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## **DEMOCRACY AND NATIONAL GOVERNANCE IN ZIMBABWE: A COUNTRY SURVEY REPORT**

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**DEMOCRACY AND NATIONAL GOVERNANCE IN ZIMBABWE: A COUNTRY  
SURVEY REPORT**

**SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA (IDASA)**

**BY**

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## 1. Background

### 1.1 Introduction

This Zimbabwe country report presents and interprets our survey findings on the attitudes, feelings and orientations of Zimbabweans on various political matters related to the concept and practice of democracy. Readers must be alerted to the fact that the survey was conducted in September/October 1999. This was during the public consultation process associated with the national but highly polarized efforts to construct a new supreme law for the country. This resulted in a draft constitution which was subjected to a referendum in February 2000 whereby the majority of the voting population rejected the government-backed draft. It is therefore noteworthy that the survey preceded this historically momentous referendum and other important subsequent political events most notably the farm invasions spearheaded by the veterans of the 1970s liberation war, the violent election campaign leading to the June 2000 parliamentary elections. The survey therefore captures what people were thinking at the time, i.e., even before the above-mentioned political events and processes.

The report begins with a brief account of the political history of the country in order to situate the study in its historical setting. This will help the reader acquire the perspective and contextual feel necessary to focus the subsequent discussion. It is posited here that the study of unique historical and cultural legacies provides an essential explanation for present thinking and behaviour. This brief background tries to isolate those factors that are part of the country's legacies that constitute a salient feature of Zimbabwe's political inheritance. This is followed by an explanation of the methodology used. The rest of the remaining sections present and analyse some of the key findings.

### 1.2 The Political History

Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia/Southern Rhodesia, is in large part a prisoner of its history. Part of its historical baggage includes 90 years of sustained minority white domination over the majority indigenous blacks under successive British settler colonial regimes. The Rhodesian state system dates back to the establishment of alien European rule in September 1890 and, "from its inception, the overriding imperative was the consolidation of the colonialist hegemony and its attendant infrastructures of control" (Masunungure; 1996, 1). The white minority governments, particularly that of Ian Smith's Rhodesia Front, were dedicated to the indefinite prolongation of the subjection of one race by another.

Colonial Zimbabwe was a bifurcated state. Two pigmentationally defined groups stood in opposition to each other, locked in a primarily two-sided contest for power. Race was the basis on which valued resources were authoritatively allocated and denied. Power, and all that is associated with it, gravitated toward the white oligarchy. The racial bifurcation of the society is aptly captured in Richard Grays book, *The Two Nations* (1960).

Before its political independence after a bitter and bloody armed liberation struggle, the country

never knew democracy except in its limited and exclusivist sense of what Masipula Sithole calls “intra-white democracy” (1990, 452). The white side of the settler political system was as democratic as any mature democracy but it was democracy defined as rule *of* the whites, *by* the whites and *for* the whites. For instance, elections were held regularly and as religiously as the constitution and electoral provisions dictated but these were essentially whites-only elections. Granted, at no time did the electoral system disenfranchise blacks as a matter of law, but the franchise qualifications were such that only a tiny segment of the Africans qualified, and of those who did, fewer still bothered to partake in the elections. Further, while white participation in politics was celebrated as a mark of citizenship, black politics was criminalised through a battery of draconian legislation. Constitutional lawyer Claire Palley (1966) observed at the time that taken together, this armory of repressive laws all but obliterated the principle of the rule of law in Rhodesia.

Politically, Rhodesia was characterised by two central tendencies; the trend toward illiberalism that culminated in the Unilateral Declaration of Independence to fend of any movement, however limited and diluted, toward black majority rule. The UDI leader, Ian Smith is on record as having declared: “no majority rule, not in a thousand years.” The other tendency in white politics was the dominant one-party rule tendency. Perhaps because of the white perception of black encirclement and security imperatives, they tended to invest their trust in a dominant and decisive leader. Thus Rhodesia had only five prime ministers from 1933 to 1978. Sir Godfrey Huggins ruled for an unbroken twenty years (1934 - 1953) and Ian Smith was in charge for fifteen years (1964-1978). Both tendencies have endured to this day in black-ruled Zimbabwe.

If racially, Rhodesia was a tale of two nations, it was also a tale of two nations economically. Blacks were economically disenfranchised often through legislation but, more importantly, through covert measures that were not necessarily codified but were understood as the operative rules of the game. This gave rise to a dual economy supported by a dual political system. The distribution of resources was highly skewed. Discriminatory policies and practices pervaded all aspects of socio-economic and political life.

It was the nature of the colonial political economy that led to the emergence, and later militarization of black politics that culminated in the armed liberation struggle, otherwise referred to as the Second Chimurenga War. The militant white political system had created its own antithesis, as if to confirm Galbraith’s “dialectic of power” thesis, where he contends that “power creates its own resistance” (1983, 72) and that “power is normally countered by opposing positions of power ...” (1983, 74). The armed struggle was spearheaded by two main opposition parties, the Ndebele-oriented Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) - its armed wing was the Zimbabwe Peoples Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) under Joshua Nkomo, and the Shona-oriented Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) - and its armed wing, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) under Robert Mugabe.

Perhaps because of the logic of the situation, and the very militaristic organisation of African nationalism in its final phases, both ZAPU and ZANU developed a militaristic conception of politics

as well. This was amplified in their armed wings. It is argued elsewhere that “both (ZIPRA and ZANLA) were highly commandist and authoritarian militarism was the chief characteristic of the liberation struggle” (Masunungure; mimeo, 1998, 22). The character and requirements of the liberation struggle transformed these two nationalist movements into authoritarian structures, brooking no dissent or criticism lest one would be accused of being a “sellout”, with ghastly consequences for one so accused.

The legacy of the armed struggle was a socio-psychology of death, terror, fear and intolerance. This was part of Zimbabwe’s political inheritance and it had a bearing on post-independence governance once the victorious militants got into power. Thus, the Economic Intelligence Unit observed that “the political experience learnt in fighting a seven year guerrilla war is leading increasingly repressive measures and an increasing authoritarianism” (EIU; 1983, 9). Rhodesian authoritarianism was reproducing itself in post-white rule Zimbabwe.

Though Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980 was a historical watershed, there were more continuities, in political terms, than discontinuities. The dominant-one party tendency continues to dominate the political landscape to this day. While the settler regimes tried to eliminate black politics by criminalizing it, the ruling ZANU (PF) government has tried to criminalize opposition politics by emasculating the opposition or rendering it impotent through various manifest and overt measures. Mugabe himself had at one point declared himself an apostle of the one party state. The one-party state project was in fact on the agenda for a decade and was only abandoned after the 1990 elections and also in reaction to the global ‘wind of change’ particularly in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

If there was this continuity in terms of one party dominance, the one-man-rule tendency was even more pronounced in black ruled Zimbabwe. At independence, Zimbabwe was bequeathed with a British-type constitutional dispensation which provided for a parliamentary system of government with a prime minister as head of government and a non-executive president as head of State. Mugabe, the prime minister from 1980 to 1987 introduced constitutional changes that: (1) fused the two positions into an executive presidency and he became its first, and so far, only occupant - this was effected through Constitutional Amendment Act (No.) 1987; and (2) gave the President powers to legislate unilaterally - this was effected through the Presidential Powers Act of 1986. “The Presidential Powers Act and the Seventh Amendment had the effect of laying the juridical basis for what Juan Linz called ‘structural authoritarianism’ or what we are calling here ‘presidential centralism’” (Masunungure; 1998, 3). So, Zimbabwe after independence gradually moved from being a dominant one party state, to a party-state, then to a presidential-state, all of these features had the effect of undermining the democratic foundations of the political system.

We ought as well to point out that the dynamics of post-colonial Zimbabwe are partly shaped by another continuity from colonialism; the continued economic hegemony of the tiny white minority. This provides a source of much racial frictions arising from the reality that while blacks captured political power at independence and are thus in charge of the ‘commanding heights’ of politics, the

`commanding heights' of the economy are still in white hands or perceived to be so by black Zimbabweans. This lack of correspondence between political and economic power is often exploited by the ruling party politicians, especially during election seasons.

Another dynamic to be noted is the ethnic heterogeneity of the Zimbabwean black community. In ethnic terms, and broadly speaking, Zimbabwe is a bi-ethnic society with two main indigenous groups, the Shona and the Ndebele. The former constitute about 78 per cent of the total population while the Ndebele are roughly 19 per cent. But this is to simplify matters. There are sub-ethnic groups within each of the two major groups most notably within the Shona. So, in fact Zimbabwe is a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic nation-state or nation-state in the making. This introduces a complexity in the political management of the country.

We have thus far observed that the country now known as Zimbabwe has had no experience with democracy except in the narrow majority rule sense. It has an unbroken history of political authoritarianism, both of the white minority model, and now, of the black majority rule type. It is struggling to define itself within the universally accepted democratic framework. Even in the electoral sense, there are serious limitations. Though holding regular elections (just as successive settler regimes did), the elections are widely alleged to be fraudulent, and fraught with irregularities. The electoral process and the institutional framework are seen as defective. The perception that the elections are somehow rigged has most probably contributed to the progressive decline in voter turnout from a very high 94% in 1980 to 57% in 1995 for parliamentary elections and from 53% in 1990 (the first direct presidential elections) to just 33% in 1996 for the presidential elections. Voters have increasingly become apathetic, one of the salient features of Zimbabwe's electoral politics.

The above discussion provides the backdrop to this study. In the next sections we focus on the survey which provides some of the empirical evidence on the state of politics and society in Zimbabwe. But first a note on the methodology used.

### **3. Sampling and Fieldwork**

The sample universe included all citizens of voting age, excluding areas determined to be either inaccessible and/or not relevant for the study. Excluded areas were national and game parks, people living in institutions (students in dormitories, persons in prisons, nursing homes ect). Zimbabwe has ten provinces, Bulawayo, Manicaland, Midlands, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Matebeleland North, Matebeleland South, Masvingo and Harare. Harare and Bulawayo are basically urban, while the remaining provinces are mostly rural. Stratification of the sample therefore was initially by province and all provinces were included in the sample. The inclusion of all provinces means that most, if not all, ethnic and cultural sub-populations in Zimbabwe were reached. The distribution of the sample populations was based on the 1992 census national distribution of the population per province.

Selection of the Districts, Wards and Enumeration Areas (EAs) was then carried out based on the 1992 Zimbabwe Master Sample of the Central Statistical Office which has 19 274 EAs. Out of

these, 13 581 are rural while 5 692 are urban. The first-stage stratification and random selection was that of the primary sampling units (PSUs) from this sampling frame. One hundred and fifty (150) EAs were the ideal sample for this study, with 100 of them covering rural areas and the remainder being urban areas. For rural areas, the interval was 136 (13 581 divided by 100), meaning that every 136<sup>th</sup> rural enumeration area was included in the sample. For urban areas, the interval was 114 (5 692 divided by 50). Every 114<sup>th</sup> urban enumeration area was selected for the study. The selected enumeration areas are indicated in Appendix 1.

A second-stage random selection was of the households from the selected 150 EAs/PSUs.. Households are defined as single housing units/groups of persons living together and eating from the same pot. Therefore, separate compounds for multiple spouses or backyard dwellings for relatives, renters or household workers were treated as separate dwellings. On average, an enumeration area has about 100 households. For each EA, a map showing location of households and major population points was obtained from the CSO. A sampling start point was selected randomly, and eight (8) households around the start point were chosen according to the method thereafter. The method for selecting the starting points was as follows:

*The sample designer placed a ruler with numbers along the top of the map of the selected EA and a ruler with letters along the side of the map. The designer then randomly chose a number, and randomly chose a letter, resulting in a random combination, eg 'B4'. A line was then drawn on the map horizontal to the chosen letter, and another line vertical to the number. The point on the map where these two lines intersect was the sampling start point. This point was then marked on the map, and given to the field team for that area.*

The fieldwork team then had to locate the nearest settlements to this point, and traveled there. Four enumerators were assigned to each EA, and each had to do two interviews to have eight interviews per EA. They all started walking from the start point, with each one of them taking directions as indicated by the team leader.

Once the household was selected, what remained was the selection of eligible individuals (aged 18 years and above) chosen randomly. A numbered card was given to each qualifying member of the household. Odd number cards were given to males while even number cards were given to females. The head of household or someone else present was asked to select a numbered card from a bag. The person interviewed was one whose card bore the number chosen. Substitution of households due to refusals of people not being home was with the very next household.

Twenty Research Assistants and four Supervisors were trained for five days in September, 1999.

These were experienced students either studying for postgraduate degree or just completed an undergraduate degree in the Social Sciences with experience of administering questionnaires from previous researches. The questionnaire was translated into Shona and Ndebele, and pretested during the week of training. Fieldwork was carried out in October 1999. The Enumeration areas were put into four blocks mainly by province and by proximity. Each team had to administer the questionnaire to the assigned EAs in their block.

### 3. Democratic Consolidation in Zimbabwe

In this section, we discuss what we may term, the “depth” of democracy in Zimbabwe. What is their commitment to and support for democracy? What do people understand by democracy? How well does democracy actually work in the country, i.e, does democracy exist empirically in Zimbabwe?

#### 3.1 Commitment to and Support for Democracy

Democracy, however it is understood by the Zimbabwe demos, is undoubtedly a preferable system of government to a vast majority . Up to 71% of the sampled population affirmed this preference with only 11% agreeing that “in some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable to democratic government.” About 13% are indifferent as to the type of political regime - to them it makes no difference whether the regime is democratic or not. The latter could possibly be comprised of the disillusioned lot i.e., they perhaps view post-independence `democracy’ as the continuation of the previous non-democratic rule.

This preference for a democratic system of rule is confirmed by responses to questions that probed respondents’ attitudes to democratic institutions. Zimbabweans have a deep attachment to democratic institutions notably a pluralistic media, an independent court system, political parties, parliament and elections. Table 1 captures this evident commitment to institutions of popular rule if government were to take action that had the effect of undermining or threatening to destroy these

Table 1



### Attitudes Towards Democratic Institutions

	Strongly support	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose	Strongly oppose	DK
Shut down media critical of government	3	4	13	18	57	4
Dismissed judges who ruled against govt.	5	4	13	22	53	5
Banned political parties	3	3	14	20	53	5
Suspended parliament & cancelled elections	2	2	14	21	54	5

*If government were to take the above actions, would you support it .....*

institutions. Up to 75% said they would oppose or strongly oppose such government actions with respect to all four institutions. In all four cases, support for such government moves never reached 7%. This corresponds with our earlier finding about the strong support for democracy even though it is not really working.

However, though the commitment to democratic institutions is robust, Zimbabweans register a lower propensity to taking action when government takes the above actions. On all items, about 40% said they would “do nothing” in response to government actions. Roughly half the adult population would take some form of action with the most popular response being “speaking to others about it” (about 25%) followed by “joining a march/demonstration” (roughly 15%).

In this regard, an overwhelming majority support democratic structures but just over half the citizens would take action in defence of the democratic institutions. The desire for democratic institutions is not matched by a concomitant inclination to act in support of those institutions from a predatory government. But at least the *spirit* of democracy is present and compelling among Zimbabweans.

We have noted that there is a wave of support for democracy. An import adjunct to this picture is that there is also an unequivocal rejection of non-democratic alternatives of governance. On one party rule Zimbabweans are emphatic; three quarters (74%) of them disapprove (20%), or strongly disapprove (54%) of this system of government while only 14% said they approve or strongly approve. Zimbabweans are multi-party lovers; they are certainly not apostles of the one-party system. One party rule has few takers among the citizens.

The same message comes through with respect to traditional leaders. Though traditional authorities are generally respected in their sphere of jurisdiction, the study indicates that when it comes to taking

all decisions in a secular modern state (i.e., outside the traditionally defined domain), Zimbabweans reject this. Sixty three per cent either “disapprove” (20%) or “strongly disapprove” of this dispensation. A minority “approve” (15%) or “strongly approve” (8%) while 10% are indifferent.

An explicitly non-democratic form is military rule - a perennial and troublesome occurrence in Africa. On this Zimbabweans are one: they are firmly against military incursions into politics. Eight out of ten respondents said they “disapprove” (13%) or “strongly disapprove” (66%) of the military leaving their barracks to govern the country. So, two thirds of adult citizens are strongly against this system of rule. The resounding public message is that the experts in violence should remain in their barracks and have no business ruling the country; theirs is not to govern Zimbabwe but to defend it.

Another non-democratic option to democratic rule is one-man rule or in the Zimbabwe case, presidential monopoly of power and authority. We asked respondents to register their opinion on a situation where parliament and political parties were abolished so that the President could decide everything. More than 78% of the respondents declared their “disapproval” (13%) or “strong disapproval” (64%) of this type of rule. In this view, even an elected President ought not to govern alone by monopolizing decision-making or govern by decree. It is as if Zimbabweans are saying, “responsible power is shared power.”

Equally, a big majority of the country’s population reject a return to a governmental system based on white minority rule with 62% strongly disapproving and 12% disapproving of going back to the old white-controlled system. They have no nostalgia for colonialism as a system of government.

In short, Zimbabweans have an unambiguous preference, even a passion, for democratic forms of rule; they have no desire to change to non-democratic alternatives even though the state of democracy they live under is very much imperfect. They thus have no nostalgia for authoritarian alternatives to multiparty systems or for reverting to the old colonial order.

In view of the widespread preference for democracy, it comes as a surprise that fully half of the total sample of respondents express a preference for technocratic rule (rule by experts) with regard to important economic decisions. In the economic sector, rule by experts is more preferred to rule by an elected government or parliament - 21% approve of this and an additional 30% strongly approve as against a fully one third who reject this arrangement. The finding is rather baffling because at the heart of democracy are regular elections and accountability and yet these economic experts would be unelected and therefore unaccountable in the popular sense. One can however speculate that the respondents were disenchanted with their elected government especially in terms of economic performance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It could also be that the word “expert” conjures up images of efficiency and effectiveness, or knowledge and capacity to deliver as opposed to the politicking of politicians even when “Rome is burning.” This is particularly so when the word is translated into Shona - the positive attributes are amplified and this could have influenced respondents.

### 3.2 Understandings of Democracy

To address this issue, we first asked respondents what they understand by the word “democracy”. Responses to the question on the meaning of the term yielded a diverse array of views about this ancient concept and practice. It was as if to confirm a related but much later question on democracy being associated with diverse meanings.<sup>2</sup> There are certainly many misconceptions surrounding the concept and content of democracy.<sup>3</sup> Few Zimbabweans conceptualize democracy as a system of government, i.e., a political regime type. As already footnoted, a plurality of the respondents view democracy as meaning “majority rule” or civil liberties of some kind e.g., freedom of speech, of association, expression etc or associate the term with rights (e.g. equal rights, the right to everything, right to vote) . Still others associate the concept with some condition of welfare or that it is associated with government policy.

It is clear that this concept is a nebulous one among Zimbabweans. 17% of adult Zimbabweans actually do not know what democracy means while an additional 11% said it is meaningless. All in all, the concept appears to be a difficult one to grasp. The strong association of the concept and substance of democracy with civil liberties and majority rule has to do with the independence struggle against white minority rule. The struggle was directly seen as related to a struggle for emancipation from the oppressive colonial rule and this was the chief mobilization theme stressed by the African political leadership. It was hardly mentioned that democracy is a particular type of political regime connected to a particular political culture of ruling. The same observation was made in Malawi, a legacy of the political struggles against Kamuzi Banda’s autocratic rule. A GTZ socio-anthropological study report on “The Challenge of Democracy in Malawi” wrote:

Less emphasised by the political leadership in the country are the connections between, on the one hand, *democracy as a political regime (or system of government)* and, on the other, *a democratic culture that ensures stability, popular participation, tolerance of views and actions, accountability and transparency on the part of those*

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<sup>2</sup> Readers must be alerted to the fact that the translation of the word “democracy” into either of the two major indigenous languages was in itself a definition of the term or simply meant “majority rule”, a response that was given by 15% of the sample, the largest single definitional response category among those who offered an opinion.

<sup>3</sup> Even the learned theorist would concede that the word is a highly contestable one. John Hoffman declared that “Democracy is without doubt the most contested and controversial concept in political theory” and that this in part “because it embodies such a wide range of contradictory meanings” (1988, 131). Bernard Crick had earlier complained that “Democracy is perhaps the most promiscuous word in the world of public affairs. It is everybody’s mistress ...” (1982, 56).

*who hold offices, checks and balances in the branches of government, and the entrenchment of morally and legally accepted values and practices (1998, 75). Emphasis in original.*

Some of the above findings are confirmed in survey responses to another question which asked respondents the degree to which they associate democracy with eight specified meanings. Table 1 presents the responses.

Table 2  
**Understandings of the Term “Democracy”**

Meanings	Absolutely essential	Important	Not very important	Not important at all	DK
Majority rule	67	22	4	1	4
Complete freedom to criticise the government	60	22	9	4	5
Regular elections	61	25	6	4	4
At least two political parties competing	58	24	7	5	5
Jobs for everyone	67	22	3	2	5
Equality in education	62	23	6	2	5
A small income gap between rich and poor	51	22	14	7	6
Basic necessities (e.g., food, shelter) for everyone	67	21	3.3	2.3	4.5

*What, if anything, do you understand by the word “democracy”? What comes to mind when you hear the word?*

For purpose of analysis, the eight specified meanings of democracy can be seen in two senses: the strictly *political* sense, i.e., democracy as political rights; and the *socio-economic* sense, i.e., democracy as social rights. Evident from the responses is that all four meanings of political democracy are considered very important with large majorities considering each of them as either “important” or “absolutely essential”. Majority rule is perceived as a particularly salient attribute of democracy in the political sense, closely followed by regular elections.

When conceived in its socio-economic sense, “jobs for everyone” is considered “absolutely important” by 67% of the adult population and a further 22% regard this as “important”. This is not

surprising in a country where the unemployment rate exceeds 50%. The provision of basic necessities for everyone is also a valued dimension of democracy with 88% mentioning it as either “absolutely essential” (67%) or important (21%). However, significantly fewer Zimbabweans consider income equality to be an especially critical policy goal - its connection with democracy is the weakest among the eight variables with 73% considering income equality to be either “absolutely essential” or “important.” It is difficult to establish why this is so in the absence of further evidence.

The implication of the above data is that democracy is valued both in its political and socio-economic rights. Both political and economic rights are considered important and critical, that is to say, both substantive or welfarist democracy and procedural democracy are highly valued though with varying degrees of intensity.

### 3.3 Empirical Democracy in Zimbabwe

The key question here is: How does democracy actually work in Zimbabwe? How does the present government compare with the past regime/s Are people satisfied with the content of democracy in their political kingdom? We try to address these questions here.

One of the defining and salient tenets of democracy is the existence of certain civil and political rights including freedom of the press, freedom of expression, freedom to form or join organizations of your choice. Equally important is social and economic justice and the performance of the government in this regard. We thus make a distinction between how people view their political lives and how they see their social and economic lives in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The former refers to political rights and the latter to substantive or economic rights.

*Political Rights.* From our survey data, Zimbabweans feel that the post independence dispensation accords them more political rights than under the white minority regime. They feel freer to express themselves, to join political organizations, to choose a candidate or party of their choice at elections and are less fearful of being arrested by the police for no apparent offence. On the issue of freedom of speech, slightly over half (54%) see an improvement compared to 22 % who view things as having deteriorated. Fifteen per cent see no difference between pre and post-independent Zimbabwe.

A much larger proportion of adult citizens report an improvement in terms of the freedom to join a political organization of their choice. Fifty per cent say the situation is better with 13 per cent indicating that it is much better. Only 11% think that the situation has worsened. A similar proportion (63%) feel that they can now enjoy the freedom to choose a person of their choice without feeling forced by others, with 14% saying things have deteriorated compared to the period before independence.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> It must be hastily added that at the time of writing, all the three freedoms discussed seem in mortal danger than was the case when the research was conducted. Political

The police, despite accusations of unprofessional and high-handed conduct in dealing with suspects do not seem to instil ungrounded fear. A large body of citizens no longer fear arbitrary arrests by the police, that is, if they have not done anything wrong. This compares quite favourably with the colonial period. Only 12% think the circumstances are worse (5%) or much worse (7.5%) with 15% saying things are about the same. There is therefore a reservoir of relative confidence in the police whose constitutional function is to maintain law and order.

In comparative terms, the current government is viewed as treating its citizens better than the white minority regime with 44% expressing this view though a significant segment think otherwise. Twenty seven per cent of respondents dispute the statement that “everybody is treated equally and fairly by government” 16% believing it is much worse. It can be argued that given the fact that the Ian Smith white oligarchy (1965-1979) was rabidly racist and discriminatory in almost all facets of social life, any post-independence government could have been an improvement, at least in terms of overtly discriminatory policies. The fact that social justice has not been achieved or is perceived not

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violence, political motivated murders, rampant intimidation, political thuggery and harassment have become more or less endemic in the post-constitutional referendum period. The electorate overwhelmingly rejected the ruling party-backed draft constitution, to the obviously bitter embarrassment and violent reaction of ZANU (PF). Thus the response to the “freedoms” questions are very likely to have been significantly different had the field work been done after the referendum and in the period leading to the June 2000 parliamentary elections.

to have been achieved so far is confirmed by responses to the question about whether “Zimbabweans are equal to one another.” The respondents are split almost equally: while 37% affirm this assertion, 36% disagree with up to 21% thinking the situation is much worse. A further 18% think things are much the same. The ‘positives’ and the ‘negatives’ almost balance each other. If one of the pillars of democratic governance is equality, then sadly Zimbabwe does not appear to be fertile ground for this at this historical juncture. This is disturbing especially when it is noted that more than a third of Zimbabweans think that the minority regime fared better in this regard when conventional wisdom would view the colonial era in comparatively more negative terms.

*Economic/Substantive Rights.* Regarding safety and security, more Zimbabweans feel unsafe and insecure than they were in the colonial period. A quarter of the citizens see the situation as worse and an additional one fifth as much worse. Exactly a third contest this and another 14% see no change. However, one should be careful in linking the prevalence or perceived prevalence of crime and violence to democracy or lack of it. I do not think there is a straightforward correlation here. For instance, violence, defined by Alfred de Grazia as “the illegitimate use of physical coercion” is a ubiquitous phenomenon everywhere, unlike force, “the legitimate use of physical coercion.” The promiscuous use of force by the state suggests political illegitimacy. But violence can be very rampant even in the developed and institutionalized democracies. In the United State, the “mother” of all democracies, black militant leader Rap Brown charged that “violence is as American as cherry pie!” We think that crime, violence and democracy can in fact co-exist, undesirable though this is.

Where it matters most for citizens in developing countries plagued by the economics of scarcity, that is bread and butter issues, the present government is given a vote of no confidence. Respondents were asked to compare the pre and post independence regimes in terms of adequate standard of living and access to basic necessities. Half the adult population think they are worse (25%) or much worse (26%) in contrast to 28% who view the situation positively. A further 13% see no change in the standard of living of Zimbabweans. In other words, half the population is disillusioned with the fruits of independence, and that is twenty years after the momentous euphoric event. Even the other 13% who see the situation as neither worse nor better have not had their expectations fulfilled.

On the question of accessibility of basic necessities, again the picture is rather depressing. More than four out of every ten Zimbabweans see their access to these necessities of daily life as either worse (22%) or much worse (22%). Thirteen per cent say things are about the same while 36% see positive progress but only 8% of the sample perceive the situation as much better.

According to Robert Dahl, one of the singularly important constituents of a democratic political system (what he prefers to call “polyarchy”) is that “virtually all adults have the right to vote.” (Dahl, 1991, 73). In Zimbabwe, all citizens above 18 years of age have the right to vote. The last general election was in 1996 to elect the executive president. In that election, our survey shows that some 44% reported having voted, about 20% said they were unable to vote while an additional 22% “decided” not to vote. A few things need to be pointed out in trying to interpret this data. First is that the 44% who said they actually voted in 1996 could have confused this election with the

parliamentary elections held a year earlier. This is because the reported voter turnout in 1996 was no more than 33% with some accounts putting it at no more than 30% (see Makumbe and Compagnon; 2000, 292). Second is that the 1996 election confused many potential voters because the two opposition candidates withdrew on the eve of the election citing, among other things, an uneven playing field. Thus many voters abstained thinking that the incumbent president was therefore elected unopposed, a fact disputed by the president himself who `refused' to recognize the withdrawals and urged his supporters to turn out in their millions to vote - the names of the two opposing candidates remained on the ballot. The point is, the survey results on the 1996 presidential election are not entirely reliable. Nonetheless, the fact that 22% of the electorate took a deliberate decision not to vote is rather worrying. The whole episode also suggests that there is something grossly unsatisfactory about Zimbabwe's electoral system that renders the process not conducive for genuinely free and fair elections. This one-sidedness of the political game and the electoral process may explain the dwindling voter turnout since the 1980 elections. The incentive to vote has been eroded, confirming the hypothesis that "you are less likely to become involved in politics if you think that what you do won't matter because you can't significantly change the outcome anyway" (Dahl; 1991, 100).

How democratic is the present government? To answer this question, we asked respondents to indicate their opinion on how Zimbabwe is governed. The results are as reflected in Table 2 below:

Table 3  
**Respondents' Views on how Zimbabwe is Governed (by per cent)**

Completely democratic	108	9
Democratic with minor exceptions	213	18
Democratic with major exceptions	206	17
Not a democracy	455	38
Don't understand question	145	12
No label????	62	5

*On the whole , is the way Zimbabwe is governed:*

If democracy is a valued and preferred system of governing Zimbabweans, it is evidently clear that the citizens are unhappy and dissatisfied with the democratic credentials of the current government. More than half the adult population declare Zimbabwe either undemocratic (38%) or only marginally democratic (17%). The level of dissatisfaction is confirmed in a follow-up question: "Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Zimbabwe?" Table 3 shows the responses to the question.



Table 4  
**Views on Satisfaction with Democracy in Zimbabwe**

<b>Respondents who said ...</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Very satisfied	5
Fairly satisfied	13
Not very satisfied	21
Not at all satisfied	36
Not a democracy	17
Don't know	7

*Overall, how satisfied are you with democracy works in Zimbabwe?*

From the data presented above, again, three quarters of adult Zimbabweans are at the very minimum not very satisfied with how democracy is working in Zimbabwe with 36% reporting that they are not at all satisfied. Only five in a hundred Zimbabweans are very satisfied about the 'democratic' process in the country. It must also be noted that the 17% who said Zimbabwe is "not a democracy" actually volunteered this response without being prompted. This is a damning indictment especially in view of the frequent claims by the ruling political leadership that Zimbabwe is a fully fledged democratic regime. Those who are governed reject such assertions, and do so by an overwhelming majority. Certainly something needs to be done about the state of democracy in Zimbabwe. There is a high level of demand for democracy among the citizenry, but a low level of perceived supply.

#### **4. State Legitimacy**

Several questions can be addressed under this theme. First, do people view the state as legitimate? A range of questions were asked to measure this. One of the key dimensions of political legitimacy in any democratic system is the manner in which those who have control over government decisions get to those positions of power. Dahl had this to say on this matter: "Elected officials are chosen and peacefully removed in frequent, fair, and free elections in which coercion is absent or quite limited." This points to a number of requirements, including procedural ones. Asked whether the present government was elected to power by accepted procedures, the majority of respondents (58%) either agreed (38%) or agreed strongly (20%) with the statement, 28% agree or disagree strongly, 6% neither agree nor disagree while 7% do not know. Our interpretation of these results is that though many Zimbabweans are disillusioned with the way they are governed, they nonetheless view the government as legitimate, at least in the sense of having been elected by accepted procedures.

However, questioned on whether the government exercises power in an acceptable way, nearly 60% disagree (27%) or disagree strongly (33%) while 24% say the government exercises power in an acceptable way. So, having come to power through accepted procedures, the victors are perceived as exercising that power in an unacceptable way.

According to James Bryce, a constitution is a “frame of political society, organized through and by law, that is to say one in which law has established permanent institutions with recognized functions and definite rights” a definition supported by Strong who sees a constitution as a “collection of principles according to which the powers of the government, the rights of the governed, and relations between the two are adjusted” (Strong; 1977, 10). In other words, a constitution is essentially the supreme law of the country that also embodies the values and aspirations of the governed. Do Zimbabweans feel this way about their constitution? Half of the respondents strongly disagreed (32%) or disagreed (18%) that the Constitution expresses their values and aspirations, 23% agree or strongly agree while 12% neither agree nor disagree. Significantly, almost 15% of the respondents said they do not know; significant because the highly polarized debate and consultations concerning a new constitution for Zimbabwe were taking place at the time of the field research in October 1999. In short, the constitution of Zimbabwe, as a political institution, is not regarded as legitimate<sup>5</sup>. This raises interesting but fundamental questions about *state*, *regime* and *government* legitimacy or vulnerability.

Stephanie Lawson distinguishes these three structures noting that “the state itself is the locus of political power, while the concept of regime is concerned with how, and by whom, that power is exercised”(Lawson; 1992, 4), i.e., regime is concerned with the form of rule. She continues: “Governments derive much of their legitimacy as controllers or managers of the state apparatus from the norms and rules of the regime. These are generally embodied in a constitution which sets out those publicly agreed procedures for the transfer of power” (Lawson; 1992, 5). Now, in cases where there are no such publicly agreed procedures for the transfer of power, meaning the constitution lacks legitimacy, can the regime and governments formed under it, be regarded as legitimate. If so, are they also not vulnerable?

We posed another question to tap people’s opinions on the legitimacy question. Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the statement “our government has the right to make decisions that all people have to abide by whether or not they agree with them.” Half of them “strongly disagree” and another 14% said they disagree; 20% either agree or disagree while 11% neither agree or disagree. This suggests that people want to be consulted before major governmental decisions that affect them are made.

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<sup>5</sup> Though they regard the present constitution as less than legitimate, Zimbabweans proceeded to reject the new draft constitution which was conceivably an improvement. They probably reasoned that though an improvement, it was still not good enough from a democratic standpoint.

The issue of trust in pivotal state and other state-related institutions is another dimension of state legitimacy. We asked a series of questions to measure trust in various such institutions. The results are depicted below.

Table 5  
**Trust in Key State Institutions (in per cent)**

	Never	Sometimes	Most times	Always	Haven't heard enough about them to know
President	38	37	12	7	5
Parliament	38	33	11	6	11
Local Government	26	33	18	10	9
Judiciary	19	25	22	20	12

*How much of the time can you trust ..... to do what is right?*

It is more than evident that citizens in Zimbabwe project and harbour a lot of cynicism and skepticism about the pillars of their polity, the only possible exception being the judiciary. The executive President is apparently the least trusted with 75% saying they will “never” trust him or only trust him to do what is right for only some of the time. In fact a plurality (38%) think the president can never be trusted to do what is right with only 19% stating that they trust him most of the times or always. The president, being the symbol of executive authority and leadership evokes very little public confidence.

Both Parliament and local government authorities also get a damning judgement from adult Zimbabweans though local government fares slightly better, notwithstanding the many corruption and mismanagement scandals that enveloped most local authorities in 1999. The more positive assessments may be perhaps because local governments are closer to the people and their outputs are more visible and directly felt.

Certainly, there is a public pervasive disaffection with the country’s major political institutions and political leadership. How do we explain this? It strongly appears that there is a political basis for this widespread cynicism, which is that they not only question the trustworthiness of the political institutions and their functionaries, but also question their capability or capacity to deliver. In other words, the cynicism is linked to the dissatisfaction with their performance.. The Table below captures the performance approval ratings.

Table 6

**Views on Performance of Major State Institutions in Past 12 Months (in per cent)**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Strongly disapprove</b>	<b>Disapprove</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Strongly approve</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
President	42	27	14	7	9
Parliament	32	31	13	5	14
Local government	30	23	24	9	11

*What about the way .....has/have performed his/their job in the last twelve months?*

In the past twelve months all the three institutions were perceived to have performed dismally. The presidency emerges the worst performer with nearly seven out of ten citizens either disapproving (30%) or strongly disapproving (42%) of his job performance. Only 21 per cent gave him a positive rating. For Parliament and local government, the combined “disapprove” and “strongly disapprove” ratings are 66% and 53% respectively. Local government again emerges relatively better off with 33% saying they approve or strongly approve of the way it performed its job compared to just 18% for parliament. Views on performance thus fed into people’s trust attitudes. Though politicians were long in rhetoric, as has been the case since independence and rising to a crescendo during election seasons, they have almost consistently been short on delivery. Expectations have been shattered and this translated into cynicism and pessimism. It is of interest to know if this cynicism about unambiguously political institutions of the state permeates even the less political or supposedly apolitical state institutions. Table 6 below addresses this curiosity.

Table 7  
**Trust in ‘Apolitical’ State Institutions (in per cent)**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Most times</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Haven't heard enough about it to know</b>
Army	14	23	25	27	10

Police	29	32	22	14	3
Courts of law	19	25	22	20	12
ES Commission	33	15	13	13	26

*How much of the time can you trust them (institutions) to do what is right?*

The Zimbabwe National Army is a product of war; it is an amalgamation of those forces formerly locked in combat during the liberation war. These were principally the two liberation forces ZIPRA and ZANLA that were subsequently merged with their former foes, the Rhodesian security forces with the active assistance of the British military. Under Section 96 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No 12) Act (1993), the ZNA is part of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces and shall be “for the purpose of defending Zimbabwe.” How do the people view this instrument of state violence? Do they trust their military?

The above survey results show that the majority of Zimbabweans do trust their army to do what is right with 27% saying they “always” trust it and another 25% reporting that they trust it “most of the times.” Only 14% are skeptical about the army’s role. To us, though not resounding, these feelings are an expression of public confidence in the army to do the “right” thing. In short, it enjoys relative legitimacy, as long as the armed forces confine themselves to their constitutionally defined role as defenders, *not* rulers, of the country. The latter conclusion is derived from the earlier discussed survey responses to the question about the army coming in to govern the country.

If many Zimbabweans invest trust in the army, what about in the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP)? The role of the ZRP, like in other societies the world over, is to maintain law and order. In performing this function, the ZRP always pleads the need for active public cooperation and support. But to win public cooperation and support, it has first to win public trust. The survey results are depressing. The citizens of Zimbabwe do not trust the police to do what is right. Only 22% trust the police “most times” and 18% “always” trust the keepers of law and order. On the other hand, six out of ten citizens “never” trust the police to do the right thing or trust the police only “sometimes” Surely, the police needs to do something about its tattered image if it is to gain the confidence of the public whose support it needs to effectively execute its constitutional duties.

Compared to the police force, the Zimbabwe courts of law are viewed as excellent. While 61% of the respondents are skeptical about the police, this feeling significantly falls to 35% with respect to the interpreters of the law. Of those who trust the courts, 22% do so “most times” and another 20% does so “always.” Though this is not entirely satisfactory, the public has slightly more confidence in the judiciary than in the other two pillars of modern government - the executive and legislature.

The Electoral Supervisory Commission which is appointed by the President to supervise elections, is another institution which invites peoples distrust - in fact it is the least trusted. Only a quarter of the electorate express trust that the ESC will do the right thing, a similar proportion actually have’t heard

enough about it to know. Nearly half the adult Zimbabweans either “never” trust the institution or trust it just “sometimes.” The reasons for the distrust were not specified but this is a body that has over the years been heavily criticised by both the opposition parties and civil society associations for being partisan or partial, toothless and ineffective.<sup>6</sup> This is quite sad given that this institution should be pivotal to the whole democratic process.

How does the media fare? One of the cardinal pre-requisites for a democratic society is the freedom of expression and the right to public and published information. The media, electronic and press, give ventilation to diverse and opposing views. In a democratic polity, the media act as society’s watchdog guarding against the promiscuous abuse of executive and administrative power. They can thus act as a countervailing agency, exposing wrongdoing, protecting individual liberties, correcting injustices and contributing in the framing of public policy. In short, the media are a channel of communication between citizens and their government, it informs individual choice at election time and influences governments by articulating the collective view or opinion of citizens.

Those who control and manage state power on behalf of citizens need information about citizen needs and values; conversely, the governed need information from those who govern them about governmental outputs and citizen obligations. The media are thus a vital part of the political infrastructure in any modern nation state. But to perform these salutary tasks effectively, the ‘fourth estate’ must be credible and trusted to disseminate information honestly, fearlessly and in a balanced way. Commenting on the role of the press in a democracy, Bryce proclaimed that “It is the

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<sup>6</sup> Sometimes after this survey, the then ESC Chairman resigned for allegedly heading an institution that is bereft of power and authority and has been denied the necessary resources to do its work. For one thing, though the ESC is constitutionally mandated to ensure that elections are free and fair, it has no statutory authority to declare elections null and void if in its determination the process was unfair and unfree.

newspaper that has made democracy possible in large countries” (1921, 92). He added:

Democratic government rests upon and requires the exercise of a well-informed and sensible opinion by the great bulk of the citizens. Where the materials for the formation of such an opinion are so artfully supplied as to prevent the citizens from judging fairly the merits of a question, opinion is artfully made instead of being let grow in a natural way, and a wrong is done to democracy (1921, 109).

What do Zimbabweans think about their media? Do they trust them? The results are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 8  
**Trust in Zimbabwe Media** (in per cent)

Media	Never	Sometimes	Most times	Always	Don't know enough about it to know
ZBC	19	22	22	18	18
Govt. Press/ newspapers	21	24	17	14	23
Indept. press newspapers	9	17	21	21	31

*How much of the time can you trust ..... to do what is right?*

Both the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and government-oriented newspapers suffer a credibility problem, more so the latter. Four out of ten ZBC listeners either “never” or only “sometimes” trust the national broadcaster. For the government press, close to half the adult Zimbabweans “never” trust it or do so “sometimes.” Only three out of every ten respondents trust the government newspapers and four out of ten respondents trust ZBC broadcasts.

The independent press attracts a higher trustworthy rating than the state-controlled press and only 9% said they “never” trust independent newspapers and 17% trust it “sometimes.”<sup>7</sup> 42% of the total survey respondents invest trust in the private press. The negative finding about this media type is that up to one third of adult Zimbabweans do not know enough about the independent press to be able to judge. This is in contrast to 18% for the ZBC (the only permitted broadcaster) and 23% for the government press.. The penetrative depth of the private press is still relatively limited. This is

<sup>7</sup> At the time of writing, there was just one one-year old independent daily paper, *The Daily News* and two major weeklies, *The Financial Times* and *The Independent*. The state on the other hand controls two dailies, *The Herald* and *The Chronicle*, both more than a century old.

probably because of a combination of factors including that highlighted in footnote five. In addition, the two weeklies are rather unaffordable, at three times the cost of a daily paper. They also tend to be too urban-concentrated and elitist, especially *The Independent*.

The important finding about the media is that the distrust associated with state institutions like the presidency and parliament also extends to the state-oriented media. These state institutions still have to cultivate or win back the trust of the people. The evidence so far firmly suggests that the present government suffers from a crisis of trust and legitimacy the outcome of which is indeterminate but worrisome. It is lacking that dimension of trust that David Kavanagh refers to as “intrinsic trust” that is “a belief in the honesty and probity of the political authorities” (1989, 146).

There are most likely multiple sources that contribute to this dearth and erosion of state legitimacy and trust. No doubt corruption or perceived corruption of public officials is a chief contributory factor. It corrodes trust and public confidence notwithstanding the circumstantial evidence that in some African countries the public tend to either condone, tolerate or ignore corruption. Our survey sought to find out how corrupt state institutions are perceived to be by the public.

In the study, corruption was understood to refer to situations “where those in government and the civil service take money or gifts from people to pay themselves, or expect people to pay them extra money or a gift to do their job.” The results are unflattering though not shocking to those who are familiar with the political economy of Zimbabwe, particularly in the post-ESAP era.

Close to 69% of Zimbabweans believe “all/almost all” or “most” government officials are corrupt. This compares very unfavourably with just 18% who either said “a few, some” (14%) government officials are corrupt or “almost none, none” (4%). Also, a staggering 70% of citizens think those who govern them take money or gifts from them and use it to advance their selfish individual and private interest. In other words, government officials are viewed as not being public-spirited; they do not have the common good or public interest at heart. The percentage could probably be higher had another 12% not been ignorant about the subject, having not heard enough about corruption in government.

From this general question on corruption, the survey then zeroed in on specific institutions and personnel. As Table 8 shows civil servants are perceived as the most corrupt. Sixty five per cent of the respondents judge “all/almost all” or “most” civil servants to be corrupt. Only two in ten Zimbabweans see these central government

Table 9  
**Perception of Corruption in Government Institutions**

Number of officials	All/Almost all	Most	A	Almost	Can't judge
---------------------	----------------	------	---	--------	-------------



perceived as corrupt			few/Some	none/ none	
In Parliament	36	27	15	3	17
Civil servants	34	32	16	4	14
Local govt. officials	26	25	21	9	13

*How many ..... do you think are involved in corruption?*

employees as more or less corruption-free. An additional 14% have no adequate information on the matter.

Parliament is also thought to be a hive of corruption by 63% of the adult population. Just about 18% think otherwise while 17% have not heard enough about corruption in Parliament.

Local government officials, for some strange reason, are assessed significantly more positively than their colleagues at national level. Nonetheless, half of the adult citizens think these officials are also corrupt while 31% give them a favourable judgement. It could be that local governments everywhere are less glamorous than central government and the media invariably concentrates on central government institutions and personnel. It is these that hit headlines, not some corrupt official in some remote and obscure local government authority. Because these local governments are invariably less endowed and have a weak financial base, the opportunities and conditions for corruption are less 'conducive'. We do not believe the tendency toward corruption among local government officials is necessarily less or subdued.

We have observed that a large majority of the Zimbabwe public thinks that corruption is rife if not endemic in various state institutions. But do people have some acquaintance with it? We asked respondents to indicate whether, in the preceding twelve months, they or their family members, had engaged in corruption with government officials to get some kind of service. Though corruption in government is perceived to be rampant, it is interesting that a very large proportion of Zimbabweans claimed never to have engaged in corrupt practices in the previous year. For instance, 88% said they had "never" practiced corruption to secure a job in the past year. Less than 3% had done so "often", another 3% had done so "a few times" while 5% had experienced corruption "once or twice." 86% had "never" engaged in corruption to get electricity or water. Another big majority (83%) had "never" given a gift or bribed a government official in order to get either housing or land.

If corruption in government is widespread, but the vast proportion of Zimbabweans had not engaged in corruption in twelve months, who then engages in corruption with government officials? In all cases cited, no more than 15% admitted that they or members of their family had participated in some form of corruption in the material period. Several possible explanations spring to mind. It could be that the respondents were less than truthful in their answers, for whatever reasons. Or, it could be that respondents had engaged in corruption before, but not in the preceding twelve months.

Alternatively, there are other areas of corruption that the survey did not probe e.g., corruptly acquiring things like a learner's/drivers licence, or a passport, or a vacancy at a government school/college, or bribing a police officer to avoid a traffic offence. Could it not be that these sorts of corrupt activities are more prevalent? If this is not the case, and in light of our survey data, it is tempting to suggest that corruption in Zimbabwe is more apparent than real, that it exists more in the realm of perception than reality. Alternatively, that corruption in the country is 'big time' business, practised on a large scale, but by the Zimbabwe elite, not the small fry. Whatever is the case, it appears that opinions on corruption are based on perception rather than direct experience

There is a widespread feeling that government institutions are generally unresponsive. With regard to the President, we asked the question: "How interested do you think the President is in what happens to you or hearing what people like you think?" 40% of citizens think he is "not at all interested" and another 25% think he is "not very interested." Thus, nearly seven out of ten Zimbabweans felt that their President does not bother about their fate or what they think. Only a quarter gave him a positive assessment with 19% saying the President is "interested" and 6% stating that he is "very interested." In short, the country's President, who is both head of state and head of government, is seen by a large majority of his citizens as uncaring about and indifferent to those over whom he rules.

The same assessment was given of Parliament. Six out of ten respondents said Parliament is either "not at all interested" or "not very interested." Only 26% viewed it as "interested" (19%) or "very interested." The local councillor scores better with 38% expressing the view that their councillor is "interested" (22%) or "very interested." However, half of the respondents are unhappy, with 26% saying their councillors "not at all interested" and an additional 24% judging him or her to be "not very interested."

The conclusion one draws from these "responsiveness" questions is the image of an average Zimbabwean politician as feathering his/her own nest, largely unconcerned with constituency citizens nor with their welfare and input. This is yet another indication of dissatisfaction with the way things are in Zimbabwe and coincides with other indicators of dissatisfaction.

Whatever explanation one ascribes to these results, it is instructive that the current ZANU-PF government is viewed far less favourably than the previous white minority regime in terms of corruption. Up to 56% of adult citizens consider the present regime to be either "much more" corrupt (32%) or "more" (24%) corrupt. This compares with the 19% who think it is less or much less corrupt than the pre-independence government. So, not only is the government seen as pervasively corrupt, it is viewed as worse than the old order with regard to corruption. This certainly subtracts from whatever legitimacy the government enjoys, more so when viewed against the backdrop of other survey results as demonstrated in Table 9 e.g., on responsiveness of government institutions.

Table 10

### **Comparison Between Present Government and Previous White Minority Regime**

(in per cent)

Comparison of	Much more	More	About the same	Less	Much less	DK
Effectiveness	7	16	13	33	23	8
Responsiveness	6	25	20	23	16	8
Corruption	32	24	13	13	7	10
Trustworthy	9	12	17	23	29	9

*You have told us how you feel about the effectiveness of the way government performs its job, its interest in what you think, corruption, and your trust in government. But how does this compare to the government that this country had before under white minority rule?*

It is therefore glaringly evident that the current government is thought of in worse terms than the oppressive and racist white minority regime. It is viewed as less effective, more corrupt, less trustworthy and even less responsive. In a bizarre way, the people of Zimbabwe seem nostalgic about the white settler regime which went out of its way to subjugate black Zimbabweans and deny them their rights in almost all spheres of life. This is tragic for a government which was overwhelmingly voted into power championing the rights and aspirations of Zimbabwean citizens. Not many regimes can function effectively against such negative judgements from the citizens over which it presides. The erosion of popular legitimacy is dramatic and should be cause for alarm for the present rulers.

One of the things the government has consistently harped on as a rationalisation for failing to satisfy peoples expectations is that the effects of the inequality inherent in colonialism has been so deeply embedded that any government would find it impossible to redress and reverse the legacies of white minority rule in the time it has been in power. But do the people sympathize with this explanation? To find out, respondents were presented with two statements and asked to choose one with which they agreed. The two statements were: Statement `A`; "It will take years for our system of government to deal with problems inherited from white minority rule" and Statement `B`; "Our system of government ought to be able to deal with problems right now regardless of who caused them." Only 24% elected to agree with statement `A` while 70% agreed with the second statement with up to 58% agreeing strongly with this statement. In other words, a big majority of the population believe that it is within the capacity of government to deal with the legacies of settler rule. In effect, the people are saying the government ought to be capable of resolving the problems inherited from white colonial rule but has failed to do so. In this sense, the government is viewed as an integral part of the problem; its failures are not attributable to whatever history bequeathed Zimbabwe with. This perceived ineffectiveness also erodes the popular legitimacy of the present government.

## 5. Government Performance

In this section, we present people's views on the performance of their government. It is now generally accepted that there is a strong relationship between economic and political development; that a sound and growing economy undergirds regime stability and sustains a democratic system of government or helps promote it where it is in its infancy. What do Zimbabweans say about their government's performance? Table 10 presents data on the people's evaluation of government performance on a range of specific issues.

Table 11  
**People's Evaluation of Performance of Government (in per cent)**

Issue being evaluated	Very well	Fairly well	Not very well	Not at all well	DK
Creating jobs	6	14	26	51	2
Building houses	4	22	30	37	6
Ensuring stable prices	4	11	15	69	2
Reducing crime	7	24	27	39	3
Improving health services	8	27	24	39	2
Addressing educational needs	13	33	21	29	3
Managing the economy	4	12	18	60	4
Delivering basic services	6	30	23	36	4
Enough land for everyone	7	15	21	52	5

*How well would you say the government is handling the following matters?*

Without exception, a plurality of citizens evaluate the present government in negative terms. Though it is assessed slightly better in the area of social services (e.g., delivery of basic services, health and especially education), its performance in the economic sector is harshly judged. More than 75% are far from satisfied with the government record in job creation, controlling inflation and in management of the economy. The government is felt to be ineffective in handling people's welfare. In fact, as Table 9 shows, 55% of Zimbabweans think the present government has actually been "less" effective or "much less" effective compared to the past white-controlled government. This has contributed to the lack of "pragmatic trust" in government i.e., "the belief that government carries out its promises" (Kavanagh; 1989, 146). This perceived low capability of the government may well threaten its very existence.

What about the performance of some of the pivotal government institutions? We asked respondents for their opinion on the performance of the President, Parliament and local government in the past twelve months. Of the three, the President was thought to have performed worst with up to 42% saying they "strongly disapprove" of his performance, another 27% "disapprove" and only 21% either "approving" or "strongly approving" of his performance. Parliament also gets a high disapproval rating with 66% either strongly disapproving or disapproving of the way Parliament had performed its job, 18% approve or approve strongly, while 14% said they do not know much about Parliament to evaluate its performance. Local government was evaluated relatively more positively but still 53% of the respondents either disapprove or disapprove strongly of its performance in the previous twelve months. Another 33 % are at least satisfied and 11% could not offer an opinion.

Interestingly however, close to half the respondents think that government represents the interests of "all Zimbabweans" while 46% feel government represents the interests of one group only. Could it be a case of government displaying equal unfair treatment and disinterestedness in its dealings with most groups?

Those who think that government favours one group gave diverse responses when asked to identify the favoured group. There is no unified position or consensus on this though the groups identified by a significant number of people can be classified as the elite of society. For instance, government is said to represent the interest of the "ruling class" by 6% of the 551 respondents who had said government represents the interests of one group only, 6% identified the favoured group as "the elite", 7% said it is "top government officials" 4% felt the group in question are "rich people" and another 4% identified the group as members of the ruling ZANU (PF) party. Significantly, few Zimbabweans identified the favoured group as an ethnic one. Only 4% of relevant respondents identified "Shona speakers", 2 % the Zezuru, 1% the Zwimba people (Zwimba is President Mugabe's home area). This suggests that the government is not perceived as being biased for or against specific ethnic groups or sub-groups. In other words, it is seen as ethnically neutral. This is quite surprising given the persistent complaints by various leaders in Matebeleland that government systematically marginalises that region and favours Mashonaland in the distribution of national

resources. Some in Mashonaland equally complain that development is deliberately skewed in favour of Zezuru-oriented groups.

We also asked respondents to indicate the degree of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with economic conditions in the country. Table 11 gives the responses. It is starkly evident that there is groundswell of dissatisfaction among Zimbabweans with the country's economic conditions, with

Table 12  
**Degree of Satisfaction with Economic Conditions in Zimbabwe** (in per cent)

Very dissatisfied	75
Dissatisfied	19
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2
Satisfied	2
Very satisfied	1

*At the moment, are you dissatisfied, neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, or satisfied with economic conditions in Zimbabwe?*

an overwhelming 94% expressing either dissatisfaction or strong dissatisfaction. Only a minute segment of the population is happy with the country's economic state of affairs. Furthermore, a very large majority of respondents felt the economic conditions in the country had actually worsened in comparison to those of twelve months back. 92% of Zimbabweans shared this assessment. In short, they are saying the nation is doing very badly. It is regressing, rather than progressing. This is the source of their pessimism, for they see no light at the end of the tunnel. Zimbabweans are bracing themselves for worse things to come, with 84% of the sampled population predicting that the economic situation would have deteriorated a year from now.

## 6 Citizenship

According to Bryce "legally, 'citizens' are those entitled to share in the government by expressing their mind and will on public questions" (1921, 144). Citizenship connotes the opportunity and capacity to participate in the governmental and public affairs of ones polity. This citizen competence or efficacy is empirically possible where the conditions for its fulfillment are present or can be created and where such conditions substantially exist, such a system approximates a democracy. Thus, to Dahl it can be reasonably assumed that:

... a citizen of a democratic country will be entitled to a considerable array of

opportunities to participate in political life, exercise control over the government, influence her fellow citizens, organize or become a member of a variety of associations, political, religious, economic, and others, and control an extensive range of decisions about her own conduct and personal life (Dahl; 1992, 16).

It is therefore clear that in democratic theory, citizen participation (individually or collectively with fellow citizens) in public and governmental decision making is a mark and test of good citizenship. For democracy to thrive and be consolidated, often there has to be critical mass of knowledgeable and active citizens. Our survey sought to find out how Zimbabweans score on some of these dimensions of citizenship.

For citizen participation to materialize, some political knowledge is necessary, including knowledge of political leaders. We asked respondents to name a number of political leaders and the results are in Table 12. The Table shows that most people could name their national and local political knowledge; the level of political knowledge is quite high. The paradox is that, despite knowing their

Table 13  
**Knowledge of Political Leaders**

<b>Respondents who could name ...</b>	<b>Correctly</b>	<b>Did not know</b>
Vice-President	72	19
Minister of Finance	41	43
Member of Parliament	52	30
Local Councillor	53	27

*Can you tell me who holds the following offices?*

leaders, there is very little contact or political interaction between the citizens and their leaders. For instance, asked if they had, in the past year, contacted a government or political party official about some important problem or to give them their views, a large majority (69%) said they had not with only 11% stating that they “frequently” contacted such officials. Even contacting other influential persons such as church or community leaders seems to pose problems with only 8% saying they frequently contact such leaders as against 67% who said they had not done so in the past twelve months. One wonders why this is so, and, more importantly, how Zimbabwean citizens articulate their problems and interests to the powers that be.

It could be the people lack the confidence to approach “big” political officials and other influential leaders. It is generally well known that such leaders tend to envelop their roles and offices with an aura of mystery which has the resultant effect of scaring the common man and woman. The leaders

become socially and psychologically distant even from the people they are supposed to serve. This therefore undermines the development of a culture of confronting and demanding, where such actions are legitimate. It can't be that Zimbabweans are somehow congenitally shy and withdrawn.

We have noted that adult citizens in this country are politically knowledgeable, at least of their leaders. But to what extent do they rely on or use the various media for news?. The survey demonstrates that the radio as a source of news is almost unchallenged; it dwarfs both the television and newspapers. While 60% of the respondents use the radio as their source, only half of the proportion (32%) mentioned television and just 24% mentioned newspapers. Those who said they "never" used these sources for news were 13%, 37% and 32% respectively. Issues of affordability, accessibility and literacy could be some of the reasons that account for the differential use of these three media of communication. For example, the TV is basically an urban phenomenon not only because that is the more affluent of society live, but also because the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation broadcasts mainly in the urban centers while radio signals can be picked on virtually in every corner of the country.

Citizenship also suggests political communication, not only with leaders, but also with fellow citizens on matters of governmental and public affairs. Such discussions are a measure of the interest of people in things political. The survey inquired from respondents how often they engage in such discussions in political discussions with friends. A quarter said they do so "frequently", 39% revealed they discuss political matters "occasionally", while 34% said "never". These results show that people are keen to discuss political matters.

Relatedly, a significant proportion of Zimbabweans indicated that they have an interest in politics and follow what goes in government and public affairs. 21% of the respondents said they "always" follow governmental and public affairs or do so most of the times while another 27% do so occasionally. Seventeen per cent follow such events "now and then" but 30% hardly follow political affairs; the latter have no interest in such affairs and are withdrawn and apathetic to what goes on in the political kingdom they live in. The latter are the apolitical mass in Zimbabwean society. Even though a third of citizens are not concerned with political life in the country, this in itself is not an index of the extent of democracy in Zimbabwe. Indifference to politics is a universal phenomenon, even in the established democracies, as Robert Dahl testifies:

It appears to be true that in most countries, those who show great interest in political matters, are concerned and informed about politics, and are active in public affairs do not make up a large proportion of adults; usually, it appears, they are a minority. Even in countries with popular governments where opportunities for political involvement are extensive, the political stratum by no means includes all the citizens. On the contrary, in all polyarchies, it seems, a sizable number of citizens are apathetic about politics and relatively inactive. In short, they are apolitical (1972, 97).



We have already noted that people in Zimbabwe are keen to discuss politics with friends. What could not be established is whether they would feel free to discuss politics with people *other* than their friends i.e., with anyone. The question is relevant in light of responses to another issue. We posited the statement: “In this country, you must be very careful of what you say and do with regard to politics” and solicited people’s opinion on this.

Nearly 60% of the sample said they “strongly agree” (38%) with the statement or “agree” (22%) with it. This is in contrast to about 28% who registered their disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement, with another 7% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. It is fair to conclude that while people want to discuss and perhaps act on political matters, they do not feel the political environment is conducive; the environment is perceived to be dangerous or asphyxiating. This negates citizen participation and to this extent, limits the scope and space for democratic discourse. In a large sense, it is a negation of a key democratic principle i.e., the freedom of expression.

Even voting is not felt to be that crucial or decisive by a large minority of citizens. 31% “strongly agree” that “no matter how you vote, it won’t make things any better in the future.” If we were to accept Bryce’s contention that “Democracy really means nothing more nor less than the rule of the whole people expressing their sovereign will by their votes” (1921, viii), what does it mean for democracy when 42% of the population are skeptical of the efficacy of the instrument through which they can express their sovereignty. Perhaps it is reflective of the sense of despair of the times and frustration that voting in the past did not improve things, so why should it in the future. A somewhat redeeming finding is that 53% either “agree” (13%) or “strongly agree” (40%) that “the way you vote could make things better in the future.” An adjunct to this cynicism about voting is that another big minority (41%) believe “it doesn’t really matter who is in power, because in the end things go on much the same.” Does this suggest that leadership does not count and that the root problems are structural or is it some kind of fatalism that plays midwifery to the dismissive pessimism?

From our discussion so far, and notwithstanding the rather pervasive ‘culture of fear’ in freely expressing ones views or acting in the political realm, it is also evident that the political stratum in Zimbabwe is fairly large. Does this political stratum, and indeed others not so classified feel they can influence what goes on in political life? In other words, we are interested in finding out how widespread is the feeling of political competence among Zimbabweans; i.e., what we may call the *density* of citizen competence in political matters. If they do not feel politically competent, does this also mean impotence in controlling their own life? The results are presented in Table 13 below. The data demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that people feel they have much more control over their lives than over what happens in the domain of politics. Regarding what happens in their life, 41%

Table 14  
**Feeling of competence in Individual and Political Life**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	DK
You feel you have little control over what						

happens to your life	23	23	7	24	17	3
You think that you do not have enough information about political life and the actions of government	31	33	8	16	9	2
Sometimes political and governmental affairs seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on	31	32	8	14	11	3

*Do you agree, neither agree nor disagree, or disagree with the above statements?*

said they do have control compared to 46% who affirmed the statement, i.e., those who admitted that they feel they have little control over what happens to their life. When it comes to political life, there is obviously a dearth of information about this which could presumably be processed and used for political influence purposes. More than six out of 10 Zimbabweans (63%) mention lacking enough information about politics and governmental activities compared to about 26% who said they have such information. Now, if information is power, its lack suggests powerlessness.

This is compounded by another finding, which is that, to most Zimbabweans (63%), the world of politics is a complex and complicated one such that they can not really understand what goes on in it. Only 25% said they can penetrate what Jean Blondel characterised as the “mystery of politics” in his *The Discipline of Politics* (1981). It is only those who understand this mystery who can meaningfully translate that understanding into political influence and those who do not are likely to be the ‘inactives’ or mere bystanders. And, this depends largely on the availability and accessibility of the relevant information. Yet Zimbabweans seem to be starved of enough information about political life and the actions of government.

It is agreed that the degree of participation in the political arena is not necessarily a reliable barometer of how democratic a particular political system is. However, political participation is not the only form of public or citizen participation. The public arena is much broader than the political arena. This brings us to the aspect of participation in civic organisations like churches groups, school associations, community groups, business and trade union organisations. One distinguishing attribute of a participant political culture as per Almond’s and Verba’s formulation is that citizens are active in their communities and often belong to one or more voluntary associations. Indeed, the democracy that so impressed de’ Tocqueville in 19th century America was rooted in that society’s robust associational life. Are Zimbabweans participants in this sense?

Our survey evidence suggests that apart from religious activities, Zimbabweans are not very active in civic organisations. Though 61% had attended a meeting, only 32% of the respondents indicated that they had done so “often” in the previous twelve months while 39% said they had gone to a meeting.

Organisations in which Zimbabweans register the lowest levels of participation are trade unions, where up to 75% said they had “never” attended trade union meetings in the past year. Only 8% said they did so often. Similar high levels of non-participation were registered for local commercial

organisations where 67% said they had “never” attended meetings and almost an equal percentage (65%) never attended community group meetings. Those who “often” attended meetings of these two groups were respectively 14% and 12% of the sample.

Civic participation in other types of groups was more or less intermediate. Group meetings concerned with local issues (e.g., schools) were attended by 18% of the respondents but 53% never attended such meetings. For local self-help associations, 57% said they had “never” attended such meetings over the previous year while 16% said they had done so.

This evidence seems to indicate that participation rises and ebbs depending on the closeness to the individual’s life the benefits - whether material or spiritual - of participation are perceived to be. Why participation in trade unions is so low may be attributed to the fact that a large proportion of Zimbabwe’s population is in the rural areas and are mostly subsistence-oriented peasant farmers and the scope and opportunities for trade union organisation are severely circumscribed. But even urban-based workers are not that highly unionized. This is despite the fact that trade union activities are about bread and butter issues and directly impact on the lives of the workers. There is also the effect of ‘free riding’ where some workers reap where they did not sow.

It strongly appears, therefore, that Zimbabweans are not that participant-oriented. They are closer to being ‘subjects’, that is, passive citizens and a subject political culture is not from fertile ground for democracy as Roskin *et. al.* observed: “Democracy has more difficulty sinking roots in a culture where people are used to thinking of themselves as obedient subjects rather than as active participants” (1988, 132). While as civic participation is not the beginning and end of democracy, it is an important bedrock of democracy.<sup>8</sup>

The passive orientation of Zimbabweans is reinforced by another set of survey findings, those on citizen participation in certain political procedures. Table 24 presents the findings. Writing letters to

Table 15  
**Participation in Political Activities**

	Often	Few times	Once/twice	No, but would do it	No, would never do it	DK
Participate with others to address community problem	30	16	10	26	17	2
Attend an election rally	16	18	12	23	28	2

<sup>8</sup> Since the end of our fieldwork in October 1999, there has appeared a discernible movement toward more active citizen participation.

Work for a political party/candidate	8	7	5	28	49	2
Write a letter to a newspaper	4	6	5	38	44	2

*Here is a list of things people sometimes do as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you have engaged in this activity or not?*

newspapers articulating their views on political matters is the least engaged in activity with less than four in a hundred Zimbabweans saying they “often” write letters to newspapers, while 44% declared they would “never” do it even if they had the chance. Given the high literacy rate in the country, this low inclination to write letters can not be attributed to lack of education. Working for a political party or candidate is the next heaviest political activity for citizens. Just 8% said they “often” engage in this form of political participation, 12% did so at least once but almost half the respondents vowed they would “never” do it. Another 28% would do so if given a chance. Attending a rally is also not very popular but 34% said they had attended election rallies “often” or “a few times.” However, 28% reported that they “never” participate in this activity and another 23% said they would do so if they had a chance.

Most of the citizen participation is in the form of organizing with others to address an important community problem. Three out of ten adult Zimbabweans “often” engage in this, 16% have done so “a few times” and 26% would do so if they had a chance. Only 17% said they would “never” do it.

The survey results demonstrate that the citizens of Zimbabwe are rather low on the active participation scale. If the degree of participation in civic life is an index of democracy, then democracy in Zimbabwe can be said to be still in a fledgling state. It must however be observed that about 25% of the respondents indicated that they would participate in political activity if they had the chance. This means the *potential* for participation is considerable; it needs to be tapped by creating a conducive or enabling institutional environment which is perceived as presently missing.

Zimbabweans also seem to have a weak orientation toward political protest. They are largely inactive in this area. The survey asked respondents if they had participated in certain activities to express their discontent where government does something they thought was wrong or harmful. Asked if they had taken part in a demonstration or a protest march, only 17% said they had done so “often” or “a few times” and another 24% said they would participate if given a chance. However, half the respondents proclaimed they would “never” engage in this activity. The citizens are equally averse to participate in boycotts (e.g., of rates, services or taxes). Just 3% mentioned participating “often” and 5% said they had done so “a few times,” 27% indicated they would engage in the activity if they had a chance in contrast to 53% who testified they would “never” take such action.

Fewer still have engaged in sit-ins or disruption of government meetings or offices with 6% saying

they had done so “often” or occasionally. An additional 23% are inclined to engage in such protest if chance allows as against a big majority (62%) who maintained they would “never” protest in this way. Could it be that Zimbabweans are more prone to taking violent actions to protest against wrongful or harmful government actions? Apparently not so, according to our survey results. Asked if they have used force or would use force or violent methods of protest to register their disapproval of government actions, only 2% admitted doing so “often”, 1% have engaged in this activity “a few times”, 18% said they would do so given a chance while a large majority (72%) said they would “never” participate in violent protests such as damaging public property.

When viewed in totality, these findings demonstrate that the citizens of Zimbabwe are unhappy citizens but hardly protest their unhappiness whether through peaceful or violent methods. The majority of Zimbabweans have neither participated in violent protests, nor do they have the propensity to do so. Those who have actually engaged in the violent actions, either often or sporadically, and those who are pre-disposed to do so, constitute less than a quarter of the adult population. The conclusion to be drawn is that though there is a groundswell of discontent, it is not often publicly expressed. There appears to be considerable bottled-up anger. If Zimbabweans an angry lot, how do they register this anger to political authority? How do they ‘speak’ their anger to power? Or are the avenues of expression blocked and if so, what are the implications of this for governance? These remain unanswered, if not puzzling questions that merit further investigation. Direct experience or perceptions of excessive police repression or harassment of protest, even peaceful ones, may dampen the propensity to engage in protest. Protest, in this sense, carries a heavy political cost.

There is a substantial body of evidence that citizens in most post-colonial societies tend to be oriented toward rights rather than obligations. This is largely attributed to the anti-colonial struggles that emphasized peoples rights much more than their obligations or duties. And yet citizens have rights as well as duties. In Zimbabwe, survey data points to the conclusion that its citizens are law biding people who are disinclined to avoiding their legal obligations. Only a small minority are given to dodging their citizen responsibilities. Table 15 below presents this evidence.

Table 16  
**Orientations to Citizen Obligations** (in per cent)

	Often	A few times	Once/twice	No, but would do	Would never do it	DK	NA
Claim government benefits to which you are not entitled	8	4	4	13	64	1	4

Avoid paying development levy or property taxes	5	3	5	16	65	2	5
Avoid paying income taxes	6	2	3	15	62	2	8
Get services like electricity without paying for them	5	2	2	13	63	3	9

*Here is a list of actions ordinary people are taking in a political system. For each of these, please tell me whether you have engaged in this activity or not.*

In all four cases more than sixty per cent claimed they would “never” engage in such activities. Again in all cases, less than 17% confessed to evading an obligation while less than 16% are inclined to evading their duties should such a chance present itself. If the responses volunteered were honestly given, then Zimbabweans are law abiding citizens. Tax collection always has to contend with tax evaders as Almond and Powell note in their discussion of citizens as subjects: “One of the most pervasive of all citizen roles, and that which has generated more citizen resistance to efforts of authorities to promote compliance than any other, is the role of tax payer” (1988, 56). Zimbabwe is reputed to have one of the highest taxation levels in the world and yet its citizens still honor their tax obligations and few contemplate avoiding them. This is also consistent with a subject political orientation which is rooted in obedience to the law, however distasteful or harmful that law may be perceived to be. One gets reminded of the Hausa Islamic doctrine that places supreme primacy on obedience: “our religion is a religion of obedience.” If honoring ones obligations and generally obeying the law is a mark of good citizenship, then Zimbabweans are good citizens.

## 8. Conclusion

In this section, and having come this far in our presentation and analysis of the data, we ask ourselves: What does all this mean for democracy in Zimbabwe? What are the prospects for democratic consolidation? Is Zimbabwe progressing along the path of democratic transition or is it regressing? For instance, a decade ago, Larry Diamond *et. al.* contended that Zimbabwe was a “semi-democracy”<sup>9</sup> and moving toward “less” democracy: Is this borne out by the facts? Seven years later, one of the contributors to the Diamond book, Masipula Sithole, was celebrating the “erosion of authoritarianism” in Zimbabwe: Is the erosion illusory or was the celebration pre-mature? To answer some of these questions, we focus on the modal characteristics as suggested by our data.

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<sup>9</sup> “... we classify as *semi-democratic* those countries in which the effective power of elected officials is so limited, or political party competition so restricted, or the freedom and fairness of elections so compromised, that electoral outcomes, while competitive, still deviate significantly from popular preferences; or where civil and political liberties so limited that some political orientations and interests are unable to organize an express themselves” (Diamond *et. al.*; 1990, 7-8).

The most telling empirical finding is that the citizens of Zimbabwe are a deeply discontented community. They are unhappy with virtually everything surrounding their lives. There is a pervasive mood of gloom and doom. For them, the present government, in which they had invested so much hope and material and moral support, has let them down. They are disillusioned with the state of their political kingdom they spilt so much blood and tears to achieve. Adult Zimbabweans see their economy in tatters and worsening and that their own economic conditions have markedly deteriorated. They feel ESAP has played havoc with their very livelihoods and yearn for the 'golden days' of a socialist-oriented and highly regulated economy; they even cherish memories of the 'good old days' of the Smith era, at least in terms of government performance in the economic arena.

Though many Zimbabweans perceive an improvement in the enjoyment of fundamental political rights in comparison with white-controlled Rhodesia, they are dissatisfied with the state of democracy in their country, in both its substantive and procedural sense. They view the government they elected as ineffective, corrupt, unresponsive and uncaring. For most citizens of the country, the current regime is not driven by the public interest; it does not promote the commonwealth. This has generated generalised distrust in the political leadership, particularly the President, the symbol of authority in Zimbabwe. The sense of distrust extends to most State institutions, including the government-oriented media of mass communication. It appears that everything that the state touches is a target of citizen distrust. The obvious implication of all this is that the legitimacy of the state and its regime has been eroded or seriously compromised over the years. Diamond *et. al.* tell us that "so intimately is legitimacy tied to democratic stability that it is difficult to know where definition ends and theorizing begins" (1990, 9). If this is the case, the erosion of the regime's reservoir of legitimacy seriously threatens even its semi-democratic credentials. The country appears to be sliding down the scale of classification of democracies and could probably justifiably be re-classified as a "pseudo-democracy" because "the existence of formally democratic political institutions, such as electoral competition, masks (often in part to legitimate) the reality of authoritarian domination" (Diamond *et. al.*; 1990, 8).

We have also noted that the pervasive unhappiness has not triggered a wave of citizen participation in political life, whether of a peaceful or violent nature. This, and other indicators, is typical of a subject orientation to political action. Apart from sporadic and anomic outbursts of riotous behaviour (e.g., the food riots of January 1998), Zimbabweans seem to have an underdeveloped culture of protest and active civic participation. Though unhappy with the world they live in, they are not oriented to breaking the law. They respect and honour their obligation, including onerous one, like heavy taxation. In short, they are law abiding but joyless citizens.

It has been widely observed that the institutional framework or infrastructure for democracy is deeply flawed and defective. Our evidence suggests however, that though what we may call the "hardware" of democracy is flawed, the "software" is developing in a democratic direction. Here I am referring to the social psychology of the nation. Zimbabweans expressed a definite preference for democracy and an unambiguous rejection of its non-democratic rivals. Though pessimistic about the future, it is informed pessimism. Zimbabweans are not an ignorant lot. If they are subjects, they are informed

subjects. Though not an *active* public, they are an *attentive* public; they are 'wide awake' as it were. Moreover, there is now developing a critical mass of active citizens.

Though democracy is receding at the institutional level, it is simultaneously deepening at the socio-psychological level. Since the survey was conducted, there is a clear trend toward citizen political participation. The two electoral processes leading to the constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections in the year 2000 have in combination resurrected political participation. Certainly, the February 2000 referendum ignited and deepened the feeling that voting can make a difference, that it can, in a meaningful way, shape the direction and content of Zimbabwe's political society; that one's vote can speak to power.

Zimbabweans are no longer content with their juridical citizenship; they also now exhibit an orientation toward what we may call "empirical" citizenship. This is fertile ground for the development of a participant-oriented political culture, the socio-psychological bedrock of a democratic political order. It is in this that democrats must perhaps place their hopes.



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## APPENDIX I

The distribution of the sample stratified by rural/urban residence and by province is indicated in the Figure below.

### **FIG 1: SAMPLE: Based on 1992 Census**

#### **Sample A: Ideal Sample**

N = 1200

Starting points = 150

	Byo	Manica	Midl	Mash W	Mash C	Mash E	Mat N	Mat S	Masvin	Hre	Total
% of national	5.97	14.76	12.58	10.69	8.23	9.93	6.16	5.69	11.74	14.27	100
Interviews	71.64	177.12	150.72	128.28	98.76	119.16	73.92	68.28	140.88	171.24	1200
Starting points	8.95	22.1	18.8	18.0	12.3	14.9	9.2	8.5	17.6	21.4	150
Pop dens/sq km	1298	42.16	26.60	19.38	30.22	32.09	8.55	10.94	21.61	1703.69	

#### **URBAN**

% urban pop	100	11.45	23.14	24.2	8.05	6.01	11.68	8.11	8.18	98.55	
Interviews	71.6	20.3	34.9	31.0	8.5	7.2	8.6	5.5	11.5	168.8	367.4
Starting points	9.0	2.5	4.4	3.9	1.0	0.9	1.1	0.7	1.4	21.1	36

#### **RURAL**

% rural pop	0	88.56	76.86	75.8	91.95	93.99	88.32	91.89	91.82	1.45	
Interviews	0	156.8	115.8	97.2	90.8	112.0	85.3	62.7	129.4	2.5	832.6
Starting points	0	19.5	14.5	12.2	11.4	14.0	8.2	7.6	18.2	0.3	104

#### **Sample B: Adapted Sample**

	Byo	Manica	Midl	Mash W	Mash C	Mash E	Mat N	Mat S	Masvin	Hre	Total
% of national	5.97	14.76	12.58	10.69	8.23	9.93	6.16	5.69	11.74	14.27	100
Interviews	72	178	151	128	100	119	74	68	141	171	1200
Starting points	9	22	19	18	13	15	9	8	18	21	150
Pop dens/sq km	1298	42.16	26.60	19.38	30.22	32.09	8.55	10.94	21.61	1703.69	

#### **URBAN**

% urban pop	100	11.45	23.14	24.2	8.05	6.01	11.68	8.11	8.18	98.55	
Interviews	72	20	35	31	8	7	9	6	12	169	369
Starting points	9	2	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	21	50

#### **RURAL**

% rural pop	0	88.56	76.86	75.8	91.95	93.99	88.32	91.89	91.82	1.45	
Interviews	0	156	116	97	92	112	85	62	129	2	831
Starting points	0	20	15	12	11	13	7	6	16	0	100

Note: The following were guidelines for adapting some of the ideal sample figures

a) Regional figures were altered to match the requirements for starting points with the number of interviews e.g 31 was made 32.

b) Where possible urban areas were over-sampled given the size of the rural population in most regions.

c) In all cases we have tried to allocate at least two starting points per area to justify traveling costs.