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Zimbabwe: Current Issues

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Zimbabwe: Current Issues

Summary

Parliamentary elections are scheduled in Zimbabwe for March 31, 2005, and they will be closely watched by supporters of human rights and democracy. The last parliamentary election, in June 2000, was marred by violence against the opposition and other irregularities. According to the Department of State, the presidential election in March 2002 was “preceded and followed by a government-sanctioned campaign of violence directed towards supporters and potential supporters of the opposition.” Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has labeled Zimbabwe an “outpost of tyranny,” and the United States has enforced targeted sanctions against top Zimbabwe officials and associates since 2002. Moreover, the Administration has urged South Africa’s President Thabo Mbeki to lead a regional effort to promote democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe. Should the 2005 voting again prove violent or manifestly unfair, some may advocate stronger measures.

Zimbabwe is a land-locked, primarily agricultural southern African country of 12.7 million people, and has been ruled by its current President, Robert Mugabe, since a majority-rule political system was established — following a long civil war - in 1980. Since the late 1990s, the Mugabe government has pursued a controversial land expropriation policy that has contributed to a sharp and continuing economic decline. GDP declined by 30% from 1998 through 2003, and fell another 5.2% in 2004. Unemployment is estimated at 70%. The adult HIV infection rate of 25% has contributed to a sharp drop in life expectancy.

The Mugabe government has been using recently imposed legislation to suppress freedom of speech and the press, and many are concerned that the government is restricting access to food, already in short supply, to opposition areas in order to influence the parliamentary vote. Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai has been acquitted in a treason trial, but faces retrial and another treason charge. President Mugabe, now 81, has not named a successor to head the ruling party, and a behind-the-scenes power struggle is adding to concerns over the country’s stability.

President Mugabe enjoys considerable popularity in Africa as a former liberation leader, and because many approve of the land takeovers. However, some leaders have come to see Mugabe’s conduct as damaging to Africa and are urging democratic reforms. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has recently adopted electoral standards for its members, and many are hoping that SADC election observers will objectively measure Zimbabwe’s conduct against these standards. Others fear that a sense of regional solidarity will circumscribe the judgement of the SADC team. President Mbeki is pursuing “quiet diplomacy” aimed at achieving a dialogue and a resolution of the problems in Zimbabwe, but whether his efforts are strenuous enough is controversial. This report, which will be updated as events warrant, describes the current situation within Zimbabwe and the policies adopted by key countries and institutions in the international community. Scenarios for Zimbabwe’s future are briefly outlined. For background on Mugabe’s land policies and previous elections, see CRS Report RL31229, *Zimbabwe Background*, CRS Report RS21161, *Zimbabwe Election Chronology*, and CRS Report RS21595, *Zimbabwe Update*.

Contents

Background: 2003 - 2005	1
Political Situation	1
Parliamentary Elections 2005	2
Political Violence	6
Food as a Political Weapon	7
Presidential Succession	8
Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)	9
Economy	10
International Perspectives	11
U.S. Policy	12
United Kingdom	14
European Union	14
Commonwealth	15
China	15
South Africa	16
Other African Reactions	18
SADC	18
Possible Outcomes	19
Appendix: Map of Zimbabwe	21

Zimbabwe: Current Issues

Background: 2003 - 2005

In the late 1990s, the government of Zimbabwe, headed by President Robert Mugabe, began to implement radical land expropriation policies in the face of rising domestic political and economic challenges. Since then, the country's problems have deepened, and many observers believe Zimbabwe is headed toward further repression or grave political instability — or perhaps both. Substantial political violence and human rights violations accompanied parliamentary elections held in 2000, as well as the 2002 presidential election. As the country approaches the next parliamentary elections, scheduled for March 31, 2005, there are continuing reports of human rights abuses and of food being used as a political weapon. Zimbabwe's political difficulties have been accompanied by a sharp decline in living standards. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG), "Zimbabweans today are as poor as they were in 1970, and 70 per cent live below the poverty line. Fewer people have formal jobs now than in 1980."¹ Nearly 25% of adults in Zimbabwe are infected by the HIV virus, and life expectancy fell from an estimated 56 years in 1990 to 39 in 2002,² the last year for which data are available. Observers are concerned that the difficulties confronting Zimbabwe are affecting neighboring countries and deterring investors from the region. This report outlines current issues affecting Zimbabwe and U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe. For historical background, see CRS Report RL31229, *Zimbabwe Background*. CRS Report RS21161, *Zimbabwe Election Chronology*, deals with the March 2002 parliamentary elections, and CRS Report RS21595, *Zimbabwe Update*, covers the 2002-2003 period.

Political Situation

Zimbabwe may undergo significant political uncertainty and potential instability in the near-to medium term as a result of two anticipated political events: the March 2005 general parliamentary election; and the possible transition to a regime to succeed that of President Robert Mugabe. The timing of this transition, and the means by which it will occur, cannot be predicted; but it seems inevitable since Mugabe turned 81 on February 21, 2005. He has led the country since a majority-rule government replaced the white minority regime in 1980.

¹ ICG: *Zimbabwe: In Search of a New Strategy*, Africa (April 19, 2004), p. 2. ICG describes itself as an independent, non-profit, multinational organization working to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

² World Bank, *African Development Indicators 2004* (Washington, 2004), p. 314.

Zimbabwe at a Glance

Name: Republic of Zimbabwe

Population: 12.7 million

Approximate size: Slightly larger than Montana.

Population growth rate: 0.68% (2004 estimate)

Life expectancy at birth: 39 years

Ethnic groups: African 98% (Shona 82%, Ndebele 14%, other 2%), Mixed and Asian 1%, white 1%)

Languages: English (official), Shona, Sindebele and a number of tribal dialects.

Literacy: *Total Population:* 90.7%

Male: 94.2%

Female: 87.2% (2003 est.)

GDP real growth rate: -8.2% (2004 est.)

HIV Infection Rate: 24.6% (adults, aged 15-49; 2003 est.)

Unemployment: 70%

Industries: Mining (coal, gold, nickel, tin, clay, numerous metallic and nonmetallic ores), steel, wood products, cement, chemicals, fertilizer, clothing and footwear, foodstuffs, beverages.

Sources: CIA World Fact book, *Zimbabwe*, 2004; Economist Intelligence Unit, *Zimbabwe Country Report*, October 2004; United Nations Joint Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *2004 Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic*.

Parliamentary Elections 2005

Zimbabwe is bracing itself for the March 31 parliamentary elections, scheduled in advance of April celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of President Mugabe's rule. The Zimbabwe opposition and many international observers expect the election to be marred by human rights abuses like those in the run-up to and during the 2002 Presidential elections. Prior to that election, according to the U.S. Department of State,

A government-sanctioned, systematic campaign of violence targeting supporters and potential supporters of the opposition began in late 2001 and intensified during the year. Security forces committed extrajudicial killings. Ruling party supporters and war veterans (an extralegal militia), with material support from the Government, expanded their occupation of commercial farms, and in some cases killed, abducted, tortured, beat, abused, raped, and threatened farm owners, their workers, opposition party members, and other persons believed to be sympathetic to the opposition. There were reports of politically motivated disappearances. Security forces and government youth militias tortured, beat, raped, and otherwise abused persons.³

At present, the 150-member parliament of Zimbabwe is firmly in the hands of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), which holds 98

³ Zimbabwe chapter, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, 2002.

seats, while the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) holds 51 seats. (Of ZANU-PF's 98 seats, 30 are appointed by the President rather than elected.) The ZANU-PF party is just two votes shy of being able to impose constitutional changes to perpetuate its hold on power by a two-thirds vote.

Recent legislative actions in the ZANU-PF-dominated parliament have raised concerns about human rights in Zimbabwe generally, and about prospects for a fair election in particular.

- **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA).** These Acts, which came into force in 2002 and 2003 respectively, have been used by ZANU-PF to suppress freedom of speech. AIPPA requires that all media services be licensed by the government, and that all journalists, including foreign correspondents, be officially accredited. The government, citing AIPPA, closed *The Daily News*, the only remaining independent daily, in October 2003.⁴ In February 2005, the new *Weekly Times* was closed down after three weeks on grounds that it had been licensed only to cover development news, rather than report on politics as it had been doing. Although two independent weeklies remain, they have a limited circulation. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) has stated that AIRPA is “one of the most effective legal instruments of state control over the media and civil society communication anywhere in the world,” and warned that free and fair elections in 2005 will not be free and fair unless media restrictions are lifted.⁵ POSA prohibits any “abusive, indecent, obscene, or false statement” about the president, and prohibits false statements prejudicial to the state.⁶ The measure has been used to justify charges against political opponents as well as police action to break up public meetings and demonstrations. Ordinary Zimbabweans overheard criticizing president Mugabe in a public place have also been jailed.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations Bill.** This legislation was introduced in July 2004, and pushed through parliament in November-December, despite objections to its constitutionality by a parliamentary committee. The bill prohibits foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from operating in Zimbabwe if their principal objectives include “issues of governance,” which in

⁴ A version of the *Daily News* remains available online at [<http://www.daily-news.co.za>].

⁵ Media Institute of Southern Africa, *Annual Report, April 2003-March 2004*, p. 7; *Voice of America*, “Media Institute Says Press Restrictions in Zimbabwe Rule Out Fair Elections,” April 5, 2004.

⁶ Dumisani Moyo, “From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: Change without Change? Broadcasting Policy Reform and Political Control,” in Henning Melber (ed.), *Media, Public Discourse, and Political Contestation in Zimbabwe* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2004), p. 26.

turn include “the promotion and protection of human rights.”⁷ Domestic NGOs are prohibited from accepting foreign funds for carrying out activities involving issues of governance. All NGOs are required to register with the government, and a council is established with wide powers to investigate and regulate NGOs. Mugabe told parliament in July 2004, that “We cannot allow (NGOs) to be conduits or instruments of foreign interference in our national affairs,”⁸ Critics believe the legislation will cripple efforts of NGOs, including churches, to promote human rights and democracy. Mugabe has not yet signed the NGO bill into law, for reasons he has not explained, but 30 NGOs have been threatened with deregistration for allegedly failing to account for their use of foreign funds. Some are reportedly winding down operations and preparing evacuation plans for expatriate staff in the event of a sudden crackdown.⁹

- **Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Bill (ZEC Bill).** This legislation, which has been signed into law, establishes a 5-member electoral commission appointed by the president.¹⁰ The commission controls voter registration and voter education, and any foreign funding for voter education has to be given through the commission. Zimbabwean NGOs may conduct voter education, but their courses of instruction have to be approved by the commission. Human Rights Watch (HRW), in a November 2004 report, sought to accentuate the positive by describing the effort to reorganize the electoral system as a “positive government initiative,” but went on to argue that under the ZEC bill, the commission would be insufficiently independent. HRW criticized the voter education provisions as “unnecessarily intrusive” measures that could “curtail freedom of information, freedom of expression, and the full participation of citizens.”¹¹

⁷ International Bar Association, “An Analysis of the Zimbabwean Non-Governmental Organizations Bill, 2004,” August 24, 2004.

⁸ *Agence France Presse*, “Mugabe Opens Parliament Declaring ‘Economic Revival,’” July 20, 2004.

⁹ *Agence France Presse*, “Zimbabwe Plans to Prosecute 30 NGOs for Alleged Funds Abuse,” March 8, 2005; *Financial Gazette* (Harare), “Jittery NGOs Set to Evacuate Expatriate Staff,” March 3, 2005.

¹⁰ The president is to consult with the Judicial Service Commission in naming the chair, and to choose the other four members from a list of seven individuals nominated by a parliamentary committee dominated by ZANU-PF.

¹¹ Human Rights Watch, *The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Bill: Will it Improve the Electoral Process?* (November 2004), p. 2. Human Rights Watch describes itself as an independent NGO dedicated to “protecting the human rights of people around the world.”

The Mugabe government is employing other, more subtle tactics to intimidate the opposition and produce a political landscape widely-seen as favorable to ZANU-PF. A December 2004 report issued by the International Council of Barristers and Advocates described extensive efforts by President Mugabe and ZANU-PF to gain control over the legal system. According to the report, they have interfered in judicial appointments and forced the removal of impartial judges “through a combination psychological and physical intimidation and threats of violence.”¹² Meanwhile, Roy Bennett, a white MDC member of Parliament, has been sentenced to a year in prison by a parliamentary committee for shoving the Minister of Justice during a debate in May 2004. The Minister had said Bennett’s ancestors were “thieves and murderers” and that Bennett would never again be allowed to set foot on his farm, which had been seized by Zimbabwe Defense Industries after Bennett won a parliamentary seat in the 2000 election. Bennett, who is reportedly highly popular among his constituents, is being held at a remote rural prison, where conditions are said to be extremely harsh.¹³ The ZEC disqualified Bennett from running for re-election in 2005, and the MDC has chosen his wife, Heather, to run in his stead.

Opposition access to the state-run media is being severely limited as the election approaches. According to Reporters Without Borders, a Paris-based organization that supports press freedom, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the principal opposition party (see below), has been offered 91 minutes of air time by the state-controlled television network for one-minute advertisements. The party must pay more than \$600 for each minute — a substantial sum in an impoverished country.¹⁴ The MDC is rarely covered in news stories on television or in the *Herald*, the government-controlled newspaper, and the stories that do appear are typically disparaging.

The Mugabe regime is placing strict limits on foreign observers of the election, and this could tend to reduce international criticism while further restricting the availability of information. No U.S. observers have been invited, and Russia is the only European country asked to send a team. However, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is expected to deploy a 50-member observer mission on March 15, and observers are also expected from the African Union and the United Nations. SADC has developed a set of electoral guidelines for the region (see below), and some hope that its observers will objectively measure Zimbabwe’s performance against these guidelines. Others worry that a sense of regional solidarity will circumscribe SADC’s judgement. The SADC Parliamentary Forum, consisting of members of parliament from around the region, has not been invited to observe the vote. It issued a report that was critical of the 2002 election. U.S. and European

¹² International Council of Barristers and Advocates, *The State of Justice in Zimbabwe*, December 2004. The Council sent an investigative team to Zimbabwe which included the Chairman of the Bar of England and Wales, the Chairman of the Irish Bar, and the Vice-Chairman of the South African Bar.

¹³ *Zimbabwe Independent*, “Bennett Wastes Away in Mutoko Prison,” December 10, 2004; *Sunday Times* (London), “Prison Torment of the Zimbabwe Farm Hero,” November 28, 2004.

¹⁴ Reporters Without Borders, press release, March 8, 2005.

embassies in Zimbabwe can be expected to watch the vote closely and report on its fairness. However, Stan Mudenge, Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister, has said that foreign observers will be permitted only to "observe" the election and not to "monitor" it. This means, for example, that only locals will be able to observe the counting of ballots, according to Mudenge.¹⁵

Political Violence

Political violence appears not to be occurring on the same scale as in 2001-2002. Some observers suspect that the regime sees less need to employ violence, since the free press has been largely eliminated and many opponents have been cowed by other means. Nonetheless, 2004 saw the continued use of torture, intimidation, and human rights abuses as a political weapon. According to the U.S. Department of State

Security forces, government-sanctioned youth militias, and ruling party supporters tortured, raped, and otherwise abused persons perceived to be associated with the opposition; some persons died of their injuries.¹⁶

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, a coalition of 17 human rights organizations, reports that there were 62 incidents of politically-motivated abductions and kidnappings from January through November 2004, and 399 assaults.¹⁷ Many such incidents involve alleged crimes by Zimbabwe's youth militia, known as the "Green Bombers" for the color of their uniforms, who were heavily involved in violence prior to the March 2002 presidential election. Human rights organizations allege that in addition to directing violence against Mugabe's opposition, militia leaders use rape and torture to discipline and control militia members. The government dismisses such charges. Zimbabwe's Youth Minister, Ambrose Mutinhiri, called a February 2004 BBC documentary exposing the militia's "torture training camps" "unfounded rubbish." He instead maintained that programs at the camps focused on the "mental decolonization of our youths."¹⁸ The government reports that 20,000 young people have graduated from the youth militia training camps, although the International Crisis Group believes the number may be higher.¹⁹ Zimbabwe's police and the Central Intelligence Organization have also been implicated in politically-motivated human rights violations.

¹⁵ *Reuters*, "EU, U.S. Not Invited to Observe Zimbabwe Polls," February 20, 2005.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, Zimbabwe chapter in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2004*.

¹⁷ Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, *Political Violence Report, November 2004*. The forum produces monthly reports on the Zimbabwe Human Rights situation in Zimbabwe and assists victims of violence. See [<http://www.hrforumzim.com>].

¹⁸ *BBC*, "Zimbabwe's Torture Training Camps," February 29, 2004; *BBC*, "Zimbabwe Defends 'Secret Camps,'" March 5, 2004.

¹⁹ International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe: Another Election Chance* (November 30, 2004), p. 4.

In the first months of 2005, as the election approached, the MDC complained that several of its candidates had been victims of beatings and that others had been arrested while attempting to put up campaign posters. ZANU-PF supporters were reportedly stopping civilians at night, demanding party identification cards, and beating those who could not produce them. Demonstrators from Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) were arrested on two occasions in Bulawayo (see below), and the police were used to break up other demonstrations and what they charged were illegal meetings.²⁰ In February 2005, three Zimbabwe-born correspondents for major news agencies, including the Associated Press, Bloomberg Financial News, and the *Times* of London, fled Zimbabwe after police raided their office saying they were looking for evidence of espionage. The reporters had filed registration papers under the Access to Information Act but had received no response.²¹

Food as a Political Weapon

In a May 2004 interview with Sky News, President Mugabe surprised food aid donors by declaring that the country was running a maize surplus and would not need food aid in 2004.²² Earlier, the government had stopped a United Nations food needs assessment, and in June, it halted general food aid distribution by donors, although some feeding programs continue.²³ Yet donors estimate that 5.8 million people, nearly half the population, are at risk due to food shortages.²⁴ While drought is partly to blame, analysts believe that disruptions to the farming sector resulting from Mugabe's land seizure program is the main reason for reduced food production.²⁵ Nearly all of the country's 4,500 commercial farms have now been taken over; and the government's land redistribution program is reportedly plagued by inefficiencies, with large portions of redistributed land not being actively farmed. Tractors and other inputs to production are reportedly in short supply. More than 150,000 experienced farm workers have reportedly been forced to flee seized commercial farms and are now living as internally displaced persons.²⁶

²⁰ See, for example, *Agence France Presse*, "Zimbabwe Police Harassment Increasing Ahead of Polls," March 2, 2005; *Zimbabwe Standard*, "Terror in Mutare as ZANU-PF Thugs Demand Cards," February 28, 2005; and *Zimbabwe Standard*, "WOZA Demonstrators Arrested," February 14, 2005.

²¹ Committee to Protect Journalists press release, February 23, 2005.

²² *Sky News*, "Mugabe Word for Word," interview by Patrick Ramsey, May 24, 2004.

²³ Amnesty International, *Zimbabwe: Power and Hunger — Violations of the Right to Food* (October 15, 2004).

²⁴ *Mail and Guardian* (South Africa), "Zimbabwe: 5.8 Million Go Hungry as Food Crisis Worsens," January 28, 2005.

²⁵ On the land takeovers in Zimbabwe, see Amnesty International's *Zimbabwe: Power and Hunger* and CRS Report RL31229, *Zimbabwe Backgrounder*

²⁶ Refugees International, *Analysis of the Situation of Displaced Farm Workers in Zimbabwe* (August 13, 2004).

The Mugabe regime's stance on food aid leads many observers to suspect that food is being used as a political weapon.²⁷ With a shortage of food and NGOs excluded from providing food aid to the needy, shortages appear to be worst in the Ndebele-inhabited region in the southern and western parts of the country, centered on Bulawayo, regarded as an MDC stronghold (see Map). Archbishop Pius Ncube, a Roman Catholic leader based in Bulawayo, has accused the government of distributing food only in areas where people would agree to vote for ZANU-PF. Food distribution is solely under the control of the government's Zimbabwe Grain Marketing Board. The Bulawayo city council has reported a number of deaths from starvation. In March 2005, the government finally acknowledged that Zimbabwe faced serious food shortages.²⁸

Presidential Succession

In view of President Mugabe's advanced age, the presidential succession in the event of his death or retirement is a matter of intense interest to Zimbabwe analysts. Some observers worry that Zimbabwe could experience a violent succession struggle and a possible military coup when he leaves the scene. Under the Zimbabwe constitution, the president may designate one of the country's two vice presidents to serve as acting president until the next election, should he leave office, but Mugabe has not done so. One of the vice presidential posts had been vacant prior to the ZANU-PF party conference at the beginning of December 2004, setting off a power struggle that transformed Zimbabwe's political scene. Emmerson Mnangagwa, speaker of the parliament and a political veteran long touted as Mugabe's heir, campaigned actively for the position of ZANU-PF's second vice president among party leaders. His selection to that position would likely have assured his appointment by Mugabe as national vice-president, but Mnangagwa was caught off guard when Mugabe decided that the country should have a woman in the post. Mugabe's choice for the position, forty-nine year old Joyce Mujuru, was inevitably elected by the party convention, and Mugabe swore her into office as Zimbabwe's second vice president on December 6. Mujuru, a veteran of the liberation war and a women's movement leader, had been serving as Minister of Water Resources and Infrastructure. Analysts differ on whether she is the new heir apparent, or might be pushed aside in a succession crisis. Should she prevail, Mujuru would be Africa's first female president.²⁹

The outcome of any succession struggle will likely be affected by the country's ethnic and clan divisions. Mugabe and many key party and clan officials are from the Zezuru clan of the Shona people, who are dominant in a wide area encircling Harare, the country's capital. One of Mugabe's closest advisors, regarded as a king-maker,

²⁷ See Amnesty International, *Zimbabwe: Power and Hunger*.

²⁸ Institute for War and Peace Reporting (London), "ZANU-PF Admits Food Crisis," March 7, 2005; *Zimbabwe Standard*, "10 More Die of Hunger in Bulawayo," March 7, 2005; *Zimbabwe Standard*, "14 More Die of Hunger in Bulawayo," February 15, 2005.

²⁹ In 1996, Ruth Nando Perry was chosen by ECOWAS (Economic Community of the West African States) to chair the Council of State in Liberia. She served from September 1996 until August 1997, and is regarded by some as the first woman head of state in Africa.

is retired General Solomon “Rex” Mujuru, a Zezuru and husband of Joyce Mujuru. Mnangagwa was seen as a representative of the large Karanga clan, which reportedly felt that its turn to control the reins of power had come.³⁰ Mnangagwa’s viability as a presidential contender was hampered by accusations that he led the purge of alleged regime opponents in provinces of Matabeleland in the 1980s, which is believed to have resulted in the deaths of 20,000 Ndebele civilians. The events of the 1980s help to explain why Bulawayo has long been regarded as a center of opposition to the government, although Mugabe has sought to gain support in the region by elevating a number of Ndebele to party and government posts.

In any event, Mnangagwa’s power has been much reduced, as has that of a number of his backers, including the former minister of information, Jonathan Moyo. Moyo, fired in February 2005, had been noted for his sharp-tongued defenses of the regime and for picking spats with other ZANU-PF leaders. He deeply angered Mugabe by convening an unsanctioned meeting of Mnangagwa supporters before the party convention, allegedly to strategize on ways of derailing the Mujuru candidacy. Mugabe has decreed that ZANU-PF nominate a woman to run in his parliamentary district, although Moyo is attempting to contest the election as an independent.

Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)

The MDC party was born out of the Zimbabwe labor movement. As poverty deepened in Zimbabwe in the late 1990s, and allegations of corruption against regime leaders became more frequent, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) organized a number of strikes and protests. In September 1999, the MDC was formed on this trade union base with support from many in Zimbabwe’s churches and in urban areas. In February 2000, MDC members elected the ZCTU secretary general, Morgan Tsvangirai (CHANG-gerai), born in 1952, as their president, and union president Gibson Sibanda as MDC vice-president.³¹

On October 15, 2004, Tsvangirai was acquitted on a treason charge based on a video recorded in Canada, which the government claimed showed him calling for the “elimination” of Mugabe. The verdict surprised many observers, in view of the regime’s influence over the courts, and some speculated that the government had secretly opted for a not guilty verdict fearing international reaction if Tsvangirai were convicted on a charge that could result in the death penalty. However, the judge stated that the evidence had simply been unconvincing, particularly because the witnesses produced by the state were “suspect” and the video unreliable.³² The government has announced that it will appeal the verdict, and Tsvangirai may be tried again because Zimbabwe law does not prohibit double jeopardy. Meanwhile, he faces another treason charge based on claims that he urged violence to bring down the government during a 2004 mobilization campaign. Whether the government will succeed in convicting Tsvangirai and severely damaging the MDC before the

³⁰ ICG, *Zimbabwe: Another Election Chance*, p. 8.

³¹ “MDC Background and Structure,” available at [<http://www.mdczimbabwe.org>].

³² *Zimbabwe Standard*, “Judge Lashes at State’s ‘Suspect Witnesses,’” October 18, 2004.

parliamentary election remains to be seen. At the very least, the charges put the MDC leader under extreme pressure as the vote approaches.

MDC officials had indicated that the party would not participate in the parliamentary campaign, unless the government took steps to assure a free and fair election. Some analysts questioned this stance on grounds that non-participation would deprive the party of any influence in the next parliament. Party rank and file reportedly felt that a refusal to participate would hand control of parliament to Mugabe on a “silver platter.”³³ After his acquittal in October, Tsvangirai visited African and European capitals to explain MDC positions and told questioners that a final decision on participation had not been reached. Nonetheless, he described a boycott as a real possibility and urged that the election be delayed until June to allow time for comprehensive electoral reforms to be implemented.³⁴ Finally, however, on February 2, 2005, the MDC announced that it would participate in the election “under protest” and “with a heavy heart.”³⁵

Economy

The turmoil in Zimbabwe has led to a severe economic contraction, a sharp drop in living standards for the rural and urban poor, and a massive exodus of Zimbabweans in search of work. According to the NGO Solidarity Peace Trust, founded by Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Evangelical clergy from Zimbabwe and South Africa, an estimated 3.4 million Zimbabweans are now living outside the country. The Trust calculates that this amounts to 25%-30% of the total population, or 60%-70% of productive adults.³⁶

GDP declined by 30% from 1998 through 2003, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) data, and dropped by another 5.2% in 2004.³⁷ World Bank and IMF lending has been suspended due to nonpayment of arrears, and foreign currency for essential imports, particularly gasoline and petroleum products, is in extremely short supply. Inflation has been in the triple digits since 2001, peaking at 599% in 2003.³⁸ The government claims that it brought inflation down to 133% in 2004. Zimbabweans continue to face steep rises in the prices of food and non-food items, including rents.³⁹ Those forced to leave the country because of economic hardship

³³ *Financial Gazette* (Harare), “MDC to Contest 2005 Poll,” January 3, 2005.

³⁴ *Business Day* (Johannesburg), “Mbeki, MDC in Talks on Delay in Zimbabwe Poll Showdown,” October 26, 2004.

³⁵ *BBC*, “Mugabe Opponents to Run in Polls,” February 3, 2005.

³⁶ Solidarity Peace Trust, *An Account of the Exodus of a Nation's People* (November 2004), p. 8.

³⁷ International Monetary Fund, *Zimbabwe: Statistical Appendix* (June 24, 2004), p. 4; Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report: Zimbabwe* (October 2004), p. 6.

³⁸ IMF country data at [<http://www.imf.org>].

³⁹ *Dow Jones Newswires*, “Zimbabwe Inflation Down to 149.3%, but Still World's Highest,” (continued...)

often face difficult conditions because economic refugees are not entitled to political asylum. South Africa, where an estimated 1.2 million have fled, deports 45,000 back to Zimbabwe each year, often after harsh detentions.⁴⁰ A controversy has broken out in Britain over reports that the government plans to deport 10,000 Zimbabwean exiles.⁴¹

In December 2003, Mugabe selected Gideon Gono, credited with turning around a troubled commercial bank, as governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. The move was welcomed by some, since Gono was regarded as a successful technocrat, and he has won some praise for foreign exchange reforms and reducing the inflation rate. However, critics maintain that his measures to fight corruption and discover illegally-held foreign exchange are being used to damage government opponents and further the interests of ZANU-PF.⁴² Despite Gono's efforts, international assessments of Zimbabwe's economic prospects remain bleak. On July 8, 2004, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), held a second round of discussions regarding the possible expulsion of Zimbabwe over unpaid debts. The board complained of

inappropriate macroeconomic policies and structural changes that weakened [Zimbabwe's] economic base. In particular, the disorderly implementation of the land reform program has contributed to a sharp reduction in agricultural production. Concerns about governance and human rights, and the continued lack of clarity about property rights have severely damaged confidence, discouraged investment, and promoted capital flight and emigration.⁴³

International Perspectives

The international community appears divided on how to respond to Zimbabwe's persistent political and economic crisis. In general, Western nations and institutions have expressed opposition to Mugabe's methods of rule, and have pursued policies intended to pressure the Zimbabwe government for reforms. In contrast, the Mugabe government has enjoyed considerable sympathy in Africa, where he is viewed as an elder statesman and a leader of the anti-colonial struggle, and among the non-aligned nations generally. This is changing to an extent, however, with some African leaders

³⁹ (...continued)

December 14, 2004.

⁴⁰ Solidarity Peace Trust, p. 8, estimates that in addition to the 1.2 million recent arrivals, another 500,000 are in South Africa as regular migrants.

⁴¹ *The Guardian*, "Zimbabwe Refugees Will be Sent Back: Deportation to Mugabe Regime Reintroduced After System Abused," November 17, 2004.

⁴² *LiquidAfrica*, "Gono's Mission is to Save ZANU-PF, Not the Economy," December 3, 2004.

⁴³ "IMF Considers the Complaint Regarding Zimbabwe's Compulsory Withdrawal from the IMF," Press Release No. 04/139. However, the board postponed a decision on Zimbabwe's compulsory withdrawal.

concluding that the Zimbabwe situation is damaging to Africa's interests and that political and economic reforms are needed.

U.S. Policy

U.S. criticism of the Mugabe regime intensified in the first months of 2005, although new measures have not yet been taken. The basic policy remains one of targeted sanctions against high-ranking members of ZANU-PF and their affiliates, urging South Africa to spearhead an African effort to restore democracy, and of assistance intended to help the country's poor. In January, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, during her confirmation hearing, that Zimbabwe was one of six "outposts of tyranny" worldwide and that the United States stood with the oppressed people there.⁴⁴ These remarks provoked a furious personal response from Mugabe.⁴⁵ On February 23, Thomas Woods, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, told a seminar at the American Enterprise Institute that Zimbabwe "has now become a textbook case of bad and illegitimate government."⁴⁶

On March 2, 2005, President Bush announced a one-year renewal of U.S. sanctions against ZANU-PF leaders. The sanctions are intended to punish those responsible for Zimbabwe's difficulties without harming the Zimbabwe population at large. The initial sanctions, imposed in 2002, ban travel to the United States by "senior members of the government of Robert Mugabe and others...who formulate, implement, or benefit from policies that undermine or injure Zimbabwe's democratic institutions or impede the transition to a multi-party democracy." Persons who benefit financially from business dealings with such individuals are also banned, as are the spouses of people in either group. In 2003, the President issued an executive order freezing assets held in the United States by 75 high ranking Zimbabwe officials and Mugabe's wife, Grace.⁴⁷ Nine firms and farms were added to this list in 2004. In addition, the United States has banned transfers of defense items and services to Zimbabwe, and suspended non-humanitarian government-to-government aid.⁴⁸

In June 2003, then Secretary of State Colin Powell had condemned the Mugabe regime in an op-ed piece, writing that its time had "come and gone." Powell stated that

⁴⁴ *Washington Times*, "Rice Targets 6 'Outposts of Tyranny,'" January 19, 2005. The others were Cuba, Burma, North Korea, Iran, and Belarus.

⁴⁵ *Agence France Presse*, "Zimbabwe's Mugabe Lashes Out at Rice, Blair at Campaign Launch," February 11, 2005.

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of State, "Zimbabwe a Textbook Case of Bad Governance, U.S. Official Says," February 28, 2005.

⁴⁷ Seventy-seven individuals are named in the executive order (EO 13288), but one of these, Vice President Simon Muzenda, has died.

⁴⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Background Note: Zimbabwe* (November 2004).

We will persist in speaking out strongly in defense of human rights and the rule of law. And we continue to assist directly, in many ways, the brave men and women of Zimbabwe who are resisting tyranny.⁴⁹

Some analysts detected a new emphasis in U.S. policy when President Bush visited South Africa in July 2003 and praised the work of President Thabo Mbeki as the “point man” in seeking a Zimbabwe solution. The statement suggested to some that the United States was stepping back from a lead role on the Zimbabwe issue and would accede to Mbeki’s “quiet diplomacy” (see below) as the best means of achieving reform in Zimbabwe.⁵⁰ Mbeki reportedly assured President Bush that he would be able to bring about talks between ZANU-PF and the MDC, but substantive talks have not occurred.

In August 2004, the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa, Jendayi Frazer, called for the formation of a “coalition of the willing” to deal with Zimbabwe. Ambassador Frazer reiterated President Bush’s acknowledgment of South Africa’s position of leverage, and insisted more needed to be done by African states to return Zimbabwe to democracy.⁵¹ Frazer specifically urged the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to do more in a speech in South Africa in February 2005, arguing that it was difficult for Africa’s friends in the United States to argue for aid increases for the region while the Zimbabwe impasse continues.⁵² Some critics of urging South Africa and SADC to resolve the Zimbabwe problem favor a stronger direct role for the United States in opposing Mugabe, but others argue that Mugabe would exploit a stronger U.S. role to win additional sympathy in Africa. U.S. officials continue to express hope that Mbeki can promote free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. The South African foreign minister, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma met with Secretary Rice in Washington on March 4, 2005, and State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher said afterward that the need for such elections was discussed. He added that “we welcome South Africa’s efforts in that regard.”⁵³

The United States remains the leader in humanitarian relief aid to the Zimbabwean people, supplying more than \$300 million in food aid and disaster assistance since 2002.⁵⁴ In addition, the United States provides other economic assistance to Zimbabwe, including an estimated \$15.4 million in FY2004, with \$13.8 million expected to be provided in FY2005. For FY2006, the Administration is requesting \$11.1 million in Child Survival and Health aid for Zimbabwe, \$1.2 million in Development Assistance, and \$2 million through the Economic Support Fund. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development, the assistance

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, “Freeing a Nation from a Tyrant’s Grip,” June 24, 2004.

⁵⁰ *The Guardian* (London) “Bush backs Mbeki on Zimbabwe,” July 10, 2003.

⁵¹ “US Seeks ‘coalition’ to Force Zimbabwe Regime Change,” *The Independent* (UK), August 25, 2004.

⁵² *Business Day* (South Africa), “SADC Inaction on Zimbabwe Places Aid at Risk,” February 25, 2005.

⁵³ *Agence France Presse*, “U.S., South Africa Stress Need for Fair Vote in Zimbabwe,” March 4, 2005.

⁵⁴ U.S. Agency for International Development.

program focuses on three critical areas: mitigating the HIV/AIDS pandemic; increasing dialogue between the citizenry and selected governmental institutions; and enhancing access of the most disadvantaged groups to appropriate business and technical services.⁵⁵ Zimbabwe is not among the countries found eligible to participate in the Millennium Challenge Account program, nor is it a focus country for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

United Kingdom

In February 2002, in conjunction with the United States and the European Union, the British Parliament imposed targeted sanctions on leading members and affiliates of the ZANU-PF regime, as well as an arms embargo and an asset freeze. The UK has imposed travel bans on 95 members of the ZANU-PF and close affiliates of the party. The Zimbabwe crisis continues to be discussed in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. To date, however, the UK has not strengthened its sanctions, and has opted instead to stand within the EU mandate. The UK continues to provide humanitarian aid in Zimbabwe. Concurrently, the UK maintains its willingness to release funds to Zimbabwe to pay for parts of an orderly land redistribution program if Mugabe retires and the rule of law is returned. Mugabe is extremely hostile toward British Prime Minister Tony Blair, a persistent critic. Speaking at his 81st birthday celebration, Mugabe said the upcoming election would "kill once and for all the machinations of that man in Number 10 Downing Street, who for some reason thinks he has the divine power to rule Zimbabwe and Britain.... On March 31, we must dig a grave not just six feet but 12 feet and bury Mr. Blair and the Union Jack..."⁵⁶

European Union

The European Union was among the first to take action against Mugabe's regime. The EU imposed targeted sanctions on 19 members of Zimbabwe's elite and their spouses after pulling the EU election observer team out of Zimbabwe in February 2002. These "light" sanctions were up-graded by the EU to target 35 Zimbabwean leaders, and have been renewed yearly. Current EU sanctions include a travel ban on 95 members and beneficiaries of the ZANU-PF, an arms embargo, and an asset freeze. The EU continues to put pressure on the ZANU-PF government to hold talks with the MDC, while at the same time providing humanitarian assistance to benefit Zimbabwe's poor. In February 2005, EU sanctions were renewed for another year.

French President Jacques Chirac is generally seen as favoring more engagement with the Mugabe regime than Britain or other EU members, and he granted Mugabe a travel permit in February 2003 to attend a Franco-African summit meeting. Chirac justified the move by arguing that the inclusion of Mugabe rather than isolation would provide a quicker path to easing the Zimbabwe crisis. Cynics suspect that Chirac may see engagement with Zimbabwe as a means of extending French

⁵⁵ USAID, *Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Justification to the Congress: Annex 1: Africa*, p. 455.

⁵⁶ *Agence France Presse*, "Zimbabwe's Mugabe Marks 81st Birthday With Attack on Opposition, Blair," February 26, 2005.

influence in southern Africa, where it has historically not had a major role. Chirac is reportedly sympathetic to the quiet diplomacy initiative of President Mbeki.

Commonwealth

The Commonwealth of Nations sent a team of observers to the March 2002 presidential election in Zimbabwe, and the group found “that the conditions in Zimbabwe did not adequately allow for the free expression of the will of the electors.”⁵⁷ Consequently, on March 19, 2002, a special committee appointed to monitor and respond to the vote, consisting of Australia, South Africa and Nigeria, determined that Zimbabwe would be suspended from the Commonwealth for one year. The suspension was the first public action against Mugabe by a body that included influential African countries. In December 2003, the Commonwealth voted to suspend Zimbabwe indefinitely. On this occasion, the decision was strongly criticized by South Africa’s President Mbeki, who had by then committed to his policy of quiet diplomacy, and by other governments in southern Africa. However, although the Commonwealth vote was not made public, some African states evidently supported the suspension. Mugabe responded by withdrawing Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth and ruling out any further discussions or a possible return.⁵⁸ Some speculated, as a result, that the Commonwealth’s action had backfired by placing Zimbabwe fully outside the bounds of the Commonwealth’s influence. Others argued that indefinite suspension by a body including many African members had important symbolic value in Africa and worldwide.

China

While several western governments have been moving to isolate the Zimbabwe regime, China has been improving ties and becoming involved in Zimbabwe’s economy. An arms agreement between the two governments has attracted considerable attention, although the terms of the deal have not been made public. The Zimbabwe government confirmed in June 2004 that it was buying arms from China, and a shipment of armored personnel carriers reportedly arrived in Harare in November.⁵⁹ Reports indicate that Zimbabwe has also ordered riot gear and AK-47 rifles from China, and the MDC charges that 12 fighter jets are being purchased as well. The Chinese ambassador in South Africa has said that reports of a fighter jet sale are “totally groundless,”⁶⁰ but such reports continue to appear.

How impoverished Zimbabwe could pay for arms from China is a subject of much speculation, but some suspect that the acquisitions are covered in some way by China’s growing economic role in Zimbabwe. China is reported to be Zimbabwe’s

⁵⁷ “Commonwealth Observer Group’s Preliminary Report on Zimbabwean Presidential Elections,” March 14, 2002. Available at [<http://www.afrol.com>].

⁵⁸ *Agence France Presse*, “Mugabe Rules Out Zimbabwe’s Return to the Commonwealth,” December 16, 2003.

⁵⁹ *Intellibridge*, November 18, 2004.

⁶⁰ *People’s Daily Online*, “China Denies Report of Fighter Jet Sales to Zimbabwe,” June 22, 2004.

largest tobacco purchaser, and Chinese firms are reportedly playing roles in the cell phone industry, as well as in television, radio, and power generation. A Chinese company is helping to build a terminal at Beira on the Mozambique coast that will ship oil to Zimbabwe by pipeline. Regular flights have begun between Harare and Beijing, and China has approved Zimbabwe as a destination for group tours by Chinese tourists.⁶¹ Diplomatic support is being offered as well. A Chinese official visiting in November 2004 said that the Chinese government “appreciates the reasons for the land issue” and was opposed to any interference by foreign governments.⁶²

South Africa

President Thabo Mbeki’s “quiet diplomacy” toward Zimbabwe has drawn much criticism for its slow pace and seeming lack of results to date. However, some analysts point out that Mbeki’s reluctance to openly confront or condemn President Mugabe is understandable on a number of grounds. Mugabe lent aid and shelter to the African National Congress (ANC), now the ruling party in South Africa, during its long struggle against white minority rule, creating a bond of gratitude. Moreover, some argue that social norms in Africa require a certain deference and respect to someone of Mugabe’s advanced age and years in power. Mugabe enjoys considerable popularity around Africa and in South Africa itself, not least because of his moves to seize lands owned by comparatively wealthy white farmers, and this may constrain Mbeki as well.

Nonetheless, many are dissatisfied that South Africa, which is immensely more powerful than neighboring Zimbabwe, and which has extensive control over Zimbabwe’s transport links to the outside world, as well as over its electricity supplies, has not been able to do more to improve the Zimbabwe situation. The topic has become a hot political issue in South Africa itself, with one commentator in a business publication writing that “if everyone had reacted to apartheid the way government seems to want us to behave toward Zimbabwe, we might still be living under minority rule.”⁶³ Retired Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu questioned Mbeki’s Zimbabwe policy in a speech to the Nelson Mandela Foundation on November 23, 2004, asking

Are we satisfied with quiet diplomacy there? Surely human rights violations must be condemned as such whatever the struggle credentials of the perpetrator.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), South Africa’s powerful labor confederation, strongly opposes the policy of quiet diplomacy, and has become so outspoken on the issue that some observers believe its longstanding

⁶¹ On economic ties, see the *Herald* (the government-run newspaper in Harare), “Joint Venture to Ease Country’s Fuel Woes,” December 17, 2004; “Tourism Prospects Bright, Says Nhema,” December 7, 2004; and *Financial Gazette* (Zimbabwe), “Chinese Lift Veil on Secret Deals,” November 18, 2004.

⁶² *Agence France Presse*, “Chinese Envoy Supports Zimbabwe’s Land Reforms,” November 2, 2004.

⁶³ Steven Friedman, *Business Day*, “Diplomacy so Quiet it Desires no Change at All,” November 3, 2004.

political alliance with the ANC is threatened. A certain sympathy on the part of COSATU toward the MDC may be inevitable, since the MDC has its roots in the union movement. COSATU is already at odds with the Mbeki government over what it claims is a failure to empower black workers, and its decision to send a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe at the end of October 2004 deepened the rift. After the mission was forcibly expelled by Zimbabwe authorities, COSATU leader Zwelinzima Vavi wrote that “we are not quiet diplomats,” and “we will not keep mum when freedom does not lead to respect for workers and human rights.”⁶⁴ COSATU is planning demonstrations at the main border crossing into Zimbabwe to coincide with the March 31 election.

Defenders of President Mbeki’s approach argue that he is the only leader with the influence and prestige needed to sway Mugabe. Britain, the former colonial power, is too estranged from Mugabe to undertake a mediating role, and other issues rank higher on the foreign policy agenda for the United States. In any event, Mugabe seems almost as embittered toward the United States as toward Britain’s Blair government. Thus, Harvard’s Robert Rotberg, a veteran Africanist, has argued that “only Mbeki can restore peace and sanity to Zimbabwe.”⁶⁵ Rotberg urges that Mbeki try to persuade Mugabe to leave the country and take up residence in Namibia, where he has a farm, or in South Africa itself. Whether Mbeki could succeed in this, should he decide to try, remains to be seen. However, some argue that Mbeki and South African diplomats have already made a contribution in Zimbabwe — helping to prevent the country from slipping into anarchy in 2002, for example.⁶⁶ Some also believe that a meeting that took place between Mbeki and Tsvangirai in October 2004, after Tsvangirai’s acquittal, may herald a new South African peace effort of some sort. Tsvangirai, who had been critical of quiet diplomacy in the past, said after the meeting that he welcomed President Mbeki’s efforts to mediate.⁶⁷

Mbeki stunned the MDC and many supporters of democracy in Zimbabwe on March 2, 2005, when he told a press conference that he had “no reason to think that anyone in Zimbabwe will militate in a way so that the elections will not be free and fair.” He insisted that “there will be a free and fair election in Zimbabwe” and that “things like access to the public media, things like violence-free election have been addressed.”⁶⁸ Earlier, he had termed Secretary Rice’s description of Zimbabwe as an outpost of tyranny as “an exaggeration.”⁶⁹ These remarks have left many wondering whether there is any substance left to Mbeki’s quiet diplomacy, but others remain hopeful that he is active behind the scenes.

⁶⁴ *Daily Mail and Guardian* (Johannesburg), “We Are Not Quiet Diplomats,” November 5, 2004.

⁶⁵ *Financial Times*, “Only Mbeki Can Rescue Zimbabwe,” December 7, 2004.

⁶⁶ International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe: Another Election Chance*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ *Business Day*, “Tsvangirai Changes Tune on Mbeki’s Quiet Diplomacy,” October 29, 2004.

⁶⁸ *Agence France Presse*, “Mbeki Pays Tribute to Zimbabwe, Says Polls Will be Free and Fair,” March 2, 2005.

⁶⁹ *BBC*, “Mbeki Criticizes U.S Over Zimbabwe,” February 22, 2005.

Other African Reactions

The African Union (AU) and its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), have in the past been supportive of Mugabe. In 2002, an OAU observer team labeled Mugabe's election victory legitimate, free, and fair. The AU selected President Mugabe as Southern African Ambassador at the 2003 AU Summit in Mozambique. However, some observers detected a slight shift in the AU's position in July 2004, when it allowed a report critical of the Mugabe regime to be circulated at its annual summit. The 114-page report, prepared by a delegation from the African Commission for Human and People's Rights that visited Zimbabwe in June 2002, reportedly criticized the Zimbabwe government for police abuses, press censorship, and compromising the judiciary.⁷⁰ The AU decided to keep the contents of the report secret until Zimbabwe has had a chance to respond in detail, but some analysts saw the report's circulation as a sign that the organization might be moving toward pressing the Mugabe regime for reforms.

While an observer team from Nigeria also endorsed the 2002 presidential election in Zimbabwe, Nigeria's president, Olusegun Obasanjo, has been active in mediation efforts. He is reportedly concerned about the consequences of the Zimbabwe situation for the credibility of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD is an initiative aimed at demonstrating Africa's capabilities for resolving its own problems in exchange for increased aid, trade, and investment.⁷¹ Obasanjo supported Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth, and in November 2004, he held a long discussion with Tsvangirai and an MDC delegation in Abuja, the Nigerian capital. The Nigerian leader then took the Zimbabwe visitors on a personal tour of his farm — an unusual privilege.⁷²

In 2000-2002, Libya was widely reported to be a key backer of the Mugabe regime, supplying oil, some speculated, in exchange for land in Zimbabwe. However, the Libyan relationship may have cooled following a June 2003 meeting between Mugabe and Libyan leader Qadhafi at which the oil agreement between the two countries was not renewed. The agreement may have contributed to substantial losses at Tamoil, the Libyan oil firm.⁷³

SADC. Many of the 14 members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are linked to Zimbabwe by a common historical experience, as well as cultural and economic ties, and the organization has been seen as disinclined to condemn the actions of Mugabe's regime. In 2002, SADC judged the Zimbabwe presidential election as substantially free and fair. Recently, however, MDC officials and other Zimbabwean pressure groups have been welcomed on visits to SADC countries, and have made their case in Tanzania, Malawi and Botswana, as

⁷⁰ *Zimbabwe Independent*, "AU Report Slams Erosion of Rule of Law," July 16, 2004.

⁷¹ See CRS Report RS21353, *New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)*, by Nicolas Cook.

⁷² *Zimbabwe Standard*, "Nigeria Rolls Out Red Carpet for Tsvangirai," November 15, 2004.

⁷³ *BBC*, "Mugabe Ends Libya Oil Talks," June 27, 2003; *Energy Intelligence Group*, "Libya's Tamoil Gets New Boss," September 10, 2004.

well as South Africa. Botswana, has spoken out on regional problems attributed to Mugabe's policies, including the refugee burden they have imposed on Botswana itself. An electrified fence is being built in Botswana along the Zimbabwe border to control refugee flows. A strong critic of Mugabe has been named speaker of the Botswana parliament, heightening strains between the two countries.⁷⁴

At its August 2004 summit in Mauritius, SADC approved new electoral principles and guidelines for all its member nations.⁷⁵ Some analysts believe that these rules may motivate meaningful democratic reforms in Zimbabwe, particularly since they lay out detailed guidelines for SADC observer missions.⁷⁶ The signatory countries, including Zimbabwe, are pledged to allow SADC observers freedom of movement and access. Some are concerned that Zimbabwe might be able to satisfy SADC and its observers with surface reforms and a last-minute show of apparent impartiality. Others believe that the explicit electoral standards set by SADC could pose a challenge to the Mugabe government should it try to hold onto power in parliament by unfair means. The SADC electoral principles include

- full participation of the citizens in the political process
- freedom of association
- political tolerance
- equal opportunity for all parties to access the state media
- equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for
- independence of the judiciary and impartiality of the electoral institutions
- voter education

Possible Outcomes

The course of events in Zimbabwe over the next several months cannot be predicted with certainty, but the following scenarios suggest some of the possibilities.

- **ZANU-PF emerges victorious in the parliamentary election; Mugabe consolidates power.** Analysts appear to regard this as the most likely scenario because of the actions being taken by ZANU-PF to consolidate its power. These include the enactment of POSA, apparent willingness to use food as a weapon, and continued recruitment and training of pro-government militias. Many observers are anticipating that ZANU-PF will win a two-thirds majority in parliament, enabling it to amend the constitution in ways that will perpetuate its hold on power indefinitely. Concerns on the part of key African actors, including Nigeria, South Africa, and

⁷⁴ *Zimbabwe Independent*, "Botswana Names Mugabe-Basher As Speaker," November 19, 2004.

⁷⁵ *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections* (Adopted by the SADC Summit, Mauritius, August 2004). Available at [<http://www.iss.co.za>].

⁷⁶ ICG, *Zimbabwe: Another Election Chance*, p. 13.

SADC, over the damage further repression and possible violence in Zimbabwe might cause to the region could tend to work against this scenario. The risk of tougher international sanctions might cause some in the ZANU-PF elite to urge moderation.

- **Mugabe retires or passes from the political scene due to illness or death.** While President Mugabe appears healthy during public appearances, his advanced age could lead to his sudden departure from politics at some point. His departure could provoke a violent power struggle in Zimbabwe, since there is no clear successor to Mugabe at present, and the recent leadership shakeup has weakened several experienced politicians. Those contending for power might try to mobilize supporters by appealing to their ethnic base, and this could further destabilize the country. A military coup or attempted coup might be possible during this period of instability. However, it may be that ZANU-PF and MDC leaders would have the political wisdom to find a solution that would avert such a crisis. Regional leaders, including Obasanjo and Mbeki, would likely try to avert the collapse of Zimbabwe by promoting negotiations among contending factions. In the event of collapse, intervention by a regional peacekeeping force would be a possibility.
- **International pressure begins to moderate Mugabe's conduct, leading to reforms.** Conceivably, the 2005 election in Zimbabwe will be fairer than past elections due to pressures arising from the SADC electoral guidelines and the threat of stronger sanctions should the voting go awry. The result could be a larger MDC presence in the new parliament, strengthened checks and balances, and greater scope for political bargaining. President Mbeki's quiet diplomacy could help to persuade Mugabe to allow the process of reform to move forward. This scenario seems unlikely to many analysts in view of the tactics employed by Mugabe and ZANU-PF in past elections as well as the past reluctance of many African governments to take a firm stance against Mugabe's conduct.

Appendix: Map of Zimbabwe



Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS. (K.Yancey 11/12/04)