

Beyond the signature: Appraisal of the Zimbabwe Global Political Agreement (GPA) and Implications for Intervention

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The optimistic reality in Africa is that the continent has witnessed a dramatic reduction in the number of armed conflicts since the onset of the 21st Century. Many such conflicts are concluded by negotiations which often lead to peace agreements. Peace agreements are contracts between parties intended to end a violent conflict, transform a conflict and ultimately consolidate peace. Most peace agreements address procedural and substantive dimensions of peace, including the *modus*

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operandi of achieving peace, the structural changes to be effected as a result of the agreement, as well as the institutional mechanisms for consolidating peace. The peace agreement mode of resolving conflicts has become particularly common in Africa, and it has proven essential in rebuilding shattered communities. Increasingly, the peace agreements brokered in Africa have tended to embrace a power sharing approach which has spurred a number of Governments of National Unity or coalitions. Power sharing agreements are promissory contracts that are premised on

Photo: (FromL) Zimbabwean MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) breakaway faction leader Arthur Mutambara, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, opposition's leader Morgan Tsvangirai and South African Thabo Mbeki pose after signing the power-sharing accord on September 15, 2008 in Harare.

redistribution of political, territorial, military and economic power among belligerents (Hoddie and Hartzell, 2005). The goals of power sharing in peace agreements include regulating the power as well as fostering inclusion among actors and stakeholders in conflict. The 2003 Arusha peace Agreement signed among belligerents in Burundi, the 2008 peace agreement signed between the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and the Party of National Unity (PNU) in Kenya, and the 2008 Global Political Agreement in Zimbabwe all have a common thread of redistributing power among parties and resulting in coalition governments. Although there is logic in the concept of power sharing, a huge debate on the sustainability of the power-sharing currently dominates political conversations. Power sharing agreements are criticised for neglecting the democratic will of the people as they often supersede election results by focusing on political elites while excluding input from moderates, junior political parties and civil society. Ultimately, power sharing agreements have a deficit in consensus and local ownership, an attribute that curtails democratisation and hinders sustainable peace.

Despite these normative and practical concerns, power-sharing agreements have become a popular method of addressing conflict, especially in the 21st Century. A common outcome of power sharing agreements is the creation of coalition governments, which are also known as Governments of National Unity. As a power-sharing agreement, the GPA in Zimbabwe closed a chapter on a decade of turbulence and political instability and was welcomed by observers and practitioners as a road map towards democratic reform in Zimbabwe. The GPA, which reached its second anniversary in September 2010, ushered in a Government of National Unity (GNU) which has witnessed ZANU PF and the MDCs working together in Parliament and Cabinet under challenging yet compelling conditions.

This policy and practice brief assesses the outcomes of the Global Political Agreement, appraises the performance of the Government of National Unity and examines the implications of the Zimbabwe situation on sustainable peace in Southern Africa. Data for this brief was acquired interactively from ten days of fieldwork in Zimbabwe involving interviews with politicians, civil society actors and political analysts. In addition, the author participated in a stakeholder meeting organised by the South African Liaison Office (SALO) in October 2010, which focused on “Building International Consensus on Zimbabwe.” The assessment was also informed by extensive review of relevant

secondary data. Subsequently, the author makes proposals and recommendations for action that could be taken by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU), GPA principals, civil society and the international community towards addressing the current political stalemate in Zimbabwe.

CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL POLITICAL AGREEMENT (GPA)

For nearly a decade, the relationship between the MDC and ZANU PF has been characterised by a violent rivalry which has had dire socio-economic consequences for Zimbabwe. Power, governance, ideology and resource distribution were all cardinal factors that contributed to this conflict. ZANU PF perceives the MDC as a counter-revolutionary and neo-liberal force that threatens to reverse the gains of independence. In fact, in the ZANU PF narrative, the MDC is considered a surrogate of the British and a “puppet of the West,” tasked with orchestrating the “regime change” agenda. On the other hand, the MDC is convinced that poor policy choices by ZANU PF were responsible for the socio-economic and political complexities in Zimbabwe, in particular the economic implosion and rising discontent among the populace.

The MDC is keen to demonstrate that ZANU PF's patronage politics has become exhausted and that the opposition has emerged to deliver a new neo-liberal social democracy. As a result of coagulated frustration with ZANU PF policies, the MDC managed to mobilise a cross-section of the population, including urbanites, intellectuals, workers, civil society activists as well as white commercial farmers. ZANU PF responded to burgeoning dissent by entrenching radical policies and dispensing violence against the opposition. Apart from the violence, the Zimbabwe crisis has seen increased rates of unemployment, growing levels of poverty and declining life expectancy rates affecting the populace.

The Zimbabwe political crisis and economic haemorrhage had contagion effects in the region, including a massive exodus of refugees to Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, Zambia and South Africa among many other countries, hence assertion that Zimbabwe was “the sick man of SADC” (Gavin, 2007). In May 2007, the spurt of xenophobic violence targeted at African nationals in South Africa was partly attributed to the burgeoning Zimbabwean refugee population in poor neighbourhoods in South Africa. Increasing levels of violence within Zimbabwe further heightened the crisis. Highlights of the increasing levels



of violence include the fast-track land resettlement programme known as the Third Chimurenga² which commenced in 2000, Operation Murambatsvina³, an urban clean-up campaign launched in 2005 and the period prior to the June 2008 runoff election, which led the leader of the MDC-T, Morgan Tsvangirai to withdraw from the Presidential race. This move spurred more directive intervention from SADC through the efforts of the designated mediator, Thabo Mbeki. After concerted mediation efforts by President Thabo Mbeki, a negotiated settlement, namely the GPA was finally reached on 15 September 2008.

ANATOMY OF THE GLOBAL POLITICAL AGREEMENT

The GPA is a watershed agreement which witnessed ZANU PF and the two MDC formations resolving to work together towards consolidation of peace and reconstruction of the country's shattered economy and political landscape. In this agreement, President Robert Mugabe retained the Executive Presidency (head of State and Government) and the positions of commander-in-chief of the armed forces and chair of cabinet, while Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC-T became the Prime Minister (head of the Council of Ministers), and Arthur Mutambara of MDC-M⁴ was offered the position of Deputy Prime Minister. The GPA awarded 16 Cabinet positions to the two MDC formations, while ZANU PF got 15 seats. Furthermore, in the Global Political Agreement, parties also agreed, "...to work together to create a genuine, viable, permanent, sustainable and nationally acceptable solution to the Zimbabwe situation."⁵

On February 11 2009, Morgan Tsvangirai, Arthur Mutambara and Thokozani Khupe were sworn in as Prime Minister and Deputy

² *Chimurenga* is a word in Shona language, which translates to revolutionary struggle. The *Third Chimurenga* is a phrase coined by the ZANU PF party, to refer to the post-2000 farm occupations under the compulsory land acquisition scheme. ZANU PF regards the acquisition of land as another form of liberation struggle to address post-independence structural inequalities over land ownership. However, observers point out that the process was accompanied by violence which discredited the noble aims of the programme.

³ *Operation Murambatsvina* was launched by the Zimbabwe government in May 2005 and it lasted for approximately 6 weeks. It was aimed at cleaning up the urban areas but the end result was demolition of urban informal structures and destruction of informal livelihoods.

⁴ The MDC-M formation is now known as MDC-N following the dismissal of Arthur Mutambara from the party's presidency in February 2011. Now, the second formation of the MDC is led by Professor Welshman Ncube, formerly Secretary-General of the party. Nonetheless, as at publication of this paper (February 2011), Arthur Mutambara still remains the Deputy Prime Minister, a position he was accorded as a leader of the then MDC-M during the GPA.

⁵ The Agreement between the Zimbabwe National African Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Formations on Resolving the Challenges Facing Zimbabwe, September 15, 2008. The full text of the agreement can be found at http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/uploads/AGREEMENT_ZPF-MDC%5B1%5D.pdf

Prime Ministers respectively in accordance with the provisions on Constitutional Amendment # 19 of 2009. Following its second year anniversary, which precedes elections as well as due to the spread of the GNU as a model for settling political disputes, it has become imperative to take stock of the Zimbabwe GNU's accomplishments and challenges.

APPRAISAL OF THE GLOBAL POLITICAL AGREEMENT

Achievements of the Global Political Agreement

Clearly, the GPA remains a seminal occurrence that has enabled the Government of National Unity to undertake some notable reforms in governance and economic development. By providing a road map for short- and long-term recovery, the GPA is an attempt towards political transformation and reconstruction of the country. The immediate effect of Zimbabwe's GNU was to bring rival parties together, halt the protracted turbulence and ultimately promote conditions for democratic reform. The subsequent inclusive government has been accompanied by a gradual distribution of both functional personnel and power from ZANU PF to other political players, MDC-T and MDC-M.

Since the conclusion of the GPA, there have been visible changes in Zimbabwe's political and economic terrain, in particular, the establishment of fiscal sanity and the regression of hyperinflation. By July 2008, Zimbabwe's hyperinflation rate was approximately 230 million percent; now inflation is estimated to have been brought down to 3%. Since the GNU began operating, there has been recorded growth of the Zimbabwean economy, while the availability of basic commodities was restored.

Furthermore, the GNU has also attempted to address the governance and democracy deficit by establishing independent and transparent commissions like the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) whose membership is open to independent persons with expertise in the selected areas. Previously, members of commissions were handpicked by the President; now commissioners of the post-GPA era in Zimbabwe are selected by Parliament through a public process. Most of these commissions are fully constituted and operational albeit with fiscal and political challenges. In addition, the Zimbabwe GNU is expected engender other political reforms including review of the constitution.

As mandated by Article VI of the GPA, a Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) was established in April 2009 to coordinate the consultative processes for constitutional reform. Since June 2009, the COPAC has held



public hearings and consultations towards the process of reforming Zimbabwe's constitution. In addition, the GPA called for the establishment of an Organ on National Healing in Zimbabwe, which has conducted consultations on the nature and direction of healing and reconciliation processes in Zimbabwe following the trauma of violence. Despite criticisms of the organ for inaction and polarisation, such consultations have generated robust public debate about the key issues that include the debate of amnesty versus justice as well as issues of reparations. These achievements of these initiatives remain at the formative stage, however.

Challenges in the Global Political Agreement

Despite the grandiose objectives of the GPA, the coalition government is at a critical juncture and it faces multiple challenges. The political deal appears to be on the brink of a precipice as tensions between ZANU PF and MDC are high and political maneuvering is evident. The constitutional reform process has been affected by incidence of political violence as each party seeks to influence the content of the constitution. Similarly, the healing and reconciliation initiatives notably suffer from lack of significant progress given the contested and multiple viewpoints of parties involved.

Also notable among these incomplete reforms are administrative issues regarding the appointment of Governors, Ambassadors, the Reserve Bank Governor and the Attorney-General. The MDC insists on being involved and consulted on these appointments while ZANU PF asserts that it is a Presidential prerogative enshrined in the Constitution. Although levels of political violence in Zimbabwe have decreased since the signing of the GPA, incidents of politically motivated violence have been reported, especially during the constitutional review process and also since the announcement of possible elections in 2011. In addition, media reports of continued land invasions have surfaced.

The sanctions debate in Zimbabwe has also become polarised, with ZANU PF on one side accusing the MDC of reneging on its promise to have these restrictive measures removed, and the MDC on the other hand arguing that the removal of such measures is dependent upon visible democratic reforms by ZANU PF. Against this background, regional and international sentiments are fundamentally divided on the issues of sanctions on the ZANU PF leadership as both the AU and SADC have remained resolute in calling for the removal of all forms of sanctions on Zimbabwe while the international community disagrees. In addition, within the international community, there is discord with regards to Zimbabwe and sanctions. In particular,

disagreements exist within the European Union as well as between Western countries and China, Russia and Brazil.

In addition, the GNU is challenged by the noticeable dominance of the security chiefs in Zimbabwe's politics. Also known as *securocrats*,⁶ these security chiefs publicly identify with ZANU PF not only because of the party's pan-African ideals but also because of the economic benefits derived from this association. Since independence, *securocrats* have been the bedrock for ZANU PF in political governance. Given their political nature, the *securocrats* have been identified as spoilers to the reform processes. However, the SADC mediators, Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma have not made concerted and significant efforts to include them in the quest for a lasting solution to Zimbabwe's conflict. President Zuma has however begun discussions with the Zimbabwe security chiefs.

The performance of the GPA in Zimbabwe offers important lessons about negotiated settlements, power sharing and Governments of Unity. Firstly, the GPA was brokered and reached at the elite and political level as negotiations towards the GPA only involved the three main political parties in Zimbabwe and their interlocutors. Lack of civil society representation resulted in an emphasis on power sharing instead of significantly addressing the effects of the conflict on the general populace.

Additionally, Zimbabwe GNU presents SADC leaders with a daunting task of supporting a pan-African and liberation movement against a background of the international condemnation of the ZANU PF regime. President Robert Mugabe is perceived within SADC as a paragon of African nationalism while, the MDC's association with the western community has tainted the party with labels such as neo-imperialists after all, to African leaders in the region MDC is a young political party whose leadership has not yet acquired significant political maturity and diplomatic experience. SADC's favour of Mugabe as opposed to Tsvangirai is based on pragmatism. Supporting labour-based opposition politics in the SADC region would be tantamount to political suicide for many Southern African leaders who are afraid that the gesture would catalyse similar labour movements in their own countries.

⁶ The term 'securocrats' was coined to refer to Zimbabwe's top officials who lead Zimbabwe's key security institutions including the Chief of Police, Commissioner Augustine Chihuri, the Commander of the Air Force, Air Marshall Perence Shiri, as well as the Commander of the National Army, General Constantine Chiwenga



Another concern with the GPA regards the timing of the upcoming elections. Despite initial protests by the MDC, ZANU PF has made statements to the effect that elections in Zimbabwe would be held in 2011. While elections will move the country forward from the limbo created by coalition politics, there are visible power asymmetries between actors in the GNU, with ZANU PF evidently controlling most of the power levers. In addition, there are concerns that the country is not ready for elections institutionally, economically and politically. Given that the history of a militarised electoral authoritarianism in Zimbabwe which has always guaranteed a ZANU PF win (Bratton and Masunungure, 2008) the proposal to hold elections in 2011 has been received with mixed feelings by certain quarters, including civil society who are concerned with a decade of elections that were fraught with complexities such as voter intimidation, allegations of rigging as well as electoral violence. There are sentiments that Zimbabwe elections in 2011 do not look too promising given the volatility that is often associated with the country's elections.

LIKELY SCENARIOS

The fragility of the GPA is worrisome, hence the need for a candid analysis of what possibly lies ahead. The following is a projection of the direction of political developments in Zimbabwe, based upon whether elections are conducted in 2011 or delayed. The scenarios are based on the analysis of present-day Zimbabwe, juxtaposed to the country's history and past experiences with election. These scenarios merely aim to present an approximate picture of what is likely to happen in Zimbabwe in the next three years given the local, regional and international dynamics at play.

Scenario 1: 'Harvest of Fear'- Sporadic Electoral Violence and Voter Intimidation

If the elections go ahead as scheduled, they will be likely conducted in mid or late 2011. Even though SADC could be invited as an observer, ZANU PF will likely rely on sporadic violence and intimidation in selected areas. During and prior to this election, the MDC and civil society will likely have no freedom to mobilise and campaign as the elections would have occurred against a background of limited reforms in the electoral architecture. Fears of a reincarnation of the June 2008 type of violence could force the electorate to 'vote wisely'. Although there is potential for irregularities and fraud to occur, SADC will likely declare the 2011 elections 'free and fair', as past experiences have shown. This scenario could lead to Zimbabwe's further isolation from the international community followed by yet another collapse of the economy and a complete erosion of the gains made by the GNU. This is the most likely scenario given the current developments in Zimbabwe where already there are reports of declining civil liberties as well as sporadic and systematic incidence of political violence.

Scenario 2: 'Minimal reform, minimal transformation

In this scenario, minimal democratic reforms including a reviewed constitution will likely be instituted prior to 2011 elections. Given SADC's continued engagement with Zimbabwe, the minimal pressure from SADC will allow the MDC to campaign, and ZANU PF will likely invite regional observers. However, the limited democratic reforms could enable the people of Zimbabwe to choose their leadership without restraint, a situation which might open the door for SADC to fully support the fledgling democracy. The elections could lead to a very close race between ZANU PF and the MDC, thereby increasing the likelihood of post-election violence. Regional bodies like SADC will likely encourage negotiations to take place between the two camps. It is not clear what course of action the political parties could take, but chances are that the MDC could seek new ways to mobilise their supporters and re-strategise.

Scenario 3: Delayed elections for coagulated reform

Although ZANU PF is likely to reject the opposition's claim for postponing elections, the MDC would like to see the polls postponed to a later date as they have raised concerns with election preparations and the country's readiness. However, if it is determined that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) does not meet all the necessary conditions to hold a credible election, there is a possibility that regional organizations could put pressure on Zimbabwe to delay its national elections. The elections will likely be held at a later date on the basis that this will allow for full implementation of the GPA reforms, including constitutional review and electoral reform. The elections will likely be observed by both local and international observers with the chance that the SADC Guidelines on the Conduct of Credible Elections will be duly respected. The extra time for reform will likely allow each party to consolidate its mobilisation strategy and outreach to the populace, thereby presenting an opportunity for another tight race. It remains to be seen which party will win or whether ZANU PF and MDC could ever form another government of national unity.

Scenario 4: Banking Violence for later use

Considering that elections are delayed per MDC's request, this does not guarantee the party an electoral victory. History has demonstrated that despite the spacing of election in Zimbabwe by five years or so, the post-2000 elections in the country have tended to be violent anyway. ZANU PF could still use intimidation campaigns against the MDC and its supporters. Even then, violence is likely to increase especially if fraud and irregularities emerge. Under such scenario, it is possible that the opposition could reject the election results, which could lead

ZANU PF to govern without the MDC. Based on the aftermath of the June 2008 elections, it is likely that such an election will be condemned by SADC and the international community. Based on past experiences, a crisis of legitimacy will likely emerge in Zimbabwe, while the opposition could become weaker and more desperate and possibly divided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The complexities of the Zimbabwean crisis require a multi-faceted approach by various African peace and security institutions. As such, these recommendations are categorised according to the actors who will be responsible for enacting such proposals.

1. For political parties in Zimbabwe

- All parties to the GNU, ZANU PF and the two MDC formations should respect and implement the promised GPA reforms, including constitutional reforms, addressing issues of governance and addressing the sanctions stalemate. The parties to the GPA must manage their affairs more constructively in this transition.
- ZANU PF must stop relying on intimidation and violence but should instead mobilise people using popular will.
- The two MDC formations must address their interparty a intraparty differences by reinvigorating their organizational capacity to effectively mobilise public opinion. These parties must also present a more distinct party ideology and manifesto.
- Given the fresh memories of political violence in Zimbabwe, there is a strong sentiment of voter apathy and fatigue. All parties must work hand in hand to guarantee voters the necessary security they need to show up en mass at polling stations.
- ZANU PF, the MDC formations as well as other political parties must respect the will of the people in the upcoming 2011 elections. The parties must also jointly work on a post-election strategy. Only a credible election respected by all could guarantee the future stability of Zimbabwe.
- ZANU PF and the two MDC formations must address the fractionalisation within their respective parties as these may threaten the overall stability of the country.

2. For civil society

- Civil society should take its rightful place in advocacy, voter education and policy influence. Civil society should be allowed to work with government and regional organizations to identify and act on any irregularities that may compromise democratic reform. Failure to do that may discredit the election results if fraud and irregularities are reported.

3. For the Mediator, President Jacob Zuma of South Africa

- The mediator President Jacob Zuma must be more directive and engaged with the political parties, ZANU PF and the MDC formations to ensure that GPA reforms that were agreed upon in 2008 are implemented.
- Given that spoilers such as the securocrats pose threats to sustainable peace, it is imperative to engage them in the vision for a post-GPA Zimbabwe. The inclusion of security chiefs in the negotiations for democratic reform in Zimbabwe is crucial given that this group has the hard power to prevent a smooth democratic transition.

4. For SADC and the African Union

- Since SADC is the initiator and guarantor of the GPA, it should continue playing the facilitation role in Zimbabwe to ensure that outstanding GPA reforms are implemented. The African Union and SADC should effectively use their peace and security organs including the Peace and Security Council and SADC Troika on Politics, Defence and Security respectively, to find a lasting solution to the Zimbabwe crisis. These organisations have a mandate to ensure that parties are held accountable for full implementation of the GPA.
- Even though SADC achieved a negotiated settlement between parties, it is important to move beyond the signature. When there is a crisis to be resolved between political actors in Zimbabwe, SADC must not be ambivalent, but should play a more proactive role in drawing a roadmap ending the crisis. This can only be possible if SADC forthrightly engages all parties.
- Using the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, SADC should continue pushing for electoral reforms, including a viable voter's roll, a favourable electoral environment as well as a non-partisan and well-equipped Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).
- Whatever outcome of the elections in Zimbabwe, SADC must ensure that there is democratic stability in Zimbabwe. The regional organisation should not recognise fraudulent elections. In addition, SADC should guarantee security of voters by instituting a policy of zero-tolerance against violence and intimidation.
- SADC and the African Union must be proactive by engaging parties in Zimbabwe before conflict escalates. It is critical for these organisations to support civil society efforts to bring about political, constitutional and social reform in Zimbabwe.
- It is important for SADC and the African Union to have policy consensus on the transformation of Zimbabwe's conflict. Divided positions will only reinforce the protracted nature of the conflict.



5. The United Nations and the International Community

- Mugabe and ZANU PF have been unreceptive to foreign intervention in Zimbabwe, accusing western powers of interference in Zimbabwe's internal affairs. The United Nations should support the mediation efforts by SADC and other AU interventions in the country to ensure there is African ownership to the Zimbabwean solution.
- The international community has maintained some level of political intervention in Zimbabwe through targeted sanctions which signify protest against policies implemented by the ZANU PF party. Though most of the sanctions are targeted at ZANU PF elites and their allies, economic sanctions have affected the day to day life of an average Zimbabwean. In order to revive the economy of Zimbabwe, the international community should support efforts which promote economic stability, growth and employment creation. Though measures such as debt relief, soft loans and foreign direct investment might not be a priority for the international community in the short term, they could be crucial in assisting Zimbabwe in its process of economic recovery.

Conclusion

Although the GNU has been welcomed by many as the antidote to Zimbabwe's crisis and much has been celebrated about its achievements, the Zimbabwe conflict is still very fluid as conditions shift everyday due to the belligerent nature of the relationship between ZANU PF and the MDC. The challenges of moving the agenda of the GPA forward draw attention to the need for continued follow-up by scholars, civil society, SADC and other conflict management stakeholders on the Zimbabwe situation. In particular, it is important for SADC and the mediator to maintain their facilitator and guarantor roles for the GPA, while civil society and scholars should continue to engage in conflict assessments and early warning on the Zimbabwean situation to avoid casualties during the impending 2011 elections.

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