

## **Unpacking the Complexities of Mediation in Africa: Some lessons from SADC's Mediation Role in Zimbabwe between 2008 and 2013**

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### *Abstract*

International mediation in Africa as is the case the world over has always been volatile and a circuitous process. Some of the factors that have complicated the process include the nature of African politics which is in most cases guided by winner take all; the multiplicity of interested parties in a conflict; the role of the military and in lack of mediation skills. This study seeks to examine the experiences of the SADC region with the Zimbabwean crisis from 2008 to 2013. The authors advance the argument that the Zimbabwean crisis was complex such that those who criticise the mediators do so as far as they misunderstood this complexity. However, the complexity of mediation with regard to the Zimbabwean situation cannot be explained by generalised submissions. This is because the case under investigation had unique features that had not been explored which led to the complexities in reaching a common ground. It can also be argued that the contenting parties in Zimbabwe during the period under study only agreed to shift their fight to another arena without necessarily finding a common ground. Therefore, this study seeks to unravel the specific conditions and developments that complicated the mediation process in Zimbabwe between 2008 and 2013. In finding answers to the fundamental question of this study, qualitative methods will be used to collect and analyse data. Data collection will be done through the use of documentary search, key informant and in-depth interviews. Content and trend analysis will be used to analyse the collected data.

## **1. Introduction**

International mediation in Zimbabwe between 2007 and 2013 has not been an easy task for the two succeeding South African presidents who mediated the negotiations among the three warring political parties in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean crisis reached its peak in 2007 following years of simmering discontentment with the manner in which President Mugabe's regime presided over the country's economy and political affairs. This paper sets out to unpack the complexities of international mediation with particular reference to the role of the succeeding South African presidents and how they dealt with the complex Zimbabwean crisis. In order to set the basis for examining the mediation process in Zimbabwe, the concept of mediation is conceptualised highlighting its major features and components. This conceptual framework also includes the explanation of how mediation success can be measured. This is followed by a synopsis of Zimbabwe's political and economic crisis leading to the intervention of SADC in 2007. The focus is on the key issues and developments that would have some implications to the period under study and how the mediated negotiations transpired. The major challenges that complicated the mediation process identified in this study include: multiplicity of interested stakeholders; political impasse among the protagonists; the questionable role of the mediator; unclear mandate; fear of reprisals on the part of ZANU PF as well as a complicated negotiating process. The paper also examines how the mediators responded in dealing with the complexities.

### **2.1 Conceptual Framework**

International mediation is not as versatile a term as is the case with many social science terms especially in the field of political science and international relations. According to the United Nations (1992: ) international mediation can be understood as "a method of peaceful settlement of an international dispute where a third party intervenes to reconcile the claims of the contending parties and to advance his/her own proposal aimed at mutually acceptable solution". In other words mediation can be regarded as a tool for conflict or dispute resolution whose ultimate purpose is facilitating an agreement between and among the parties to a conflict. Mediation is also defined as "a process by which a third party or group of parties participate in negotiations to foster negotiations in order to assist them to recognise common interests and to compose a solution on the basis of those interests" (Berridge and Freeman, 2003: 41). Thus mediation is the continuation of negotiations in the presence of the third party. Mediation normally comes into play where the parties to a conflict have tried to negotiate, and have failed to reach some consensus. Mediation can take place in a variety of settings including inter-personal, inter-state and intra-state conflicts. Sargsyan (2003) observed that "Mediators act in a complex setting that reflects an intricate net of political, economic, social, cultural and even psychological dynamics." This was true with regard to the Zimbabwean crisis from 2000 to 2013. Given the complexities of mediation process, it is difficult to come up with universally accepted criteria for measuring success. However, "success has been generally regarded as

“deescalating in the means of struggle between the negotiating parties, the negotiations themselves moving forward or the creation of a settlement that leads towards a positive resolution of the parties’ differences” (theworldoutline.com, 2012). Another scholar Bercovitch came up with two broad evaluative criteria for, measuring mediation success namely the subjective and objective assessments. The subjective is based upon the perception of the parties to the conflict or the mediator’s perception with regard to the attainment of mediation objective. In this regard mediation according to Bercovitch is successful when the parties are satisfied with the process and the outcome; the outcome is seen as fair and when done within the prescribed time in the case of international mediation. Bercovitch’s objective criterion is concerned with the behaviour of the disputants upon termination of mediation and determines the extent of change that had taken place. If disputants continue to interact in the same dysfunctional manner the mediation process is said to have failed. On the other hand the mediation is regarded as a success when it contributes to the elimination of violent behaviour bringing disputants to the negotiating table (Sargsyan, 2003). A successful mediation also influences the protagonists to embrace a formal agreement that settles many of the issues in dispute and produces new and more productive interaction (ibid).

This study utilises the ripeness and readiness theories by Zartman (1989) and Pruitt (2005) respectively. These theories offer some assumptions on how and when the third party, in this case the mediator, should intervene in a conflict as well as the conditions that are necessary for the protagonists to consider negotiation as a way out of the conflict. Zartman (2000) identified two major conditions necessary for rational policy makers to consider negotiations which are; the existence of a mutually hurting stalemate and a mutually perceived way out of the conflict. With regard to mutually hurting stalemate, Zartman “believes that unless the conflict is ‘ripe for resolution’ and has reached the level of ‘hurting situation’ a point at which neither party can win unilaterally, there is not much that mediation can do. However, when the conflict concerned has reached the hurting stalemate stage the mediator’s role is one of bringing the protagonists to the negotiating table considering mediated agreement as a way out of the crisis. Therefore, Zartman’s ripeness theory is adapted in this study to explain why the three major political parties in Zimbabwe became ready for negotiations in 2008 following the disputed presidential election runoff. The ripeness theory is also used to explore and examine various methods and tactics used by the third parties to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table.

### **3. Zimbabwe’s Political Crisis: A Synopsis**

The political crisis in Zimbabwe cannot be detached from the failures of the black government led by President Mugabe to create conditions for meaningful economic independence. The failed 1979 Lancaster House negotiations serve as a point of departure for the successive post colonial political crises in Zimbabwe. However, the crisis which saw the SADC appointing South Africa to mediate negotiations among the political parties between 2007 and 2008 is more of a struggle for the capture of state power, electoral crisis and failure to democratise. The ZANU PF government has instituted some suicidal political and economic reforms in a bid to correct its

failures during the 1979 negotiations. The adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), the participation of Zimbabwe in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) war in 1998, the payout of gratuities to war veterans, the Fast Tract Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) of early 2000 and the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Programme (IEEP) plunged Zimbabwe into both political and economic crisis. It is also argued in this paper that as is the case with many African countries, a political culture of intolerance coupled with violent responses to opposition political parties characterised Zimbabwe's political terrain since 1980.

Zimbabwe had gone through violent conflicts dating back to the pre-colonial period. However, for the purposes of understanding the 21<sup>st</sup> century political crisis which saw the intervention of the SADC through South Africa it is important to highlight key developments of the Lancaster House Negotiations. It can be argued that the Lancaster House agreement left unresolved many issues that were to shape the future of Zimbabwean politics. One of the unresolved issues was that of land. According to Muzorori (2000) during the Lancaster House Conference, "Britain prescribed a land reform programme that was to be carried out on a willing seller willing buyer basis". As a result the Government of Zimbabwe was not able to adequately redress the land imbalances which were brought into existence by colonialism. Consequently the effects of the flawed negotiated process would only show nearly two decades from independence. As later illustrated in this paper, the land question became the centre of the political crisis which started in the early 2000.

At independence, Zimbabwe remained economically tied to the British inheriting an economy that was based on local white entrepreneurship, that is, Multinational Corporations (MNCs) such as British Petroleum (BP) and British American Tobacco (BAT). The perpetuation of colonialism by Britain through the economy (neo-colonialism) meant that Zimbabwe was theoretically independent as its economy remained in the hands of foreigners. It is, therefore, plausible to argue that while in 1980 Zimbabwe gained political independence, the minority whites remained in control of the economy. During the first decade of independence things seemed okay since the economy was performing well and that very few black Africans had the requisite experience to own and manage the economy.

However, there was no strategy to transfer the macroeconomic management of the Zimbabwe from the white minority to the black majority. The effects of such could soon show after the 1985 general elections as the major government portfolios were now under black leadership. The ZANU PF government hastily adopted ESAP which worsened the economic condition of the largely rural population and the working class. As part of the ESAP conditions, the government abandoned its corporatist style of government. This gave prominence and more power to labour organisations, primarily the ZCTU. This would, a decade later, give birth to the strongest ever democratic alternative to Zanu PF, the MDC.

The year 2000 marked the major turning point in the evolution of Zimbabwe's political crisis as the ZANU PF government experienced its first electoral defeat during a constitutional

referendum held on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2000 (Mhandara *et al*,2013). According to Kagoro (2005) the ruling ZANU PF government's bid to adopt the proposed constitution lost to the "No" vote supported by newly formed MDC and civil society groups. Fearing the repeat of what happened during the referendum, where the opposition won, ZANU PF had to resort to violent methods of electoral campaign. According to the Commonwealth election Observer Group for the 2000 Parliamentary elections, "following the electoral defeat during the referendum ZANU PF government accused the MDC of conspiracy". In this regard the MDC was accused of working in cahoots with the country's white commercial farmers and the government's external enemies. The MDC was also accused of perpetrating violence against the ZANU PF supporters. Therefore, from the onset ZANU PF regarded the MDC as an enemy set to reverse the gains of the liberation struggle. This perception remained well entrenched within ZANU PF circles and had to guide how the post 2008 electoral dispute was to be resolved. Such perceptions also became part of the complexities during the mediation process.

The relations between Zimbabwe and Western countries particularly countries of the European Union (EU), the United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia and New Zealand became sour because of the Land Reform Programme. Predictably, Zimbabwe was slapped with economic sanctions by these countries. Zimbabwe went on to withdraw from the Commonwealth in 2003 following her suspension from the group in 2001. In reaction, Zimbabwe intensified implementation of the indigenisation and economic empowerment programme. This further economically isolated Zimbabwe from the rest of the West. The isolation and sanctions never helped in restoring democracy in Zimbabwe as successive elections since 2000 have been marked by horrible incidences of violence. Alongside electoral violence was the continued deterioration of the economy marked by inter alia shortage of basic commodities such as fuel, high levels of unemployment and inflation. The crisis reached its climax in 2007 when the opposition leaders and their supporters together with some civil society groups staged demonstrations leading to political skirmishes of March 11 the same year. During the 11 March 2007 political upheavals, opposition leaders including Morgan Tsvangirai, Lovemore Madhuku and many more were beaten and detained by the police. One opposition supporter was shot dead by the police. In response, SADC intervened mandating South Africa to facilitate dialogue among the political parties in Zimbabwe during an extra-ordinary summit of the heads of state and government in Dar-es-Salaam Tanzania, on March 27 2009. Mbeki's mediation efforts were aimed at bringing the protagonists to the negotiating table, addressing socio-economic challenges, creation of conditions for a credible harmonised election in 2008 as well as assisting Zimbabwe's re-engagement with the international community (Maisiri, 2013). According to Mhandara *et al* (2013); Maisiri (2013) the SADC facilitated negotiations between ZANU PF and the two MDC formations resulted in a relatively free and fair harmonised election in 2008. Therefore, it is clear that SADC was formerly involved in mediating the Zimbabwean crisis since 2007. It is also worth noting that prior to 2008 South Africa had been involved in mediating the crisis on an informal basis.

Unfortunately, the 2008 harmonised election did not produce an outright presidential winner a situation which marked a terrible sliding back of the whole country into deep political crisis reminiscent of the post 2000 referendum when ZANU PF was defeated by the opposition. The electoral laws required that to be declared a presidential winner; the candidate concerned should have garnered 50 percent plus one vote of the total votes cast. As such, the absence of an outright winner meant that the country was supposed to go for a second round or run-off presidential election. As was the case with the post referendum in 2000, ZANU PF instigated a wave of violence against its opponents mainly the MDC T supporters. Masiri succinctly captured ZANU PF's response to 2008 March election outcome in the following words "[T]he credible electoral environment prevalent in March was seen as threatening to the party's continued hold on power, triggering the political violence and intimidation towards the presidential run-off election of June 2008." The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) 2008 observed that the presidential run-off election was characterised by intimidation and repression. Masunungure (2009) concurs arguing that the 2008 June presidential run-off election became the bloodiest election in the history of Zimbabwe. The MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai was forced to withdraw from the race at the last minute citing the continued abduction and murder of his supporters.

The situation in Zimbabwe was so bad such that it could not be ignored by the international community. This led to the African Union to intervene through the SADC (Mhandara *et al*, 2013). According to Masiri (2013) SADC's questionable stance compelled the African Union (AU) to make a strong decision at the Sharm el Sheik, Egypt Summit in June 2008 instructing the regional body to mediate negotiations aimed at establishing an agreement among the warring political parties. Thus the former South African President, Mbeki entered into the second phase of mediating political parties in Zimbabwe but this time with a different objective and a broadened mandate. The focus during this phase was to facilitate negotiations for the formation of an inclusive government comprising the then three major political parties; ZANU PF and the two MDC formations one lead by Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC T) and the other one led by Professor Author Mutambara (MDC M). This phase lasted between April 2008 and February 2009 when the GNU became fully consummated. Due to the magnitude of animosity among the three political parties, the mediation role had to continue now focusing on the implementation of the GPA provisions from February 2009 to July 2013. It was during these successive phases of mediation from the pre-2008 election to the post 2008 harmonised election and the implementation period of the GPA that the two successive South African mediators had to grapple with the complexities of the Zimbabwean crisis. Ensuing are selected conditions and political developments that made the mediation process in Zimbabwe a, tortuous and protracted process.

## **The Mediation Challenges**

The 2008 harmonised elections produced an impasse that called all the parties, either directly or indirectly to the negotiating table. The multiplicity of the interested actors complicated the negotiation process. This explains why there were several sticky issues during the negotiation process (some of which nearly collapsed the process). Power politics in Africa, multiplicity of stakeholders, the country's security sector, class formation in the country, the nature of African diplomacy, international community divisions (along political ideologies and political parties) and the undefined role of the mediator are all among factors that complicated the Zimbabwe negotiating process.

There are several social classes with underlying political and economic interests in Zimbabwe. The political elite; active supporters of the regime and the active opponents of the regime; the oppressive apparatus of the regime (the military, the police, youth militia, the radical war veterans and the intelligence group) and the business community all had some variant and divergent desired outcomes of the negotiation process. Harmonising and reconciling these interests would prove problematic if not unattainable. For example, the interests of the ZANU PF elite (active supporters of the regime) are as different from MDC's political elite (active opponents of the regime) as the South is from the North Pole. Zanu PF seeks to maintain and consolidate power while the MDC's objective is to wrestle power from ZANU PF. These two, ZANU PF and MDC, also created alliances to the extent that the interests of ZANU PF are also the interests of the security forces, the radical war veterans and the some black business persons. In the same vein any outcome of the negotiating process that favours or furthers the interests of the MDC also did the same to a number of progressive educated but jobless youths, the international business corporations, donor and civil society organisations.

Ideologically, Zimbabwe resembles a 21<sup>st</sup> century cold war, with the two main political parties ZANU PF and MDC philosophically opposed. These ideologies are, however, not alien to Zimbabwe but provides a microcosmic representation of the international political and economic community. Finding a common ground between conventional radical political and economic standpoints and modern liberal political and economic standpoints is difficult, if ever possible. Nationalisation of the country's natural economic resources and protectionist economic policies of ZANU PF are as different from what the MDC stands for, liberation and international commercial competition. Backed by their funders and political godfathers Russia and China, ZANU PF was not willing to renege on their position. The same was true with the MDC and its Western (USA, Britain and the EU) allies.

Robert Mugabe is a cult hero in Africa. He is revered and respected in SADC and Africa in general. It is against this background that any negotiation with a provision to oust him from power is politically and morally incorrect and should be totally condemned. Such is the influence of Robert Mugabe in Africa that any negotiation that he and his party are participants and is presided over by a SADC member state, the negotiating group will never be even. There is a

strong political solidarity among the revolutionary parties; most of whom are the ruling parties in the SADC region. The Patriotic Front (PF) of Zambia, South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) of Namibia, African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa (the mediator country), Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) of Mozambique, Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) of Angola and Chama ChaMapinduzi (CCM) of Tanzania. Their relationship dates back to the anti-colonial movements, to the formation of the Front Line states and ultimately the formation of SADC. In view of the foregoing, it is inconceivable that any negotiation process involving one of these parties and presided over by one of these parties can provide an objective political outcome.

The mediation challenge in Zimbabwe was further worsened by the suspicion (Maisiri, 2013) and lack of common goals and objectives on the part of ZANU PF and the MDC. ZANU PF has always conceived the MDC as a puppet political party whose rise to power could signal the re-colonisation of the country and reversal to the gains of independence. This myth is entrenched to the core in the hearts, minds and souls of the Zanu PF stalwarts. This is the same level of suspicion that the MDC have on ZANU PF on empowerment and human rights issues. ZANU PF has patronised all the state apparatus, instruments and state policies to the extent that it is a prerequisite to be an active party member to enjoy political and economic freedom in the country. It is a system that has consolidated their grip to power since 1980 and any negotiation efforts to replace a system that has been working for them will not be conducted in earnest. This suspicion has resulted in political polarisation and impasse in the country and heightened the challenge of mediation and negotiation. More so, since the negotiations were aimed at resolving a post electoral crisis, the mediator was confronted with a challenge of dealing with tensions arising from the need to capture and control the state. In fact, it was due to the fear of losing the control of the state that the then ruling elements resorted to violence. Such a situation fit well within the context explained by EISA (2011) noting that "violence also ensues in situations where there is a strong possibility of changing existing power relations and the incumbents are unwilling to cede power".

As a corollary of the above there was fear of reprisal on the part of ZANU PF. Envisaging MDC taking over power coupled with the reckless political statements by MDC, ZANU PF stalwarts were unsure of their political life. Fearing being dragged to the international criminal courts and punished by the MDC, ZANU PF was unwilling to compromise during the negotiations. For the MDC the negotiations were an avenue to get into the corridors of power. This complicated the negotiations resulting in "sticky issues". Key ministries such as Home Affairs, Justice and Local government became fiercely contested because these would be key instruments towards any reprisal attempts by the MDC.

In addition ZANU PF always resorts to political violence when it is facing an imminent electoral defeat. This behaviour complicated the implementation of the provisions of the GPA. ZANU PF's behaviour which resulted in scuttling the reform process was described by Maisiri (2013) as the "aborting reconstruction". This was mainly because ZANU PF regarded the imposition of economic sanctions by the West as the major problem and nothing to do with governance and deterioration of state institutions. Therefore, it can be argued that ZANU PF only accepted the GPA provisions to the extent that they were serving its interests to continue holding on to power. Signing of the GPA was also used by ZANU PF as way of showing fake commitment to reforms.

It however became clear between 2009 and 2013 that, "...ZANU PF leaders had limited commitment to the GPA and the resultant institutionalisation of the GPA provisions" (Maisiri, 2013).

Lack of mediation skills on the part of the mediators also complicated the resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis. Nathan (2007) correctly observed that mediators in Africa are more often than not appointed on the basis of their political status rather than their competence and skills. With regard to the Zimbabwean crisis the two subsequent mediators were appointed on the basis of their political status as Presidents of South Africa. In fact the mediation role was given to South Africa as a country not to individuals. As a result the mediation appeared to be based on the influential position of South Africa. This perspective of mediation in Africa was succinctly captured by Nathan (2007) who contends that, "international mediation is conceived and undertaken often crudely as form of tough diplomacy". As such, mediators focus on issues such as persuasion and bargaining. A similar scenario happened in Sudan when the 1994 Declaration of Principles issued by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was rejected by the ruling party accusing the mediators of being impartial (Deng, 1997). In the case of Zimbabwe, South Africa, especially during Tambo Mbeki's mediation period, was accused of being biased in favour of the ruling ZANU PF party. The majority of MDC officials who were interviewed indicated that they had a feeling that Mbeki was favouring the ruling ZANU PF party.

Nathan (2007) charged that "it is absurd that states and international organisations that would not deploy untrained soldiers or doctors in conflict zones are willing to use untrained mediators." Therefore, one can argue that at the centre of mediation challenges in Africa lies the misconception of the mediation process.

Closely related to the above is the absence of adequate institutional support to the mediation process. This remains a challenge not only for the SADC countries but for the whole of the African continent. According to Nathan "both at AU and SADC there are no standing mediation units". As a result there is lack of institutional memory and adequate technical support for mediation teams.

The Negotiating process itself proved to be complicated for the mediation team as they were dealing with different people and institutions with varying degrees of decision making authority. In this regard, at the initial level the protagonists were represented by negotiators who would then report to their principals. The principals in this case were the leaders of the three main political parties (Mugabe of ZANU PF, Mutambara of MDC M and Morgan Tsvangirai of MDC T). The mediator would also facilitate negotiation among the principals and was reporting to both the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS) and SADC Summit. In this case the negotiators would submit proposed resolutions to the principals for their approval.

### **How did the Mediator Deal with these Complexities**

The mediator is always expected to display the capacity to deal with so many challenges confronting the negotiation process. In the case of the Zimbabwean crisis it is worth noting that the two succeeding mediators approached their role from different perspectives and they adopted different strategies. Ensuing are some of the ways in which the two mediators dealt with challenging scenarios during their mediation processes. In our assessment following

Bercovitch's criteria we noted that Mbeki the former South African president registered much success than his successor.

President Mbeki's major success was the signing of the G.P.A which became the basis of the Government of National Unity (GNU) which came into force in 2009. According to Maisiri 2013;

The GPA articles were comprehensive and covered issues related to economic recovery (Article III), humanitarian assistance (Article XVI), Rule of Law XI), Basic Freedoms (Articles X and XII), Land Question (Article V), Constitution-making (Article VI, Foreign Policy (Article IV) National Healing (Article VII), Strong Institutions (Article VII and XIII) and the legislative Agenda (Article XVII).

The above all encompassing provisions of the GPA reveals that the mediator made concerted efforts to listen to the concerns of all the parties to the conflict. The GPA can also be viewed as a document aimed at political and economic reconstruction as it captures the fundamental issues that have set Zimbabweans against each other and those contested fundamentals that have led to the deterioration of the economy. In fact, economic and political reforms were the most generally agreed necessities that Zimbabwe was in need of in 2008.

Therefore as a mediator, Mbeki tried to appeal to the ideals of all participating political parties. With regard to ZANU PF ideals of non-intervention Mbeki emphasised dialogue and non-intervention in Zimbabwean politics. According to the Zimbabwe situation.com 31 October 2013, "Mbeki maintained his stance that an imposed regime change was fundamentally wrong". While this approach drew an avalanche of criticism it somehow worked for the good of the negotiation process as the negotiators felt they were their own liberators. According to Tinhu (2013) Mbeki's quiet diplomacy was discredited by the local opposition and groups and the West who expected a much tougher stance against President Mugabe and his ZANU PF. However, given the animosity existing between the West and the ruling elites in Mugabe's government a confrontational way was not going to help the Zimbabwean protagonists to find each other.

President Mbeki was also able to listen to the concerns of the opposition parties and displayed some commitment to ensuring the negotiations became a success. While the negotiation process in itself was complex, the inclusion of the negotiators apart from the principals became a tool for pacifying the acrimony among the three major political parties in Zimbabwe. In addition the ideals of the opposition groups such as the restoration of the rule of law, the reconsideration of the land reform, strengthening national institutions among a barrage of reforms were captured in the GPA.

President Mbeki also displayed flexibility and capacity to think outside the box as indicated by his resolve to include other strategies which were not explicitly stated by the SADC. Firstly, in 2008 following the delay in announcing presidential election results and deteriorating political conditions he send a fact finding team to Zimbabwe to verify the allegations of renewed political violence. This followed the former South African Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Mamabolo, who was the head of SADC election observer team's advice that the deteriorating conditions were making it impossible for a free and fair presidential election run-off (Maisiri, 2013). In response President Mbeki deployed a team led by retired South African generals to find out the magnitude

of escalating violence and intimidation. It is argued that their report confirmed the presence of widespread political violence. Unfortunately, the report was not made public during the time of the inclusive government. Nevertheless, the deployment of the fact finding mission shows the commitment of the mediator in understanding the nature and magnitude of the political crisis in Zimbabwe.

In dealing with incessant accusations of displaying bias against the opposition parties while favouring the ruling ZANU PF party, Mbeki announced plans to work closely with SADC, AU and the UN. It can be suggested that this strategy was meant to deal with criticism levelled against his quiet diplomacy and the fact that he was favouring President Mugabe. In his proposal, Mbeki suggested establishment of a special group of SADC, AU and the UN representatives which he would talk to on an ongoing basis. It is said this suggestion was applauded by the opposition parties in Zimbabwe. Maisiri (2013) argues that the opposition parties had problems with the partiality of Mbeki and the credibility of SADC. Therefore, the strategy worked in restoring confidence on the mediator and his team. Mbeki's biggest score was the formation of the Government of National Unity among the three major political parties.

When President Zuma took over as the mediator, expectations were high that he was going to depart from Mbeki's quiet diplomacy adopting a tougher stance on President Mugabe. Indeed Zuma took a rather hard-line stance demanding reforms before the elections. Unfortunately, his strategy yielded very little success in ensuring that President Mugabe implements reforms before elections were held. Tinhu (2013) notes that "Zuma appeared to make it clear that reforms promised by Mugabe to the SADC under the GPA, which would enforce the separation of the state and ZANU PF institutions would be completed before elections could be called." However, President Mugabe insisted on holding elections before July 31 without effecting the said reforms and Zuma as the mediator did nothing. The elections were then held under nefarious conditions amid wide spread rigging allegations. President Zuma was the first to send congratulatory message to President Mugabe and imploring the opposition to accept defeat.

Questions have been raised as to what President Zuma as the mediator could have done in such conditions. Unfortunately, such questions were given little attention by the scholars as much focus was given on the constraining factors. One of the major constraints was that President Mugabe emerged to have more leverage against the mediator whose much anticipated pressure proved to be backfiring. Due to pressure, Mugabe threatened to pull out of SADC and Zuma could only back down probably due to the fact that he did not want to be seen as dividing the SADC region. In this regard, serving SADC became more important than pressurising for democratic and electoral reforms in Zimbabwe. Zuma and his assistant for international relations Lindiwe Zulu were subjected to a barrage of attacks by high ranking officials in Mugabe's party and from Mugabe himself. For instance Lindiwe Zulu was described by Mugabe as "stupid and idiotic, street woman" while Zuma was labelled by Jonathan Moyo as erratic and a liability not only to South Africa but to Africa as a whole (Tinhu, 2013). All these developments were taking place at a time when it was increasingly becoming clear even to the negotiators that ZANU PF was likely to become victorious during the 2013 harmonised elections. As such Zuma had no option than supporting the winning horse.

Supporting Mugabe became the viable decision because he was facing surmountable problems in his own country. Two major developments appeared to be challenging to Zuma, Firstly, the skirmishes at Marikana needed attention as they had dented his credibility as a promoter of

peace. Secondly, the 2014 elections were near and it appeared more that Julius Malema and the Economic Freedom Fighters were going to present a huge challenge to his throne. There was also high possibility that Mugabe's ZANU PF would ideologically and morally support Malema who by then was claiming to have been inspired by Mugabe's policies.

## **Conclusion**

The SADC intervention in Zimbabwe's crisis from 2007 to 2013 proved that international mediation is a complicated undertaking. The major complexities in Zimbabwe included among other factors the multiplicity of interested parties with conflicting interests outside the main protagonists, a rift of suspicion and lack of common goals among the disputants, continued incidences of violence, lack of confidence with the mediators, ZANU PF's alleged lack of commitment to implement the provisions of the GPA as well as the tortuous negotiation process. In the face of these challenges the two succeeding negotiators did their best in bringing the warring parties to the negotiating table, leading them to come up with common goals and objectives. However, since the SADC mediated negotiations in Zimbabwe occurred in three interconnected phases, it can be noted that the outcomes of each phase were a product of what has been taking place in a given period. Therefore, in one phase the mediation process could be regarded as a success while on the other phase it dismally failed. Measuring the mediation success on the premises of attainment of the set objectives and the post mediation relationship and behaviour of the disputants, we conclude that the first pre-2008 election phase of the mediation process was a success. This is because the main tasks of bringing the main political parties to the negotiating table and creating a conducive environment for the conduct of the 2008 harmonised election were achieved. The only weakness is that ZANU PF again resorted to electoral violence in the run up to presidential run-off election. In other words, the culture of political violence remains well entrenched in Zimbabwe. It seems the problem of violence goes beyond the capacity of the mediator.

The second phase which followed the disputed presidential election run-off again succeeded in bringing the warring parties together forming a government of national unity. In this regard the major score was the signing of the GPA and the coming into being of the government of national unity. Insurmountable challenges followed the full consummation of the government of national unity with ZANU PF showing its lack of commitment in ensuring the full implementation of the provisions of the GPA. Nevertheless, some scores were recorded as well during the third phase for instance the formulation of the new constitution and relaxation of the sanctions regime by the European Union. In ensuring some of the successes recorded it can be noted that the mediators played important roles. The last phase of the negotiations, during the actual implementation of the provisions of the GPA and functioning of the GNU, challenges came mainly from Mugabe being a big brother to the negotiator then and also to the other principals who ended up being powerless and irrelevant. Having said that, the negotiation process managed to get a GNU in

place but did not achieve the much needed positive growth in the country particularly in political transition and maturity as animosity still exists among political parties.

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