

Zimbabwe in 2011/2012: Political Scenario Mapping

by
John Makumbe

The year 2010 ended on a rather sour note for most politicians in Zimbabwe. At the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) annual consultative meeting in December, President Robert Mugabe called for harmonized elections to be held in 2011, arguing that the government of national unity (GNU) was not working well. He argued that the GNU, a temporary measure aimed at bringing about inclusivity and harmony, had not been an effective governance mechanism. In Zimbabwe, the call for elections always conjures up scenes of political violence, polarisation and the possibility of incumbent legislators losing their seats.

On returning from his annual holiday in Singapore, Mugabe repeated his call for elections in 2011 indicating that as President, he had the constitutional authority to dissolve Parliament and call for elections. This was strongly disputed by Morgan Tsvangirai, the Prime Minister and president of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T), who rightly argued that Mugabe cannot dissolve Parliament and call for elections without first consulting the other two Principals.

The purpose of this piece is to map out some of the possible scenarios that Zimbabwe may be faced with in 2011/2012. Given the volatility of the Zimbabwe political situation, it is only fair to caution that all four of the scenarios outlined below could change significantly with the passage of time.

Scenario One: Ivory [Most Likely]

We have called this first scenario Ivory since it is inspired by some of the events that are currently taking place in the Ivory Coast, which closely resemble the events that occurred in Zimbabwe in 2008. It is ironic that in its wisdom (or lack of it), the African Union (AU) included President Mugabe on the team of mediators that will be working on the Ivorian crisis. Despite Mugabe's call for elections in 2011, there is likely to be SADC pressure on the inclusive government to fully implement the global political agreement (GPA) so as to ensure

that the next elections are credible and indisputable. The legal and institutional reforms that are spelt out in the GPA would have to be implemented, as well as the twenty-four outstanding issues that have already been agreed on but have not yet been implemented. The time required for the drafting of the new constitution and the holding of a referendum will essentially mean that no elections can be conducted in Zimbabwe in 2011. Both formations of the MDC have so far indicated that they will not agree to participate in elections before the GPA stipulated reforms are in place. Elections can, however, be held should any one of the three parties to the GPA indicate that they are no longer interested in participating in the GNU.

There are growing fears for Mugabe's health since he will be turning 87 this February. Zanu-PF would therefore prefer that elections are held as soon as possible while Mugabe is still in reasonable health. There are, however, some Zanu-PF members of Parliament who are not keen on early elections as they are afraid of losing their seats to the popular MDC-T. Zanu-PF is very likely to deploy elements from the security sector to campaign for Mugabe and his party, and this will essentially mean that there will be serious levels of political violence. At the same time, the business community is worried that elections in 2011 will most likely have a negative impact on the fragile economy which, though stable, is improving at a very slow pace due to the political uncertainties, limited foreign direct investment and Zimbabwe's ill-conceived policies such as the indigenization and economic empowerment policy. There will therefore be limited transition to democracy and polarisation will remain as any healing and reconciliation efforts will fail to gather momentum. As a result, the MDC-T is likely to get stronger while Zanu-PF will be weakened under this scenario.

Scenario Two: Encore [Likely]

In the second scenario, we see continued stalemate among the GNU players. There will also be increased political tension and the resort to violence, mainly by Zanu-PF, given Mugabe's call for elections in 2011. The constitution making process will be stalled due to limited resources and political bickering among the three principal parties. Eventually, a draft constitution will be completed but it will turn out to be highly pro-Zanu-PF and will be rejected at a referendum in the second half of 2011. Mugabe will take advantage of this NO vote and call for elections under the current Lancaster House Constitution, which strongly favours his party. But as in 2008, the MDC-T will nevertheless win these elections and

Mugabe and Zanu-PF will dispute the results alleging vote rigging by the pro-MDC civil servants. Mugabe will once again refuse to hand over power. SADC will then resume its mediation process and negotiate what may be called a GPA(2), and a GNU(2) will be formed. The MDC and civil society will protest to both the SADC and the AU but to no avail. The security forces will intensify their repression and gross human rights violations will be committed. Western countries will maintain targeted sanctions and restrictive measures, and little transition to democracy will occur.

Scenario Three: Dream Come True [Unlikely]

Under this scenario, the Constitutional Parliamentary Committee (Copac) will complete the drafting of the new foundation law for Zimbabwe in mid-2011. A referendum on the new law will be conducted in September and a YES response will be attained. Presidential elections will then be called for early December 2011 and the MDC-T will win these elections. Zanu-PF will make protestations to save face but Mugabe will gladly hand over power to Morgan Tsvangirai. Both the SADC and the AU will accept the election results and so will the international community, which will proceed to recognise the new government and lift the sanctions and restrictive measures against Zimbabwe. Civil society, though accepting the results, will insist that a better and more democratic constitution be drafted, this time without excessive Zanu-PF involvement. Thousands of Zimbabweans in the Diaspora begin streaming back home as the nation goes into top gear in the transition to democracy. Strong measures are taken to reform state institutions and the security sector in order to eliminate chances of partisan operation by these structures.

We note here that although Mugabe is insisting on elections at all levels of the governance structure, the MDC-T and the MDC-M have indicated that only presidential elections should be conducted before 2013 since they are the only ones that were disputed in 2008. Mugabe's insistence on harmonised elections is based on the fear that if only presidential elections are held, some of his own party members will not campaign for him to win, and Tsvangirai will, once again, win the election hands down. This is a legitimate fear since most of his fellow party members are also of the view that he has overstayed his welcome but they dare not openly state this viewpoint. The limited resources available for both the referendum and the elections further militate against the holding of harmonised elections as opposed to only presidential elections.

Scenario 4: Big Event [Most Unlikely]

The Big Event is if one of the two politically strongest leaders in Zimbabwe dies or is in any way incapacitated. We refer here to President Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai. If this happens to President Mugabe, then both the House of Assembly and the Senate will be summoned to sit as an Electoral College to elect a President who will hold office until the scheduled 2013 elections or until the GNU is dissolved, whichever will occur earlier. All three political parties that are part of the GNU will nominate candidates of their choice. The current composition of the legislature is such that the Zanu-PF candidate will win such elections since both the eighteen traditional leaders and the ten provincial governors are likely to vote with Zanu-PF. There is likely to be serious internal strife within Zanu-PF as the three main factions will jostle for the leadership of that party and the nation.

At the time of writing, it seems as if Emmerson Mnangagwa would win that contest, and Joice Mujuru would most likely be re-assigned elsewhere outside of the presidency. Mujuru has of late found herself at loggerheads with President Mugabe who probably now thinks that she would not be a suitable candidate to take over from him. Mnangagwa is also quite unpopular within the structures of Zanu-PF, but some of the hardliners in that party prefer him as the heir apparent to Mugabe rather than lady Mujuru. There is also speculation that given the political bickering in his own party, Mugabe would probably prefer to hand over power to Morgan Tsvangirai for the sake of the nation. For his own safety, Mugabe dares not publicly articulate this preference to his colleagues in Zanu-PF.

What if it is Tsvangirai who dies or becomes incapacitated? This is also likely to cause considerable chaos within the MDC-T since there is currently no obvious successor. In fact, there are several senior members of that party who would like to take over when Tsvangirai goes. Examples include the secretary general, Tendai Biti, the organising secretary, Elias Mudzuri, and the party's national chairman, Lovemore Moyo, to name a few. The MDC-T's vice president, Thokozani Khupe, is unlikely to take over from Tsvangirai ahead of some of the individuals noted above.

The Big Event is likely to result, *inter alia*, in the destabilisation of the national economy and there will also be political tension country-wide. The security sector is likely to assume the



role of king-maker, and this may result in a major tug of war between those in that sector that support Mujuru and those that support Mnangagwa. Here again, the Mnangagwa group seems to have the upper hand since most of the elements in the security sector will prefer that the nation be ruled by a man rather than a woman. The nation will remain at a standstill; there will be no transition to democracy. The international community will remain sceptical and sanctions will remain firmly in place. The tenure of the GNU is likely to be extended by several months, possibly all the way into 2013, when scheduled elections are due.

Conclusion

Zimbabwe's current political arrangement is increasingly untenable and will continue to be tested by the prospects of either a referendum or elections. The benefits of having a stake in the state may also prejudice the onset of any real change in the next five to ten years. It will however be incumbent on the region to ensure that the conduct of both the referendum and any future election can withstand measurement against the continent's own principles and guidelines on such democratic processes.