Zimbabwe's 'Inclusive Government': Some Observations on its First 100 Days

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ABSTRACT *Zimbabwe seemed to be in a political transition—but only on the surface. In actual fact, the new government established under the power-sharing agreement between President Mugabe and newly elected Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai proved unsuccessful in its first 100 days owing to continued rivalry and a lack of commitment on behalf of Mugabe and his party. Mugabe managed to secure key positions in the new government for his cronies. They continued to control the relevant security organs as well as the Reserve Bank, which held a key position because its Governor guarded the budget available for the new ministers. Consequently, sabotage was an imminent threat for the new government. Mugabe benefited from the weakness of the opposition, which was split and had an indecisive and uncharismatic leader who failed to secure financial support from the West. To complicate the situation even further there were more players involved in the political arena of Zimbabwe, including the two major farmers' groupings, an emerging third party under Simba Makoni, the trade unions and white businessmen. They all had their own agenda. Mugabe and his ruling clique relied on each other as they had both committed gross human rights violations over the last 25 years. They either fall together or their mutual dependency keeps them going. Change was unlikely to occur; even the new Movement for Democratic Change ministers were aware of this.*

KEY WORDS: Zimbabwe, Mugabe, Tsvangirai, Inclusive Government, ZANU-PF

Introduction

Zimbabwe's new government faced severe difficulties during its first 100 days in office. The situation in Zimbabwe is very complex and the problems are deep-rooted, aggravated by many different players involved in the political arena. It remains unclear who eventually led the country in the period under scrutiny. It is assumed that there was a mutual relationship between Mugabe and the ruling clique, comprised of the heads of state security organs, the Reserve Bank Governor and other close allies of President Mugabe. They still needed each other to stay in power and to be safe from prosecution. Hence, they took the necessary steps to continue ruling the country even under the new political

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circumstances following the power-sharing agreement with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), Mugabe’s party, continued to control the realm of state security and the financial resources available to the new Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai, and his cabinet, meaning that sabotage of the new government’s policy was an imminent threat.

The situation during the first 100 days into the new government can be summed up by saying that Mugabe could only win, while Tsvangirai could only lose. Mugabe secured a non-interventionist stance from the states in the region, most notably South Africa. On a global level, China and Russia backed him in the United Nations Security Council. Furthermore, he benefited from the weakness of the opposition, which was split and whose leaders were weak and uncharismatic. Tsvangirai was described as being indecisive (*Africa Research Bulletin*, 2007, p. 17145A) and not assertive enough in the negotiations. The power-sharing agreement and the distribution of cabinet posts reflect this. Tsvangirai took a submissive role to Mugabe’s position and entered a government that was still largely controlled by ZANU-PF. Tsvangirai had already lost politically particularly considering that he had raised high expectations and promised a great deal. In this context, he has achieved little in the first 100 days of the Inclusive Government.

This paper focuses on the first weeks after the new government was sworn in. It first reflects on my experiences in Zimbabwe in February 2009. Therefore, the first part is subjective and not explicitly rooted in academic knowledge. The second part is different in that it provides an account of the situation in Zimbabwe from early to mid-2009 on the basis of interview data, thorough newspaper reading and academic analysis. The following themes are elaborated: the first section of the second part tries to find out who effectively ruled Zimbabwe in the period under investigation. The second section scrutinises the weakness of the main opposition, namely Tsvangirai’s MDC. This is followed by a section about the various domestic players involved in Zimbabwe’s politics, specifically Simba Makoni’s group, the farmers and the businessmen who contributed to the complexity of the political arena. The arguments made in this article refer explicitly to the first 100 days of the new government; arguably, however, to a large extent they also apply to the current situation in Zimbabwe.

Living in Zimbabwe: Some Observations

Daily life in Zimbabwe seemed unaffected by the new government after it was inaugurated in early February 2009. The prevailing atmosphere is best described by the words ‘cautious optimism’. An MDC cabinet member said: ‘I am cautiously optimistic, but I’m under no illusions that we have a massive challenge and huge problems that lie ahead’. Indeed, people were not euphoric and only a few thought that Zimbabwe would immediately enter into a new era.

The inauguration of the new government did not alter the precarious socio-economic situation of the country. The US dollar and the South African rand replaced Zimbabwe’s hyperinflationary currency, with its 13 zeros making most goods unaffordable for the masses. Although shops were stocked in the city centre

of Harare, it seemed that most of the people were still relying on a subsistence economy, as they had no access to foreign currencies with which to buy food and other essentials. There were reports that there was no food security in the rural areas. Moreover, cholera kept ordinary citizens on tenterhooks. Farms were still being seized and the perceived security threat from the seemingly omnipresent Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) agents continued as before. There were no students at the University of Zimbabwe as they had been beaten by police forces on campus a couple of days earlier, forcing university officials to adjourn all classes. Likewise, schools remained closed because teachers demanded to be paid in foreign currency.

The situation in Hatcliffe, a poor northern suburb of Harare, could be seen as representative of the country. Hatcliffe is one of the high-density areas of Zimbabwe. The people who live there are poor and mostly unemployed living in shacks. Many of them have suffered as a result of Operation Murambatsvina, the notorious operation orchestrated by ZANU-PF after the 2005 elections to 'clean' informal settlements.¹ *De facto*, the operation was conducted to punish MDC voters. After speaking to MDC supporters in Hatcliffe, it became clear that people were happy about the chain of events that led to Tsvangirai's inauguration. They were indeed hopeful. Yet at the same time they were realistic, knowing that change would not happen overnight. They were traumatised and continued to live under constant threat because Mugabe supporters were still around and were still intimidating MDC supporters. It seemed that public life was frozen in a state between hope and despair.

Months before, while the MDC was campaigning for the 2008 election, its supporters wore MDC T-shirts, inevitably meaning that the ZANU-PF thugs were able to recognise their targets. Aware of this, people were fearful of Mugabe's thugs and the CIO, who were a constant threat as its agents were infiltrating public life.

The people were fearful of an outbreak of violence. Mugabe's 85th birthday was awaited with bated breath; on that day—21 February, one week after Tsvangirai's inauguration—the streets of Harare were empty. Security around hotels was increased. The ZANU-PF youth had announced that their birthday gift for Mugabe would be to oust all white farmers in the country. MDC supporters felt additionally imperilled. Hence, caution prevailed; most people stayed at home. Yet, no major incident was reported.

Although daily life slowed down on Zimbabwe's streets, the new administration was busy. New members of the government in particular (mainly from the MDC) were running from one meeting to the next. Like MDC officials and cabinet ministers, the international diplomatic corps was almost inaccessible as they convened meeting after meeting to assess the political situation and to find strategies to cope with the changed circumstances. MDC officials claimed that they were faced with a lack of loyalty from civil servants in their ministries which contributed further to the chaotic situation in political circles. It seemed that MDC officials were surprised that they eventually joined the new administration, meaning that their long-standing hopes finally became a reality. However, whether they were really starting to determine Zimbabwe's policy will be discussed in the following section.

The Rulers of Zimbabwe

Two incidents had provided a clear indication of who was actually going to rule the country in the months to come. The South African *Mail & Guardian* (13–19 February 2009, p. 28) reported: ‘Approaching Mugabe to be sworn in, Tsvangirai prematurely raised his hand, and Mugabe, in Shona, said: “No, I go first”, before reading him the oath’. Second, the rhetoric used is revealing. A Western diplomat noted that President Mugabe does not use the phrase ‘Unity Government’ as Tsvangirai does, but ‘Inclusive Government’. In fact, Mugabe and his ZANU-PF were not willing to be left in the shadow. Mugabe claimed one month after the new government came into existence: ‘I am still in control and hold executive power’ (*The Economist*, 7 March 2009, p. 57). Tsvangirai seemed to understand that he was second behind Mugabe. He did not become as influential as he would have liked. In an interview with the South African-based *Business Day* (29 May 2009) after 100 days in office, he had already adopted Mugabe’s language and also used the phrase ‘Inclusive Government’.

However, it would be naïve to assume that it was only Mugabe who ruled the country before the inauguration of the Inclusive Government and during the period thereafter, which is primarily scrutinised in this paper. Many different theories are aired about who was—and arguably in 2010 still is—ruling Zimbabwe. They range from ‘Mugabe is ruling the country on his own’ to ‘Mugabe is the puppet of the ruling clique’. Others emphasise the importance of the First Lady Grace Mugabe, while another group subscribes to the theory that the Attorney General’s role is crucial. A last group emphasises the pivotal role of Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono. Remarkably there was no one at this stage who assumed that the new Inclusive Government had taken over power.

Each of the theories listed above bears some truth. It is argued here that the most logical way of explaining the political situation prevailing in Zimbabwe is to understand it as a mutual dependency between the ruling clique and President Mugabe that influences their behaviour towards the MDC and other players. This dependency was founded as a result of the gross human rights violations against Zimbabwe’s own population, which were carried out following instructions allegedly given by the President and his closest allies. The most prominent examples of atrocities committed in the last 25 years are the ‘ethnic genocide’ (Gevisser, 2008, p. 297) in Matabeleland in the 1980s and Operation Murambatsvina after the election of 2005, when opposition voters were brutally beaten and—in many cases—killed (Bratton and Masunungure, 2006).

Before going into further detail on how this mutual dependency works, there is a need for clarity concerning who is assumed to belong to the ruling clique and what their respective roles are. The clique consists of just a handful of people who were formerly assembled in the so-called Joint Operational Command (JOC). This institution consisted of the top-rank officials responsible for the security sector.² Members are the Chief of the Army Constantine Chiwenga, the Chief of the Air Force, Perence Shiri, the former commander of the army, Solomon Mujuru, called Rex Nhongo during the liberation fight, the incumbent Minister of Defence, Emmerson Mnangagwa, the head of the CIO, Happyton Bonyongwe, the Head of State Security, Didymus Mutasa, the Prison Services Commissioner, Paradzayi

Zimondi, and the Commissioner General of the Police, Augustine Chihuri. Besides, the Reserve Bank Governor, Gideon Gono, was reportedly a member of JOC.

Shiri in particular was responsible for the atrocities committed by Mugabe's government. He was the commander of the North Korean-trained 5th Brigade, which is responsible for the actions in Matabeleland in the 1980s, when an estimated 18,000 people died due to state terrorism (Chan, 2003, pp. 25–33). Emmerson Mnangagwa is also viewed as brutal. Most Zimbabweans regard him 'as the architect of the pre-election military campaign [in 2008] that killed as many as 100 opposition supporters and displaced tens of thousands more; for ZANU-PF loyalists on the contrary, Mnangagwa is a sort of saviour' (*Africa Confidential*, 5 September 2008, p. 5).

The First Lady Grace Mugabe and the Attorney General, Johannes Tomana, also deserve explicit mention. Both gather, filter and provide the information available to the President. Mugabe alienated himself from the ordinary Zimbabwean a long time ago. Heidi Holland (2008) describes Mugabe as an unsociable person. He lives in relative isolation and is distant from the public. A former member of Mugabe's staff, interviewed by the author of this paper, characterises the President as a person who keeps his distance and with whom it is difficult to form a friendship. A fellow combatant during the liberation war shares this opinion by stressing the distance Mugabe keeps between himself and others (also see Tekere, 2006). The First Lady and the Attorney General might take advantage of this characteristic. The Attorney General in particular, an 'anti-MDC lawyer' (*The Star*, 27 January 2009, p. 1), has a strong influence when it comes to implementing government policies. 'He has total control over what the President hears and sees, and he also has total control over what goes out and whether it gets out or whether he actually bins it into file 13', states an anonymous interviewee. In fact, Tomana was, and still is, influential. He was considered as a 'key political weapon for the President to harass MDC figures with spurious charges and to hold them in custody for months. He is understood to be behind a plan to whittle away the MDC's majority in Parliament' (*The Times*, 22 May 2009, p. 46). A Western diplomat said that 'the attorney general makes sure there is no progress in the rule of law; ... makes sure people remain arrested, or even get arrested; ... also ensures that there are further land seizures, etc.' Shortly after the new government was sworn in, 'Tsvangirai acknowledge[d] that getting rid of Gono and the attorney general, Johannes Tomana, who has abused the law to lock up Mugabe's opponents, will be seen as an early test of his power' (*The Guardian*, 14 February 2009, p. 30). The MDC explicitly called for Tomana and Gono—the 'hard-liners a threat to transition'—to leave office (*Business Day*, 24 March 2009), indicating the influential role both played in sabotaging the new government.

Gono is able to control the political arena of Zimbabwe. One of Mugabe's former members of staff remarks that the Reserve Bank Governor has free rein. In fact, Gono controls the national budget and the money to be spent by the government. Gono managed to build a patronage system that even rivals Mugabe's (*Africa Confidential*, 5 September 2008). The last Mugabe administration had 'sat in their offices, but everything they wanted to do, every expense etc. has had to go through the Reserve Bank—through Gono and his team. So what has happened: the Reserve Bank has become a *de facto* government', remarks a well-informed source. The

power that comes with Gono's position becomes obvious when walking through the city centre of Harare; the Reserve Bank is by far the most impressive building, taller than any other building in the city centre, symbolising the role of the Reserve Bank and its Governor.

The MDC tried to reduce Gono's influence by appointing Tendai Biti as Minister of Finance. Their personalities soon clashed in a fight about who would control the budget. Biti described 'Gono as an "Al-Qaeda"-like official deserving to be put before a firing squad for his activities as central bank governor' (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 20–26 February 2009, p. 1). As Gono was favoured by Mugabe, it appeared that Biti was unlikely to win this fight. Ultimately, it is Gono, with the power to decide how much money flows to each ministry, who can influence policy-making. His room for manoeuvre became more limited when it was decided that the country's own currency should be replaced by foreign currencies.³ Yet he remains influential. A scholar at the University of Zimbabwe seen as a fierce critic of Mugabe observed: 'Whatever little money there is, Gideon Gono is holding on to it as much as possible while his future is being determined, whether he will in fact continue as Governor of the Reserve Bank or maybe asked to step down'. A well-informed source emphasised that: 'if he [Gono] is not removed the Unity Government will fall apart, purely because it will be unworkable'. Yet, in February 2009 the aforementioned scholar remarked that it looked 'like he is very much going to stay in place. There will be a lot of work to be done between him and the Minister of Finance in order to reconcile them. But it's not going to be easy.' He was proved to be right.

Gono's crucial role became apparent when the EU made clear that it would provide financial aid only on Gono's replacement. A cabinet member stated: 'They [the Europeans] are so focused on the event of Gideon Gono going—as if that's going to deliver! You could get rid of Gono and get someone even worse in his place.' Europe's demand put Tsvangirai in a difficult position, limiting his possibilities because Mugabe would not have accepted Gono's resignation. Tsvangirai and Biti, however, needed Gono to resign as proof to the donor countries that the new government was serious about political transition. On the other hand, Tsvangirai could not run the risk of breaking up the government after having been in power for a few weeks, which meant that Mugabe and Gono emerged as the winners of the dispute. As a matter of fact, Gono still holds his position today. The London-based *Observer* reported in March 2010 that 'Zanu leaders have made it clear in private that there will be no concessions over replacing the central bank governor or attorney general until sanctions—which are hitting party grandees in their own pockets—are lifted' (*The Observer*, 2 March 2010, p. 18).

The roles played by the heads of the different security organs are self-evident: the police forces, the army and the CIO all control the state domestically. These three organs each bring fear to the population. The chief of the prisons controls the political prisoners. All members of the former JOC are dedicated members of ZANU-PF. Most of them refused to join the swearing-in ceremony of the new Prime Minister Tsvangirai. Some made strong statements prior to the inauguration that they would never attend such an event (*The Observer*, 15 February 2009). In particular, 'Chiwenga and ... Zimondi vowed ahead of the March 2008 synchronised polls that they would not salute the MDC-T [MDC under Tsvangirai] leader

should he win the presidential election' (*The Financial Gazette*, 19–25 February 2009, p. 1).

The Mutual Dependency between ZANU-PF and Mugabe

On one particular occasion prior to the 2008 election and the inauguration of the new government Mugabe faced a serious threat from within his own party. This incident became known as 'the Tsholotsho conspiracy'. In November 2004 six out of the ten ZANU-PF provincial chairmen met in Tsholotsho to plan the future leadership composition of ZANU-PF.⁴ Mugabe was warned about the 'conspiracy' (*Africa Confidential*, 3 December 2004) and suspended the six provincial chairmen from the ZANU-PF. This reaction highlights the seriousness of the incident. Jonathan Moyo, the then Information Minister, is thought to have organised the meeting (*Africa Confidential*, 17 December 2004). Observers also assume that he was assisted by Emmerson Mnangagwa. In fact, Moyo would have been promoted to Vice-President of the country (challenging Mugabe's favourite Joice Mujuru). Moyo was later expelled from the party and was voted into parliament as an independent candidate in 2005. Mnangagwa, on the contrary, managed to climb the ZANU-PF hierarchy again, making an 'impressive political comeback' (*Africa Confidential*, 9 May 2008, p. 6) and winning Mugabe's favour again. He was welcomed back into the JOC in early 2009, arguably because Mugabe depended on his patrons as much as they depended on him, particularly on a crucial figure like Mnangagwa.

However, after the Tsholotsho debacle, Mugabe was certainly aware of his unpopularity. Therefore, all close observers are convinced that Mugabe wanted to step down after the first round of the presidential election in 2008 when he suffered a defeat (*Mail & Guardian* online, 4 April 2008). A formerly close ally of Mugabe commented that 'he [Mugabe] probably would have welcomed the idea that he could exit with dignity and retire. But I don't believe the people he brought into powerful positions, particularly the military and the police, would have allowed him to leave.'

If Mugabe was prepared to step down under the condition that he would be granted amnesty, as the *Mail & Guardian* reported on 4 April 2008, why did he agree to join the Inclusive Government? There are arguably three main reasons. First, although he felt defeated, he was still aiming to fulfil his lifetime goal of dying in office (also see Dowden, 2006, p. 286). A second reason is that the JOC members were worried about their future. They wanted to keep up the status quo, i.e. having influence, holding power and maintaining a certain standard of living. An interviewee expressed this phenomenon in the slogan 'today I am a minister, tomorrow I starve'. Third, amnesty would be granted only to Mugabe, not to his cronies. Hence the ruling clique needed Mugabe to stay in power so that they could remain safe from the fear of prosecution. They probably felt insecure about their future, as no one spoke about a general amnesty at that stage. An international tribunal may have been established, which would have brought to light every unlawful action of the 29 years since ZANU-PF came to power. An alternative route, a truth and reconciliation commission, would also have been painful for the perpetrators, as shown by the experiences of neighbouring South Africa. In short, the ruling clique felt threatened. Their absence from Tsvangirai's swearing-in

ceremony and their anti-MDC rhetoric indicate how much they wanted to maintain the status quo.

They needed Mugabe and Mugabe needed them. The President was certainly aware that he would be in serious trouble if he surrendered without ensuring the security and survival of the ruling clique; they would have found a way to hold him responsible for his command, particularly with regard to the ethnic cleansing in Matabeleland in the 1980s and Operation Murambatsvina in 2005.

In the end, as a collective body, they saw no other option than to rig the vote count from the first round of the presidential election, winning time and ultimately ensuring Mugabe's victory in the run-off.⁵ This strategy paid off. It remains unclear whether Tsvangirai's withdrawal from the run-off was planned; however, the ruling clique was certainly pleased that it could maintain its democratic façade.

Shortly after having 'won' the election and having been hurriedly sworn in, Mugabe rushed to the African Union Summit, which took place in Sharm El-Sheikh in July 2008, to gain legitimacy from Africa's leaders. Despite some criticism, particularly from Mugabe's 'most effective opponent' (*Washington Post*, 2 July 2008, p. 6), Zambia's President Levy Mwanawasa, legitimacy was widely granted to Mugabe (*The Times*, 2 July 2008, p. 32; Welz and Junk, 2009).

The Weakness of the MDC and its Leadership

Mugabe's biggest advantage in the first 100 days of the new government was the weakness of the former opposition. The MDC leadership was not able to transform its overwhelming popularity into political power. The prevailing weakness of the MDC centres around two facts. First, the MDC is split into two camps: one is headed by Prime Minister Tsvangirai, the other by Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara. Second, Tsvangirai proved to be manipulable by being indecisive, not being able to say 'no', and being ill-advised.⁶ This became apparent when the MDC entered the Inclusive Government. Mugabe explored every possibility in order to keep a grip on power. The distribution of ministerial posts (both sides got the same number of ministers) clearly shows how Mugabe managed to secure power for his party although ZANU-PF had lost the parliamentary election in March 2008 and Mugabe had gained fewer votes in the first round of the presidential election. Further indications of Tsvangirai's weakness are that the detention of Roy Bennett, the designated Deputy Minister of Agriculture, did not spark off any loud protest and there were no consequences when Mugabe did not respond to an ultimatum issued by Tsvangirai in May 2009. These themes will be elaborated on next.

The MDC emerged from the trade union movement (Raftopoulos, 2001, pp. 14–21). It was founded in 1999 but its origins date back earlier. The MDC split in 2005 when there was a dispute within the party about whether to participate in the Senate election. Mugabe had proposed to reinstate the Senate as a political organ of the country. Some MDC members saw it as a chance to participate in the election; others considered it a trap by Mugabe to strengthen his power base. At first, Tsvangirai lobbied to participate in the election. He was already promising Senate seats to

members of the MDC. A well-known MP and MDC member of Mutambara's faction recalls:

He [Tsvangirai] was quite in favour of the Senate at the time. Then something happened. He met Mujuru in South Africa... He came back... and started lobbying the entire party that we should not participate in the Senate election.... So he changed his mind—we understand there was a lot of money which changed hands, but that's by the way... Finally we had a National Council Meeting to decide whether we are going to participate in this election or not. And eventually, because we couldn't come to a consensus, Tsvangirai in his ignorance perhaps—looking back—decided that we would vote on it... It was a secret vote and the result of the vote was 33 to participate in the election and 31 against and two spoiled papers. Now, the two spoiled papers:... one of them had a very small cross in the yes section... They said it was too small so it was considered spoiled. And the other one had written 'yes' instead of putting a cross... it was also considered spoiled even though in fact it was indicated clearly that the person wanted to participate. So the actual result should have been 35 against 31. But even 33, it was clear that we should participate in the Senate election. Tsvangirai then stood up in that meeting and said, well you have voted and you have voted to participate, but I do not believe that this is the best thing for the country and as your President I am going to overturn your vote and I am going out of here and announcing to the world that the MDC is not going to participate in this election... We couldn't believe... that this man can do this... He went out. He had organised a press conference at his house with all the international press and he lied to these people in front of the CNN and BBC cameras and so on. He said, our national council has voted and the vote was equal yes and no and I used my casting vote as President to say we will not participate in the election. First of all the vote wasn't equal and secondly under our constitution as a party, he didn't have a casting vote as President. There was not such provision in our party constitution. So he lied to the international community.

If this story is true, it reveals that Tsvangirai may not be as committed to democratic principles as one might assume. Despite personally having faced the brutal terror—including severe injuries—during campaigns by Mugabe loyalists in 2007 (see e.g. *The Guardian*, 19 March 2007, p. 19), he still did not adhere to the majority vote. Asked about Tsvangirai's commitment to democratic principles, an MDC member of cabinet said in February 2010:

I think that Morgan Tsvangirai has come a long way since 2005, when the split occurred. All of us have learnt the lessons of that and have been sobered by the terrible things that have happened in this country not just before 2005 but since 2005 and especially in 2008. And in all my dealings with Morgan Tsvangirai in the last two months, I have to say that I have growing confidence in his commitment to democracy. I have been impressed by the way he has handled a variety of things.

The story about Roy Bennett's detention highlights Tsvangirai's weakness. Roy Bennett is a dispossessed white farmer who, due to political tensions, went to South Africa and while still in exile was assigned the post of Deputy Minister of Agriculture. When returning from South Africa to be sworn in, he was arrested by the security forces on treason charges. Bennett's inauguration was postponed for weeks while he was still held by the security organs. The incident uncovered a 'lack of sincerity on part of the ZANU-PF and the security forces the party controls' (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 20–26 February 2009, p. 16).

Taking Mugabe's display of strength into account, it would perhaps have been logical for the MDC to pull out of government. However, the Prime Minister refused to withdraw from the Inclusive Government, perhaps because 'he cannot say "no"', as one of this allies put it. Indeed, Tsvangirai is seen as indecisive (see also *Africa Research Bulletin*, 2007, p. 17145A). He did not consider the Bennett incident as a serious setback. The arrest 'undermines the spirit of our agreement' he said, continuing on to say that 'it is very important to maintain the momentum of our agreement' (*The Star*, 16 February 2009, p. 6). The new Prime Minister seemed to be committed to the power-sharing agreement and had lost sight of the fact that ZANU-PF loyalists took advantage of him. In May 2009, 100 days into the new government, a final conclusion on the Bennett case had not been drawn. Tsvangirai admitted that it was indeed 'a slow and frustrating process' (*The Times*, 22 May 2009, p. 46). In early 2010, Bennett was still unable to take up to his position of Deputy Minister of Agriculture (*The Observer*, 2 March 2010, p. 18).

Tsvangirai's weakness is shown not just by the Bennett case. To take another example, he sent an ultimatum to Mugabe on 22 April 2009 because Mugabe did not review his decision regarding the unilateral appointment of Gideon Gono and because land was still being seized (*Mail & Guardian* online, 22 April 2009). Mugabe, however, did not respond with any change to his policy. As Tsvangirai's tactical manoeuvre was ultimately not successful his party in turn set him an ultimatum to resolve the issues, causing disagreement within the government. 'While some senior MDC officials, especially members of the party's parliamentary caucus, were beginning to demand a pull-out from the government, Biti said this was not an option' (*Business Day*, 7 May 2009). Despite the increasing pressure on Tsvangirai and his leadership style, he stayed in government without having resolved the problems relating to the power-sharing agreement.⁷

In this context, it is worth asking who advised Tsvangirai in his first weeks in office. When Mugabe suggested that Tsvangirai was massively influenced by the British government, he did not seem to be completely wrong. Taylor and Williams (2002) argue that the role the former colonial power can play is limited, particularly with reference to the ZANU-PF regime. Yet, Britain could and certainly did influence Zimbabwe's political dynamics by supporting the MDC. In fact, the British and the US-American embassies in Harare seem to have played a crucial role in advising the MDC leader. Behind closed doors it is said that they were opposed to the power-sharing agreement. With regard to that agreement, the *Independent* argued in September 2008 that the British and US-American governments 'will be disappointed that Mr Mugabe still wields so much power' (*The Independent*, 13 September 2008, p. 28). A senior Western diplomat emphasised that there were clear signs that the Americans in particular were furious when Tsvangirai joined the Unity

Government in February 2009 under conditions dictated by President Mugabe. Europe's position in this context was not quite clear; however, there are indications that the Europeans, including Britain and Switzerland, were also against the power-sharing agreement. They thought it would be a false move for the MDC. Once Tsvangirai was sworn in, the Europeans had to adapt their strategies in the turbulent waters of Zimbabwe's policy while continuing to support Tsvangirai.

Some Western diplomats pointed out that the new government lacked experience in ruling a country, some even going so far as to say that Tsvangirai and the new government simply had 'no clue', which is not completely untrue. One might not go that far; however, taking into account that the new government had no experience in heading a state administration, in implementing policy, or even in running a party, (the MDC, for example, is better described as a loose structure than a well-organised body), there is some truth in the Western diplomats' claim. In addition to this, on the whole the new ministers found their staff to be disloyal.

The outlook for the MDC was bleak. *The Times* drew an interesting parallel between the MDC leader and Joshua Nkomo, who led the other liberation movement besides ZANU-PF in the 1970s and 1980s, which was later absorbed within ZANU-PF. This observation summarises the arguments made above and concludes this section:

The Godfather of Zimbabwean politics was simply following the advice of the fictional Mafia boss Vito Corleone to 'keep your friends close and your enemies closer.' Mr Mugabe had executed exactly the same manoeuvre with Joshua Nkomo and his ZAPU party. The two former guerrilla commanders became bitter rivals after independence. Eventually, Mr Mugabe offered Mr Nkomo a place in government. In reality, he emasculated his opponent and ZAPU was swallowed up with one gulp by ZANU-PF. Mr Tsvangirai's detractors will argue that he has fallen into the same trap. Now that he has agreed to work with Mr Mugabe he has lost his moral authority and will no longer win support from his friends in the West. (*The Times*, 14 February 2009, p. 14)

The Other Players

The political landscape in Zimbabwe does not consist only of ZANU-PF and the MDC. There are more players involved in the political arena. Four groups will be outlined briefly as they are considered to play a crucial role. They are the (evicted) farmers, the trade unions, the businessmen, and the political grouping around ZANU-PF dissident Simba Makoni.

It is wrong to assume that Zimbabwe's farmers are united; they are organised in two rival groups. On the one hand, there is the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU); on the other hand, there is a group called Justice for Agriculture (JAC). The latter split away from the CFU for various reasons, most notably because they felt that their interests were not protected by the CFU, as JAC staff pointed out in interviews in their inconspicuous office in Harare. According to JAC, their organisation has more members than the CFU. JAC's members are mostly evicted farmers, whereas the CFU is primarily made up of current farmers. JAC has developed over the past months, appearing to be a human rights organisation at the beginning of 2009,

rather than merely a pressure group for evicted farmers. JAC claims to be financed 40% by its members and 60% by 'the international community', although it was not revealed who was meant by that phrase. JAC is a highly political organisation, whereas the CFU only attempts to be political, with a President who was evidently proud to be invited by Robert Mugabe to the inauguration of the new government. JAC's claim not to be linked to any political party seems to be true. The CFU, on the other hand, was highly active in lobbying ZANU-PF and the MDC, as well as Simba Makoni. It is noteworthy that the latter is reportedly a member of the CFU. The CFU claimed 'to be kicked by all sides', but in fact the same CFU tried to gain the upper hand in the game by attempting to work with the other players to ensure the union's survival. Moreover, some members of the CFU leadership openly state that they want to join the new administration.

In short, the farmers, whether part of JAC or the CFU, were involved in the political scene in Zimbabwe. Whereas the one group seemed to work like a benevolent charity organisation, the other was struggling for survival. The land issue currently is and will be *the* domestic issue in Zimbabwe in the years to come. During the first 100 days of the Inclusive Government, farms were still being seized and Mugabe declared on his birthday in late February that 'land distribution will continue!' (*The Economist*, 7 March 2009, p. 40). There is little doubt that this will be the case and thus JAC and the CFU will remain important players.

The trade unions are difficult to judge. They claim not to be linked with one specific party. There is, however, no doubt that the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) is more closely linked to the MDC than to other parties. The MDC emerged from the labour and trade union movement. Morgan Tsvangirai has held the position of Secretary General of ZCTU. He and the current Secretary General are still in close contact. It is interesting that the latter (despite being leader of the self-proclaimed independent trade unions) was reported to be considered for the office of the next Governor of Harare (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 20–26 February 2009, p. 4).

The trade unions remain strong because they are well-organised at the grassroots level. It is no coincidence that the MDC emerged from this structure, as the trade unions served as a platform to discuss political issues during Zimbabwe's one-party era, which ended in the late 1990s. The impact that the local trade union structure has on the political opinion of the country must not be underestimated. Since the beginning of the millennium, ZANU-PF has perceived the labour movement as a threat, banning national strikes and threatening to imprison its organisers (Meredith, 2002, p. 162).

The next crucial players to be looked at are a handful of white businessmen with whom even Mugabe collaborates (see e.g. *Africa Confidential*, 3 April 2009). The stories about them are reminiscent of Hollywood movies, full of conspiracy and criminal activity; they are involved in the arms trade and the exploitation of natural resources, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Some of them are banned from travelling to the European Union and the United States and they are under scrutiny by Interpol. Although much of their racketeering remains secret and will probably continue to be so, there is no doubt that they influence politics in Zimbabwe. Their network is huge and their influence massive. One of the businessmen tried to become involved in the political arena by sponsoring the Tsholotsho meeting (*Africa Confidential*, 3 December 2004); but the same man seems

to have links with Mugabe as well. Arguably, the business of these individuals is possible only under non-democratic conditions, where the rule of law is not respected. Therefore, they have a strong interest in maintaining the status quo. There are good reasons to assume that they support ZANU-PF individuals, as the involvement with the Tsholotsho meeting suggests.

The last important player is the political grouping of Simba Makoni, who is a highly ambivalent political figure. He had decided to leave the Mugabe administration and run for President in the 2008 election. However, he did not succeed, as he faced Mugabe and Tsvangirai as his opponents with greater popular support. Some observers argue that he only ran as candidate to divert votes from the opposition camp while keeping ties with ZANU-PF. In early March 2008, it was speculated that Makoni had the support of senior ZANU-PF members, most notably Vice-President Joice Mujuru and her husband, retired army commander Solomon Mujuru (*The Guardian*, 3 March 2008, p. 24). The fact that Mugabe did not criticise Makoni publicly is noteworthy, particularly when compared with the harsh rhetoric he used *vis-à-vis* the MDC.

After the Inclusive Government was established, Makoni and some of his loyalists claimed that they wanted to found a new party. A representative of the grouping said that they hoped to become the lucky third when the ZANU-PF/MDC coalition breaks apart. He explained the opportunity: 'you must be on the right side... everyone has his agenda'. The Makoni people claimed to be committed to ZANU-PF's original principles, which are rooted in the liberation struggle. They argued that Mugabe's party had strayed away from the original principles they had at independence and in the early years of the Republic of Zimbabwe. ZANU-PF claims to be left-wing; however, the party is far more conservative than they think. Makoni and his allies want to go back to the principles that ZANU-PF had initially fought for during the liberation struggle.

Conclusion

The analysis above has revealed that the situation in Zimbabwe was highly complex in the first 100 days of the Inclusive Government and continues to be so. There are many outstanding issues. Many different players were involved in the political setting; all had and still have their own agenda. Some proved to be very influential in the conduct of policy, most notably the JOC members. Although this policy-making unit was officially disbanded under the power-sharing agreement between the MDC and ZANU-PF, it is assumed that they still influence current policy-making and implementation. Mugabe can rely on the support of his allies, both within ZANU-PF and internationally, as shown by the fact that Mugabe is still in power. A Tsholotsho debacle is unlikely to happen again, as even Mugabe's ZANU-PF internal opposition became aware that they need Mugabe to remain in power. In the regional setting, South Africa protects Mugabe; in the global one, China played this role by vetoing decisions against Zimbabwe in the United Nations Security Council (Welz & Junk, 2009). One of Mugabe's biggest strategic advantages is the weakness of the former opposition. Tsvangirai is backed by the masses; however, he is not able to transform this support into bargaining power against Mugabe. Tsvangirai's ultimatums⁸ were ignored by Mugabe, most notably the ultimatum issued in

April 2009. Tsvangirai seems to obey Mugabe's every command. The latter and his cronies control most key policies, such as state security and the economy. With it they control the public and the financial resources of the new government, thus having the power to sabotage the Inclusive Government. The staffs of the ministries largely comprise ZANU-PF members who show little loyalty to their new ministers. After 100 days in office, the prospects of the new government were bleak. The current political situation shows that a deep transition has not yet taken place. The problems are too deep-rooted and complex and therefore difficult to overcome.

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Notes

1. For a quantitative study based on Afrobarometer data, see Michael Bratton and Eldred Masunungure (2006).
2. It is not known exactly who is a member of the JOC (see *The Observer*, 15 February 2009 and *The Zimbabwe Times*, 12 August 2008). The presented list includes all names that were mentioned in the interviews conducted in Harare.
3. US dollars and the South African rand are mostly used. Additionally, Botswana's pula, the euro and the UK's pound are also used.
4. For more details on the Tsholotsho conspiracy, see *Africa Confidential*, 3 and 17 December 2004. For Jonathan Moyo's perspective of the incident, see www.prof-jonathan-moyo.com
5. According to the above, there are reasons to assume that policy-making in the JOC after the March 2008 election followed what Janis (1972) describes as 'group think.' Everyone was committed, dissidents were excluded and decisions had to be made quite rapidly. This is, however, to be understood as a footnote, and requires further research.
6. In an interview with the German-based *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (21 November 2008, p. 7), Tsvangirai admitted that the MDC had made too many compromises, although they won the election. ('Wir haben schon so viele Kompromisse gemacht. Wir haben die Wahl gewonnen und Mugabe erlaubt, an der Macht zu bleiben. Wir können nicht bis zur Kapitulation mit ihm verhandeln.')
7. The sudden death of Tsvangirai's wife in a tragic car accident certainly did not help Tsvangirai to adopt a firmer position towards President Mugabe.
8. Tsvangirai issued a 24-hour ultimatum to Mugabe on 26 June 'to negotiate or face being shunned as an illegitimate leader' (*Mail & Guardian* online, 26 June 2008).

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