elections dates are announced, the SADC guidelines on democratic elections clearly articulate what members states should do but when it comes to the Zimbabwean government, things turn tipsy truly as suddenly double standards come into play.*

### **Perceptions of voters on militarization of government operations in Zimbabwe**

Voters always play a significant role in how democratic processes are run hence the study focussed on

**Table 2: Perceptions of voters on militarization of gvt operations in Zimbabwe**

	N	Mean
No active member of the army should be attached to any section of gov	385	4.41
No retired soldiers should serve in any part of government	385	3.32
There are too many soldiers who are involved in gov civilian roles	385	3.66
Democratic institutions like ZEC should not be run by serving soldiers	385	4.55
Democratic institutions like ZEC should not be run by retired soldiers	385	4.55
A soldier has no role policing civilians	385	3.65
There are too many civilian roles, delegated to soldiers even in parastatals	385	4.86
Soldiers have no role in civic operations like policing Covid protocols	385	4.76
There is just too many military personnel in the Zim government departments	385	3.70
Command agriculture is a subtle way of militarizing a civilian operation	385	4.31



The study also took an interest on the perceptions of Zimbabwean voters on the militarization of government operations in Zimbabwe. Table 2 above shows that the majority of respondents were strongly agreeing with the following sentiments: democratic institutions like ZEC should not be run by serving soldiers (4.55), democratic institutions like ZEC should not be run by serving soldiers (4.55) and soldiers have no role in civic operations like policing Covid protocols (4.76) and there are too many civilian roles, delegated to soldiers even in parastatals (4.86). Respondents also agreed with the following sentiments, no active member of the army should be attached to any section of government (4.41), there are too many soldiers who are involved in gov civilian roles (3.66), a soldier has no role policing civilians (3.65) and there is just too many military personnel in the Zim government departments (3.70).

Respondents were however not sure about the following sentiments, no retired soldiers should serve in any part of government (3.32, *not sure*).

The following verbatim quotes from University Lecturers, Opinion leaders, NGO Representatives and Political Journalists on the militarization of government operations in Zimbabwe?

**Verbatim quotes from University Lecturers from Political Science Faculty on the militarization Zimbabwe government operations are presented below**

*Zimbabwe has been an authoritarian state for a long time, infact initially it was only an authoritarian state. However, from the state of the new millennium, when a strong opposition party was formed, every major government function from elections administration, land reform exercise, Operation Murambatsvina, now command*

*agriculture to mention but a few. Let's not forget what happened in 2005 when government launched what they called Operation Murambatsvina, when the local councils were commandeered to demolish what were called illegal structures, the operation was led by a Commando group of police officers who are called the Black Boots. This was the escalation of the militarization of government operations. Then Zimbabwe Electoral Commission was led by a serving member of the army who was serving as the Chief Elections Officer, what could be worse than that. Can a serving member of the military pronounce an opposition member as a winner in elections? How on earth can that ever happen*

**Quotes from NGO Representative on the militarization Zimbabwe government operations are presented below**

*As the NGO community we have always complained about the militarization of government operations because we feel that exercise is greatly eroding the democratic space in the country. Serving and even retired members of the military have no role completely in the ordinary government operations. this is because by the very nature of the army operations there is a command element hence running a government department means this is how they will be running that department. Nobody in a democratic state deserves to be harassed while being served but then one cannot avoid it in a militarized civil government department. Ironically there are some sections of the community who prefer such an environment and this makes it difficult for genuine fighters to make headway.*

**Quotes from Political Journalists on the militarization Zimbabwe government operations are presented below**

Zimbabwe's state apparatus is over militarized, quite frankly I do understand why it is that it's just senior soldiers who retired are deployed to undertake civilian duties, why don't they deploy retired civilian duties. Why don't we see some civilians being retired into the army ranks? This shows that there is a hidden agenda behind such an exercise. (POL JOURO 1).

-We have reached a stage where Zimbabweans have lost all hope.

**Perceptions of voters on internal & external factors perpetuating conflict in Zimbabwe**

The study also focussed on analysing the threats of substitutes on MFI players in the country and in order to understand more, mean values and the analysis of variance based on their experience in the sector.

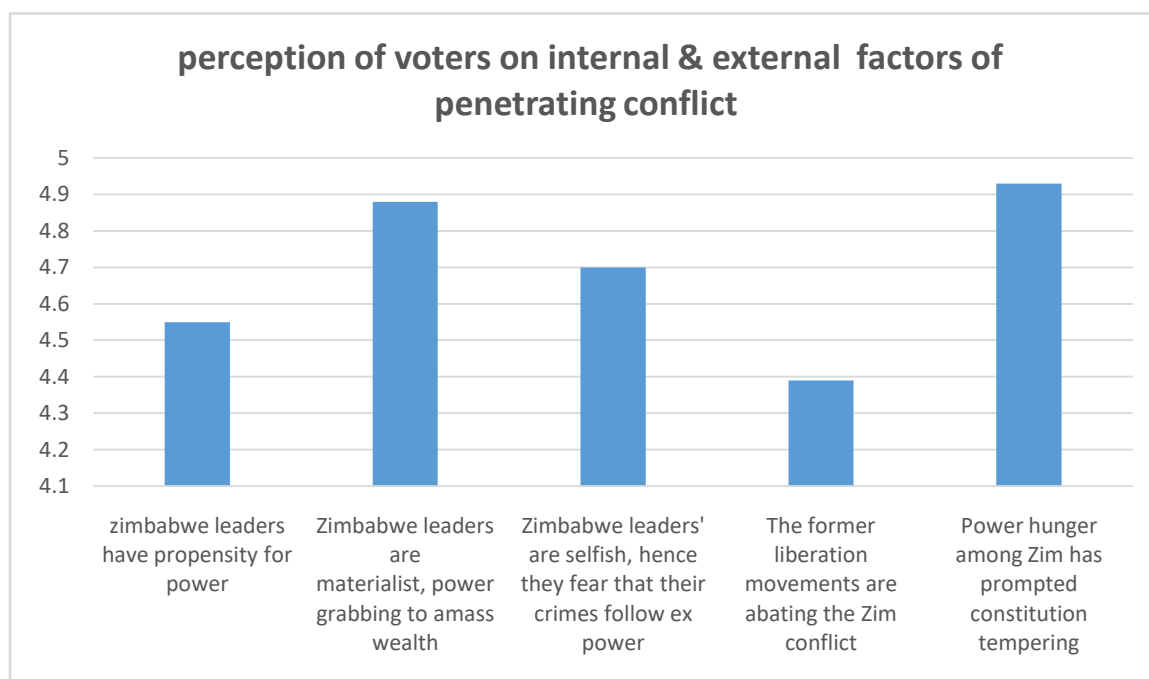
**Table 4: Perceptions of voters on internal & external factors perpetuating conflict Zimbabwe**

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	N	Mean
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Zimbabwe leaders have a propensity for power	385	4.55
Zimbabwe leaders are materialist, power grabbing to amass wealth	385	4.88
Zimbabwe leaders are selfish hence they fear that their crimes follow ex power	385	4.70
The former liberation movements are abating the Zim conflict	385	4.39
Power hunger among Zim has prompted constitution tempering	385	4.93
Valid N (list wise)	385	



The voters were also asked about their perception on the internal and external factors that are perpetuating the Zimbabwean conflict. The analysis on Table 4.5.1, show that the majority of respondents strongly agreed (mean score= 4.55) with the assertion that Zimbabwean leaders have a propensity for power, strongly agreed (mean score = 4.88) that Zimbabwe leaders are materialistic hence use power grabbing strategies to amass wealth, strongly agree (mean score= 4.70) that leaders are selfish, and are afraid their crimes will follow them after they leave power. Analysis of Table 4 also showed that the majority of respondents agreed (mean score=4.39) that former liberation movements are abating the Zimbabwe conflict by boasting about war time credentials which are not adding value to the country’s current predicament.

The following verbatim quotes from University Lecturers, Opinion leaders, NGO Representatives and Political Journalists on the militarization of government operations in Zimbabwe?

## Verbatim quotes from University Lecturers on internal & external factors perpetuating conflict

*In as far as internal factors that are perpetuating conflict in Zimbabwe are the following, the ruling elite have been permeated by a culture of intolerance, intimidation and violence. they now harbour the notion that they have a monopoly of progressive ideas, which completely crowds out other citizens' ideas. To me the ethos of the liberation struggle is being abused for the benefit of the connected few. (OP LEAD 1)*

*-The external factors that are perpetuating conflict in Zimbabwe are the imperialist powers that have a hand in the mindset of a number of Zimbabweans politicians. I remember the late President Mugabe saying they had eves-dropped one political leader of an opposition party being tipped-off by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, this goes to show that some of these leaders cannot be trusted (UNI LECT 3)*

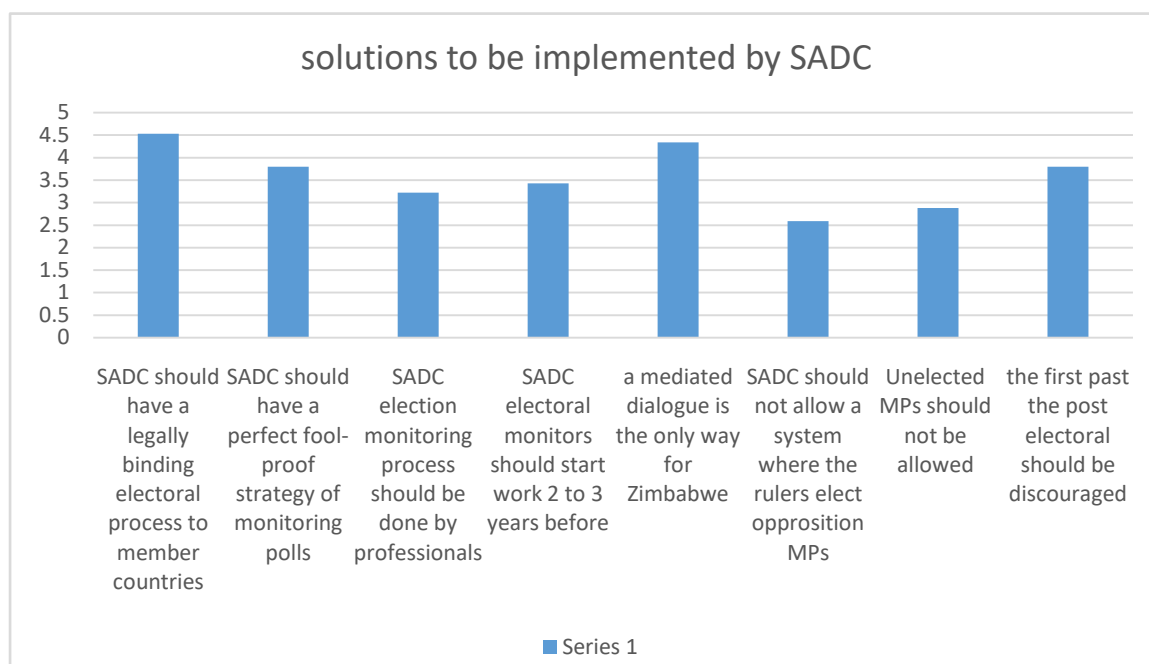
## Alternative solutions which can be implemented by SADC break the deadlock in Zimbabwe

The study also sought to determine how new entrants are a threat to MFI players and in that regard, mean responses from participants were drawn. The highest mean value indicating that there was generally an agreement on the issue while the smallest value implies disagree.

Table 5: Solutions which can be implemented by SADC break the deadlock in Zimbabwe

	N	Mean
SADC should have a legally binding electoral process to member countries	385	4.53
SADC should have a perfect fool-proof strategy of monitoring polls	385	3.80
SADC election monitoring processes should be done by professionals	385	3.22
SADC Electoral monitors should start work 2 to 3 years before elections	385	3.43
A mediated dialogue is the only way for Zimbabwe	385	4.34
SADC should not allow a system where the rulers elect opposition MPs	385	2.59
Unelected MPs should not be allowed	385	2.88
The first past the post electoral process should be discouraged	385	3.80





The respondents were also asked about their perception on the alternative solutions which can be implemented by SADC in order to break the deadlock of conflict between the two main political parties in Zimbabwe. An analysis on Table 4.5.1, shows the majority of voters were agreeing (*mean of 4.43*) that SADC should have a legally binding electoral process to member countries, agreeing (*mean of 4.34*) that a mediated dialogue is the only way for Zimbabwe, agreeing (*mean score= 3.80*) that that SADC should have a perfect fool-proof strategy of monitoring polls, and also agreeing (*mean of 3.80*) that the first past the post electoral process should be discouraged.

Notably also was the fact that the majority of voters were not sure (*mean score= 3.22*) whether SADC election monitoring processes should be done by professionals, not sure (*mean score= 3.43*) whether it was feasible for SADC Electoral monitors to start election monitoring work 2 to 3 years before elections. Not sure (*mean score= 2.59*) whether it was feasible for SADC not to allow a system where the rulers elect opposition MPs and finally of the quantitative analysis the majority of respondents were not sure (*mean score= 2.88*) whether it would be feasible for SADC to decree that unelected MPs should not be allowed in member countries' parliament.

The following verbatim quotes from University Lecturers, Opinion leaders, NGO Representatives and Political Journalists on alternative solutions which can be implemented by SADC in order to break the deadlock of conflict between the two main political parties in Zimbabwe

-University Lecturer 1 gave that, the politics of impunity be Zimbabwe's ruling elite is so entrenched that SADC, now need to draw up a strong code of conduct on how to conduct elections in the SADC region. He went to say

*-NGO Representative 1 concurred by saying our number one problem are a flawed electoral process. In some countries all political players are treated equally but, in this country, when we go to the polls, we already know who is going to win our elections, this is a shame as it shows lack of accountability that permeates our electoral system. Consequently, Zimbabwe 's democratic trajectory is not certain, and the international community should remain vigilant and engaged in supporting the people's call for a genuine transition*

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study is anchored by the Timeline analysis theory which basically examines Zimbabwe's timeline between 1980 and 2020. Between gaining independence from the British in April 1980 and 21 November 2017, the Republic of Zimbabwe was ruled by Robert Mugabe, the leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). Two decades after independence, Zimbabwe had fallen into an extended period of economic decline and crisis, which was primarily linked to the implementation of a controversial land reform in 2000 - a policy that led to low agricultural productivity, high unemployment and hyperinflation (Gebremichael, Fitwi, Kidane, Belay & Sharrif, 2018). It is important to look into numerous factors that can explain the difference between the 2008 and 2013 elections in Zimbabwe. During the 2008 electoral violence, youths were used as proxies and employed to carry out acts of violence in exchange for financial gains, in many cases, necessary for them make ends meet or support their families. These factors can be identified and analyzed with the help of timeline analysis. SADC found itself embroiled in the Zimbabwean electoral debacle following the 2008 elections.

The majority of respondents *strongly agreed* that, SADC has no political will to mediate in the Zimbabwe conflict, also that SADC cares little about Zimbabwe's economic meltdown, SADC cares little about human rights violations in Zimbabwe, SADC guidelines on elections are rarely used in Zimbabwe, SADC mediators are always biased against the people's wishes, also they agreed that SADC mediators are more interested to their own countries gains at Zimbabwe's expense. The above resonates with Chikohomero (2019) who views the electoral processes in Zimbabwe as a mirror to Southern African Development Community (SADC) shortcomings with regards to entrenching democratic values. Though not the only measure of democratisation, elections remain a key component with which to measure the extent of a

country's embracing of political freedoms and citizen participation. However, there was a minority voice which supported the role of the mediator as fair, the following is what he said "in Southern Africa, we are lucky to have a regional grouping call called SADC. That organization was born out of the spirit of revolutionaries; thus, they know serious political parties and those that are championing the cause of imperialist powers.

Furthermore, on whether they thought SADC was fair in the execution of their role of conflict resolution and peace building. The following is what came out of the survey, the that the majority of respondents strongly agreed (mean score= 4.55) with the assertion that Zimbabwean leaders have a propensity for power, strongly agreed (mean score = 4.88) that Zimbabwe leaders are materialistic hence use power grabbing strategies to amass wealth, strongly agree (mean score= 4.70) that leaders are selfish, and are afraid their crimes will follow them after they leave power. Marios (2015) supports the above view when he says the result of this approach is that SADC cannot coax member states into instituting comprehensive and democratic electoral reforms. The slow pace of reform has been frustrating for citizens and activists. Electoral integrity and credibility have been elusive in most SADC member states. Elections and electoral processes have been a source of contestation and, in some instances, instability, leading to open conflicts in Southern Africa and elsewhere in Africa.

The Zimbabwean political conflict has been ongoing for nearly two decades and, at each turn, SADC has failed to act on principle. Instead, it has sacrificed its own rules for political expediency in the name of solidarity and stability. The 2013 elections clearly showed a deliberate disregard of the SADC Principles and Guidelines. However, the response from the regional body was understanding and conciliatory and merely suggested cosmetic improvements. SADC displayed neither force of conviction nor determination to guide Zimbabwe towards alignment with its own constitution and the Principles and Guidelines. The failure by SADC to enforce its own rules against a 'strong' member state like Zimbabwe over the last few decades partly contributed to its inertia during what some might refer to as a coup in November 2017.

The role of regional organisations such as SADC in the resolution of political and economic crisis in member states is a very exciting area for political discourse. Within such a context, there is need for third-party intervention in African conflicts or crises as in the case of Zimbabwe. Agbu (2006:19) notes that, the term "third party intervention" is used to refer to a person or team of people who become involved in a conflict to help the disputing parties manage or resolve it. For Agbu (2006) states-mediators not only facilitate discussions, but

they usually impose a structure and process on the discussions that are designed to move the parties towards mutual understanding and win-win agreements. The concept of third-party intervention is particularly crucial in the Zimbabwean case. While the role of SADC and its mediators in Zimbabwe has previously resulted in a power sharing agreement that was signed by the leaders of the opposition and the ruling party. Unfortunately, SADC faced a number of challenges with the full implementation of the power sharing deal, in such a way that the conflicting parties did not follow through on their agreements. This lack of follow-through is at least partly attributable to SADC as the mediating party. SADC just let the ruling party do as they wanted. SADC should have shown its teeth, but alas, they just continued being one sided.

The study revealed the stigma that has come to characterize Zimbabwe's image in other countries makes the playing field uneven. Every Zimbabwean is being tarred with the same brush, all of us are known as thieves and prostitutes. Besides, lack of official documentation has led to the vulnerability of Zimbabweans in South Africa as they end up doing all sorts of odds jobs just to sustain themselves. During interviews respondents noted that, it has increasingly become embarrassing to be associated with the Zimbabwean brand when one visits any of our neighbouring countries, because whether it's the law enforcement agents or just ordinary citizens one is labelled as a scoundrel who is always living outside the law. Once Zimbabwe was known as the bread basket of the region but now we are the basket case of the region. Unfortunately, the truth is never told, while I acknowledge that the tag Zimbabwe has become a liability in neighbouring countries, but this is simply because of illegal sanctions that were imposed on Zimbabwe by the imperialist forces. Could these people who called for these sanctions please, now go out there and request that these sanctions be retracted.

Another Opinion Leader *added that it was embarrassing being labelled as a Zimbabwean in neighbouring countries as everybody was being labelled the same.* Besides, most Zimbabweans do so without any presence of official documentation has led to the vulnerability of Zimbabweans in South Africa as they end up doing all sorts of odds jobs just to sustain themselves (Miller, 2010). Bimha (2017, p.8) sums up the actions of desperate Zimbabweans' actions as reminiscent of the push-pull theory which is migrant-centred in that it focuses on explaining how individuals, as rational actors, decide to migrate if there are perceived economic gains in the country of destination."

More so, this same theory defines migrations as primarily a function of economic differences between the place of migrants' origin and the country of destination (Bayisa, 2017). Miller

(2010) and Tarnu. (2015) however caution against calling the Zimbabwean exodus to South Africa economic migration as they bring a new dimension into the predicament migrants find themselves in their country of birth. “In addition to the economic turbulence in Zimbabwe, the unstable political environment has also played an important contributing role in prompting the exodus of Zimbabwe to their southern neighbour” (Miller, 2010, p. 1). While concurring with Miller’s view Bimha (2017) argues that the mass movement of Zimbabweans to their southern neighbour has assumed a new dimension, it has also become a humanitarian migration in addition to the already existing economic migration crises which was already existing when desperate job seekers were finding all means possible to just cross the Zimbabwe /South African border.

### **Conclusion**

The study identifies the causes of the conflict in Zimbabwe as economic mismanagement and failures of governance, leading to social alienation and dislocation to which the ruling party responded by increasing repression. The security structures remain powerful actors and seem determined to ensure that ZANU-PF does not lose power. SADC seems increasingly divided over how to deal with the issue, and the future remains uncertain. ZANU-PF is determined to maintain itself in power, for to lose control of the state is to lose practically everything, and given the changing demographics, there will probably be no way back. The departments of state, and especially the higher ranks of the security agencies (defence, police and especially intelligence) are dominated by ZANU-PF ‘cadres’ as a result of years of politically-motivated placements, and the state is the principal vehicle for patronage. Moreover, the party sees itself, especially with regard to the land, as engaged in a new liberation struggle the ‘third *chimurenga*’ or liberation war (the first being the resistance to the early white settlers, the second the war against the Ian Smith regime). It is no coincidence that the slogans and rhetoric (and some of the political mobilisation methods) of the liberation war are used in the present.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the above findings the following recommendations were made:

#### **SADC principals**

It is recommended that given that the SADC principals have been treating the Zimbabwean question with kid gloves for a long time, the Zimbabwean question should now be escalated to the Africa Union, failure to which it should be handled by a special impartial mediator.

## **Government of Zimbabwe**

The government of Zimbabwe should enable laws that make it possible to file complaints at the polling-station level on election day and include instructions on the procedures and forms to do so in polling manuals and information provided to the candidate and party agents. The government of Zimbabwe should conduct a comprehensive review of the electoral legal framework well in advance of the next elections to further clarify, update, and harmonize respective laws.

## **Zimbabwean Judiciary**

The Zimbabwean judiciary should uphold the legal rights of citizens and the country's domestic

and international commitments to the U.N. human rights conventions, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Declaration of Rights of the Zimbabwe constitution

(Chapter 4, Section 50: Protection of the Rights of Accused and Detained Persons.)

## **Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC)**

It is recommended that the ZEC should provide public information on a regular basis and allow for a meaningful observation of ZEC activities. Information on decision-making and all other activities should be made available through briefing papers posted on the ZEC website and through regular, timely briefings for candidate agents and observers. ZEC should enhance the effectiveness of ZEC training on election-day procedures, with a particular focus on the vote count and how to complete summary results forms by dedicating more time to practical exercises on these issues. Furthermore, ZEC should adopt and publicize transparent procedures for the tabulation, transmission, and announcement of results.

Moreover, ZEC in accordance with international covenants and principles of equality, should ensure clear distinction between activities of the party in power and activities of the government to avoid abuse of state resources. The ZEC should be legally empowered to enforce provisions within the Electoral Act that strictly prohibit the politicization of food aid,

agricultural inputs, and other social welfare benefits including penalties for misuse of state resources and the involvement of public officials in political activity.

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