

PERSPECTIVES

Political analysis and commentary from Southern Africa

Dear Reader

We are happy to present you with this second edition of *Perspectives: political analysis and commentary from Southern Africa*.

With the *Perspectives* publication, the Heinrich Boell Foundation intends to encourage experts from Southern Africa express their views on current political issues in the region. *Perspectives* will focus on South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe, the three partner countries of HBS in the Southern African region. In addition to country-specific developments, *Perspectives* shall address issues of interest to the entire SADC region.

Our first edition in February 2008 (available on www.boell.org.za) covered the dramatic political changes within the ruling parties of Namibia and South Africa. This second edition focuses on our third partner country: Zimbabwe.

Parliamentary and Presidential elections in Zimbabwe are scheduled for 29th March 2008. While some observers claim that they can already predict their outcome, the situation in Zimbabwe has recently become more complex.

There is now a third candidate, Simba Makoni, who announced last month that he was running for president. Many analysts argue that his candidacy can be seen as a sign of the increasing divisions within the ruling party ZANU-PF and that his entry into the race makes predicting the results of the elections more difficult.

In our first article, Prof Brian Raftopoulos looks at the background and the timing of Makoni's presidential bid and the (likely) reactions from ZANU-PF as well as from the opposition party MDC. Based on this analysis, he gives an outlook of the possible aftermath of the 2008 elections.

Our second contribution assesses one of the most

important (and sad) chapters in recent Zimbabwean history and its implications for politics in the country today: Shari Eppel analyses what led to the Matabeleland atrocities in the 1980s (also known as the 'Gukurahundi' era) and links these particular events to the current situation in Matabeleland in the run-up to the 2008 elections.

We hope that these two articles will make an interesting read and will widen your perspectives on politics in Zimbabwe.

Please send us your comments or suggestions on *Perspectives* (perspectives@boell.org.za).

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Biography

Brian Raftopoulos

Formerly a Professor of Development Studies at the University of Zimbabwe, Brian Raftopoulos is currently the Director of Research of the Solidarity Peace Trust, in Cape Town, as well as a Research Associate in the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town. He has published widely on Zimbabwe in the areas of labour history, nationalism, historiography, economic policy, and politics and is currently the co-editor of a forthcoming "History of Zimbabwe". While in Zimbabwe he was for several years a civic activist, being a member of the First Task Force of the NCA and the Chair of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition from 2001-2003. Brian Raftopoulos is also the Chair of the Board of the Zimbabwe Institute based in Cape Town.



The frog and the puppet

The Makoni moment and opposition politics in Zimbabwe.

By Brian Raftopoulos

Introduction.

It is a symptom of the diminished expectations and shrinking horizons in Zimbabwean politics that Simba Makoni's¹ entry into the 2008 Presidential race has sparked such a renewed energy into the country's body politic. With the country sinking further into the mire of an extended political and economic debacle, the prospect of yet another disastrous Mugabe electoral 'victory' appeared a desultory inevitability. Bolstered by the coercive network of party and state control over the broad arena of the country's politics, and supported by the monumental blunder of the continued disunity of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, Mugabe's over-extended stay in power appeared set to continue the ruling party's disastrous haste to "rush the country to the grave" to paraphrase the words of the great radical historian Isaac Deutscher.

¹ Simba Makoni was Zimbabwe's Minister of Finance and Economic Development under Robert Mugabe's from 2000 to 2002. His policies as finance minister, however, were not always in line with those of the ruling party ZANU-PF and with the views of President Mugabe (Makoni favored, for example, the devaluation of the Zimbabwe Dollar, which Mugabe opposed). He was finally replaced in August 2002 after a relatively short period in office. On 5 February 2008, Makoni announced at a press conference in the Zimbabwean capital Harare that he was planning to run for President.

Yet as is often the case with such seemingly overwhelmingly authoritarian regimes, the seepages in the roof of their legitimacy expand as the narrowness of their political project undermines the bloated claims of their nationalist assertions. The cracks in ZANU-PF² have been growing for several years and the voices of dissent, at first muted and barely audible, have become more voluble with the deepening crisis in the country. The party that for so long blamed external forces for the Zimbabwean malaise has had to contend with a growing internal critique of the

² The Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was formed as a Nationalist party in 1961 with Joshua Nkomo as President. At the time, Robert Mugabe became ZAPU's information and publicity secretary. The Rhodesian government banned ZAPU in 1962, which ultimately contributed to a guerrilla war against the government. The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was founded in 1963 – in concurrence to ZAPU – by Ndabaningi Sithole, Herbert Chitepo, Edgar Tekere, Leopold Takawira – and Robert Mugabe. From the beginning it had a more militant agenda. During the course of the liberation struggle ZAPU was backed by the former Soviet Union and ZANU by the Chinese. Both parties formed, however, the Patriotic Front (PF) in 1976 to overthrow the minority regime in Rhodesia. After independence in 1980 the alliance split again and Mugabe's ZANU defeated ZAPU in the general elections, with the latter retaining a stronghold in the two Matabeleland provinces. After several years of violent turbulence in the 1980s (see Shari Eppel's contribution in this edition) both parties talks in 1985 and in 1987 merged into ZANU-PF – which was de facto the decisive step towards a one party state under Robert Mugabe. ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo became one of Zimbabwe's two Vice-Presidents in 1987.

leadership and policies of the ZANU-PF itself. The litany of Mugabe's total displacement of the crisis on to the forces of imperialism has been confronted with the culpability of his own leadership in the downward spiral of the country's fortunes. The critique that the opposition and civic forces have been making for nearly a decade about the assault of ZANU-PF on the liberties of Zimbabweans, has finally found a voice, from within the long-standing factional struggles in the ruling party. Though the direction and depth of this voice in the structures of ZANU-PF remains unclear, the assertion of its presence in a party so unaccustomed to such defiance signals an important change in the dynamics of this party.

Makoni's Presidential Bid: Political Background.

The central fact to keep in mind about Simba Makoni's entry into the 2008 presidential race is that he is pursuing a "reform ZANU-PF" agenda, and moreover, he has from the beginning of his campaign been clear about this. In his speech announcing his intention to challenge Mugabe, he affirmed his commitment to ZANU-PF:

*Let me affirm here, my faith in, and loyalty to the Party. I would very much have wished to stand as its official candidate. Unfortunately, as we all know, that opportunity was denied to any other cadre who would have offered themselves to serve the Party and country.*³

Thus from the onset of his campaign it has been essential to present himself as a voice from within ZANU-PF seeking to return to what he claims is the true vision and values of the ruling party. Makoni's historical reference and the political culture he draws from is ZANU-PF, wrapped in his affirmation of a "deeper faith in, and higher loyalty to the whole nation of Zimbabwe." This in itself is a step forward in Zimbabwe politics, as it brings out into the open the longer term struggle that has been emerging in the ruling party over the succession question and the future of ZANU-PF after Mugabe.

That Makoni has chosen 2008 to contest Mugabe's leadership is the result of several factors. Firstly the continuing decline of the Zimbabwean economy⁴ poses a threat not only to the majority of Zimbabweans who have been pushed into deeper

levels poverty, but also to those who have benefitted from the patronage of the ruling party and need a more 'normal' political and economic environment in order ensure that their accumulated patronage is not negated by Zimbabwe's hyper-inflationary environment. The crisis has been created by a disastrous model of state led acquisition of economic assets outside of a sustainable growth strategy, led by an incompetent leadership, and in the context of isolation from western financiers and donors. In Makoni's words:

*President Mugabe has shown a great deal of resilience over the years, but the truth is that we know enough of his weaknesses and we have come to one simple conclusion; that he and those around him are incapable of mounting a credible strategy for a sustained recovery of this country.*⁵

Secondly the Makoni challenge has emerged in a party whose history, since the ascendancy of Mugabe to the leadership, has been marked by a series of violent struggles as Mugabe has cemented his place at the top. From the mid 1970's when Mugabe rose to power by marginalizing the young, radical ZIPA⁶ grouping, to the demolition of the rival liberation movement ZAPU during the Gukurahundi atrocities of the 1980's, Mugabe has marshaled the support of the military to consolidate his stay in power. When, as in 2004, various factions within the ruling party tried to legally oppose Mugabe at ZANU-PF's December conference of the year, Mugabe effectively deployed the party machinery against the "Tsholotsho"⁷ group, including the then influential and destructive Minister of Information, Jonathan Moyo⁸. Once again at the end of 2007 Mugabe manipulated the annual conference, with the support of a section of the war veterans, in order to clinch his nomination for the 2008 Presidential election. At various stages Mugabe has thus thwarted all attempts to challenge

5 Message to all Zimbabweans in South Africa from Simba Makoni President 2008.

6 ZANU's military wing, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the rival ZAPU's armed wing Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) had united in 1976 and formed the (albeit short-lived) Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA).

7 Tsholotsho District is a business center in the province Matabeleland-North, some 120km north-west of Bulawayo. Tsholotsho has seen mass-killings during "Gukurahundi" in the first half of the 1980s and is still a highly contested area in Zimbabwe politics. In the run-up to the 2004 December conference, several ZANU-PF heavyweights attended an unofficial meeting in Tsholotsho and – unsuccessfully - strategized around winning one of the two vice-presidential seats in order to position themselves or a post-Mugabe situation.

8 After the December 2004 incidents, ZANU-PF took the decision to reserve the Tsholotsho MP seat for a female candidate in a move that was regarded as a punishment for Jonathan Moyo. Moyo announced that he would campaign as an independent and was subsequently expelled from cabinet and ZANU-PF. He won the Tsholotsho District MP seat in March 2005 and is currently an independent MP.

3 Statement by Simba Makoni: Zimbabwe-Parliamentary and Presidential Elections. 5th February 2007.

4 Inflation rates have surpassed 150,000%, which is unprecedented in recent history. The value of the Zim \$ literally decreases by the day. In February 2008, the unofficial exchange rate jumped from Z\$ 5 million to US\$ 1 to Z\$ 15 million to US \$ 1 within three days. Estimates usually put unemployment and poverty levels at > 80%. Life expectancy is one of the lowest in the world at 36 (men) / 34 (women).

his Presidency from within ZANU-PF, and since 1980 actively encouraged the 'provincialisation' of the party leadership to ensure that no other leader of ZANU-PF emerged as a national candidate. As a result of a combination of political patronage through the control of the state and the threat of coercion, Mugabe has maintained an iron grip on the ruling party.

The emergence of Simba Makoni represents a significant public challenge from within ZANU-PF, in a bid that appears to have strong support from key leaders within the ruling party. In addition a statement by one of Makoni's backers, former senior army officer, Retired Major Kudzai Mbudzi, indicates that there may also be significant support for Makoni within the military and intelligence sectors. In a warning to those in ZANU-PF who may be intent on inflicting violence or intimidation on the Makoni challenge Mbudzi cautioned:

*We expect overzealous reaction from the intelligence. They must be warned that we are also part of the intelligence and we won't tolerate that. We warn them that they would be dealt with accordingly in their individual capacity.*⁹

Thus for the first time since taking power with the help and support of the military, Mugabe is facing a presidential challenge from a candidate who may also have strong support in this key sector.

Thirdly Makoni has benefitted from the division that took place in the MDC in 2005,¹⁰ and the failed bid to re-unite the two formations in 2007. In the absence of a united electoral front from the MDC, and the increasing ethnic dimensions of the split, Makoni was presented with an opportunity to ride on the wave of both, disaffection with the ruling party, and despair over a divided opposition. It was therefore significant that Makoni announced his Presidential nomination a few days after news of the failed attempt to re-unite the MDC. Thereafter the failure of the MDC to unite the perceived Shona and

Ndebele¹¹ sections of the two formations, and the continued refusal to deal with the organizational and accountability issues that gave rise to the 2005 split, threw the smaller Matabeleland based Mutambara formation into the arms of the Makoni formation. The latter announced its support for Makoni's Presidential campaign, while continuing to field their own parliamentary challenge. In 2007 Mutambara had sent out the following challenge to disaffected members of ZANU-PF:

*If you cannot stand up for your beliefs or . . . do not want to sacrifice your position at the feeding trough or because it will endanger your political ambitions, then you are nothing but a coward. The integrity and true character of a person is judged by where they stand during invidious moments of crisis.*¹²

With Makoni's 'coming out' and the rejection by the Tsvangirai MDC of an electoral coalition with his former comrades, the Mutambara formation sought another political arrangement to utilize their regional support in Matabeleland in an effort to maintain political relevance at national level.¹³ Makoni has responded to this support with what can best be described as a distant acknowledgement, explaining his ambivalence as follows:

*There are a large number of people in ZANU-PF who share my proper vision. I don't want to alienate those people by forming a coalition with an entity.*¹⁴

While there exists such a tentative arrangement with one formation of the MDC, the larger Tsvangirai formation has thus far rejected any suggestion of a working arrangement with Makoni. Explaining the reasons for his position Morgan Tsvangirai stated:

*Dr. Makoni has been part of the establishment in ZANU-PF. So he is equally accountable. I believe that what Dr. Makoni is trying is to reform an institutionalized dictatorship. That is not our agenda. This party [the MDC] seeks to transform the political culture of this country, so there is a serious difference between reforming dictatorship and actually transforming it.*¹⁵

The Makoni campaign has put little effort

9 Toby Chimhashu, 'Mbudzi warns CIO against making Makoni target.' Newzimbabwe.com 07/02/08.

10 The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed in 1999 as an opposition party under the leadership of popular trade unionist Moran Tsvangirai. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, the MDC won 57 of the 120 seats that were contested and for the first time since 1980 constituted a relevant political opposition to ZANU-PF. The party split, however, after the Zimbabwe Senate elections in 2005. For a discussion of the reasons for the split see Brian Raftopoulos, "Reflections on the Opposition in Zimbabwe: The Politics of the Movement for Democratic Change" in Ranka Primorac and Stephen Chan (Eds), *Zimbabwe in Crisis: The International Response and the Space of Silence*. Routledge, London, and New York, 2007.

11 The overwhelming majority of Zimbabweans define themselves as Shona or Ndebele (also known as Matabele, a name originally given to them by the British colonialists). More than two thirds of Zimbabweans speak Shona as their first language, compared to 12-14% Ndebele (mostly concentrated in Matabeleland). Some analysts have argued that the split in the MDC has – among other reasons – an ethnic dimension with the Mutambara fraction being predominantly Ndebele-oriented and the Tsvangirai fraction Shona-oriented.

12 Arthur Mutambara, "Why a Reformed ZANU-PF is not the answer to the Zimbabwean Crisis." Speech in Harare, 2007.

13 See Shari Eppel's analysis in this collection.

14 "Makoni rules out coalition with MDC." *ZimOnline.co.za* 26/02/08.

15 Raymond Mataingire, "Tsvangirai scoffs at Makoni alliance." *www.thezimbabweetimes.com* 11/02/08.

into cultivating any linkages with civil society organisations, appearing to regard the latter as a support base for Tsvangirai and therefore a 'lost cause.'

Fourthly the failure of the South African-led SADC¹⁶ mediation begun in 2007 in a bid to find a way through the political impasse in Zimbabwe, and providing further evidence of Mugabe's intransigence, may have triggered further discontent in ZANU-PF, and spurred Makoni and his supporters into action. At its inception the objectives of the mediation were that ZANU-PF and the MDC should:

1. Endorse the decision to hold parliamentary and Presidential elections in 2008.
2. Agree on steps to be taken to ensure that everybody concerned accepts the results of the elections as being truly representative of the will of the people.
3. Agree on the measures that all political parties and other social forces should implement and respect in order to create the necessary climate to facilitate such acceptance.

After several months of negotiations between ZANU-PF and the MDC, and apparent agreement on several areas of the dispute, the mediation fell apart in February 2008 on three issues: the date of the election; the timeframe for the implementation of the agreed reforms; and the process and manner of the making of a new constitution. While President Mbeki and SADC claimed that ZANU-PF and the MDC had reached agreement on all substantive matters relating to the political situation in Zimbabwe, and that what remained was to "conclude the outstanding 'procedural' matter of the enactment of the agreed Draft Constitution,"¹⁷ the MDC denounced this position. In a statement issued on 21st February 2008 the joint MDC position noted that the above issues that had derailed the mediation "were not matters of procedure but of substance and went to the heart of the matter." Moreover the MDC stated that Mugabe's unilateral proclamation of the date of the election on 25th January 2008, when this matter was still under discussion, "amounted to a repudiation of the SADC

dialogue by ZANU-PF."¹⁸

For the MDC it was important to go through the SADC process, to show its commitment to African mediation attempts, to once again demonstrate the SADC's limitation with regard to the Zimbabwe crisis, and to expose the continuing intransigence of Robert Mugabe. If the MDC had withdrawn too early it would very easily have been accused of not taking 'African solutions to African problems' seriously. For Makoni, who probably understood the dynamics of the SADC process better than the MDC given his tenure as Executive Secretary of SADC from 1984-1997, awaiting the outcome of the mediation was also important before declaring his opposition to Mugabe. He too had to be seen to give the SADC process a chance. In the near future it may appear that the failed SADC mediation resembled the *Détente* period in Southern Africa in the 1970's in which South Africa, Zambia, the liberation movements, and the Smith¹⁹ regime with pressure from the governments of the UK and the US, entered into discussions to try to deal with the Rhodesian problem. While the *Détente* exercise failed to end the Rhodesian crisis, it triggered power struggles within the liberation movement and became a prelude for the Lancaster House discussions at the end of the 1970's.

Given these four factors it can be argued that Makoni's appearance on the Presidential stage is a result of the confluence of several factors: The continuing struggles within ZANU-PF between factions that have all benefitted from the ruling party's patronage; the rampant decline of the economy; the divisions in the opposition; and the failure of the SADC mediation. Moreover it is clear that Makoni has also benefitted from nearly a decade of opposition and civic mobilization against Mugabe's authoritarian regime, by drawing on the both the hopes and fatigue of those struggles to propel his own presidential ambitions.

The 2008 Election and its Possible Aftermath.

Under the current conditions there is little chance

¹⁶ Southern African Development Community. The 15 member states are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, Mauritius, DR Congo, Madagascar, and the Seychelles. In March 2007, after a violent crackdown on opposition leaders, SADC leaders mandated South African President Thabo Mbeki to lead mediation process between ZANU-PF and the MDC to resolve Zimbabwe's political and economic crisis.

¹⁷ Media Statement on the Extraordinary Meeting of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security, (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 31st January, 1st February 2008.)

¹⁸ MDC Press Statement on the Failed SADC Dialogue on the Crisis in Zimbabwe, 21st February 2008.

¹⁹ Ian Douglas Smith (1919-2007), became Prime Minister of the British Colony Southern Rhodesia in 1964 and unilaterally declared independence in 1965. He was subsequently Prime Minister of Rhodesia from 1965 and maintained a white minority regime until a negotiated settlement end of the 1970s. This settlement was signed on 21 December 1979 and became known as the 'Lancaster House Agreement'. After ZANU-PF had won the 1980 general election, Smith became the official leader of the opposition (as the head of the whites-only 'Republican Front'). He finally retired from politics after the 1985 general elections and lived in Harare until shortly before his death in 2007.

of the 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections achieving anything close to free and fair conditions. All the areas in the SADC mediation which dealt with the political conditions required to deliver a generally acceptable election were to a large extent repudiated by the Mugabe regime, and the result is likely to be yet another broadly contested result. The Mugabe media campaign has already rolled into operation and both Makoni and Tsvangirai have been predictably demonized. While the well-known label of “puppet” has been attached to Tsvangirai, Makoni has achieved a more amphibian distinction. Mugabe has likened him to a “frog trying to inflate itself up to the size of an ox. It will burst.”²⁰ Moreover the state controlled newspaper “The Herald” called Makoni’s intervention “an alien construct which is worse than all the MDC’s put together [...] This whore political formation is intended to oust this one man for the edification of the bitter British.”²¹

Under the present electoral conditions it is still unclear how Simba Makoni intends to carry out his electoral campaign, given that he is standing as an independent, without his own formal party structures. Makoni’s message on this issue is that he has strong support at all levels within ZANU-PF and that this will become apparent in the vote for the Presidency. Thus far, apart from the support of Dumiso Dabengwa and Edgar Tekere, both veterans of the liberation struggles but with little current electoral support in their respective home areas of Matabeleland and Manicaland, Makoni is yet to receive the open support of any of the ruling party heavy weights. While it is rumoured that such support is being quietly given to Makoni, this truth of this assertion has yet to become apparent. Given Mugabe’s ruthlessness in dealing with opposition both inside and outside of his party, it is unlikely that such support will become public before the election. For if this were to happen too early before election day there is every chance that Mugabe would postpone the election to deal with such forces.

Makoni must therefore navigate a very difficult election strategy combining secret mobilization within ZANU-PF with an open appeal to the people of Zimbabwe. Through such an approach he will need to break Mugabe’s hold on the rural vote, make some headway in the urban areas against Tsvangirai’s MDC, and hope that Mutambara’s MDC can deliver the bulk of the vote in Matabeleland. Thus far Makoni’s

political and economic reconstruction policies to deliver such a change have been vague and general, but hinting at a move to what David Moore has called greater “market civilization”. This would align him to the macro-economic stabilization programmes of both MDC formations.

For both MDC formations this election is also likely to have significant implications. Firstly it could settle the issue of which side has the loyalty of the voters in Matabeleland, a key bone of contention in the unity discussion between the two. Should the Mutambara formation fail to deliver on this it will both, cease to be of use to the Makoni campaign, and signal the end of its political life. On the other hand if it succeeds in Matabeleland and Makoni is able to break Mugabe’s rural stronghold in other areas, the MDC Mutambara will have some leverage in a post-election political reconstruction.

Morgan Tsvangirai’s MDC must also maintain its foothold in the urban areas, as well as win a substantial number of seats in Matabeleland in order to remain in serious contention if none of the three presidential candidates gets 51% of the vote. Under these circumstances, should he come in third place in the election race the support of his party would be vital to a Makoni victory, thus putting him in a more favourable position in the event of the formation of a Government of National Unity. It is highly unlikely that Tsvangirai could win the election outright given the existing electoral conditions. Tsvangirai must also face the prospect of a leadership challenge in the face of another election loss, however much he has been denied his rightful victories in the past. Thus this election could draw a line under the political career of Morgan Tsvangirai, and signal the beginning of a recasting of the opposition as a whole, with the question of MDC unity returning to the agenda, as a key element in the campaign for MDC leadership by one of the contenders.

Mugabe’s campaign is likely to be as controversial as ever, with the prospect of violence increasing if Mugabe feels he is losing his grip on the rural vote. It is highly improbable that Mugabe will allow any other candidate to win this election, notwithstanding Makoni’s threat to split ZANU-PF. However, even if Mugabe wins, ZANU-PF will have been drastically changed and deeply split by the succession battle. Moreover a Mugabe victory will only produce another contested election in the country, signaling a deepening of the political and economic crisis and an intensification of Western sanctions against

20 Chris Chinaka “Mugabe belittles opponents as frog and puppet.” Newzimbabwe.com 25/02/08.

21 Nathaniel Manheru, Herald 12th January 2008.

the Mugabe regime. This could drive the factional struggles deeper into ZANU-PF structures, and most dangerous of all, perhaps tempt sections of the military to respond more overtly to the crisis in the ruling party, and the country. The Commander of Zimbabwe's Defence Forces Constantine Chiwenga has already hinted at such an intervention. On the 9th March 2008 Chiwenga declared:

Elections are coming and the army will not support or salute sell-outs and agents of the West before during and after the presidential election. We will not support anyone other than President Mugabe who has sacrificed a lot for the country. ²²

This position was reiterated by the Head of the

²² Fikile Mapata, "Army threatens coup if Mugabe loses." Newzimbabwe.com 11/03/08.

Prison Service, Retired Major Paradzai Zimondi, who threatened to "go back to defend my land" if Mugabe loses.²³ These threats are a repetition of those made by the head of the army in 2002 General Vitalis Zvinvashe ahead of that year's Presidential election. These are ominous signs and such a military intervention would be the beginning of an even darker period in Zimbabwe's history, one that we should all hope can be avoided.

Brian Raftopoulos.

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²³ Ibid.

Biography

Shari Eppel

Shari Eppel was born in Zimbabwe and lives in Bulawayo, Matabeleland. She is a psychologist, and has worked with torture survivors for twelve years. In 1995, Shari was commissioned by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Legal Resources Foundation to research and oversee the writing of a book about the massacres that took place in Matabeleland under Robert Mugabe during the 1980s – the Gukurahundi massacres. Called “Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace”, this remains the most substantive history of this time, and has recently, ten years after its initial publication, been re-released in South Africa, Britain and USA under the title “Gukurahundi”. In 2000, Shari was the inaugural winner of the USA-based Barbara Chester Award for clinicians in the field of torture survivors. She continues to document and publish information on the abuses, both historical and current, in Zimbabwe.



Matabeleland:

its struggle for national legitimacy, and the relevance of this in the 2008 election.

By Shari Eppel

Matabeleland consists of three western provinces of Zimbabwe, namely Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and Bulawayo. This region, stereotyped as marginalised and underdeveloped, and also as a hotbed of political opposition both historically and currently, is once more poised to play a strategic role in the forthcoming elections.

After Independence in 1980, Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands were subjected to a brutal and hidden period of oppression, in which an estimated 20,000 civilians were massacred and tens of thousands more were tortured by the Fifth (5) Brigade, which answered ultimately to Robert Mugabe. Hundreds were forcibly disappeared and thousands lost homes and livestock, as Mugabe relentlessly moved to effectively establish a one party state in Zimbabwe.

The 1980s violence was without any doubt far in excess of anything that happened in affected regions

during the 1970s war of liberation.¹ While the “dissidents” of Matabeleland can be blamed for some of the atrocities, all evidence points to government forces, in particular 5 Brigade and the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) being responsible for over 90% of violations.² It is fair to say that few people in Matabeleland claim NOT to have been affected by these events. Most people in the region – more than 70% – seem able to justify their claim to be primary

¹ If we assume 30,000 dead nationally over a decade of struggle in the 1970s, and consider an estimated 20,000 dead in an area representing 20% of the national population, in the space of 30 months, comparative intensity is clear.

² Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and Legal Resources Foundation (LRF); *Breaking the silence, building true peace: a report on the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988*; Harare, 1997: out of over 7,000 violations reported to the compilers of this report, fewer than 200 were attributed to dissidents. See also Alexander J, McGregor J, Ranger, T; *Violence and Memory: a hundred years in the dark forests of Matabeleland*; Weaver Press, Harare, 2000. Both write detailed histories of this era based on eye witness accounts.

victims of 5 Brigade atrocities.³ The fact that events remain largely unacknowledged to date at the official level, combined with continued perceived regional under-development, has had a lasting impact in terms of political outlook.

This paper will look in more detail at what led to this “Gukurahundi”⁴ era and then comment on the political context of Matabeleland leading into the current election.

Ethnography and Geography

The population of Matabeleland North, South and Bulawayo constitutes between 15% and 20% of Zimbabwe’s total, and the region is considered to be culturally Ndebele.⁵ While almost everyone in Matabeleland has become consolidated into an Ndebele identity, this has been a complex process ethnically, linguistically and culturally.⁶

In population terms, 80% of Zimbabwe is Shona-speaking. The Midlands Province of central Zimbabwe is linguistically and culturally both Ndebele and Shona, while the remaining six provinces are Shona-speaking. The Shona are not one homogeneous group or culture, just as the Ndebele are not. However, no political party can consider itself truly national unless it can claim legitimate, elected representation in the fiercely independent region of Matabeleland.

Matabeleland is generally less hospitable to human habitation than much of Zimbabwe. Rainfall is lower than in Mashonaland, and the land is less fertile. Water is scarce, and malaria is endemic throughout almost the entire of Matabeleland. However, the region has rich mineral deposits, including coal, gold, methane gas, and limestone.

3 Extensive random surveys carried out by Amani Trust Matabeleland during the 1990s found that 77% of adults in Matabeleland North, and 75% of adults in Matabeleland South had been personally affected by Gukurahundi; Amani Trust, “Preliminary results of Survivors of Violence Survey”, internal paper, November 1998.

4 *Gukurahundi* is a Shona word meaning: “the first rain of spring that washes away from the fields the chaff left over from the last harvest”. The Ndebele were left in no doubt that they were the rubbish to be swept away by 5 Brigade.

5 The Ndebele are descended from the Nguni tribal groups that predominate in South Africa; the Zulu and Xhosa are both Nguni tribal groups. The Ndebele migrated north from what is now KwaZulu Natal in the mid 1800s. Ndebele is very similar to Zulu, and Ndebele is one of South Africa’s eleven official languages.

6 While Ndebele identity has been incorporative of other identities, there are limits to this process, and linguistic minorities have also mobilized in peripheral districts against Ndebele dominance. However, what unites Matabeleland is a shared history: allegiance to Zapu cut across tribal tensions, and so has a shared history of post independence persecution. Alexander et al, op cit: see their chapter “Life in the dark forests” for an excellent overview of early settlement of Matabeleland North. The Rozwi state in the north pre-existed the arrival and conquest of first the Swazis and then the Ndebeles in the 1800s. By the early 1900s, there was fluid movement and co-existence of small groupings of Lozwi, Nyai, Tonga and Shangwe, with the Ndebeles arriving in noticeable numbers in Matabeleland north from the early to mid twentieth century onwards.

Vast reserves of hardwood timber and wildlife lie in the region. Extensive cattle ranches were established in colonial times, but no commercial crops are able to grow here on any scale. Peasant farmers consider their wealth in their livestock, and in most seasons rural families do not grow enough maize to feed themselves. Matabeleland South in particular is reliant year after year on maize from outside their region. This is significant in a nation where the ruling party has a long established pattern of politically manipulating access to maize for its own political benefit.⁷

Political history: 1950s to 1980

During the 1950s, the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 with its forced resettlement of the Ndebele into infertile regions, and subsequently the Land Husbandry Act, which resulted in forced de-stocking, proved fertile ground for the rise of nationalism in Matabeleland – as elsewhere in Zimbabwe.

In 1957, the nationwide African National Congress (ANC) was formed with Joshua Nkomo, an Ndebele as its leader. The ANC was banned by the colonial government in 1959. In 1960, the National Democratic Party formed, also under the national leadership of Joshua Nkomo, and this began to have a nationwide reach, beyond urban areas, including into rural Matabeleland, helping to consolidate a nationalist perspective that transcended the various Ndebele and Shona group identities.⁸ By 1961, the NDP was banned – only to resurface months later as the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU). Once more, this nationwide party was led by Joshua Nkomo, supported by a predominantly Shona executive.

However, by 1963 rifts established themselves within ZAPU, leading to a second nationalist party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), under the leadership of Ndabaningi Sithole. The splits were caused partly by differences in policy and by personal differences between leadership, but increasingly over time, support for the two parties became regionally defined. Both parties considered themselves national in focus; neither ZANU nor ZAPU were tribalist by policy, but by the 1970s there was a strong association of ZAPU with Ndebele

7 Political abuse of food by ZANU PF in fact dates back to 1984, when a strictly enforced food curfew brought the Matabeleland South population of around 400,000 to the brink of starvation, during the “gukurahundi” era. Political abuse of food therefore resonates in a particular way in Matabeleland, being linked as it is to the massacres of the 1980s.

8 Alexander et al, *ibid*, pp 95 ff.

speakers and of ZANU with Shona speakers.⁹

The Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), armed wing of ZAPU, prided itself on superior military training and intelligence networks. ZIPRA was Russian trained and by the end of the war, had operational tank and air units. Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), armed wing of ZANU, was Chinese trained. During the 1970s, fierce fighting increasingly broke out between the two guerrilla armies, in training camps in Tanzania, as well as within Zimbabwe, and left a legacy of distrust and polarisation between the two.

In terms of the peace accord signed between Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe and Ian Smith in 1979, the two guerrilla armies of ZANLA and ZIPRA were to be integrated into one army together with the old Rhodesian Defence Force, to make up the Zimbabwe National Army. The long standing animosities between ZIPRA and ZANLA made this extremely problematic. As army integration began, ZIPRAs felt persecuted within the army. There were reports of forced disappearances from ZIPRA ranks, and disgruntlement over their lack of representation at senior level.

ZANU overwhelmingly won the election of April 1980 – although significantly, all 15 seats in Matabeleland were won by ZAPU, who also won 5 seats in other areas¹⁰. Tensions rose steadily between ZANU and ZAPU during 1980, culminating in a major outbreak of violence in November in Bulawayo. In February 1981 there was further ZIPRA – ZANLA violence in Matabeleland and the Midlands, and more than 300 lost their lives. In 1982, arms caches were “found” in Matabeleland, leading to the charging of five top ZAPU officials with treason, including Dumiso Dabengwa, and the dismissal of all ZAPU cabinet ministers, including Joshua Nkomo and Joseph Msika (the current vice president of Zimbabwe).¹¹ The treason charges were dismissed as baseless by the courts. Throughout these growing indications of a comprehensive clampdown on ZAPU, hundreds of ZIPRAs defected back to the bush. It was disillusionment and fear that led to these ZIPRAs choosing a life on the run, rather than any strong political motivation. Some of these ex-ZIPRAs

were to become, in the course of 1982-3, a series of disparate bandit groupings with no over reaching leadership – and were to provide Mugabe with the perfect pretext to launch a massive operation against the “dissidents” of Matabeleland.¹²

1980-1987: “Gukurahundi”

While the massacres of the 1980s have been remembered by many of its victims as one of being victimised for being “Ndebele”, the motivation for the repression was more politically than ethnically driven. While 5 Brigade itself, in its rhetoric and actions, conflated being a “ZAPU supporter” with being “Ndebele” with being a “dissident”, it appears that the intention behind the onslaught was a perceived need to crush ZAPU as a viable political entity, and to create a *de facto* one party state. However, the need to suppress the ZAPU-supporting, Matabeleland region was obviously a long standing one for Robert Mugabe. In October 1980, less than six months after assuming power, Mugabe entered into an agreement with the North Koreans to train a praetorian guard that would answer to him personally – this became the notorious 5 Brigade, given the name of “Gukurahundi” by Mugabe himself. In October 1980 there was no possible justification for such a squad to exist: this was prior to the first Entumbane uprising, for example, and was at a time when ZAPU and ZANU were sitting together in Cabinet.

The 5,000-strong 5 Brigade was extraneous to the rest of the army, and was trained by the North Koreans in peculiar contrast to the rest of the army, which was trained and integrated by the British.

5 Brigade was unleashed in Matabeleland North in January 1983, with devastating results. Within weeks, thousands of civilians were massacred in rural villages.

5 Brigade was easily identifiable, as they wore red berets, spoke Shona, and drove around in unique Chinese vehicles. They sang revolutionary songs as they travelled and their movement was marked by screaming, gunshots and burning homesteads – this was not the behaviour of an army brigade intent on hunting down small groups of elusive dissidents. This was a brigade with a mandate to terrorise and murder civilians. It was other units from the main body of the

9 CCJP and LRF, op cit: much of the information following is summarised from their account.

10 There were 100 elected seats nationally in 1980.

11 CCJP and LRF, op cit. Arms caches had in fact been found all over Zimbabwe, including in ZANLA areas, as nervous guerrillas stashed arms, and an ad-hoc committee to deal with the *known existence* of these arms had been set up. But ZANU had obviously decided to use the arms caches as the “point of no return” in the growing crisis.

12 The government's own figures for “dissident” numbers in 1984 were 400: see CCJP and LRF, *ibid*. Dissidents themselves admitted they were ultimately leaderless and were not taking instructions from any senior ZAPU official. In their own words – “Apart from defending ourselves, there was very little we wanted to achieve.” Cited in CCJP and LRF, p 34, *ibid*. also see Alexander et al, op cit, for an extensive discussion of events in the 1980s from the point of view of the dissidents themselves, as well as from those civilians affected by events.

army – namely 4 Brigade, 6 Brigade, the paratroopers and the Police Support Unit – that carried out a quite separate campaign against the approximately 400 highly dispersed bandits that came to be called dissidents.¹³

5 Brigade's modus operandi changed over time, becoming more clandestine as their atrocities began to draw intense criticism from the Catholic church in particular.¹⁴ They moved from a campaign in 1983 of well witnessed, epidemic violence in the community setting, to mass forced translocations to large detention centres in 1984, to a more clandestine policy of forced disappearances in 1985, ahead of the elections. Thousands were murdered in 1983 and 1984: in 1985, hundreds of key community leaders were called to their doors in the middle of the night, taken away in vehicles without number plates and have never been seen again.

The persecution of civilians perceived to support ZAPU was happening in the context of an onslaught against senior ZAPU leadership. Joshua Nkomo narrowly escaped assassination and had to flee to Botswana, while other leadership were detained for years without trial.¹⁵ Throughout this time, the new ZANU government made use of the repressive legislation inherited from the colonial regime, and of the "resilient and equally military oriented structures left by the retreating settler state".¹⁶ ZANU replaced colonial authoritarianism with a nationalist authoritarianism. However, in areas outside of Matabeleland, this nationalism manifested differently – other parts of the country saw the development of roads, agricultural markets, schools, clinics, a vast land redistribution exercise, and even national pride! The almost total government control of movement and of the media, meant that people in other parts of the country, who were harvesting the fruits of liberation, did not understand the scale or truth of what was happening in Matabeleland.

The Unity Accord

In spite of three years of unrelenting atrocities against them, in 1985 Matabeleland yet again voted

overwhelmingly for ZAPU, which once more won all seats in the region. However, ZAPU was in a very weakened position, with many leaders in detention without trial and others facing yet another treason case. Violent rhetoric and torture continued. The 1980s violence was eventually brought to a close with the signing of the Unity Accord in December 1987, which effectively led to the absorption of ZAPU into ZANU and the de facto creation of a one party state. Matabeleland received no apology, no compensation, no regional development – and a blanket amnesty in April 1988 protected primarily 5 Brigade from prosecution.¹⁷ In return for signing, ZAPU was guaranteed little other than that one of the Vice Presidents of Zimbabwe would henceforth be from ZAPU ranks.

Matabeleland: continuing the struggle for national legitimacy

The struggle for people in Matabeleland to be incorporated into the nation in a manner that allows them a legitimate voice in government and legitimate recognition for the historical role they played in fighting for freedom in the 1970s, would be considered by many to remain unfulfilled. "The brutal campaign of violence directed against Matabeleland in the 1980s powerfully confirmed its exclusion from the nation."¹⁸ At the level of national memory, the role played by ZAPU and ZIPRA remains belittled or ignored. Most written histories and school curriculae continue to downplay or denigrate ZAPU. Those who fought in the ZAPU campaign are far less likely to be declared National Heroes and to be buried at the National Heroes Acre.¹⁹ "It remains difficult and dangerous for people to seek to erect monuments to those slain in the 1970s, let alone those who died at the hands of the state in the 1980s".²⁰ The Unity Accord of 1987 is seen by many in the region to represent the political emasculation of Matabeleland; in a clear rejection of this Accord by the people of Matabeleland, most of those political leaders involved in the signing or implementation of it, have proved incapable in recent years of winning positions in

13 CCJP and LRF, op cit.

14 The following patterns are clear from hundreds of interviews by the current author since the 1990s, as well as from existing written accounts. See CCJP/ LRF and Alexander et al for very detailed accounts of 5 Brigade activities.

15 Todd, Judith, *Through the Darkness*, Zebra Press, Johannesburg, 2007 vividly captures the impact of these years on senior ZAPU leadership.

16 Ndlovu-Gatseni, S.J: "Putting people first –from regime security to human security: a quest for social peace in Zimbabwe, 1980-2002", in Alfred G Nhema, *The Quest for peace in Africa*; International Books with OSSREA, Addis Ababa, 2004.

17 Atrocities by CIO and other state forces were also pardoned. Dissidents also benefited from the amnesty – and 122 surrendered. However, 5 Brigade, as the most consistent violators, benefited the most from the amnesty.

18 Alexander et al, op cit, page 1.

19 Lookout Masuku, a very senior ZIPRA commander was only very belatedly declared a national hero in the late 1980s – too late to be buried at Heroes Acre. To date this pattern continues – in the closing months of 2007, Isaac Nyathi and Masala Sibanda, both senior ex ZIPRAs, were only reluctantly declared National Heroes after a regional outcry – again too late to be buried in the National Heroes Acre.

20 Alexander et al, page 8.

parliament or the senate, in Bulawayo in particular.²¹

The MDC

The formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999, which incorporated at its highest level many longstanding and highly respected Ndebele activists, including trade unionists, civic leaders and several senior ex ZIPRAs, seemed to be the realisation of this aspiration for a Matabeleland voice at a national level. Indeed, in the early years, the MDC provided a home for an inclusive, national, democratic discourse that seemed able to challenge the increasingly repressive and stale ZANU hegemony. Matabeleland immediately established itself as a major force within the MDC, winning 21 out of 23 parliamentary seats in their three provinces in 2000. To date, Matabeleland North and South have proven to be the only *rural* districts in Zimbabwe able to deliver MDC parliamentary seats – as well as maintaining 100% of all Bulawayo seats. Matabeleland representation within the MDC in 2000 was thus 37% of all their parliamentary seats (21 out of 57) – more or less double the 15-20% which Matabeleland represents in national population figures.²²

However, after years of intense state oppression, in 2005 the MDC finally fractured into two, with most of the more credible Ndebele leadership thereafter in one faction. This split, which crystallised around the issue of whether or not to participate in the Senatorial election of 2005, was driven by a lack of good leadership and ideological unity.²³ The MDC had, since 2001, conducted four internal commissions of inquiry into intra party violence and poor discipline, which had become increasingly ethnic in its manifestation. The Commission of Inquiry into internal violence conducted in November 2004, found that there was “a strong anti-Ndebele sentiment that has been propagated, orchestrated and instilled into the innocent party members’ minds by a senior party leader under the guise of sheer hatred for the

21 Dumiso Dabengwa, for example, a senior commander in ZIPRA, has stood on a ZANU PF ticket and been trounced in two parliamentary and one senatorial election since 2000. Joseph Msika, who is the Ndebele vice President needed in terms of the Unity Accord, had to be appointed to parliament by Mugabe; John Nkomo, another senior ex-ZAPU leader, has also had to be appointed to parliament, as he is unable to contest in the polls in Matabeleland and win.

22 In the 2005 election, with a national voter turnout that was considerably lower and in a climate that was far from free and fair, MDC fared less well, winning only 41 parliamentary seats. However, Matabeleland maintained its representation of 40% of these seats, winning 16.

23 Raftopoulos, Brian: “Reflections on opposition politics in Zimbabwe: the politics of the Movement for Democratic Change”, in *Reflections on Democratic Politics in Zimbabwe*, Eds Raftopoulos and Alexander, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Cape Town, 2006. This essay examines the issues leading to the split in great detail.

Secretary General at a personal level”.²⁴ The causes for the split were complex, and did not result in a simple tribal or geographical division: the so-called pro Senate (Mutambara) faction remained with seven MPs from Mashonaland and the Midlands and thirteen from Matabeleland, while three Matabeleland MPs and eighteen from elsewhere remained in the so called anti Senate (Tsvangirai) faction.²⁵

However, it is undeniable that the MDC split has led once more to the perceived marginalisation and regionalisation of Matabeleland’s political voice. To many, it has felt like history repeating itself, particularly since the contemptuous withdrawal of the Tsvangirai faction from what seemed a certain coalition deal in early February this year. Just as ZANU – admittedly with incomparable violence – aimed to regionalise and crush ZAPU and then incorporate its weakened leadership into a coalition that effectively meant its absorption, Tsvangirai hopes to do the same to MDC Mutambara. It will be interesting to see what representation each MDC faction succeeds in winning in Matabeleland, considering Matabeleland’s history of resistance to political bullying. In the face of the huge support that Tsvangirai has within Harare, it is unlikely that the five MPs that the Mutambara faction have there will retain their seats, although one or two might.²⁶ This will leave the Mutambara faction represented almost entirely, or entirely, in Matabeleland, even though the leaders of this faction are national and not regional in outlook, have structures with some, if limited, support on the ground nationwide, and aspire to play a national role.²⁷

Matabeleland 2007-8: the current election

In the wake of the MDC split, there was a perceptible revival in Matabeleland of separatist and federalist voices and groups. This is perhaps best typified by the application of *Welshman Hadane Mabhena and Others* to the British Government in May 2007, for Britain to revoke its conquest of the Kingdom of Matabeleland in 1894, so that Matabeleland can be free after “114

24 MDC; Commission of Inquiry into Party Headquarters (Draft Report), December 2004, p 31.

25 While the two factions were originally referred to as pro and anti senate, this designation has had to fall away now that the “anti senate” faction is contesting the 2007 senate elections! The two factions are now known by their leaders’ names: Tsvangirai and Mutambara.

26 There is a greater chance that Tsvangirai will lose ground to Makoni than to Mutambara in Harare.

27 The Mutambara MDC has nominated candidates in around 60% of contested positions nationwide.

continuous years of oppression”!²⁸ This application is accompanied by the “Resolution of Rededication to the Restoration of the Kingdom of Matabeleland”. Such an extraordinary application from such a highly respected veteran politician as Mabhena would not have been likely in the time between 2000 and 2005.²⁹ There have long been separatist and federalist tendencies in Matabeleland, from the 1920s claims of Ndebele royals, to Kayisa Ndiweni’s federal party of late 1970s, to the 1990s re-emergence of ZAPU. Cultural groups such as Imbovane with an explicitly tribalist and separatist agenda, were also visible during the 1990s, but this quest for regional separatism became imperceptible after the 2000 election. This re-emergence in separatist sentiment could be seen as a response to the failure of Matabeleland to remain adequately represented and heard within a unified, national, opposition party: people in Matabeleland have since colonial times had a long established tradition of not expecting the government, or any other national player, to take their needs and demands into consideration, and of being resigned to – or aspiring to – self reliance.³⁰ This is always their fallback position. For example, since Independence the government has not built any new dams in the Bulawayo water catchment area, in spite of the population having more than trebled in this time: every election, a promise by central government to pipe water from the Zambezi is made – only to be made again in the next election. The MDC dominant city council of Bulawayo has, for years, sourced chemicals for water purification partly from ex Bulawayo residents in the Diaspora, in the knowledge that central government will not facilitate this, and has successfully resisted attempts by central government to take over its water supply system. The residents live with permanent draconian water rationing schedules

28 “An application to review the verdict of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the ‘Land Case of Matabeleland’ on 19th July 1918, with the view to ascertain its justification and to hear the demand of the people of Matabeleland who are praying for the revocation of the Matabeleland Order-in-Council of 18th July 1894 with the subsequent restoration of the Kingdom of Matabeleland and the accompanying restitutions”. Heads of argument submitted to the British Embassy in Harare in May 2007, asking for a broad based Judicial Committee be constituted to hear the issue.

29 Mabhena was ZANU PF Governor of Matabeleland North until 2000, and is a ZIPRA veteran of the war of liberation.

30 This is not only a problem at the level of government service delivery: Civic organisations that claim to be national are often perceived to impose Harare agendas on Matabeleland without due consultation; big corporations with Harare headquarters are perceived as recruiting tribally, preferring to transfer Shona expertise to Bulawayo than to employ Ndebeles in senior positions – and so on.

to try and ensure some water supply persists.³¹

However, the rise of visibility of groups such as the Patriotic Union of Matabeleland (PUMA), the Federal Democratic Union (FDU) and ZAPU-Federal Party (ZAPU-FP) is unlikely to have any impact on the forthcoming elections. In spite of their fielding 13 candidates in the 11 Bulawayo parliamentary constituencies, and in spite of reviving sympathy for a federalist agenda, it is very doubtful that any of these parties will win more than a sprinkling of votes. The perception of most people in Matabeleland arguably remains that the region is part of a bigger nation, and must continue to battle to be meaningfully represented nationally. It is therefore no surprise at all that, in the wake of the failure to form a coalition with the Tsvangirai MDC, the Mutambara MDC has formed a loose coalition with ZANU PF break away Simba Makoni in his quest to be president. Makoni has agreed not to field any candidates in Matabeleland and to campaign for the MDC Mutambara in Matabeleland, in return for this MDC promoting him as their presidential choice. The idea of voting for Makoni appears to have been very positively viewed in Matabeleland, with an unprecedented rush of people to register to vote in the wake of his announced candidature. Record numbers of late registrations were recorded in Matabeleland, including in rural districts, in the week leading to the Nomination Courts. It is Makoni’s perception that it is the Mutambara faction of the MDC that can bring him the most support in the Matabeleland provinces – they certainly hold the majority of parliamentary seats there at the moment – and in return, the MDC Mutambara would expect Cabinet seats in the event of a Makoni win.

Interestingly, most of the old ZIPRA group that became incorporated into ZANU after the Unity Accord, are backing Makoni and therefore are backing MDC Mutambara in this election. This group openly includes Dumiso Dabengwa, and is alleged to clandestinely include Vice President Joseph Msika and Speaker of the House John Nkomo. This raises questions as to the continued existence of the Unity Accord; it is doubtful that any of those who were originally party to it will remain within the body of Mugabe’s ZANU PF after this election, whether Makoni wins or not.

31 While Harare also has erratic water supplies, the causes are different: their dams have water, but the take over of their water supply by central government and the interference with the elected council which has prevented it from running the city, has resulted in shocking service delivery. By contrast, Bulawayo runs as well as it can on almost no resources.

However this election turns out – and it is suddenly a very fluid and unpredictable election – Matabeleland is going to be a hotly contested region. ZANU is likely to continue to win some parliamentary seats in Matabeleland, notably in the extreme, drought-prone, donor dependent south, and in Bubi/Unguza/Insiza North where resettled farmers reside in numbers. Some ZANU candidates could also benefit from the split MDC vote, but overall they are once more likely to win a minority of seats in these three provinces. However, ZANU is also likely to contest fiercely: under the revised constitution, the president cannot appoint any MPs, where previously he could appoint 20. This means the remnants of the old ZAPU guard, who have relied on being appointed firstly to parliament and secondly to cabinet, will have to win at the polls this time around.³² They could campaign brutally, particularly in

³² Sithembiso Nyoni for example, who continues to support the Mugabe faction of ZANU, has never won at the polls. She is currently a minister and must win in Nkayi or lose her place in government.

view of Makoni's challenge.

Simba Makoni is relying on the Mutambara MDC to deliver him the region, and the Tsvangirai MDC is determined to squash what they perceive to be a rebel MDC faction, and to use the ZANU split to deliver them the presidency. As rural and urban Matabeleland voters can be relied upon to vote predominantly for one opposition or another, rivalry for these votes will be intense. In general, Matabeleland can be predicted to vote in a way that gives it a strong and independent voice at national level: how this is perceived to be best achieved by individual voters remains to be seen.

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