



Language

Since Zimbabwe achieved independence in 1980 after a bitter civil war, President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party have been in government and have suppressed or tried to neutralise opposition. From 2000 onwards Zimbabwe faced a mounting economic crisis, with thousands of people leaving the country. Mugabe – having failed to expand his presidential powers in a referendum in 2000 – tried to exploit the widespread popular resentment that most of the best farmland remained under white ownership. Authorizing ‘war veterans’ to attack white farmers and their African workers and seize the farmland, he has then redistributed it less to the landless poor than to his political cronies.

A new opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change, based on the trade unions, was prominent in defeating Mugabe in the 2000 referendum. Subsequently it organized a range of public protests, as well as contesting presidential and parliamentary elections, claiming that results were rigged by ZANU-PF (claims which were supported by some but not all external election observers). Impressive opposition to the regime from unions, professional bodies, community action groups and human rights organizations, and from the inspirational Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), developed along side party politics.

Crisis point was reached in 2008, both economically – with inflation rocketing – and politically, when Mugabe tried to rig the Presidential elections in June. MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai claimed victory, but Mugabe refused to concede until opinion in southern Africa also began to swing against him, notably among South African trade unions. Southern African leaders previously reluctant to join the west in condemning Mugabe pressured the MDC to join a coalition government with Mugabe to establish political and economic stability. This coalition did not stop Mugabe’s supporters in the security services continuing to kill and intimidate opposition members, but by ending economic sanctions it did improve the economy, and gave some role to members of the MDC.

The coalition also negotiated a new draft constitution that was put to a referendum in March 2013, which will not affect past land seizures but offers safeguards for civil liberties and somewhat limits presidential powers, including the period in office for any president after Mugabe. Around half the electorate took part, nearly 95% endorsing the new constitution. Human rights groups reported harassment in the run-up to the referendum, even of groups recommending endorsement but critical of the constitution’s shortcomings – for instance, WOZA, which succeeded in having 60 out of 82 of their proposals incorporated into the constitution. It remains to be seen how the constitution will be implemented, and whether there is again widespread intimidation during Presidential elections due to later in 2013.

Cherry, Janet, [Zimbabwe – Unarmed resistance, civil society and limits of international solidarity](#) [1], In Clark, [People Power: Unarmed Resistance and Global Solidarity](#) [2] (A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements [3]), London, Pluto Press, pp. 50-63

Account written during the post-electoral negotiations in 2008, but primarily assessing the role of community-based organisations (unions, professional associations, urban community groups and women’s groups) in the broad resistance movement. Draws on extensive interviews with activists. In the same volume see: Carter, April ; Cherry, Janet , [Worker solidarity and civil society cooperation: Blocking the Chinese arms shipment to Zimbabwe, April 2008](#) [4] In Clark, [People Power: Unarmed Resistance and Global Solidarity](#) [2] (A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements [3]) London, Pluto Press, 2009, pp. 191-192 .

Maclean, Sandra J, [Mugabe at war: The political economy of conflict in Zimbabwe](#) [5], Third World Quarterly, Vol. 23, issue 3 (June), 2002, pp. 513-528

Examines deterioration of governance in Zimbabwe since independence and the effectiveness of opposition since 2001.



Meldrum, Andrew, [Where We Have Hope: A Memoir of Zimbabwe](#) [6], London, John Murray, 2004, pp. 272

Personal account by *Guardian* journalist of Zimbabwe's politics and people since 1980. Chapters 12-19 (pp. 114-241) cover the rise of the MDC, the debate about the new constitution, resistance and repression, and Chapter 20 describes his own expulsion from the country.

Raftopoulos, Brian ; Sachinkoye, Lloyd, [Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe](#) [7], Harare, Weaver Press, 2001, pp. 316

The first chapter by Raftopoulos is on 'The Labour Movement and the Emergence of Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe'. Later chapters include criticism of the MDC from a socialist perspective.

Sithole, Masipula, [Fighting authoritarianism in Zimbabwe](#) [8], Journal of Democracy, Vol. 12, issue 1 (January), 2001, pp. 160-169

Windrich, Elaine, [Then and now: Reflections on how Mugabe ruled Zimbabwe](#) [9], Third World Quarterly, Vol. 23, issue 6 (December), 2002, pp. 1181-1188

Feature review of several books on Zimbabwe with historical analysis.

Wokoma, Iyenemi Norman, [Zimbabwe: Women of Zimbabwe Arise WOZA](#) [10], In George-Williams, [Bite Not One Another: Selected Accounts of Nonviolent Struggle in Africa](#) [11] ([E. I. Africa - Sub-Saharan](#) [12]), Addis Ababa, University of Peace Africa Programme, pp. 95-98

WOZA is one of the most imaginative and militant of the opposition groups and is also committed to nonviolence. See also Cherry, [Zimbabwe – Unarmed resistance, civil society and limits of international solidarity](#) [1] ([E. I.2.2.iii. Zimbabwe. Resisting Autocracy since 2000-](#) [13]) .

Zimbabwe Focus, [When to call black white: Zimbabwe's electoral reports](#) [14], Third World Quarterly, Vol. 23, issue 6 (December), 2002, pp. 1145-1158

Analysis of March 2002 Presidential election and conflicting assessments of its fairness from organizations within Zimbabwe and teams of electoral observers from the west and Africa.

Websites recommended

[Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe \(GALZ\)](#) [15] - <http://galz.co.zw/> [16]
[Sokwanele - Campaigning non-violently for freedom and democracy in Zimbabwe](#) [17] - <http://www.sokwanele.com> [18]
[Women of Zimbabwe Arise \(WOZA\)](#) [19] - <http://www.wozazimbabwe.org/> [20]

See also:

Keith Goddard, [Inside Out](#) [21] In Ney, Chris , [Nonviolence and Social Empowerment](#) [22] London, War Resisters' International, , 2005



23:27):<https://civilresistance.info/section/e-resisting-oppressive-dictatorial-military-or-authoritarian-rule/e-i-africa-sub-saharan-21>

Links

[1] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2009/zimbabwe-unarmed-resistance-civil-society-and-limits-international-solidarity> [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2009/people-power-unarmed-resistance-and-global-solidarity> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/section/introduction-nonviolent-action/1-theory-methods-and-examples/1b-strategic-theory-dynamics> [4] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2009/worker-solidarity-and-civil-society-cooperation-blocking-chinese-arms-shipment> [5] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2002/mugabe-war-political-economy-conflict-zimbabwe> [6] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2004/where-we-have-hope-memoir-zimbabwe> [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2001/striking-back-labour-movement-and-post-colonial-state-zimbabwe> [8] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2001/fighting-authoritarianism-zimbabwe> [9] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2002/then-and-now-reflections-how-mugabe-ruled-zimbabwe> [10] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2006/zimbabwe-women-zimbabwe-arise-woza> [11] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2006/bite-not-one-another-selected-accounts-nonviolent-struggle-africa> [12] <https://civilresistance.info/section/e-resisting-oppressive-dictatorial-military-or-authoritarian-rule/e-i-africa-sub-saharan> [13] <https://civilresistance.info/section/e-resisting-oppressive-dictatorial-military-or-authoritarian-rule/e-i-africa-sub-saharan-21> [14] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2002/when-call-black-white-zimbabwes-electoral-reports> [15] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/0/gays-and-lesbians-zimbabwe-galz> [16] <http://galz.co.zw/> [17] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/0/sokwanele-campaigning-non-violently-freedom-and-democracy-zimbabwe> [18] <http://www.sokwanele.com> [19] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/0/women-zimbabwe-arise-woza> [20] <http://www.wozazimbabwe.org/> [21] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2005/inside-out> [22] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2005/nonviolence-and-social-empowerment>