





harmonized elections that were held on 29 March 2008. People in all areas voted peacefully without registering any violent activities.

Moorcraft, (2012), noted that: Results of the 29 March 2008 Presidential elections, showed Morgan Tsvangirai with 47.9% and President Robert Gabriel Mugabe with 43.2% while Simba Makoni of the Mavambo, Dawn/Kusile Party got 8% of the votes cast. Since results had showed that there was no clear winner a run-off was called for because the country's Constitution stated that for one to be a presidential winner he or she had to garner fifty percent plus one vote of the total cast in the election. This meant that there was no winner and that led to the run-off that took place on 27 June 2008, pitting President Robert Mugabe and Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai who had emerged as the top two in the 29 March 2008 elections.

Violence took centre stage in the build-up to the run-off. Over two hundred (200) people were killed and that over one hundred (100) people were maimed while over seven hundred (700) others were displaced (Bango, 2011). Bango (2011) blames members of the security forces who include the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), Zimbabwe Prison Services (ZPS), the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and some political party members for perpetrating the violence. As a result, one political contestant (Morgan Tsvangirai) withdrew from the election citing the problem of violence against his supporters (Meredith, 2008).

According to Mahoso (2009), the elections which had been set for 27 June 2008, went ahead despite Tsvangirai's withdrawal. President Mugabe won the second round by an overwhelming majority of 85.5% and Tsvangirai got 9.3%. President Mugabe was sworn in for another term as President on 29 June 2008.

Moorcraft (2012) noted that: Against this backdrop a number of issues were raised over the legitimacy of the winner of the run-off. A dispute ensued in the country and there was a stalemate for some months in the country. As result of the dispute, the Southern Development Community (SADC) had to intervene to resolve the conflict in Zimbabwe.

SADC's intervention in Zimbabwe, which can be traced back to 2007, led to the appointment of former President of South Africa Mr. Thabo Mbeki as mediator in the conflict. Mr. Mbeki mediated in Zimbabwe and it was his role that led to the formation of the inclusive government in 2009. Chigora (2010), noted that the Unity Government brought not only hope to the Zimbabweans but also to the international community for many viewed it as a purveyor of better moves for the country and its overall standing in the Region and beyond.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the role of the Governments of National Unity in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe.

### 3. Conceptual Framework

This research was underpinned by John Burton's Human Needs Theory as it entangles the concept of GNUs as model of conflict resolution. The Human Needs Theory draws a distinction between interests that are negotiable and values and needs that are not. (Burton, 1991). Burton explains that his theory is concerned with the resolution of conflict as distinct from its containment or enforced settlement. One necessary component of successful conflict resolution is problem-solving. Burton proposes to view problem – solving as a continuous process rather than a final determination. Problem – solving often requires a new synthesis of knowledge, new techniques and a change in conceptualization of a problem. Burton suggests that there is need to re-evaluate the conceptualization of conflict itself and techniques of its resolution and management, for traditional approaches to conflict management often fail to recognize the complex nature of some conflicts. For example, Burton points out that mediation approach is based on assumption that given goodwill and adequate communication, preferably direct communication, there can be agreements based on reasonable compromises. Burton suggests that the role of the third party must go beyond providing communication between the parties directly involved in the conflict; rather, its task is to apply general theories about conflict and human behavior to the particular situation being examined, thereby helping the parties to analyse it. While conflict resolution is a short term and case by case approach to conflict, the purpose of conflict prevention is to prevent conflict from taking place by eliminating its sources through long term policies. Burton notes that the term prevention had to be invented because of an existing suitable word; the word prevention has the connotation of containment which is inconsistent with the notion of resolution. Like resolution, conflict prevention is grounded in the Humana Needs theory, and insights from conflict resolution can “help to provide the policy direction for prevention, so that necessary second order changes can be made before violent conflicts erupt. As a general approach, conflict prevention consists of two parts, removing the causes of conflict and creating conditions in which conflict cannot occur.

This research was underpinned by the Human Needs Theory as it entangles the concept of the GNU as a model of conflict prevention.

### 4. Methodology

In order to gather as much data as possible a number of qualitative research approaches were employed. The main respondents were leaders of political parties, leaders of civic organisations, church leaders and member of the Joint Monitoring and implementation Committee (JOMIC). Data was collected through questionnaires and in-depth interviews from participants. There was also detailed documentary analysis of the GPA policy document. Secondary data, that is, newspapers, desktop research, publications were also used.

## 5. Findings

From the research, reasons for the formation of the GNU were highlighted. Failed elections were cited as the main reason that led to the formation of the GNU. The other reasons were the need for peace, the resuscitation of the economy, failure by the then ruling party to govern the country, the failure by the SADC to recognise ZANU PF as the winner of the 2008 elections and high levels of politically motivated violence. Having identified the factors that led to the formation of the GNU, most respondents highlighted the fact that the achievements of the GNU were not according to their expectations. Issues such as electoral reform, poverty alleviation, constitutional reform, health issues, power imbalances, water and sanitation and the Security Sector Reform were not adequately addressed, though there was noted improvement in the economic performance and the educational sector. One of the respondents highlighted the GNU had managed to bring about economic stability but it had failed to deliver political stability as the political parties were engaged in political and power struggles up to the end of the GNU. Majority of the respondents concurred that a peaceful environment was created as a result of the GNU. The respondents noted that the supply of basic commodities greatly improved, hospitals became operational, schools and universities became functional. Political violence which had become the order of the day became minimal as the GNU allowed all the political parties to the GNU participation, open debate and openness of expression particularly in parliament. Some of the respondents pointed out that the GNU managed to create room for transparency in the government, and also there were improvements in the judiciary system.

The research also revealed that power imbalances still existed among the three political parties in the inclusive government. The security sector reform was never achieved as security personnel remained biased towards one political party. It was never going to be easy as the parties in the GNU had different political ideologies and bickering was witnessed until the end of the GNU. There was a lot of blame games and there was also failure to implement agreed activities within the specified timelines and failure to stop selective application of the law. One respondent pointed out that too much power still in the current President and ZANU PF in terms of control. The respondents also noted that the GNU took so long to come up with a people-driven constitution, thereby failing to fulfill one of its obligations. Some of the respondents pointed that there was parallel government since proceeds from the sale of diamonds were said not to be channelled in the national treasury.

On the issue of the GNU as the model of conflict prevention, the respondents noted that there was no political will on the part of the GNU leaders to abide by the GPA of 15 September 2008. The respondents felt that there was failure to implement the agreed issues within the set timelines. The respondents felt that the leaders were supposed to swallow their pride and work together for the betterment of the people of Zimbabwe. Some respondents felt that the GNU outlived its lifespan and was supposed to end with the holding of free and fair elections that would be monitored by the international community.

## 6. Discussion and Analysis

Results from the study indicate that Zimbabwe's GNU was formed as a result of a number of factors that include: disputed 2008 Harmonised Elections, high levels of unemployment, absence of rule of law as claimed by the MDC formations, poor economic performance, high levels of unemployment, poor health facilities, high levels of emigration, power imbalances, poor water and sanitation issues. At the formation of the GNU, Zimbabwe was in a state of fragility. According to Makochekamwa and Kwaramba (2011), state fragility is a state which is significantly susceptible to the crisis in one or more of its subsystems while Stepputat and Engber-Pedersen, (2008) consider fragile states as those where the state power is unable and unwilling to deliver core functions to the majority of its people, security, protection of property rights, basic public services and essential infrastructure. Clearly the Zimbabwean situation was a crisis in almost all subsystems, (Makumbe, 2011), be it health, education, economic performance, political environment, human rights issues and governance of the country. The Zimbabwean situation was a time bomb for violent conflict as outlined by John Burton's Theory of Conflict Prevention, which states that failure to provide basic human needs may result in conflict. Before the formation of the GNU, the ruling government had failed to provide basic human needs.

Literature has also managed to argue other possible reasons which led to the formation of the Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe. The research also noted that corruption, international isolation, and monetary and fiscal policies had an effect on the formation of the GNU. The Zimbabwean government created and developed crisis management strategies which appealed to the political leadership as viable though on the ground, they were destroying the nation. This is supported by the Book of Dr. Gideon Gono, *Zimbabwe: A Casino Economy*. In the book, Dr Gono supported his monetary and fiscal policies.

It has become a norm in the African politics that all political leaders who have ruled for a long time resist to vacate offices and as a result forge for coalition government so as to safeguard their territories (Kwaramba, 2010). This is supported by the case of Madagascar, Kenya and surprisingly the United Kingdom.

The involvement of a mediator is one of the reasons which led to the formation of the GNU. Thabo Mbeki, the former president of South Africa is the one who persuaded the political leadership in Zimbabwe to forge an inclusive government. There was also an incessant pressure from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), particularly following the SADC Summit of 28 January 2009, where both Muagabe and Tsvangirai were had an ultimatum by the SADC (Brickhill, 2011). Brickhill argued that Mugabe needed MDC as a political partner to avoid the financial collapse of ZANU-PF but Tsvangirai was also on the back foot, his moral authority counted for little against the realities of regional power politics. Without regional recognition and South African support, the MDC would have remained removed from the centres of power, regardless of their domestic and international support.

According to Chitiyo (2008), the formation of the GNU is based on the notion that, it was clear that had the MDC not joined, President Mugabe would have formed his own cabinet, thus condemning the MDC to the political wilderness. It was also clear that the ruling party had prepared a military, judicial and political onslaught to decimate the MDC structures and personnel in a follow up to the murderous offensiveness of spring 2008's Operation.

Through the signing of the Global Political Agreement, the political leadership agreed on areas that were to be addressed and this formed the basis for the formation of the GNU. The political leadership as noted from the GPA had 27 greys that they agreed to resolve within the transitional government. Among the conflict areas to be addressed were, the land issue, the constitution, security sector reform, media reform, restoration of the economic stability, sanctions, and freedom of assembly and association.

As postulated by Galtung in his theory under the violence model, the situation in Zimbabwe had reached an alarming rate and violence was inevitable. All forms of violence were being experienced, that is structural, direct violence and cultural violence which result in negative peace. In order to initiate positive peace, the mediator in the Zimbabwean crisis negotiated for a transitional government whose mandate was to restore positive peace though in my opinion, the negotiated settlement was rather a conflict suppression mechanism instead of a problem solving mechanism. Under the GPA Article VII, it highlights the issue of promotion of equality, national healing, cohesion and unity. This clearly shows that the political leadership knew about violence, atrocities taking place and the need for them to be addressed but rather sought to suppress the issues by signing the GPA.

As reported ([www.thezimbabwean.com](http://www.thezimbabwean.com)) Zimbabwe had moved from being the bread basket of Africa to become the greatest beggar in Africa and inflation rates that have never been recorded in the world were recorded in Zimbabwe. Unequal application of the rule of law was the order of the day in Zimbabwe as law was applied according to the wishes of those who were financially stable. In relation to the theory underpinning this research, the human needs theory, failure to adhere to the needs of the people usually leads to conflict. The prior government of Zimbabwe for the past decade it has failed to articulate bread and butter issues and hence conflict of any magnitude are inevitable.

Research has categorically shown that the GNU has failed to a greater extent to solve the problems that were prone in Zimbabwe prior to its formation as more challenges than success have been achieved by the GNU. The GNU managed to address some of the conflict that was prevailing before its formation. This research shows that economic stability was achieved by the GNU but on the political front a lot still has not been achieved. The GNU managed to stabilize the high inflation levels that were recorded in the country. The GNU also managed to bring food on the shelves as supermarkets are now full with products though they are not locally produced. As alluded by Martha Mutisi (2011), the immediate effect of Zimbabwe's GNU was to bring rival parties together, halt the protracted turbulence and ultimately promoting conditions for democratic reform.

The subsequent inclusive government was accompanied by a gradual distribution of both functional personnel and power from ZANU PF to other political players, MDC T and MDC M. This was a very crucial improvement as power was once vested in one political party and now new ideas were brought in by the opposition political parties. Sharing of power also provided transparency as there was always checks and balances to monitor the operations of the government. Judging from the private media reports, power within the GNU was still vested in ZANU PF as the president still appointed army generals, cabinet ministers, governors and various executive posts without consulting the then prime minister. A clear case is the appointment of Brigadier Nyikayaramba to a major general post, ([www.nehandaradio.com](http://www.nehandaradio.com)).

The GNU tried to address the governance and democracy deficit by establishing independent and transparent commissions like the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), the Zimbabwe Media Commission (ZMC) and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) whose membership was open to independent persons with expertise in the selected areas. Though these independent commissions were formed, their operations were still biased as some of the Board members were operating on partisan basis for instance the Zimbabwe Media Commission issued radio and television licences to broadcasting companies that were aligned to ZANU PF only. (Daily News, 5 December 2011).

As mandated by Article VI of the GPA, a Constitutional Parliamentary Select committee (COPAC) was established in April 2009 to coordinate the consultative process for constitutional reform. From June 2009, the COPAC held public hearings and consultations towards the process of reforming Zimbabwe's constitution. The consultation making process progressed with a number of challenges but the referendum was finally held on 16 March 2013. The constitution was expected to address some of the conflicts that were experienced before the formation of the GNU.

The GNU faced a lot of resistance from all political parties. The issue of power being vested in one political party was expressed, including the issue of the security sector reform and the failure by the political parties to adhere to agreed activities within the agreed timelines. There were delays in finalising the constitution. The constitution is key to the future of the country, the constitution determines how elections will be held, and also gives guidelines on how the country is to be governed.

A number of key areas that were backtracking the GNU were observed. Chigora (2011), observed that another serious challenge to the GNU comes from the approach used in the formulation of the GNU. The government was formed through an accord between the main political parties' leaders only, leaving out civil society organizations and other leaders and lesser political parties. Governance involves the three pillars which are government, business sector and the civic society. It became very difficult for the GNU to fully function as it did not consider some of the key aspects of the pillars of governance. Civil society acts as a watchdog to the activities of the government, and hence the formation of the



GNU sideline their importance and therefore it became intricate to have a resounding success story from the GNU.

Guzura and Chigora (2011), argued that the removal of opposition representation in parliament effectively means the removal of checks and balances since parliamentary governance is by consensus of those in leadership. Resultantly, this stifles debate which should be the duty of the parliament as the governing will use caucuses such that bills will be brought to Parliament simply to be passed. As such, parliament becomes more of a rubber stamp for the executive. The issue of other political parties was completely removed by the GNU as focus was now given on three parties hence voice of the voiceless were not echoed since there was no room for other political parties in parliament.

From this research, the respondents urged the political parties to institute all agreed reforms before any new elections, stop all selective application of the law, the security sector should be professional and not partisan, all civil servants including the police should be apolitical and serve the government of the day with respect, complete the drafting of the new constitution, and hold new elections that allow for a peaceful transition of power to the winners.

Research results indicated that the political parties were not willing to incorporate the agreed issues on the GPA, and ZANU PF was calling for elections regardless of the constitution making process, they started gunning for support from regional bodies such as SADC and AU (Nytimes.com), by sending ZANU PF delegates to the presidents of SADC countries so as to gain support.

ZANU PF also defied the GPA preamble by allowing the security agents to meddle in the politics of the country, as reported in the paper by Patrice Makova, (www.nehanda.com), the then Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, argued that the army generals had a right to meddle in politics by virtue of having fought for the liberation of the country. He dismissed calls for army generals to resign join full time politics, insisting that their behaviour should not be labelled meddling but a right to decide the future of the country. This was a clear rejection of the security sector reform by a ZANU PF member. This is also supported by statements by Major General Martin Chedondo, who stirred the storm when he argued that soldiers must be involved in national politics in order to remain loyal and defend the nation's territorial integrity and interest. In 2011 Brigadier Douglas Nyikayaramba also declared that no one without any revolutionary credentials would rule Zimbabwe, thereby insinuating that the then Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirayi would not be allowed to become President even if he won the elections. That left questions on the future of the GNU, because it seemed as though Zimbabweans were chasing a wild goose. The military has become increasingly vocal in support of one political party and threatening unconstitutional action in the event that the favoured party is not elected. (www.nehandaradio.com).

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The GNU in Zimbabwe was mainly necessitated by the mediation process that was negotiated by the SADC facilitator, former South African President Thabo Mbeki. The 2008 March Harmonised elections in Zimbabwe failed to produce a clear Presidential winner. The elections were characterised by high levels of political violence that rocked most parts of the country. The country was in a state of fragility and virtually every system in the country was not functioning. Both the public and private sectors had ground to a halt. The non-functioning of the state resulted in high levels of employment and economic decline and hyperinflation. The land question, sanctions, constitutional reform, restorative of the economy and social services, security sector reform, need for reconciliation and national healing and electoral reform were identified as the reasons that led to the formation of the GNU.

The GNU managed to stabilise the economy, created a peaceful environment though the political ground was uneven. The GNU managed to make some notable reforms in economic and governance development. By providing the road map for short and long term recovery, the GNU was an attempt towards political and reconstruction of the country. The GNU also managed to address governance and democracy deficit by established independent and transparent commissions like the National Economic Council, Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Media Commission and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission whose membership is open to independent persons with expertise in selected areas. The GNU also saw the reduction in politically motivated violence.

The main challenges faced by the GNU were the politicisation of the security sector, failure to implement the agreed GPA facets, failure to address the issue of sanctions, delays in the constitutional making process, power imbalances, the appointment of key government officials such as Provincial Governors, lack of civil society participation, the timing and coming up with elections time-frame, differences in political differences among the political parties in the GNU, failure to address the capitalisation of the industries and creation of employment opportunities.

Despite the above challenges, the GNU did not only give Zimbabweans the much needed hope and chance to rebuild their shattered lives but also created possibilities for a democratic political transition. In spite of its weaknesses, the GNU represents an important breakthrough in efforts to resolve the protracted crisis in Zimbabwe. The coalition government provided an important platform for continued negotiations between ZANU PF and the two MDC formations, the only process that will ultimately lead to a successful resolution of the crisis.

The GNU did not and will not lead to an overnight change in the country's economic and political fortunes, but it presented opportunities for Zimbabwe to begin the process of extricating itself from economic and political turmoil. The GNU presented a stepping stone for the process of transformation and democratisation of the nation.

While most studies on peaceful settlement of disputes see the substance of the proposals for a solution as the key to successful resolution of conflict, a growing focus of attention shows that a second and equally necessary key lies in the timing of efforts for resolution (Zartman, 2000). Parties resolve their conflict only and when they are ready to do so and when alternative, usually unilateral means of achieving a satisfactory result are blocked and the parties feel they are in uncomfortable and costly predicament. At that ripe moment, they grab on to the proposals that usually have been in the air for a long time and now appears attractive.

Basing on the findings from both primary and secondary research conducted in the study, several recommendations have been made. The three political parties to the GPA, namely ZANU PF, MDC T and MDC M should have agreed on the facets. There was always bickering in the GNU. Zimbabweans and their international partners should have supported the institutions and structures that were set up by the GPA that had the potential to reform the structures of political and economic governance, such as the Human Rights Commission, Media Commission, JOMIC and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. SADC and the African Union as the initiators and guarantors of the GPA should have continued playing the facilitation role in Zimbabwe to ensure that outstanding GPA reforms were implemented. The AU and SADC should have effectively used their Peace and Security organs, including the Peace and Security Council and the SADC Troika on Politics, Defence and Security respectively to find a lasting solution to the Zimbabwe crisis. These organisations had a mandate to ensure that the parties to the GPA were held accountable for the full implementation of the GPA. SADC was not supposed to be ambivalent but should have played a more proactive role in drawing a roadmap to end the crisis. This could have been possible if SADC had forthrightly engaged all parties. Using the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, SADC should have pushed for electoral reforms, including a viable voter's roll, a favourable electoral environment as well as a non-partisan and well equipped Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. In future SADC and the African Union should be proactive by engaging parties in Zimbabwe before conflict escalates. It is critical for these bodies to support the civil society efforts to bring about political, constitutional and social reform in Zimbabwe. It is important for SADC and the African Union to have policy consensus on the transformation of Zimbabwe's conflict. Divided will only reinforce the protracted nature of the conflict. The United Nations should have supported the mediation efforts by SADC and other AU interventions in the country to ensure that there was African ownership to the Zimbabwean solution. The international community should have supported efforts that promoted economic stability, growth and employment creation.

## 8. Future Scope

The research study was generalised. Future studies need to focus on perceptions of specific actors in the GNU such as political parties and civic society.

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