

# **Election Monitoring and Observation in Zimbabwe: Hegemony versus Sovereignty**

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## **Abstract**

Despite the pervasive trend of election monitoring and observation, especially in Eastern Europe and Africa since the early 1990s, there has been little, if any, academic discourse on this subject. Instead, the focus of intellectual and policy debate has been on macro political issues of political liberalization and democratization; the main concern being whether or not the democratization process started in the early 1990s in Africa is being consolidated. This article raises a three pronged thesis. Firstly, although monitoring and observation are inextricably intertwined in both theory and practice, they denote two different processes, hence it is imprudent to use them synonymously. Secondly, election monitoring and observation, especially the latter, do not apply uniformly and in a consistent pattern in developed and developing countries and this raises profound questions of international standards, norms and practices of democratic governance. Thirdly, although election monitoring and observation represent good practice at the micro level of democratization, they have also tended to be used as part of the political conditionality and leverage through which industrial countries impose their hegemony over developing countries and thereby undermine their already enfeebled national sovereignty. No other country portrays so vividly and poignantly the controversies surrounding the above three themes than Zimbabwe which recently went through two major elections, namely the 2000 Parliamentary election and the 2002 Presidential election.

## **Introduction**

Election monitoring and observation are increasingly becoming an embedded feature of the political culture of the SADC region. This development can be traced, in earnest, from the political liberalization which started to mark the regional polity in the early 1990s (Matlosa, 1998). This new political phenomenon in the SADC region is both interesting and intriguing at the same time. It is an interesting development to the extent that it aims to add substantial value to

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\* Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES) Trust, Harare, Zimbabwe.

democratic governance in the region and to this extent (and only to this extent) should monitoring and observation be encouraged for the SADC region. It is also intriguing in that powerful global forces have attempted (in some cases successfully) to use election monitoring and observation as foreign policy tools to exert their suzerainty over smaller states. Thus, powerful western countries that support election observation through enormous financial and personnel resources use this, ostensibly noble political practice as a political conditionality to impose their hegemony and undermine the sovereignty of the concerned African states. It is this latter variant of election monitoring and observation that developing countries in general, and the SADC region in particular, must deliberately resist.

Election monitoring and observation, therefore, which essentially represent good practice in consolidating and nurturing democratic governance, are progressively being turned into a blatant political conditionality of aid donors. Both bilateral and multilateral aid agencies and governments are using monitoring and observation exactly the same way that political pluralism and adjustment were used in the late 1980s and early 1990s to apply a carrot and stick pressure on developing countries to achieve their strategic interests (Gibbon, Bangura and Ofstad, 1992; Mkandawire and Olukoshi, 1995). In no country of the SADC region is the clash between global hegemony of the western liberal world and sovereignty of a developing country so dramatically manifest as in the recent developments around monitoring and observation of elections in Zimbabwe. It is, therefore, the contention of this paper that the enormous interest of western governments in the 2000 Parliamentary and 2002 Presidential elections in Zimbabwe is driven more by a desire for entrenchment of their hegemony over Zimbabwe and achievement of their strategic interests, than any quest for the rule of law and democratic principles. It is also with this background that we are better able to understand and explain the diplomatic battles that have raged between Zimbabwe, on one hand, and the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU), on the other. As Mandaza aptly observed recently the conflict between Zimbabwe and the EU over the election observation is a "reflection of the desire of the European Union - and the western world in general - to assert its global superiority, power and hegemony in Africa and the Third World" (2002). Imposition of western hegemony through election monitoring and observation would naturally reduce and curtail the political sovereignty and independence of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe, therefore, has had to be admonished and penalized by the western world through imposition of various types of sanctions for being bold enough to resist western hegemony and holding steadfastly to its sovereignty and independence.

It is worth noting from the outset, though, that election monitoring and observation by various groups and governments, from the developing countries in general and the SADC region itself, that do not share the paternalistic and patronizing western neocolonial designs, have clearly been of a totally different

order. Election observation undertaken by these groups during the 2000 Parliamentary election was extremely constructive/transformational and not confrontational/judgmental as was the case with the EU observation mission led by Sweden's Ambassador to the United Nations, Pierre Schori. It was no wonder, then, that Schori could not be allowed the second time round when he sought to lead an abortive EU observer mission for the 2002 Presidential election in Zimbabwe. Unlike observation missions from the western world, which clearly embrace imperialist hegemony and western strategic interests, regional and continental missions have helped and, continue to help, concerned states (Zimbabwe included) to deepen, consolidate and nurture their fledgling democratic systems by critiquing observed systemic deficiencies and making clear cut proposals regarding administrative policy and institutional reforms. This approach is informed by the imperatives of regional integration in both the economic and political spheres through the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and, at a continental level, through pan-Africanism and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU)/African Union (AU). Such an approach should be paramount over the hegemonic designs of western imperialist countries in election monitoring and observation. The conduct, pronouncements and verdict of election observers from western industrialized countries are primarily driven by generalized Afro-pessimism which has become increasingly acute in those countries under conditions of accelerated globalisation. In stark contrast, observation by regional and continental bodies is driven largely by Afro-optimism anchored upon pan-Africanism and political solidarity.

This brief article explores ways in which researchers, policy practitioners and non-governmental organizations can better fathom and explicate the current clash between imperialist hegemony and national sovereignty as expressed in the context of the SADC region as a whole and Zimbabwe in particular. The article demonstrates the importance and value of election monitoring and observation for democratic governance but cautions that, if these processes are used for advancing western hegemony and strategic interests and at the same time undermining national sovereignty and independence, then they become, *ipso facto*, counter productive.

Let me hasten to point out that this is the stark reality that all African states are faced with the new era of accelerated globalisation within a unipolar world. In this current international order, wherein the USA is a dominant military power, African states will be pressured by various means to acquiesce to imperialist hegemony and sacrifice their sovereignty and independence. It is well nigh impossible for any one African state (including Zimbabwe) to challenge this new form of imperialist hegemony on its own, successfully. The African states will have to pool their sovereignty together (SAPES/UNDP/SDC, 2000) through continental (African Union) and regional (SADC) integration schemes in order to mount an effective response aimed at guarding their sovereignty and autonomy.

The first section of the paper sets the stage of the debate by providing a broad overview of election monitoring and observation which, it is hoped, will be useful especially for the uninitiated in the area of election observation. The second section is the anchor of our debate for it explores the Zimbabwe case study in election monitoring and observation and attempts to draw broad lessons for the SADC region. The basic argument raised in this section is simply that there is more to western interest in observing the election in Zimbabwe than mere concerns with democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Imperialist hegemony and strategic interests in Zimbabwe are paramount, rather than any other considerations in Zimbabwe's Parliamentary and Presidential elections. As the old cliché goes, nations of the world do not relate on the basis of permanent friends or enemies but rather on interests which, in turn, determine either friendship or enmity. The conclusion wraps up the discussion and highlights the main observations and lessons learnt from the Zimbabwe situation.

## **Rationale and Essence of Election Monitoring and Observation**

Election monitoring and observation have become a common and an embedded feature of the current global democratization wave, particularly in Eastern Europe and developing countries in general, and Africa in particular, since the 1990s. It is an integral part of what Samuel Huntington (1991) refers to as "the third wave of democratization" and what Francis Fukuyama (1992) terms the "end of history", both notions suggesting the collapse of the bipolar world system and the triumph of western liberal democracy over the popular democracy of the Eastern Bloc. However, election monitoring and observation are unevenly applied throughout the world.

Elections in the developed countries are hardly ever subjected to the watchful eye of hordes of international observer groups, yet no single developing country can hold a general election without being put in the global spotlight by international observers and monitors. The problems that beset the Clinton government when US electoral colleges delivered George Bush (Junior) as the winner of the Presidential election, whereas popular opinion polls had unequivocally pointed to Al Gore's lead in the race, and the problems around the counting of votes certainly suggest that even the elections in the so called 'old and mature' democracies need to be subjected to international observation and monitoring. The point being canvassed here is simply that, if election monitoring and observation are to be accorded the global credibility and acceptability within the new international political economy, they have to apply to all states of the world, big and small, rich and poor, and weak and powerful.

There were no international observer and monitoring groups scrutinizing the British Parliamentary elections of 7 June 2001, despite the widespread racial conflicts that marked northern parts of the country and the Yorkshire region.

The May 2002 Presidential election in France which pitted President Jacques Chirac against two other contenders, namely Lionel Jospin (the Prime Minister) and Jean-Marie Le Pen (right-winger), did not attract considerable international attention nor was it subjected to international observation, despite its problems, including sporadic violence and pervasive voter apathy. In contrast, large hordes of international observers 'invaded' tiny, poverty stricken and resource poor Mali during its Presidential election on 28 April 2002. Focus could not be on anything positive about that electoral process as, for instance, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) remarked about the controversy of the electoral process and the refusal to accept the election outcome by the five other Presidential candidates (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/English/world/Africa>). There is no gainsaying, therefore, that the most recent election in the USA was fraught with legal and administrative irregularities, while the most recent election in Britain was marked by racially motivated violence. The French election too was not a bed of roses as the process was punctuated with violence and voter apathy. The paradox is that, in the three European/American cases above, there were no international monitoring and observation missions to pronounce on the credibility and legitimacy of the elections and their outcomes. How then do we explain the apparent selective application of international election observation on a global scale?

This uneven application of observation and monitoring can be explained in three ways. First, democracies in the developed world are considered already mature, consolidated and fully institutionalized and thus need not be externally examined and scrutinized. Second, developing countries have undergone decades of authoritarian regimes and the recent transition has introduced young, fragile and conflict ridden democracies that still need external assistance by way of monitoring and observation in order to be stabilized, institutionalized and consolidated. Third, election observation is also linked to political conditionality of aid from the industrialized countries. Donors insist on a particular type of a governance regime in a developing country if their aid is to be provided to such a country. However plausible this argumentation may be, the uneven application of observation and monitoring of elections has forcefully brought to the fore critical issues about external intervention in the domestic governance regimes of the developing countries and the implications of this for national sovereignty.

In no other situation has this contradiction been as sharply portrayed and dramatically played out as in the Zimbabwean election of 2000 when the ZANU (PF) government found itself at loggerheads with a number of international actors and ultimately disallowed some western observer groups from watching the election. A few days before polling day, the Zimbabwe Government passed the Electoral (Amendment) Regulation 2000 (No. 7) which stipulated that election monitors and observers would be appointed by the Electoral Supervisory

Commission (ESC) and accredited by the Election Directorate on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of the conditions for accreditation provided by this regulation is that a fee of US\$ 100 was to be paid by each observer. Furthermore, the regulation outlined a code of conduct for election monitors and observers. The Zimbabwe case study clearly poses the following questions:

- Why are the western powers keen to impose observation of elections on developing countries;
- Do observers get invited by concerned governments or do they invite themselves;
- What are the overt and covert interests of the western powers in election observation;
- Are the rules, regulations and code of conduct of the observation process determined by observer groups themselves or a sovereign state holding an election;
- Who then really observes the observers as it were or do observers, observe themselves; and
- What is the political value of the observation statements that observers make with regard to the role and position of a given state within the international community of nations?

Oftentimes the concepts ‘monitoring’ and ‘observation’ are used synonymously as though they mean the same process. Both in common usage and academic discourse, the two terms should be used to refer to two distinct, albeit intertwined, processes. The two terms are certainly intertwined and interconnected to the extent that they “refer to some form of eye witnessing and fact-finding” (Daniel, 1995: 95). The Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) defines election monitoring as “an activity which involves the authority to observe an electoral process and to intervene in the process if relevant laws or standard procedures are being violated or ignored” (<http://www.idea.int>). Although both election monitoring and observation review and evaluate the whole electoral process, covering the pre-election phase, the polling day and the post election phase, the former is more thoroughgoing and extensive than the latter. Thus, for Rwelamira and Ailola election monitoring is a

... little more involved than mere observing. It involves the careful scrutiny and assessment of an election for purposes of determining its impartiality in terms of organisation and administration. It also includes an assessment of the process and actual formulation of the electoral law and the role of the security forces. For this reason, military and police observers are, when appropriate, engaged to monitor the activities of national police and military forces. Other areas which may be monitored are the civil service, the media, political party campaigns, voter education, voter registration and the actual voting as well as the vote counting and announcing processes (1994: 211).

Available literature (Rwelamira and Ailola, 1994; Daniel, 1995) perceives monitoring and technical assistance as mutually and inextricable intertwined and comprising various forms including:

- Direct management and administration of the total electoral process, in cases where a state has lost authority, as in Somalia (United Nations Operation in Somalia – UNOSOM) in the early 1990s and East Timor (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor – UNTAET) in 1999;
- Supervision and control over the election, as was the case with the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) in the 1989 transitional elections in Namibia;
- Administrative management of the election under the supervisory control of either the host government or an independent electoral commission appointed by the host government as was the case with the Commonwealth technical assistance to the 1993 election in Lesotho through two experts, Mr. Noel Lee of Jamaica and Ms. Joycelyn Lucas of Trinidad and Tobago, as chief electoral officers within the Elections Office of the Government;
- Electoral assistance to a host government, ranging from technical help in the form of equipment to experts in the drafting of electoral laws, codes of conduct and undertaking voter registration and delimitation exercises (all SADC states receive various forms of election material from developed countries in the form of assistance, e.g. Zimbabwe received technical assistance from Denmark for the Constituency delimitation exercise); or
- UN sponsored peace monitors during an election following a violent conflict and a peace agreement, as was the case in Angola in 1992 following the Bicesse Accords (United Nations Angola Verification Mission – UNAVEM) and Mozambique in 1994 following the Rome Agreement (United Nations Operation in Mozambique – UNOMOZ).

It is quite clear, therefore, that election monitoring is a much more interventionist form of fact finding about the election process. In contrast, election observation refers to some fact finding by both internal and external actors regarding an electoral process with limited or without direct intervention into the actual electoral process. According to the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), election observation refers to,

... the purposeful gathering of information regarding an electoral process, and the making of informed judgments on the conduct of such a process on the basis of the information collected, by persons who are not inherently authorized to intervene in the process, and whose involvement in the mediation or technical assistance activities should not be such as to jeopardize their main observation responsibilities (<http://www.idea.int>).

An election observer, therefore, is a person (local or foreign) who is participating in the electoral process of a given country, not as a voter but as an evalua-

tor of the process, and is accredited to do so by relevant authorities of that country. International observers also conduct their fact finding mission in accordance with the constitution and electoral laws of a given country, including a code of conduct where applicable.

One of the most comprehensive and well developed guidelines (norms and standards) for election observation is the Commonwealth's 'Good Commonwealth Electoral Practice', premised upon the 1991 Harare Declaration. Among its most useful guiding principles for observation is the provision that:

... the practice of permitting local and international observers to observe elections helps to inspire confidence in the electoral process and should be encouraged. All observers should operate within the laws of the host country and liaise with the electoral body. Any complaints received by observers from political parties, candidates or individuals should be brought to the attention of the electoral body (Commonwealth, 1997).

Therefore, international election observation, in and of itself, is a good practice in the process of nurturing and consolidation of democracy provided accepted standards, norms and rules are respected by all actors, including observers themselves. The United Nations Centre for Human Rights corroborates the Commonwealth position by emphasizing the point that "international election observers should be invited by the host country" (United Nations, 1994).

Besides the controversy that surrounds the conduct of election monitoring and observation elaborated in the preceding paragraphs, another controversy in elections discourse relates to the nebulous notion of 'free and fair' elections. Conventionally, election observation culminates in a proclamation or declaration of an observer mission on the freeness and fairness of the election which, in turn, casts either a positive or negative judgement on the election outcome. Although there are no agreed principles that govern the freeness and fairness of elections, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights has suggested modalities for ascertaining that elections are free and fair (UN, 1994). These have been elaborated further and given some analytic anchor by Elklit and Svensson in their 1997 publication on what makes elections free and fair. For these authors, the freeness and fairness of elections is assessed throughout the three main phases of elections as illustrated in Table 1.

Although Table 1 does provide a useful guide to what key aspects of elections are to be observed in all the three critical phases of the election process, neither conceptually nor methodologically does it resolve the controversy over the notion of 'free and fair'. This notion is problematic because it attempts to apply a technicist instrument in the assessment of complex political processes marked by various internal and external dynamics not covered in the table above. Second, the 'free and fair' concept is simply too judgemental, and as such unhelpful, in terms of a constructive critique of an electoral process in a country with a view to encouraging positive reform or transformation. Importantly,



**Table 1:** Definition of Free and Fair Elections

ElectionPhase	Free	Fair
Pre-election	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• respect, protection and observance of all political freedoms as provided for in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and related covenants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acceptable delimitation process</li> <li>• transparency</li> <li>• Election Act and a system that allows fair allocation of seats</li> <li>• IEC</li> <li>• impartial voter education programme</li> <li>• equal access to public mass media</li> <li>• registration of voters acceptable to all parties</li> </ul>
Polling Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunity to participate in the election</li> <li>• absence of intimidation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• secrecy of ballot</li> <li>• one person, one vote</li> <li>• acceptable ballot boxes and papers</li> <li>• access to polling stations by accredited parties</li> <li>• presence of agents and observers</li> <li>• impartial assistance to disabled</li> <li>• proper handling of void ballot papers</li> </ul>
Post Election	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• legal possibilities of complaint</li> <li>• adequate possibilities for resolution of election related conflicts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• proper counting/reporting procedures</li> <li>• proper measures during transportation of ballot boxes and security at polling stations</li> <li>• impartial reports by media on election results</li> <li>• impartial treatment of election complaints</li> <li>• acceptance of election results by all involved</li> </ul>

Source: Eliklit and Svenson, 1997: 37

the declaration of elections as 'free and fair' has suffered irreparable harm in the Southern African region as a result of observers giving elections a clean bill of health, but violent conflict erupting shortly after they have left, as was the case in Angola in 1992 and Lesotho in 1998. Equally importantly, the declaration of elections as 'free and fair' by western observers has tended to serve an ideological role for imposition of imperialist hegemony, where this is threatened, or enhancing this hegemony where it already exists. In a word the free and fair concept is now used as some form of carrot and stick diplomacy to reward acquiescent states and punish non compliant states within the global order of liberal democracy. It is further used, by western gatekeepers, to determine and impose either inclusion or exclusion of a concerned state in the international community of nations. From this vantage point, it is, therefore, easy to

explain and understand the frozen diplomatic relations between Zimbabwe and the western world which have culminated in the imposition of various types of sanction on the former by the latter.

### **Election Monitoring and Observation: A Case Study of Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe regularly holds various types of elections all occurring at different times of the tenure of the legislature and the presidency. These are:

- National Assembly elections, every five years;
- Presidential elections, every six 6 years; and
- Local Government and by-elections in between the Legislative and Presidential elections.

It is worth noting that elections are highly charged political episodes which often trigger violence. The key point that is worth emphasizing here is that no election in the world is devoid of politically motivated violence because an election is essentially a political contestation for state power. Given that Zimbabwe holds so many elections at various periods, it is no wonder that protracted violent conflicts are so profoundly embodied in the country's political system. Election related political violence also tends to negatively affect voter turnout as Table 2 below illustrates. It is worth noting, however, that voter apathy is more pronounced during Presidential elections (32 percent in 1995) than during Parliamentary elections (50 percent in 2000). This may be an expression of voter fatigue due to the extraordinary frequency and regularity of various types of elections in Zimbabwe. Despite the significant increase in voter turnout in the 2002 Presidential election (54 percent), the voter participation rate still remains low by SADC regional standards. It is no exaggeration to observe that Zimbabwe holds more elections than any other SADC member state as a result of different time frames for the Parliamentary, Presidential and local government elections, which are also punctuated over time by by-elections.

Besides politically motivated conflicts and declining voter turnout, the multiplicity of elections held has tended to fan political tensions between the executive organ of the state and the Judiciary. A clear case in point is the political impasse between the two organs of the state relating to the holding of the Harare and Chitungwiza Mayoral and Council elections vis à vis the presidential elections. While the Judiciary had ruled that the mayoral and council elections be held on February 11 2002, the Executive, through presidential powers, had proposed that the Mayoral and Council elections be held simultaneously with the Presidential election of 9–11 March 2002. In the end, the Executive's decision reigned supreme over the Judiciary and the Mayoral and Council elections for Harare and Chitungwiza were held in tandem with the Presidential election.

The four main authorities responsible for election administration and man-

**Table 2:** Voter Turnout in Post Independence Elections: 1980–2000

Year	Potential voting population	Registered voters	Voter turnout	As % of potential voters	As % of registered voters
1980	2 900 000	2 900 000	2 702 275	93	93
1985	4 000 000	3 500 000	2 972 146	74	85
1990	5 300 000	4 800 000	2 237 524	42	47
1995	6 000 000	2 600 000	1 482 660	25	57
2000	5 500 000	5 049 815	2 552 844	46	50
<b>Presidential</b>					
1995	6 000 000	4 902 244	1 557 651	26	32
2002	7 110 403	5 611 335	3 046 891	43	54

Source: UNDP/Poverty Reduction Forum/IDS, 2000: 65; SAPES Data Bank

agement in Zimbabwe are the Delimitation Commission, the Election Directorate, the Registrar General, and the Electoral Supervisory Commission. The Delimitation Commission is responsible for dividing the country into election zones (120 constituencies) to facilitate voting by the electorate for the national assembly in accordance with the first-past-the-post electoral system. The Election Directorate mainly coordinates election administration by concerned government departments and ministries with a view to ensuring that elections are conducted “efficiently, properly, freely and fairly”. Furthermore, the Election Directorate grants accreditation to foreign election observers upon recommendation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Registrar General is a civil servant, within the Ministry of Home Affairs, charged with the administrative responsibility for all elections from polling stations through constituencies up to the national level. The Office of the Registrar General also maintains the voters’ roll and avails the roll for public inspection.

There are just too many institutions in charge of the management and administration of Zimbabwe’s elections and this situation tends to lead to slippage and duplication of effort which may adversely affect the smooth running of elections. For purposes of cost effectiveness, more efficiency and leveling of the playing field, the functions of these various institutions could equally be undertaken by an independent electoral commission. If the Electoral Supervisory Commission could be turned into an independent electoral commission, it would not only assist to centralize the management and administration of elections, but also help assure the electorate and other contestants that the election management body is autonomous from the state.

Of all the elections that Zimbabwe has held since 1980, the 2000 Legislative election and the Presidential election of 2002 have attracted the greatest amount of international attention. Consequently, various election monitors and international observers became heavily involved in the Parliamentary elections of

2000, in which the ruling ZANU (PF) won the by capturing 62 seats in the face of stiff competition from the newly established opposition party – the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which managed to garner 57 seats of the legislature. The outcome of the 1996 Presidential election was as follows: Robert Gabriel Mugabe of ZANU (PF) was re-elected President with 92.7 percent of the vote; Abel Muzorewa of United Parties (UP) 4.8 percent; and Ndabaningi Sithole of ZANU-Ndonga 2.4 percent. Table 3 provides results of the previous Presidential elections since 1990 all of which were won by President Robert Mugabe. The long established political dominance of ZANU-PF within the Zimbabwean polity in the context of the historical political culture of dominant party system (Mandaza and Sachikonye, 1990; Giliomee and Simkins, 1999) clearly assured Robert Mugabe a victory over other contestants during the 2002 election. If one adds to these factors the crucial factor of political apathy as well as the rural-urban dynamics in terms of the political base of ZANU-PF and the MDC, then the ruling party was clearly poised to win the 2002 election. However, it must be recognized that this election was rather unique in many respects. As was the case in the 2000 Parliamentary election the ruling ZANU-PF, faced a relatively strong opposition. Also, the issues of contestation were more complex as both internal and external interests and agendas either converged or conflicted. Western diplomatic and economic pressure on Zimbabwe had become more intensified and pronounced but African states largely rallied behind Zimbabwe, thus widening the apparent political gulf with the west (witness, for instance, divisions within the Commonwealth and the European Union along these lines) (see Table 3).

Table 4, depicts an interesting trend in National Assembly Elections since 1980, all of which were won by ZANU-PF. It is worth noting again that the margins of ZANU-PF victory have progressively declined from 99 percent in 1980 to 77 percent in 1985, 76 percent in 1995, and 49 percent in 2000. It is worth noting that the newly established opposition party, the MDC, posed such a tremendous and unprecedented challenge to the ruling ZANU-PF and was able to win all urban constituencies in the Matebeleland region, while the ruling party held its own in most rural constituencies. In terms of the overall performance, it is clear that the ruling party's stronghold includes Mashonaland, Manicaland, Masvingo and Midlands provinces.

Judging by the voting pattern and voting behaviour during the 2000 Parliamentary election, it was abundantly clear that the key determinants of victory in the 2002 Presidential election would include the rural-urban dynamics of voting behaviour, the usual low voter turnout during Presidential elections especially in urban areas, campaigning strategies and party structures, the external environment, particularly the British, EU and US pressure on the ZANU-PF government, and party programmes, manifestos and political postures (Mandaza, 2002).

**Table 3:** Presidential Elections in Zimbabwe: 1990–2002

Year	Party	Candidate	Number of votes	Votes (% of totals)
1990	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)	Robert Mugabe	2 026 976	83.0
	Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM)	Edgar Tekere	413 840	17.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>2 440 816</b>	<b>100.0</b>
1996	ZANU-PF	Robert Mugabe	1 404 501	92.8
	United Parties	Abel Muzorewa	72 600	4.8
	Zimbabwe African National Union – ZANU (Ndonga)	Ndabaningi Sithole	36 960	2.4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1 514 061</b>	<b>100.0</b>
2002	ZANU-PF	Robert Mugabe	1 685 212	56.2
	ZANU-Ndonga	Wilson Kumbula	31 368	1.0
	Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)	Morgan Tsvangirai	1 258 401	42.0
	Independent member of Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU)	Paul Siwela	11 871	0.4
	National Alliance for Good Governance (NAGG)	Shakespeare Maya	11 906	0.4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>2 998 758</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: SAPES Trust, Socioeconomic Databank

It was no wonder, therefore, that the ZANU-PF candidate, Robert Mugabe, won the election as illustrated in Table 5.

The most interesting revelation from Table 4, is that, in all provinces where the opposition candidate, Morgan Tsvangirai, won, voter turnout was very low, thus negatively affecting his total national vote. In contrast, the ruling party candidate received higher voter turnout in the traditional ZANU-PF strongholds and made further inroads in some opposition strongholds. This surely guaranteed him a victory. It must be accepted, though, that the contest was very stiff, hence the ruling party received 56 percent of the total vote while the main opposition garnered a record of 42 percent, making this the first ever close contest since 1990, as Table 2 clearly demonstrates.

Table 6 depicts the nature of Parliament after the 2000 election in terms of elected representatives and appointed MPs. This is the first time in independent Zimbabwe that the legislature has been marked by such diversity of political representation and opinion. However, this political diversity and opportunity to encourage participation and inclusivity have not been not sufficiently exploited by the opposition to canvass an alternative political programme and national

**Table 4:** National Assembly Election Results in Zimbabwe 1980 – 2000

Party	Candidates	Registered	Votes Votes	% Valid	Seats
2000	ZANU (PF)	120	1 220 951	48.83	62
	MDC	120	1 150 793	46.03	57
	UP	59	29 677	1.19	0
	ZAPU	21	10 824	0.43	0
	ZUD	16	6 100	0.24	0
	ZANU	12	16 493	0.66	1
	LP	8	753	0.03	0
	LPZ	14	10 449	0.42	0
	ZIP	4	473	0.02	0
	NDU	1	164	0.01	0
	ZPP	1	62	0	0
	ZCP	1	16	0	0
	PDF	1	90	0	0
	ANP	1	862	0.03	0
	NPA	1	617	0.02	0
	Independents Spoilt?	89	51 971	2.08	0
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>469</b>	<b>2 552 844</b>	<b>99.99</b>
1995	ZANU (PF)	120	1 126 822	76	117
	ZANU-Ndonga	?	93 546	6	2
	FPZ	?	88 223	6	–
	Independents (Margaret Dongo)	?	62 085	–	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1 370 676</b>	<b>88</b>
1990	ZANU (PF)	120	1 690 071	81	117
	ZUM	120	369 031	18	2
	ZANU-Ndonga	120	19 448	1	1
	UANC	120	9 667	1	–
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>2 088 217</b>	<b>101</b>
1985	ZANU (PF)	80	2 233 320	77	64
	PF-ZAPU	80	558 771	19	15
	ZANU-Ndonga	?	36 054	1	1
	UANC	?	64 764	2	–
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>2 892 909</b>	<b>99</b>
1980	ZANU (PF)	80	1 668 992	63	57
	PF-ZAPU	80	638 879	24	20
	UANC	?	219 307	8	3
	ZANU-Ndonga	?	53 343	2	–
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>2 580 521</b>	<b>97</b>

Source: SAPES Trust Databank

**Table 5:** Zimbabwe Presidential Election Results By Province: 2002

Share of Votes										
Province Voters	Registered	ZANU	NAGG	ZANU-PF	IND	MDC	SPOILT Votes	TOTAL Votes	VALID Voting	(%)
Harare	882 176	833	430	101 385	445	309 842	2 295	415 230	412 935	47.07
Bulawayo	363 028	402	194	29 828	302	131 890	631	163 247	162 616	44.97
Midlands	724 659	4 841	1 633	263 373	1 653	152 324	6 894	430 718	423 824	59.44
Manicaland	662 217	5 080	1 832	172 547	1 820	172 225	6 537	360 041	353 504	54.37
Mashonaland West	572 677	2 636	1 167	230 321	1 009	87 498	5 787	328 418	322 631	57.35
Mashonaland East	589 185	3 772	1 459	266 315	1 308	76 617	5 800	355 271	349 471	60.30
Mashonaland Central	480 092	2 727	1 168	240 685	984	45 139	3 916	294 619	290 703	61.37
Masvingo	655 122	5 866	2 059	256 379	1 955	106 157	5 627	378 043	372 416	57.71
Matabeleland North	338 186	2 218	1 184	61 274	1 488	109 771	1 941	177 876	175 935	52.60
Matabeleland South	343 993	2 611	899	73 369	978	84 322	1 658	163 837	162 179	47.63
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>5 611 335</b>	<b>30 986</b>	<b>12 025</b>	<b>1 695 476</b>	<b>11 942</b>	<b>1 275 785</b>	<b>41 086</b>	<b>3 067 300</b>	<b>3 026 214</b>	<b>54.30</b>

agenda in challenging the ruling party beyond their focus on the personality of Robert Mugabe. In a nutshell, oppositional politics since 2000 has revolved more around personalities and less around national issues and, as a result, the political field was profoundly polarized in the run up to the 2002 Presidential election. This polarisation, which manifested itself through lack of tolerance, political violence and sensationalized media reporting, clearly had its own imprint and impact on the election process and outcome.

Although all the previous elections have produced a clear winner by majority votes for the legislature and the presidency, election observation has increasingly become a contentious and controversial subject in Zimbabwe. One aspect of this controversy relates to the distinction of election monitoring from observation. Does observation mean the same thing as monitoring and vice versa, and who is responsible for each? In all fairness, election monitoring is a much more involved process of election watching than observation and is usually undertaken by local organisations. These include the government, the election management bodies and NGOs. Only rarely would international actors get involved in monitoring.

However, countries put in place institutions that play this role in accordance with their constitutions and electoral laws. In the case of Zimbabwe, therefore, election monitoring is the sole responsibility of the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC). During the 2000 election, the ESC played this role in collaboration with local NGOs. For the Presidential election of 9–10 March 2002, election monitoring was to be undertaken solely by the ESC and about 22 000 monitors from the public service were trained to take charge of about 5 500 polling station throughout the country. This approach was criticized by NGOs as they felt that their role in elections had been drastically reduced, given that they were no longer in charge of either election monitoring or voter education. The NGOs were not able to undertake the task of voter education and election monitoring because both tasks were reserved for the ESC. A total of 70 local,

**Table 6:** Composition of the Zimbabwean Parliament: 2000-2005

Political Party	Legislative seats	% of votes
ZANU (PF)	62	51.7
MDC	57	47.5
ZANU-Ndonga	1	0.8
Non Constituency Seats	12	–
Provincial Governors	8	–
Chiefs	10	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>



**Table 7:** Election Observers: Zimbabwe's Parliamentary Election, 2000

Country/Organization	Size of Observer Mission	Leader(s) of Mission
Commonwealth	32	General Abdusalami Abubakar (Nigeria)
European Union	190	Pierre Schori (Sweden)
Electoral Commissions Forum of SADC Countries	21	Justice B. Bwalya (Zambia)
SADC Parliamentary Forum	31	Nora Schimming Chase MP and Moises Kambaya MP
Australian Parliamentary Observer Mission	6	Senator Alan Ferguson Senator Andrew Murray Kim Wilkie MP
All Africa Conference of Churches and World Council of Churches	100	
Organization of African Unity (OAU)	30	
South African Parliamentary Observer Mission	50	Tony Yengeni MP
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	

**Note:** There were many other observers from diplomatic missions based in Harare and various NGOs who were not accredited. These have not been captured in the above table. This means that the actual total number of observers exceeded 500.

regional and international NGOs were, however, invited by the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Patrick Chinamasa, to take part in the observation process.

As for election observation, a number of international and regional organizations observed the 2000 election (Table 7) and even more were accredited to observe the Presidential election of 2002 (Table 8).

In 2000, the government promulgated procedures, rules and regulations for the accreditation of monitors and observers. Statutory Instrument 161A of 2000 gives the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) power and authority to appoint election monitors. According to this regulation, election monitoring shall not be undertaken by, an officer or member of any political party contesting the poll being monitored, or any person who is not a citizen of Zimbabwe.

As a rule, election monitoring in Zimbabwe is undertaken by public servants under the central coordination of the Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC). Accreditation of international observers is the sole responsibility of the Election

**Table 8:** Election Observers – Zimbabwe's Presidential Election of 2002

Country/Organization	No. of Observers
Norway	27
Spain	2
Austria	2
Abuja	2
DRC	5
Iran	3
Japan	5
Belgium	4
Italy	7
Ireland	4
France	9
Nigeria	26
Algeria	1
Ghana	3
Libyan	6
Lesotho	2
Canada	8
Czech Republic	1
Russia	5
Namibia	3
Swaziland	1
Malawi	34
Tanzania	25
Australia	4
Zambia	7
Cameroon	1
Angola	7
Ethiopia	1
Mozambique	8
Botswana	12
South Africa	94
Indonesia	3
Belarus	1
United States of America	34
Commonwealth Countries	91
SADC Parliamentary Forum	55
World Council of Churches	42
Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA)	92
International Finance Corporation (IFC)	2
SADC Electoral Commission Forum (ECF)	16
African Caribbean Pacific (ACP)	7
Organization of African Unity	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>694</b>

Directorate on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Monitors and observers are supposed to adhere to and abide by a code of conduct which is part of Statutory Instrument 161A of 2000. Election monitors and observers are required to pay a fee of Z\$1 000.00 and US\$100.00 respectively for purposes of accreditation.

These rules represent a very important development because, for the first time in Southern Africa, a deliberate attempt was made by a government to control and regulate observers with a view to protecting the political integrity of the election and guarding against possible erosion of national sovereignty. These rules, in a sense, represent an attempt on the part of Government to 'observe the observers'. This is crucial in light of the recent development in the Zambian election of 27 December 2001, wherein the European Union (EU) is reported to have sponsored one party, namely the United Party for National Development (UPND), and went to the extent of congratulating its presidential candidate Mr. Anderson Mazoka for supposedly winning the poll even before the vote count had been completed. It turned out that the candidate of the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), Levy Mwanawasa, had in fact won the Presidential election, albeit by a minority vote of less than 30 percent. He now faces a stiff oppositional challenge regarding the conduct of the election and the legitimacy of his presidency. The EU subsequently produced their adverse election observation report revealing alleged irregularities in the electoral process.

The deteriorating diplomatic relations between the Zimbabwean government and the EU, Britain and the USA has also influenced the government's stance on international observation of elections. During the 2000 elections, some of the international observers had to be banned from undertaking the task due to their overt political bias. This included the alleged partisan role that was played by the US based National Democratic Institute (NDI) who dismissed the whole process as fraudulent and not free and fair even before it started (NDI report, 2000). Yet the same organization could not pass a public judgement over the controversy ridden US election which delivered the present Bush administration. As a result, in part, of the unethical conduct of the NDI, on 20 June 2000, the Election Directorate passed a directive that individuals representing non governmental organisations (NGOs) would not be accredited as observers in terms of Statutory Instrument 161A of 2000. The ruling further stated that "Members of the Non-Governmental Organisations are free to move around the country but will not be accorded the rights and privileges provided by the Statutory Instrument 161A of 2000. They will be expected to abide by the laws of Zimbabwe" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 June 2000).

The EU, Britain and the USA have mounted tremendous pressure against the Zimbabwe government mainly due to the land redistribution exercise, the military involvement of Zimbabwe in the DRC conflict, Zimbabwe's denunciation of the IMF/World Bank economic adjustment programme, and Zimbabwe's pursuit of an

autonomous/nationalist development model and a foreign policy path perceived to be in contradiction with western interests. It was, indeed, as part of the political pressure to ostracise Zimbabwe that the US recently passed a piece of legislation styled 'the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act' aimed mainly at exerting various forms of pressure, including curtailing development aid and imposing economic sanctions against the country. The 'Zimbabwe Democracy Bill' was piloted in the US House of Representatives by the Chair of the Africa subcommittee, Ed Royce, and passed by a vote of 396 to eleven, supported by the State Department and ultimately signed by President George Bush. That this legislation is indeed only part of a grand scheme by the US and EU to mount political and economic pressure on Zimbabwe is clearly revealed in Royce's statement that "...the US House of Representatives acted against tyranny in Zimbabwe. I foresee the US working closely with the European Union, South Africa and the other regional states to address this crisis" (<http://www.house.gov/royce/zimbassanc.html>). The Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act will formalize the veiled economic sanctions that the US has imposed on Zimbabwe since the late 1990s and will assist the Bush administration to impose so called 'smart sanctions' against top ranking ZANU (PF) officials.

Through spirited and protracted lobbying by the British government, the EU also geared itself up for imposition of sanctions in accordance with article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement between the EU and ACP countries, which provides for political dialogue involving parties to ensure respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. Such dialogue is meant to last for no more than 60 days. In case this dialogue "does not lead to a solution acceptable to both parties, if consultation is refused, or in cases of special urgency, appropriate measures shall be revoked as soon as the reason for taking them have disappeared" ([http://europa.eu.int/comon/development/cotonou/agreement\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comon/development/cotonou/agreement_en.htm)). Bilateral talks between the EU and Zimbabwe in January 2002 have not facilitated a mutual understanding between the parties and the diplomatic stand off between Brussels and Harare is still acute.

Paradoxically, as the EU was contemplating imposition of 'smart sanctions' against Zimbabwe, the ZANU (PF) government also used the election observation issue to significantly reduce the influence of the British and the EU in the 2002 Presidential election. The government made it clear that the British would not be allowed to participate in the election observation process. Furthermore, the government would only accredit a combined EU/ACP international observation mission, which was to be led by an ACP country/leader. At the time of writing, Zimbabwe had just lodged a dispute with the EU which is to be considered by the Council of Ministers through an elaborate process of arbitration stipulated in article 98 of the Cotonou Agreement. This will surely be a protracted diplomatic wrangle between Zimbabwe and the EU which is also likely to drive a political wedge between the European and ACP members of the Union

with dire consequences for the Cotonou Agreement. For Mandaza, the Zimbabwe-EU diplomatic debacle over election observation should be used by the ACP countries to push for a review of the Cotonou Agreement and other neo-colonial arrangements, to build genuine partnerships based on mutual respect and equality rather than imposition of the weight of the powerful over the weak and prioritisation of western hegemony over sovereignty (Mandaza, 2002).

Although the British lobby against Zimbabwe in the EU may have paid dividends given that the EU has already imposed smart sanctions against the ZANU (PF) leadership, this imperial and neocolonial maneuver has not achieved the same effect in the Commonwealth. The 54 member Commonwealth of States, comprising principally former colonies of Britain, in which Britain itself enjoys unquestioned political suzerainty, dismissed outright the proposal from the former colonial metropole for the suspension of Zimbabwe from the organisation in January 2002. The proposal for the suspension of Zimbabwe was justified by Britain on the grounds that the former had contravened the 1991 Harare Declaration which committed member states to multiparty democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Thus far, the only two countries that have been suspended from the Commonwealth for breach of the Harare Declaration are Fiji and Pakistan for the unconstitutional removal of governments by military means. SADC has dismissed the British calls for suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth and the EU's threat of sanctions as a veiled imperialist imposition by Britain to maintain its neocolonial domination and safeguard its strategic interests in the region in general and Zimbabwe in particular. Besides the imperialist ambitions of Britain and the EU in Southern Africa the political and economic pressure by Britain, the EU and the USA also smacks of global racial bigotry aimed at undermining the sovereignty of the developing countries, including Zimbabwe.

As the diplomatic tug of war continued, the EU sent a six member advance team of international observers as part of preparations to send a fully fledged observation mission of about 150 people prior to the March Presidential election. The accreditation of the EU observer mission was to be conditional upon proper procedures being followed, including exclusion of the British on the team and the leadership of the Mission by an ACP country/leader. Besides Britain, the Zimbabwe government also banned election observers from five other EU member states, allegedly for interfering in the internal affairs of the country by providing various forms of support to the opposition MDC and allowing anti-government radio stations to broadcast anti-ZANU (PF) propaganda from their Capitals. These were Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands. As the diplomatic wrangling between Zimbabwe and the EU intensified, on 10 February 2002, the Swedish Ambassador to the United Nations, Pierre Schori arrived in Harare purportedly to lead a EU observer mission for the Presidential elections.

On 12 February 2002, thirty more EU observers arrived in Harare amidst a diplomatic tussle between the government and EU regarding accreditation of Pierre Schori, who had entered the country on a tourist visa. Whereas the government insisted that it would not accredit Schori, it did extend accreditation status to most of the thirty EU observers, excluding those from the six countries which had been barred from election observation. The political showdown between the government and the EU reached a critical point when government warned Schori against making any political statements since he had entered the country as a tourist and even threatened to withdraw the 14 day tourist visa.

As the government progressively geared up for a political battle with the EU, prospects for the expulsion of Schori and retaliatory economic sanctions by the EU became more real by the passing day. Indeed, ultimately, the government ordered Pierre Schori to leave the country for violating his visa conditions as a tourist by making political statements. Schori left Zimbabwe on Saturday 16 February 2002. This development brought the diplomatic row between the EU and Government to a climax and the probability of the imposition of sanctions by the former on the latter became greater. It did not surprise keen observers of the deteriorating EU-Zimbabwe relations when the EU foreign Ministers' meeting on Monday 11 February 2002 in Brussels unanimously agreed on the imposition of smart sanctions on President Robert Mugabe, his Cabinet and other senior officials, together with their families. The proposed sanctions, which were imposed with immediate effect following the EU decision, included:

- Immediate withdrawal of international observers from the EU member states in Zimbabwe;
- A freeze on assets owned by the President and Cabinet members together with other officials in any of the 15 nations comprising the EU;
- A ban on travel by the President, Cabinet Ministers and other officials to any of the 15 EU nations;
- An arms embargo on Zimbabwe; and
- Suspension of bilateral contacts and consultations between diplomats of EU member states and Zimbabwe government officials.

A day after the EU decision, the United States government decided that it would impose similar smart sanctions on Zimbabwe, pending approval from President Bush who was on an official tour of Asia. The US economic squeeze on Zimbabwe also included financial sanctions, most of which are already in place and being meted out by both multilateral and bilateral financial/donor agencies. This development is a harbinger of the pressure that other developing countries are bound to face if they are seen to defy the west and threaten their strategic interests anywhere in the world.

The remaining invited international observers included mainly organizations from Africa and the third world such as SADC, COMESA, the Non-Aligned Movement, the OAU/AU, and Nigeria etc. (see Table 8).

This is clearly a deliberate diplomatic move by the Zimbabwe government to brush off the western pressure and strengthen pan-African political solidarity through election observation. This development raises a fundamental question for the consolidation of democratic governance in the Southern African region, namely should the critical players in election observation in the region be regional organizations/states or international players from the industrialized northern countries? Regional organizations, like SADC, COMESA, OAU/AU, SADC Parliamentary Forum and the Electoral Commissions Forum of the SADC, will need to grapple with this important question and others around election observation. It is the contention of this author that, if African States are to pool their threatened sovereignty together and face up to the enormous challenges posed by globalisation, the key role for election observation must be given to continental (African Union) and regional (SADC) supranational institutions on the basis of agreed norms and standards of election process. This critical role of the supranational institutions at regional and continental levels should also be complemented by regional civil society organizations to ensure broader participation. All other international institutions and actors must play a secondary or subsidiary role. This policy route on election observation will send a clear statement that Africa is committed to charting its own autonomous political future and vision which may not necessarily be along the lines of western liberal democracy.

Not only has Zimbabwe faced enormous political and economic pressure from the EU, UK and USA. Western imperialist overtures have also been orchestrated through the 54 member Commonwealth, dominated by Britain. During the recent Summit of the Commonwealth States in Brisbane, Australia, the 54 member club was divided on the Zimbabwe issue along racial lines. On one side was the four countries, namely Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand, which were vehemently mounting pressure for the imposition of sanctions on Zimbabwe. On the other side was the African group of member states who maintained that there was no political or legal basis for the Commonwealth to impose sanctions on Zimbabwe. Due to this political impasse, the Brisbane meeting resolved that a task force comprising the President of Nigeria, the President of South Africa and the Prime Minister of Australia should, together with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, engage the Zimbabwe government, monitor developments in Zimbabwe and propose an appropriate policy stance by the Club, particularly taking into account the report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission for the 2002 Presidential election. As was to be expected, a highly negative observation report by the Commonwealth observer group played an important role in influencing the Commonwealth task force to recommend a one year suspension of Zimbabwe from the Club. The positions of Australia, Canada, Britain and New Zealand are clearly another demonstration of the contradiction between hegemony and sovereignty as

powerful countries relate to weak ones within the Commonwealth grouping and exactly how the election and election observation are also used as convenient tools in this power struggle. Following this decision of the Commonwealth, mediators from South Africa and Nigeria namely, Mr Kagalema Mothlanthe and Prof. Adebayo Adedeji were tasked to mediate inter-party talks, aimed at reconciliation and nation building, between ZANU (PF) and MDC. Although prospects for the talks and their outcome were still rather bleak at the time of writing, the most important lesson from this initiative is that African states must take proactive steps to resolve their own socioeconomic and political problems rather than deferring this critical role to the western powers and the United Nations.

## **Conclusion**

The current political transition from mono-party towards multi-party political systems in Southern Africa is a positive development for democratic transformation in the region. Whether it is perceived as genuine democratization or mere political liberalization, this transition has ensured relatively higher levels of political participation and representation of the electorate in key institutions of governance, particularly the legislature. This has been entrenched through regular legislative, presidential and local government elections which the majority of the SADC states have now institutionalized within their political systems. These elections are subjected to internal and external evaluation through monitoring and observation by different governmental and non-governmental groups. These monitoring and observer missions undertake their fact finding tasks on elections within the broader framework provided by international and regional human rights instruments, as well as the constitutional provisions and electoral laws of individual countries.

Additionally, the monitoring and observer missions have to comply with national constitutions and relevant laws governing elections in individual host states. The key roles of election observers have to be critically reviewed to ensure that all phases of the election process are carefully evaluated before a verdict is passed on the freeness and fairness of the process. To this end, an important initiative towards developing norms and standards for elections by the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the Electoral Commission's Forum of the SADC will go a long way in ensuring that election observation clearly adds value to democratic governance and respect for human rights in the SADC region.

The idea of developing regional norms and standards for elections will define good practices in election management and provide benchmarks against which elections can be assessed by monitors and observers. If well implemented and adhered to, the norms and standards will assist greatly in entrenching a democratic culture, in minimizing conflict and contributing to political stability



(Machipisa, 2000). The norms and standards so far developed by the SADC Parliamentary Forum cover the following broad political conditions for elections:

- Elections and individual rights;
- Elections and the government; and
- Fostering transparency and integrity in the electoral process.

The norms and standards for elections which are being developed by the Electoral Commissions Forum of the SADC focus mainly on technical and administrative aspects covering the pre-election phase, the polling day and the post election phase.

Election observation in Zimbabwe has forced many analysts to rethink the role of both monitors and observers in elections in Southern Africa. It is imperative that lessons learnt in election observation in a majority of countries thus far, particularly Zambia and Zimbabwe, help regional organizations to make key decisions as to who is supposed to play a key role in these processes. Organizations like the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the Electoral Commissions Forum of the SADC Countries should assist in this task. It is quite obvious that, although election monitoring and observation, in and of themselves, are noble principles for the enhancement and institutionalization of democratic governance, they are increasingly being used as foreign policy tools to impose imperialist hegemony. This, in turn, will curtail and diminish national sovereignty and independence of African states which are already severely enfeebled by the twin process of globalisation and economic adjustment. One of the most strategic responses of African states to the pervasive global imperialist hegemony is to deliberately move away from narrow concerns about national sovereignty towards pooled sovereignty through supranational institutions as a basis for pan-African solidarity. However, this strategy should not be used as a facade for countenancing the resurgence of authoritarian rule on the continent.

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