

Review

Factors affecting voting behavior and voting patterns in Zimbabwe's 2008 harmonized elections

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Elections in Zimbabwe 2008 reflected a changing behavior and pattern that has existed since her attainment of independence in 1980. History has it that the ruling ZANU PF has always had a sweet and easy victory over the opposition. The 2008 elections reflected a different picture. The 2008 elections were unique not only in as far as results are concerned but also in as far as the indirect and direct players' contributions. The uniqueness was manifested in behavior of the voters and the parties themselves. There were many political contesters and many offices up for grabs at once. These were the first elections that failed to produce an outright winner for the office of president and led for the first time to a runoff since independence. A number of questions have arisen as to the changes in voting patterns. The papers therefore seek to analyze the factors beneath the manifestation of the trend changes. The paper will round off by pontificating about the future of voting patterns in Zimbabwe.

Key words: elections, voting patterns and behaviour, Internal and external factors, free and fair elections.

INTRODUCTION

Since the formation of the MDC in 2000, there always has been some gruesome election battle. The battles have been won by ZANU PF because of a number of factors which is not the scope of this discussion. When people vote there are a number of consideration a voter has. Even the so called 'parochial' think and make decisions before they cast their vote. They will be very conscious of their votes and will always make an informed decision. In 2008 voters made informed decisions based on certain factors hence 2008 elections were unique. The elections had a significant external flavor such as the SADC Electoral Act which for the first time was being used and in Zimbabwe for experimental purposes. The Act ushered in new conditions and thus a shift from the traditional conditions surrounding Zimbabwean elec-

tions. Sanctions had a bearing on the voting behavior and pattern as the socio-economic and political environment of the day affected the voters' behavior.

On the domestic arena, the actors' role and contributions in the election process had affected and affected the voting pattern and behavior. ZEC and ZESN's role on voter education just before the elections need to be captured for a balanced assessment of the factors. In this line one cannot downplay the role played by the Media and the Non Governmental Organizations. The organizational capacities and strategies of the political parties and their leaders had an effect on the voters' behavior. Some parties lost out because of splits, factionalism and divisions. The creation of many constituencies and the delimitation map affected the voting process.

The Simba Makoni breakaway from ZANU PF on 'Super Tuesday', his personality and defections to his party from the two main parties- MDC and ZANU PF had immense effect on March 28 elections. The division of MDC into MDC led by Tsvangirai and the other led by Mutambara had a direct effect on the voting pattern and results. The internal squabbles of parties themselves such

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such as the divisions rocking MDC T prior to the elections in the Midlands region affected voting behavior and pattern. Issues of class, ethnicity and race cannot be understated or underestimated as they also had a say on the voting patterns. This paper discusses the factors influencing the voting behavior and patterns in the elections.

THE 2008 ELECTION DETAILS

Before an exploration of the factors affecting the 2008 elections in Zimbabwe, it is logical to come up with the election details that will help to solidify and support the propositions. The House of Assembly seats were expanded from 150 to 210 members, all elected, in the 2008 election, while the Senate comprised 93 seats, 60 of which were directly elected. There were 29 constituencies in Harare, 28 in Midlands, 26 in Manicaland, 18 in Mashonaland Central, 23 in Mashonaland East, 22 in Mashonaland West, 26 in Masvingo, 13 in Matabeleland North and 13 in Matabeleland South and 12 in Bulawayo. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission delimited 1,958 wards. There were about 5.9 million registered voters, about 11,000 polling stations, compared to about 4,000 polling stations in the 2005 parliamentary election. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/zimbabwe parliamentary elections 2008](http://en.wikipedia.org/zimbabwe_parliamentary_elections_2008)).

Final results for the House of Assembly showed the MDC (Tsvangirai) with 100 seats, ZANU-PF with 99 seats, the MDC (Mutambara) with ten seats and one independent. ZANU-PF was credited with the lead in the popular vote, receiving 45.94% against 42.88% for the MDC (Tsvangirai), 8.39% for the MDC (Mutambara) and 2.79% for minor parties and independent candidates. ZANU-PF won an absolute majority of the popular vote in five provinces: Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Midlands and Masvingo. In Masvingo, although the party won 52.01% of the vote, it took only 12 of the 26 seats, while the MDC (Tsvangirai) won 41.61% of the vote and took 14 seats. The MDC (Tsvangirai) won an absolute majority in Harare and Manicaland. In Bulawayo, the MDC (Tsvangirai) won all 12 seats with 47% of the vote; it also led in Matabeleland in Matabeleland North with about 37% of the vote. ZANU-PF won the most votes in Matabeleland South, but won only three seats; the MDC (Mutambara) won seven and the MDC (Tsvangirai) won two. ZANU-PF's loss of seats was attributed primarily to major loss of support in Manicaland and moderate loss of support in Masvingo, with support for the respective parties being considered relatively unchanged in the rest of the country. Final Senate results were released showing the MDC and ZANU-PF with 30 seats each. As for the presidential results, no candidate received an outright majority in the first round as Tsvangirai got 47.9% of the first round vote and Mugabe got 43.2%. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/zimbabwe parliamentary elections](http://en.wikipedia.org/zimbabwe_parliamentary_elections)

2008).

The factors

The factors can be divided into internal and external contributions. Externally, it has to do with Zimbabwe's interaction with the outside world and how it impinged on the views and perception of voters. Internal factors concern the socio-economic and political developments within the country and how the political parties managed the developments in light of the 2008 harmonized elections.

External

The enactment of the US-Zimbabwe Democracy Bill in the United States, suspension of Zimbabwe from the International Monetary Fund, suspension and subsequent withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth, suspension of aid in social services by some Nordic countries and the imposition of sanctions by the European Union, affected the voters' social and economic lives. The sanctions had a negative effect on the Zimbabwean economy as there were acute shortages of goods on the Zimbabwean shelves. There were artificial shortages and the collapse of the economy thanks to the neo-liberal agenda and the capitalist global forces operating in nation states and in the jungle called the international system. Sadly the multilateral institutions which are pro-liberal joined in the battle and a tiny state called Zimbabwe, which in the era of globalization cannot do alone experienced the following problems emanating from what Mugabe has always labeled illegal sanctions meant to effect regime change. The problems encountered prior, during and after the elections include the following:

- i. Fuel shortages.
- ii. Hyper inflation.
- iii. Currency depreciation.
- iv. Food shortages.
- v. Hunger.
- vi. Famine.
- vii. Retrenchments.
- viii. Unemployment.
- ix. Shortage of medicines and drugs in hospitals.
- x. Striking civil servants.
- xi. Brain drain.

The 2008 elections came amidst these challenges and the voters were crushed by the sanctions to an extent of thinking and voting for a change of government. Some voters did not care the name and capabilities of those contesters but just voted for change. The reason lies in the fact that voters were hungry and therefore angry against the government which was suffering from the imposed sanctions. The people therefore just voted for

change hence the statistics tilted in favour of the opposition parties. It must be noted that the voters do not trust the change but they just protested against the government that they thought to have brought the untold suffering.

The look east policy was not quicker in cultivating benefits and thus it did not match the onslaught from the neo-liberal global forces that imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe. As noted above, the global forces had almost brought Zimbabwe to a standstill and the general voters suffered hence their votes went to an alternative party-MDC. The sanctions therefore had an impact that caused a shift in voting behavior as people chose a party that was not under sanctions. This explains the votes garnered by all opposition parties. In previous elections, very few would vote for the opposition but this time it happened, thanks to the sanction related hardships.

The SADC electoral act guideline

The 2008 elections in Zimbabwe were conducted under the SADC electoral act guideline which was not only new to Zimbabwe but an experiment by SADC. It sought to usher in an environment of free and fair elections. While other critics would argue that the 2008 march elections were not free and fair, I do hereby submit that the socio-economic and political environment prevailing prior to the elections was far much better and changed from the previous conditions that have always been unfair and unfree. It was a far much better and improved scenario from the 2005, 2002 and 2000 elections where political violence claimed many lives and the opposition could not campaign in certain areas. There were minimum cases of political violence and interference.

For the first time, Zimbabwe obliged to implement the provisions of the electoral act thereby providing a new and unique environment which ultimately changed voting patterns and behavior. The SADC electoral act for the first time allowed the opposition to use the public media and thus they campaigned on national radio and television stations. They in the process reached out to almost every corner of the country and thus for the first time other parts heard the election manifestos and propaganda of both the opposition and the ruling party. This significant access to the media meant the opposition campaigned even in rural areas where ZANU PF has had a monopoly. In essence the opposition party- MDC garnered many votes from the country side and thus a change in the voting pattern and behaviours of people.

The SADC electoral act ensured free political activity throughout the country and this free environment implied that the opposition campaigned everywhere throughout the country thereby cutting across the areas where they had been barred from entering in previous elections. Because of free political activity ensured by the act, the opposition managed to educate and mobilize enough to effect a change in voting patterns.

Internal factors

The role played by NGOs, Media and election Institutions in the March, 2008 elections had a bearing on the change in voting pattern and behaviours. While the opposition and the NGOs have refuted vehemently that they campaigned for the opposition, I do hereby submit to the contrary. The NGOs working in most rural areas through hook and crook means campaigned for the opposition. One cannot deny the organic connection between MDC and the NGO sector. The NGOs have a stake in the MDC as the organizations were behind the origin of MDC. Surely one cannot prophesy ignorance of that ZCTU, NCA, CRISIS COALITION, ZINASU and many other NGOs have always supported the opposition and sometimes inform and rubberstamp the opposition's ideology and stance. Not all NGOs however supported the opposition but one cannot downplay their influence. The Bikita people who have always been a target group of NGOs voted overwhelmingly for the opposition thanks to the NGO education and mobilization there.

The media also played a significant role towards the change in voting patterns in 2008. While I submit that the contesting parties did not get equal access to the media, the time and space given to the opposition in this election was far much improved that it aired its propaganda and communicated its manifesto to the millions and millions of people in the countryside. Both the electronic and print media accepted adverts and campaigning material from the contesters, although ZANU PF had an unfair advantage, this on the whole worked to the effect of changing voting patterns as the opposition gained significant votes.

The delimitation commission and its increase of constituencies and other related changes also affected voters. The opposition cried foul prior to the voting but emerged stronger because it gained a significant number of new constituencies owing to the increase in constituencies, the number of polling stations also increased thereby ensuring free voter activity. Other voters could not vote because of a change of constituencies and they were turned away.

The role played by the Elections Institutions such as ZEC and ZESN cannot be ignored. This entails voter education and mobilization. While it has always been a prerogative of ZEC to educate voters, in 2008 ZESN also took to the people and educated many on the voting process. ZESN is alleged to have campaigned for the opposition while the opposition says ZEC campaigned for ZANU PF. This paper submits that whatever the case, people went to the votes informed of their free right to choose and therefore without fear casted their votes. The secrecy often attributed to vote rigging was exposed prior to the voting day thereby casting away all the fears that have always been imposed on people. The conditions therefore were a bit changed with many election educators and observers coming in, the prevailing conditions just prior to the elections impacted in such a way that the way that the electorate believed that the election process

had been made transparent and thus they would exercise their right to choose freely.

INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPEMNTS THAT MATTERED IN 2008 ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS

Super Tuesday factor/ the Simba Makoni factor

On February 5, 2008, Simba Makoni held a press conference in Harare where he stated that he was challenging Robert Mugabe to become the next President of Zimbabwe. Up to that point he had remained a member of the ZANU-PF Politburo and the party's Deputy Secretary of Economic Affairs. He told reporters, flanked by Ibo Mandaza and Retired Major Kudzai Mbudzi, "Following very extensive and intensive consultations with party members and activists countrywide and also with others outside the party, I have accepted the call and hereby advise the people of Zimbabwe that I offer myself as candidate for the office of president...I share the agony and anguish of all citizens over the extreme hardships that we all have endured for nearly 10 years now...I also share the widely held view that these hardships are a result of failure of national leadership and that change at that level is a pre-requisite for change at other levels of national endeavor."(Fanuel Jongwe, "Ex-minister takes on Mugabe", AFP The Times, South Africa, February 5, 2008).

Makoni said that he would have liked to run as ZANU-PF's candidate, but since he could not, he was running as an independent. When Makoni announced his candidature, he stated that many in ZANU-PF particularly the political "heavyweights" would publicly announce their support for him. This triggered intense speculation that the Vice President's husband and retired army commander, Solomon Mujuru would declare his support for him. The following notable endorsements were made:

- i. On February 15, Arthur Mutambara, the leader of another MDC faction said that he would not run for President and that his faction would instead back Makoni.
- ii. At the opening of Makoni's campaign on February 29, former Interior Minister Dumiso Dabengwa and former Speaker of Parliament Cyril Ndebele were present to support him. (Rival wins key supporter", BBC News, March 1, 2008) Also present at White City hall where Makoni launched his campaign was Edgar Tekere who vowed to de-campaign Mugabe until election time.
- iii. Fay Chung the former Zimbabwe Minister of Education and Culture and currently an independent candidate in the March, 2008 senatorial elections has also formally endorsed Makoni. (Ex- Zim Minister Confirms Backing Makoni, vying for Senatorial Seat", The Zimbabwe Gazette, March 4, 2008).

The breakaway from by Simba Makoni from the ZANU PF establishment effected changes to the voting patterns in Zimbabwe. His personality and influence as well as the

timing of his breakaway from ZANU PF fed on the would-be ZANU PF supporters. The team he assembled under the Mavambo project and the lucrative manifesto attracted many from both ZANU PF and MDC. This paper argues that ZANU PF was disturbed by the Makoni coup as he went promising that many from ZANU PF would join him as what influential Dabengwa did. Whether he told the truth or he lied, whether it was an intelligence works or it was a genuine move away from home, the fact is that the move costed ZANU PF more than it costed the other contesters. The declaration by the Mutambara faction on supporting Simba Makoni again further affected voting patterns. Disgruntled members from ZANU PF simply relaxed and could not either join Simba or campaign for the ZANU PF presidential candidate thereby allowing their traditional votes to be shared between MDC T and the MDC T establishment. This is evidenced by the fact that in one ward a ZANU PF parliamentary candidate would score higher than the ZANU PF presidential candidate. This arguably shocked the party top brass who went on to order a rerun that did little to change the votes statistics.

In Matabeleland, the usual MDC stronghold lost votes to Simba Makoni because of Dumiso Dabengwa and the other faction's declared support for the Mavambo project. MDC T could not get much because of the alleged Dumiso factor. Besides the Simba Makoni factor, there are other underlying factors that need discussion.

MDC SPLIT- anti-senate and pro senate factions

After the Senate elections, the MDC split into two groups: One led by Morgan Tsvangirai and another by his deputy Gibson Sibanda with the support of Welshman Ncube, Gift Chimani and spokesperson Paul Themba Nyathi. Tsvangirai and Mutambara failed to unite on a single MDC candidate for the March, 2008 presidential election. Tsvangirai ran for President while Mutambara backed the independent candidacy of Simba Makoni (Fikile Mapala, "Mutambara withdraws from race, backs Makoni", newzimbabwe.com, 15 February, 2008). The split of the MDC into two factions and their failure to unite prior to the elections costed them some votes hence there was a shift in voting behavior. The combined and united MDC could have won the elections convincingly as calculations from the 2008 elections show. There are instances where two MDC candidates, (one from MDC Mutambara and one from MDC T), could have won if their votes were combined. However, many seats were won by ZANU -PF because of the division of the opposition. This was the case in the Mazowe South constituency, where the ruling party won the seat with 4109 votes but the combined vote of both MDC factions added up to 5453. To sum it all, Coltart of the pro-Senate faction observed, "In at least 8 House of Assembly constituencies we handed victory to ZANU PF by dividing the vote" (Senator David Coltart Bulawayo 3 April, 2008. www1.zimbabwesituation.com).

The split of the MDC between the two factions supporting Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara has hurt their combined electoral performance, as the election to the House of Assembly is based on the first past the post system. The electorate who for the first time heard about the MDC was confused on who to vote for as they saw two candidates using the same logo. The split therefore affected voting patterns. The other smaller faction declared its support for Simba Makoni thereby confusing the voters all the more.

Party fielding several candidates, factionalism, divisions

The contesting parties failed to be united within their establishments serve for the Simba Makoni led establishment. The divisions and disagreements within the contesting parties had a bearing on the voting patterns and behaviors of the people. ZANU PF had disciplinary problems following the unexpected departure of Simba Makoni. There were some skirmishes in Mhangura when ZANU PF leaders there allowed Simba Makoni agents to campaign at A ZANU PF rally. Besides, ZANU PF party fielded more than one candidate in some Parliamentary constituencies. This was the case in:

- a) Nketa.
- b) Gutu West.
- c) Makoni West.
- d) Makoni East.
- e) Glenview.

MDC M fielded more than one candidate in the following areas:

- a) Chiwundura.
- b) Gokwe-Nembudziya.
- c) Silobela.
- d) Masvingo urban.

MDC T party had internal factionalism and divisions and this costed the party significant votes. Of particular interest is the Midlands area where almost every seat had two candidates from MDC T. This area had personality clashes and the national leadership failed to deal with this problem prior to the elections thereby leading to a split in votes as the electorate did not know the national executive's official candidate. Kombayi, who was the faction's Senatorial candidate for the Gweru Chirumanzu constituency was accused of sponsoring some of the "rebel" candidates but nothing was done to correct this anomaly. On Election Day, the party fielded more than one candidate in the following areas:

- i. Chirumhanzu.
- ii. Chirumhanzu- Zivagwe.
- iii. Gweru urban.
- iv. Redcliff.

- v. Shurugwi North.
- vi. Vungu.
- vii. Zvishavane Ngezi.
- a) Hwange Central. b) Shamva North.

(ZEC announced results and statistics of 2008 elections).

Organizational capacity of parties

The main three parties fall short of excellent organizational capacities in the 2008 elections. As highlighted in the preceding data, the parties did not manage internal struggles for power successfully hence the fielding of many candidates. Of course the MDC T is the chief culprit in this regard. It was however a new phenomena in ZANU PF and unless this problem is rectified, this will always be a set back as was the case in the Makoni North seat where its total votes from its two candidates were far much more of the winning MDC T candidate.

The two MDC formations failed to field a candidate in Muzarabani South, thereby guaranteeing ZANU PF of one parliamentary seat unopposed. One does not understand the capacity, tact and potency of a party that seeks control of Zimbabwe when it fails to field a candidate. The MDC supporters in Muzarabani therefore voted for the available candidate and thus a blow to the MDC. The MDC M failed to field candidates in most areas for reasons best known to the leadership. The electorate therefore didn't have choice but to accept ZANU PF and MDC T candidates. The parties therefore lacked preparedness. An inadequate preparation therefore is a factor that affected voting patterns in this election. It seems not even one of the parties was prepared enough for the elections.

The three parties also had a poor strategy in as far as voter education is concerned. Firstly it must be noted that there was poor voter turnout as less than 42.75% of the eligible voters voted. Besides the poor turnout, there was also a 1.58% spoilt papers. (ZESN 2008, 2008 Elections voter registration <http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/zim2008results5.htm>). The parties therefore did not play the role of voter mobilization and education, thereby burdening the crippled ZEC to do the work. Some people simply ignored the elections while others who had the zeal, lacked knowledge of how to vote, hence the increased number of spoilt papers. ZANU PF did a better job as most of its supporters in the rural areas took part in the elections. This explains why ZANU emerged superior on the popular vote and yet it lost on the number of seats.

Regionalism

The 2008 elections in Zimbabwe had a regionalism factor. Voters voted in the spirit of the region as evidenced by the fact that Manicaland, Masvingo, Harare, and Bulawayo voted for the MDC while Mashonaland East - West and Central voted for ZANU PF strongly. It was a

new development in Zimbabwean politics that ZANU PF would loose out in Manicaland and parts of Masvingo. Voters therefore voted according to the beliefs and party orientations of their influential regional leaders. In essence it is hereby forwarded that the regions that voted for the MDC had most influential people in the party structures from these regions hence their influence had a bearing on the voting pattern of the region. The MDC top brass is made up of people from Masvingo and Manicaland hence these leaders s influence in their region worked in the change of behavior of the voters in 2008.

Ethnicity

An ethnic group is a group of human beings whose members identify with each other, usually on the basis of preferential endogamy and/or a presumed or real common ancestry. Ethnic identity is further marked by the recognition from others of a group's distinctiveness and the recognition of common cultural, linguistic, religious, behavioral or biological traits, real or presumed, as indicators of contrast to other groups. "Ethnicity is a fundamental factor in human life: it is a phenomenon inherent in human experience (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_behaviour).

Ethnicity has been a factor in Zimbabwean elections and thus one cannot downplay its effect on voting behaviour and patterns in the 2008 Zimbabwean elections. There are distinct tribes in Zimbabwe and these entail the Karanga, Zezuru, Ndebele, Tonga and Manyika. The charges of racial and ethnic prejudice, favoritism and marginalization have often gained renewed potency during periods of economic and political turbulence and have often been mobilized by politicians for political gain. For example, during the nationalist struggle for independence, ethnicity not only played an important in the struggle for leadership in ZAPU but also partly led to the eventual break-up of the party and the subsequent founding of ZANU in 1963. All but one of those who left the Joshua Nkomo-led party was Shona-speaking. Ethnicity continued to be a problem in both ZANU and ZAPU throughout the liberation struggles and leadership battles were sometimes fought along ethnic faultiness (Sithole, 1979).

To a certain extent, race and ethnicity have, therefore, continued to be salient in the social and political life of Zimbabwe before and after independence in 1980. Voting patterns in post-independent Zimbabwe have tended to reflect ethnic relations among the various groups in the country. In the 1980 elections, for instance, ZAPU which was perceived to be an 'Ndebele party' won all 20 seats in Matebeleland, while ZANU which has always been seen as a 'Shona party' got its majority seats in the Shona-speaking parts of the country. The Rhodesia Front, representing the political and economic interests of whites was overwhelmingly voted by whites. Until the removal of the 20 reserved seats from the constitution in

1987, Zimbabwean whites continued to vote the RF overwhelmingly. After the demise of the RF and the enactment of the constitutional amendment which abolished the separate voting roll for whites, most whites withdrew from electoral politics. They only resurfaced on the electoral seen in 2000 when their economic livelihoods were threatened by the government confiscation of white commercial farmers' land. While ethnic and racial relations among Zimbabwe's population groups have sometimes not been harmonious, there has been no open conflict or ethnically inspired violence since the Gukurahundi days of 1982 to 1987. Even the land reform exercise, which targeted white commercial land, has not resulted in open and sustained racial conflict between blacks and whites. (http://www.issafrika.org/index.php?link_id=14&slink_id=3524&link_type=12&slink_type=12&tmpl_id=3 Huysse, 2003).

The main ethnical groups of relevance to this research are the Ndebele and Tonga. The Ethno-national conflict that took place in Zimbabwe from 1980 - 1987, between the ZANU – Shona led government and the Ndebele led ZAPRA forces had an ethnical dimension that informed voting patterns and behaviours of 2008. The Ndebele voted for the MDC that does not have the ZANU people that were at the forefront of gukurahundi. Most of them voted for the MDC because the party has denounced the gukurahundi disturbances and have promised to establish a truth and reconciliation commission. Besides, the MDC has integrated the Ndebele people in its structures and thus there is balance. This explains why MDC took quite a number of votes in the Ndebele areas. In the Tonga ethnical case, the people have a common belief system and went on to vote for the opposition uniformly.

Race

Race, refers to "some concentrations, as relative to frequency and distribution, of hereditary particles (genes) and physical characters, which appear, fluctuate, and often disappear in the course of time by reason of geographic and or cultural isolation." "While we may not be different biologically, the color of our skin is the most visible difference among us, and it affects the way we interact with each other (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_classification_of_human_beings). The 2008 elections were also influenced by race as a factor. The color of the skin decided which party to vote for. The long standing conflict between the revolutionary and nationalist ZANU PF with the whites, resulted in many whites voting for the other parties with the liberal connotations and connections. Most whites voted for the MDC because the party is oriented in the west where the white race came from. It should be noted that the up market suburbs of Harare and Bulawayo voted overwhelmingly for the MDC and that's where these Whites reside. Also of importance is the fact that

many blacks who reside in the countryside voted for the Nationalist ZANU PF because of the people's hatred of anything to do with the white race. The MDC party was brandished in the media as a British puppet party and that had an effect on the uninformed rural black electorate who just dread anything of British origin.

Class

Social class refers to the hierarchical distinctions (or stratification) between individuals or groups in societies or cultures. Usually individuals are grouped into classes based on their economic positions and similar political and economic interests within the stratification system. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_class). First of all, a "class" is a group of human beings who share common interests, because they experience common conditions. The 2008 Zimbabwe elections had their voting patterns and behavior affected and influenced by class as a factor. Owing to the developing nature of Zimbabwe, many are poor and are in the working class category. Working and lower status citizens are more sensitive to macroeconomic fluctuations than their better-off counterparts. This heightened sensitivity affects fluctuations in voter turnout and voter choice across developing democracies. Macroeconomic downturns result in increased voter participation as lower status voters express their grievances at the polls. This benefits political parties and coalitions with expressly working- and lower-class appeals. Although increased turnout primarily helps parties that are working-class/economically disadvantaged oriented, the economic effect on party support is substantially greater.

In light of this, it is clear that many workers' vote went to the liberal and worker oriented party- MDC. Workers in Zimbabwe expressed their grievances emanating from worsening economic conditions by voting for an alternative party that has its roots in Labor movement. This explains the voting pattern in most urban areas where there are many workers. The MDC got control of the urban areas thanks to the working class majority in these areas. ZANU PF on the other hand got the majority vote in the rural and peri urban areas because of its established support base in the peasantry who reside in the countryside. Most results in the resettlement areas and rural areas went in ZANU PF's favour. The working class inclination to the MDC and the peasant class inclination to ZANU PF depict a class factor phenomenon in the voting patterns and behavior for 2008 in Zimbabwe. The middle class who are aspiring to make money arguably got frustrated by the economic conditions and therefore voted for the MDC. The elite class who has already made a fortune through extra constitutional means arguably

voted for the ZANU PF party so that they can conserve their fortune. They could not trust the change for that it would change their status for worse.

The informal sector business class that was taking advantage of the chaotic economy under siege from the west obviously voted for ZANU PF. The class comprises, foreign currency dealers, fuel buyers and sellers and the informal market traders. These groups made huge profits out of the chaos and thus voted for ZANU PF government (under siege from the west imposed sanctions), for the perpetuation or continuation of their informal but lucrative dealings.

Abbreviations: **MDC**; Movement for democratic change, **MDC-M**; movement for democratic change faction led by Mutambara, **MDC-T**; movement for democratic change faction led by Tsvangirai, **NGOs**; non governmental organizations; **SADC**; southern African development commission, **ZANU PF**; Zimbabwe African national union patriotic front, **ZEC**; Zimbabwe election commission, **ZESN**; Zimbabwe Election Supervision Network.

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