**What happened on Election Day in Zimbabwe?**

A new report by Crisis Coalition substantiates the argument that Zimbabwe’s 31 July 2013 harmonized elections were undemocratic. Based on recent empirical evidence from its ethnographic study, the links to Zimbabwe’s chain of democratic choice were broken, says the Coalition, especially the principle of *integrity* and *insulation,* particularly on the Election Day.

There are competing arguments meant to explain the ‘31 July complex’ but detailed views of local level participants have not been given adequate attention as commentators seek more global explanations. This is the gap this paper covers based on partisan electoral officers, political intimidation and discrimination, multiple and illegal voting, displacement of voters, violence, vote buying and five pathways of undue voter influence. Such an approach is meant to provide empirical evidence on what happened on the Election Day, will add to current efforts to get a more global picture and a solid way-forward for the next electoral cycle. “We also further assert that, with the right advocacy interventions, the past elections can be a learning phase if the experiences of July 2013 are used to start asking strategic questions toward a more democratic election,” says Crisis. We reproduce the report in full below:

# Introduction

**In this paper, we argue that Zimbabwe’s 31 July 2013 harmonized elections were undemocratic because party and state actions ‘broke’ the chain of democratic choice**. In essence, the principles of integrity and insulation particularly on Election Day. We base our argument on ethnographic interviews as well as testimonials from participants and observers at a constituency level in order to get the views from below. Such an emic approach enriched our empirical evidence on the themes around *partisan electoral officers, political intimidation and discrimination, multiple and illegal voting, displacement of voters, violence, vote buying and five pathways of undue voter influence especially on the Election Day*. To substantiate our argument, we present our data in three interrelated sections. First, we revisit academic literature and civil society reports and explain our theoretical guidance. Second, we provide detailed empirical evidence from our interviews and testimonials. Third, we give our views on Zimbabwe’s future prospects for a democratic election, front strategic questions and finally conclude the paper.

Important reports have been published on Zimbabwe’s 2013 harmonised elections that try to understand the election results from a broader and grandiose perspective. These include; The End of a Road: the 2013 elections in Zimbabwe by the Solidarity Peace Trust (SPT); Zimbabwe’s Unfinished Business: a report on the July 2013 harmonised elections by the Elections Resources Centre (ERC); How can the 2013 harmonised elections be explained? by the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute (ZDI) among other reports especially from the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN). These reports give the background to the elections, provide the results, explain the results in terms of opposition limitations and the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF)’s strategies more broadly, draw parallels and patterns between the 2008 and the 2013 harmonised elections and suggest recommendations. Our addition to this growing corpus of reports is a tradeoff between breadth and depth, for our paper goes for the later. We seek to provide more detailed empirical evidence on what happened mainly on the Election Day as people went to vote. This will broaden empirical evidence to ongoing debates about the July 2013 complex.

# Global perspectives: the theory

At a theoretical level, we build from our previous report, *Countering Electoral Manipulation: Strengthening Zimbabwe’s Chain of Democratic Choice.* Thuswe follow the genealogy of Robert Dahl’s wisdom to outline five primacy conditions that must exist for a free and fair election to happen. As Schedler (2006:40) argues*, ‘together these conditions form a metaphorical chain which, like a real chain, holds together only so long as each of its links remains whole and unbroken’*. These include; access to plural sources of information for free formation of voter preferences (*Information*); all citizens having equal right to participation without any hindrances, legal or practical to universal suffrage (*Inclusive*) and that the winners that emerge from the election be able to take state power and exercise their power in line with the constitutional term limits (*Irreversibility*). For the purposes of this report we emphasise the two links of *integrity* and *insulation* which speak to our empirical data.

**Insulation**

Once the citizens have formed their preferences and attained their right to participate in the election they must be able to express their choice freely. The use of the secret ballot is meant to insulate people from outside pressure, undue influence, intimidation, threats, coercion, bribery or even verbal disapprovals of their choice. Trends such as voter intimidation and patronage violate this link as they exert undue influence. Democratic elections must be conducted in a peaceful, secure and stable environment where individuals’ security is impartially protected. Tolerance and free participation of all registered voters should be guaranteed to ensure free and fair polls.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Integrity**

The professionalism, independence and competence of electoral institutions such as the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and related election management institutions should be at the center of the integrity of an election. This is meant to avoid rigging in casting votes and overall institutional bias in the management of the elections. Ideally, for elections to be considered democratic relevant institutions must be seen to autonomously uphold and enforce such rules and procedures. Thus rules, regulations and procedures must be easily accessible, enforceable, be adhered to in the whole election process without exception.[[2]](#footnote-2) Those in charge of management of elections must demonstrate that they equally treat the contesting candidates and their supporters. Democratic elections should therefore take place within the confines of an autonomous, non-partisan and independent institution that enjoy the confidence of the citizenry and the contesting parties.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Our emphasis remain that partial compliance with the tenets of the democratic choice does not lead to partial or ‘acceptable’ democracy in Zimbabwe but it leads to undemocratic elections. Any violation to any of the links does not lead to ‘acceptable’ but to unacceptable polls. An electoral control game by authoritarian states of breaking a rule ahead of the others is improper. Violation of any of the conditions invalidates the fulfillment of all the others. Like a chain it breaks down. Although elections by themselves are not a sufficient condition for democracy, good quality elections are a necessary condition before we can speak of democratization and democracy[[4]](#footnote-4). The past election confirms what Levitsky and Way (2002) called [electoral] competitive authoritarianism or what Joseph (1998) calls façade democracy. We now give our detailed empirical findings in the next section.

# Grounded perspectives: the evidence

For ethical reasons, safety and security of respondents we minimize risks by adopting the ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality and we present our data as constituency based. We start with who and how the elections were managed.

## Partisan election officers

**Evidence suggests that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission officers were partisan and compromised.** *The military, traditional leaders, ZANU PF local leaders, ZANU PF activists and close relatives to ZANU PF candidates were polling officers.* This was against ZEC’s pronounced values of professionalism, transparency, impartiality, commitment and independence. This compromised the integrity of the election and makes it impossible to qualify it as democratic. To illustrate, *in Magunje constituency, interviews indicate that army personnel were deployed as polling officers namely*- Kamunhenga, Guzha, Maruma, Nyamhongo, Matare, Mazungu, Mbende, and Mabhena and were possibly more.[[5]](#footnote-5) *In Mberengwa West constituency, presiding officers were closely related to the candidate*, Joram Gumbo as illustrated below:

1. **Agony Gumbo**- a presiding officer at Mpesi Poling Station is a son to Joram Gumbo.
2. **Elemiah Gumbo** – a presiding officer at Chirambahuyo, is a sibling to Joram Gumbo.
3. **Agnes Midzi** – a presiding officer at Humbani Station is a wife to Elemiah Gumbo
4. **Munyaradzi Gumbo (Matanga)** – a presiding officer at Mavorovondo, is a young brother to Joram Gumbo, a know ZANU PF activist and position holder who once contested for the position of councillor under the ZANU PF ticket, and was Joram Gumbo’s chief election agent in the previous election.
5. **Lovemore Gumbo**–a presiding officer, is Joram Gumbo’s cousin, stays with Joram at his residence
6. **Mr John Mabhena** – a presiding officer, is married to Joram Gumbo’s daughter Winnie Gumbo
7. **Winnet Mabhena-** a presiding officer deployed at Chovuragu and Sandawana polling stations is Joram Gumbo’s daughter.
8. **Patricia Shirichena –** a presiding officerdeployed atMasase station, is married to Joram Gumbo’s son (Agony Gumbo mentioned above). She has been a secretary on ZANU PF party sponsored projects. She was seen openly celebrating during the counting process when the votes went in favour of Joram Gumbo. For instance she could be heard shouting whenever a ballot paper belonging to Joram Gumbo was counted.
9. **Tawanda Gumbo** – a presiding officer deployed at Mavorovondo, is Joram Gumbo’s second born son who is a known ZANU PF activist.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**In Zvimba North constituency, ZANU PF executive members were deployed by ZEC as presiding officers.** These were the same people who were said to be harassing and intimidating citizens in the same area. We provide some examples below.

**Table 1: Examples of partisan ZEC officers**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **POLLING CENTRE** | **ZEC POSITION**  | **NAME OF OFFICIAL** | **ZANU PF POST OF ZEC official** |
| KILDONIAN SIDING | PRESIDING OFFICER | MARIKOSI MUPARAGANDA | CHAIRPERSON (MUTORASHANGA) |
| VANAD MINE | PRESIDING OFFICER | RICHARD JULIUS | VICE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (MUTORASHANGA) |
| VANAD MINE | POLLING OFFICER | RICKY GUTU | VICE CHAIRPERSON (BORDER GEZI ) |
| RUGARE COOP | PRESIDING OFFICER | EDWICK TIVAPFUKIDZE | DISTRICT MEMBER(MARINGAMBIZI) |

Source: computed from a testimonial

Complaints were also raised to ZEC by the MDC T candidate but no action was taken.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**In Zhombe constituency, the traditional leaders and their relatives aligned to ZANU PF were used as polling officers**.[[8]](#footnote-8) *ZANU PF office holders were also used as presiding officers in Zhombe constituencies.* Below are some examples:

1. **Sheunesu Shoko**- deployed as ward 23 collation officer based at Musume Secondary School, is ZANU PF district chairperson for ward 23
2. **Happious Shirichena** – deployed as polling officer at Gwavamutangwi Polling Station is ZANU PF district chairperson for ward 26
3. **Tavona Moyo** –Presiding Officer at Rhonda polling station is ZANU PF district chairman for Ward 27
4. **Paul Maphosa** – a presiding officer in ward 28 is ZANU PF Midlands Provincial Secretary
5. **Charles Ncube** – a presiding officer in ward 19 is ZANU PF district chairperson for Ward 19.[[9]](#footnote-9)
6. **Elizabeth Shumba**- a presiding officer at Garenyama Polling Station, Ward 19 is the spouse of the winning Zanu-PF candidate for the ward. The MDC-T polling agents observed the presiding officer Elizabeth Shumba personally assisting up to 60 voters. The numbers of assisted voters was very high throughout the constituency.[[10]](#footnote-10)

A formal concern was raised with ZEC by the MDC T candidate’s chief election agent for Zhombe constituency but no action was taken by ZEC. ZEC’s deployment policy compromised its reputation and directly affected the freedom of the voters to choose leaders of its choice. We now provide some evidence on the displacement of voters.

## Displacement of voters

**Most of the prospective voters were turned away because they could not find their names in the voters roll despite the fact that they had checked their names during the voters roll inspection period**. Some discovered that their names were now appearing in other wards within the same constituency (despite that this was a ward based election) or in entirely different constituencies’ altogether.[[11]](#footnote-11) This was in violation of the general principles of democratic elections which provide that voting methods must be simple, accurate, verifiable, secure and transparent.[[12]](#footnote-12) As a chief election agent explained,

Within the same ward a person could miss his or her name but the name would appear in another polling station. For example, some voters failed to find their names at Ayshire primary polling station but would find their names at Chikeya polling centre. If the voters roll is ward based this is very confusing at it shows the shambolic nature of the voters roll.[[13]](#footnote-13)

In Zvimba South, a lot of voters were turned away because their names did not appear in the constituency and some were referred to as far as the Midlands province.[[14]](#footnote-14) This was prevalent in most constituencies but a lot has been written on this development in previous civil society reports and we avoid repetition and move to the next issue on voter registration slips.

## Illegal and multiple voting

**ZANU PF political contestants abused voter registration slips for three purposes**. *First, to ensure that their supporters who had registered after the official closure of the process were allowed to vote. Second, to facilitate multiple voting by people within the same constituency. Third, to bus in people from other constituencies to vote using fake voter registration slips.*

In Zvimba North constituency a respondent substantiated,

One of the agents observed that some of the slips had no dates but ZEC officials said agents were not allowed to verify the dates on the voter slips. Most of the people who had these controversial slips did not reside in our constituency; they were bused in a ZUPCO bus written FF7N but without number plates. It is a clear indication of the rottenness of the whole officialdom in the registrar general’s office.[[15]](#footnote-15)

In Buhera North, the MDC T candidate confirmed that some people who were registered as late as 30th July, 2013, were given voter slips back-dated to a date earlier than the cut-off date of 10 July 2013.[[16]](#footnote-16) In Chitungwiza South, the ZANU PF candidate allegedly hired people from the surrounding areas and gave them $10.00 for getting the slip and going to vote. As the candidate narrated,

a lot of people were brought in to vote from areas that fall outside of Chitungwiza South and some are willing to appear before the court to testify. Between 7am and 10am on 31 July 2013 many people who were ferried from neighbouring areas were allowed to vote using the fake slips. The polling stations affected most were Seke 13 Primary School, stations 13A and 13D and partly Unit L at a kindergarten school. [[17]](#footnote-17)

As a result of the voting slips, the ZANU PF candidate in Rusape allegedly coordinated people to vote multiple times at different polling stations. [[18]](#footnote-18) At Mangudya polling station, the farm manager, Mr Mirror Chiposa, transported farm workers who had voter slips to the polling station. When the farm manager voted, he opened his ballot paper in front of the farm workers who had voter slips (in full view of the presiding officer) to show that he had voted for ZANU PF. He did this to exert undue influence on the farm workers he had brought to vote in a similar way.[[19]](#footnote-19) In a testimonial, the MDC T candidate also noted that, ‘Nathaniel Mhiripiri, a known supporter and member of the ZANU PF bussed people to Zimati polling station in a Nissan lorry, white in colour, and when they finished voting, he took them again to another polling station called Mashumba where they voted again’.[[20]](#footnote-20) All these practices went unchecked. Another opposition activist explained that,

On the Election Day, Joram Gumbo’s vehicles (Nissan Patrol Registration number ABL 7506, driven by P. Shumba, Joram Gumbo’s cousin and a lorry) were seen ferrying voters from one polling station to the other raising suspicions of multiple voting. Myself and my team physically met some voters at Cross in Ward 29 who boasted of having voted at Sandawana and Chimbapire and were now heading for Chovuragu Polling station. They boasted that they would finish off the MDC presumably through voting. [[21]](#footnote-21)

In addition, there was also psychological intimidation targeted at opposition supporters as explored next.

## Political intimidation and discrimination

**The military, ZANU PF activists and most notably traditional leaders intimidated people with violence if they were going to vote for any other party rather than ZANU PF.** They drew on the previous memories of liberation war and March-June 2008 violence. In Magunje constituency, armed soldiers patrolled from 28 July 2013 up to the 1st of August 2013 threatening war should ZANU-PF lose. [[22]](#footnote-22) They were supported by recruit soldiers at the Magunje Infantry Barracks. In addition, ZANU PF candidate, Mr G.Gandawa moved around on the election eve in most wards in Magunje wielding a gun, and threatening war if he were to lose. He claimed to be a CIO operative[[23]](#footnote-23) Major Ndlamini who worked at Mvuma for Maguta as a soldier held several meetings and said that everyone should vote for ZANU PF or else face the repeat of what happened in 2008 . Similarly in Mutoko North, people were openly intimidated into voting for ZANU-PF by soldiers from the 2.1 infantry battalion. They were warned of death and war if ZANU-PF was to lose the election.[[24]](#footnote-24) People were also being intimidated by chiefs and village heads to vote for ZANU PF across most rural areas. Chief Gwesela was very influential in ward 9 of Zhombe. He declared that all those people who will vote for MDC like in 2008 will be asked to leave his area for good.[[25]](#footnote-25) In Mutoko East constituency, during the 31st July 2013 elections, traditional leaders aligned to the ZANU PF party and ZANU PF activists actively intimidated voters. As a respondent said,

The intimidation was in the form of verbal threats against anybody who was identified as actively participating in opposition sponsored political activities and or being a member of the opposition or even a perceived sympathizer. They gave directives to them to renounce their allegiance to the opposition MDC, denounce the MDC, its national and local leadership, join ZANU PF and vote for a ZANU PF candidate.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The consequences for failing to adhere were physical violence. The threats were effective because made in reference to fresh memories of the June 2008 violence that left many opposition supporters dead, maimed and some physically disabled.[[27]](#footnote-27)

In addition, ZANU PF threatened to dispossess people of their properties in the event that they voted for the opposition political parties. So intimidation extended beyond physical harm to property dispossession. The threats also included the destruction of people’s properties. Whereas this was more prevalent in the rural areas in the 2008 March-June election, this time it had an urban character. In Harare South constituency chairpersons of cooperatives and housing consortiums directed people to vote for ZANU PF.[[28]](#footnote-28) The chairpersons who were aligned to ZANU PF were clear that they would take housing stands from those who would dare vote for the opposition.[[29]](#footnote-29) As the MDC T candidate for Harare South testified,

On destruction of their personal properties and belongings reference was made to the events of the same nature that occurred in June 2008 when properties and personal belongings of scores of MDC-T party members and activities were destroyed. I have no doubt that many members, activists and even neutral citizens of Zimbabwe including some Zanu PF members were intimidated and considered the threats, consequences thereto as serious. [[30]](#footnote-30)

In the new resettlement areas the farmers were also threatened with dispossession of their land by ZANU PF. An example is in Zvimba North. A respondent elaborated,

Intimidation on the electorate was rampant during the election period. The A1 and A2 farmers were threatened by ZANU PF secretary for lands (Dr Ignatious Chombo). Even farm workers were threatened with the violence of 2000 farm invasions if they were to support the opposition. At Barron Gomo polling station, Mr Munetsi, an Agritex officer was campaigning for Dr Chombo, the ZANU PF candidate, telling the voters that they would be expelled from the new farms. [[31]](#footnote-31)

Surprisingly Mr Munetsi was a ZEC official. At Inchefu polling station, the ZANU PF chairperson of Tashinga and a person identified as Adam Mula also intimidated the resettled farmers. [[32]](#footnote-32) These threats contribute to the undemocratic nature of the July 2013 election.

## Actual physical violence

**The dominant narrative is that there was minimal violence during the July 2013 elections. Whilst this is true, it has overshadowed attention to some serious cases of violence that were recorded in various constituencies which contributes to the argument that the elections were undemocratic**. For example, in Zvimba North constituency, some houses were burnt in cases of politically motivated violence. From our data, the following are examples. In Katawa, Maxwell Chipondo’s two houses were burnt. In Rafingora, Charles Vhazhure’s thatched house was burnt to ashes. In Mapondo, Mrs Nyamaka’s house was set on fire and the red acres area; the Zulu family had their house also burnt. Some of the suspects were actually arrested but escaped with small fines in such grave cases. *In addition, there were also cases of assaults.* As an observer explained in a testimonial,

George Munzara a youth loyal to Marian Chombo was assaulted by Felix and Bywell Shaba’s father and was left unconscious. The suspects were fortunately arrested by members of the police, but to our surprise the suspects were seen and heard singing in one of Dr Chombo’s car boasting that they would continue to beat people who were against ZANU PF and remain protected by the law.[[33]](#footnote-33)

 In the post-election period the group has allegedly continued to threaten opposition supporters with violence. In Chambadzi district, an individual identified as Mr Kaunda has continued to threaten people with ‘physical discipline’.  *In some cases, opposition local leaders were beaten*. As a candidate explained, ‘during the campaign period, at Greycourt, I was physically shoved and my campaign team leader (Mr Isa) was physically beaten by a ZANU PF campaign team member identified as Tinashe of Greycourt. This was reported to CID Chinhoyi under case number 36-07-13 and dealt with by officer Marwa’.

*A grievous case of rape was also reported during the elections*. An activist in Rusape alleged in a testimonial that,

On the 30th of July 2013, C. Mutombwa, a well known ZANU PF activist raped and sodomised a young boy related to an MDC activist at a computer lab at his house. The case was reported (RRB Number 813437/13). The suspect was arrested and tried and now awaiting judgment’.[[34]](#footnote-34)

All these cases provide evidence that the Zimbabwean state failed to hold a democratic election and this was compounded by the prevalence of patronage as below.

## Vote Buying

**Vote buying is inimical to democratic elections, yet this was rampant in the July 2013 election**. In Buhera North constituency, for example, the respondent distributed maize in every ward, torches and flasks that bore the image of President Mugabe. Bags of maize were also delivered on the election eve at all ward centres with promises that the maize would be distributed soon after the election, provided ZANU PF wins.[[35]](#footnote-35) In Mberengwa West, the ZANU PF candidate, Joram Gumbo, gave the electorate some torches, plates, pots and other kitchen items with the then ZANU PF Presidential candidate Robert Gabriel Mugabe’s picture.[[36]](#footnote-36) In Zvimba South, the ZANU PF candidate distributed kitchenware, pots and pans on the eve of the 31st of July 2013. [[37]](#footnote-37) Similar practices were observed in Magunje constituency. In Harare South constituency, money, chicks, plates and cabbages were distributed. This was vote buying. As an observer elaborated, ‘all recipients of the “gifts” had their identity particulars noted and were instructed to go into polling stations with the said torches and vote for the person whose image appeared on the torch as well as all other people from his party’. [[38]](#footnote-38) Such vote buying practices amounted to bribery which is a violation of Section 136 of the Electoral Act [Chapter 2:13]. Corrupt and unlawful practices compromised the democraticness of the election. [[39]](#footnote-39)

## Undue influence: voting without a choice

**Undue influence on voters was exercised in multiple interrelated ways and our research detected five pathways**. First, *people were assigned particular polling stations to vote at*. Second, *voters were told to record the two digits of the ballot serial number and submit them to ZANU PF people*. Third, *people were assembled at the village head’s homestead before voting and had to go vote as a group with a leader assigned to them*. Fourth, *ZANU PF activists recorded names of people at polling stations just after they would have voted* . Fifth, *people who were suspected to be MDC were assigned ZANU PF people to assist them to vote.*

In Harare South, ZANU PF aligned chairpersons ‘were tasked to prepare lists of voters in the area and to direct them to the polling stations where they were supposed to vote .The voters were then directed to stand in a queue behind their cell leaders so that their vote could be ascertained’.[[40]](#footnote-40) At Kebvunde primary school in Mutoko North, entries to the polling stations were surrounded by traditional leaders and soldiers.[[41]](#footnote-41) Whereas in Magunje constituency, the voters were forced to gather at selected places near the polling stations and instructed to vote in a specific order.[[42]](#footnote-42) In Mberengwa West, a respondent noted that,

on the voting day at Zvavagavi and Mavorovondo polling stations, ZANU PF officials Frank Madzima and one Tava Madzima were spotted taking down names of all the voters who visited the stations, which intimidated the voters. The incident was also reported to the ZEC leadership that had visited the stations. Kwashai Moyo, MDC-T candidate (councillor) and his chief election agent, Tolakele Mpofu notified a ZEC official, [identified as Mrs Shoko] who had visited the station. [[43]](#footnote-43)

 In Nyanga South constituency, village heads demanded the last digits of each ballot paper. This was more pronounced and widespread in wards 4, 10, 11 and 12.[[44]](#footnote-44) As noted above, the electorate had no free choice, as they were assembled before going to vote. In Zhombe constituency, people were asked to gather at their particular village heads’ homestead and then proceed to the polling station as a group. This was recorded in all the 11 wards of Zhombe.[[45]](#footnote-45) In other constituencies, the voters were asked to submit the last digits of their ballot serial numbers. In Zvimba North, a respondent explained,

People were terrorized so that they could leave their ballot serial numbers at information centers that had been set up by ZANU PF across polling stations. In Mutorashanga, Kamushinda’s house was used as the depository centre where people had to go and their ballot serial numbers. In Mafuta ZANU PF activists terrorized villagers who had not submitted the ballot serial numbers.[[46]](#footnote-46)

The villagers were forcibly instructed to feign illiteracy and to accept ZANU PF activists to vote for them. As an observer chronicled in Mt Darwin North,

On the 31st of July, in the early morning before polling stations opened, people had to assemble at the homesteads of their headmen. The headman had a list of MDC relatives, supporters, perceived supporters and youths aged between 18 and 35 years who were not active in ZANU PF. All these were instructed not to cast votes without assistance. They were assigned ZANU PF supporters to assist them to vote on the false basis that they were unable to write. How can someone who completed Ordinary Level be said to be unable to write an X? How can someone who is a Roman Catholic Church Bishop like Mr Chakaipa in ward 4 be said to be unable to write an X but able to read a bible every Sunday. How come someone who works in the government bureaucracy, teachers and nurses were said to be unable to write an X. All the polling stations I visited there was no fairness.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Coercing opposition members and potential voters to agree to be treated as “assisted voters” whereas they could read and write compromised the integrity of the elections. The intention for doing this was to ensure that the electorate would be coerced into voting for ZANU PF rather than candidates of their choice.[[48]](#footnote-48) This does not in any way fit the bill of a democratic election. Given the evidence above, we now look at Zimbabwe’s future prospects.

# Prospects for democratic elections

Our empirical data, inter alia our theoretical understanding, shows that Zimbabwe is at a crossroads having endured another participatory ritual in the form of an election. The elections were held in a non-democratic setting. What does the future hold for Zimbabwe in future elections with one scheduled in June 2018? *This will not depend much on theoretical propositions but on concrete and practical steps that stakeholders such as civil society will take.* As Lindberg (2013:239) has argued, ‘though [current electoral]…systems favour incumbents, the passage of time and the greater experience an election affords is likely to serve to promote real political competition and meaningful participation-that is, to lead to more democratic elections (see Van de Walle2013:236). Depending on solid interventions by stakeholders, lessons can be drawn from July 2013 elections, with an aim to advance the democratic conduct of the next general elections. With proper advocacy, democracy can be a learning process for with every election, the democratic machinery (voting, ballot counting and reporting, election management and so on), can gain strength.

At this stage, we are not suggesting solutions but we intend to initiate debate with a longer term perspective on what strategic questions can Zimbabwe’s civil society begin to ask for practical interventions. ***Some of the questions appear familiar and obvious but the game changer answers are not so obvious in a semi-autocratic setting*.** How can the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) improve its independence and integrity? How can Zimbabwe have a credible voters roll? How can Zimbabweans receive adequate voter education so they can participate more freely? How can members of the state security (policy, military and CIOs) be compelled not to swim in partisan electoral politics? How can traditional leaders be compelled to stay out of partisan electoral politics? How can political intimidation and political discrimination be confronted in rural areas? How can the use of state resources as a form of patronage be ended? How can perpetrators of violence be made to account? How can mechanisms to record and store data on electoral processes be improved?

There are so many questions that can be asked in relation to how the democratic conduct of elections can be improved. *However, the above questions strictly flow from our empirical findings on mainly what happened on Election Day.* Civil society might need an early post-election think tank conference that focuses on the long and short term interventions for a democratic election in future.

# Conclusion

We conclude that Zimbabwe’s 31 July 2013 harmonised elections were undemocratic. This is based on empirical evidence that shows systematic practices that undermined the election. These included undue partisan electoral officers, political intimidation and discrimination, multiple and illegal voting, displacement of voters, violence, vote buying and five pathways of undue voter influence. *Our emphasis on the two principles of integrity and insulation does not mean the state met the other principles of information and inclusion. This is far from it.* Our argument here is based on our ethnographic data on mainly what happened on the actual voting day, which revealed more on the violations of integrity and insulation. Further studies might substantiate on the other principles. Nevertheless, once one chain is broken, we can no longer measure up to a democratic election. This is more important given that authoritarian regimes now go through the motions of holding elections. They see a need—both domestically and internationally—to legitimize their rule with the regular holding of elections. However, we insist that regular and moreso peaceful elections are insufficient to fulfill the promise of a democratic choice in Zimbabwe. Even though, the 31st July 2013 harmonised elections were just a participatory ritual, with the right interventions from stakeholders, these elections can serve as a foundational school upon which democratic elections can be built and the earlier the best.

1. See Countering Electoral Manipulation: Strengthening Zimbabwe’s Chain of Democratic Choice, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, Harare, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J Elklit, Op cit [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Countering Electoral Manipulation: Strengthening Zimbabwe’s Chain of Democratic Choice, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, Harare, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. J Elklit, Democracy and Elections in Africa in K Matlosa et al(eds), (2007) Challenges of Conflict, Democracy and Development in Africa, EISA [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Magunje constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Mberengwa West constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Zvimba North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Zhombe constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Mberengwa South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Mberengwa South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Buhera North South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Buhera North South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Rusape South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Zvimba South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Zvimba North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Buhera North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Chitungwiza South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Rusape constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Sagandira constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Sagandira, Rusape constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Mberengwa West constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Magunje constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Magunje constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Mutoko North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Zhombe constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Mutoko East constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Mutoko East constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Harare South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Harare South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Mutoko East constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Zvimba North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Zvimba North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Zvimba North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Rusape constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Buhera North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Mberengwa West constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Zvimba South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Buhera North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Buhera North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Harare South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Mutoko North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Magunje constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Mberengwa West constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Nyanga South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Zhombe constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Zvimba North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Mt Darwin North constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Nyanga South constituency database [↑](#footnote-ref-48)