

Committee: African Union

Issue: The political crisis in Zimbabwe

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Position: President

INTRODUCTION

Greetings, delegates! My name is Eleftheria Arkadopoulou, I am a mechanical engineering student of the National Technical University of Athens and I will have the honour of serving as the President of the African Union. Should you have any questions concerning our committee or the topic in question, I will be at your disposal at e.arkadopoulou@gmail.com.

Zimbabwe, formerly known as Southern Rhodesia, only gained its full independence from the United Kingdom in 1980. Located in the region of southern Africa, it is a landlocked country bordering with Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa and Botswana and is made up of two major clans: Shona and Ndebele. Despite the peculiarity of its soil, its economy relies to a great extent on agriculture. Since its 1980 independence, Zimbabwe has been under the rule of Robert Mugabe, who has been the prominent political figure ever since and whose policies have been disputed multiple times, both by the international community and the Zimbabwean people, who suffer the consequences. Having already been in unrest, the political and economic situation deteriorated following the events of 2017, during which the political leadership switched hands, and has been very fragile ever since.



*Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1:
Zimbabwe's flag: green for land and
resources, yellow for mineral wealth,
red for the struggle towards
independence, black for the coloured
majority and Zimbabwe's national bird
and emblem*

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

ZANU-PF

Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (formerly known as ZANU) has been Zimbabwe's leading political party since the country's first free elections in 1980.

Founded when a faction of Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) holding nationalist views broke off the party, it was later seen merging with ZAPU again to form ZANU-PF.

Mandate

The authority the people grant a newly elected leader, indicating that they trust the new ruler and that they indeed represent them and their will and serve their interests.

Coup d'état

A sudden defeat of a government through illegal force by a small, often military, group.¹

Referendum

A vote in which all the people in a country or an area are asked to give their opinion or decide about an important political or social question.²

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Key figures

¹ Definition by Cambridge English Dictionary

² Definition by Cambridge English Dictionary

Robert Mugabe. Mugabe, born in 1924, had formerly served as a teacher and received military training before entering Southern Rhodesia's (now Zimbabwe) political scene by joining ZANU in 1963. During the following years of the white-ruled state, ZANU was forced off the state's political elite and Mugabe was imprisoned for as long as ten years and was later sent into exile. Since his comeback in 1977, he has lead ZANU-PF, has served both as a president and as a prime minister of the country and has often been accused of flawed elections and strangling his political opponents. His policies have regularly been condemned by the international community. He currently bears the stigma of an authoritarian governor and has been notorious for overspending when it comes to government funds. In 2017, he dismissed ZANU-PF's Vice President Mnangagwa, an act that many attribute to his attempt to control the line of succession within the party; this act of his led to an uprising which violently forced him off his position, detained him to his house and had a travel ban imposed on him.



Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 2: Robert Mugabe

Emmerson Mnangagwa. Born in 1946, Mnangagwa was known as Mugabe's right-hand man since he entered the political scene. Commonly known as "the crocodile", he poses as a dominant military figure during Zimbabwe's fight for independence and, like Mugabe, he has spent multiple years in prison during the white rule. Despite his formerly heroic and patriotic stance, he has often been accused of intimidating both the public and his political opponents and associated with atrocities against them; he has proven to be fearsome. During the 2013-2017 period, he served as the Vice-President of ZANU-PF. In November 2017 he was appointed president, and he currently holds this position.

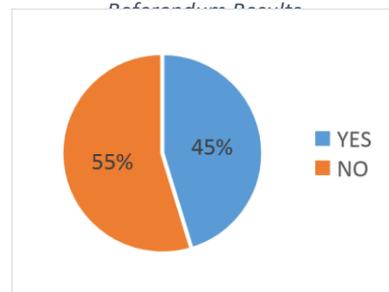
String and connection of events 1980-2017

In 1980, after a long-lasting guerrilla war, Zimbabwe holds its first free elections supervised by the United Kingdom. Mr Mugabe, having been granted the mandate of the people, is appointed prime minister. In the following years, the political clash between the two opposing parties ZANU and ZAPU escalated into a clash of the Shona and Ndebele clans and, finally, a political genocide on behalf of the Shona people lead by Mugabe, known as the Gukurahundi, during which more than 20,000 people were massacred, the majority of

which were civilians. At the end of the Gukurahundi, which left most of the population traumatised and their faith in Mugabe questioned, ZANU and ZAPU reached an agreement and merged into ZANU-PF, a party of nationalistic nature that has held power ever since. In the following years, and mainly due to the unequal ownership of land of the white population, Zimbabwe’s government implemented a long-term land redistribution tactic known as Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), seizing land off the white farmers and re-allocating the lots to destitute members of the black population. Although the land redistribution act was implemented as an attempt to boost the economy and seal the black population, it had long-term devastating effects for the public, and consequently for the country’s economy as a whole.

In 2000, the Zimbabwean people were presented with a draft new constitution, which, by default, was contemporaneous and aimed at replacing the old, conservative one, promising the acceleration of the land distribution act process, embodying a “Bill of rights” –which was later criticised as insufficient–, granting the prime minister extended powers and providing government branches with legal immunity. A referendum was held and the new constitution was rejected, thus indicating the discontent of the population towards the scheme of the

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 3: 2000 Referendum Results



president’s extended powers. Two years later, elections were held and ZANU-PF emerged as winner with a 56.2%; however, the elections were deemed as “not free and fair” by international observers, whereas, during the pre-election period, incidents of intimidation and violence against opposition party’s “Movement for Democratic Change” members occurred.

Six years later, elections take place again and, for the first time, the opposition party wins the majority of the votes cast; however, not enough for a government form. During the run-off election, the incidents of violence against opposition members and supporters repeated themselves to so tremendous an extent that opposition leader Tsvingai was forced to withdraw. The one-candidate election was held and the obvious outcome of ZANU-PF’s win sparked international disapproval. Under these unfavourable circumstances, a power-sharing coalition government of ZANU-PF and MDC rose to power in 2009. Despite lacking mutual agreement and understanding, after a four-year term, certain economic growth was observed and a new constitutional referendum that suggested, between others, to limit the powers of the president, was introduced; with an outstanding majority of almost

95%, the Zimbabwean people agreed. Shortly after elections followed, and Mugabe emerged as the winner. Once again, these elections were internationally criticised and characterised as rigged and flawed.

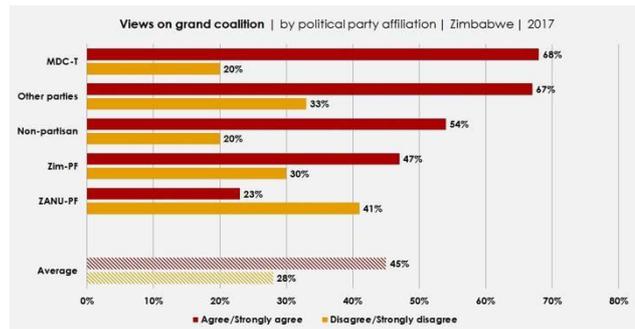


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 4: Partisan views on power-sharing government

The political shift of 2017

The latter and allegedly unfair election has brought us to the infamous events of 2017. In the meantime, president Mugabe’s wife, Grace Mugabe, has joined her husband in his political journey: she joined ZANU-PF, gained the support of many key figures in Zimbabwe’s politics and made it to the position of the head of the women’s league in the party. In November 2017, R. Mugabe dismissed V.P. Mnangagwa, claiming “disrespect, disloyalty, deceit and unreliability”, thus altering the line of succession within the party and, as seen by many, promoting his wife Grace to be the next leader of the party. This led to the escalation of the people’s dissatisfaction and, later in the year, to a military takeover of



Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 5: Robert Mugabe and his wife, Grace Mugabe

the government; while police patrolled the streets, Mugabe was thrown off his position and detained to his house, together with his wife, and later resigned. Since then, Mnangagwa took over the position of the president. His political programme –which he has been proven willing to implement– includes the provision of a welfare state for the citizens and the introduction of anti-corruption measures.

Was the military action a coup d’état? Zimbabwean military authorities argue that it wasn’t: “We wish to make it abundantly clear that this is not a military takeover”, argues Zimbabwe’s Major General, and cites that the intervention aimed at removing criminals that

might disrupt the country's social and political balance. The academic definitions of a coup differ; however, the particular incident seems to fulfill most of the criteria. Despite the fact that the public has been benefited and seem to agree with the removal of Mugabe, international observers seem concerned that the military easily seized the president's full authority.

On July 30th, 2018, elections were held and, after a chest-to-chest race ZANU-PF emerged as the winner and Mnangagwa is officially appointed the position of the president. The African Union was invited as an observer to the elections and published [an official statement](#) concerning the observation of the process, together with some recommendations. The election outcome, which was challenged by many that cited it was flawed, triggered a string of protests and demonstrations, mainly by opposition supporters, which were encountered by the army and the police; six civilians were killed and dozens were hospitalised. The opposition filed a legal challenge of ZANU-PF's victory, which was later overruled by Zimbabwe's Supreme Court due to lack of evidence. Mnangagwa inaugurates president once again; once again, the government's legitimacy is questioned and the public is infuriated.

Impact on the public

Throughout the years of his presidency, Robert Mugabe has demonstrated mainly patriotic and leftist views. Having taken part in the war of independence himself, he takes great pride in Zimbabwe's past, and he has been attempting –sometimes through violent and unconventional means– to pass on this idea to the public. By intimidating his political opponents for his own benefit and silencing the opposition by force, he crafted a regime of terror and suspiciousness. By introducing theoretically modern constitutions that did not enhance but abolished the people's rights, he provoked the feeling of suppression. For these reasons, his regime has often been characterized as authoritarian.

Mugabe's fiscal strategy also had devastating consequences for the country. As a result of the FTLRP, many experienced white farmers fled the country and the newly-settled black farmers that were given their land were forced to bite off more than they could chew, since a huge part of them lacked the knowledge and the skills to cultivate the land. Thus, the country's agriculture –the main source of income and economic growth– came to an unprecedented descent. This production drought led to chronic scarcity in basic goods and

the overly keen efforts of the government to overcome the problem and feed the population by printing money resulted in hyperinflation. When the threat of international sanctions forced him to face the problem, Mugabe threatened to lift foreign investment off the country; thus, potential investors were repelled and the economy was further crippled.

To recapitulate, the ongoing political crisis has triggered an economic and social one as well. More specifically:

Previous elections, leading up to the very last July ballot papers, have been internationally and nationally criticised and characterised as flawed by numerous countries and organisations. As a result, the procedure has lost its credibility and is highly doubted upon when it comes to transparency and fairness. Additionally, the political attacks towards opposition members have raised concerns when it comes to freedom of speech and expression, whereas the certain past Zimbabwe has had of a sole leader serving unlimited consecutive terms and enjoying excessive authority has built up fear and has raised the public's doubts as to whether the leadership is indeed accountable or enjoys a certain kind of legal immunity. In many cases, the discontent of the public gradually escalated into massive protests not only in Zimbabwe, but in neighbouring countries that host Zimbabwean population as well, and it took the form of rage.

As far as the economic aspect of the issue is concerned, agricultural production has been cut off and the country has been drawn back in technical knowledge and global competition; the aforementioned repulsion of investors and the relative failure of the FTLRP are to be held accountable. As a less economically developed country, Zimbabwe's economy relied to a great extent on foreign investment, in order to not only boost the production and cover the population's needs, but to re-gain competitiveness in a capitalistic global market as well, by obtaining technical knowledge, modern tools and significant funds. The biggest part of the population currently lives in poverty.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

South Africa

South Africa's largest group of immigrants is of Zimbabwean nationality and the biggest part of the Zimbabwean diaspora has settled there; as a consequence, the ties between the two nations stand strong. The two former leaders of the countries, Robert Mugabe and Jacob Zuma, have shared a friendly political relationship and many common

tactics and policies, together with their authoritarian way of governing. The two countries have had a similar political scene in the latest years and many argue that South Africa is to follow the way Zimbabwe has lead, which could prove to be threatening for the country's political leadership. Current South African President, C. Ramaphosa, who is also the current chairperson of SADC, whereas having expressed concerns regarding the violent incidents that took place, has publically congratulated Mnangagwa on his victory and has endorsed the citizens of Zimbabwe to accept the outcome of the elections, thus condemning the opposition's challenge and seeming to support Mnangwagwa.

People's Republic of China

"China is Zimbabwe's all-weather friend", noted former president Mugabe during General Secretary's of CPC, China's ruling party, visit to Zimbabwe. China is Zimbabwe's greatest trade and one of its most important political partners and has, in the past, made significant investments in and given loans to the African country, thus boosting the economy. To reciprocate, the Zimbabwean government has been supportive of Chinese intervention in Africa. Apart from that, when a Security Council resolution concerning imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe was on the floor, China vetoed it. However, the Asian country's government's faith in Mugabe seems to have been unsettled due to disagreement with some of his policies and therefore the ties between the two countries have been loosened. The shift in the regime, together with a friendlier diplomatic approach, are contributing to the prospect of a future strengthened collaboration between them, which could prove to be beneficial for both sides.

South African Development Community (SADC)

SADC is a community of fourteen south African member states that aims at ensuring peace and security among the region, Zimbabwe included. Founded in 1992, its jurisdiction includes monitoring the political, social and economic situation in member states and guiding them through shared socioeconomic policies and tactics towards long-term stability. SADC also provides citizens with opportunities in employment and integration and, when it comes to Zimbabwe, could facilitate the process of recovering after the current political crisis. The organisation had previously remained relatively distant to the crisis, thus provoking the criticism of its members (especially Zimbabwe's neighbour's Zambia), who have characterised the recent events as a "wake-up call" for SADC; in response, in 2017,

SADC held an emergency summit calling upon member states to contribute to a joined effort to resolve the crisis. After his inauguration, Mnangagwa expressed his views that “we continue to count on the support and solidarity we have always received from SADC”.



Figure SEQ Figure \ * ARABIC 6: SADC members

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1963	A white-lead colonial regime is imposed
1979	Robert Mugabe becomes first prime minister
1980	Independence recognised at an international level
2000	FTLRP is implemented
	Draft constitution rejected by referendum
2002	Second election condemned as flawed by the international community; Mugabe is re-elected
2008	Third election highly criticised; power-sharing government of ZANU-PF and MDC
2013	Fourth election – condemned as rigged
2017	VP Emmerson Mnangagwa is dismissed
	Military intervention deprives Mugabe of his power
	Mnangagwa inaugurates president
2018	ZANU-PF wins elections

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- Security Council Draft Resolution S/2008/447 – 11 July 2008: Demands the cease of violence towards the opposition and the imposition of financial sanctions in Zimbabwe.
<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/POC%20S2008447.pdf>

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The political crisis in Zimbabwe has been troubling the international community for numerous years. In 2008, the United Nations Security Council took action and suggested the aforementioned Draft Resolution S/2008/447 condemning the political and humanitarian violence that took place and demanding a military embargo on Zimbabwe; however, the Draft Resolution was vetoed by both People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation and was therefore never put into action. Apart from that, the UN has voiced multiple concerns about the humanitarian aspect of the crisis and about the credibility of the elections, with the President of the Security Council having made an official statement (<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Zim%20S%202008%2023.pdf>) deprecating the authoritarian circumstances under which the elections took place.

In the same year, after the international outrage that followed what seemed like a rigged election, the African Union stepped forward and held a summit to assess the situation. In this summit, both Botswana and Kenya strongly condemned Mugabe's actions against the opposition, whereas South Africa spoke against the heavy charges that were dropped upon Zimbabwe's leadership. A resolution was proposed, in which the AU encouraged SADC intervention in negotiations. In 2017, the Union characterised the military intervention as a coup, despite Zimbabwe's military itself denying it, and later backed Mugabe's decision to resign. Lastly, it pledged to assist Zimbabwe in order to ensure that the elections held will be free, fair, transparent and credible.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In order to untangle Zimbabwe from the ongoing crisis, we should take into consideration numerous factors, concerning all the branches to which the crisis expands. More specifically:

It is of utmost significance to ensure that the elections that are to follow are free, fair and credible and not subject to violence from any of the sides that compete in the ballots, so that the mandate of the elected leadership is not of a crooked nature. In order to achieve that, a legal framework defining the sanctions for illegitimate actions and supervising the electoral process should be established. It could also prove to be helpful to call upon international observers from various countries and organisations to monitor the transparency of the elections. Apart from that, an enhanced legal framework, securing the protection of both the politicians and the citizens and their rights and at the same time allocating power and responsibilities, thus preventing their concentration into the hands of one person, should come up at the table as well.

As for the socioeconomic side of the issue, after a long period of economic instability, it is essential that Zimbabwe's economy stands back to its feet. A reviewed Land Distribution Act that meets sustainable standards and goals could also prove to be beneficial for both the farmers and the rural economy as a whole. Furthermore, it is compelling for Zimbabwe to open up to Foreign Direct Investment, by setting an investor-friendly environment – in this way, the country's agriculture will be mobilized and the techniques will be modernised – whereas a path to combat the ever-rising rates of inflation should be followed as well. Throughout the combination of all of the above the above, unemployment, which has been plaguing the country for decades, is to be faced, and long-term political and economic stability is to be achieved. Thus, the dissatisfaction of the people will be eliminated and Zimbabwe's leadership will re-gain the trust of the public.

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