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Zimbabwe Backgrounder

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Summary

In late 2001, political tensions were mounting in Zimbabwe as a March 2002 presidential election approached. There were several incidents of political violence, and President Robert Mugabe issued a new decree to accelerate the forcible takeover of white-owned farms. The move was widely interpreted as violating a September 2001 agreement, signed in Abuja, Nigeria, committing the government to proceed with land redistribution only with "due regard" for the rule of law. The government was also preparing to introduce legislation to ban foreign reporters from Zimbabwe and to require Zimbabwe journalists to be licensed. It had earlier indicated that only Zimbabwe civil servants would be permitted to act as observers during the March vote.

Apart from its political difficulties, Zimbabwe faced a declining GDP; high rates of inflation, unemployment, and poverty; and an HIV infection rate of 25% among adults aged 15 to 49. Food shortages were feared, partly because of the turmoil in the country's agricultural sector, and partly because of a severe drought in southern Zimbabwe. Officials acknowledged the need for food aid, but said that they would not permit charities and international relief organizations to distribute assistance. They claimed that such groups would use relief aid to interfere in the country's politics and support the opposition.

On October 15, 2001, President Mugabe announced that Zimbabwe was abandoning free market reforms and returning to a socialist style economy. The move was judged likely to deepen difficulties with the international financial institutions, which had already halted lending, and further discourage potential investors.

Following the November 2001 assassination of a ruling party activist, President Mugabe charged that the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was a "terrorist" organization, leading many to expect an intensification of government action against the party. A poll showed MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai leading Mugabe in the presidential contest, but analysts believed that Mugabe was determined to win in March at almost any cost. Britain, the United States, the European Union, and many African leaders, including South African President Thabo Mbeki, were pressing Mugabe to permit a free and fair vote. Many feared rising political turmoil in Zimbabwe in coming months.

U.S. policy-makers once saw Zimbabwe as a source of political and economic stability in southern Africa, but with the failure of Zimbabwe's economic reform program and mounting unrest in the 1990s, U.S. assistance levels fell sharply. Aid came to focus on programs to strengthen democracy, raise living standards among the poor, and fight the AIDS epidemic. In late 2001, the United States announced the withdrawal of Peace Corps volunteers from Zimbabwe and strongly criticized the Zimbabwe government for restrictions on the press. On December 11, Congress passed the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 (S. 494), providing pressures and incentives intended to promote peaceful and democratic change, equitable economic growth, and a restoration of the rule of law.

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In late 2001, political tensions were mounting in Zimbabwe as a March 2002 presidential election approached. There were several instances of political violence, including the murder of a ruling party activist in the southern city of Bulawayo, followed by an attack on the Bulawayo headquarters of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Several MDC members were arrested in this incident, and President Robert Mugabe lashed out at MDC "terrorists," and at the British government, which he said supports them.[1]

Meanwhile, a new presidential decree was issued to accelerate the forcible takeover of white-owned farms – a move that was widely interpreted as violating a September 2001 agreement, signed in Abuja, Nigeria, committing the government to proceed with land redistribution only with "due regard" for the rule of law. President Mugabe's government was drawing mounting international criticism, not only on the land issue, but also because of alleged interference with the freedom of the press and an apparent refusal to permit international observers to monitor the upcoming election. Shortages of foreign exchange and mounting arrears on foreign debt signaled the continuing deterioration of Zimbabwe's economy, and officials acknowledged that large amounts of food aid would soon be needed to stave off a potential famine in southern Zimbabwe. At the same time, they insisted that food relief not be distributed by charities or international agencies, on grounds that they might use food aid to interfere in Zimbabwe politics and support the MDC.

Zimbabwe's political, economic, and international problems led many observers to expect serious political instability and a possible humanitarian crisis in the months ahead. The purpose of this report is to provide background information on the factors and events that have brought Zimbabwe to its current situation. The report will not be updated. Instead, developments in Zimbabwe will be monitored by new CRS products as events warrant.

Historical Background

The roots of Zimbabwe's current difficulties can be traced back to 1890, when a column of 200 white settlers belonging to Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSAC) arrived in the heart of the territory belonging to the Shona people, known as Mashonaland. By promising that white numbers would remain small and that they were interested only in mining, the settlers had won passage into the region from Lobengula, chief of the Ndebele people, whose Matabeleland lay between Mashonaland and South Africa. But each white settler was immediately given 1,210

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[1]For details on these events, see below, **Other Current Issues.**

hectares of land (1 hectare=2.47 acres) in addition to 15 mining claims. In 1893-1894, the BSAC waged war against the Ndebele, eventually winning control of Matabeleland as well.[2]

In subsequent years, African farmers were largely confined to Native Reserves, now known as Communal Areas, where the soils were poor and rainfall scant. The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 formally set aside over half the country's total land area, including the most fertile zones, for whites; and the Land Tenure Act of 1969, allocated most remaining unreserved land to the so-called "European areas," while denying Africans any possibility of acquiring land in those areas. There had been an influx of European settlers after World War II, and by the 1960s, there were more than 200,000 whites, while Africans numbered about 7 million.

Britain had permitted the white-ruled territory to become a self-governing colony, known as Southern Rhodesia, in 1923, but by the 1950s, as elsewhere in Africa, African political movements were growing stronger and pressing for majority rule and independence. Britain, which had come to recognize that independence for all of its African colonies was inevitable, insisted that the white settler regime undertake political reforms that would prepare the way for eventual majority rule in Southern Rhodesia. In order to avoid this, the white government, led by Ian Smith of the Rhodesia Front party, issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain in November 1965, naming the secessionist country Rhodesia.

Britain imposed stringent economic sanctions against Rhodesia, and United Nations sanctions followed, but neither Britain nor other countries were prepared to intervene militarily to end the rebellion. Economic sanctions had limited impact, since Rhodesia was able to trade freely with its neighbor, white-ruled South Africa. There were outbreaks of armed African opposition to the white regime as early as 1966, but it seemed at the time that white minority rule might last indefinitely. In 1972, however, a full scale guerrilla war began as troops of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) crossed into Rhodesia from bases in parts of Mozambique that Mozambican revolutionaries had freed of Portuguese control. In 1974, African nationalist Robert Mugabe, who had been imprisoned in Rhodesia for a decade, was released; and he slipped out of the country, taking command of ZANU in 1975. Mozambique became fully independent of Portugal in 1975, strengthening ZANU's position, while to the west, guerrillas of the rival Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), based in Zambia, were also launching

[2]For more detail, see Harold D. Nelson, ed., *Zimbabwe, A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series (Washington: U.S. Library of Congress, 1982).

armed attacks into Rhodesia. ZAPU was largely an Ndebele movement, and its head, Joshua Nkomo, now deceased, was himself Ndebele.

Early Congressional Involvement

Zimbabwe in Brief

Population: (2001) 11.4 million
Size: slightly larger than Montana
GNP per capita: $385 per year in 2001, down from $421 in 2000.
GDP: 1999: $5.6 billion; 1989: $8.3 billion
Foreign debt: $4.5 billion (2001)
Life expectancy: (years)1998: 51; 1990: 56
Literacy: male : 90%, female: 20% (1995)
HIV infection rate (adults): 25% (1999)
Ethnic groups: Shona 71%, Ndebele 16%, other African, 11%, white 1%, mixed and Asian 1%
Religion: Christian, 25%; indigenous, 24%; syncretic, 50%; Muslim and other, 1%

Sources: World Bank; United Nations; U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook; budget address in the Zimbabwe parliament,

During the late 1960s and in the 1970s, U.S. participation in the U.N. sanctions against Rhodesia became a significant issue in Congress, where some Members saw the white-ruled country as a bastion against communism. These Members were concerned that ZANU leader Mugabe identified himself as a Marxist and that ZAPU, ZANU's rival, was supported by the Soviet Union. Under the "Byrd Amendment," named for Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia, U.S. enforcement in the United States of the U.N. sanctions against Rhodesia was suspended with respect to imports of critical and strategic materials. (Section 503 of the Armed Forces Appropriation Authorization of 1971, P.L. 92-156.) These included chromium, used in the manufacture of high-quality steels, as well as titanium and nickel. In 1977, however, after a long legislative battle, the view that the Byrd amendment was damaging the United States in Africa and undermining efforts to promote democracy prevailed, and the amendment was essentially repealed.[3]

The Carter Administration, which came into office just before the Byrd amendment was repealed, strongly supported majority rule in Rhodesia, and backed British diplomatic efforts to bring about this result. Controversy over U.S. policy continued, but on December 21, 1979, at Lancaster House in London, a Rhodesian peace agreement was finally concluded. The agreement provided for a brief transition period under a British governor, elections under a constitution establishing a parliamentary form of government, and constitutional guarantees of minority rights. Mugabe's party, renamed as the ZANU-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), won a parliamentary majority in the election, and he was installed as Prime Minister of independent Zimbabwe on April 18, 1980.

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[3]U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. *Executive-Legislative Consultation on Foreign Policy: Sanctions Against Rhodesia*, Congress and Foreign Policy Series (Washington, September 1982).

Zimbabwe in the 1980s

For much of the 1980s, Zimbabwe was regarded as something of a model to other African countries because of gains the Mugabe government made in extending education and health care services to the poor; and in providing extension services, rural roads, and clean water for impoverished farming communities. Moreover, the country enjoyed relative racial harmony, and some whites served in government, although others were embittered by the course of events and thousands left. (In 2001, whites numbered an estimated 70,000 to 80,000 out of a population of 11.4 million.) The difficulties Zimbabwe encountered as a "front-line state" facing white-ruled South Africa brought it sympathy and support from the international donor community. The United States provided more than $360 million in non-food economic assistance in the first decade after independence.

Even in the 1980s, however, there were indications that authoritarian tendencies were emerging in Mugabe's regime. From 1983-1987, dissident activity in Matabeleland, the ZAPU stronghold, was suppressed by the North Korea-trained Fifth Brigade of the Zimbabwe army. Though little information on the conflict was provided by the government, reports indicated that thousands were killed and that government troops committed a number of atrocities. The conflict ended when Nkomo agreed to merge ZAPU with ZANU-PF, but the merger had the effect of making Zimbabwe virtually a one-party state. The constitution was changed in 1987 to create a new political system with a strong presidency, and Prime Minister Mugabe was himself inaugurated as the first president on December 31 of that year. In the later 1980s, reports and allegations of corruption appeared with increasing frequency.

Zimbabwe in the 1990s

In February 1990, Nelson Mandela was freed from prison in South Africa, and Zimbabwe's large and powerful neighbor began a 4-year democratic transition. Peace and democracy in South African seemed to promise a major improvement in Zimbabwe's international situation. Meanwhile, the Zimbabwe government was developing an economic structural adjustment program aimed at strengthening the domestic economy. In July 1991, the finance minister announced plans to cut the budget deficit, reduce the size of the civil service, and end all state subsidies to state-owned corporations, including the national airline, the steel corporation, and the railways. Despite these promising domestic and international developments in the early 1990s, the political and economic difficulties that had begun to emerge in the1980s deepened severely as the decade advanced.

Allegations of serious corruption, some involving government ministers and Mugabe family members and others close to the president, continued to appear. In 1996, there were reports of serious improprieties in payments from the War Veterans Compensation Fund, intended to assist disabled veterans of the liberation struggle. Veterans mounted a series of protests, but these were stemmed in August 1997, when the government announced that all veterans would receive a substantial lump sum payment as well as a monthly pension and other benefits. Economists were concerned that no such expenditures had been budgeted or planned, and that the inflationary impact of the payouts would further weaken the currency.

Demonstrations by students and workers against corruption and unemployment occurred with increasing frequency in the later 1990s, and these were often harshly suppressed by the police. In December 1997, during one round of protests, trade union leader Morgan Tsvangirai was attacked in his office and beaten unconscious by unknown assailants; and in March 1998, the offices of his Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in Bulawayo were pillaged and burned. The latter attack came after the army had been deployed to put down urban protests over rising food prices. There were other reports of political intimidation against opponents of the regime, and some accounts attributed these attacks to war veterans, whose loyalty to Mugabe had been solidified by the costly veterans benefit program.

Land Issue through June 2000

As Zimbabwe's political and economic situation deteriorated in the later 1990s, tensions between the Mugabe government and white farmers over land intensified. At the time, it was estimated that about 4,500 white-owned commercial farms were occupying about 70% of the country's most fertile land while perhaps 8 million African peasant farmers were still primarily working the poorer, drier soils of the Communal Areas. Many observers argued that the white-owned farms were critical to the nation's economy, not only because of their contribution to the nation's food supply, but also because the tobacco, maize, and other crops they produced for export accounted for about 40% of export earnings. Moreover, many argued that the long-term solution to unemployment among Zimbabwe's poor lay not in land redistribution but in business and industry, including tourism. Even so, it had long been recognized by donors, and by the largely white Commercial Farmers Union, that the sharp inequity in land distribution was untenable over the long term, and programs had been developed to purchase white-owned land for resettlement by African farmers.

The goal of these land reform programs was not to divide up fertile land into subsistence plots, but to create viable small farms that would continue to produce crops for the local market and for export. Some economists argued that reform of this sort could actually boost earnings in the agriculture sector, since in their view land on the large, white-owned farms tended not to be fully utilized. Others pointed out, however, that there would be added costs to reform, since the former white-owned farms would be more densely populated, creating added needs for roads, schools, clinics, and other facilities.

From 1980 until 1992, a largely British-funded program financed the purchase of approximately 3 million hectares of land on a "willing seller-willing buyer" basis, and some 62,000 families were resettled.[4] U.S. assistance funds during this time were used not to purchase land but to help strengthen the overall economy and assist smallholder farmers through agricultural credit programs, extension services, and training. British support for land purchases came to an end in 1992, when the Mugabe government enacted the Land Acquisition Act, amending the constitution to deprive landowners of the right to appeal government-set prices in the courts. (The Act still required fair compensation, even though the right of appeal was taken away.)

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[4] *The Economist*, November 15, 1997.

The Mugabe government did compulsorily take 45 farms in 1994, and according to reports, the choicest were given not to the poor but to cabinet ministers, generals, and others well-connected in ZANU-PF.[5]

Lancaster House Commitments

The land issue continued to fester, with Mugabe insisting that Britain was obligated to finance the purchase of land from whites for redistribution in part because British subjects had initially taken the land by force and in part because of commitments he felt were made at the Lancaster House negotiations in 1979. Authoritative sources on Lancaster House maintain, however, that the promise made by Britain was not a specific pledge to buy land but a more general offer to help fund agricultural development, land resettlement, and redistribution programs that might be undertaken by the new Zimbabwe government.[6]

Nonetheless, Jeffrey Davidow, a U.S. diplomat who closely studied the negotiations, reports that Lord Carrington, the British mediator, did indicate that Britain "would be prepared to shoulder some of the financial burden" of compensating white farmers.[7] Davidow also reports that the Carter Administration promised assistance to Zimbabwe at Lancaster House, although the promise was "convoluted and cautious" and not linked to the purchase of white-owned land. The Administration, Davidow maintains, did not want to be accused of buying out "white landlords" on the one hand, or of "opening the U.S. treasury to land-hungry peasants" on the other. These British and U.S. promises, which Davidow describes as "undoubtedly sincere, but still vague" helped bring the talks to a successful conclusion.

1997-1998 Land Seizure Crisis

On October 13, 1997, President Mugabe told a political rally that his government had decided to take land needed for redistribution to poor African farmers from white commercial farmers without compensation. Initial reaction was muted, since similar threats in the past had not materialized. In November, however, the government published a list of 1,503 properties, totaling over 5 million hectares, for takeover. The government said it would pay for buildings and improvements on land taken, but not for the land itself – a responsibility that in Mugabe's view lay with Britain.

The reasons for President Mugabe's decision to revive the land question in 1997 were the subject of speculation among analysts. Zimbabwe was already experiencing economic difficulties in 1997, and these had led to several incidents of labor unrest. It may have seemed to Mugabe that land seizures and redistribution offered a way to

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[5]*The Economist*, April 16, 1994; *African Business*, January 1998.

[6]Henry Wiseman and Alastair Taylor, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: the Politics of Transition* (New York: International Peace Academy, 1981), 9.

[7]Jeffrey Davidow, *A Peace in Southern Africa: the Lancaster House Conference on Rhodesia, 1979* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1979), 63.

boost employment, quickly and restore his government's sagging popularity.[8] Mugabe may also have been impatient with the British refusal to provide further funding for land reform on his terms, and resentful of the insistence on the part of Britain and other donors that the land reform process be orderly, open, fair, and transparent. He may have calculated that the threat of a sudden, large-scale land seizure would persuade donors to waive their conditions and provide funding in order to avert a rural upheaval. Mugabe himself said, "The demand and need for land by our people is now overwhelming," adding that "if the British government want(s) us to compensate its children, it must give us the money or it does the compensation itself."[9]

President Mugabe raised the issue with British Prime Minister Tony Blair at a Commonwealth summit held in Edinburgh in late October, reportedly seeking about $250 million for land acquisition,[10] but was disappointed. The British insisted not only that any acquisition program would have to be open and transparent, but also that resettlement plans would have to be "economic" and benefit the poor – criteria the Mugabe proposal did not meet, in the British view.[11] The British government affirmed in December 1997, that it recognized the need for land reform in Zimbabwe, but that President Mugabe's approach "will damage the economy, undermine investor confidence, and do nothing to help the poor."[12]

The first months of 1998 were highly confused with respect to the land issue, with the government at times seeming to step back from the threat of sweeping nationalizations and at times threatening to move ahead. In June and July, poor farmers seeking land moved onto some white-owned farms as squatters, foreshadowing the vast squatter movement of 2000. Land seizures by government did not actually occur, however, perhaps because President Mugabe had come under strong international pressure to exercise restraint. Donors and international financial institutions warned that the proposed takeover program would inflict severe economic damage by deterring investors and cutting exports. The International Monetary Fund delayed a balance of payments support disbursement expected in August, primarily because of concerns over Mugabe's land policy and its effect on investment.

Despite international concerns, a land reform pledging conference met in Harare in September 1998. Zimbabwe was seeking pledges sufficient to fund half of a $2.2 billion program aimed at acquiring 5 million hectares over 5 years for the resettlement of 150,000 farm families.[13] In fact, no funds were actually pledged at the conference, but tensions between Zimbabwe and the donor community seemed to ease

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[8]"Mugabe Walks a Fine Line on Land Redistribution," *Financial Mail* (South Africa), November 14, 1997.

[9]South African Press Agency Report, October 17, 1997.

[10]*The Economist*, November 15, 1997.

[11]British embassy statement in Zimbabwe, reported by the South African Press Agency, November 6, 1997.

[12]British Foreign Office statement, December 10, 1997.

[13]*The Economist*, September 5, 1998.

because an agreement was reached on a two-stage land reform process that would have donor support. In the 2-year Inception Phase, 1,000 poor, rural families were to be resettled on 25,000 to 40,000 hectares already owned by the government or to be acquired by the government from underutilized farms that had been offered for sale by their white owners. The Inception Phase would be followed by an Expansion Phase, whose scale and design would depend on lessons learned during the Inception Phase. A communique issued at the end of the conference promised that the program would be "implemented in a transparent, fair, and sustainable manner, with regard for the law," and Foreign Minister Stan Mudenge promised that there would be "no confiscators and no land-grabbers."[14]

Although the plan seemed to have the support of Mudenge and other Zimbabwe officials, President Mugabe threatened major new land seizures in November 1998 and March 1999, jeopardizing donor support. Nonetheless, the Zimbabwe government presented a detailed plan for the Inception Phase in February 1999, and in May, the World Bank pledged $5 million to assist with the resettlement of poor farmers, and several bilateral donors, including the United States, made small pledges as well.

Aftermath. In subsequent months, it seemed that the land issue might recede as Zimbabwe moved forward with the donor-approved reform program. France and Japan joined other donors in offering aid to resettled farmers, and in August 1999, the IMF lifted its suspension of balance of payments support. The IMF again insisted, however, among other conditions, that land reform procedures be "fully transparent" and that fair compensation be paid to landowners. At the end of the year, Mugabe signaled the onset of new land crisis when he began to demand that changes in the constitution to be voted on in 2000 include provisions for seizing land from white farmers without compensation. In a December 21, 1999 interview, Mugabe said "Land was taken from our people during colonization without compensation, but now the British say we must pay compensation for the soil stolen from us. Where do we get the resources to pay for the land?"[15]

Land Crisis Resumes

The land issue indeed figured heavily in the referendum on constitutional changes proposed by the government, which took place on February 12 and 13, 2000. The proposed changes included a provision, inserted at President Mugabe's insistence, empowering the government to acquire agricultural land compulsorily for resettlement without paying compensation.[16] It seemed likely that the constitutional amendments would pass, in view of the government's strong backing of the changes and its domination of the media, but in a surprise outcome, 55% of those participating voted "no." Some analysts wrote that in view of the result, President Mugabe should have recognized that his influence was waning and accepted that the time had come to retire; but instead, the referendum seemed only to energize Mugabe for a new

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[14]South African Press Agency, September 11, 1998

[15]*Johannesburg Independent Online*.

[16]*Africa News Service*, January 28, 2000.

assault on white-owned farmland. There was speculation that he was motivated in part by anger over the strong support among whites for a "no" vote and by the backing whites were giving to the MDC, which was then a new opposition party.

Within days of the referendum, war veterans and other ZANU-PF supporters began to move onto white owned farms, and by May 2000, it was estimated that squatters were present at approximately 1,000 farms. In some instances, according to reports, the farm occupations were peaceful and farm work was allowed to continue. In other instances, however, white farmers were attacked and driven off their properties. The Zimbabwe police took no action to prevent the farm occupations, claiming that they lacked the capability to repel the squatters. Court orders requiring the squatters to leave were ignored. By early June, twenty-five people had been killed during the land occupation crisis, including four white farmers and several black farm workers; the killers seemed to target MDC supporters, both black and white.

A high-level Zimbabwe delegation traveled to Britain at the end of April 2000 and was told that London would provide an additional $57 million to help with land reform and other programs – and would take the lead in mobilizing additional support from the international community. But then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook insisted that no action would be taken against a background of occupations and violence, and he reaffirmed British insistence on transparency, fair compensation, good economic management, and clear benefit to the rural poor in any land reform program.[17] Mugabe's reply seemed to come on May 1, 2000, when a spokesman announced that, with parliament adjourned since April 12, the president would invoke special powers to allow the forced acquisition of white-owned land. In a May 4 speech, Mugabe said that for whites who did not cooperate, "we can assist by showing them the various ways they can leave our territory."

Pre-Election Escalation. Before the June parliamentary election, President Mugabe sharply escalated the land takeover drive. On June 2, 2000 the government listed 804 large farms for swift takeover and rapid resettlement. According to reports, as many as 100,000 poor Africans would be quickly moved onto the farms, while roads, schools, clinics and other facilities would be provided later. Owners, who were granted 30 days to file legal objections, would not be compensated for the land itself but would receive compensation for improvements to the land, such as farm buildings. How the improvements would be valued, and the form and timing of this compensation, were not made clear. President Mugabe had invoked emergency powers to enable the government to take land without compensation on May 24.

On June 7, 2000, President Mugabe indicated that he might extend the government takeover of white-owned farms beyond those already slated for seizure. If any white farmers were permitted to remain, he added, it would be through the "charity" of the government. Mugabe urged supporters to offer thanks to the Zimbabwe war veterans who had led the farm occupations. A fifth white farmer was killed, possibly in a robbery attempt, on June 2; and by the time the elections were

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[17]Robin Cook press conference, April 27, 2000.

held, it was estimated at least 30 people had been killed in attacks on farmers and African supporters of the opposition.

June 2000 Parliamentary Election

Elections to the 150-member parliament in Zimbabwe on June 24-25, 2000 resulted in a narrow victory for the ruling ZANU-PF, which won 62 seats. The MDC took 57 seats in the high-turnout vote, so that for the first time in the country's history, there would be a strong parliamentary opposition. Thirty appointive seats under the control of President Robert Mugabe continued to give ZANU-PF firm control of parliament, although the MDC won enough votes to block constitutional amendments. Tsvangirai did not himself win a seat but announced that he would contest the 2002 presidential election.

There has been much speculation that President Mugabe used the land issue to influence the outcome of the vote. Even though voters rejected compulsory land seizures in the February 2000 referendum, Mugabe accurately calculated, according to this speculation, that the confrontation with white landowners would solidify his support among the rural poor, war veterans, and others. Some believe that the land confrontation distracted attention from Zimbabwe's many other problems during the run-up to the election and gave militant Mugabe backers an incentive to attack white farmers and farm workers who supported the MDC.

Foreign observers accept MDC allegations that the government undertook a systematic effort to prevent a free and fair election and to assure a ZANU-PF victory. Observers from the European Union and the Commonwealth of Nations refused to certify the elections as free and fair because of the violence and intimidation that preceded the voting. On May 22, 2000, the head of a delegation from the U.S.-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) stated that because of a campaign of violence, intimidation, and misinformation, "the conditions for credible democratic elections do not exist in Zimbabwe at this time."[18] Rallies and demonstrations by the MDC were disrupted by police and by ZANU-PF backers, including war veterans. MDC supporters were detained by police, and as noted above, several MDC members were killed by unknown assailants. Just before the vote, the Mugabe government banned NDI, the International Republican Institute, and a team of African observers sponsored by the European Union from monitoring the vote.

Nonetheless, the MDC chose to remain in the race, evidently calculating that it would gain a substantial number of seats despite the violence and intimidation. This calculation proved to be accurate, as the party won overwhelmingly in Harare and other urban areas, while taking some rural seats as well. Party leader Morgan Tsvangirai maintained that the MDC would have won control of parliament had it not been for the violence, but said that the result gave the party a base for contesting the presidency in two years and the parliament once again in five. The ability to block

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[18]Statement of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) Pre-Election Delegation to Zimbabwe," May 22, 2000.

constitutional amendments was significant, since President Mugabe had used such amendments in the past to consolidate his power.

Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)

The MDC, founded in September 1999, poses a more serious challenge than any that ZANU-PF has faced. The party's Secretary General, Morgan Tsvangirai, is a Zimbabwe labor leader, and the party has a strong base in the country's organized labor movement. The party also seems to have backing among students and urban middle classes, who are drawn to its promises to rekindle the economy, fight corruption, and improve health care and education. In addition, the MDC supports "people driven land reform," by which it appears to mean corruption-free redistribution to genuine small farmers, with international support and compensation for farms purchased. The Mugabe government portrays the MDC as an agent of white farmers and foreign supporters, particularly in Britain.

Contenders in Zimbabwe

Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe since December 31, 1987; from 1980-1987, he was Prime Minister. Born February 21, 1924; educated at a mission school and Fort Hare University, South Africa; correspondence degrees from University of London and University of South Africa; co-founder of ZANU in 1963; arrested in 1964 by white Rhodesian authorities, jailed or under house arrest for ten years; took over leadership of ZANU guerrilla movement in Mozambique, 1975.

Morgan Tsvangirai, President of the MDC. Born March 10, 1952; completed secondary education; textile and mine worker; elected secretary-general Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, 1988; co-founder of the MDC, September 1999.

Sources: standard references, press reports.

In September 2000, Tsvangirai warned that Mugabe would be overthrown if he did not soon quit – remarks that resulted in formal charges of treason and sabotage. Tsvangirai, who later withdrew his remarks, maintained that his indictment was part of a government campaign of harassment. Conviction, which would have disbarred Tsvangirai from participating in the 2002 presidential election, could have led to a life sentence. On November 20, 2001, however, the Zimbabwe Supreme Court ordered the charges dropped on grounds that they contravened sections of the constitution. The Supreme Court decision came as a surprise because recent appointees to the Court are regarded as Mugabe allies (see below).

Land Issue Since June 2000

Some analysts had expected that ZANU-PF losses in the June 2000 election would cause President Mugabe to step back from the land-takeover confrontation and seek a compromise solution. Instead, the election outcome, which Mugabe blamed on donor hostility, the western media, white farmers, churches, and others,[19] seemed only to goad Mugabe into expanding the land takeovers. By early August 2000, government officials were stating that more than 3,000 farms would be seized and that the army would be mobilized to rapidly resettle hundreds of thousands of poor families. They portrayed the expansion as an urgent response to a pressing need for land; but critics speculated that President Mugabe was again escalating the land confrontation in order to better position himself for the 2002 presidential election. By April 2001, it was estimated that 2,600 farms had been slated for takeover, and the government maintained that 70,000 families had been resettled on 3 million hectares of land. Government critics maintained that far fewer had actually been moved onto farm plots.

The Zimbabwe Supreme Court ruled on November 10, 2000, that the President's land resettlement policy violated fundamental constitutional rights, but the government vowed to proceed with the takeovers. On December 14, 2000, President Mugabe told a ZANU-PF Congress that "Our party must continue to strike fear in the heart of the white man, our real enemy," and vowed to continue with land takeovers regardless of any court decisions. The congress endorsed Mugabe as ZANU-PF leader, and internal critics of the president were dropped from party positions.

The Supreme Court ruled against "fast track" land takeovers on December 21, 2000, increasing tensions between the court and the Mugabe government. On March 2, 2001, the Chief Justice of the Zimbabwe Supreme Court, Anthony Gubbay, agreed to go on immediate leave and to retire July 1, following intense government pressure for his resignation. Gubbay had reportedly received a number of death threats.

The Minister of Land, Joseph Made, stunned a meeting of commercial farmers on August 2, 2001, by announcing that the government planned to take 8.3 million hectares of white-owned land rather than the 5 million originally announced. Analysts noted that this amount would represent about 90% of the remaining commercial farms, but there was some confusion about whether this was what Made had intended to convey.[20] A white farmer, who had been attacked earlier in the week, died of his wounds on August 7, becoming the ninth white farmer to die since the unrest began.

On August 10, 2001, 21 white farmers from Chinoyi in northern Zimbabwe were charged with assaulting resettled black farmers on August 6 and were remanded in custody. The farmers maintained that they had acted in self defense. Several white-owned farms around Chinoyi were looted and burned following the incident, and many whites fled the region, although the situation had reportedly eased by August 13.

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[19]BBC, July 22, 2000; *The Guardian*, July 27, 2000.

[20]*Financial Times* (London), August 3, 2001.

Abuja Agreement

In September 2001, the Zimbabwe government agreed to attend a Commonwealth-sponsored summit on the situation, to be held in Abuja, capital of Nigeria. Leaders in southern Africa, who fear that the Zimbabwe crisis is discouraging investment and tourism throughout the region, had strongly urged Zimbabwe to attend, as did Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. Under an agreement concluded on September 7, Zimbabwe committed itself to implementing land reform in a fair, just, and sustainable manner, with "due regard to human rights, rule of law, transparency, and democratic principles." In exchange for this pledge, Britain committed to providing a "significant financial contribution." It was understood that the funds would be used to compensate white farmers whose land was taken.

Leaders of southern Africa sought to consolidate the Abuja agreement by going to Harare the following week to insist that it be implemented. Pressure on Mugabe from President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Malawi President Bakili Muluzi, chairman of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), was reportedly intense. It was agreed that SADC would set up a special ministerial task force to monitor implementation of the agreement. In subsequent weeks, however, violence continued to be reported on occupied farms, and there were some reports of new farm invasions by militants. On October 2, 2001, the Zimbabwe Supreme Court, reversing its earlier course, issued an interim ruling permitting the government to continue with the redistribution of white-owned land. (The court made this ruling final on December 3.) Analysts speculated that the ruling would allow the government to claim that it was indeed respecting the rule of law, as required by Abuja. Government critics argued that the decision resulted from previous government interference with an independent judiciary.

On November 9, 2001, President Mugabe issued a sweeping new decree ordering 1,000 farmers who had already been served with takeover notices to cease farming immediately and to leave their homes within three months. "Quit notices" are expected to be issued to the remaining 3,500 white farmers shortly, and when this occurs, they too will be required to cease farming. Some 1,700 farms continued to be occupied by militants of the ruling ZANU-PF, according to reports.

Other Current Issues

The Economy

Zimbabwe's Finance Minister, Simba Makoni, in presenting his annual budget message on November 1, 2001, painted a bleak picture of Zimbabwe's economy. According to Makoni, GDP had declined by 7.3% over the previous year, inflation was running at a rate of more than 85% annually, and per capita income had fallen to $385 per year from $421 in 2000. Makoni said that Zimbabwe's exports were expected to total about $1.7 billion in 2001, as compared to $2.7 billion in 1997. The

Minister estimated that 75% of Zimbabwe's people were "living in abject poverty."[21] Shortly after Makoni's speech, the governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe told members of parliament that arrears on foreign debt would reach $1 billion by the end of 2001.[22] Total foreign debt is estimated at $4.5 billion. Data released in December showed that by November, inflation had reached an annual rate of 103.8%.[23]

Zimbabwe has great economic potential in view of its rich endowment of land, mineral wealth, tourism potential, and relatively high standards of education. However, the economy has performed poorly for years. Zero growth was recorded in 1999, and GDP fell by 4.5% in 2000.[24] The unemployment rate is estimated at 60%.[25] Disbursements of World Bank loans have been suspended in part because Zimbabwe's repayments are overdue, and IMF lending is also suspended, reflecting IMF concerns over Zimbabwe's economic policies.

Foreign exchange is in very short supply, and because of this Zimbabwe suffers a severe shortage of fuels, which must be imported. On June 13, 2001, the government raised fuel prices by 70%, leading to two days of protests over resulting increases in the prices of basic commodities and of bus and taxi fares. The shortage of hard currency seems certain to continue, since the output of tobacco, the principal foreign exchange earner, is dropping due to the crisis on the farms. Tourism, an important source of revenue, has plummeted as images of conflict and confrontation in Zimbabwe have been broadcast around the world.

Food shortages are feared, partly because many of the farms taken over by squatters were growing produce and maize, the staple of the Zimbabwe diet, for local consumption. Moreover, the southern part of the country is suffering from a severe drought. On November 8, 2001, Makoni warned that the country faced an urgent need for food aid, since more than 700,000 people had too little to eat. The World Food Program is organizing a relief effort, but some observers are concerned that food deliveries could be delayed in the political situation deteriorates. On November 11, Information Minister Jonathan Moyo said that charities and international aid agencies would not be allowed to distribute food, since they might use food relief to campaign for the MDC.[26]

In July 2001, the government banned private sales of maize and wheat, re-instituting the maize trade monopoly of the government-owned Grain Marketing Board. Some economists fear that over the long term, this move will exacerbate the

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[21]United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, November 2, 2001. See also, "Bleak Outlook for Zimbabwe's Economy in New National Budget," Agence France Presse, November 1, 2001, and "Zimbabwe Announces Bleak Budget," Panafrican News Agency, November 1, 2001.

[22]*Financial Gazette* (Harare), November 9, 2001.

[23]*Mail and Guardian* (South Africa), internet edition, December 17, 2001.

[24]*Economist Intelligence Unit.*

[25]BBC, July 24, 2001.

[26]Jan Raath, "Mugabe Bans Charities' Food Aid," *The Times* (London), November 12, 2001.

food situation by reducing incentives to producers. Some expect the emergence of a parallel market where grain will be sold illicitly at high prices.

The Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries estimates that 400 businesses closed in 2000, with the loss of 10,000 jobs. President Mugabe blames the closures on a campaign by local whites to damage the economy in protest to the land takeovers.[27] Actual attacks on businesses by militants and war veterans, which broke out in April 2001, appear to have subsided.

Analysts typically blame the economic policies of the Mugabe government, and its failure to carry through with the reforms promised in 1991, for Zimbabwe's economic difficulties. High government spending, typified by the 70% to 90% pay raises Mugabe granted civil servants and the military on the eve of the February 2000 constitutional referendum[28] comes in for particular criticism. State-owned corporations, such as the national oil company and the national electricity supplier, typically operate at losses, and this adds to the budget deficit. President Mugabe, on the other hand, blames donor-imposed economic reform programs for the country's economic difficulties, arguing that they have deprived the government of the ability to influence the economy and mainly benefitted external interests together with local white-owned companies.[29]

Concerns over Zimbabwe's economic future have mounted since President Mugabe's October 15, 2001 announcement that his country was abandoning free market economic reforms and returning to a socialist style economy. The move followed government-imposed price cuts of 5% to 20% on basic commodities, such as maize meal and soap, announced on October 12. Mugabe said that businesses opposed to the price controls could "pack up and go" and that the government would take over any firms that closed.[30]

Libyan leader Muamar al-Qadhafi is offering support to Zimbabwe's economy through a $360 million oil deal, which will reportedly see Libyan oil going to Zimbabwe in exchange for Zimbabwe exports to Libya. Qadhafi gave $100 million in aid to Zimbabwe in 2000.[31] According to some press reports, President Qadhafi is seeking a stake in key sectors of the Zimbabwe economy, including agriculture and tourism, in exchange for his support. An independent Zimbabwe weekly reported on November 22, 2001, that several large farms were being identified for possible allocation to Libyan entrepreneurs.[32]

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[27]BBC, April 18, 2001.

[28]*Financial Times* (London), January 20, 2000.

[29]Speech to the Special People's Congress, December 14, 2000.

[30]Andrew Meldrum, "Mugabe Returns to Socialism," *The Guardian* (London), October 16, 2001.

[31]Reuters report appearing in *Daily Mail and Guardian* (South Africa), July 19, 2001.

[32]*Financial Gazette*, November 22, 2001.

Press Freedom

Restrictions on the freedom of the press in Zimbabwe are a focus for domestic and international criticism of the regime. The broadcast media are state controlled,[33] and although there is an independent daily newspaper as well as independent weeklies, editors and reporters repeatedly been arrested and detained. The offices of the *Daily News* were bombed in 2000, and its presses were destroyed in another bombing in January 2001. *Daily News* editor Geoff Nyarota has been arrested three times during 2001.

The Mugabe government has also placed heavy pressure on the foreign media, and on November 23, 2001, the state-owned *Herald* newspaper accused six foreign journalists of "terrorism" for filing allegedly false reports about the political situation in Zimbabwe. A government spokesman quoted by the *Herald* reportedly linked the journalists' accounts to a letter received from the U.S. Government complaining about widespread assaults in the wake of the assassination of ZANU-PF activist Cain Nkala (see below).[34]

On November 30, the *Herald* reported that the government would soon introduce sweeping new legislation known as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Bill. This legislation, which seems certain to be enacted in view of the government's majority in parliament, would require all journalists to be licensed, and establish a press commission empowered to withdraw licenses from offending reporters. Foreign journalists would be excluded from working in Zimbabwe and local journalists would require special permission to report for the foreign media. Reports judged harmful to law enforcement or likely to promote public alarm and despondency would be banned.[35]

Nkala Assassination

Political violence flared in the southern city of Bulawayo in mid-November 2001, following the discovery of the battered and decomposed body of local ZANU-PF activist Cain Nkala. Nkala had been kidnaped at gunpoint a week earlier, and President Mugabe and other leading ZANU-PF figures blamed the MDC for Nkala's death. War veterans loyal to ZANU-PF rampaged through Bulawayo seeking revenge for the killing of Nkala, burning several houses as well as the MDC headquarters.[36] Many of the war veterans reportedly arrived in Bulawayo by train from Harare, the capital. Bulawayo is a center of support for the MDC, and the traditional capital of the Ndbele people, many of whom have long felt exploited by the Shona who tend to dominate ZANU-PF.

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[33]For details, see U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2000*, available at [http://www.state.gov].

[34]"Zimbabwe Warns Media, EU Says Ties at Critical Point." Reuters, November 23, 2001.

[35]BBC, "Zimbabwe Seeks Total Media Control," November 30, 2001.

[36]"War Vets Rampage Through Bulawayo," BBC, November 16, 2001.

MDC leaders maintain that Nkala died as a result of in-fighting in the ruling party, and one report maintained that he had made allegations to the police about official corruption.[37] At least 15 MDC members have been arrested in the case, and two have alleged that they were tortured into making confessions, which they later withdrew. In a 40-minute oration at Nkala's funeral, Mugabe alleged that the MDC was a terrorist organization backed by the British government. MDC officials fear a wider crackdown centering on the Nkala assassination.

Congo Intervention

Zimbabwe's deployment of 12,000 or more troops to support the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is often cited as a particularly costly drain on Zimbabwe's resources. Finance Minister Simba Makoni told parliament on August 30, 2000, that the war in Congo had cost the government $200 million over two years, and some estimates are considerably higher.[38] Makoni warned that Zimbabwe's economy could not withstand this level of expenditure and said the government was committed to bringing the troops home "at the earliest opportunity." President Mugabe and other Zimbabwe officials explain the Congo deployment as a contribution to regional peacekeeping and stability and maintain that Zimbabwe's troops will leave once a United Nations peacekeeping force is deployed.[39]

Several reports have claimed that a few well-connected Zimbabwe business people, and elements of the military, are enriching themselves in the DRC, where several commercial ventures with Zimbabwe ties have been set up.[40] A United Nations panel on the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the DRC reported on November 15, 2001, that Zimbabwe's operations in Congo have yet to benefit Zimbabwe's economy because the holdings "seem to be controlled by top military and party officials who are also the direct beneficiaries."[41] The Zimbabwe government rejected this charge and insisted that Zimbabwe is involved only in legitimate business activities in Congo. Foreign Minister Stan Mudenge added: "We know that the report has been created by the British government, who are keen to discredit Zimbabwe at all costs."[42]

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[37]Michael Hartnack, "Torture Evidence Casts Doubt on State Propaganda Claims," Associated Press, November 30, 2001.

[38]BBC report, January 20, 2000.

[39]On the Congo conflict, see CRS Report RL31080, *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Peace Process and Background.*

[40]"Ruthless Backers for Congo Diamond Mine," *Financial Times* (London), May 27, 2000.

[41]*Addendum to the Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. UN Document S/2001/1072, transmitted to the Secretary General by a letter dated November 10, 2001.

[42]UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, November 21, 2001.

HIV/AIDS

Zimbabwe, according to United Nations data, has the third highest HIV infection rate in the world, with more than 25% of working-age adults testing positive for the virus.[43] Because of AIDS, the rate of population increase is expected to be zero in 2002, and the population will begin to decline in 2003. According to the Zimbabwe Health Minister, AIDS-related deaths totaled 100,000 in 2000,[44] and UNICEF reported in June 2001 that life expectancy, now 44 years, could fall to 27 in a decade.[45] Without AIDS, life expectancy would have been 70 in 2010, according to UNICEF. (Zimbabwe officials maintain that the UNICEF prediction on life expectancy is exaggerated.) The number of AIDS orphans nationwide has reached 600,000.[46]

President Mugabe, in public speeches and interviews, acknowledges HIV/AIDS as one of the challenges Zimbabwe faces, among other challenges, but he seems to have given land, the Congo intervention, and other issues higher priorities on his policy agenda. In January 2000, the government introduced a special payroll tax known as the "AIDS levy" to fund AIDS programs. Labor unions and others strenuously opposed the levy, charging that the funds would likely be diverted to some other purpose, and by May 2000, AIDS activists were protesting what they maintained was a large discrepancy between the amount raised through the levy and the amount actually going to AIDS projects. In July 2000, however, the chairman of the AIDS Levy Fund claimed that the fund was benefitting millions.[47]

In November 2001, the Zimbabwe government suspended disbursement of AIDS levy funds through village level AIDS action committees, deciding instead to channel funding through ZANU-PF-run district councils. AIDS activists charged that this decision "politicized" the fund, which, they maintained, would be used to enhance President Mugabe's chances in the presidential election. Others argued that the committees had a poor track record in handling the funds, and that they could not be trusted to handle the large sums involved.[48]

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[43]This is a 1999 estimate for adults, age 15-49. For more information, CRS Issue Brief IB10050, *AIDS in Africa*.

[44]BBC, June 3, 2001.

[45] The report, "Progress Report on Zimbabwe 2000," was released in Harare on June 12, 2001. Lewis Machipisa, "Government Rejects UN Report on Life Expectancy," Inter Press Service, June 12, 2001.

[46]*The Independent* (London), February 10, 2000.

[47]BBC, July 22, 2000.

[48]"HIV/AIDS Groups Accuse Government of 'Playing Politics,'" UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, November 15, 2001; and BBC, November 15, 2001.

Relations with Britain

President Mugabe has long blamed many of Zimbabwe's problems, most notably the inequity in the distribution of land, on Britain, and his relations with the government of Prime Minister Tony Blair are particularly poor. Mugabe is angry with the Blair government for its refusal to offer unconditional financing for his land redistribution program, but he has also launched a number of personal verbal attacks against Blair and members of his cabinet. These seem to stem in part from an incident in November 1999, when British gay activists attempted a citizens arrest of Mugabe, who was visiting London. Mugabe, who is outspokenly anti-gay, was deeply outraged and blamed the Blair government for failing to prevent the attack. Britain has reportedly made arrangements to receive as many as 20,000 refugees from Zimbabwe if necessary, but the number eligible for British passports may be significantly larger, since Britain grants this right to people whose parents or grandparents were U.K. citizens.

Outlook for 2002

On November 7, 2001, a Zimbabwe official indicated that the government would not allow independent observers to monitor the March elections, but would instead permit only Zimbabwe civil servants to be present at the polls. In late November, Mugabe reportedly refused a request by a visiting European Union delegation to send EU observers.[49] These developments, combined with other recent events, including threats against the independent press, both domestic and foreign, and President Mugabe's portrayal of the MDC as a terrorist organization, lead many to expect further action on the part of President Mugabe to assure that he prevails in the March election. The result could be rising political turmoil inside Zimbabwe and mounting international isolation. Conceivably, President Mugabe will attempt to cancel or postpone the vote. While this might buy him more time in office, it would likely deepen Zimbabwe's domestic and international problems.

A poll conducted in August and September 2001 indicated that MDC leader Tsvangirai would defeat President Mugabe with 52.9% of the vote, compared to 47.1% for Mugabe.[50] Analysts believe that the very real threat of defeat is the motivation for Mugabe's policies toward the opposition and the press. Mugabe faces another challenge from the National Constitutional Assembly, which coordinated the "no" vote in the February 2000 referendum. The Assembly, a coalition of churches, unions, and human rights groups, is planning demonstrations in January 2002 in support of a constitution that would include a separation of powers and other checks and balances.

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[49]"Mugabe Tells EU to 'Stay Out' of Zimbabwe Elections - Report," Dow Jones International News Service, November 24, 2001. On November 26, a Zimbabwe official reportedly said that observers would be invited from "friendly" countries. *New York Times*, November 27, 2001.

[50]*Financial Gazette* (Harare), November 8, 2001.

Key foreign governments, with increasing urgency, are attempting to persuade the Mugabe government to change course. South Africa's President Mbeki, who in the past has drawn criticism in his own country for not being more outspoken on the Zimbabwe situation, made a number of remarks critical of Mugabe in late November and early December 2001. Speaking at a briefing for foreign journalists on November 29, Mbeki said "Clearly in a situation where people get beaten up, where people get disenfranchised, obviously there cannot be free elections."[51] Later, Mbeki said that Mugabe was pursuing wrong economic policies that had ripple effects throughout the region, and he also voiced concern for journalists in Zimbabwe.[52] Un-named South African officials have said that Mbeki's patience with Mugabe is "wearing thin," and that the Zimbabwe president would no longer be protected from international pressure by South Africa.

President Mbeki continues to say that South Africa will not impose sanctions against Zimbabwe, but has urged the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to monitor the situation. (However, a SADC ministerial level team that visited Zimbabwe in mid-December 2001, seemed to endorse Mugabe's policies, finding that land-reform violence was declining and that Mugabe was committed to holding free and fair elections.) South Africa's tougher stance reportedly came after western leaders called Mbeki, urging him to increase pressure on Mugabe.[53] Mbeki is reportedly also concerned that his country faces a Zimbabwe refugee crisis as the Zimbabwe situation deteriorates.[54]

On October 29, 2001, the European Union warned President Mugabe that his country would face the possibility of sanctions within 75 days unless steps were taken to end violence, create conditions for free and fair elections, insure press freedom and the independence of the judiciary, and end the occupation of private property. British Foreign Minister Jack Straw, however, said that specific sanctions were not on the table and that the EU was simply moving from "a benign position to one of active engagement."[55] On December 5, 2001, Straw said that a steering committee of Commonwealth ministers would meet during the week of December 17 to discuss possible sanctions against Zimbabwe.[56] Meanwhile, U.S. pressure is increasing as well (see below).

Whether increased international pressure will persuade President Mugabe to change course, or rather intensify his determination to prevail in the March vote, is

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[51]Chris McGreal, "Mbeki Predicts More Turmoil in Zimbabwe," *The Guardian* (London), November 30, 2001.

[52]"Mugabe Can No Longer Get Protection from South Africa: Report," Agence France Presse, December 2, 2001.

[53]Michael Dynes, "Zimbabwe Accuses Mugabe of Knifing it in the Back," *The Times* (London), December 4, 2001.

[54]"South African President Suggests SADC Meeting on Zimbabwe," Panafrican News Agency, December 3, 2001.

[55]United Press International report, October 29, 2001.

[56]"Commonwealth to Mull Zimbabwe Sanctions in Two Weeks," Reuters, December 5, 2001.

not yet clear. Zimbabwe officials have repeatedly warned that international sanctions might force them to impose emergency measures, and it is conceivable that the government would use sanctions or other international action as an excuse for draconian steps to suppress opposition at home. A cabinet minister reportedly told the BBC in August 2001 that the government would have "no choice but to declare a state of emergency if we are under sanctions."[57] Advocates of increased pressure on Mugabe hope that pragmatists in ZANU-PF, if not Mugabe himself, will eventually be persuaded that their own political survival depends on moderating government policy.

U.S. Policy

U.S. policymakers once saw Zimbabwe as a source of stability in southern Africa, as a valued contributor to regional peacekeeping, and as an emerging customer for U.S. exports.[58] By the later 1990s, however, U.S. concerns over Zimbabwe's slow progress in economic reform and democratization were on the increase.

Clinton Administration officials were highly critical of the land takeovers and political violence in Zimbabwe, and criticism of Zimbabwe has continued in the Bush Administration. At a speech in South Africa on May 25, 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell said that Mugabe seemed reluctant to "submit to the law and the will of the people" and called on the Zimbabwe leader to permit a free and fair election. The Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Walter Kansteiner, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 28, 2001, that "while the United States desires open and friendly relations with Zimbabwe, we cannot have normal relations until the violence and intimidation are ended, and the rule of law restored." Kansteiner added that the Administration would work with Congress to try to persuade President Mugabe to permit an open and fair election in 2002.

A further deterioration in U.S.-Zimbabwe relations occurred on November 15, 2001, when the United States announced the withdrawal of all 43 Peace Corps volunteers in Zimbabwe because of Zimbabwe's refusal to issue work permits for new volunteers. The following week, State Department officials summoned Zimbabwe's ambassador for a meeting where concerns were reportedly expressed over the violence following the Cain Nkala assassination.[59] State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said on November 26 that Zimbabwe's refusal to grant visas to foreign journalists was "another attempt on the part of the government of Zimbabwe to limit scrutiny of its campaign of political violence and intimidation."[60]

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[57]BBC report, August 20, 2001.

[58]See, for example, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Congressional Presentation statements on Zimbabwe, FY1997 and FY1998, as well as earlier presentations.

[59]Rachel L. Swarns, "West's Envoys, Unhappy, Find Zimbabwe Unhelpful," *New York Times,* November 24, 2001.

[60]Reuters report, November 26, 2001.

U.S. assistance to Zimbabwe, which exceeded $32 million in FY1995, dropped substantially in the second half of the decade (see **Table 1** below). Nonetheless, a limited assistance program continues, targeted on programs and non-governmental organizations seeking to strengthen democracy, raise living standards among the poor, and fight the AIDS epidemic. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) maintains that its programs are helping to preserve the foundations of Zimbabwe's economy, so that there can be a quick recovery if a credible political transition occurs.[61]

Table 1. U.S. Assistance to Zimbabwe
(Actual Appropriation, $ millions)

	FY1998	FY1999	FY2000	FY2001 Estimate	FY2002 Request
DA	11.850	8.800	12.127	12.822	12.273
ESF	.055	–	–	–	
Peace Corps	1.391	1.626	1.640	.987	1.161
IMET	.336	.299	.300		.050
Total	13.632	10.725	14.067	13.809	13.484

Source: USAID. DA=Development Assistance (including Child Survival aid), ESF=Economic Support Fund, IMET=International Military Education and Training. For more information, see CRS Issue Brief IB95052, *Africa: U.S. Foreign Assistance Issues.*

Congressional Action

In June 2000, the Senate passed S. 2677, the Zimbabwe Democracy Act of 2000, which criticized the government of Zimbabwe and ZANU-PF for pre-election violence and imposed certain sanctions. The bill, which was not taken up by the House, was heavily criticized by Zimbabwe officials – indeed, Foreign Minister Mudenge called it an attempt to "recolonize" Africa.[62] Supporters of the legislation argued that enactment would have sent a clear message to President Mugabe and the people of Zimbabwe with respect to the U.S. position on democracy, the rule of law, and the need for a sound economic policy.

On August 1, 2001, the Senate passed a new bill, the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 (S. 494). Subject to a presidential waiver, this bill would have the effect of requiring the United States to support the continued suspension of lending to Zimbabwe by the World Bank and the IMF. However, if the President certified that the rule of law had been restored and that progress was being made in democratization, the United States would support a resumption of lending and provide other support for the Zimbabwe economy. The bill authorized $20 million to support equitable, legal, and transparent mechanisms of land reform, and $6 million for democracy and governance programs. Finally, it called for

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[61]USAID FY2002 *Budget Justification to Congress*.

[62]*Africa News*, August 4, 2000.

consultations with other governments on sanctions targeted specifically at Zimbabwe leaders responsible for the breakdown of the rule of law.

The House passed an amended version of the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act on December 4, 2001. The House-passed version of S. 494 differed from the Senate bill in that it did not include a provision stating that the President should direct the establishment of a Southern Africa Finance Center in Zimbabwe once democratic reforms have taken place. In the Senate version, such a center would have been established to facilitate the development of U.S.-backed commercial projects in Zimbabwe and the southern Africa region. While the Senate version required that the United States support a review of debt relief options and support multilateral lending for Zimbabwe after democratic reforms, the House bill put comparable provisions in "sense of Congress" language. The Senate approved the House version of S. 494 on December 11, and President Bush signed the bill into law on December 21.

The final version of the FY2002 Foreign Operations Appropriations (H.R. 2506) would require the United States to oppose loans to Zimbabwe by international financial institutions, except to meet basic human needs, unless the Secretary of State certifies that the rule of law has been restored. The House agreed to the conference report (H.Rept. 107-345) on this legislation on December 19, 2001, and the Senate agreed on December 20, clearing the measure for the President's signature.