



ELECTORAL SECURITY FRAMEWORK ZIMBABWE

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I. Introduction

A. Electoral and Conflict Dynamics

From April 16 to April 20, 2018, Creative Associates International (Creative) conducted an assessment to identify the threats to peaceful elections in Zimbabwe during 2018 and measures that could be considered to mitigate these threats. The assessment was conducted by Jeffrey Carlson, Director of Creative’s Electoral Education and Integrity Practice Area; and Jeff Fischer, Creative’s Senior Electoral Advisor, with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). During the assessment, the team met with representatives from civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, political parties, and international organizations. The interviews sought to obtain insights on threats to peaceful elections, their profiles and probabilities; and programming that is being proposed, planned or implemented to prevent, manage, or mediate these threats.

The structure of this assessment is as follows. First the assessment introduces the electoral and conflict dynamics associated with the 2018 electoral cycle. Next, the assessment explores structural vulnerabilities for violence, that is, factors that are creating fragility or circumstances that could induce violence. Following the conditional factors, the assessment examines election-specific factors--issues embedded in the current electoral scene which could serve as triggers for violence. The assessment then considers mitigating factors that could be leveraged to reduce the vulnerabilities, and pivotal factors that could mitigate or provoke conflict depending upon their direction. The assessment concludes with a conflict prevention strategy and recommendations on programming steps that can be considered, forming an Electoral Security Framework for 2018.

The July 30 elections are “harmonized” to include the presidential, parliamentary, and local levels. These elections will be the first since the November 2017 “coup d’état” which saw the Zimbabwean military’s ouster of President Robert Mugabe and the installation of Emmerson Mnangagwa as his successor. This sea-change in governmental and Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) leadership is coupled with the death of the Movement for Democratic Change’s (MDC-T) leader Morgan Tsvangirai, which has triggered a parallel schism within the main opposition coalition. As a result, in contrast to previous election years, there is the potential for intra-party violence in the pre-election phase.

B. Definitions of Electoral Violence

Several definitions of electoral conflict and violence can be cited. One states that:

Election violence is a particular type of political violence, and it occurs within the context of the overall process of democracy and democratization...Electoral violence is a sub-type of political violence in which actors employ coercion in an instrumental way to advance their interests or achieve specific political ends...¹

¹*Elections in Fragile States: Between Voice and Violence*, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, March 7, 2008.

In another, it is defined as, “any random or organized act or threat to intimidate, physically harm, blackmail, or abuse an electoral stakeholder in seeking to determine, delay, or to otherwise influence the electoral process.”² A third concludes:

At the broadest level, by violence or political violence we mean the deliberate use of physical harm or the threat of physical harm for a political purpose. Overt physical violence can take the form of beatings, torture, and murder, but violence is also evident by its threat – by coercive intimidation. ‘Electoral violence’ refers to physical violence and coercive intimidation directly tied to an impending electoral contest or to an announced electoral result.³

These definitions have at least three features in common. First, electoral conflict and violence has a broad range of manifestations. On one end of the spectrum, there is the scale of electoral violence that took place in the post-election phase of the Popular Consultation in East Timor in 1999 and the 2007 Kenyan presidential and parliamentary elections, which left thousands dead and displaced. But, electoral conflict can also manifest itself in personal intimidation, such as the so-called “night letters” delivered by the Taliban that warned Afghan voters not to cast ballots in the 2009 presidential election or they would face personal consequences. Second, conflict and violence are employed to achieve a political objective. In an electoral context, this objective would be surmised as capturing the electoral process through the elimination of political rivals, suppression of voter turnout, coercion of voters, or intimidation of election officials. Finally, electoral conflict and violence can occur during any phase of the election, from voter registration, political campaigning, and Election Day to the announcement and implementation of outcomes. As a result, policy and programming options must be process-oriented and not electoral event-oriented with a singular focus on Election Day security.

It is with these definitions in mind that a conceptual approach to framing electoral violence is employed in this assessment.

II. Structural Vulnerabilities for Electoral Violence

Structural vulnerabilities are macro-level factors that create conditions for electoral violence to be triggered.

A. Harmonized Elections

The first harmonized elections occurred in 2008. By combining the presidential, parliamentary, and local elections into one Election Day, the electoral stakes to succeed on that day enhance the intensity of political competition. Harmonizing elections diversifies and multiplies the motives for the perpetration of electoral violence simultaneously at the national, constituency, and local levels.

² Fischer, Jeff, *Electoral Conflict and Violence – A Strategy for Study and Prevention*, IFES, 2002, page 8.

³ Straus, Scott and Charlie Taylor, *Democratization and Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa – 1990 – 2007*, University of Wisconsin, 2009, page 9.

B. Electoral Systems

The parliament is a bicameral National Assembly, composed of a House of Assembly and a Senate. The House of Assembly consists of 270 members, 210 of whom are elected in single-member constituencies with an additional 60 seats reserved for women based upon the votes of the single-member constituencies using a party-list proportional representation system. As a result, the voting for the 210 single-member constituencies is critical in determining party control of the parliament, and the head-to-head competition that results from this system produces incentives to employ violence to obtain the votes necessary to achieve a zero-sum victory in that constituency.

The presidential system is conducted in two rounds, with the two leading contenders facing each other in a run-off. The winner must receive a majority of votes cast. While majoritarian systems force political consensus around two candidates, in principle, reducing fragmentation, history has demonstrated that the intensity of campaigning in second rounds increases with the zero-sum stakes involved, as evidenced by the 2008 experience in Zimbabwe.

C. Electoral Justice

There are several avenues for pursuing electoral justice. First, the High Court can be engaged on matters of major consideration, such as the use of the MDC logo and name by the Thokozani Khupe faction of the MDC. However, after the election proclamation is made, an Electoral Court is established to hear other judicial petitions on electoral matters. Second, a chain of investigations can be prompted by a complaint lodged by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) for investigation and possible referral to the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP). A Special Investigation Committee can be invoked to also examine the claims, but the committee is only established after candidates are nominated by their parties. These mechanisms are reported to be more effective at investigating inter-party petitions than intra-party complaints. Third, the ZEC can engage in alternative electoral dispute resolution through the Multi-Party Liaison Committee and the enforcement of the Political Party Code of Conduct. These mechanisms were only activated once the July 30 election proclamation was made. Because of the temporary nature of these processes, the system is deemed weak, slow, and emerging late in the election campaign. Additionally, with a \$10,000 fee to submit a petition in the Electoral Court, access to justice is financially out of reach for many Zimbabweans. As a result, electoral complaints become vulnerable to violence because judicial mechanisms may be ineffective at resolving them according to the rule of law.

D. Political Party Financing

The Political Party Finances Act provides public funding for political parties garnering at least five percent of the vote in the previous election. However, only the ZANU PF and MDC-T have benefited from these subsidies. In 2018, two smaller political parties, the Zimbabwe Development Party and the Voice of the People's Party challenged this Act in the Constitutional Court. However, in March 2018, the Court ruled against this petition. This inequity in political financing creates vulnerabilities for electoral violence in that smaller parties do not have the resources to effectively defend themselves and seek redress for acts against them if they become the targets of electoral violence.

E. Status of Women

Women were cited as particularly vulnerable to electoral violence. These vulnerabilities are said to be realized in several ways. First, women candidates may be targeted for sexual abuse as they vie for the nominations of their political party where sex is a prerequisite for obtaining the candidacy. One interviewee observed that even with the women's quota system for set aside seats, males are determining the candidacies. Additionally, the wives and daughters of political opponents may be targeted for assault. Women who are political party agents are targeted for abuse in the polling stations. Women have reported domestic abuse by their spouses and communities as punishment for their public political activism. One international non-governmental organization (NGO) is monitoring social media for online abuse of women in general with the political context in mind as well. Key findings from this effort were not yet identified. This combination of societal attitudes and practices creates vulnerabilities for women to be targets of electoral violence.

F. Youth Bulge

Youth, particularly, young males, are often the targets of recruitment by politicians to be agents of violence. These youths may be recruited through existing gangs or formed as youth wings of political parties, effectively party militia, such as the Green Bombers for the ZANU PF and the Order of the Vanguard for the MDC Alliance and presidential candidate Nelson Chamisa. ZANU PF has been effective in recruiting youth into its ranks, but it was observed that, at the age of 40, Chamisa is also attracting young people to his campaign. Recent statistics show that just over 86 percent of the Zimbabwean population is aged between 0 and 24 years (38.90 percent are 0 to 14 years of age, and 29.47 percent are 15 to 24 years of age). It is reported that in the preliminary 2018 voter registration statistics, 60 percent of registrants were between 18 and 40 years of age. Such a youth demographic creates vulnerabilities for electoral violence because this group represents a ready-made pool of potential enforcers to be recruited by politicians and deployed against opponents as seen the political party youth militias identified above.

G. Summary of Structural Vulnerability Factors

The harmonization of elections and the electoral system combine to intensify political competition at the national, parliamentary, and local levels. Electoral justice mechanisms are considered weak and costly and do not represent a widely embraced route to resolve electoral disputes. While there is public financing of major parties, the exclusivity of these awards does not level the playing field, and political finance contributions and expenditures are otherwise opaque. Finally, women and youth have traditionally been politically marginalized, with women as targets of violence and youth as targets of recruitment into violence. These factors combine to make the electoral process vulnerable to violence in terms of competition, justice, resources, and participation.

III. Election-Specific Vulnerabilities for 2018

While conditional factors create environmental vulnerabilities for violence, there are also election-specific or contextual vulnerabilities which may serve as triggers for violent incidents to occur.

A. Political Fragmentation

As discussed in the opening examination of the country context, the changes in leadership in the ZANU PF and MDC-T have produced factions in both parties, resulting in antagonistic alignments of previous allies and raising the prospects of intra-party violence. The conflict experienced among these factions in both party primaries is described below. Additionally, there is a generational split, where younger candidates in both parties are seeking parity in leadership and candidacy opportunities within the traditional party establishment.

B. Social Media

Social media can play a “wild card” role with respect to electoral violence. The Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe reported an overall Internet penetration rate of 49.5 percent in 2017. WhatsApp users account for 44 percent of all mobile data usage in the country. In 2017, there were 850,000 Facebook users in Zimbabwe. Mobile telephone coverage in the country is reported to be at 100 percent. However, Internet usage is concentrated in urban areas, with rural areas relying more on mobile telephones and SMS texting. Social media can be employed to document incidents of electoral violence; however, it is already reported that social media sites are being employed as tools of intimidation and conveyance of fake news and threats. Both major political parties are employing social media to promote their political agendas, with ZANU PF using the hashtag “#EDismyvot” and the MDC Alliance using “#generationalconsensus.” Social media abuse creates vulnerabilities for electoral violence if its political use includes the conveyance of threats and intimidation and disinformation intended to disrupt the process and provoke conflict, and if arrests for transmitting political messages via social media occur.

C. Biometric Voter Registration (BVR)

The ZEC has introduced Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) to improve the integrity of the voter roll through enhancing the accuracy of voter identification and reducing duplicate registrations. The process was implemented through a two-step data collection, which involved both mobile registrations and fixed locations. The ZEC collected two forms of biometric data on each voter: 1) ten fingerprints, and 2) a photograph for facial recognition. Each registrant was given a unique serial number on a paper registration slip at the completion of their registration. Voters were required to provide their national identity document and a proof of residence to register. At the time of the assessment, the ZEC was in the process of “de-duplicating” the database and identifying duplicate or false identification numbers.

While there was general agreement that the initiative would achieve its technical objectives, there was also concern about political machinations resulting from this reform. First, one source noted that the BVR was not established in law, but, rather, by Presidential pronouncement, which could be problematic because executive orders are temporary in nature. It was speculated that the voter registry could be subject to legal challenges because it is not enshrined in Zimbabwean legislation. Second, many sources reported that local politicians and traditional Chiefs were compelling voters to share their registration slip serial numbers. In some cases, voters were required to share their serial numbers to receive government food subsidies. In the ZANU PF local cell reorganization

program, intended to solidify its grassroots base, members were required to fill in their registration numbers on party forms. Additionally, voters were told that the knowledge of their registration slip numbers allowed the local politicians and traditional Chiefs to know whether they cast ballots and how they voted. The BVR has created a vulnerability for voter intimidation through the misappropriate use of voter registration serial numbers by incumbent proxies.

D. Special Voting Activities

While special voting activities, such as voting by people with disabilities and voting in hospitals, are intended to enfranchise the disadvantaged, two special voting activities in this case hold the potential for conflict and intimidation: 1) diaspora voting, and 2) ex-prisoner voting.

1. Diaspora Voting

In past elections, out-of-country voting was confined to diplomats and any other public servants stationed outside of Zimbabwe. However, the opposition has advocated for expanding that to include any eligible Zimbabwean voter residing outside of the country. This initiative has become a source of contention between the incumbent and opposition. If out-of-country voting is not undertaken, this will likely be used by the opposition to support their complaints that the electoral process is exclusive and unfair.

2. Ex-Prisoner Voting

President Mnangagwa pardoned 3,000 prisoners under a presidential amnesty order to reduce the population in the country's prisons, which currently hold 20,000 inmates despite having a collective capacity of only 17,000 prisoners. Some have expressed concern that these former prisoners' voting preferences could be manipulated by the government.

E. Summary of Election-Specific Vulnerability Factors

The political fragmentation of both the ZANU PF and MDC Alliance is introducing a new set of unknowns into the political landscape. This fragmentation can be exacerbated by the use and misuse of social media, which will also be playing an unprecedented role in Zimbabwean politics this year. Combined with these factors, the BVR has become a double-edged sword, likely bringing greater integrity in voter registration, but also the intimidation, vote buying, and threats to the perceived secrecy of the ballot which have resulted from the issuance of voter registration numbers. Additionally, special voting programs, such as for the diaspora and ex-prisoners, can result in further divisiveness between the incumbent and opposition.

IV. Mitigating Factors

Mitigating factors are those which can be leveraged to reduce the vulnerabilities for electoral violence.

A. Independent Commission Cooperation

The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), National Media Commission (NMC), and National Gender Commission (NGC) are coordinating their activities to promote peaceful elections. The NPRC has urged political parties to campaign peacefully, stating that it will subpoena perpetrators of violence to account for their deeds.

These initiatives bring more public resources into the elections for monitoring, investigation, and prosecution, reducing the opportunities for impunity.

B. Electoral Violence Courts

On April 23, it was announced that special courts to hear complaints concerning crimes of electoral violence would be established.

This initiative will introduce focused judicial attention on crimes of electoral violence, which had previously gone largely unpunished. However, as it is early in the process, this new judicial instrument's impact on justice and impunity remains unclear.

C. Domestic Election Observation Campaigns

The Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) intends to deploy 200 long term observers, one in each district, and 5,000 short term observers, covering an anticipated 10,000 polling stations. ZESN will be monitoring for incidents of electoral violence. ZESN and the Election Resource Centre (ERC), which will be deploying an additional 700 observers, and other groups, will establish a Situation Room, including a call center for real-time reporting on incidents and information. ZESN and the ERC will have human rights attorneys standing by to provide counsel. Domestic election observation missions will also be employing a Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) so that their observation has both a qualitative and quantitative dimension. Many observers will have smartphones and will photograph the posted results at polling stations. However, these observation efforts need to be linked to the NHRC, so that the NHRC can initiate investigations of human rights violations identified by observers. The \$10,000 accreditation fee for each observer that ZEC charges also represents a financial burden on such missions.

The Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) will have a role in observing elections. Traditionally, ZINASU has observed elections under ZESN. The organization seeks to foster academic freedom and to create a safe environment for a multiplicity of ideas. It is apolitical, but some people tend to link it to the MDC-T. However, the MDC-T has its own student body on campus.

The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe has a seat in the Situation Room so that gender-based issues can be tracked. The organization wants to establish an informal mediation network and is working with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to set up an observatory to monitor acts of violence against women.

Domestic observation mitigates electoral violence by providing widely deployed teams to witness and document incidents, building evidence-based findings and accountability as deterrents for those perpetrating violence.

D. Peaceful Election Campaigns

1. Peace Messaging Campaigns

“I Pray, I Vote” is a peaceful election campaign undertaken by a collation of faith-based organizations: Shalom Project Trust, Habakkuk Trust, Ecumenical Church Leader’s Forum, Zimbabwe Council of Churches, and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe. This campaign is one of a number of church-sponsored peaceful election advocacy initiatives. Other initiatives include the Ecumenical Elections Covenant stating how they want elections conducted, what the elections should deliver, and quality of leadership; and the National Envisioning Process confronting three challenges: 1) social cohesion; 2) promoting legislation to institute constitutional mandates; and 3) economic recovery and trust. The Council of Churches also issued a Warning Letter on confrontation in politics in September 2017. A Warning Letter is a clerical instrument similar to a Pastoral Letter. The World Council of Churches will conduct its own election observation, independent from other groups, and operate a call center with their own informal and formal observers, providing real-time responses through engaging church leaders. If there is not an outright winner, national mediation with church leaders will be offered.

Additional peace messaging campaigns include that of the Zimbabwe National Reconciliation Alliance which conducted a non-partisan campaign from March 1 to May 31, 2018 to promote “peace, justice, national reconciliation, and renewal”; Heal Zimbabwe’s National Peace Campaign; and traditional leaders have been urged by the president to promote a peaceful election in their communities.

Peace messaging initiatives mitigate electoral violence by asserting religious values and promoting peaceful elections through those lenses.

2. Survivor Support Services

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGOs Forum is a coalition of 22 human rights organizations that provides an array of survivor support services, including public investigation (Zimbabwe Association of Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation), documentation of political violence (Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust), legal education and assistance (Legal Resources Foundation, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights), counseling services for the rehabilitation of torture victims and self-advocacy (Counseling Services Unit), and support for human rights defenders (Zimbabwe Human Rights Foundation).

Survivor support services mitigate the impact of violence on the lives and families of those who were targets of violence.

E. Summary of Mitigating Factors

Electoral violence mitigation can be addressed on a number of levels. First, the coordinated initiatives of the independent commissions provide a government-level mechanism for investigation of such crimes. The governmental dimension is also being extended to justice through the establishment of a special court to hear cases of electoral violence. Domestic election observation missions are numerous and will provide a robust level of accountability for electoral actors. Peaceful election programming is also present to provide a stream of positive communications. And, when violence does occur, survivor support services are available to assist victims and their families.

V. Pivotal Factors

A. Zimbabwe Election Commission

In addition to administering the elections, the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) establishes Electoral Security Committees, Dispute Resolution Committees, and approves voter education materials. The independence and impartiality of the ZEC has come into question, particularly among the opposition, given that a significant portion of the Commission are reportedly former military members. As a result, the performance of ZEC will be closely monitored by the MDC for its independence from the executive branch and the military, and its impartiality in electoral administration.

B. Youth Candidacies

MDC-T youths are increasing their advocacy to obtain parliamentary and local government nominations and complement the youthful presidential candidate, Nelson Chamisa. Last year, the party acquiesced to the youth's demand to have at least 20 percent of the seats reserved for them in each province. This is a pivotal issue because, if their political objective for such candidacies are thwarted, youth may boycott or otherwise disrupt the electoral process in response.

C. Traditional Leaders

The President of the Chief's Council, Fortune Charumbira, has been accused of partisanship in favor of ZANU PF. However, High Court Justice Clement Phiri ordered that Charumbira officially retract his statements in support of ZANU PF. If they are neutral actors, traditional leaders can play an important role in voter education and dispute resolution. However, if they have decided to support the ZANU PF, then their good offices will be employed in manipulation of authority for partisan purposes.

D. Summary of Pivotal Factors

A failure to engage young people in the electoral process risks creating a generational alienation of from democracy and representative governance. Next, while the police have been marginalized by the military, the election could offer an opportunity for them to reengage with the public with new approaches to community policing.

VI. Political Parties Primaries

A. ZANU PF

ZANU PF established an election commission to conduct primary elections. However, the May 2 elections were rife with accusations of ballot box stuffing, bribery, and scuffles at polling stations. In some locations, voting materials were delivered late. As a result, the Politburo ordered a re-run of the voting in 10 constituencies. The Politburo also sent independent verification teams to all areas to investigate the claims and verify the outcomes. Some incidents of violence were reported. In Chegutu West, candidate Dexter Nduna fired gunshots into the air to disperse opponents during a standoff between factions. Four polling station agents for candidate Vengai Musengi were allegedly poisoned in Chegutu East. Moreover, President Mnangagwa condemned some candidates' use of ZRP officers as polling station officials. Employing police in this fashion is effectively the use of state resources for political purposes.

In an unexpected turn of events, the primaries saw the defeat of many established party figures including National Chairperson Oppah Muchinguri. Others losing their elections included the Minister in Charge of Public Service, a former police spokesperson, a Scholarship Minister, and the Matabeleland South Provincial Affairs Minister. One of President Mnangagwa's top advisors was defeated. Elsewhere, top ZANU PF ministers and officials lost in Midlands province, Gwanda South, Mutare West, Buhera West, Manicaland, Mberengwa West, Mavingo, Chivi South, Matabeleland South, Makoni South, and Mutare South. Additionally, only 22 women have been voted in through this round of primaries. The implications for fragmentation within the ZANU PF voting bloc and its consequent vulnerability for conflict should be monitored by election observer groups.

B. MDC Alliance

Over 3,000 candidates submitted their paperwork to vie for the party's nominations. However, the party's approach to candidate selection involves a first step of consensus building, rather than voting. In this way, potential candidates and their supporters are asked to negotiate and reach a consensus on the nominee for a particular office. If a consensus cannot be established, then a vote will be conducted. The process has been criticized as empowering party leaders and opening the selections to favoritism and manipulation. There were reports of infighting in Matabeleland Province where seven constituencies failed to agree on a candidate. In Glen View South Constituency, MDC-T officials were accused of imposing the daughter of Morgan Tsvangirai as the nominee. The seated MDC-T parliamentarian, Jessi Majome, has withdrawn her candidacy saying that the playing field is not level. While the party has said that it is reserving 20 percent of its constituencies for youth and 50 percent for women, some senior members reportedly contested for the seats set aside for youth. Since a "consensus," unlike an election, is not a legally binding, if these agreements fall apart, the potential for conflict emerges. There is no immediate intra-party mechanism to resolve such differences, apart from leadership interventions. This should also be monitored by election observer groups.

VII. Electoral Violence Profiles

The profile of the electoral violence will be a product of the tactics which the perpetrators choose to adopt and whether they are applying the logic of violence or the logic of intimidation to achieve their political objectives. Based upon the history of electoral violence and the current context, there are three potential profiles for electoral violence that can emerge.

First, there is the harshest profile, which includes an array of tactics including homicide, strategic displacement, physical assault, sexual assault, and property damage or confiscation. These tactics would be employed by state agents, such as security forces, and state proxies, such as youth militia and “war veterans.” The victims would be opposition candidates and supporters. The geographical locations would be in opposition strongholds and the incident venues can range from rallies, to candidate homes and offices. The violence would occur during the pre-election phase to influence turnout.

The second profile assumes that political fragmentation will be the principal factor in destabilizing the electoral process. Under this profile, the perpetrators will be political rivals both within parties and in inter-party confrontations. While homicides could occur, this profile envisions a less lethal set of tactics including assaults and property destruction. Candidates and supporters would continue to be victims, but opposition members would not be the only targets. The “hot spot” locations would be more numerous under this scenario, but the incident venues would remain the same as in the first profile. Additionally, the violence might not be limited to the pre-election phase, with rivals seeking confrontations on Election Day, and potentially street actions if the outcomes are disputed and protests erupt.

The third profile can be termed the “legitimacy option.” Under this profile, the incumbent employs state hegemony to quell overt electoral violence. However, the motives to retain power remain and, hence, the manifestations of electoral violence would become more nuanced in the form of intimidation tactics. In this case the perpetrator and victim identities would be the same as in the first profile, but with less reliance on physical thugs to carry out acts but more to portray them as threats. The locations would be more personal in nature and social media usage may be ramped up as a conveyer of threats. Once again, the emphasis would be on the pre-election phase to influence voter turnout and vote selection.

VIII. Electoral Security Framework

A. Conflict Mitigation Strategy

The political party conflict mitigation strategy can be configured with three objectives in mind: 1) conflict containment, 2) impunity reduction, and 3) public accountability.

1. Conflict Containment

While incidents of electoral violence have occurred during this electoral cycle, these incidents have been sporadic and have not resulted in loss of life or serious injury. The most widespread form of coercion has been the intimidation associated with voter registration slip numbers.

Although the motives and capacity for violence exist, the first strategic objective is to contain the violence to its current manifestations and intensities, with the obvious intention to reduce it further if possible. In this case, conflict containment is accomplished through inclusion and dispute resolution. The conflict containment strategy is fulfilled through support for political inclusion, effective electoral dispute resolution mechanisms, and de-conflicting electoral reform. Preparations for political inclusion must be made in the pre-election phase, while electoral dispute resolution and de-conflicting electoral reform are concerns throughout the electoral cycle. The good offices of public diplomacy by the international community can also play a role in the containment of conflict.

a. Political Inclusion

Supporting female and male youth candidacies and involvement in elections can contain their retreat into violence because of their marginalization. Special training programs and electoral awareness courses can be provided to educate these young candidates and their supporters on elections as instruments of governance. In so doing, youth are encouraged to participate peacefully within the electoral process and not be recruited to inflict violence against it. Additionally, supporting women's candidacies through training and organizational assistance can offer the dual benefit of both political empowerment, as they gain the skills to effectively campaign; and a measure of security, because would-be perpetrators of violence against them may be deterred by the international spotlight.

The issue of inclusion is also reflected in the special voting programs under consideration for the diaspora and ex-prisoners. While extending the franchise to residents abroad conforms with international electoral standards for inclusion, in some contexts conducting transnational registration and voting present financial and technical obstacles which cannot be quickly overcome in a relatively compressed electoral calendar. Such a context is relevant for Zimbabwe and the conduct of diaspora voting should be planned for the next harmonized election so that its administration can be deconflicted and fairly conducted. On the other hand, if ex-prisoners and/or the prison population in general are allowed to vote, this voting should be monitored by domestic and international election observer groups to deter intimidation and voter manipulation during the voting phase.

b. Effective Electoral Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

Electoral dispute resolution can be conducted through support to existing mechanisms involving the NHRC, NPRC, and Special Investigation Committees. Preparations are underway through international assistance to provide capacity assistance to these institutions and to establish linkages between the investigative institutions and election observer groups. International support should continue to the ZEC for its participation in the Multi-Party Liaison Committee and to enhance its use to provide strategic communications to the political parties.

The international community can also play a role on conflict containment throughout the electoral cycle by using preventive diplomacy to encourage political rivals to eschew violence and resolve their differences peacefully.

c. De-Conflicting Electoral Reform

With the passage of the electoral reform legislation, a review of these statutes should be undertaken to assess their impact on political competition, inclusion, and barriers to participation which could trigger conflict.

2. Impunity Reduction

Impunity reduction can be fostered throughout the electoral cycle through support to the electoral violence court and monitoring ZRP arrests and investigative activities.

a. Electoral Violence Courts

A new court is being established to hear cases of electoral violence. Guidance on the judicial considerations of such politically sensitive cases should be provided as should investigative guidelines for the ZRP to follow in building cases. Such guidance could be shared through a one-day workshop on the topic for court officials and ZRP. Additionally, the caseloads from the court should be monitored for outcomes including patterns of victimization, perpetration, crimes committed, judicial decisions, and penalties.

b. Monitoring ZRP Arrests and Investigations

The ZRP has also made public statements about zero tolerance for crimes of electoral violence. The ZRP's arrests and investigations should be monitored to measure how police actions are impacting the impunity factor. Such monitoring could be included in that of international and domestic election observer groups, as further elaborated below under Public Accountability.

3. Public Accountability

The third strategic objective involves going public with messaging directed at accountability for acts of electoral violence and monitoring incidents of electoral violence throughout the electoral cycle.

a. Peaceful Elections Messaging

Peaceful election campaigns organized by faith-based organizations should possess both motivational and admonitory messages encouraging peaceful politicking and also drawing a line of public accountability for acts of electoral violence. As respected institutions in Zimbabwe, faith-based organizations are key to the success of such campaigns, which will train people to address conflict and tension if faced with confrontation in different contexts, particularly extremely local contexts. Messaging should include accountability for gender-based violence. This public accountability is intended as a “name and shame” tactic for perpetrators to deter their violent behaviors. As described in this assessment, the programming platforms and organizations are in place to conduct such peace messaging campaigns. However, additional international assistance would add to their robustness and even offer a platform for mediation which could intersect with the electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

b. Election Observation

Public accountability is also facilitated through domestic and international election observation missions, the Situation Room, and call centers to report incidents. The introduction of an incident monitoring methodology and a common incident forecasting/early warning database and mapping platform would enhance transparency through a collective comparison and baseline of incidents across the country. A sample incident monitoring form is found in the Annexes.

Support for real-time reporting may be a deterrent and may also provide opportunities for rapid responses to incidents. Social media should also be monitored for the perpetration of online threats and accusations. Through the introduction of a software-based monitoring protocol, such threats and accusations can be identified and tracked, and actions can be taken to mitigate their impact. Additionally, gender-based electoral violence should be a priority monitoring focus. Projected “hot spots” should be identified for a special observation focus.

Finally, there may be differences in the perceptions of domestic and international observers in rendering judgment on the quality of the election. Opposition forces appear to be suspicious of the impartiality of the ZEC and the potential for vote rigging to occur. Irregularities will become important issues to the losing parties. However, this election is seen by many in the international community as, potentially, the freest and fairest since independence. As a result, international observers may be inclined to minimize the significance of minor irregularities that occur.

IX. Conclusions

This set of elections is a crossroads event, which could potentially pivot into three different scenarios. In the first scenario, the military could decide to dictate who the political leaders are, employing force to ensure that the election outcomes meet their expectations. Second, the intra-party conflict experienced during the primaries could produce a form of political fragmentation and could foster violence because the playing field is viewed as being more open to capture with a diminished ZANU PF. Third, if the objective of electoral legitimacy is paramount to the incumbent and violence would detract from the fulfilment of that objective, this election could set precedents for peaceful campaigning and alternatives to violence in pursuing political power and governmental control. However, if the logic of violence is simply replaced by the logic of intimidation and malpractice, legitimacy will equally suffer. Which direction the 2018 elections take will depend upon the political will of the Zimbabwean actors and the interventions and assistance from the international community.

ANNEX I – List of Organizations Interviewed

Election Resource Centre
Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
Heal Zimbabwe Trust
International Foundation for Electoral Systems
International Republican Institute
Movement for Democratic Change Alliance
National Democratic Institute
People’s Democratic Party
United Nations Development Programme
Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe
Zimbabwe Council of Churches
Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network
Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
Zimbabwe Peace Project

ANNEX II – List of Acronyms

BVR	Biometric Voter Registration
ERC	Election Resource Centre
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGC	National Gender Commission
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NMC	National Media Commission
NPRC	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
PVT	Parallel Vote Tabulation
TZ	Transform Zimbabwe
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZESN	Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network
ZINASU	Zimbabwe National Students Union
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police

ANNEX III – Universal Electoral Incident Reporting Form**Universal Electoral Incident Reporting Form**

Incident Factors	Coding Categories	Comments on Incident
Phase/Date/Time	Pre/Election Day/Post dd/mm/year 1000	Note political party affiliation, ethnicity, and gender of targets and perpetrators
Source	Personally Witnessed _____ Interviewed Witness _____ Second Hand Account _____ Journalist _____ Police or Other Official Report	
Victims/Targets		
Stakeholders (disaggregated by gender)	Candidates (Political Party) _____ Political Party Officials and Supporters _____ Election Officials _____ Voter Registrars _____ Poll Workers _____ Journalists _____ Election Observers _____ Security Forces _____ Voters _____ Others _____	
Electoral Activities and Events	Voter Registration _____ Political Campaigning - Events and Rallies _____ Voting _____ Ballot Tabulation	
Sensitive Electoral Materials	Identity Cards or Card Stock _____ Un-Voted Ballots _____ Voter Registers _____ Voted Ballots _____ Voting Equipment	
Perpetrators		
State and State Proxies	Military _____ National Police _____ Other Police _____ Paramilitary _____ Ruling Party Supporters _____ Other _____	
Coalition of Opposition Parties	Opposition Election Protest Groups	
Political Rivals	Political Party Supporters _____ Candidate Supporters _____ Political Party Militias _____ Political Party Youth Wings _____ Other _____	
Insurgent and Rebel Groups	Terrorists _____ Separatists _____ Ideological Militia _____ Other _____	

Criminals	Drug Trafficking Organizations ____ Other _____	
Tactics/Types of Incident	Homicide _____ Physical Assault _____ Sexual Assault _____ Strategic Displacement _____ Deportation _____ Extra-Judicial Detention _____ Property Destruction _____ Property Confiscation _____ Personal Intimidation _____ Other _____	
Weaponry	Explosives _____ Firearms _____ Machetes/Knives _____ Clubs and Sticks _____ Rocks/Projectiles _____ Fistfights _____	
Locations	State/Province _____ Municipality _____ Election Office _____ Election Warehouse _____ Registration Site _____ Polling Site _____ Political Party Office _____ Candidate Office _____ Candidate Home _____ Police Station _____ Media Office _____ Election Observer Office _____ In Transit/Shipment _____ Location of Opportunity _____ Other Location Designation _____	
Incident Intensity Code Level		
0	No reported electoral violence before or after a vote	
1	The second level of violence is violent harassment, indicated by police breaking up rallies, party supporters fighting, street brawls, opposition newspaper being confiscated, and limited short-term arrests of political opponents	
2	The third level of violence is violent repression, as indicated by long term high-level arrests of party leaders, the consistent use of violent intimidation, limited use of murders and assassinations, and torture	
3	The fourth level is a highly violent campaign, in which there are repeated, coordinated physical attacks leading to 20 or more deaths	

Immediate Aftermath	Arrest/Detention _____ Services to Victims _____ No Action by Authorities _____ Other _____	
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