

ZIMBABWE: AN OPPOSITION STRATEGY

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ZIMBABWE: AN OPPOSITION STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The risk of an explosion that could cost thousands of lives in the country and shatter the stability of Southern Africa is growing in Zimbabwe. Political reform is blocked, and virtually every economic indicator continues to trend downward. Inflation, poverty and malnutrition are growing more acute. Party and civil society opponents of President Mugabe's government are yet to tap effectively into the living-standards-based dissatisfaction but it could finally become the spark that sets Zimbabwe toward change. The course is risky but Zimbabwe's splintered opposition needs to come together to formulate a campaign of non-violent resistance that channels this anger and frustration into pressure on Mugabe to keep his word to retire by 2008 and on his ruling ZANU-PF party to negotiate seriously on a transition. The international community, long frustrated at its inability to influence the crisis, should assist, especially by tightening targeted sanctions (U.S./EU) and offering mediation services (South Africa).

A sense of paralysis hangs over the country. ZANU-PF, which in any event has nothing in its recent history to suggest it is capable of producing constructive policies, is gridlocked. Mugabe has manipulated the succession contest within it to keep the competing factions dependent on his favour and to neuter the dissatisfaction with his stewardship that is increasingly visible even among its members. Senior government, party and security officials exploit exchange rates to strip rapidly dwindling national assets.

The international community is fatigued and disillusioned at the lack of progress and shows no inclination to attempt new initiatives. Ideas for mediation by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and then former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa have not shown much sign of life. South Africa acknowledges it has nothing to show for years of quiet diplomacy and is now preoccupied with its own presidential politics and other international issues. South African Development Community (SADC) members appear increasingly concerned at the impact the crisis is having on the region. Some reportedly pressed Mugabe for reform in private at the just concluded summit in Lesotho, but in public the chairman praised Zimbabwe's economic "progress", suggesting the organisation is not

likely to adopt a strategy going beyond trying to persuade the Zimbabwe president to accept some form of mediation by Mkapa.

U.S. and EU sanctions against key personalities of the Zimbabwean power structure remain in place but, while useful, are not much more than annoyances to the elites rather than active forces for change. Increasingly, it appears that Zimbabweans will have to start the process of creating new circumstances on the ground before the external actors can be stimulated to become more actively involved.

The political opposition and civil society organisations have failed to respond adequately to the crisis and demonstrate that they can put genuine pressure on the government. The main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), is weakened by a split that seems permanent, although there is talk of creating a "New Patriotic Front" (NPF), a Kenyan-style umbrella that offers promise for a loose coalition of all opposition groups. The main MDC faction, that of Morgan Tsvangirai, is still planning for the mass action it has promised.

Any such campaign is dangerous because the authorities have their own plans to respond with deadly force if need be. The crippled economy affects rank and file police and soldiers enough to cause a worried government to give them large salary increases recently but there is no evidence it could not mass enough reliable guns to suppress any confrontation in the centre of Harare. A decentralised campaign of non-violent resistance, at many places around the country and focused on bread and butter demands, could have more promise because it would be harder to infiltrate and disrupt and might force the government to decide between starting a process of piecemeal concessions or relying on less trusted men as the security forces were stretched.

Ultimately, stalemate in Zimbabwe is most likely to be broken by domestic resistance of one kind or another. With conditions becoming so dire, no one can discount a spontaneous revolt like the 1998 food riots. But it is incumbent on the MDC and civil society to try to manage the birth of a new dynamic that would also energise the international community. If they can, and if they can

also put together a deal guaranteeing Mugabe a secure retirement, it just may be possible to move quickly at last on inter-party talks aimed at a new constitution and elections that truly are free and fair.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the MDC Factions of Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara:

1. Work together to enact the principles of the recently signed “Democracy Charter”, actively participate in a loose coalition, bilaterally and under the umbrella of the proposed “New Patriotic Front”, and encourage as many as possible opposition parties, civil society organisations and religious bodies to join that Front and speak to the government with one voice.
2. Establish jointly a commission to investigate intra-party violence and expel permanently any party members who have engaged in or in future engage in such violence.
3. Consider launching a decentralised, non-violent campaign around the country focused initially on bread-and-butter economic demands and involving many and on-going actions such as non-confrontational marches, ratepayer strikes and the like to pressure the ZANU-PF government into specific concessions and eventually political negotiations.
4. Identify acceptable elements of a deal that might be proposed to President Mugabe at an appropriate moment in return for his firm commitment to lay down his authority and leave the presidency no later than upon expiration of his term of office in 2008, a possible element of which might include a guarantee he and his family could live comfortably and secure from prosecution.

To Civil Society Organisations:

5. Join the proposed “New Patriotic Front” so that as many organisations as possible can speak to the government with one voice
6. Consider joining the MDC in a decentralised, non-violent, nationwide campaign focused initially on bread-and-butter economic demands.

To the Government of Zimbabwe and ZANU-PF:

7. Negotiate with the MDC on a new constitution, provisions for sharing power in a transitional

government and arrangements for free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections (the latter perhaps moved forward to 2008), including repeal or suspension of repressive “security laws” enacted in recent years.

8. Drop plans in parliament to adopt proposed new repressive legislation such as the “Suppression of Terrorism Bill” and “Interception of Communications Bill”.
9. Suspend ongoing activities related to Operation Murambatsvina until humanitarian concerns surrounding housing and employment have been addressed, and allow street vendors to resume operations.

To the Government of South Africa:

10. Encourage President Mugabe to accept and implement a retirement package no later than the end of his present term in 2008 and offer to facilitate ZANU-PF/MDC talks aimed at producing a new constitution, a transitional government with shared powers and free and fair elections in 2008.
11. Press SADC to take a strong position in support of democratic change in Zimbabwe, including an expressed willingness to consider expulsion from the organisation if this is not forthcoming.

To the EU, its Member States and the U.S.:

12. Maintain and strictly enforce targeted sanctions against senior members of the Zimbabwe government, ZANU-PF and closely associated businesses.

To SADC and the African Union:

13. Pressure Harare to accept the MDC as a negotiating partner.

To UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

14. Dispatch a senior official to conduct a follow-up investigation on the effects of Operation Murambatsvina.

Pretoria/Brussels, 24 August 2006

ZIMBABWE: AN OPPOSITION STRATEGY

I. INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is more polarised than ever, and in many ways, prospects for change appear to be slipping further away.¹ But under the surface a potent and unpredictable economic storm is brewing which, if it erupts, could either push all sides to the negotiating table or destabilise the country completely. The erosion of living standards alone will not produce change but it has created tremendous volatility.

With the average salary one third what is needed for basic living requirements and inflation “down” to 994 per cent,² the question is no longer whether the economy is functional, but who it is functioning for. The answer, with nearly 90 per cent of the population living in poverty,³ is only a select few. Middle and lower class citizens have been severely affected for years. Low income urban residents were hit particularly hard by Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, which destroyed many homes and businesses, while earlier ill-advised government seizures of land left many farm workers without employment.⁴ A new monetary reform program puts added pressures on everyone.

In what was once one of Africa’s most developed economies, white-collar workers sell lunches on the side to make ends meet,⁵ and even rank and file members of the security sector struggle to maintain basic living

standards.⁶ Inflation is a persistent cancer, and average citizens have been venting their frustration in ways large and small, from outbursts in bank lines⁷ to sharp questioning of Vice President Joyce Mujuru at a recent public forum.⁸

The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party of President Robert Mugabe appears incapable of resolving a crisis that has led to a 50 per cent decline in GDP since the late 1990s⁹ and is accompanied by political instability that has scared off foreign investors. Despite controlling almost all levers of power, it has failed to offer a realistic economic recovery plan.¹⁰ Ultimately, the economic situation requires a political solution. Generating more foreign investment necessitates a change in the government’s approach to enforcing property rights and an easing of the volatile political situation. None of this is likely under the current leadership.

Where the economic collapse will lead the country remains a matter of debate. There could be spontaneous demonstrations, similar to or more extensive than the food riots of 1998,¹¹ or civil society and the badly divided opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), could channel the widespread anger and frustration into pressure that might persuade ZANU-PF finally to negotiate seriously to break the political

¹ Crisis Group has reported regularly on the political situation in Zimbabwe. See most recently Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°38, *Zimbabwe’s Continuing Self-Destruction*, 6 June 2006; Crisis Group Africa Report N°97, *Zimbabwe’s Operation Murambatsvina: The Tipping Point?*, 17 August 2005; Crisis Group Africa Report N°93, *Post-Election Zimbabwe: What Next?*, 7 June 2005; and Crisis Group Africa Report N°86, *Zimbabwe: Another Election Chance*, 30 November 2004. All previous reporting can be found at www.crisisgroup.org.

² “Zimbabwe inflation down to triple digits for now”, SABC News, 9 August 2006. The rate in June had been 1,184 per cent.

³ Sarah Bracking and Lloyd Sachikonye, “Remittances, poverty reduction, and the informalisation of household wellbeing in Zimbabwe”, Global Poverty Research Group, June 2006.

⁴ Crisis Group Report, *Zimbabwe’s Operation Murambatsvina*, op. cit.

⁵ “When the going gets tough, the tough turn entrepreneurs”, IRIN, 22 June 2006.

⁶ “No money to print currency”, IRIN, 29 May 2006.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Tony Hawkins, “Scepticism pervades China deals with Zimbabwe”, *The Independent*, 7 June 2006. Vice President Mujuru received several angry questions about the economic situation and the value of the deals with China when she spoke at a forum in June on the business relationship with Beijing.

⁹ Crisis Group interview, Harare, leading Harare-based economist, 7 June 2006.

¹⁰ Crisis Group interview, Harare, June 2006. This view is held by several prominent Zimbabwe economists with whom Crisis Group has spoken. They expect the National Economic Development Priority Program, announced by the government earlier this year, to fail as its predecessors have because it does not address the governance issues at the heart of foreign investors’ concerns.

¹¹ In January 1998, nine people died during mass demonstrations protesting an increase in the price of staples. The food riots, as they came to be known, were fuelled by the frustration of ordinary people and were largely unorganised.

deadlock. The government uses a variety of tactics to make organised protest difficult.¹² However, with such a high percentage of the population living in poverty, it is nearing the point where it cannot protect against every eventuality.

President Mugabe expertly manipulates the succession struggle within ZANU-PF, playing the factions off against each other to keep the party compliant and himself indispensable. A constitutional amendment is being prepared that would prolong the 82-year-old's rule in one form or another beyond 2008, his promised retirement date.

With the lack of internal political movement, Zimbabwe has fallen far down the international agenda. Many African states remain ambiguous about a country situation they recognise is harmful to the continent's interests but which is presided over by a hero of the anti-colonial struggle. The West mostly looks to South Africa to lead but Pretoria's quiet diplomacy and occasional use of economic leverage have consistently failed to make any impact. Recent attempts to organise a UN initiative or utilise the South African Development Community (SADC) to mediate have been equally unpromising.¹³

Crisis Group's concern remains that a time bomb is ticking which could all too easily explode into deadly violence that would not only ravage Zimbabwe but also destabilise South Africa and other states in the region. This report examines the political landscape in search of indications for ways in which that nightmare scenario might be avoided. As a practical matter, the onus for action lies with the people of Zimbabwe. It is only more concerted action on their part that is likely to trigger more urgent international demands for reform.

II. THE ECONOMY

Even the 20 per cent of Zimbabweans with jobs struggle to cope with inflation that makes a fixed income or investments lose value by the hour.¹⁴ The ZANU-PF government has looked to deals with new trading partners in Asia to stay afloat but these have not provided a windfall – at least not one that has benefited average citizens. China has promised to build thermal energy stations, and arrangements with Malaysia and other countries have provided temporary relief of fuel shortages, but none of these promise much fundamental economic improvement. Major foreign investment is likely to return only with a wholesale change in economic and political policy. Macroeconomic figures are bad and getting worse. GDP has declined by 40 per cent since 1998, and factory output has dropped by 45.6 per cent in that same period.¹⁵ Manufacturing levels are at their lowest since 1971, and income levels are half what they were eight years ago.¹⁶ An official from the Employer's Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ) says foreign exchange reserves are 10 per cent of what they were a decade ago, tourism is 14 per cent of its 1996 rate, and agriculture is 20 per cent of its pre-land reform program high.¹⁷

A. DOMESTIC IMPACT

The economic crisis imposes dire conditions on average Zimbabweans. For a country that was once a major regional food exporter to be suffering malnutrition-related deaths is a remarkable reversal. The authorities closely hold national statistics but in Bulawayo, 110 people, including 28 children, reportedly died from malnutrition related causes between January and March 2006.¹⁸

The availability of food varies widely. While major cities generally have adequate supplies for those who can pay, the situation in peri-urban and rural areas varies from shortages to near-famine. Maize grain, Zimbabwe's staple, was not readily available in markets in many areas through the first half of this year.¹⁹ An improved 2005-2006 harvest, thanks mainly to greater rainfall, has led analysts to predict that Zimbabwe will reduce the shortfall on its

¹² Operation Murambatsvina is the best known of these tactics. By destroying the homes and businesses of poor urban residents, the government disrupted opposition strongholds and forced many people back to ZANU-PF-dominated rural areas. Laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) make it extremely difficult for people to disseminate information or gather in public without government approval.

¹³ "Annan ends his Zimbabwe mediation", www.news.bbc.co.uk, 3 July 2006.

¹⁴ Tendai Mukandi, "Business climate most unfavourable", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 14 July 2006.

¹⁵ "Opportunistic money is creating a new elite", IRIN, 6 July 2006.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 12 June 2006.

¹⁸ "33 more die of malnutrition diseases in Zimbabwe city", www.zimonline.co.za, 7 July 2006. The mayor, Japhet Ndabeni-Ncube (MDC), released the Bulawayo figures.

¹⁹ World Food Programme Report, 7 July 2006.

maize production by two thirds, though still falling 395,000 metric tonnes short of what is needed.²⁰ While Zimbabwe is likely to import enough maize to meet basic needs, food security is still a major problem, as inflation leaves many citizens unable to pay for this staple foodstuff. Zimbabwe produced only 550,000 tons of maize in 2005, due in part to drought.²¹ Rains have been better this year, and the government estimates a harvest of 1.8 million tons, though the FAO expects more like 1 million to 1.2 million tons.²² Even members of the ruling party recognise there is a food crisis. A parliamentary committee report on food security cited serious shortages in staple foodstuffs across the country.²³ The Commercial Farmers Union estimates that agricultural production has fallen 60 to 70 per cent since 2000,²⁴ a decline that can be linked most directly to the failed land redistribution program under which the government gave party loyalists farms regardless of their knowledge of agriculture.²⁵

The government's priority is control, not economic efficiency. Operation Maguta, which puts the agricultural sector in military hands, has further decreased food security,²⁶ decimating food sources in some rural areas.²⁷ Soldiers have destroyed small market gardens to force farmers to support the ruling party.²⁸ Urban victims of Operation Murambatsvina continue to be targeted in periodic, smaller "clean-up" campaigns. In June 2006, more than 400 people in Harare's high-density Glen Norah suburb had their makeshift shelters demolished and burned by police.²⁹ Suspicion that the prime motivation for Murambatsvina was to disperse urban opposition

strongholds received further credence when authorities reportedly told residents to return to rural areas.³⁰

Many of those affected are descendants of migrant workers from Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi, who have no ties to the countryside. Those who do go back to rural areas where family support networks are stronger are often sent to "re-education" camps run by the security services to indoctrinate new arrivals with the ruling party's philosophy. Short courses of a day or so involve speeches and discussion of ZANU-PF successes and the perceived dangers of opposition parties. "They lost everything, and then they're sent into the rural areas to listen to ZANU-PF propaganda", a trades union official said.³¹ Those who have managed to remain in urban areas eke out a meagre existence. The police patrol mostly by day, so many people emerge after dark to sell fruits, vegetables and daily necessities. However, police sometimes raid homes and arrest anyone with more food than what they consider acceptable for personal consumption.³² In essence, Zimbabweans can be arrested for possession of food with intent to distribute.

In early June 2006, the government implemented Operation Roundup, the transfer of street children and the homeless from Harare to farms.³³ It did not give those it displaced adequate assistance, a shortcoming only partially made good by aid from civil society organisations. Sekesai Makwavarara, the ZANU-PF mayor of Harare, told critics: "As residents you should support the council and government when they embark on the clean-up exercise".³⁴ While the government, under UN pressure, built a handful of homes for the displaced in Masvingo, many refused to occupy them, claiming they were constructed hastily with inadequate materials and were likely to collapse.³⁵

Foreign remittances are increasingly the lifeblood of the economy. Many Zimbabweans survive only through money and goods sent by friends and relatives in the diaspora, where some four million live.³⁶ Given the weakness of the Zimbabwe dollar, even a single low-wage earner in South Africa, the UK or elsewhere can send enough to support an entire family. Half the residents of

²⁰ "Rising cost of living threatens food security", Famine Early Warning System, www.fews.net, 10 August 2006

²¹ "Zimbabwe Maize Production Update", FAO/GIEWS, *Global Watch*, 7 June 2006.

²² Ibid.

²³ "Food shortages becoming critical, warns parliamentary body", IRIN, 1 June 2006. The report put the blame in part on fuel and transport problems. The issuer of the report was the Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare Committee.

²⁴ "Opportunistic money is creating a new elite", IRIN, 6 July 2006.

²⁵ See Crisis Group Africa Report N°85, *Blood and Soil: Land, Politics and Conflict Prevention in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa*, 17 September 2004.

²⁶ Operation Maguta began in November 2005 as a government plan to increase the military's involvement in agriculture and other sectors of the economy. Military outposts have been established in rural areas so that soldiers can take over farms and order farmers to plant maize, sometimes destroying other crops in the process. The government says the aim is to increase food security, but the military lacks agricultural experience.

²⁷ "'Maguta', Worsens Food Crisis - Study", *Zimbabwe Standard*, 7 May 2006.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "Govt launches another clean-up operation", IRIN, 16 June 2006.

³⁰ Crisis Group interview, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) official, Harare, 8 June 2006.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ "Following Harare Roundup, thousands sent to new holding camp", Voice of America, 16 May 2006. Operation Roundup in May 2006 relocated roughly 10,000 residents of Harare who were homeless or working as street vendors to rural areas. Most were held on a farm against their will in an area without adequate food or facilities.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "Mugabe's clean-up houses find no takers in city", www.zimonline.co.za, 9 May 2006.

³⁶ "When the going gets tough", op. cit.

urban areas are estimated to receive such help.³⁷ Meanwhile, prices in all sectors are rising to keep up with inflation. At the current rate, a leading Harare-based economist predicted, they will double every three months.³⁸ Health care costs recently rose between 85 and 100 per cent, on the heels of a 240 per cent increase three months previously.³⁹

On 1 August, Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono instituted a monetary reform plan, devaluing bearer cheques by 1,000 per cent⁴⁰ and issuing new bank notes. Citizens were given to 21 August – sixteen business days – to make exchanges, with a daily limit capped at Z\$100 million (U.S. \$1,000 at the pre-monetary reform rate).⁴¹ Any amount above Z\$1.6 billion (\$16,000) thus became worthless. This hit currency traders and others operating in the parallel market hard, particularly women who comprise the majority of the informal economy. The plan also lowered the official exchange rate by 150 per cent, to Z\$250:\$1. Prior to this, banks were unable to meet a demand for the increasingly worthless banknotes and limited withdrawals to Z\$5 million (roughly \$49), while queues waited overnight. Observers blamed the shortage on the combination of large pay raises given to the security services and some civil servants and on too little foreign currency to import paper, ink and printing machinery parts with which to produce the notes.⁴²

The eroding economy has caused the government to resort to heavy borrowing. Debts to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as well as bilateral and commercial lenders have risen to \$3.9 billion, domestic debt to \$208 million,⁴³ the latter more than doubling in a single month due mainly to interest on treasury bills and failure to rein in government spending.⁴⁴ Much of the debt comes from advances from the Central Bank, which is not independent and in 2005 lent the government 20 per cent of its revenue.

³⁷ “Remittances, poverty reduction”, op. cit.

³⁸ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 7 June 2006.

³⁹ “Zimbabweans to pay 85 per cent more for health”, www.zimonline.co.za, 5 July 2006.

⁴⁰ Bearer cheques are interchangeable with currency and were instituted to keep currency needs on pace with inflation.

⁴¹ This report cites Zimbabwe’s currency, the Zimbabwe dollar, as “Z\$” and the U.S. dollar as “\$”. Zimbabwe dollar figures unless otherwise noted are given as pre-monetary reform values using the previous official exchange rate of Z\$100,000:U.S.\$1. The equivalent U.S. dollar values are likewise at the pre-monetary reform rate unless otherwise noted.

⁴² “No money to print currency”, op. cit. This pay raise was announced after the MDC appealed to civil servants and security force members, whose salaries were slipping below the poverty line, to join mass protest actions. See below.

⁴³ “Foreign Debts shoot to U.S.\$3.9 billion”, www.zimonline.co.za, 7 July 2006.

⁴⁴ “Domestic debt doubles in a month”, *Financial Gazette*, 28 June 2006.

Zimbabwe, which imports most of its energy and has trouble finding enough hard currency to pay for it, may also soon face a serious power shortage. Economic growth rates and population increases indicate SADC countries will export less energy in coming years. The Zimbabwe Electric Supply Authority (ZESA) began severe power cuts in mid-July.⁴⁵ Many homes and businesses already get power for only a few hours a day. China has agreed to provide \$1.3 billion to build three thermal power stations and develop coal mines⁴⁶ but few details have become public knowledge. Zimbabwe has defaulted on such deals in the past, and it is unlikely in any event that new power sources would come online quickly.

Recently, the government was embarrassed when the UN Committee on Development Policy categorised Zimbabwe as a “Least Developed Country”,⁴⁷ citing the prolonged decline and increased economic vulnerability. The government responded with its mantra that Western sanctions were responsible for difficulties,⁴⁸ which were in any event not so serious, and the label was politically motivated. However, the committee used objective criteria to make determinations which are generally in line with assessments of independent economists.⁴⁹

B. THE LOOTING OF A COUNTRY

ZANU-PF has been more than a spectator to economic decline. The government has taken bad decisions but party stalwarts have used their positions to systematically exploit the situation for private gain. While the scale of asset stripping may not be known for years, there is little doubt that much of the national wealth has been diverted to the pockets of the inner circle.

The seizure and redistribution of commercial farmland was only the most obvious practice. Senior ZANU-PF and security service personnel treated these properties as estates and showed little interest or competence in raising crops. Earlier this year, powerful ZANU-PF politicians such as State Security Minister Didymus Mutasa, Reserve Bank Governor Gono, and Vice Presidents Mujuru and Joseph Msika called for farmers regardless of race to reapply to receive land⁵⁰ but there has been no progress in returning

⁴⁵ “Mugabe warns ‘crookish’ party members”, *Mail & Guardian*, 15 July 2006.

⁴⁶ “When the going gets tough”, op. cit.

⁴⁷ “A downgrade in country’s status causes friction”, IRIN, 20 June 2006.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Harare, 7 June 2006.

⁵⁰ “White Farmers Say Still to Receive Land from Zimbabwean Government”, www.zimonline.co.za, 26 June 2006.

experienced professionals to the land taken by officials, and this appears to have been another hollow offer.

The government has acted to ease the impact of inflation only on the wages of the security sector and some civil servants. In this it has had some support from the Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe (EMCOZ), which opposes any official link between wages and the poverty line,⁵¹ which for a family of five is Z\$68.4 million per month (\$684).⁵² The average salary is currently Z\$20 million per month (\$200).⁵³ EMCOZ, which negotiates with the trade unions (ZCTU) and the government in the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) on management-labour issues, maintains that wages are 35 per cent of production costs in manufacturing and 50 per cent in agriculture and that indexing them to inflation, as the ZCTU wants, would place a heavy burden on employers.⁵⁴ The result is that most salary earners routinely experience de facto cuts.

The government speaks hopefully about its National Economic Development Priority Program (NEDPP), which seeks to bring in \$2.5 billion of foreign investment in agriculture, mining and manufacturing.⁵⁵ However, it is the seventh economic recovery plan since economic troubles began in 1991, on an EMCOZ official's count,⁵⁶ and little different from its failed predecessors in that there is no provision for tackling the underlying governance issues which directly deter investment. Daniel Ndlela, a leading independent economist, argues:

A workable economic policy can only be made by a government that is reform-minded enough to seek genuine normalisation of both internal and external relations....No economic policy plan, whatever name you give it, will have a chance as long as its authors do not know or pretend not to know where the problem comes from.⁵⁷

A primary reason ZANU-PF has resisted reforms is that its members continue to enrich themselves by manipulating

differences between official and actual exchange rates in the badly distorted economic system. The U.S. dollar brings five times the bank rate on the parallel market. With special access to loans and government coffers, ZANU-PF and senior security service officials can make large profits, decreasing the incentive to stabilise the economy. As Ndlela says, "the exchange rate is a tax on the system".⁵⁸

Many well-connected individuals also make money from fuel price disparity. Public transport drivers pay more than twice that paid by commercial farmers, who get their fuel from the government, and then sell it on the parallel market for more than twice that price again.⁵⁹ Some commercial farmers make a five-fold profit reselling at the parallel rate.

C. THE "LOOK EAST" CAMPAIGN

Due to the exchange rate, real property, goods and services are very cheap for foreign investors. As an EMCOZ official put it, "we are ripe for South Africa's taking".⁶⁰ However, the government's history of seizing land without compensation and recent talk about nationalising industries makes investors nervous. In partial response, President Mugabe says Zimbabwe is looking for foreign investment more to Asia than the West. China is now the second largest supplier of goods, though many complain it uses Zimbabwe as a dumping ground for poor quality items.⁶¹

The government claims the "Look East" campaign will resolve the economic problems and points to the deal with the China National Machinery and Equipment Import and Export Corporation to build thermal power stations. Although the details of such deals are often kept secret in Harare, it is known Zimbabwe is financing this project by supplying chrome to China, leading many to fear the government is mortgaging much of its natural resources for short-term economic payoffs.⁶² "These relationships can only survive if they are resource-based", said a senior

⁵¹ Kumbirai Mafunda, "Employers refuse to pay poverty level wages", *Financial Gazette*, 6 July 2006.

⁵² "Family of Five Now Needs \$68 million", *The Herald*, 11 July 2006. The poverty line is developed by the Central Statistical Office, which calculates the amount a family of five requires to meet its basic needs for a month. It takes into consideration food, accommodation, transport, clothing and health care.

⁵³ "Remittances slow the slide into ruin", *IRIN*, 4 July 2006.

⁵⁴ Crisis Group email correspondence with EMCOZ official, 7 July 2006. "Zimbabweans go hungry as world record inflation bites", *Agence France-Presse*, 22 May 2006.

⁵⁵ "When the going gets tough", *op. cit.*

⁵⁶ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 12 June 2006.

⁵⁷ Daniel Ndlela, "A workable economic policy needs reform-minded govt", *Zimbabwe Quoted Companies Survey 2006*, *Zimbabwe Independent*, April 2006.

⁵⁸ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 7 June 2006.

⁵⁹ "Opportunistic money is creating a new elite", *IRIN*, 6 July 2006. The prices per litre, in U.S. currency, are \$0.11 for commercial farmers, \$0.23 for public transport drivers and \$0.50 for parallel market providers.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 12 June 2006.

⁶¹ Tony Hawkins, "Scepticism pervades China deals with Zimbabwe", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 7 June 2006; Crisis Group interview, political science professor, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 8 June 2006. China also provides buses and MA-60 commercial aircraft. Crisis Group interview, Chinese diplomat, Harare, 16 June 2006.

⁶² Crisis Group interview, leading economist, Harare, 7 June 2006.

MDC official.⁶³ Zimbabwe has also sought help from Iran and North Korea. The then Iranian president, Mohammed Khatami, visited in 2005, and Mugabe has had a relationship with Pyongyang since the early days of independence.⁶⁴ But, an EMCOZ official commented, “These guys are takers, not givers.”⁶⁵

China’s foreign policy, as its Harare embassy says, is based on “five principles of peaceful coexistence”, including “win-win relationships, non-interference, respect for diversity, economic development, and sovereignty”.⁶⁶ Non-interference and sovereignty appeal particularly to ZANU-PF. China engages Zimbabwe with little regard for its human rights record or corruption and without the demands for democratic reform made by the West. Beijing does, however, lobby for changes in laws seen as harmful to its economic interests.⁶⁷ It may also be willing to take an active role in assisting the government maintain control. It is rumoured to have sold radio jamming equipment used to block signals from offshore independent radio stations.⁶⁸ Reports from activists in other southern African nations indicate China is also providing anti-riot gear that Zimbabwe’s police have employed against demonstrators.⁶⁹

However, China cannot bail Zimbabwe out. A Chinese diplomat said: “We are a developing country ourselves. We cannot do such things”.⁷⁰ The limits of the relationship were suggested when President Hu Jintao skipped Zimbabwe in his seven-country Africa tour in April 2006. Indeed, evidence of any tangible effect of Chinese investment is scarce. Air Zimbabwe began flights to China in 2005 hoping to reinvigorate the tourist market but arrivals have declined 70 per cent this year,⁷¹ and the route costs Zimbabwe more than \$1 million per month.⁷²

D. SECURITY CONCERNS

Economic difficulties are also taking a toll on the security services, raising suspicions that the government may not be able to rely on rank and file soldiers if large protests materialise. In April 2006, soon after the MDC threatened

mass action and began to talk about the impact of failed government policies on the security services, a 150 per cent increase in army and police salaries and significant raises for civil servants were announced. These turned out less than promised, however. Soldiers received Z\$21 Million (\$210) instead of Z\$27.2 million (\$272); teachers received just under Z\$31 million (\$310) instead of Z\$36.5 million (\$365).⁷³

The military’s upper echelons are treated much better. While most soldiers’ incomes are at the poverty line, the leaders receive a host of unofficial benefits, from cheaper fuel to opportunities to take advantage of exchange rate schemes and business investments. Senior officers involved in Zimbabwe’s campaign in the Congo gained valuable mining concessions. Mugabe, who relies increasingly on the military for support, has rewarded it through Operation Maguta and by installing officers and ex-officers in important parastatal positions.

Reports are emerging of security problems due to a lack of supplies around the country. A member of a parliamentary committee tasked with investigating security concerns said, “In Gweru city, the capital of the Midlands province, we found that there were no tear gas canisters, while only one police vehicle was servicing the entire city. A lot of vehicles were grounded, either because there was no petrol or there was no money to buy spare parts”.⁷⁴ There were also reports of police stations not having enough money to buy light bulbs and only intermittently feeding prisoners.⁷⁵

The military is unlikely to overthrow Mugabe, no matter how bad the situation, given the ties between the president and his generals, but there is a question of how it would respond to orders to violently suppress large crowds protesting conditions from which its own troops suffer. The government is prepared for mass demonstrations and those who go into the streets first would likely be met with force. However, if a nationwide campaign were to stretch the police and military to cover numerous rallies in many locations, they might prefer to stand aside. A political activist with contacts in the army recounted an exchange he had on the economy:

One soldier asked me: ‘Why are you always complaining and trying to protest?’ I said: ‘Do you not shop at the same stores we do and struggle to pay the same prices?’ He said ‘yes’, and once he understood, he said he supported us.⁷⁶

⁶³ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 12 June 2006.

⁶⁴ Roger Bate, “Trading with our enemies: Zimbabwe sucks up to Iran, China, and North Korea”, *Weekly Standard*, 9 May 2005.

⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 12 June 2006.

⁶⁶ Crisis Group interview, Chinese diplomat, Harare, 16 June 2006.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 14 June 2006.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Rowan Callick, “China and Zimbabwe love affair turns sour”, *The Australian*, 19 April 2006.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “Soldiers, teachers duped over salaries”, *Zimbabwe Standard*, 7 May 2006.

⁷⁴ “Tsvangirai presents ‘roadmap for democracy’ and another ultimatum”, IRIN, 9 June 2006.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 16 June 2006.

Speculation is rampant in Harare regarding the military's response to protests and runs the gamut from troops refusing to fire to doing everything they can to break up marches, including with extensive deadly violence. A ZCTU official was told by a common soldier that his comrades had agreed among themselves that if the situation arose, they would fire once into a crowd of marchers but would retreat if it still came forward.⁷⁷ The government can be expected to avoid putting less than its most trusted units into such a situation. In April 2006, however, State Security Minister Didymus Mutasa, a close Mugabe confidant, said it would not "keep its security organs in the camps" if opposition protests went ahead.⁷⁸ And on 16 August, President Mugabe said the army was ready to "pull the trigger" to block any attempt to topple him.⁷⁹

While the military's exact attitude cannot be known, several factors may affect its reaction to protests. The MDC has sought to make clear that the objective of any mass protests it organises would be not to overthrow the government but to pressure it into negotiating. If this point is maintained and the military is satisfied that the actions are not an imminent threat to the state, it might be less ready to use deadly force. The composition and demeanour of a demonstration would also be relevant. The security services could be expected to be somewhat less likely to fire on a peaceful protest whose participants included many women, children and elderly and were asking them to join in or were sitting down, than on one made up predominantly of angry young men. If crowds were very large and the protests widespread, the military might also hesitate out of concern that its forces would be overwhelmed.

The government may well anticipate that its threat to use deadly force is a strong deterrent. Citizens who have for years experienced the authorities' readiness to employ violence would likely be reluctant to go into the streets in large numbers unless they were truly desperate or could see that their numbers were so large that the risk was reduced. That may mean that either the economic situation will first have to grow worse or, initially at least, small groups of core demonstrators will have to take considerable risks to test the security services' resolve.

If the opposition takes the very serious step of launching non-violent resistance, all these considerations suggest it might be better advised to aim for a decentralised series of non-violent actions rather than a single confrontation at a sensitive point. The military has long been preparing to deal with mass action in the streets of Harare but may not have the organisational capacity or the reliable resources to respond effectively to multiple protests in all corners of the country. These assumptions are all unproven, however. More needs to be known about the mood within the security services, a subject that Crisis Group hopes to further address in subsequent reporting.

E. POLITICAL REPRESSION

As the economic situation worsens, the government continues to introduce more repressive measures. Under the Broadcasting Services Act, independent radio and television stations cannot operate inside Zimbabwe, and two foreign-based radio stations, SW Radio Africa and the Voice of America's Studio 7, say their broadcasts into the country are jammed.⁸⁰ Studio 7 either could not be heard or was seriously interrupted in Harare in June.⁸¹

Even as it is criticised heavily for existing repressive legislation,⁸² the government is seeking new authority to restrict free expression and hinder opposition activities. The "Suppression of Foreign and International Terrorism Act", which was proposed on 24 March 2006, would allow it to punish severely any group it defines as terrorist.⁸³ There is concern it could stretch this to cover opposition parties and civil society groups. A draft "Interception of Communications Act" would allow monitoring of e-mail and other electronic communications.

⁷⁷ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 8 June 2006. It can be assumed that the willingness of soldiers to disobey orders to use violence would depend to some extent upon whether senior officers were present or otherwise able to identify, and so take action against, those who did so.

⁷⁸ "Zimbabwe security minister repeats threats to shoot protestors", www.zimonline.co.za, 25 April 2006.

⁷⁹ "Zimbabwe: Threat by Mugabe", Reuters, 16 August 2006. Mugabe was speaking at ceremonies marking Defence Forces Day.

⁸⁰ "Harare calling - broadcasters accuse government of radio jamming", IRIN, 5 July 2006.

⁸¹ Crisis Group interview, senior independent political analyst, Harare, June 2006.

⁸² The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) has strangled independent media and made it difficult for opposition voices to access a forum in which to criticise the government. Implementation of the permit process under the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) has hindered the ability of opposition parties to hold public gatherings.

⁸³ "Zimbabwe proposes new anti-terror laws in wake of Mugabe assassination plot", www.jurist.law.pitt.edu, 27 March 2006.

III. THE MDC AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Public discontent is at an all time high due to Murambatsvina and the economic crisis but the MDC may not be ready to take advantage. It gives the impression of scrambling to catch up to scenarios that continually take it by surprise. “No one anticipated the crisis to last this long”, said a senior MDC official. “No one thought it would be this bad”.⁸⁴ If it can overcome its serious internal divisions and mount an effective non-violent resistance campaign aimed at improving conditions and starting serious negotiations with ZANU-PF, it could yet get the country back on the road to democracy. However, it has often made it too easy for the ruling party to exploit its divisions.

A. STATE OF THE SPLIT

The split within the MDC is most likely permanent but there is some chance for increased cooperation among opposition groups. The movement’s divisions, which reached a breaking point in November 2005 over the approach to the senate elections,⁸⁵ showed signs of softening when Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara appeared together at a Christian Alliance meeting in July 2006. The meeting was billed as an opportunity for opposition groups, civil society and churches to show greater unity, and groups from across the opposition spectrum did pledge this. A “Democracy Charter” was signed by all attendees, and a New Patriotic Front (NPF), a Kenyan-style umbrella for opposition parties and organisations, is being considered. A decision by opposition parties, including both MDC factions, to establish a permanent relationship would be a first step to repairing some of the damage created by last year’s split.

A loose coalition may be the best that can be aimed for because the divisions are real. By the time the senate issue arose, the MDC had already experienced years of differences over how to confront the ZANU-PF government that essentially pitted the group headed by Morgan Tsvangirai and Tendai Biti against that led by Welshman Ncube and Gibson Sibanda. Tsvangirai tended to favour a more confrontational approach, including mass action, to pressure ZANU-PF into concessions. Ncube preferred fighting ZANU-PF in institutions, such as parliament. “The split liberated Tsvangirai”, said an

observer. “There was something artificial about [the alliance between] him and Welshman”.⁸⁶

The initial divisions became pronounced in September 2004 at the time of Tsvangirai’s treason trial. In anticipation of a conviction, rumours circulated that the MDC was dividing along ethnic lines. Ncube, then the secretary general and now a key figure in the Mutambara faction, alleges that youths aligned with Tsvangirai were told to seize Harvest House, the Harare headquarters, to prevent Sibanda, a Ndebele, from assuming the presidency.⁸⁷ Tsvangirai was acquitted, but some youths did storm Harvest House, destroying property and assaulting those they thought were planning on replacing the MDC leader. A commission of inquiry cleared the top leadership but tensions ran high. In May 2005 40 youths similarly stormed Harvest House and assaulted those perceived to oppose Tsvangirai. A second commission of inquiry cleared Tsvangirai, and the perpetrators were expelled from the party. However, a dispute arose over whether Tsvangirai tried to reinstate them,⁸⁸ and rumours again spread of an ethnic split.

Buffeted also by its failure to respond effectively to Murambatsvina in mid-2005, the party was already “dysfunctional”, in the language of an official from the Tsvangirai faction, by the time of the acrimonious debate over senate tactics.⁸⁹ The ultimate split, Ncube says, centred around three core issues: commitment to non-violence and to democratic, collective decision-making, and the responsibilities of elected party organs.⁹⁰ The Tsvangirai faction characterises the split somewhat differently, focusing more on the personal disagreements among key party leaders.

The break culminated not over the decision to contest elections itself but over how it was reached. The Tsvangirai faction was upset that two absentee ballots cast in its favour, which would have produced a 33-33 tie, were not counted.⁹¹ The other side was incensed that Tsvangirai, in its view, violated the democratic principles and mechanisms of the MDC constitution by refusing to act on the vote,⁹² while the Tsvangirai faction claimed Ncube and his allies used undemocratic means in lobbying for that vote. When Tsvangirai, as party president, declared that the MDC would not contest the elections and left

⁸⁴ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 10 June 2006.

⁸⁵ See Crisis Group Briefing, *Zimbabwe’s Continuing Self-Destruction*, op. cit.

⁸⁶ Crisis Group interview, political science professor, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 9 June 2006.

⁸⁷ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 14 June 2006.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 10 June 2006.

⁹⁰ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 14 June 2006.

⁹¹ Crisis Group interview, a leading analyst with knowledge of the situation, Harare, 18 June 2006.

⁹² Ncube and an independent political analyst separately provided this description. Crisis Group interviews, Harare, 14 and 18 June 2006.

the meeting, Ncube and Sibanda attempted to create new structures and challenge the Tsvangirai faction for use of the party name and assets. Given that the Tsvangirai leadership was mainly Shona and the new group mainly Ndebele, there were strong ethnic overtones. Nevertheless, ethnicity is generally secondary to the core tactical differences over how to achieve shared objectives.

ZANU-PF has been more than willing to exploit all the divisions. The MDC obtained a report allegedly authored by the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) a year before the senate vote detailing the government's desire to drive a wedge between the senior leadership by manipulating its disagreements.⁹³ Many MDC members still question whether some of the divisions and resulting intra-party violence that has featured in the continuing tensions between the factions were instigated by ZANU-PF.

Ncube acknowledges that allegations of violence have been made against members of both factions but asserts that those against the Tsvangirai faction are much more persistent and serious.⁹⁴ The leadership of what is now the Mutambara faction stops short of claiming Tsvangirai has personally directed attacks on their supporters but says he has responded inadequately. The recent attack on Mutambara supporter and MDC Harare North parliamentarian Trudy Stevenson demonstrates the continuing problem.⁹⁵ On 2 July, she and two other MDC officials were assaulted after leaving a meeting in Mabvuku. Stevenson recognised some of her attackers and said at least one was a Tsvangirai supporter from the town who had previously been suspended for violence.⁹⁶

MDC Secretary General Tendai Biti, a senior member of the Tsvangirai faction in whose parliamentary constituency the attack occurred, said any perpetrators found to be MDC members would be expelled immediately.⁹⁷ Tsvangirai condemned the attack⁹⁸ but implied it was directed by ZANU-PF. An MDC press release made the same claim but announced an independent commission of inquiry comprised of Harare-based attorneys would investigate.⁹⁹ However, David Coltart, a senior Mutambara supporter

and parliamentarian, said the faction was not involved in discussions about the commission and questioned its impartiality.¹⁰⁰

The periodic violence has led some to doubt the MDC's ability to govern or even mount a more effective opposition campaign. While no government in Southern Africa is likely to back an opposition party in a neighbouring country directly, the MDC's internal difficulties reduce the chance it will receive even indirect help to force negotiations with ZANU-PF.

The Tsvangirai and Mutambara factions need to work together to stop the violence. An investigative commission approved by both, unlike the present body, might achieve the twin aims of proving the MDC is serious about tackling violence and demonstrating that the factions can work together. Any party member responsible for violence should be permanently expelled.¹⁰¹

B. THE ROAD AHEAD

The diplomatic community views the MDC split as symptomatic of the problems that have prevented it from being taken more seriously as a vehicle for change. A senior Danish diplomat in Pretoria said it "underscored the perception that the opposition is weak due to their inability to organise themselves. They never managed to put their house in order".¹⁰² The consensus in Zimbabwe is that the Mutambara faction has too little grassroots support to be a major player. Some argue Tsvangirai may even become more effective now that he has a more homogeneous team. Many believe that the intra-party violence is being fanned by ZANU-PF.

Indeed, in many ways the split has been overstated by Western diplomats,¹⁰³ who tend to concentrate less on each faction's domestic support than its ability to negotiate with the ZANU-PF or even govern. The Mutambara faction contains the MDC members with the most negotiating experience. Ncube was instrumental in the South Africa-sponsored constitutional talks that made some progress in 2004.¹⁰⁴ It is unclear, however, who would represent the MDC in any future negotiation, and continuation of the split is one reason why the international community is so discouraged at the moment.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ A series of beatings have been alleged against both factions, though more accusations have been directed at supporters of Morgan Tsvangirai. The allegations revolve around several incidents at the MDC headquarters, Harvest House.

⁹⁵ Violet Gonda and Tererai Karimakwenda, "MP Trudy Stevenson and others severely assaulted", SW Radio Africa, 3 July 2006.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Njabulo Ncube, "Tsvangirai condemns violence in opposition", *Financial Gazette*, 13 July 2006.

⁹⁹ Tendai Biti, "MDC sets up Commission of Inquiry", www.mdczimbabwe.org, 5 July 2006.

¹⁰⁰ Crisis Group interview, Washington, 11 July 2006.

¹⁰¹ Ncube insists that earlier actions against such persons have amounted only to suspensions and that Tsvangirai unilaterally reinstated them. Crisis Group interview, Harare, 14 June 2006.

¹⁰² Crisis Group interview, Pretoria, 20 June 2006.

¹⁰³ Crisis Group interviews, Harare and Pretoria, June 2006.

¹⁰⁴ See Crisis Group Briefing, *Zimbabwe's Continuing Self-Destruction*, op. cit.

The Tsvangirai faction, which believes it is stronger, appears more unwilling to compromise with its rival and is moving forward with preparations to present its plan for confronting the government. Though it has still not refined the details, much less begun to implement them, it announced in June a "Roadmap for Democracy", a series of demands for a new constitution and free and fair elections.¹⁰⁵ It seems to intend to use ZANU-PF's failure to reciprocate as a stimulus for eventual non-violent mass action. However, protesting the absence of inter-party talks may be a less attractive strategy for a disaffected public than one that focuses on bread and butter issues.

In many respects, the media has not given the Mutambara faction a fair chance. While it has yet to demonstrate broad support, its defeat in the Budiro by-election, a Tsvangirai stronghold,¹⁰⁶ is not necessarily an accurate measure of national support. Part of its problem is its leader, Arthur Mutambara, who has an admirable academic and student organiser background but is still an unknown quantity in Zimbabwe due to his many years abroad. Lack of first-hand experience with the suffering of recent years has made it more difficult for him to develop support.¹⁰⁷ He needs both to offer a concrete plan and show that he understands the average person's troubles.

The Mutambara faction has sought to gain traction by both pointing out Tsvangirai's shortcomings and publicly seeking to align itself more closely with him, a contradictory tactic that has not worked well. "Arthur invested a lot in personal attacks on Morgan's leadership [when speaking with diplomats]. Morgan didn't do that, and won a lot of respect".¹⁰⁸ If Mutambara is serious about a coalition, as he appeared to be when he appeared onstage with Tsvangirai at the Christian Alliance meeting, his faction's verbal attacks on Tsvangirai's ability to confront ZANU-PF should stop. Both factions would do well to understand that diminishing the other is counter-productive. The opposition has few chances unless it can demonstrate unity. If a coalition such as the New Patriotic Front is to take root, both factions must find a way to coexist while focusing on ZANU-PF.

The most optimistic scenario for the MDC is probably for the two factions to remain separate but establish a working relationship. Full unification would require the senior members of both factions to repair badly damaged personal

relationships and find a way to accommodate the multiple ambitions now involved. Neither is likely but both factions might just be able to agree on a set of common goals, a single presidential candidate and a unity parliamentary list, while retaining much of their operational independence. But the longer acrimony over the split persists, the more the common cause will be harmed. The international community will not push for inter-party negotiations while questions about the MDC's ability to offer a united front linger.

The Mutambara faction does have other options. It could weaken Tsvangirai's group by joining another small opposition party such as the United People's Party (UPP) of David Shumba, a former ZANU-PF official. Jonathan Moyo's United People's Movement (UPM), as well as the Democratic Party and the Zimbabwe African People's Union Federal Party, all of which attended the Christian Alliance meeting, are also options but are not taken as seriously as the UPP, almost all of whose members were recently connected to the ruling party.

Ultimately, the Mutambara faction must eventually show grassroots support or be relegated to nonentity status. Rural council elections scheduled for late September are a place to start. The Tsvangirai faction has said it will stand in all wards.¹⁰⁹ The Mutambara faction also will stand but has not indicated for how many seats. New regulations require all candidates to pay Z\$2 million (\$20) for a background check. As there are approximately 1,600 seats, Coltart said, "...that makes it far too expensive to contest all".¹¹⁰

C. THE POTENTIAL FOR MASS ACTION

Whether strategic, non-violent action aimed at pressuring the ZANU-PF government into seriously negotiating a new political dispensation could succeed is an existential question for the country's democratic forces. The international community might awake from its lethargy and press for a resolution of the crisis if there was a dramatic change in the domestic situation. "If there is civil commotion, it will change things in Zimbabwe. If there is a program of mass civil disobedience, things will change", said a senior MDC official.¹¹¹ Civil society leaders and the MDC have started tentatively down this path. "The outcry for action has never been so pronounced", said Morgan Tsvangirai.¹¹² But the mass action tactics presently under consideration are not promising.

¹⁰⁵ "Tsvangirai presents 'Roadmap to Democracy' and another ultimatum", IRIN, 9 June 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Crisis Group Briefing, *Zimbabwe's Continuing Self Destruction*, op. cit., p.8.

¹⁰⁷ Crisis Group interview, political science professor, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 9 June 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Crisis Group interview, senior member of Mutambara faction, Harare, 10 June 2006.

¹⁰⁹ "Rural election race heats up as parties prepare for battle", *Financial Gazette*, 28 June 2006.

¹¹⁰ Crisis Group email correspondence, 5 August 2006.

¹¹¹ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 12 June 2006.

¹¹² Crisis Group interview, Harare, 17 June 2006.

The MDC and most civil society groups have failed miserably to visibly oppose the ZANU-PF government. Only a few civil society groups have successfully launched persistent street protests or any other means of resistance.¹¹³ “Civil society is lukewarm”, said University of Zimbabwe senior lecturer John Makumbe. “It is cowering under the threat of a dictatorial culture. I see fear in the new crop of civic leaders”.¹¹⁴ While government repression and infiltration are major factors in the inability of opposition groups to organise, failure can also be attributed to two tactical errors. First, the MDC and civil society organisations are focused on mass street protests at the expense of other, potentially more effective means of resistance. Secondly, they have not enunciated a clear, concise list of grievances and demands that resonate with the bulk of the population.

Many civil society organisations continue to target the intelligentsia and market their message nationally, often relying on the internet, to which few citizens have access.¹¹⁵ Grassroots organisations such as the Combined Harare Residents Association have strong community structures and the ability to organise ordinary people quickly. However, they have stuck to their limited mandates and have little reason to coalesce around opposition campaigns that appeal only to constitutional or electoral issues in the absence of a national, unified opposition movement.

Mass resistance might be more effective if opposition groups were to concentrate on attacking specific government weaknesses, especially in the economic realm, rather than merely putting thousands into the streets. ZANU-PF’s biggest fear is a massive street protest leading to a popular revolt. It has passed laws making it difficult to organise and assemble and is well prepared militarily for a street confrontation, especially in Harare. However, given shortages in equipment and fuel, the security services might be hard pressed to respond efficiently to numerous smaller marches, demonstrations and actions around the country. As previously stated, chances for violence would depend on a number of factors, including whether elite or ordinary troops were involved; the size and characteristics of the crowd; whether senior officers were present; and how identifiable, and thereby potentially accountable, soldiers who chose not to fire would be.

The government seems to fear that rank and file soldiers and police might be won over if the MDC reaches out to them: The April pay raises came immediately after

Tsvangirai pointed out that soldiers had the same economic problems as civilians. “If the MDC adopts a middle ground, more in the security sector and civil service will jump on board”, said a leading economist.¹¹⁶ “Every Zimbabwean is an angry Zimbabwean”, said a professor at the University of Zimbabwe, “and an angry person is a dangerous person”.¹¹⁷

Mass participation in a boycott of commuter transportation over high prices would be a way to challenge the state without directly and immediately confronting it. Tsvangirai tried such a tactic in September 2005 but it failed due in part to a lack of support by others in the divided MDC leadership. But pictures of tens of thousands of Zimbabweans walking to work would be a powerful image. Work stoppages by civil servants would send a powerful message. If government-employed newspaper distributors, radio and television engineers or other state employees were to stay at home in substantial numbers, the government would have difficulty functioning.

Above all, the MDC and civil society would need to choose issues that resonate with ordinary people. Trying to rally citizens around a platform of democratic reforms at a time of economic hardship and near-famine is difficult. Constitutional reform is not the priority for homeless people.¹¹⁸ Other tactics such as dropping empty maize meal bags at government offices, ratepayer’s strikes, building makeshift houses in city squares to protest homelessness and personally asking police and soldiers for their support are resistance methods that do not require physical confrontation or extensive organisation. Some civil society organisations – though still a minority – have begun to develop grassroots strategies around more focused demands. For instance, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), organised a campaign in which women demonstrated (though ultimately unsuccessfully) against rising school fees in Bulawayo and Harare outside government offices as well as the schools that were turning pupils away.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), Women of Zimbabwe Arise, and the Zimbabwe National Students Union have all led successful public demonstrations over the last few years.

¹¹⁴ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 16 June 2006.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 13 June, 2006.

¹¹⁷ Crisis Group interview, political science professor, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 9 June 2006.

¹¹⁸ The NCA, which seeks a democratic constitution achieved by an inclusive process, has held marches, sometimes monthly, in many cities across Zimbabwe with participation in the hundreds at times. However, Dr Lovemore Madhuku, the NCA chairman, has said: “It would appear that the situation is too complicated for most Zimbabweans. They might not see immediately how a new constitution would get them to tomorrow because most people want to get out of where they are”. “Over 160 NCA demonstrators arrested”, SW Radio Africa, 12 July 2006.

¹¹⁹ “WOZA’s education campaign continues at schools”, www.kubatana.net, 23 May 2006.

Civil society in Zimbabwe has many positive attributes, but it is hierarchical and prone to endless debate. The detailed preparation needed for a highly organised, nationwide campaign could be its own worst enemy, giving time and opportunity for the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) to infiltrate. A decentralised campaign in which individual groups planned and implemented events and supported each other's actions, might be both more effective and more difficult for the authorities to prevent.

Earlier attempts at coordinated, long-term resistance programs have bogged down in the planning stages. According to a senior official from the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, an umbrella organization for many civil society organisations engaged in legal activities to oppose the government, they have failed due to several factors: crippling poverty, which makes participation difficult by those most affected by the economic crisis; CIO infiltration; lack of popular confidence in their success; and lack of resources for a nationwide campaign in a hyperinflationary economy.¹²⁰ These are all still real problems but a decentralised, mobile campaign might be able to build support for itself and strike chords with every sector of society. As smaller, community-based groups gained traction and confidence in their tactics, they might grow and merge into a national resistance program.

While decentralisation of action and tactics would be necessary, the MDC and civil society organisations need to do a better job of coordinating on message and the demands they make to the government. The ZCTU, an obvious candidate to play a major role in non-violent resistance, has been inconsistent on wages, at times calling for them to be pegged to the poverty line,¹²¹ at other times merely urging negotiations with the government. Other civil society groups have not backed a common platform of tangible reforms. The resistance movement that eventually overthrew Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic began with students demanding and winning the dismissal of a chancellor at a university.¹²² Zimbabwe's activists need to demand tangible action, such as a specific number of decent, affordable housing units for victims of Operation Murambatsvina, better distribution programs in food shortage areas and subsidies for urban transportation.

Morgan Tsvangirai has called for an all-stakeholders meeting of opposition members and major civil society leaders to rally around the MDC "Roadmap to Democracy".¹²³ Now that the Christian Alliance has

done some of the spade work, it is up to the Tsvangirai faction, as the largest opposition group, to develop a working alliance. Other groups may bristle at pushing the MDC's roadmap at the expense of their own plans, but nothing will be achieved without a common approach. The two key aspects – decentralised management and unified message – are not contradictory but they will be difficult to keep in balance.

D. THE UNREPORTED RESISTANCE

Much of the resistance occurring in Zimbabwe goes underreported, leading to a perception of greater inaction than is the case. Recently, the NCA held simultaneous protests in five cities, with 300 participants, of whom over 160 were arrested.¹²⁴ If other organisations adopted similar tactics but focused them on bread and butter issues for a sustained period, the security forces would be stretched very thin.

On 18 May 2006, over 100 people were arrested in another NCA protest in Harare,¹²⁵ when police prevented a march to the city centre. Earlier that month, nearly 200 women and children affiliated with WOZA, were arrested in Bulawayo as they conducted the protest against rising school fees described above. The children were released that day but most women were held through the weekend. Charges were eventually dropped because the police could not prove the gathering threatened public order. Security forces have been vigilant at preventing protests around the Murambatsvina anniversary.

The Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) has been very active in rallying students around issues affecting higher education. College and university tuition has risen sharply to Z\$200 million (\$2,000) while grant packages remain stagnant at about Z\$13 million (\$130).¹²⁶ Some students have resorted to criminal activities such as prostitution to pay fees.¹²⁷ ZINASU has responded with protests attended by hundreds in Bulawayo and other cities.¹²⁸ Given the economic situation, any protest could gain momentum and become a major risk for ZANU-PF.

¹²⁰ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 14 June 2006.

¹²¹ "A slow simmer may reach boiling point", IRIN, 22 May 2006.

¹²² Crisis Group interview, expert on Serbian democracy, Washington, 25 May 2006.

¹²³ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 17 June 2006.

¹²⁴ "Over 160 NCA demonstrators arrested", SW Radio Africa, 12 July 2006.

¹²⁵ "Zimbabwe arrests 100 in new crackdown on opposition", Reuters, 18 May 2006.

¹²⁶ "Education system sliding into ruin", IRIN, 29 June 2006.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Crisis Group interview, senior Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition official, Harare, 14 June 2006.

IV. ZANU-PF

A. THE MUGABE SUCCESSION

Discontent with Mugabe's handling of the current crisis is pervasive in the ruling party but it is paralysed by the succession issue. There is no clear sign whether the faction led by Vice President Joyce Mujuru, the faction led by former Speaker of Parliament Emmerson Mnangagwa – or indeed either of them – will prevail. Mujuru's is considered slightly stronger but Mugabe retains great leverage by not tipping his hand. With all competing for his favour, no one is willing to press for reforms or create conditions that might lead to Mugabe accepting retirement. "No one will stand up to Mugabe in that crowd", says Tsvangirai.¹²⁹ "Mugabe likes to keep them all bubbling" added a senior British High Commission diplomat. "He loses control when he picks".¹³⁰

Mujuru appears to be in the ascendancy mainly because she has been given responsibility for such high-profile initiatives as a trade visit to China and negotiating the deal for the three power plants to be built by Beijing. However, she cannot shake the perception that her power derives from her husband, former military chief and close Mugabe confidant Solomon "Rex" Mujuru. She does not have much popular support, and there is a feeling that she may not have the political capital in her own right to be president.

Emmerson Mnangagwa is still serving his penance for the Tsholotsho episode¹³¹ but has not been completely sidelined.¹³² He is thought to have more strength within the party, as evidenced by the backing he received at Tsholotsho, so may be more able to unite key players. His current portfolio as housing and rural development minister is not high profile but allows him to build connections in key ZANU-PF rural strongholds.

The military leadership is an unknown quantity in the succession struggle but it has been reluctant to get heavily involved in political issues. It is unlikely to take a decisive part, at least publicly, though it will expect to be consulted and to satisfy itself that any successor is palatable to it. Mujuru is respected for her role in the liberation struggle,

as is her husband. Mnangagwa was responsible for patronage during Zimbabwe's intervention in the Congo and still enjoys strong military support.

Mugabe may not have decided whom he wants as his successor. Of greater concern to him than personal attributes likely is the increased power a designated heir would have even before the transition. Once a successor emerges, Mugabe will be a lame duck, who could lose control of the party. He is well aware of the fate of former Zambian President Frederick Chiluba and former Malawian President Baliki Muluzi, who were pushed aside after appointing successors. Above all, he wants to hold on to power both to cement his stamp on the party and the government and to ensure that he is protected from prosecution. Accordingly, he probably prefers not to choose a successor until absolutely necessary. If he decides to unify presidential and parliamentary elections in 2010 rather than retire as he has said he would when his term expires in 2008,¹³³ he could easily impose several more years of ZANU-PF paralysis.

Despite Mugabe's best efforts to postpone matters indefinitely, the time for some decisions is rapidly approaching. Although in relatively good health at 82, his days in power are finite. As the constitution stands, the death or permanent incapacitation of the president triggers an election in 90 days. ZANU-PF wants to avoid this because it is not certain it could win a snap vote held in difficult economic circumstances. It prefers to amend the constitution to permit one of the two vice presidents to serve out the president's term and use the additional time to consolidate power and benefit from incumbency in a later election. A draft constitutional amendment to this effect is likely to be announced sometime before the December 2006 party congress. ZANU-PF has sufficient seats in parliament to enact any amendment.

Mugabe's recent comments suggest he will seek either to extend his term or otherwise arrange matters so that he remains central to national politics well into the future. During a state visit to Malawi in May, he said "the people" will decide when he leaves.¹³⁴ He is believed to have tasked Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa and Mnangagwa, in his capacity as ZANU-PF legal affairs secretary, to prepare an amendment that meets his needs.¹³⁵ It might, for example, revise government structures to create a new post for him – such as president for life with power to appoint and dismiss a prime minister charged with management of day-to-day affairs – and also stipulate that he personally,

¹²⁹ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 17 June, 2006.

¹³⁰ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 16 June 2006.

¹³¹ At Tsholotsho in December 2004, during the annual ZANU-PF party congress, Mnangagwa and his allies put around a declaration intended to position him as the heir apparent, seemingly against Mugabe's wishes. Mugabe scotched the plan, ostracised Mnangagwa and elevated Joyce Mujuru to the vice presidency. See Crisis Group Report, *Post-Election Zimbabwe*, op. cit.

¹³² Ibid, also Crisis Group Briefing, *Zimbabwe's Continuing Self-Destruction*, op. cit.

¹³³ See *ibid*.

¹³⁴ "Zimbabwe clears way to stay in office until 2010", *Business Day* (Johannesburg), 10 May 2006.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*.

or the occupant of such an office, would be immune from any prosecution.

In all likelihood, this would allow him to die in office and avoid the possibility of either facing charges or living to witness wholesale changes to his core policies. He then might appoint a technocrat prime minister palatable to the West but without a strong domestic constituency of his own such as former finance minister Simba Makoni or the Reserve Bank governor, Gideon Gono, who are generally considered ZANU-PF moderates.

B. INTERNAL DISSENT IN ZANU-PF

While Mugabe still has some time in which to refine his tactics, there are tensions within ZANU-PF. Former party official Daniel Shumba, who left to form the UPP,¹³⁶ has refused to reveal its leadership fuelling suspicions the driving force is his long-time ally, Mnangagwa.¹³⁷ ZANU-PF is cracking down on members seen to be aligned with Shumba or the UPP, suspending, for example, several party officials in Masvingo province, including the provincial deputy chairman.¹³⁸ Jonathan Moyo, who broke with Mugabe and won election to parliament as an independent, now heads his own party, the UPM, to which the ex-information minister's hints and political gossip also suggest a possible Mnangagwa connection. Mnangagwa denies any such ties but it is plausible that he wants an alternative base for himself against the possibility that he will lose the ZANU-PF contest and is hedging his bets with one or more parties. If so, he would seem to have a history of closer connections with Shumba, who comes from the branch of ZANU-PF that backed him during the Tsholotsho episode.

Of the two, the UPP may have the better prospects. Shumba still has some grassroots support in his native Masvingo province and more recent demonstrable popularity within ZANU-PF, where he is said to retain ties to a number of senior figures who could be important in a post-Mugabe scenario. Moyo is a shrewd political analyst and operator but alienated much of the country while in government, serving as Mugabe's spokesperson and spearheading the crackdown on the independent press.

ZANU-PF cannot be counted on to lead reform but cracks in its support for the senior leadership are starting to be apparent. Mugabe has always insisted upon near total public agreement with his policies but members are becoming more vocal about the economic situation and his stranglehold on decisions surrounding the succession issue. So far, this dissent either comes from the few neutrals in the Mujuru-Mnangagwa contest or is considered low-level enough not to threaten the leadership.

Vitalis Zvinavashe, former commander of the defence forces and now a ZANU-PF senator, has called on the government to deal with food shortages more transparently.¹³⁹ Although they often stop short of directly criticising Mugabe, younger parliamentarians who do not share the liberation struggle background of their elders are beginning to express displeasure with the party hierarchy. Recently, a group of them sought a meeting with Mugabe and both vice presidents to discuss deteriorating relations between parliament and the ministries.¹⁴⁰ Mugabe refused, and the parliamentarians eventually agreed to present their grievances to the speaker of parliament and other senior leaders.

Elements in the Mujuru and Mnangagwa camps are quietly starting to look beyond Mugabe, realizing that any new president will face a monumental task in rebuilding the country, and have held low-level talks about a political solution with both MDC factions.¹⁴¹ These talks are not likely to get far, however, since neither presidential contender wishes to risk a break with Mugabe on such a fundamental issue.¹⁴² At most, they indicate that younger ZANU-PF figures may be willing to compromise once freed of Mugabe's shadow.

¹³⁶ Nelson Banya, "ZANU PF purges top officials in Masvingo", *Financial Gazette*, 6 July 2006.

¹³⁷ Crisis Group interview, senior independent political analyst, Harare, June 2006. Kumbirai Mafunda, "UPP launch a damp squib", *Financial Gazette*, 28 June 2006. Shumba was ZANU-PF chairman for Masvingo province when it supported Mnangagwa during the Tsholotsho party congress.

¹³⁸ Nelson Banya, "ZANU PF purges top officials in Masvingo", *Financial Gazette*, 6 July 2006.

¹³⁹ "Former Zimbabwe army chief wants frank assessment on food crisis", www.zimonline.co.za, 28 April 2006.

¹⁴⁰ Crisis Group interview, civil society officials with ties to both parties in parliament, Harare, 14 June 2006.

¹⁴¹ Crisis Group interviews, senior officials from the Tsvangirai and Mutambara factions, Harare, June 2006.

¹⁴² If Mugabe were interested in such talks, he likely would use a close ally not connected to either contender, such as State Security Minister Didymus Mutasa. While Mugabe has arguably cultivated the divisions within ZANU-PF to keep potential challengers off-balance, he retains a core group of senior party officials such as Mutasa, who are loyal exclusively to him and implement his wishes.

V. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The diplomatic response to Zimbabwe's crisis is marked by a general sense of fatigue and a paucity of good policy options. Mugabe has played external initiatives off against each other as skilfully as he has manipulated factions within the country. His rhetoric on sanctions and land reform has distorted debate, preventing meaningful discussion on governance, succession or dialogue with the MDC. Eight years into the crisis, there is no consensus on what might be a promising approach.

A. FALSE START AT THE UNITED NATIONS

There had been some hope for a UN-initiated mediation effort after Mugabe invited Secretary-General Kofi Annan to visit Zimbabwe and investigate the situation following the release of the UN's highly critical report on Operation Murambatsvina in July 2005. It was widely anticipated that if he went, Annan would explore options for securing Mugabe's retirement and starting inter-party discussion of a new constitution. But talks between Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari and senior government officials prior to the AU's July 2006 Banjul summit made little progress, and when Annan and Mugabe met at Banjul, the Zimbabwe leader indicated that he wanted Benjamin Mkapa to mediate disagreements over land reform between his country and the former colonial power, Britain, and that the former Tanzanian president was willing.¹⁴³

Annan told reporters, "I was committed to helping Zimbabwe, and we both agreed that the new mediator, former Tanzanian president Mkapa, should be given the time and space to work".¹⁴⁴ However, Mkapa has not indicated publicly that he is prepared to accept such a narrow role and appears to believe that if he is to become involved it must be with greater scope to deal with Zimbabwe's political divisions.¹⁴⁵ The UK quickly rejected Mugabe's notion, pointing out that the crisis was a governance matter that needed to be resolved within Zimbabwe.¹⁴⁶ Mugabe's intention appears to have been in the first instance to sideline Annan, and in this he has succeeded. The secretary-general subsequently gave

up any plans for the trip.¹⁴⁷ He leaves office at the end of the year and is unlikely to begin a diplomatic initiative he cannot complete unless he first sees significant progress by the parties.¹⁴⁸ The UN could still, however, be more active on the humanitarian side, following up issues relating to Operation Murambatsvina with a high-level visit.

B. TARGETED SANCTIONS

The European Union and the U.S. have for several years imposed limited, separate but similar sanctions – travel bans, freezing of accounts – targeted at senior officials of the government and ZANU-PF as well as at major Zimbabwe businesses associated with those leaders. They have regularly renewed them and occasionally expanded their scope or the lists of those affected.¹⁴⁹ In June 2006, both vowed to maintain them until there was major progress in human rights, democracy and rule of law.¹⁵⁰

These sanctions are meant to make life less pleasant and less profitable for those most responsible for Zimbabwe's troubles without adding to the discomfort of its ordinary citizens. They are not extensive enough, or applied by enough countries, to have a decisive impact. Nevertheless, a ZANU-PF parliamentarian acknowledges they are having some effect on the business interests of the ruling party and fuelling discontent among some party and government officials who are blocked from greater international activity.¹⁵¹ It is possible that as the economy continues to deteriorate, they may become a more influential factor in policy considerations. They should be maintained, enforced, and if possible expanded. Most useful would be to persuade more countries, especially in

¹⁴³ "The two-step between Mugabe and the opposition goes on", IRIN, 7 July 2006. "We do not need you to mediate, Mugabe tells Annan, *Zim Observer News*, 3 July 2006.

¹⁴⁴ "Kofi Annan press encounter at the African Union summit", Banjul, Gambia, 2 July 2006.

¹⁴⁵ Crisis Group interview, Pretoria, August 2006.

¹⁴⁶ Crisis Group e-mail correspondence, senior official, UK High Commission Harare, 21 July 2006.

¹⁴⁷ "Annan no longer coming to Zimbabwe", www.zimonline.co.za, 3 July 2006.

¹⁴⁸ "If there is a consensus agreement on how to bring the parties together to discuss these issues, we will assist in any way we can", Crisis Group interview, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Tuliameni Kalomoh, New York, 18 July 2006. A ZANU-PF/MDC agreement on the structure and agenda of negotiations is a likely prerequisite for such UN engagement.

¹⁴⁹ President Bush issued Executive Order 13288 on 7 March 2003 imposing an asset freeze and travel ban on senior Zimbabwean and ZANU-PF officials. A second Executive Order, on 23 November 2005, expanded the targets to include family members of those on the original list, as well as anyone found to be providing assistance to such persons. The EU passed targeted sanctions against Zimbabwe first in 2002, expanded the list from 79 to 95 individuals in 2004 and renewed the sanctions in 2005. Contrary to the Zimbabwe government's assertions, the sanctions do not impose economic penalties on it or the country as a whole, but on key officials and those close to them.

¹⁵⁰ "EU, U.S. vow to maintain targeted sanctions against Mugabe", www.zimonline.co.za, 24 June 2006.

¹⁵¹ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 12 June 2006.

Africa and Asia, to join them but there does not appear to be a likelihood of this at present.

C. SOUTH AFRICA AND SADC

South Africa is universally regarded as the country with greatest potential to influence Zimbabwe. Because of its economic ties, the many immigrants from Zimbabwe and its ambitions to improve the African continent's ability to handle its own problems, it also has perhaps the greatest motivation. President Mbeki himself, however, has acknowledged that his "quiet diplomacy" has not worked.¹⁵² President Mugabe in turn often acts toward Mbeki as if he considers the South African president a lightly respected younger brother.

The effect of the crisis on South Africa is considerable. More than three million Zimbabweans – equal to nearly a quarter of the population – have crossed the border in search of security and, especially, jobs.¹⁵³ Over 7,000 applied for asylum in the first quarter of 2006, 38 per cent of all such requests to the Pretoria government.¹⁵⁴ Many of these are skilled workers who provide valuable services in South Africa, of course,¹⁵⁵ and the country has also benefited by taking over exports Zimbabwe has lost during its economic downturn.¹⁵⁶ Experts estimate, however, that the crisis has cost the Southern Africa region \$2.5 billion in investments since 2000 while reducing South Africa's GDP by 1.3 per cent.¹⁵⁷ Zimbabwe's parastatals also owe large debts to South African companies that they are increasingly unable to pay.

Nevertheless, South Africa is turning inward on its own politics, with a presidential election (and succession) looming in 2009. Zimbabwe is no more than a mid-level concern, "way back on South Africa's foreign policy priorities. NEPAD, the African Union, Sudan and the DRC all rank higher".¹⁵⁸ The domestic constituency pushing for a more active policy on Zimbabwe has limited influence. "President Mbeki is not beholden to constituents or likely

to give in (to their demands). He won't bend to domestic pressure", a U.S. diplomat said.¹⁵⁹

To complicate matters, there is no consensus within South Africa on what it might usefully do to help resolve the crisis that it has not already attempted. It broke fairly sharply with quiet diplomacy in 2005, when it tried to take advantage of Zimbabwe's difficulties with the International Monetary Fund to offer a deal: a \$450 million economic package in exchange for important economic and political reforms. Mugabe had his central bank print up more currency to pay the IMF debt (giving inflation another boost) and turned it down.¹⁶⁰ A Pretoria-based diplomat says South Africa asks as many questions on how to resolve the conflict as anyone, not because it is uninformed but because it has not identified a promising approach.¹⁶¹ This, another diplomat adds, is partly why Western countries do not want to push it to take stronger action. "They don't want to jeopardise relations or penalise the government for what they see as an impossible situation".¹⁶²

Part of South Africa's reluctance to confront ZANU-PF stems from its distaste for either a leadership vacuum or an MDC-controlled government. It would welcome a stable government of national unity but wants to avoid the risks that could accompany a complete change in Zimbabwe's power structures. In addition to the usual concern of not wishing to appear to meddle in the internal affairs of a neighbour by supporting an opposition party, Pretoria is wary of a labour-based government in Harare. Mbeki has sought to steer his ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), toward middle class values and has distanced himself somewhat from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), a staunch MDC supporter. A labour-based government in the region could upset the careful balance Mbeki has tried to construct for South African politics.

As sensitive as South Africa is to any implication of acting like a hegemon, it is the unquestioned economic and military powerhouse of SADC, and it could do a better job persuading its other governments directly influenced by Zimbabwe's slide to organise a more activist common front. Zimbabwe's undemocratic practices are at odds with SADC's core principles. As the crisis continues, the member states are experiencing economic hardship and damage to their organisation's reputation as a promoter of democracy. South Africa should rally them to express their frustration directly to Mugabe.

¹⁵² "Quiet diplomacy on Zim has failed, says Mbeki", www.iol.co.za, 2 July 2004.

¹⁵³ "More Zimbabweans seek asylum", IRIN, 21 June 2006.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. Other countries of origin for substantial numbers of applicants for asylum in South Africa include the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Somalia. See "South Africa tackles its growing backlog in asylum applications", UNHCR, 6 July 2006.

¹⁵⁵ "South Africa gives Zimbabweans a haven, but at what cost?", IRIN, 2 June 2006.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Crisis Group interview, leading Pretoria-based political analyst, Pretoria, 20 June 2006.

¹⁵⁹ Crisis Group interview, Pretoria, 20 June 2006.

¹⁶⁰ Crisis Group Briefing, *Zimbabwe's Continuing Self-Destruction*, op. cit.

¹⁶¹ Crisis Group interview, Pretoria, 20 June 2006.

¹⁶² Crisis Group interview, Pretoria, 20 June 2006.

This would still allow South Africa to position itself as a mediator, one prepared to take a relatively soft approach on matters such as the guaranteed soft landing Mugabe probably requires if any diplomatic transition strategy is to get off the ground.

At their 17-18 August 2006 summit meeting in Lesotho, a number of SADC member states reportedly expressed displeasure to Mugabe during private side sessions that the Zimbabwe crisis was hurting foreign investment in the region. Mugabe seems to have reacted badly to the criticism, leaving midway through the second day without making any statement and skipping the later, closed-door session on Zimbabwe.¹⁶³ Pakalitha Mosisili, the SADC chairman and Lesotho prime minister, put a good face on matters, saying the early departure was due to age, not disagreement.¹⁶⁴

Much as he had done earlier with Kofi Annan, Mugabe sought to use the summit to obtain endorsement of a narrow role for ex-President Mkapa to mediate land policy issues between his government and London.¹⁶⁵ This would have strengthened his claim that such problems as Zimbabwe are the residue of colonial-era issues rather than fundamental matters of domestic governance, while at the same time allowing him more easily to deflect pressures for any other initiative. The Tanzanian delegation informed the summit that Mkapa was reluctant to get involved on such a basis, and SADC member states refused the ploy, indicating that they would consider associating the regional body only with a more extensive, official mediation by the Tanzanian statesman,¹⁶⁶ presumably one that might lead eventually to negotiations between ZANU-PF and the MDC and free and fair elections. There is no indication, however, either that Mugabe is prepared to accept serious talks with such

an agenda or that SADC is willing to use more than gentle suasion to change his mind.

Whenever dissatisfaction among SADC nations has seemed to be growing dangerously, Mugabe has attempted to quell it through personal meetings, talking with Jakaya Kikwete in April 2006, for example, after the Tanzanian president was thought to have grown impatient.¹⁶⁷ Mugabe's nostalgic anti-colonial rhetoric may not always resonate with his counterparts but it strikes a populist chord with many Africans; SADC leaders are not the only ones on the continent reluctant to challenge him.

However, the impact of the crisis on SADC nations is undeniable. Botswana acknowledges there are difficulties with Zimbabweans crossing the border illegally to sell goods or engage in criminal activity but maintains that dialogue is the only answer.¹⁶⁸ It admits to having no clear idea how dialogue would occur or between whom but says, "SADC should be used to address political problems as well".¹⁶⁹ This offers South Africa an opportunity to pull together a more forceful coalition. SADC is uniquely positioned to press Zimbabwe for reforms because, unlike much of the African Union, its members generally have better governance records and can oppose abuses of democracy and human rights without risking a domestic crisis.

Probably the strongest initiative SADC could undertake would be to begin deliberations on expelling Zimbabwe. Its elections regularly are contrary to the organisation's Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. It consistently violates the charter and protocols by denying free expression and assembly, co-opting the judiciary, violating human rights and restricting democratic processes. The mere threat of expulsion might give Mugabe pause since he needs quiescent neighbours in order to maintain the fiction that Zimbabwe's troubles stem from the machinations of Western, former colonial powers.

D. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES

The EU and its member states have generally remained united behind a policy of pressing for advancements in democracy and human rights while maintaining targeted

¹⁶³ Crisis Group interviews, Pretoria, August 2006.

¹⁶⁴ "SADC says there is 'progress' in Zimbabwe", *Business Day*, 21 August 2006. The "progress" to which Mosisili referred in his post-summit press conference was allegedly economic. He said Zimbabwe was "strengthening, and the government has reversed its land seizure policy...The situation in that country is of concern. We have been engaged with the leadership of Zimbabwe on how best we can recover the economic viability of that country. (But) there has been progress". He added: "The Zimbabwe government is on record as inviting some of the previous white farmers to come back. They are reviewing the whole question of land acquisition. Indeed there is progress". Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, Pretoria, August 2006. "Mugabe has said he supports Mkapa to deal with the alleged 'bilateral dispute' with Britain over Zimbabwe's chaotic land reforms. Mugabe wants to speak to British Prime Minister Tony Blair about the issue", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 18 August 2006.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ "Mugabe pushes to meet Blair", *Zimbabwe Independent*, 26 May 2006. President Kikwete and President Festus Mogae of Botswana are believed to have levelled some of the sharpest criticism at Mugabe during the just-concluded Lesotho summit. Crisis Group interviews, Pretoria, August 2006.

¹⁶⁸ Crisis Group interview, senior Botswana diplomat, Harare, 12 June 2006.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

personal sanctions. However, there are varying degrees of commitment to this policy, and Mugabe has been courting some Scandinavian and newer Central European member states, offering vaguely-defined dialogue in an effort to split the EU and put pressure on the UK to soften its stance.¹⁷⁰ The tactic appears to play on the desire of some member states not to be associated too closely with what is perceived in much of the developing world as the more heavy-handed American and British diplomacy.¹⁷¹ There is little reason to believe, however, that EU diplomacy will fall for such a ploy.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer recently observed that “neither quiet nor loud diplomacy has worked to keep Mugabe from destroying his country”.¹⁷² Against that discouraging background, Washington will maintain its targeted sanctions, continue to tell Harare that relations cannot improve until major reforms are forthcoming and welcome almost any strong South African initiative (though it does not expect one). But it does not appear to envisage a larger role for itself. “The Zimbabwe issue is slipping”, said a U.S. diplomat.¹⁷³

U.S. policy, like that of other nations, is suffering from fatigue and a lack of creativity. It is not enough to call Zimbabwe an “outpost of tyranny”, as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has done.¹⁷⁴ There is a need to explore expansion of the targeted sanctions, at least in order to keep up a degree of economic pressure, and importantly to find ways to channel more concrete assistance to groups within Zimbabwe working for democratic reform. Above all, the U.S. needs to make Zimbabwe a genuine priority and cooperate with its friends to produce a more unified diplomatic front.

VI. CONCLUSION

This is the eighteenth report or briefing Crisis Group has written on Zimbabwe in slightly more than six years. They tell a depressingly consistent story of a potentially rich land sinking further into economic and political distress and in so doing bringing ever closer the prospect of a violent explosion whose shock waves would shake a Southern Africa region that has otherwise mostly demonstrated considerable stability and progress. A further thread of the reporting has been the inability, for a range of reasons, of outsiders to change the direction in which events are tending.

Two lessons are clear. The first is that movement back from the edge of the cliff, if it is to come, must start from within the country. If it does, others will be both able and more willing to pitch in and help. If Zimbabweans allow the fortunes of their land to remain the sole responsibility of the present ruling group, however, there is no reason to expect meaningful change in the tendencies that have characterised the past half-dozen years.

The second is that President Mugabe is the central obstacle to a more hopeful future. Mugabe is one of the giants of Africa and his country’s anti-colonial liberation but as put by a leading Harare businessman, who argued that even government ministers recognise economic improvement is improbable while he remains in control, “all acknowledge that our problems are one man”.¹⁷⁵ While there is an element of over-simplification in this – the whole Zimbabwe governing system needs cleaning up, and many of its manipulators need to have their powers reduced or removed – the core observation is valid.

“The people” may yet act in a purely spontaneous fashion if their anger, frustration and desperation increase but that would almost certainly be accompanied by much bloodshed and more suffering inside Zimbabwe and beyond its borders. It is incumbent upon those with standing – opposition political parties and civil society organisations – to come together and subordinate their differences in a common cause. Their tactics, this reports suggests, might best be those of a decentralised campaign of widespread non-violent demonstration for specific bread and butter issues. A tightly organised campaign directed toward confrontation at one or two especially sensitive geographical points such as downtown Harare, or on an overarching political issue such as a new constitution, would probably be both unachievable and more dangerous.

¹⁷⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Harare, June 2006.

¹⁷¹ Crisis Group interview, senior European diplomat, Harare, 2006.

¹⁷² Jim Fisher-Thompson, “States guided by partnership not paternalism in Africa, State’s Frazer outlines U.S. policy”, U.S. Department of State, 20 April 2006.

¹⁷³ Crisis Group interview, Pretoria, June 2006.

¹⁷⁴ “Rice names ‘outposts of tyranny’”, www.news.bbc.co.uk, 19 January 2005.

¹⁷⁵ Crisis Group interview, Harare, 13 June 2006.

If a critical mass of such demonstrations can be achieved – and the risk of serious consequences would be greatest for the first protestors – opposition leaders should then be prepared rapidly to address the Mugabe issue. No outsider should be so presumptuous as to prescribe to Zimbabwe's long-suffering citizens what to do about their president but if the goal is the earliest possible change with the greatest possibility of some cooperation from those within ZANU-PF who wish to retain a stake in their country's future, there could be advantage in exploring a deal.

A “retirement package” would likely need to include guarantees that he and his family could live honourably and comfortably, without fear of prosecution. But Mugabe in turn would need to give an ironclad commitment to give up his executive authority and leave office on or before the 2008 date on which his present term expires. Once that fundamental obstacle has been resolved, it will be much easier for ZANU-PF and the MDC to return to the constitutional talks they nearly completed in 2004¹⁷⁶ and to move on to a power-sharing arrangement and creation of the conditions necessary for free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections (the latter possibly moved forward from 2010), including repeal of “security” laws passed in recent years.

The international community, while it cannot compel or start a transition for Zimbabwe, has an essential role in facilitating it once a beginning has been made by the country's own citizens. A degree of coordination should be sought but different components would have different roles. South Africa, for example, is still best placed to offer mediation services that could be vital both to seal the retirement deal with Mugabe and to smooth inter-party talks as well as to forge a strong position within SADC and the wider African Union. The U.S. and the EU should give help to democratic elements and maintain their targeted sanctions so as to keep pressure on Mugabe to leave office and on ZANU-PF to negotiate seriously.

Pretoria/Brussels, 24 August 2006

¹⁷⁶ See Crisis Group Briefing, *Zimbabwe's Continuing Self-Destruction*, op. cit.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF ZIMBABWE

