

Violence and Politics in Zimbabwe from 2008-2018

Abstract

Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF party has been locked in an internal battle of political survival which intensified as the country democratized. Political violence has become a common feature in these internal struggles and underscores the degree of competition between agents within the government. This analysis of Zimbabwe's political violence is presented in three sequential parts: the first considers patterns and explanations for the violence in 2008; the second on subsequent low-level violence since 2008; and the last on the violence emanating from internal ZANU-PF factional struggles. There are continuities in this violence over the past ten years; first, the politics of the ruling party have become the defining feature of the Zimbabwean state; and political violence remains a direct reflection of ZANU-PF internal struggles. Second, violence is most intense surrounding elections. Violence marred all three that took place between January 2008 and August 2018, although at vastly different rates and in response to different perceived threats. Despite the repeated risks of violence during elections, Zimbabwe remains a relatively stable country with low rates of all political violence compared to the surrounding states in Africa. Third, violence is but one way that the internal competition with ZANU-PF and state institutions is performed. As ZANU-PF continues to alter its foundations, elites and principles to be 'fit for purpose', there are reasons to believe that violence rates will not change.

When compared to most countries that surrounding it, Zimbabwe experiences a relative low rate of political violence and disorder.¹ While contrary to perceptions in the western media², Zimbabwe's governance and security patterns are similar with democratizing states with dominant one-party systems³. In relative terms, Zimbabwe's direct political violence rates suggests it is one of the safest countries in Africa. Yet, there remains a pattern of serious and significant abuse, and violence directed towards citizens peaks during election periods and continues in interim periods at the hands of local security services and party militias at the community level.

Zimbabwe's violence is a reflection of the domestic politics of the state, which is, in turn, a reflection of internal ZANU-PF politics. Violence has been used by both the party and the state institutions to bolster and promote the dominance of ZANU-PF across the country, while the factionalism within ZANU-PF has often steered the targeting of violence, and the perceptions of threat. As it is shaped and patterned by intense internal competition that has characterized ZANU-PF since 2000, and while as the party's public support and legitimacy was cast into question, violence is a feature of Zimbabwean governance, not a defect in its system.

While these threads run through violence in Zimbabwe, the manifestation on the ground can appear disparate and indeed chaotic: informal laborers and vendors are hassled on the streets of Harare; mining gangs skirmish with police; land interlopers clash with settled farmers and local authorities; party militias target factions within their own party, and supporters of the opposition; police harass voters, and the military has, as recently as August 2nd, 2018, killed multiple people as they protested the parliamentary election results in Harare. In addition, purges at the senior levels of ZANU-PF has led to a Vice President escaping in fear of his life⁴, military takeovers, security services in contest with the chief of Police⁵; battles between intelligence services; fights within provincial authorities and perceived threats to current and former politician's lives.

But these acts are linked by political competition occurring at several scales of the political process: at the local level, traditional authorities, mining gangs and party apparatiks are constantly reasserting their authority and their control. Often in connection with local police and party officials, these events are largely contained in localities and occur simultaneously across the state. They are in response to local pressures, rather than a central command and control security architecture. In the urban areas, fierce competition between the parties for control of urban authorities and supporters has led to a crackdown on 'opposition friendly' groups; these practices coincide with blatant attempts to pack urban councils with imposed ZANU-PF officials⁶ (cite). Competition on the regional level, and fights that have broken out over primaries, candidates, regional factionalism and so forth, are a direct reflection of the internal fragmentation of the ZANU-PF party as it came into and out of the 2008 elections. Conspiracies including and surrounding Bhora Masango, Gamatoto, Blue Ocean, Lacoste, and G40 brought considerable disorder to the provincial party and governing structures of ZANU-PF and the Zimbabwean state. All led to the removal of Mugabe and the turbulent succession of Mnangagwa. In each of these cases, violence was a direct result of internal competition between party, state and security alliances. Conflicts in such cases are direct, targeted and limited. These patterns tell us that while the opposition and its supporters have suffered in Zimbabwe,

¹ Raleigh, Clionadh and Helen Morris. 2018. <https://www.acleddata.com/2018/02/12/zimbabwe-political-violence-and-protest-before-and-after-november-2017-transition/>

² Economist. 2018. <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2018/08/14/vienna-overtakes-melbourne-as-the-worlds-most-liveable-city>

³ United Nations. 2018. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>

⁴ <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2018/06/24/zimbabwe-president-mnangagwa-escapes-assassination-vp-others-injured/>

⁵ <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/africa/2017-11-15-police-under-the-radar-as-zimbabwe-military-puts-harare-on-lockdown/>

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violence directed towards them typically occurs at specific periods. But violence that is designed to hold the ZANU-PF party, or a faction thereof, in power has been a strong determinant of who, where, when and why violence occurs in Zimbabwe. Often, reporting on Zimbabwe violence tends to distinguish citizens into two camps based on their voting, and the implicit reasoning is that ZANU-PF attacks those in the opposition. But it is equally likely that much of the ZANU-PF violence is directed towards inconsistent supporters of the ruling party, whose support is necessary for electoral wins. It is this pattern, along with others, that this piece will consider.

The Logic of Political Survival and the Role of Violence

ZANU-Pf has dominated Zimbabwean politics for the entire history of the state; indeed, the party and the state have become largely ‘coterminous’ for the purposes of governance and government decisions (xxx). However, the party itself has cycled through considerable change since 1980, culminating in events in 2017-2018 when President Robert Mugabe was relieved from power by an internal alliance of senior military command and a faction of ZANU-PF led by one of the then vice Presidents Emerson Mnagagwa. The competition that resulted in the rupture at the senior levels of ZANU-PF was largely due to factionalism, as Mugabe sought to centralize every more power in the regime, and by extension his family and inner circle. The ‘pro-regime’ faction of ZANU-PF were commonly referred to as G40, or ‘Generation 40’. This faction was characterized by several key differences from the typical basis of ZANU-PF, including their relative youth compared to senior party members; the lack of ties to the liberation struggle; their disagreements and disrespect for the War Veterans group; the senior military command; their attempted co-option of both the Police, through its leader Mr. Chihuri and the CIO, or Central Intelligence Organization. The leaders of this faction were commonly regarded to include Grace Mugabe, Saviour Kasukuwere, Jonathan Moyo and Patrick Zhuwao. Mugabe placed each in key positions to create obstacles for the other faction of the party (Lacoste) to advance and threaten his position in power. Lacoste, in contrast, was led by Emerson Mnagagwa, and included several key senior members of the ZANU-PF party; it involved the co-option of multiple provincial coordinating committees; it integrated the War Veterans and military elites, who both noted that the Lacoste faction was the ‘real ZANU-PF’ and in recent years, openly contradicted Robert Mugabe and his personalization of power⁷.

These more recent events followed a continued stream of purges, high level firings, suspicious deaths, questionable election totals, a bankrupted economy, land seizures for political elites, firing and replacements of local and provincial level officials and episodes of targeted violence. What can explain the changes in ZANU-PF, the level of volatility, internal fragmentation and general disorder of the Zimbabwean state? As the integral politics of ZANU-PF are closely tied to the actions of the government and state, the link between the volatility in state actions and the disorder within ZANU-PF spring from the same source: Mugabe struggled to keep power since Zimbabwe transitioned to democratic elections. The struggle was particularly intense within senior levels of the party, who were both dependent on Mugabe patronage and unable to unseat him without damaging their status and position. The changes that occurred within the party are common features of ‘the politics of political survival’.

Across most African states in the post-Cold War period, leaders and elites negotiate and exchange loyalty and community alliances for political positions, state rents, and influence. A leader’s patronage is the vehicle

⁷ Allison, Simon. 2017. “Zimbabwe’s succession race is far from over”. Institute of Strategic Studies. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/zimbabwes-succession-race-is-far-from-over>.

of the 'politics of survival'⁸, the 'political marketplace'⁹ and 'militarized ethnic bargaining'¹⁰. The distribution of power in society and across elites emerges from bargaining "among contending elites"¹¹ with an outcome that is "mutually compatible and sustainable for the purposes of economic and political viability"¹². These practices are not static, stable, or without conflict. Political bargaining allows regimes to adapt to different pressures, crises, and political developments, and reflect changing power hierarchies, leverage, and the needs of the regime and populations. The logic of political survival in non-democratic and transitioning democracies is that 'bad policy is good politics'.¹³ Staying in power means co-opting a strong, loyal, small group, and having access to the funds to provide for them. Competition between elites in patronage systems for power, positions, rents and corruption networks is a 'zero-sum' game. As a result, many developing African states suffer from high levels of instability at senior levels of government, including the cabinet, but these same regimes are often characterized by longevity.

Competition between elites and leaders can take on strange manifestations of 'negotiation'.¹⁴ Leaders want to maintain a small, powerful and unambitious 'winning coalition' containing a group of essential people who are necessary to keep a leader in power, but who can be bought off to remain loyal. In all but the rarest circumstances, a leader will find resources to fund these essential elites to maintain his or her power. Zimbabwe is aptly characterised by those same practices, but in suffering a debilitating economic collapse due to mismanagement from the 1990s, the choices available to Mugabe and to senior elites to pursue elite patronage became restrictive and predatory. As a result of elite negotiations, volatility and brinkmanship that characterized the internal politics of ZANU-PF for the past decades, it has lost legitimacy, capacity and authority, but it did not lose its hold on the Zimbabwean state¹⁵.

A leader inclined to political survival tactics knows that most of the threats to their existence come from within and below, rather than from outside.¹⁶ External challenges can be dealt with through repression, as is relatively common but sustained at a low level in Zimbabwe. But internal challenges require more strategic finesse. Limiting the power of internal challengers involves rewarding loyalty, replacing ambitious contenders; and threatening the position of others.¹⁷ Crises arise when leaders do not have the means to placate, pay for, and otherwise fund the loyalty of his or her chosen elite circle.¹⁸ They may also arise when a leader appears weak, and unable to maintain the patronage network that is so vital for essential and influential elites. In those cases, ambitious, powerful political elites will seek to replace their ineffective leader.¹⁹ In most states, the opportunity for replacement can come about through a death, a coup, or even an election. Selecting leaders in patronage systems means election choices and outcomes are dominantly structured by the elite networks of the groups engaged, rather than votes. But removing a leader without another waiting is a serious risk for senior elites- they risk losing their own access to power in order to curtail the leaders.

From the logic of political survival, each significant elite within these factions has their own agenda and need for resource capture to dominate their network and access continued power by destroying the

⁸ Midgal, Joel. 1988.

⁹ De Waal 2015

¹⁰ Roessler 2011

¹¹ Di John and Putzel 2009

¹² Khan 2010

¹³ Bueno de Mesquita, B., Smith, A. and Siverson, R. *The Logic of Political Survival*, (2005), MIT Press.

¹⁴ De Waal, A. *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power*, (2015). Cambridge: Polity Press.

¹⁵ Matyszak, Derek. 2017. Zimbabwe's succession Rubik's Cube. Institute of Security Studies. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/zimbabwes-succession-rubiks-cube>

¹⁶ Schedler, A. *The Politics of Uncertainty: Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism*, (2013), Oxford University Press.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ De Waal, A., 2015.

¹⁹ Bueno de Mesquita, B., Smith, A. and Siverson, R., 2012.

capabilities of their fellow party members in distinct factions. This created intra-elite competition and jostling, leading to unstable provincial politics in both the party and state positions, and inner circle elite problems (manifest in troublesome senior elites, purges, statements of support or detraction, and occasional threats). Problems trickled down to areas of resource control- mines, farms, businesses, positions in markets, supply routes, contracts etc. Further, an economic crisis made these problems all the more difficult for elites, and the scarcity at the bottom led to intermittent attacks of the local representatives of 'weakened' elites. Scarcity at the top led to purges, denunciations and threats of corruption exposure.

What role does violence play here? In the politics of political survival, violence is one tool, of many, that can be deployed in competition. Further, violence is not a sign of breakdown but can often function as a cheap way for elites to protect their resources, take others' resources, threaten voting populations, indicate a group's willing to transgress public norms as a form of leverage, and as an economic strategy to acquire new forms of 'discounted' rents. Within Zimbabwe, political violence is used in competition active at several scales: the community, councils, mines, farms, province, party, and institutions. It is multifaceted and a tool of multiple parties, often working towards highly localized ends. The ruling party elites has allowed for and benefitted from violence practiced at several levels: at the very local level, against farmers, miners, vendors and against the opposition supporters. The police used threats to extract enormous sums through road blocks,²⁰ the municipal police used violence to control access to vending stands and kombi routes,²¹ and the military used violence to control access to the diamond fields and to revenue from diamonds.²² Overtly political violence peaked during elections and included a number of militias, loosely affiliated with specific elites or internal party branches, who harassed, assaulted and threatened the idea of a challenge to the power and corruption networks of politicians and senior party members.²³ Violence is a part of the party's functioning system. Only when senior institutions are involved- such as the security services- does the significance and consequences of this violence become publicized and understood as a top-down, command and control strategy of repression.

Many of these forces came to a head in the election of 2008, and variations of similar practices have continued to mar elections since that time. The 2008 election is illustrative of the 'politics of political survival' for several reasons: it represented a time of severe internal fragmentation in ZANU-PF, and a senior elite, surrounding the Mujuru couple, that had distanced themselves from the Mugabe regime. Violence before the election was minimal, and directed towards the opposition supporters, conducted at a very local level. However, in the interim, when the power, positions and privileges of elites were in question, ZANU-PF, in conjunction with the security services of the state, targeted both voters who opposition supporters and those were openly that were expected to vote for ZANU-PF.

In 2008, a period of liberalization in the Zimbabwean political environment allowed for widespread opposition support to grow amongst voters.²⁴ While the voters increasingly saw Morgan Tsvangirai as a viable leader, and the opposition as stewards to a new era, no such glasnost occurred in the inner and principal elite structures of the ZANU-PF party. Both the objective and subjective results of the 2008

²⁰ Matyszak, D. "Zimbabwe's shady police roadblocks reflect its failing governance," 20 September 2017. *Institute of Security Studies*, found online at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/zimbabwes-shady-police-roadblocks-reflect-its-failing-governance>.

²¹ "Zimbabwe Government insists on ill-advised eviction of informal traders," 12 October 2017. *Zimbabwe Human Rights Association*, found online at <http://kubatana.net/2017/10/12/zimbabwe-government-insists-ill-advised-eviction-informal-traders/>.

²² "Zimbabwe: Rampant abuses in Marange Diamond Fields," 30 August 2011. *Human Rights Watch*, found online at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/30/zimbabwe-rampant-abuses-marange-diamond-fields>. For a more recent update, see "Villagers want to end diamond fields terror," 1 March 2018, found online at <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2018/03/01/villagers-want-end-to-diamond-fields-terror>.

²³ *The Anatomy of Terror*, 2011.

²⁴ Raftopoulos, B. 2009. 'The crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998-2008.' *Becoming Zimbabwe*, ed. B. Raftopoulos and A. Mlambo, 201-32. Harare: Weaver Press.

election suggest a strong and winning opposition.²⁵ Election geography demonstrates that opposition support was strong even within some of ZANU-PF's typical strongholds. President Mugabe won the runoff by a questionable margin, given the previous performance and the overall ZANU-PF constituency votes.²⁶ Substantial violence occurred between the first election and the later presidential runoff. However, the geography of the violence presents a puzzle: there are more recorded violent events in areas that voted for ZANU-PF local representatives, and where opposition support is at its lowest. What accounts for this surprising pattern to violence?

On 29th March 2008, Zimbabwe held elections for Local Government, Parliament, and Presidency positions. The two main parties competing were the Movement for Democratic Change - Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and the ruling party, ZANU-PF. Some additional competition came from a breakaway MDC faction in Bulawayo and Matabeleland, which despite the same base name, were not allies of the MDC-T, and from a breakaway ZANU-PF group, Mavambo Kusile Dawn, led by Simba Makoni. According to the MDC-T Parallel Voter Tabulation, Tsvangirai won 50.3% of the presidential vote in the first round,²⁷ and the opposition won most parliamentary seats (110 out of 210 possible seats). However, after a delay of more than six weeks, the results released by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission reported that Tsvangirai won 47.9% of the vote, a result short of the absolute majority required to declare him the president in the first round. A presidential runoff election was announced for the 27th June 2008. Tsvangirai pulled out of the presidential runoff on 22nd June because of the high levels of violence across the country. Mugabe won 85.5% of the presidential vote.²⁸ The constituency break-down of the final 2008 presidential election was never released.

How did Mugabe garner 85.5% of the vote in the runoff? Three scenarios are possible: people who had voted for the MDC in the first election either switched their vote to Mugabe, abstained from voting, or there was widespread ballot stuffing/cheating by the regime. But the total number of votes did not increase or decrease, despite Morgan Tsvangirai's withdrawal (he still remained on the ballot paper). For the almost 86% support to be legitimate, Mugabe would have had to take almost all of Tsvangirai's vote. It is not uncommon for runoff candidates to display significant differences in 1st and 2nd rounds of elections, often gaining a large number of votes in the second round. However, for such significant increases in vote share, other presidential candidates would have been excluded from the second round (e.g. a four-way race becoming a two-way race). There is no credible evidence that massive numbers of MDC voters voted for Robert Mugabe in the second round. These voters did not choose Mugabe in the first round, and many of these same voters had rejected, en masse, ZANU-PF local representation. For these and other reasons, the 2008 Presidential runoff totals were extremely suspect, and it forces the question: if the regime was planning to stuff the ballot boxes, why use violence between the polling days?

²⁵ See <http://archive.kubatana.net/html/archive/elec/080329kubres.asp> and <https://www.eisa.org.za/wep/zim2008results5.htm> for the final results.

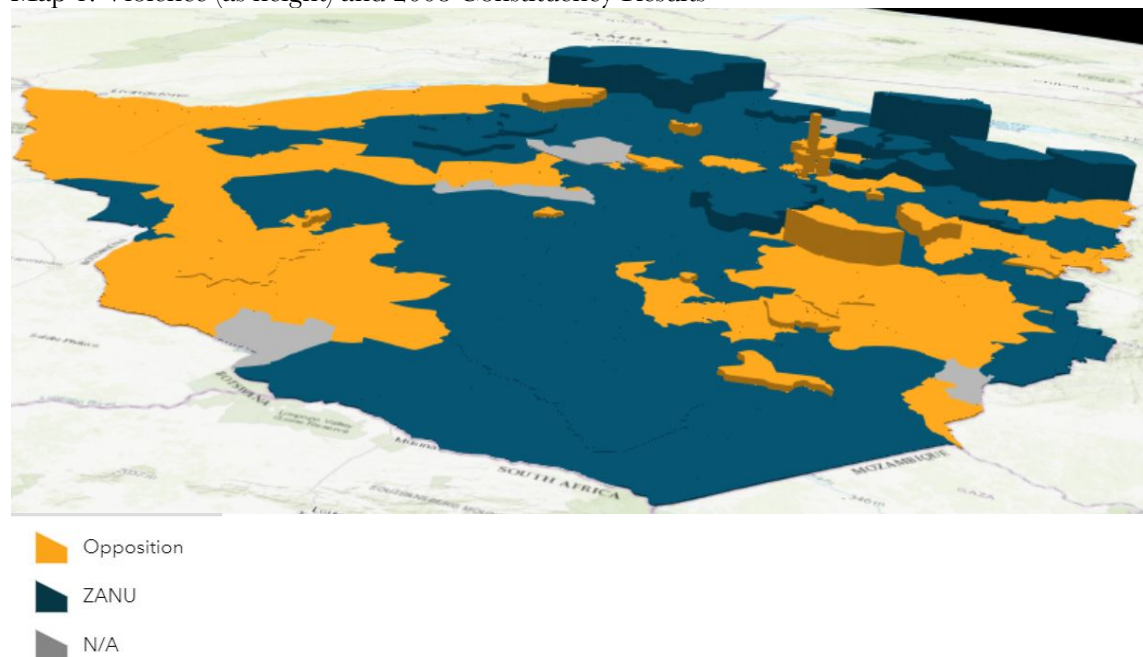
²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "Zimbabwe Opposition Claim Victory," 2 April 2008, *BBC*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7326532.stm.

²⁸ "Timeline: Zimbabwe's Presidential Run-Off," Reuters, 29 June 2008, found at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-zimbabwe-election-events/timeline-zimbabwes-presidential-election-run-off-idUSL2666927520080629>.

From mid-March through mid-September 2008, ACLED²⁹ reports that over 500 discrete violent events occurred in Zimbabwe.³⁰ These attacks are aggregations of many victims who were targeted in specific places and dates. Several other reports provide more expansive attention to the victims of the violence.³¹ A feature of the Zimbabwean violence is an extremely high rate of violence against civilians: 98% of the incidents recorded during this period involved a state force or political militia attacking unarmed civilians. But the fatality rate is extremely low (estimates range from 90 to 200 over the course of the violence)³². This is the case for two suspected reasons: the Zimbabwean security sector did not want to engage international attention with high numbers of fatalities, and ZANU-PF needed to generate, by force, some support for Robert Mugabe. Killing potential voters would be a bad strategy for both objectives, but terrorizing voters is a good strategy for their purposes

Map 1: Violence (as height) and 2008 Constituency Results



In Map 1, the 3D height of the constituency indicates the levels of violence in the constituency during the 2008 run-off campaign. The colors indicate the party of the winning MP in that constituency (MDC-T and MDC-N are orange; ZANU-PF is blue).

²⁹ The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project collects disaggregated data on political violence and protest for all developing states. It covers African states from 1997 into the present. ACLED's Zimbabwe data for this period are generated from local sources and reports of the violence. The Zimbabwe Peace Project reports, which rely on local collectors; the Counselling Service Unit patient reports, which uses medical attention and self-reporting to generate information for events; and the rumors alliance organizations that emerged during this period of 2008, constitute the vast majority of sources. Additional media information and accounts (such as the 'Anatomy of Terror' series) also contributed to these accounts. The ACLED Zimbabwe collection is organized in Harare with several in-country organizations contributing to the coverage. ACLED collects information on events- including the when, where, what and by and to whom political violence and protest occurred. There is no fatality criterion, so events in which 1 person was assaulted are collected and recorded in the same way as events in which 50 people may have been assaulted. For further details about the coding process of ACLED, please visit acleddata.com/resources, where definitions, procedures, source materials, discussions of review process and revision processes etc. are extensively discussed. To access the data generated, please visit acleddata.com/data.

³⁰ These dates were chosen in order to cover the violent run-off campaign. .

³¹ For more detail about reporting violence in the 2008 election run-off period, see The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum Political Violence Report from December 2008 and *The Anatomy of Terror* reports from 2011 and 2012.

³² The discrepancy is due to direct and indirect attributions of fatalities. ACLED (with 90 fatalities) codes for direct deaths at time of event; other sources consider the medium to long term deaths due to injuries sustained during events

As displayed in Map 1, there is a distinct geography of the violence in 2008. It is highest in areas in and around the capital, in Mashonaland East, Central and West, in Masvingo and Manicaland. Each of these areas – barring Harare Central - are ZANU-PF ‘strongholds,’ they are regions where most regime elites and supporters reside (as explained in voting totals for 2002 and 2005 – see below). Violence is lowest in Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and South, and the Midlands. Bulawayo and Matabeleland are historically opposition strongholds.

The majority of the violence was carried out by members of ZANU-PF militias, who had been trained under the National Youth Service, and then employed as Ward Officers in constituencies across the country.³³ These youths were deployed from bases established in schools and churches in the constituencies. The bases were headed by War Veterans, senior ZANU-PF officials (MPs or Rural District Councilors), or military officers in the Zimbabwe National Army. The police provided material and logistic support for the bases; they also worked to ensure that ZANU-PF perpetrators were not prosecuted for the violence, by refusing to record cases. The resources to fund the violence were mobilized through government-authorized salaries to Ward Officers, and through permitting the leadership access to local farms, mineral resources, and community businesses.³⁴

The violence was organized and led at the most senior levels of the state, under the leadership of the Joint Operations Command (JOC), the supreme organ for the coordination of state security, made up of the key commanders of the armed forces and the Ministers of State Security and Defense. After the March 2008 poll, Mugabe appointed Emerson Mnangagwa, then Minister of Rural Housing and Social Amenities, as chair of JOC.³⁵ The violent groups deployed by JOC met with almost no organized or coordinated violent resistance by the opposition or the Zimbabwean population³⁶.

By using the results of the 1st election, which provided clear and correct parliamentary tallies, the strategies and logics behind the 2008 violence are made clear. The regime and political elites’ role in this violence – both as victims and as instigators – illustrates the multiple strategies active in the 2008 violence and beyond.

Explaining 2008 Violence Patterns

Why did only some areas of Zimbabwe experience attacks by ZANU-PF in 2008, while others areas were relatively safe? There are three groups that ZANU-PF wanted to repress and strategies behind their repression: loyal MDC supporters, specifically urban voters (‘opposition’); rural voters in typical ZANU-PF strongholds who voted for the MDC in parliamentary and presidential polls (‘defectors’); and those who supported local ZANU-PF representatives but not Mugabe (‘traitors’). The strategies and geography are tailored to the target: prevent MDC voters from voting again (in Harare, primarily); punish rural voters from defecting; and punish traitors for supporting a local elite without supporting Mugabe. The latter vote presents an unpleasant reality for Mugabe: if the party is stronger without him, a faction of powerful ZANU-PF will remove him from the top.

The geography of three strategies is evident based on the voting returns for the first round. Violence rates are highest in Harare; violence in capital cities is consistently high during periods of disorder and this was a strong MDC urban center. The opposition won 21.6% of the seats in Mashonaland, (18% in Mashonaland East, 17.6% in Mashonaland Central, and 28.5% in Mashonaland West). In Manicaland, opposition candidates won 64% of the parliamentary seats. In Masvingo, opposition candidates won 56% of the

³³ *Anatomy of Terror*, 2011.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ “Mnangagwa takes charge of JOC,” 29 April 2008. *Daily News*, <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/2008/04/mnangagwa-takes-charge-of-joc/>.

³⁶ Jocelyn Alexander & Kudakwashe Chitofiri (2010) The Consequences of Violent Politics in Norton, Zimbabwe, The Round Table, 99:411, 673-686, DOI: 10.1080/00358533.2010.530410

parliamentary seats in 2008. The scale of opposition support – both for parliamentary positions and president – was undoubtedly surprising to ZANU-PF. Each of the aforementioned areas are key ZANU-PF areas. But the level of opposition support is not highly correlated with violence. Indeed, violence is highest in areas that returned more ZANU-PF wins. See Table 1 for a review.

Table 1: Parliamentary 2008 Results and Violence Rates (March-September 2008)

Province	Total Seats	Population (2012)	MDC Wins	ZANU-PF Wins	Number of Violent Events in the Province
Bulawayo	12	1.2 Mil	12		7
Harare	29	2.1 Mil	27	1	142
Manicaland	26	1.7 Mil	16	8	51
Mashonaland Central	18	1.15 Mil	3	14	90
Mashonaland East	23	1.34 Mil	4	19	117
Mashonaland West	21	1.5 Mil	6	15	58
Masvingo	26	1.48 Mil	14	12	20
Matabeleland North	13	749 K	8	4	1
Matabeleland South	13	683 K	8	4	8
Midlands	28	1.6 Mil	7	20	22

Punish Opposition Voters

The most common explanation for election violence is incumbent ZANU-PF forces attacking opposition supporters. For that to be true in Zimbabwe's case, we would expect high rates of violence in areas with the most MDC voters. The MDC has historically received its highest levels of support from the urban constituencies in Harare and Bulawayo because the party mobilization structures were originally built through the urban labor movement.³⁷ There were also high levels of support for the MDC in Matabeleland because of the historical animosity that Matabeleland feels for ZANU-PF after the 1980s atrocities. But relative to population and expectations, both the cities and Matabeleland saw low levels of attacks. Out of the districts that experienced significant violence, only seven were MDC wins, including Bulawayo Central, Harare Central, Mbare, Zengeza West, Epworth, Buhera West, and Matobo North. The average national rate of violence is very similar for constituencies that returned an MDC candidate, and those that voted for a ZANU-PF candidate.

A link between violence and MDC-stronghold areas explains a fraction of the violence patterns. Loyal opposition support cannot explain the vast number of attacks in other areas, and especially rural zones. Strong opposition areas saw far less violence than unexpected 'swing' districts, barring the targeted violence visited upon senior MDC officials and polling agents.

³⁷ Raftopoulos, B. 2009. 'The crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998-2008.' *Becoming Zimbabwe*, ed. B. Raftopoulos and A. Mlambo, 201-32. Harare: Weaver Press.

Punish Defectors

The defector logic suggests that areas which ZANU-PF expected to win - but did not - would be the most affected by attacks from the state and its militias. This explanation has some consistency on the constituency level, but less so on the provincial scale. To determine defectors, consider the 2005 MP elections. Although far fewer constituencies were active (91 were added between 2005 and 2008), there are many districts that clearly fall into ZANU-PF hands with relatively safe levels of support. But in 2008, both previously safe ZANU-PF districts, combined with opposition support in new districts carved from original 2005 districts, went to the opposition (as MP support).³⁸ Although the MDC won substantial new areas of support in 2008, the areas where the defector logic would be most evident are Masvingo and Manicaland. Here, the opposition added support from the 2005 districts and added more support from the new districts in these provinces in 2008. That is, in effect, a double win.

Violence occurs in defector districts as one component of the overall strategy. On the constituency level, violence is high in areas that are traditionally associated with ZANU-PF, but did have some MDC wins. If we compare on the provincial level, there are glaring disparities. Compare Manicaland, where the MDC won the majority of seats, to Mashonaland West, where ZANU-PF won most seats. Their populations are similar, as are the number of violent events they experienced. The same comparison can be made for Masvingo (MDC wins majority) and Midlands (ZANU-PF majority) but similar density of population and violent events (see Table 1). Indeed, the highest violence (outside Harare) occurred consistently in areas that roundly supported ZANU-PF MP candidates, and should have supported Mugabe for president, but perhaps did not. Further, the ZANU-PF candidates that lost in typical ZANU-PF voting provinces were not more likely to engage or support violence compared to winning candidates, yet these losing ZANU-PF members are exactly the people that should have done so under the defection logic (See Table 2).

Table 2: ZANU-PF Majority Provinces & MDC Districts where Most Violence Recorded

ZANU Majority Province	Constituencies won by the opposition	ZANU Candidate in the constituency (Losing Candidate)	Was the losing candidate implicated in run-off violence?
Mashonaland Central	Mazowe South	Zinyemba, Margaret	No
Mashonaland West	Chegutu West	Mafa, John	No
	Chinhoyi	Sikanyika, Robert	No
	Hurungwe West	Boni, Mary	No
	Norton	Mutsvangwa, Chris	Yes
Masvingo	Bikita West	Musakwa, Elia	No
	Masvingo Urban	Omar, Joosbi	No
	Zaka Central	Nyaradzo, Tachiona	No

Punish Traitors

Of all the districts that experienced violence in 2008, a far higher proportion of districts that voted for ZANU-PF experienced violence than those whose voters supported the opposition (See Table 3). Many

³⁸ See EISA, "African Democracy Encyclopedia Project," <https://www.eisa.org.za/wep/zim2005results1.htm>.

more constituencies that voted for ZANU-PF candidates in ZANU-PF majority provinces saw more conflict than the MDC constituencies in the same provinces. Further, there is a higher rate of successful ZANU-PF candidates engaging in violence in their own districts, than losing ZANU-PF candidates engaging in violence in theirs (See Table 2).

Table 3: Average Violence Rates by Representatives in Different ZANU Supporting Districts

	Constituencies won by an opposition MP	Constituencies won by a ZANU-PF MP	Closely Contested Constituencies	Constituencies with a safe win
Average number of violent events	2.47	2.54	1.38	3.88
Average number of violent events in ZANU Stronghold: Mashonaland	3.38	4.50	3.18	6.64
Average number of violent events in ZANU Stronghold: Manicaland	2.75	0.8	0.16	4
Average number of violent events in ZANU Stronghold: Masvingo	1.29	0.2	1	.4

What accounts for these unexpected findings? The first result is that ZANU-PF parliamentary candidates, who are the local ZANU-PF representative and direct beneficiary of its patronage network, generated enough support for themselves, but failed to use their influence to generate support for Mugabe. The second is that the response to disloyal or insufficiently loyal ZANU-PF supporters is targeted violence. The geography of the results and violence is particularly telling, as this pattern of violent events clustered in the Mashonaland provinces.

An explanation for this violence could be a reaction to *Bhora Musango*, a strategy whereby local ZANU-PF elites would encourage their supporters to vote for the ZANU-PF MP, but not to vote for Mugabe.³⁹ Whether or not *Bhora Musango* was real relates to the presence of a coordinated internal effort to challenge Mugabe from a particular faction. But the reaction to *Bhora Musango* is the more important issue: was the violent response to presumed internal coordination, and definite poor support for Mugabe, to warn and punish? And was the violence fueled by ulterior motives, including changing the top elite guard from the close Zezuru group to others deemed ‘more loyal’?⁴⁰

From a political survival logic, the 2008 election was a ripe moment for an internal elite coup. Heading into the election, ZANU-PF's economic, political and military power was concentrated within a circle close to Mugabe, which was dominated by Mugabe's relatives and other Zezuru elites, primarily from Mashonaland West.⁴¹ This group was the key elite circle essential to the continued ability of Mugabe to remain in power. Below this essential group was a wider network of influential actors who fill elected and administrative posts in these same areas. It is crucial to note that Zimbabwe's politics is not ‘ethnicized’ in the ways that African

³⁹ Blessing-Miles Tendi (2013) Robert Mugabe's 2013 Presidential Election Campaign, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39:4, 963-970

⁴⁰ The Zezuru represents a subcategory of the Shona language group, to which Mugabe belongs. The Zezuru group is perceived to dominate the political and military elites, which causes tension with the Karanga, Manyika, and Ndebele.

⁴¹ Muzondidya, J. and Ndllovu-Gatsheni, S. “Echoing Silences: Ethnicity in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe,” (2007), *African Journal on Post-Conflict Resolution*, 7:2 (275-297).

politics is often regarded; but that these individuals had managed to consolidate power through many shared attributes, including family, ethnicity, region, past histories and business relationships. The resentment towards the Zezuru elite network felt by Karanga, Ndebele and Manyika, was compounded by the fact that the primary contender for elite power networks in the post-Mugabe succession scenario was Solomon Mujuru's group, which was also dominated by Mashonaland-based Zezurus.⁴²

Faced with a drastic reduction in patronage and elite promotion possibilities due to the state of the Zimbabwean economy and the growing influence of the opposition, these elites had a choice: the first was to continue to strive to be in a small group of elites who have access to patronage, knowing that this group will decrease in size and scope due to limitations of Mugabe to provide sufficient resources. The second was to remove Mugabe and establish a new patronage network to secure their power and those close to them. The third option was to determine which would be the winning camp within the internal contest, and tie your fortunes to that group. This is an option for low level elites who are not 'first movers', but will go where they believe power resides. Powerful ZANU-PF elites - such as those from Mashonaland - cannot defect. The opposition could neither accept such elites, nor afford them the same levels of access to resources and patronage. Because most ZANU-PF elites were deeply enmeshed in business and political networks, it was still better to be inside the tent than outside. Further, it was best to find a leader who would continue to assure their prominence, rather than continue to gamble with Mugabe.

ZANU-PF entered the 2008 election with these unstable relationships and choices available to senior elites. In early April 2008, Mugabe needed a strategy to ensure that the support for ZANU-PF was re-consolidated back into support for himself. Emerson Mnangagwa, who was a senior elite, but not a Zezuru, offered to ensure that the consolidation was carried out.⁴³ Mnangagwa used the election runoff as an opportunity to punish those who he regarded as weakening the ZANU-PF influence in rural areas, especially as they benefitted from the patronage network. Mnangagwa was already at loggerheads with the Mujurus and other 'Super Zezuru' over issues around succession and access to power, and this afforded him the opportunity to over-react to internal dissension.⁴⁴ This violent campaign ensured that Mugabe won the runoff, but, more importantly, it provided a foundation on which Mnangagwa supporters could begin to construct what would become the Mnangagwa faction after Solomon Mujuru's death and Joice Mujuru's 2014 purge.

The importance of this process for Mnangagwa to developing his own factional support can be seen in the trajectories of a few specific ZANU-PF candidates who lost their seats in the 2008 election. Patrick Chinamasa, Joseph Made, Chris Mushowe, Oppah Muchinguri, Chris Mutsvangwa, and Shuvai Mahofa were all defeated by opposition candidates in their constituencies in 2008. They should have been considerably weakened by having lost their parliamentary seats in 2008, yet they continued to hold key politburo and party positions. In 2013, each of these individuals was restored as an MP or senator, many through suspiciously high election results. They were also rewarded with cabinet positions, guaranteeing their influence within the state. During the division of ZANU-PF into distinct factions vying for succession between 2015 and 2017, these individuals came to be considered key actors in Mnangagwa's faction. Their allegiance to Mnangagwa is cemented by the fact that they owe their position to him, because in an un-manipulated election they would lose the popular vote in their constituencies.

This explanation for a high degree of violence in 'traitor' areas suggest that if *Bhora Musango* was a true phenomenon, it was practiced very badly. At the very least, a 'voting coup' requires more buy-in than those of an elite group. It requires a plan for counter-reactions, a strong faction of the military, and a plan post-election. None of those elements appear to have been present. But that does not exclude the idea of *Bhora Musango* being used as a justification to threaten and remove a core group of ZANU-PF elites who blocked

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Tendi, M-B. 'Ideology, Civilian Authority and the Zimbabwean Military.' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39:4. 829-843 (2013).

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

the ascension of others. In this interpretation, select ZANU-PF elites used the electoral crisis and violence as a calculated bargain to maintain their political status in the country and to punish or warn elites that they must be loyal to ZANU-PF if they wish to continue to occupy key positions in the state-party network.

A third element of this ‘warning’ violence is the use of winning ZANU-PF MPs as local directors of violence. Why would winners attack the people who voted them into position? Winning ZANU-PF candidates may have been in a position whereby there was much more to gain by showing loyalty to Mugabe by using their control of a constituency to punish voters. Indeed, those who participated in violence against communities who voted for them were often rewarded in subsequent years.

The final result of the 2008 elections was Mugabe retaining power, ZANU-PF losing a parliamentary majority to the opposition, a ‘Government of National Unity’, where power was technically shared between President Mugabe and Prime Minister Tsvangirai, and international pariah status for Zimbabwe because of the levels of violence and disorder generated by ZANU-PF to secure this result. The opposition was subdued; the rural voters punished; and the elites warned. The violence had another crucial consequence, in that it altered who had power in the party. By relying on Mnangagwa and the JOC to ‘fix’ the election, Mugabe gave significant powers to these individuals to reshape the party and country to suit their long-term succession goals. That involved the 2013 election, the 2018 election, and the succession struggle.

Violence and Change after 2008

Violence rates decreased significantly after the 2008 zenith. The range of targeted civilian violence vacillated from 60 to 180 incidents per year, and between 20 to 130 riots and protests.⁴⁵ The perpetrators of this violence are reportedly low-level party operators, who compete for access to patronage and resources at the community level. Violence against opposition supporters was ongoing, often due to intermittent behavior by unorganized youths. Structural violence - such as politicized food aid and selective security - became more common over this period, and again was directed to areas believed to be in strong support of the political opposition.⁴⁶

However, the most volatility and disorder emanated from the consolidation exercises within ZANU-PF itself. As ZANU-PF realized that it had lost significant public support, it engaged in an exercise to reassert local control and rebuild internal co-option and coordination structures post-2008. Reorganizations of power and patronage access pitted local, regional and national party and state members against each other, and began the succession conflict that remains unresolved. Violence in Zimbabwe following 2008 is mostly transactional, used to ensure that key individuals retain access to income generation projects (e.g. access to the diamonds was used to ensure that the security sector had access to resources to enable them to control the population and stay loyal), access to land/stands/vendor stalls was used to cement support from ZANU-PF supporters and generate income for ZANU elites. Key political figures were interested in controlling specific populations (such as the vendors) for political and economic access to bolster their strength in an increasingly unstable party.

The rewards of violence

ZANU-PF won the 2013 election by an overwhelming margin, without significant levels of violence. A common interpretation of the ‘stability’ is that the manipulation was done before the vote, so there was no need to threaten, punish or repress with violence during the vote. But ZANU-PF did especially well for a party that, five years previous, had lost a general election; and MDC did very poorly. The combined results

⁴⁵ See Aclad data website

⁴⁶ See Zimbabwe Peace Project Monthly Reports for ongoing coverage of politicized food aid <https://www.zimpeaceproject.com/>.

of the two MDC parties won 110 parliamentary seats in 2008, but party seats total fell to 49 in 2013.⁴⁷ Of the 110 opposition seats in 2008, 24 were swing seats (where the opposition candidate won by less than 10% of the vote), the rest were safely won by the opposition candidates (the opposition candidate won more than 10% of the vote). In 2013, ZANU-PF gained 62 seats, which, in addition to retained seats, resulted in ZANU-PF holding 160 of the 210 seats in parliament (76% of all seats). This means that the ZANU-PF wins in 2013 took mostly safe, and some swing, seats from MDC.

Even though ZANU-PF retained the Presidency and gained back control of the parliament with a two-thirds majority, there is little evidence of widespread public support for ZANU-PF.⁴⁸ The opposition, weakened by continued internal fractures and failures during the GNU government, was unable to capitalize on any discontent within ZANU-PF, and may have lost some supporters. But the number of people who voted increased, so opposition voters abstaining is also not a likely answer. The wins can be attributed to a number of tactics that set the stage for continued ZANU-PF dominance, using any and all means to achieve it.⁴⁹ The consequences of the 2013 elections are wide and significant: the ZANU-PF consolidation of the party, both within its structures and across the state, was successful. The most significant legacy may be that the practices of 2013 all but guarantee that the opposition cannot win or prevent ZANU-PF getting two-thirds of the seats in 2018.⁵⁰ Using the tactics of the 2013 election, coupled with the constitutional changes and the placement of loyalists in key positions (the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission and the courts), a 2018 ZANU-PF victory is all but predetermined.

Amongst all the tactics employed in 2013, an increase in violence is not observed. ZANU-PF employed complementary and distinct tactics in 2013, many of which may be also used in 2018. These included: changing the electorate through altering the Voters' Roll, packing opposition constituencies with security service employees instructed to vote for ZANU-PF, and excluding opposition voters. ZANU-PF also attracted votes using state resources, such as access to food aid and access to state social support programs.⁵¹ In 2013, the opposition lost half their 2008 seats overall and sustained significant losses in every province. Of the 62 lost seats, 57 became 'safe' ZANU-PF seats, where the ZANU-PF candidate won by 10% or more of the vote. In 28 of those constituencies, the ZANU-PF candidate won by 50% or more of the vote. In particular, ZANU-PF built wins from opposition safe seats: all MDC safe seats were easily won by ZANU-PF in 2013. The difference in votes between what the losing ZANU-PF candidate received in 2008 and what the winning ZANU-PF candidate received in 2013 is reviewed in Appendix A.

The pattern of power in 2013 reveals the beginning of factional dominance: those that supported Mnangagwa as he rose to prominence from 2008 had a more successful election in 2013. Of the 15 districts where the most violence was recorded by ACLED in 2008, all of the ZANU PF candidates attempted to stand for election again in 2013 (except two MPs, who had died). Five of these candidates lost in the 2013 primaries. In some cases, these candidates lost for reasons directly related to their role in the internal party competition – e.g. in Gokwe Nembudziya, Flora Bhuka, a highly respected, locally powerful individual, who had successfully run for election as the ZANU candidate, lost the 2013 primary election to a younger, more inexperienced candidate, Justice Mayor Wadyajena, who had received strong sponsorship from Mnangagwa, who wanted to block the Mujuru-aligned Bhuka.⁵² Two of the 2008 candidates, David

⁴⁷ See EISA, "African Democracy Encyclopedia Project," <https://www.eisa.org.za/wep/zim2013results1.htm>.

⁴⁸ Zamchiya, P. "The MDC-T's Unseeing Eye in Zimbabwe's 2013 Harmonised Elections: A Technical Knockout." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39:4, 955-962 (2013).

⁴⁹ Matyszak, D. "Back to the Future: Legitimising Zimbabwe's 2018 Elections," 17 November 2017, *Institute of Security Studies* <https://issafrica.org/research/southern-africa-report/back-to-the-future-legitimising-zimbabwes-2018-elections>.

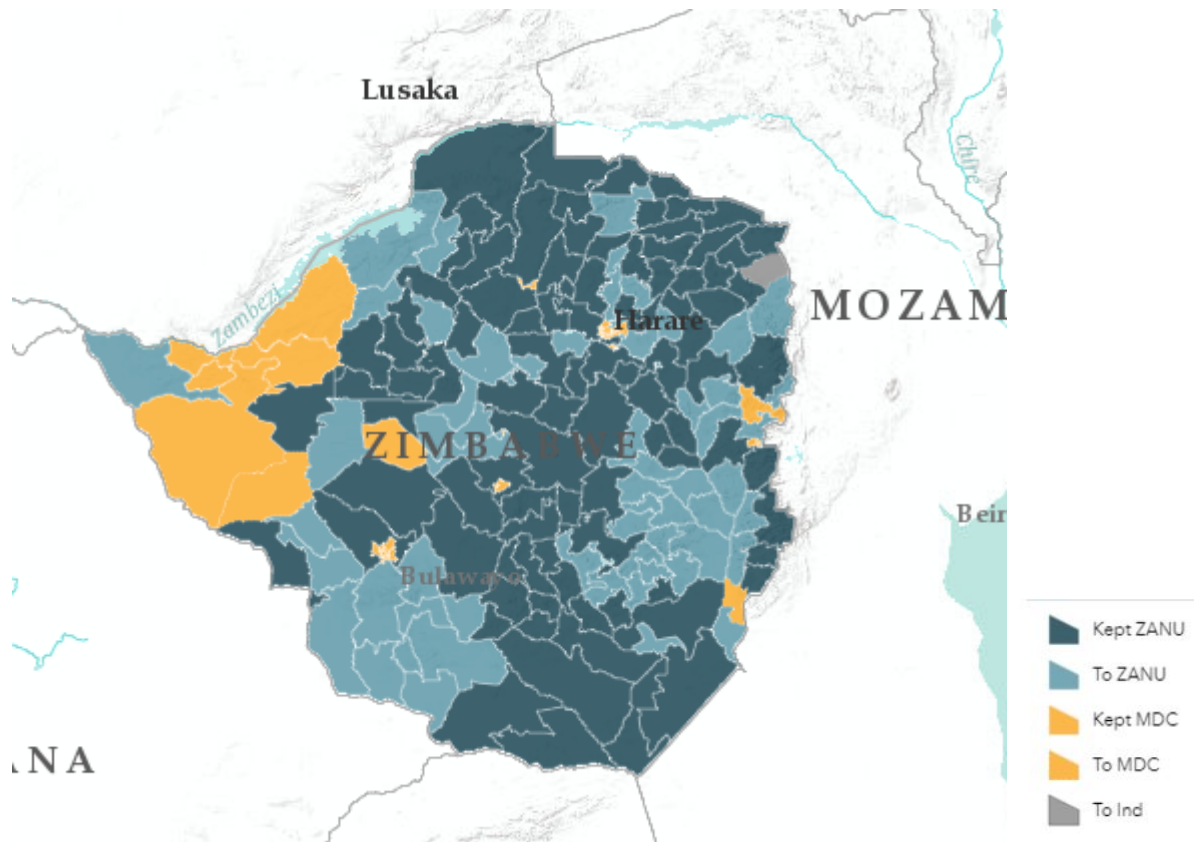
⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ See Zimbabwe Peace Project Monthly Reports for ongoing coverage of politicized food aid <https://www.zimpeaceproject.com/>.

⁵² "ZANU-PF in-fighting cancer spreads to villages," 5 September 2014, in *Newsday*, <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2014/09/zanu-pf-infighting-cancer-spreads-villages/>.

Parirenyatwa and Olivia Muchena, stood as senators rather than MPs in 2013. If a party elite is allocated a seat in a province where that party is likely to win senate seats through proportional representation, it can be considered a reward for that elite, in that they do not have to campaign. It is also a commentary on their overall effectiveness within the party - they are important enough to be granted further patronage, yet not likely to win seats for the party.

Map 2: ZANU-PF seat gains in 2013



Election interim periods and factional fighting

At late stage patronage, the use of violence becomes internal to the machinery of government. For several African states, this machine is seized by succession politics. After the 2013 election, ZANU-PF continued to orchestrate ways to regain rural votes and consolidate the party at the local through national levels, but it was beset by internal factions. The ‘plot’ for Mujuru to overtake Mugabe heightened after the 2013 election, as did the campaign to prevent her. The result of the internal machinations was a purge in late 2014 of Mrs. Mujuru and those believed supportive of her. Notably, as a harbinger of future internal crisis, the supposed support of the Security Sector was the nail in the Mujuru coffin. Mugabe was clearly aware of the close hold the security services appeared to have in this late stage of his authority. In particular, the War Veterans association, and senior members of the services, held both real authority and legitimating authority within ZANU-PF. The distance between those who claimed ‘ownership’ of ZANU-PF and Mugabe’s position began to show. It became further entrenched during purges in 2016, with the rise of G40 as a front for various weak “pro-Mugabe-younger generation” candidates; and the eventually firing of then Vice

President Emerson Mnangagwa in late 2017. As rumored, the military and war veterans backed Mnangagwa's usurpation of power over both Mujuru (in 2014) and Mugabe. President Mugabe stepped down in late November 2017 with minimal violence, barring a few incidents involving the arrests or escapes or senior elites in Harare.⁵³

Throughout this period of internal party insecurity, many intersecting, ongoing, and opportunistic tactics for gathering local authority, rents and resources and denying them to others generated low level, local conflicts. There were intermittent local attacks and protests surrounding factional politics. Rent disputes and patronage territory disputes tended to occur in key sectors. There were continued farm acquisitions in Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland East, particularly on land that had belonged to G40 supporters.⁵⁴ Clashes and machete murders between gangs of artisanal gold miners in Midlands province continued. These gangs are organized and run by elites with factional interests.⁵⁵ The clashes between organized groups of vendors, kombi drivers, and other transport operators and the police or city authorities continued.⁵⁶ Isolated incidents of violence against opposition supporters continued at a similar rate to violence against opposition supporters over the past two years.⁵⁷ This violence received little reaction from security, the government or the international community.

The political machinations at the top, and the intense struggles playing out between elites and their interests, did not devolve into organized violence that diffused or escalated significantly. The military and party elites who forced Mugabe to resign realized that, in this instance, they would benefit more from an untarnished image internationally, so they needed to keep widespread, orchestrated political violence to a minimum. Furthermore, there are multiple ways to 'harm' an internal opposition without using overt violence. The military and ZANU-PF group in control of the party is tactically undermining the support bases for the remaining internal opposition - using accusations of corruption and party votes of no confidence. These strategies at the national level, complemented by intermittent violence against the state's official opposition, as well as internal competitors, suggest a key aspect of Zimbabwe's conflict: large scale political violence is a strategy used to further a political agenda only when it is useful for the main party, and controlling interests of that party. It does not represent a breakdown in state authority, or weakness of the party of the regime. It is one of many tools and should always be explained in terms of what it can deliver for the violent agents, rather than a focus on the negative repercussions, of which there are many. Further, that there was violent clashes locally, both within ZANU-PF institutions and against opposition supporters, suggest a widespread acceptance and impunity for these actions. While dealing with national instability, the patronage flow in ZANU-PF was experiencing massive difficulties as the economic situation worsened. Little was likely moving from the top of the networks to the bottom, but the opportunity to loot and capture resources to 'feed' local supporters and as an additional source of elite income was unlikely to be turned down. This leads to reports of scattered, inconsistent and 'resource' focused altercations in trading areas, small mines, businesses, road taxes (the police road blocks from 2016 being a key example).

⁵³ "Zimbabwe's very peculiar coup," 16 November 2017, *International Crisis Group*, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/zimbabwe/zimbabwes-very-peculiar-coup>.

⁵⁴ "Soldiers assault 19 families, force them to burn their houses," 12 January 2018, *Bulawayo24*, <https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-125691.html>.

⁵⁵ "Terror in Kwekwe after ED Fall," 12 November 2017, *The Standard*, <https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2017/11/12/terror-kwekwe-ed-fall/>.

⁵⁶ "Harare warns vendors against bashing municipal cops," 4 January 2018, *Daily News*, <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2018/01/04/harare-warns-vendors-against-bashing-municipal-cops>. "Kombi wars rock Bulawayo," 9 February 2018, *Newsday*, <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/02/kombi-wars-rock-bulawayo/>.

⁵⁷ Aclad database.

Change in ZANU-PF and Current Status

The violence of 2008 allowed an inner circle of ZANU-PF to consolidate power between those elites who were crucial in delivering this election to then President Mugabe. Those who currently occupy senior positions in the Mnangagwa government worked over a period of ten years to remove elements that threatened their rise to power and consolidation of the party and state to their benefit. That they were able to disseminate the opposition's power in the 2013 election further sealed their path to centralized control. The issues within ZANU-PF, including ongoing consolidation of party structures and elites, integration with the formal institutions of the state, and the decreasing resources with which to pay its members for their support and roles, will continue to dominate the politics of Zimbabwe.

2018 has witnessed a largely peaceful transition, initiated by the same individuals and internal ZANU-PF groups who were behind the violent election run-off in 2008, Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, and Gukurahundi in the 1980s.⁵⁸ That the transition was peaceful is not a testament to their peaceful aims, but rather underscores the central point about conflict: it emerges because of competition. The Mnangagwa faction faced no coordinated competition for power, and hence violence was unnecessary. President Mnangagwa continues to face few detractors that could legitimately create a viable threat to him, so violence is likely to stay low. Detractors and opponents lose more by engaging in violence than they gain: Zimbabweans neither have an acceptance nor an appetite for political violence. There is an internal country norm around levels of violence which politicians have to adhere to: while the election violence in 2008 was much lower than the election violence in Kenya (the same year), it is consistently raised in Zimbabwe, whereas it is seldom of significance to political discourse in Kenya, where citizens have a higher expectation of political violence. Overall, violence levels in Zimbabwe are generally low compared to other countries in the region, and the risk for higher violence is contingent on a number of elite choices that appear unlikely at present. However, Zimbabwean citizens do not live in an open and free society, but one where their security and rights are determined by the unstable machinations of the ZANU-PF political machine.

The violence in 2008 gave ZANU-PF an opportunity to seal future victories over the opposition, and how this period laid the groundwork for a reorganization of their party. Since 2008, fractures within ZANU-PF's public and elite support led to violence across Zimbabwe, and best understood as a way for members within the ruling party to re-organize power, reassert control and reestablish consistent alliances. Zimbabwe's recent violence emanates from two sources: competition between members of the ruling party for access to favored financial resources, corruption schemes and voting constituencies, and intermittent attempts to reassert local control on the ground through youth militias, politicized aid, repressing citizens, attacking vendors etc. Much of those control mechanisms surround access to patronage. In addition, acts of random violence against the weaker opposition are common.

Violence is one of many ways to gain control, but ZANU-PF factions have employed many others. Following the 2008 violence, and leading to the 2013 election, ZANU-PF began a period of purging defectors, and building new internal alliances. These internal processes allowed for a consolidated party structure to pursue a 2013 election strategy that resulted in several anomalous outcomes, recycled elites who appear to have benefitted from turning on each other in 2008, and power grabs to further consolidate the regime's hold on its elites.⁵⁹

ZANU-PF has witnessed many substantial changes since before 2008 as a result of the logic of political survival for both Mugabe and a group of top elites. Reluctant to name a potential successor and limiting

⁵⁸ "Zimbabwe's Military-Assisted Transition and Prospects for Recovery," 20 December 2017, *International Crisis Group*, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/zimbabwe/b134-zimbabwes-military-assisted-transition-and-prospects-recovery>.

⁵⁹ Raftopoulos, B. (2013) The 2013 Elections in Zimbabwe: The End of an Era, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39:4, 971-988.

the path of actual successors at every turn, Mugabe sowed discord across his political network and the state at large. Succession politics split the party, and the consequences of 2017 and the rise of Mnagagwa may make ZANU-PF significantly smaller given the paucity of resources to fund internal and external alliances.

Based on detailed subnational violence data from that period, political attacks in 2008 had three objectives, each with their own strategy, subnational geography and target (ACLED, 2016). The “repression” objective was to deal with areas of high, opposition turnout: loyal opposition supporters were attacked in order to prevent them from voting and discourage continued actions. Much of the urban violence can be attributed to attacking the opposition. But the opposition did well in a number of rural areas outside of typical strongholds including Masvingo and Manicaland⁶⁰. This created the need to respond to “defector suppression”. The success of the MDC MP representatives and the questionable need for a runoff election suggest that typical ZANU-PF rural voters “defected” and voted both for a local MDC representative and Morgan Tsvangirai for president. Attacks in areas that returned an MDC local representative may be attributed to this logic, as well as targeted attacks in frontline areas, where examples could be made of those who ‘voted incorrectly’. But there is a third, supplemental explanation for some violence: “punishing traitors. A ‘traitor’ vote is one where the voter cast their ballot for their local ZANU-PF MP but did not vote for Mugabe. From Mugabe’s perspective, the elites (MPs, Provincial authorities, traditional authorities and other ZANU-PF elites in the area) in areas that returned a ZANU-PF local representative vote-- but not support for him and his inner circle--are ZANU-PF traitors. The violence occurring in these districts could be an act of warning, consolidation and terror to discourage and punish future dissension.

Why did traitor-votes emerge? Key ZANU-PF elites from specific strongholds were likely ‘under-paid’ and reluctant to let Mugabe’s power continue unchecked, as the previous period had been sustained economic and political crisis. But they also suggest a difficult and ongoing reality for ZANU-PF: their supporters are not loyal. Too much has accrued to the top circle of elites, and too little to the bottom. Combined with no consistent platform and a threadbare liberation ideology, insufficient patronage is a likely key reason for both defector and traitor votes. This problem transcends ZANU-PF factions and purges, but it goes to the heart of the regime’s issue of reproduction, consolidation and generational change.

⁶⁰ While MDC has some support across the country, typical returns have urban areas, Matabelelands and Bulawayo as their core areas.