

Challenges of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Creating Democratic Space and Guaranteeing Peace and Security in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: *The history of Zimbabwe cannot be complete without mentioning incidents of conflict and violence. The pre - colonial era was characterised by conflict related to conquest and expansion of political power in form of fiefdoms, chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires. This phenomenon ended with the British colonial invasion which was marked by destructive wars by the colonisers versus the indigenes. The subsequent revolutions were in cultural and political forms. The colonial era was replete with oppression, exploitation by the colonial regime and resistance against it. These persistent anticolonial movements finally yielded results and Zimbabwe got its independence in 1980. The liberation struggles saw a lot of people lose their lives. This however did not end the conflict. Instead, the independence era became characterised by internal fights for hegemony between the two major political parties - the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU - PF) and the Zimbabwe African People’s Union – Patriotic Front (ZAPU - PF). However, the turn of the new millennium ushered in the country a new and unique mode of violence. Zimbabwe faced a lot of political challenges which resulted in political polarisation of the country. These led to an unprecedented mode of political violence. These were worsened by the Western economic sanctions. A combination of all these and other factors resulted in undermining Zimbabwe’s economy and threw the country into disarray. This left the ordinary people marginalized and reduced to abject poverty. It created a fertile ground for the NGOs to mushroom in the country with pseudo promises of creating democratic space for the Zimbabweans to participate in politics without fear of intimidation. These NGOs were also attempting to create an alternative to the existing political power structure. They postured themselves as peace builders in the society that had been infested by political violence.*

Keywords: Democracy, Conflict, political violence, Opposition Political Party, Peace building

1. Introduction

Being people’s collective organisations, the CSOs play a critical role in the promotion of the people’s rights, social justice, and democracy in averting social crises and calamities. They manifest the interests and the will of the people. They work for the interest of the people. The CSOs include labour unions, non - profit making organizations, faith - based organizations, cooperatives, savings and credit unions, associations like cultural, economic, social etc. In many countries, there are three sectors that are vital in promoting the welfare of the citizens; the public sector under the government, the private sector comprised of business, and the civilian sector. The latter is composed of the CSOs and NGOs.

CSOs are also critical in enhancing the freedoms of people by educating them on how they can effectively participate in governance and political issues in their milieu. However, they face some challenges as cited by CIVICUS an alliance for citizen participation (Poskitt and Dufranc, 2011). It explained that in countries where there is instability and conflict the CSOs face challenges that affect their effectiveness.

Having been transformed into a settler colony, after dispossessing the original owners of the land of their ancestral lands and place them by the *maruzevha* – the Tribal Trust Lands, they were herded reserves and they became *makorokoza* (declassé). The subsequent state oppression and exploitation helped to raise the consciousness of these subalterns.

Zimbabwe is not excluded in having its own CSOs. We have to avoid the ideological trap which argues that CSOs and the

new social movements are a rare monopoly of the civilised West while social movements are for the developing countries. What needs to be noted is that in the past two decades, there has been a rift between the government and some of them. Masunungure (2014) states that in as much as the CSOs are critical to any state, they can never be substitutes to the state. They can only criticise or perform some complimentary roles and services to the state but not to substitute it. This is because they do not have the mandate and legitimacy of the people and neither can they have the capacity, stamina, expertise and coercive qualities to deal with politics. While they have risen to fill the gaps in areas which are not addressed by the states, that is supposed to be done in a way that does not disturb the systems and structures of governmentality.

2. Methodology

This article focuses on specific roles played by CSOs in Zimbabwe in creating a democratic space. It analyses how they are operating and the challenges they face in their operations taking into consideration the political, economic and security environment of Zimbabwe. To accomplish this, it analyses the activities of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN), the Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC).

Much of the literature about these Civil Society Organization is available online. The study utilised secondary sources and unpublished materials on this subject matter. It combined desk research and online survey. The majority of the material was obtained from the online sources. These were mainly articles in academic journals

and reports. Grey literature also provided factual information. These includes reports and working papers.

Reflections on civil society and its functionality

To understand the etymology and historicity of CSOs requires to start by reviewing Gramsci's explanation of it conceptually and empirically. He explains the organic linkage and inseparability between civil society and political society. They are intertwined and indivisible. He defines civil society as unity of private organisms where social classes compete for political and social leadership. Both the civil society and the political society constitute the state. They are characterized by two types of power – hegemony and domination. Civil society is the base of consent and hegemony while the dominant group deploys it over society. Political society is a coercive machinery that is deployed externally to control the civil society's inclination towards anarchy (Thomas, 2009). He and Tocqueville focus on democracy and civility.

However, their analyses were premised on Western socio-cultural, political, ideological and religious constructions like churches, unions, parties, cooperatives, and civic associations. The functionality of CSOs was to prolong the dynamics of the study and they were deeply anchored among the people. They transformed civil society into a privileged arena of political change by enabling it to seize political power without arms.

Chatterjee (2004) debunks the populist imagining of the subalterns as rights-bearing citizens. He argues with empirical evidence that they are not proper members of civil society and that the state institutions do not consider them to be so. The state has to care for them and also control them. He dismisses discourses which have liberalized the notion of civil society to apply to virtually all social institutions that are not directly linked to the state. Topical among these are: Cohen and Arato (1992); the Western Financial institutions spearheaded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; Aid Agencies and Non - Governmental Organisations (NGOs). In Eastern Africa, the ineptness of the NGOs has earned them the cynical renaming of *Nothing Going ons*. He shows how they took liberty under the aegis of neoliberalism "... authorized the consecration of every non - state organ as the precious flower of the associative endeavours of free members of civil society. " He dismisses them as "unscrupulously charitable theoretical gestures. " He explains that although civil society is demographically limited, it is ideal for revitalizing an interventionist political project. He elucidates how struggles by civil societies are weapons of the weak and the special ways how states handle them without resorting to judicial recourse.

In his exploration of the socio-cultural constructions, Castells brings out the locus and functionality of identity and meaning in society. He unearths three types of identity formation – legitimizing, resistance and project. He explains how these lead to different outcomes in identity formation and the legitimizing one produces civil society. He defines civil society as a set of structured and organized social actors who produce sometimes in a conflict manner the identity that authenticates the sources of structural domination. Including the conflictual and negative aspects of civil

society enables him to transcend the original Gramscian populist definition of civil society, which focus only on the positive meanings of democratic social change.

The continuity between civil society institutions and the state's power machinery organized around similar identities like citizenship, democracy, politicization of social change, confinement of power to the state and its consequences facilitates the conquering of the state by the forces of change like those of socialism. Contrary to this, Foucault, Sennett, Horkheimer and Mercurio had identified internalized domination and legitimation of an over-imposed, undifferentiated normalizing identity.

In his study on governmental rationality, Gordon (1991) pushes further the archaeology of knowledge on civil society. He shows that in the *Foucauldian* notion, the main function of liberalism was to construct and invent the characteristic qualities of liberty through civil society. He further explains how Locke and his followers conceived civil society as the political or juridical society. He tried to correct the earlier misunderstanding of Ferguson's notion of civil society as private economic interests to be the driving force of the public prosperity. To him, society does not make civil society to be basically opposed to the will of government as earlier postulated but a vector of agonistic struggle over the governmental relations of "the common interplay of relations of power and everything which never ceases to escape their grasp". He explains Foucault's analysis of civil society and the development of liberalism as political practice, as the elaboration of mechanism of security for the economic government.

He locates the genesis, evolution and politics of civil society in the industrial bourgeois Europe spearheaded by France. The main ones included the 1815, with the dualistic version of Lockean civil society where the industrial entrepreneurs aimed to detain the labouring population politically in a "virtual state of nature". Then 1848 and 1871 witnessed the countervailing efforts by the subalterns to construct a new civil society basing on their own vision and terms. Marx (1848) interpreted these revolts as actions of civil society against the state. He explored the violence which characterized them as the outgrowth of civil society that unlawfully struggled to break away from its social basis. He opined that conflict over the interpretation of social rights and civil society implied conflict over the functionality of the state.

Gordon (1991) shows how the Western political theorists condemned the pre-industrial solidarities of the poor as total social dangers, political threats, sedition and anti-society. He condemned them as a zone of instinct that was conflicting with social beings; precluded free mobility of labour and capital – both of which constituted the foundation of liberal welfare. He averred that the wretched paupers were devoid of interest to develop economically and that they resisted transition from squalor to well-being. He underlined the need for a broader strategy for implementing the personality and mentality of economic person among the poor and the need for political technology crafted from the resistant dangerous classes to form something greater than economic human, a social citizen.

To Ferguson, natural history of man as a specific species of animal had always been there; that human nature was social history, civil society or just society. Natural history was as old as the individual, not product of original contract involving exchange, transfer/surrender of natural rights. After developing mutual connection with new type of governing, civil society is taken as a ground for rationalizing the legal control of a self - limiting economic or "frugal" government index - linked to economic processes.

The plan of civil society locating the problem of deploying political power to a natural space where power of spontaneously developed relations of authority and subordination exists in internal, dynamic relation to the play of egotistic and non - egotistic interests. He argues that if the function of government is to secure the automatic working of civil society, then, the state's deployment of governmental power has to be seen in continuity with or as grafted onto society's greater power relations.

In his exploration of govern mentality, Michel Foucault (1991) unearths the problematizing nature of liberalism in relation to civil society as both the object and end of government. To him, the relationship between civil society and the state is a form of plan for the deployment of power. He conceives civil society as the "transactional reality" inhabiting the mutable encounter of political power and everything else that permanently removes its reach. In his view, it undergoes continuous metamorphosis.

To him, its political aim is to play a central part of deciding on opening any additional problem space of how to rule. The types of power existing within civil society are both legal and institutionalized as techniques of government.

Osaghae (1994) identifies two ideologically opposing views on how individuals relate to the bourgeois state. It is premised on the concept of citizenship. Its assumption is of reciprocity between the rights provided by the state (justiciable rights and freedoms) and responsibilities of citizens. The latter include payment of taxes, respect of law and support for the constituted authority. It is concerned with order which is guaranteed by reciprocity. Gramsci had also observed how the absence "disequilibrium in the rights - duties balance" would result in political disorder. He uses historical evidence from different modes of politics and production from various parts of the world to explain how the state's denial of rights to its citizens can create fertile grounds for consistent protests, civil disobedience and revolutions. He explains that where the citizens enjoy rights, though with problematic responsibilities, people deny support to the state for its effective functioning. What is missing in this citizenship - equilibrium thesis is its rationale and its calculations in social reality.

The radical view of the citizenship thesis of classes and class struggles

The Marxist discourse explores the relationship between the individual and the state. It distinguishes two sets of individuals or citizens (classes) basing on their social relationship to production. One class is of the owners and controllers of the means of production and the other one is of the propertyless. The relationship between them is that of domination and exploitation. Hence, Marx' dictum of the

history of their relationship being of class struggles (Marx, 1848). He shows how the capitalist state is an instrument of class oppression, the real as opposed to the false, of the citizens (the oppressed classes or the subalterns Indian School) lies in overthrowing the state and the existing social order.

The conception of the relationship between the individual and the state in Africa requires a broader approach. Individuals in Africa do not relate to the state indirectly but collectively. Students push through student bodies and other organized groups, workers through trade unions, professional groups or social movements, new social movements, trades, artisans through the guilds; market women through informal groups; farmers through cooperatives, societies, religious, ethnic or cultural organisations etc (Cooper, 2018). Some groups may combine to make demands on government especially in hard times and they can resort to violent redress from government and/or its agencies. All these indicate vibrant civil societies in Africa. What is needed is to understand and explain individual groups and state actions because the collectivistic basis of citizenship in Africa has resulted in the consensus on the expected obligations of the state towards the citizens. These have politics, economic, social, cultural and even spiritual levels which are generalised as development.

Behavioural trends show how combining class and ethnic ties is important in analyzing individual and group behaviour and their relationship to the state. Both have to be analysed as they are recursive but not mutually exclusive. Individuals employ both class and ethnic strategy, gender, regional, religious, alumni, club membership, strategies depending on the situation and the anticipated benefit from the strategy. The concept civil denotes to issues related to people who are not involved in military matters. A CSO civil society organization can be taken to denote any organization that deals with issues which affect the ordinary people collectively. The demands of CSOs on the government are aimed at ameliorating their material conditions. The greatest demand of the African masses on the government is of development.

Suffice it to note that nearly all were victims of colonial ravages and exploitation, which produced dehumanizing, disarticulating, retarding and under developing effects. Almost all continue to be subject to peripheral capitalism wherein exploitation, oppression, ignorance, malnutrition and poverty are still ravaging Africa. Some countries, they are still experiencing authoritarian, inefficient and irresponsible politics that is insensitive to the people's concerns. The people's concerns and demands for democracy and rights end up being muffled by high rhetoric of democracy, independence, nationalism, Pan - Africanism, upholding electoral democratic politics after every five or seven years. These are constantly countered by resistance by agitated locals who in many instances are funded and encouraged by outsiders under the rubric of democracy and rights. These democratic struggles have been going on since independence.

Individuals in Africa can be categorised into three major social groups. The first one is the privileged minority

bourgeois class. These include minority ruling class, real controller of the reins of government and political power. These include the politicians, military officers, bureaucrats, the intelligentsia and their private sector counterparts; the millionaires, manufacturers, banking and finance capital. He explains how privatisation has helped to consolidate to cement the link between the public and private and the private and bourgeoisie.

Two aspects which unite to give the privileged class a certain distinction:

- a) Its members are closest to the state in relation to control, influence and manipulation.
- b) Its members are comprador – local agents of international capitalism. This is pursued through different state policies, some being imposed like nationalization, indigenization, and SAPs initiated and closely implemented by the IMF, the WB and the USA, the stronghold of world capitalism behind the two bodies.

The second is the African middle class. This class includes those in employment and whose labour value is therefore determined in form of wages, public workers and daily paid workers, self - employed in small business, petty traders, market people, artisans, taxi drivers, etc. They live off their sweat and their existence depend highly on their securing work for pay. They are largely urban - based.

Third is the peripheral class. It is constituted by the peasants and others usually in the agrarian setting. They are not fully integrated in the mainstream of the emerging capitalist economy. Colonial and post - colonial histories show that this class has been and continues to be the victim of capitalist exploitation.

All these raised the expectations of people, many of whom depended on the state, which historically was paternalistic It increasingly became omnipotent with the rapid expansion of the public sector. The African crisis continued to worsen without any action by the successive governments. Governments slipped deeper into decay and stagnation, without any capacity to improve the dismal landless condition which had been inherited from the colonial state. People finally came to realize the ineptness and incapacity of the new political class to bring about the desired and daily publicised utopia of development.

Africa faced new catastrophes from the recolonisation of Africa by the WB and the IMF. The two imperialist institutions usurped the determination and implementation of policies under the aegis of the structural adjustment Programmes regime. Contrary to its leaders' efforts, the states in Africa were isolated from the society. Their development initiatives became increasingly determined by the external capitalism from the West.

The failure of the states to fulfil their expectation made the people to take their own development initiatives to further their interests. These took the forms of tribal unions as parallel structures to provide public good like offering scholarships, building schools, churches, town halls and hospitals. They provided meagre loans to small scale traders and artisans and they engaged in other self - help projects

especially in villages; initiated collective welfare and engaged governments to improve the conditions of the members. Other associations included market associations and drivers. The unions pursued self - development schemes. Regarding capital intensive public goods, the peasants depend on government for employment, education and health facilities, basic infrastructure such as housing, public transportation, electricity and water and programmes for addressing other ills like poverty. They failed to block the invisible and faceless neo - colonialism.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2005, 2001) defines CSOs romantically as complimentary to the state and industry. In other words, it takes them to be a third sector existing together with and networking with the state and the private sector. Though contrary to the earlier versions, it is considering NGOs as the CSOs. This would be highly erroneous as it externalises the agency instead of recognising the CSOs' interconnectedness with the state in many aspects. There are many CSOs which are involved in different areas – socio - economic, cultural and political. The CSOs which work on the democratisation in the former colonies are expected by the UNDP to cover issues supporting processes that lead to the formulation of policies on democratic governance and to lobby for reforms of electoral systems, to support access to information and activities that deal with anti - corruption.

The problem with this approach is its externalisation of the CSOs from the society and country. Yet, all the earlier discussions on CSOs demonstrated the bonding and inseparability between states and CSOs. The UNDP is pushing the Western imperialist agenda which has been derailing the African from their nationalist and Pan - Africanist projects for democratic transformation. Talking of lobbying implies that the UNDP is projecting the foreign NGOs as CSOs and prioritising them over the indigenous CSOs. This was earlier debunked by scholars like Chatterjee (2004). Thus, the UNDP's claimed CSOs lack the people and any organic linkages with the local CSOs and the state. They are alien and utopia as their programmes are externally conceived, funded, monitored and evaluated. As such, the outcomes of their activities are likely to create disasters, confusion, divisions and perpetuation of the problems which they purport to solve in those societies.

This study forces on the CSOs which have been trying to push for political space for opposition politics in Zimbabwe. They have defined that as trying to create democratic space and their operations include advocacy, campaigning, lobbying, raising the people's consciousness using dissent approach on electioneering politics, policies and govern mentality. They engage in funding the local CSOs which have similar programmes, offer direct legal assistance to individuals and organisations which become charged with involving in insurgent politics and activities. They are also involved in networking, influencing policy formulation, development fund and carry out ideologically guided researches which are aimed at promoting their personal agenda. They publish and disseminate them, offer technical assistance to those individuals and CSOs working as consultants in some cases, train them in skills for dissent politics through workshops, conferences and short courses.

The Role of CSOs

UNDP (2005) identifies the civil society as a third sector which works alongside the state and the industry. The civil society is regarded by the UNDP as a vital cog for the collaboration and connection between the citizens and the state. A big number of the CSOs are involved in areas of human rights, such as economic, social, cultural and political rights. Some do advocacy work on issues of access to justice, information and critical social services. The CSOs are also involved in lobbying, campaigning, and public education on policy issues.

If we follow Chatterjee's epistemological caution against the fallacy of baptising external NGOs and all other sundries as CSOs and focus our analytical lenses inside Zimbabwe, we shall be able to find many CSOs which have been involved in pushing for human and political rights. These are able to raise resources internally and externally. They get involved in electoral process which includes voter registration, voting and other rights. They may provide cheap or free political education and pro bono services, and help people to connect with the funders for their projects.

The CSOs play a critical role in bringing positive change in the society. They help to create dialogue and provide opportunities for bringing people together for positive ends. They are able to mobilize people and help them to articulate their concerns at the local, national, regional and international levels. They can raise the people's consciousness on issues that are not known to the authorities or those which they may have suppressed or concealed.

They can organise the people to participate in policy making. Cooper (2018) explains how CSOs are increasingly involved in the political and governance processes. This makes them a critical player in the political process of the country. They monitor and evaluate the implementation of government policies in the society.

While the CSOs try to raise the people's consciousness for effective political participation, the NGOs – which masquerade as CSOs also use their locus in society of the poor to fan divisiveness, insecurity and enmity in them against the state and the political class controlling political power. After noticing some deficiencies in critical services in the marginalized communities, CSOs may go beyond rhetoric to raise the people's consciousness and mobilise resources for the desired change.

The CSOs have arrogated themselves the mandate of acting as the watchdog that hold governments and their institutions accountable. These are mainly on issues relating to management of public funds especially in form of loans, human rights abuses, poverty, service delivery by government and their service providers. They record issues and report them to their local and external funders and allies. The latter then hold the disbursement of more funds to government and they put pressure on it to answer the raised queries. That way, they project themselves as the important pillars for the development of democracy and govern mentality. They have positioned themselves in the vital parts of Zimbabwe's policy formulation. This is because they get involved in many policies. They mount campaigns to

educate the people holistically about the implications of every proposed new policy or the changes in the existing ones.

The CSOs are viewed as instruments which make the politics in the country more democratic, transparent and accountable to their citizens. They are the drivers of the democratic process in the country. That way, they help to shape the political process towards democracy. The critical questions which remain unanswered in the maze of democracy are: What type of democracy? Who will have defined that democracy and in whose interest is it? We hold in this article that there is no universal mode of politics like democracy. It is impossible universalise a single modal of politics and governmentality beyond time, space, mode of production and culture. Democracy traces from Africa after the invention of political power. This is a subject for another paper.

Closing of Space and Restrictions by Governments

The CSOs require enabling an environment for them to operate effectively. They need political freedom for them to bring about significant change. This includes guaranteeing freedom of association, assembly and expression. These preconditions allow the CSOs to advance collective interests. These freedoms are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That political atmosphere allows the members of the CSOs to participate freely, voluntarily and enthusiastically in public affairs (CIVICUS, 2018). The CSOs are a sine qua non for the stability and development of the country. They work as watchdogs and make the governments to be accountable to the society as a whole.

This right to associate cannot be used as a shield to subvert national interests and promote anarchy. Given the inseparability of the state and CSOs, then, it becomes imperative to set limits to their operations so as to avoid interferences, sabotage and interterritorial conflicts. There have to be restrictions in order to avoid the CSOs becoming threats to the national security and the safety of the public. In most cases, governments put in place measures to protect public interests including the health, values and morals of the nation. These prohibit the right to associate from infringing on other people's freedoms and rights. This was also buttressed by the United Nations Human Rights Committee when it declared that any restriction to this right shall be based on objective and reasonable criteria (Committee UN Doc, 1996). This is however problematic as it is impossible to have objectivity in social reality - which is highly dynamic and ever changing. The same applies to reasonable criteria. What is the basis of that reasonability? And reasonable to who? These were phraseologies which need interrogation before embracing them.

The CSOs are free to make any political choice or decision so long as it does not jeopardise the interests of the country. They can prop up any political candidate or party in any election competition. The CSOs always try to articulate their interests and promote them collectively through political processes. However, this may be restricted in countries where the political class is not sure of its stability and

popularity. The same would apply under autocratic governments.

Funding the CSOs is always very critical. Given their base in the country, the CSOs do not have the right to raise resources the way the states do – whether through taxation, internal and external borrowing, cajoling other state, compelling or looting the weaker peoples. Placed in situations of lack of funds, some CSOs solicit for funding from hostile sources – mainly those whose interest is to undermine the countries where those CSOs are located. Their dangerous intentions are normally reflected in what they are aggressively promoting and funding. They may be funding CSOs with dissentious and anti - state political agenda and outspokenness. This therefore transforms these CSOs and groups into hostile entities to the state.

The incumbent political class finds itself besieged by these hostile forces. It lacks any option other than finding it out as these groups play confrontational politics and take anti - state stances. This puts into question the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Defenders (1998) Charter which declares freedom for groups to collect money and resources from wherever under the claim of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. No country including the old ones can allow that save for Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab and Boko Haram would be most willing to fund dissent politics in the USA. This will enable us to understand the conflict between the CSOs, NGOs and the state in Zimbabwe.

The relationship between the government of Zimbabwe and the CSOs got sour when Britain and other European countries decided to impose targeted sanctions on Zimbabwe and they stopped funding its social services. They then started channelling funding through the CSOs which were purporting to be carrying out humanitarian work in the country. This move weakened the government while correspondingly strengthening the CSOs as the major players in service provisioning. The ZANI - PF government interpreted this as a plot to effect regime change in Zimbabwe. It could not sit naively watch while waiting to be overthrown from within. It became an open secret as the issue of the regime change agenda by the former colonizers dominated the discourse around the freedom of CSOs and their funding (USAID, 2021).

Some governments may realise that the CSOs are carrying out dissent and dismissive activities to cause public disorder and disaffection. They find no option other than restricting the activities of such CSOs. In some cases, assemblies by CSOs may start peacefully but gradually degenerate into uncontrollable violence. Governments through their intelligence systems may detect that the environment is not conducive for an assembly of the opposition politics. This may force them to act swiftly, incisively and decisively restrict such kinds of gatherings until when the time is conducive to hold them. However, this may be interpreted by those who are funding insurgent politics to label them as closing space for CSOs to operate freely. It is the mandate of the state to protect its people and their property and create a better future for them. This accords them the right to make

decisions on different matters which are affecting the entire society, economy, population, politics and country.

Countries set up rights and parameters for citizens' participation in national affairs. The aim is to prevent them from meddling in the state's politics. In Zimbabwe, the NGO law clarified that political activities had to be based on engagement over issues of human rights such as women and children and people with disabilities. The CSOs were legally allowed to criticise actions of government, political party or political leadership that infringed on such rights.

Having witnessed the negative aspects of the different actors under the cover of CSOs, many governments of different countries were compelled to restrict the space for the operations of the CSOs. Poppe and Wolff (2017) show how this affected mostly CSOs which were dealing with direct politics under the rubric of human rights and democratic principles. This did not happen in the developing countries only but also in the developed ones. (Cooper, 2018. The question is why.

The CSOs, NGOs and the government owned non - governmental organisations (GONGOS) became infamous because of their confrontational method instead of dialogue as they articulated their objectives with the state. In Africa, the foreign NGOs have been masquerading as CSOs. Their hyped assumption is that the subalterns cannot speak for themselves. After assuming that privileged title, they begin to abuse and challenge the political class and its government. They go further to mobilise the population into defiance politics, organise public demonstrations and denounce the whole governmentality.

The CSOs which are funded from outside end up colliding with the political class in government. This is after they have been indoctrinated with negative politics which is buttressed by the donor funds. They begin to boast of great political knowledge and claim great importance. Their political ego becomes inflated and they begin to criticise the government publicly. They collide with the political class. Placed in this confrontational situation, the government resorts to restrict their activities.

CSOs in Zimbabwe trace their history in colonialism. They operated in some cases clandestinely against the oppressive and predatory colonial system. Their growth coincided with nationalism. They planned anti - colonial movements in different forms. They were targeting its oppressive and exploitative modes of colonial power. The colonial government viewed them as extremely dangerous since they were fomenting nationalism. They were mainly located in agrarian setting where they targeted migrant workers and ordinary people. However, the growth of industries and urban areas gave rise to the organizations of labour and the residents' associations. It was after independence that CSOs became prominent.

In Zimbabwe restrictions on CSOs dates back to the colonial era. A lot of CSOs in form of anti - colonialism emerged challenging the British colonial order. Their aim was to liberate the people and the country from the colonial oppression, domination, marginalisation and exploitation.

These CSOS were a real political and military threat to the Ian Smith regime and its policies. The Rhodesian state responded in 1967 by enacting a law to restrict the activities of CSOs (Mashumba and Mareng, 2004). This Act allowed the state to monitor the CSOs. It would access information on the activities and funding of the CSOs and monitor them. This obnoxious and draconic law did not eradicate the anti-colonial movements. They instead increased their struggle and gradually coalesced into two major anti-colonial movements. One was under Robert Mugabe while the other was under Joshua Nkomo.

The Government of Zimbabwe Policy on CSOs

The relationship between the independence government of Zimbabwe and the CSOs has been strained since the turn of the new millennium. The government viewed the CSOs as meddling into politics by playing opposition politics. The government responded by forming the Private Voluntary Organizations Act (Chap.17: 05). It was amended in 2002 September. The Government tabled a bill in 2021 seeking to amend the Act. It wanted to use this bill to provide itself with a legal machinery to control and probably silence the CSOs.

The Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human rights defined the 2004 Bill as being motivated by the government's interest to restrict the democratic space and minimise scrutiny of the government's violation of the human rights. This created a black-out on what was likely to be happening in Zimbabwe as some of the restrictions barred the local NGOs from receiving foreign funding. President Mugabe declared that the ZANU - PF government was not ready to allow the NGOs in Zimbabwe to be conduits by foreign powers to interfere in the affairs of Zimbabwe as a sovereign state (Mashumba and Maroleng, 2004).

Besides the PVO Act, there are other Acts that also restrict the operations of the CSOs. These laws are shrinking the operations of the CSOs, especially those dealing with politics and human rights. The resurrection of the colonial PVO Act in 2004 raised new concerns in the independent Zimbabwe. It was viewed as a reincarnation of the colonial legal technology of oppression. The question is why.

It empowered the government to interfere with the operations of the CSOs as they were legally required to seek government's approval for any changes in their funding and leadership. The government had powers to classify any CSO as a high-risk organization threatening the security of the country. It could deregister any CSO that would be viewed as a high-risk to the national security. The amendment also provided for the government to ban any CSO that engaged in or interfered with national politics. The issue of involvement in political activities is broad and not clear as to what constitute political activities. However, this cannot hold if CSOs are to be conceived in the Gramscian, Foucauldian, Chatterjean and Gordonian sense where the state and CSOs are the key twin players in articulating political interests of the population and checking the excesses of the state. As such, this law seems to have been aimed at external NGOs and GONGOs rather than on the Zimbabwean CSOs. The Human Rights Watch posits that the amendment limited the freedoms of CSOs which were engaged in governance and

human rights issues that were linked to the opposition political activities. The other most dreaded laws were the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

The bad blood between the CSOs, NGOs and the ruling political class in Zimbabwe worsened. The CSOs and the NGOs together with their foreign backers resolved to wrestle political power from the political class. Their ideas were emboldened and they formed their own political party – the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). They then got engrossed in open political work. While it is not strange for CSOs to form political parties whose objective is to compete for political power, the incumbent political class does not normally take the challenge lying down. The political class had all along failed to appreciate the gravity of the situation and concede to the demands of the CSOs and NGOs. This move dismissed the assumption that CSOs had to be apolitical, with no interest in accessing political power. CSOs proved different from the foreign NGOs which could only shout criticisms, facilitate the democratic system and provide humanitarian services.

These reveal how the CSOs end up clashing with the state whenever they point out some political mistakes or shortcomings on the part of the state. Sipamandla (2011) explains how the confrontation between the civil society and the government of Zimbabwe escalated from the time the CSOs formed the MDC opposition political party in 1999. They were helped and facilitated by the external donors and foreign NGOs, which were operating in the country.

The other domain of confrontation was caused by the desire of the government to control the CSOs and NGOs. Yet, they were supposed to have some relative freedom from the state. The CSOs, however, broke from this stricture when they came together to form an alliance in 1997 to facilitate the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and demand for a new national constitution. This alliance gave an impetus to the vicious fight for democracy in Zimbabwe.

The clash between the state and the insurgent NCA demonstrated how CSOs can clash viciously with the state. In 2000, the NCA espoused insurgent street politics. It organized demonstrations which were aimed at pushing for abstinence from voting in a referendum for the draft constitution. It also took legal action challenging the election dates and results on several occasions. The state considered the NCA to be meddling into the political matters of the country. The NCA had clearly shown that it was more comfortable working with the opposition parties such as the MDC and the independent candidates during the elections.

While the political class and the state try to confine the NGOs and CSOs within the specific non-political spheres, the fact is that it is hard to divorce CSOs from politics. Unlike NGOs which operate as agents of the funders without any independent interests and urge to protect and promote them, CSOs have direct interest in politics and the outcomes of every political process and negotiation. That was exposed by the CSOs in Zimbabwe which broke the confinements in which the state was trying to garrison them. This is

confirmed by scholars like Dziva C. et al (2013) who show how most CSOs in Zimbabwe were mainly focusing on human rights abuses by the state. Contrary to the claim that human rights were protected and upheld by international laws and treaties to which Zimbabwe is a signatory, they were the CSOs which reigned over the state and its agents to observe people's rights. It was this which encouraged them to continue mounting pressure on the government.

The Civil Society's Role in Creating a Democratic space in Zimbabwe

The political and economic situation in Zimbabwe has been tough for the CSOs. This section focuses on four CSOs which were operating in Zimbabwe. These included the NCA, the ZCC, the ZESN and WOZA.

The NCA started as a local NGO in 1997. It was the CSO which was composed of the Zimbabwean citizens and CSOs. These included labour movements, student and youth groups, churches, human rights organizations, and some unemployed people. Its founding chairperson was Morgan Tsvangirai, the then Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. He later abandoned the NCA and went to take up the leadership of the MDC. This was a new political party. He was replaced by Lovemore Madhuku as its chairperson. He later transformed the NCA into a political party and he became its founding president.

At its formation, the NCA's main goal was to create a conducive environment for a people driven constitution of Zimbabwe through awareness. It wanted to achieve this by creating critical debate about the constitution. This was to enable an open, accountable and transparent process of constitution - making. Its strategic vision was to create a secure, peaceful, democratic and prosperous country that would guarantee human dignity and social justice. The NCA wanted to establish a people - driven constitution which would be the foundation of governmentality. Its purported aim was to establish social and economic development in the country.

The genesis of the NCA shows the inherent problem of imperialism in the former colonies. Instead of emerging organically on the abundant local resources and ideas, it emerged on the Western resources, ideas, plans and encouragement. This is demonstrated by the countries which rushed in to fund its insurgent politics. They included Norway, Sweden and Canada (Dorman, 2003). Dzinesa (2012) explained how the NCA drafted its constitution in 2001. This was different from the one which had been decampaigned and rejected in the referendum of 2000. Its draft constitution removed certain presidential powers.

The second civic organization that participated in Zimbabwe's social and political arena in the new millennium was WOZA. It was formed in 2003 by Jenni Williams. The concept WOZA also comes from the Ndebele language and it means arise (Robert F Kennedy Foundation 2013). Its main objective was to create for women political space to speak with one voice on issues affecting them in their daily lives. It also focused on how to empower female leadership to arise and bring up solutions to

the Zimbabwe crisis and defend the rights and freedoms of the women in Zimbabwe.

In 2007, it organized a non - violent demonstration on Valentine's Day and the police arrested its leadership. They were distributing Valentine's cards and red roses to the members of the public. The clandestine timing and preparations for the demonstration caught the police unaware. Its purpose was to urge the government leadership to deliver the People's Charter which contained the aspirations and demands of Zimbabweans. Though driven by women, its work is inclusive of both genders. It advocates for benefit of all members of the society. In all its demonstrations, it was advocating for peace, equality and people's rights.

The ZESN was formed in 2000 by thirty - seven (37) NGOs. After understanding the role of the electoral commissions in guaranteeing or undermining electoral process in a country, the leaderships of these NGOs formed ZESN with the sole purpose of guaranteeing free, fair and credible elections (Zeiling, 2002). Its main aim was to coordinate the activities of the elections in Zimbabwe. Its intention was to create a level electoral playing ground for ensuring free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. It also wanted to coordinate electoral activities of the member NGOs. Its broad programme consisted of monitoring and observation of the electoral processes in Zimbabwe, advocating for electoral reforms, conducting electoral and voter education. Its idea was to create ideal conditions which would guarantee credible and fair elections that met internationally acceptable standards.

These were manifested in its vision and mission which declared that it envisaged conducting elections that would meet intentionally acceptable standards.

Hence, their claim was to create a democratic electoral environment and process in Zimbabwe. They committed themselves to promote a system that would ensure democratic elections in the country (ZESN, 2019). They would achieve these by enhancing the citizen participation in matters of democracy and governmentality, promoting free and fair electoral processes through impartial election monitoring, establishing a legal framework and culture for democratic elections, method of gathering information, disseminating and communicating information about the elections and other democratic processes.

Being critical of the Electoral Supervisory Commission which it accused of being biased towards the ruling ZANU - PF, it pushed for a new constitution that would provide an independent electoral system and guarantee protection to those opposed to the government in the election process. It underpinned the independence of that electoral body as it would be an umpire during the elections. It argued that that organ would be impartial to all the political contestants, without being captive to the ruling party like the incumbent on.

It wanted an autonomous electoral commission that would be able to be at par with the other arms of the state like the judiciary. Its view was that such high position would empower it to have full control of the voter registration and

the custodianship of the voters' registration instead of leaving the task to the office of the Registrar General. It would also be the one with the authority over the process of accreditation of the election observers and monitors. This would make it a credible umpire of the electoral process in Zimbabwe.

It advocated for a shift from the Executive President to the ceremonial one. This would be appointed while the leader of parliament had to be elected by the majority. Its reasoning was that an executive president who doubled as head of a political party ended up compromising the democratic way of conducting elections. To demonstrate this, if the president was the appointing authority of the electoral commission, then it would be the ruling party that would be appointing the umpire for the political game. It left the election commission at the mercy of the appointing authority. Given the critical role of the electoral commissioners in managing the elections, the powers of appointing and removing them had to be given to a neutral party to guarantee impartiality, fairness and stability.

While the constitution required the President to consult the Judiciary Service Commission in appointing the ZEC chairperson he or she could reject the advice. In that case, he would be required to inform the senate about his different choice and that would end the matter. Given that most of the senators were members of the ruling ZANU - PF, they would endorse his choice. He also had powers to appoint the members of the JSC. Its proposal therefore was that the President should appoint the Chair after consulting both the Judicial Service Commission and the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders. The Electoral Commission would be well - funded and autonomous in its finances which would guarantee its effective and efficient performance.

Another CSO was the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). This was an ecumenical organization which was formed during the British colonialism. It became heavily involved in the anti - colonial politics in Zimbabwe. Its climax was when it demanded for the majority rule in Zimbabwe during colonialism. When Zimbabwe got independence, the ZCC embarked on socio - economic and civic education. Its programs included voter education workshops, legal aid projects, human rights awareness initiatives and community development initiatives (Mpfu, 2008: 20).

From the turn of the new millennium, it underwent a transformative process in its approach to socio - economic and political matters. The aim was to enable it to respond to the millennium challenges which were confronting the society. It began to play a role rather than implementation. This new approach enabled it to empower communities to address problems on their own. Through the Church in Society, the ZCC established area team committees which were made up of ministers and the laity in churches and organizations, especially those which were affiliated to it.

In 1997, it initiated the formation of the NCA. This was composed of a number of CSOs in Zimbabwe. It was formed to spearhead the writing of a new constitution for

Zimbabwe. Matikiti (2008: 6) reveals that the NCA had its initial secretariat at the ZCC offices. Kuvheya, L. who was the first director of training with it explained how the ZCC facilitated the NCA with personnel and funding. After the ZCC being the brain behind the formation of the NCA, the latter metamorphosed into a political party – the MDC. This gave rise to competitive active politics. Among its leadership were Morgan Tsvangirai and Lovemore Madhuku. This implied that ZCC had a hand in the formation and institutionalisation of dissent politics in Zimbabwe. It is this which may have politically poisoned its relationship with the ZANU PF and its government. From then, the ZANU - PF came to realise that all the ZCC initiatives were aimed at regime change in Zimbabwe. It had to fight back tooth and nail for survival. The ZCC also influenced the formation of the ZESN. The ZCC's involvement in all the different socio - political aspects and in the activities and ideological outlook of the other CSOs made the ZANU - PF led government to strongly believe that the ZCC was working behind the scenes through these CSOs to remove the incumbent government from power.

Other peace building activities which the ZCC embarked on included several pastoral letters and press statements. Mpfu (2008: 20) highlights the pastoral letter which was issued by the ZCC after the 2002 presidential elections. That letter was calling for restraint on all the political contestants in the elections. Before the 2005 elections, it encouraged people to go and vote without any fear.

Over time, ZCC became ambivalent either because of fear or some political negotiations had taken place behind the curtains. This came out when the NCA and ZESN showed intentions of aligning with the MDC. It abandoned them. Was that disagreement over autonomy? Mpfu (2008: 20) cites the then General Secretary of ZCC declaring that his organisation was not anti - government but that it supported and prayed for the legitimate leaders and not to insult them. Could it be that the ZCC was trying to serve the nationalist interests of the Zimbabweans without any consideration of political party or it had changed sides because of certain influence?

The discussion in this section shows that the activities were a concoction of a face - off with the government. Confrontations and frictions were inevitable. In some cases, the government's actions were justified as some CSOs had overstepped their mandate. In other cases, the government overreacted in its clampdown on the activities of the CSOs. While the CSOs were enhancing democracy and peace building in Zimbabwe, the state had the duty to maintain public order. Democracy did not imply infringing on other people's principles and rights. These could only be guaranteed by the state.

The Civil Society and Peace Building

The CSOs have been involved in the political process and peace building in Zimbabwe. Their propinquity to the people and their active involving them enabled them to have knowledge of issues which could bring people together. They had the capacity to gather ordinary people at the lower level of the society and make them work together for conflict transformation and peace building. That shows how

CSOs have been agents of change and how they are able to detect conflict before it manifests. This however negatively tainted their image. But as earlier discussed, CSOs by their very nature have to get involved in the people's socio-political and economic problems and their causes. This draws them into politics. In the process, they may clash with the state but it will use non-legalistic methods as Chatterjee (2004) explained.

CSOs play a lot of critical roles in society. In situations where the state becomes receptive and accommodative to them, then, they achieve a lot of things together. Where the state resists them, then, they may resort to counter-resistance. They can be used in conflict halting, transformation and peace building, service delivery, monitoring, enforcing accountability and transparency, can safeguard people's rights, fighting social ills like corruption, drugs, etc. They can identify areas that need reconstruction or protection. They can enhance participation by the subalterns, increasing the level by improving communication skills of the people, advocacy, promotion of socialization, intermediation, facilitating dialogue between the subalterns and the state. The CSOs can be used to mobilize people at the grassroots and to enable the middle class people level to develop skills of monitoring the top level management during the implementation process.

Accomplishing all these had to depend on the relationship between the CSOs and the state. In Zimbabwe, the relationship of the CSOs and the state during the period ushered in by the new millennium was varied. It was sometimes acrimonious, bitter, better or lukewarm, on other days depending on what the issues at stake. The state would sometimes resort to the security machinery to suppress the activities of the CSOs and ensure security in the country. The cases of WOZA and ZINCA forced the state to adopt this stance as their activities were brewing a revolution tantamount to influencing a revolt in the country.

The ZCC faced a critical situation towards the end of 1990s. It face a leadership problem which threatened to destroy the entire organisation. This resulted in most of its local and international partners to isolate it. These internal contradictions and threats compelled it to withdraw from most of its political activities which were raising the people's consciousness for social justice and democracy in Zimbabwe. This occurred concurrently with the purported general donor fatigue. The latter negative development affected a number of CSOs right from 2000 onwards. Behind the façade of the Western donor fatigue was the shift of donor priorities to the East after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In addition, the Western capitalists had weakened the ZANU - PF and the entire Zimbabwean economic and political life through the horrendous and infamous economic sanctions and international vengeful demonization of Zimbabwe. They had also created and funded insurgent politics within Zimbabwe. Having accomplished all these, the West did not have any more interests in Zimbabwe.

Gumbo Hopewell (2002) describes the situation that was faced by most of the CSOs in Zimbabwe right from 2000 to 2013 as a serious nightmare. This was so because of the plans for funding. The case of the ZCC was worsened by its

facilitating the formation of the NCA under Tsvangirai. He later became the leader of the opposition party, the MDC.

The shift of priorities by the funders coupled with their lack of trust in the local CSOs, plus the weakening state and its lack of trust in the ZCC after its espousing and promoting militant and insurgent opposition politics put the ZCC in a political quagmire. The Zimbabwean state started to monitor its activities. The ZANU - PF government and the ZCC got involved in confrontational politics. The worst part was when the ZCC allowed the NCA to use its offices and secretariat for its insurgent political work. The state therefore had seemingly justifiable reasons to witch-hunt the ZCC and the NCA for its survival. These developments made it difficult for the ZCC to operate freely and meaningfully in Zimbabwe. It sought the solution in forging an alliance with the other CSOs in Zimbabwe with the intention of getting a very strong voice and continue to push for conflict resolution and peace building. This became strategically and timely intervention in 2000/2013. This collaboration with the other CSOs reduced duplication as they shared some responsibility and the areas to work with. Its main tasks involved organising the people from the other grassroots to participate in peace and building.

This was done through the ZCC's structures of the member denominations. The local church leadership through the local teams created by the ZCC helped in disseminating information as well as in organizing venues for meetings and workshops. It also featured very prominently through these local teams at the grassroots level, where the teams also gathered helpful data. This knowledge was used by the coalition of these organizations which were operating on the same wave-length with the ZCC. Its partnership with other CSOs became disadvantageous to it.

The political and economic situation in Zimbabwe from the mid-1990s into the new millennium made many NGOs and CSOs to shift their focus from developmental issues in general and humanitarian assistance to politics. When politics became the flavour of the month, they abandoned the material needs of the people and took up the superstructural ones. Unfortunately, this was entering a domain of frays with the state. This is because politics denotes the tensions in structures and how they are resolved. Any engagement in politics therefore entails disagreements and contestations and their resolution. In the case of Zimbabwe, the NGOs and CSOs shifted from supportive roles to the state efforts to those challenging its *raison d'être*, rationale, mandate and performance. They entered new bases of challenging the state under the label of political advocacy basing on the operations of the state. They assigned themselves the overseer role of documenting whatever they considered to be the state's violation of the human rights and then reporting the state's violations of human rights. Their main focus was on the national security agencies like The Central Intelligence Organization and the Zimbabwe Republic Police. This new mandate was bound to put them on a war path with state. They were bound to clash very soon. The government viewed their activities as anti-government and as enemies of the state. The new mandate made the ZCC a bedfellow of the enemies of the state. The state lost its trust in the ZCC and all the other CSOs and

NGOs affiliated to it. All of them were now viewed as anti-governmental organisations or enemies of the state.

The other problem stemmed from the nature of external funding. It came with strings attached. Sriskandaraj Dhananjayan (2015) opines that some donors preferred funding activities which promised to fight terrorism and the undemocratic governments. These put the CSOs in a conflictual relations with government as it was direct confrontation with a hegemonic state.

The strings attached always influence and change the objectives of the recipients of the funds to make them fit into the agenda of the funders.

Most of the activities in Zimbabwe during the Zimbabwe conflict of 2000 - 2013 were donor driven. They could not therefore address the problems confronting the society. Given their usual external – country dictatorial approach, the funders did not consult the people of Zimbabwe on what to prioritise for funding. The people could never have asked for funding confrontational and anti-nationalistic politics. Therefore, the subsequent politics, lack of funds and partnership compromised the ZCC's approach to conflict resolution and peace building. This made it to be classified in the country as political rather than as an apolitical faith-based organization. And it had been properly learnt during the European colonialism that whoever entered the sphere of politics would attract the wrath of the state. The political class used the state machinery to control political power and resources for their benefit. Whoever interfered would attract their attention. They were those which sealed the fate of ZCC.

Friction between the ZCC and the Government of Zimbabwe

When CSOs entered the Western project of consolidating the impoverishment of the developing countries and dismantling their economies, politics and security through denying them resources, they jumped onto the bandwagon of pushing for non-material and non-developmental things. The funding which they got was tagged to political fire - protection of human rights, social justice and democratic governance. They found the state waiting for them as they appeared as if they were undermining the authority and programmes of the government. They attracted NGOs and CSOs and people to press for political demands. The danger with politics is that whatever is thought of grows in urgency and assumes the immediacy of here and now or never. Given the nature of a state of never tolerate whoever challenges its power and legitimacy, the two belligerents began to clash. Challenging the state as the sole political player and decision maker of policies and key issues and implementer. The West gave these NGOs and CSOs in Africa destructive foolhardy courage. They encouraged them to organise protests and demonstrations with the object of disrupting the flow of the business. They received funding for these activities. As expected, the flow of business hence they received a hostile reception from the state security organs like the Zimbabwe Republic Police.

There were many things to factor in before challenging the state. Challenging the status quo is like challenging one's

authority. The CSOs exploited their organic linkages in the society, their propinquity with the people and their respect, their rapid growth to amass support. Their rapid growth in strength and political operation threatened the political class and citizens in Zimbabwe. Going by the outcome of elections that were held in Zimbabwe from 2000 onwards, the agrarian setting which was inhabited by the marginalized people had historically been the power base of the ZANU - PF and on the other side the rural population was also targeted by most CSOs hence clashes with ZANU - PF. The new CSO targeted class and it began to wean it from the ZANU - PF. These made the clashes between these CSOs and the political state inevitable.

They worked with the subalterns. The new work revolved around mobilisation of people and addressing them. They refused to follow the procedures in the Public Order and Security Act (POSA). The subalterns attended the workshops, conferences, meetings and gatherings for various reasons. Some of them wanted to gain information and knowledge. Others wanted to get some allowances for attending. In most cases, the allowances were paid in the United States of America dollars. The ordinary people would convert it into local currency, which was termed "*ku Burner*". This concept and practice referred to the exchanging of the USA dollar to the local bearer's cheques. It rapidly gained popularity in usage and endearment. This new phenomenon was intended to intensify capital flight and other negative effects of the Western sanctions on the Zimbabwean economy. It in turn intensified the people's hostilities to the Zimbabwean state and the ruling government.

The shifting of the CSOs and NGOs from their original mandate of social development and the provisioning of the social services to plotting and broadcasting insurgency politics plus the inducement of people using money to bribe the subalterns showed how all this was not being done for the good of Zimbabwe. It was not being done in good faith. Imperialism was using its local allies to destroy the young Zimbabwe state.

The Access to Information and Privacy Act (AIPA) also created friction as the CSOs began to gather information openly on issues of human rights violation and infringement by the political activists in the agrarian Zimbabwe. This information would then be shared with the other CSOs and the Western funders and these would in turn broadcast it far and wide. Some of the CSOs had sister organizations that were operating internationally. The state responded by putting in place measures to censure their activities and plans and communication.

This surveillance brought the Zimbabweans into the spotlight and it resulted in many countries criticising the ZANU - PF Government of how it was handling people who were opposing it. The main accusation was of lack of rule of law in Zimbabwe under the governmentality of ZANU - PF. They tracked, documented and reported and in many instances exaggerated the acts and lies of violence by the groups of government against the opposition. Notable among these were the ZANU - PF youth and the war veterans. What aggravated the situation was that no action

was taken by the Police and government to hold punish the accused and try to redress the situation. The opposition and its external backers based on this to declare that there was absence of the rule of law. This gained currency and was amplified in the Western media and circles. They took advantage to denounce and demonise the ZANU - PF government and its leadership for its excesses in its violation of the human rights.

Some CSOs continued with their earlier mandate of conducting humanitarian activities. This was ongoing in the drought - affected areas of the country. Distribution of food, mainly maize was not supposed to be done without the involvement of the politicians. The opposition politicians were quick to denounce it as vote buying. On its part, the government insisted on using the existing structures which it had established to perform that function. Similar disparaging accusations of being pro - ZANU - PF were levelled against the traditional leaders whom the political class used to carry out their critical historical roles. Whatever the opposition and its backers were demanding was tantamount to asking the ZANU - PF to self - destruct. Yet, no power can self - destruct.

3. Conclusion

While earlier studies showed how CSOs in the colonies had been playing a great role of overthrowing the oppressive and exploitative colonial powers, studies on the independent nation - states have revealed how CSOs are continuously struggling to expand the democratic spaces in the country. The implication of this is that the new independence political class and imperialism have been narrowing the democratic space which the people fought for and achieved at independence. The CSOs responded by fighting for the recovery of those democratic spaces and their expansion. In situations and times where internal conflicts such as civil wars and other forms of violent social movements arise, some CSOs and NGOs normally do rush in to solve the conflict and rebuild people. These take various labels – peace building; restoration of democracy, observation of human rights and govern mentality.

They may educate the indigenes on how they can study participate effectively in the governance and political affairs of their countries. In the sphere of the country, politics gradually makes them clash with the home government. This is more so in countries where there is political instability and conflict. Zimbabwe was not an exception.

The CSOs and their internal forces pushed for changes to accommodative politics in Zimbabwe's politics. Although their activities met with restrictive measures from the government, their efforts managed to bring about some political landscape in Zimbabwe. The citizens increased their active participation in politics.

The question is about the shift of the funders' priorities from addressing the people's developmental concerns to funding the insurgent or anti - state politics after 2000. Could advocacy for non - material and developmental, democracy, human rights. Could advocacy for non - material and non -

developmental ones like democracy and human rights address the people's needs?

Being incensed and gradually hurt by the hostile Western imperialist sanctions that aimed at regime change in Zimbabwe, the government responded by enhancing laws which put particular restrictions on the operations of the CSOs and NGOs. The object of these legal - political measures was to safeguard its survival by limiting their destructive operations. These took the form of withdrawing funding from the government's social services activities. These sanctions undermined the state capacity and the social services. Correspondingly, the same Western countries which were undermining the state capacity to perform and promote its national agenda decided to destroy it further by funding the NGOs and CSOs very generously. They also embarked on a systematic, international crusade to decampaign and demonise it. This was done using their well - listened international media and fora.

The whole political sphere became polluted with the imperialist conspiracy to change the political class in Zimbabwe from power. The state became alert by this insurgent political project which aimed to influence the Zimbabwe population to be agitated and embittered against the ZANU - PF government. It therefore embarked on countermeasures to bolster its position and forestall that grand plot of regime change. Its mechanics yielded fruits and guaranteed its regime survival. It proved the African proverbial river water which can never boil riceno matter its state of hotness. However, the acrimonious politics of regime change and the state's counter - measures of regime survival in Zimbabwe was at a very heavy cost to the entire country, economy, population and social well - being.

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