Master’s Thesis in Political Science
Democratization in southern Africa: Process and Challenges

A case study of Zimbabwe’s divergent path in its democratic transition

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Abstract
Despite promising prospects to transition towards a democracy after attaining its independence in 1980, Zimbabwe somehow fell into authoritarian rule and became increasingly undemocratic compared to other countries in southern Africa. Therefore, this thesis seeks to understand why a “most likely” case of democratization in the region failed and instead slipped into authoritarianism between 1980 and 2000. The single case study investigates a set of elite level dynamics, using components of process tracing and case study techniques. The analysis is built upon a theoretical framework focusing on dimensions of power dynamics in terms of Bratton’s power capture, power division and power sharing along with Svolik’s politics of authoritarian rule and the dominant party system. The research indicates that the political party Zanu-Pf, under the leadership of Mugabe, has dominated the political arena since the first democratic elections of 1980. With the help of the party’s majority, the ruling elites captured, divided, shared and controlled power; to serve authoritarian ends that ensured regime survival at the expense of democracy.

Keywords:
Democratization, democratic transition, authoritarian rule, dominant party system, power dynamics, power capture, power division, power sharing
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<tr>
<td>ZANU-PF</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African Nation Union (Patriotic Front)</td>
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<td>PF-ZAPU</td>
<td>(Patriotic Front) Zimbabwe African People’s Union</td>
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<td>ZANLA</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army</td>
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<td>ZIPRA</td>
<td>Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army</td>
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<td>UANC</td>
<td>United African National Council’s</td>
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<td>ZBC</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>MDC</td>
<td>Movement for Democratic Change</td>
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of democratic transition in Sub-Saharan Africa

In 1989, Sub-Saharan Africa experienced a sudden wave of movement towards democracy as the majority of the countries made considerable efforts to transform from one-state party states, authoritarian and military rule to democratically elected states (Matlosa, 2017 p.6). Huntington (1991) describes this sudden shift towards democratization as “the third wave of democratization”. A phenomenon that had begun in 1974 with the overthrow of Portugal’s authoritarian government and replaced it with one of the world’s most successful democracies (ibid, p.45). This process, according to Huntington, spread quickly across the Atlantic, Latin America, Asia and finally Africa (Huntington, 1991 p.45). The third wave of democratization heralded that democratization was no longer a Western concept or confined to Western culture, but rather a global concept impacting many regions (Silander, 2005 p.52). This development was interesting since most African countries were, according to prevalent political researchers, unlikely to democratize with the odds against them; the continent was subjected to extreme poverty, deep ethnic cleavages and with problematic colonial histories in its past (Sebudubudu, 2010; Mozaffar, 1997 p.7). The democratization wave came along with a “wave of optimism” about the prospects of democracy (ibid). The democratic transition was, however, celebrated too early in sub-Saharan Africa, as its democratization still remains in a state of flux (Sebudubudu, 2010 p.3).

Generally, democratic transitions in this region did not produce the desired democratic outcome, defined by Chabal as “adequate political frameworks for the reforms which need to be implemented to increase political accountability and spur sustainable economic development” (1998 p.300). Although almost every nation in the region claim to be democratic, proclaiming democracy does not necessarily mean achieving democracy, as history has clearly demonstrated. Since the end of the 1990’s, majority of Sub–Saharan countries have failed to uphold the new democratic pattern, despite self-proclamation of democracy. Thus, fragile democracies and authoritarian regimes are seen in Niger, Nigeria, Togo, Congo, Gabon, Uganda - to name a few (Silander, 2005 p.54).
Cheeseman (2015) even pinpointed that, “democracy became an important reference of point for even the most authoritarian regimes”. As Huntington (1991) argues, the democratic waves that transpired were all followed by a reverse wave in which some countries that had previously made the transition to democracy reverted to non-democratic rule. One example is Nigeria, which started out as a democracy soon after its independence but acceded into a military regime after 1966 and even later on (Huntington, 1991 p.20-21). Sub-Saharan African states commute between democratic development and setbacks to authoritarian regimes (ibid). In Tanzania and Uganda, the environment for independent civic and political activity still continue to shrink since incumbent leaders work profusely in silencing dissent. The two countries continue to experience declines in their scores on global democracy indexes (Freedom House, 2019).

Southern African countries are unique in that most of the countries nearly turned to democracy as most of the countries embarked on a democratic transition process, except for Angola and Eswatini (Bauer & Taylor, 2005 p.1-22). I was drawn to look closely on this region, with special interest on Zimbabwe, as it stands out from other countries in the Southern African region that were engulfed by the third wave of democratization. Southern African states share a common colonial and early postcolonial history, where liberation movements dominated the region as the countries had to resort to armed struggles to attain their independence (Bauer & Taylor, 2005 p.1-22). Much of the territory was under British imperial domination by the end of the nineteenth century. Additionally, southern Africa is also politically, socially interdependent, with connections fostered from region-wide migrant labour systems and liberation movements as young exiles in the region shared experiences and contemplated a common southern African future (Bauer & Taylor, 2005 p.1-22). The existence of the Frontline States (FLS), formed by the free independent southern African nations in a fight against apartheid in South Africa, which finally brought an end to minority rule, is evidence of the union among countries in the region (Bauer & Taylor, 2005 p.1-22). Therefore, it was not strange that by the time the third wave of democratization came, most of these countries embarked on the same journey.
Like the rest of the world, democratization in southern Africa was also marked with different patterns and trajectories as countries followed different paths. Hence, the level of democracy that exists between these countries varies widely. This reflects the varied experiences of their transition and the difficulties in consolidating democracy (Mozaffar, 1997 p. 7-10). Some of the countries have taken great strides towards well-established democratic governments and institutions (ibid). As an example, Namibia and South Africa have upheld their democratic constitutions and respected the rule of law ever since their respective transitions in 1990 and 1994. Botswana also stands out in the region since it has managed to sustain its uninterrupted democracy after its independence from the British colonial rule in 1966 (Bauer & Taylor, 2005 p.1-22). Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique have also had partly successful transitions, although international organisations such as Freedom House still regard them as only partly free (Freedom House, 2019).

However, some countries remained unaffected by the wave of democratization that transpired in this region, for example Eswatini (Swaziland) ruled by an absolute monarch, King Mswati 111, since 1986. The country remains autocratic as political opposition parties have remained banned since 1973 (Human Rights Watch Report, 2019). Angola, despite its oil wealth and influential power in Africa, was in 2019 still regarded as not free by the Freedom House. Serious governance and human rights abuses continue in the country (Freedom House Report, 2019). Other countries have instead been less significant in their transition and rather opted to follow a completely different development and moved towards an autocratic government (Cheeseman, 2015 p.168). This sentiment applies to Zimbabwe, although regarded as partly free by Freedom House; the country stand out by having experienced one of the most protracted democratic transitions in southern Africa (Sachikonye, 2017 p.118). Zimbabwe’s case is interesting since country maintained a nominal multiparty systems and a constitutional order after attaining its independence in 1980 (ibid). Despite the quite favourable preconditions for a democratic transition, however, the country is still lagging behind on the road to democratic transition and continues to follow an authoritarian path.
This thesis will therefore focus on Zimbabwe, since the country stands out in its democratic transition within southern Africa. Zimbabweans had better prospects of making a head start in both economic and political development than the majority of the countries in the region (Sachikonye, 2002 p.13; Bassuener, 2008). The country had inherited a more diversified economy after its independence from the British colonial rule and was heralded as the breadbasket of Africa; had a middle-income status and had made huge investments in education and the government of the new Prime Minister Robert Mugabe was racially inclusive (Bassuener, 2008). In addition, the country also offered stability to the region that was mired by liberation struggles from Namibia to South Africa, and conflicts from Angola to Mozambique (Sachikonye, 2002 p.13). The future of Zimbabwe, in terms of democracy, looked bright. However, a moment of optimism was followed by an accelerating decline as authoritarianism found its way into the transition process (ibid). By the late 1990’s, the hopes for a sustainable democracy in the country began fading away as President Mugabe grew more adversarial and repression of political dissent and violent land seizures became the order of the day (Bassuener, 2008).

The Zimbabwean case shows the way in which democracy has met continuous challenges in African political development for more than three decades (Mozaffar, 1997 p.7-10). As most of the countries that gained independence after the 1960’s and afterwards reverted back to authoritarian rule. This was due to a number of complex issues that existed in different varying degrees such as the prominence of neo-patrimonial structures, creation of a centralised state with a monopoly over economic opportunities and the mixed legacy of the colonial struggle and ethnic conflicts (Cheeseman, 2015). Scholars such as Diamond (1999); Rustow (1970); Huntington (1991); Lipset (1959); and Cheeseman (2015) have come up with different explanations about the development of democratic transitions and challenges they have faced. However, it is important to note that there is no single cause that can explain why some countries succeed in their democratic transition while others fail (Huntington, 1991). Democratic developments or stagnation always depends on a combination of factors; and it can be very hard to offer an explanation for why one country has been successfully
democratized as in the case of Botswana, while the neighbouring Zimbabwe, with a similar historical context, has not (Huntington, 1991 p.38).

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The main aim of the study is to contribute to our understanding of why a “most likely” case of democratization may fail and slip into authoritarianism. By employing a single case study – using components of process tracing and case study techniques, I will analyse a set of elite level dynamics in the democratic transition in Zimbabwe. More specifically, I will examine how Zimbabwe’s ruling elites in the leadership of Robert Mugabe managed to capture, share and divide its powers at the expense of democracy from 1980-2000. This period highlights the time when Zimbabwe attained its independence to the period when the main opposition party in Zimbabwe (MDC) first challenged the ruling party Zanu-Pf in the parliamentary elections.

The specific research question that the study aims to answer is thus the following:

*To what extent and in what ways did the newly elected ruling party in the leadership of Robert Mugabe during the period of 1980-2000 use its power dynamics to undermine the democratic transition in the country?*

By employing Bratton’s theoretical dimension of power capture, power sharing and power division, Zimbabwe’s unsuccessful democratic transition will be investigated. To further deepen the analysis and in order to identify and explain some of the key mechanisms of the process, I will focus the case study around certain key events that transpired during that period, namely: the construction of the Zimbabwe national army, the Matebeleland crisis, the constitutional amendments, the 1990 and 1995 electoral process, war veterans crisis, the formation of the MDC opposition party, and the Land issue.
1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Method

Since the intention of the research is not to present new information on the case, but rather to bring a new perspective and potential theoretical insights to the phenomenon, I will use a descriptive as well as an explanatory approach. The descriptive approach will give an account of what happened and how it happened (Esaiasson et al, 2012). Emphasis will be placed on Zimbabwe’s democratic transition period and how the country stands out in the southern African region as it diverts its transition from democracy to an authoritarian state. The study will also be explanatory since I examine how the power dynamics in terms of Bratton’s power capturing; power division and power sharing within the political elites impacted the regime trajectory of Zimbabwe. The aim is to use on existing theories and explanatory factors to analyse what happened in a specific case, and not to test or develop theories (Esaiasson et al, 2012 p. 42-44; Bryman, 2002 p. 341).

As the focus of the study is Zimbabwe’s failed democratic transition, and the country being the basic unit of analysis, the study falls under what Landman (2008) calls a single country study. Despite the general criticism that follows in employing this method, Landman (2008) highlights that the case study adds value to our comparative understanding of politics. Since it allows for contextual description and ability to provide new classifications for better understanding of issues beyond the original country (Landman, 2008 p.86). Hence, this study uses the case of Zimbabwe as an interesting case in the region because it stands out in its political path with rather favourable preconditions for democracy similar to its neighbours - Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. However, the country gradually turned into an authoritarian regime trajectory distinctly deviant from these neighbours. In this way, the country fits the category of a “most likely” but failed case of democratization (Landman, 2008; Sachikonye, 2017). Landman argues that “most likely” is applied on countries where a theory suggests that a particular outcome is expected to occur (2008, p. 89). It is imperative to point out that “most likely” or “least likely” cases are mostly used in comparative studies.
with more than one case. Yet Landman (2008) states that this concept is also applicable to single-case studies.

I am aware of the fact that comparative studies are common among studies to understand why countries with otherwise similar characteristics have different political outcomes during their democratization process. A comparative study of Zimbabwe, Botswana, and South Africa for example would, probably highlight a sample of different variables that could have impacted these countries differently, hence the different outcome. However, this might lead to overly simplistic or inaccurate generalisations of the democratization in southern Africa. The choice of a case study will allow me to have a deeper analysis with fewer components, thus enabling me to gain a more profound understanding of the case (Esaiasson et al, 2012). Moreover, case studies are often effective when it comes to identifying and measuring indicators related to the essential theoretical concepts (George & Bennett, 2005 p.19).

Issues regarding research validity and reliability are common when it comes to qualitative research methods, and case studies are not an exception to this criticism. Case studies are usually criticized for generalizing (Gerring, 2007). By investigating and having an in-depth analysis of the key factors that have contributed to the failures of democracy in Zimbabwe, this study will therefore focus on Zimbabwe’s specific characteristics and context and does not attempt to draw conclusions on its neighbouring countries. Hopefully, the generalisations of the findings will be limited (Landman, 2008 p.93). Additionally, research based on the case study approach is advantageous since it provides the best conceptual validity (ibid). To provide more qualitative evidence, I will apply a technique called process tracing since the purpose of my research is to map out certain key events that led to the developments of authoritarian regime in Zimbabwe and sabotaged the democratic transition (Esaiasson et al, 2012). For efficient process tracing, Bennet & Checkel highlights, that the process requires the establishment of correlation in the area of study and well-elaborated theories, with a specified-causal mechanism with observable and clear implications of this causal mechanisms (2015 p.125).
The key events that are identified are the Matebeleland crisis, the constitutional amendments, the 1990 and 1995 electoral processes; war veterans crisis, the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change, and the land issue: farm occupations in 2000. These events are chosen since they are central political developments that transpired during that period and have reflected the ruling elites tendency to arbitrary rule and the enforcement of authoritarian politics (Sachikonye, 1990). Process tracing will allow me to understand how the newly elected ruling party under the leadership of Mugabe conducted these events and the factors that influenced their decisions during the process, as well as the impact of these events on the final outcome. The process tracing will only go back as far as 1980, when Zanu-Pf led by Mugabe won majority vote in the first democratic elections held after independence of the country.

1.3.2 Material

This study relies heavily on secondary sources, i.e. academic journals, articles, written literature and reports on democratization in general, as well as written sources that focus on the democratic transition in Africa, particularly in southern African countries with special reference to Zimbabwe. The secondary sources will be evaluated diligently, to ensure validity and that they will provide a good theoretical understanding of Zimbabwe’s failed democratic transition and its path towards authoritarian rule. Therefore, I have tried to balance the literature from both Western and African scholars to ensure a more holistic approach to the discussion of the matter. Due to the economic and political crisis that Zimbabwe is faced with, a plethora of material that tends to be biased with regard to the political path the country has chosen exists. Throughout the research I have therefore tried to be objective towards the material that I have selected thorough choosing unbiased reports. Additionally, to show the level of democracy in Zimbabwe between 1980-2000, the Freedom House indices of political freedom will be used to support the analysis of the case. A brief methodological description of the index is presented below.

*Freedom House:* This index remains to be an indispensable tool for understanding democracy, derived from Dahl’s model for *polyarchy* where both political rights
and civil liberties are considered (Freedom House Methodology, 2019). The index does not measure democracy per se but freedom. Freedom in the world is highlighted in three categories where “free” ranges from 1.0 to 2.5, “partly free” 3.0 and 5.0 and “not free” is above the rating of 5.5 (ibid). Additionally, Freedom House’s methodology highlights that “free” countries satisfy both demands sets for “electoral and liberal democracy” yet “partly free” are only “electoral” democracies but do not meet the demands of a “liberal” democracy (Freedom House Methodology, 2019).

1.3.3 Delimitations

There are many different understandings and models of democracy as a concept, which makes it challenging to comprehend and makes it even harder for a researcher to take into consideration all the information that is available. By choosing to focus only on the issue of power dynamics and examining it in terms of power capture, power sharing and division within the ruling elites of Zanu-Pf under leadership of Robert Mugabe, I have already limited the research. Moreover, the research adapts a more actor–oriented dimension hence democratization of Zimbabwe could also be explained by structure-oriented dimensions.

As Huntington (1991) explains, there are many variables that explain why democratizations succeed or fail and it’s usually a combination of many variables in one case. These may include socio-economic factors, colonial heritage and state capacity. Thus, there are several theoretical perspectives and explanations regarding why some countries manage to transition into a democracy and why others like Zimbabwe fail to do that, hence the chosen explanations or variables may or may not be fundamental to the failure of Zimbabwe’s transition. However, due to limitations of my study I have limited the explanatory variables to those that best explain the case. It is important to highlight that there are always different theoretical perspectives about why Zimbabwe did not succeed in its transition, which may have warranted a different set of variables.
1.3.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of four chapters, which are presented as follows; Chapter one provides an introduction, providing the reader an overview of democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa with special focus on southern Africa and the presentation of Zimbabwe as a deviant case in the region. The aim and research question are presented as well as the methodology the research will pursue, how the study is conducted as well as the limitations that are encountered by using the research method chosen. Chapter two focuses on the theoretical framework of which the study is built upon; i.e. previous research on challenges of democratization in Africa, concepts of democratization and theoretical perspectives such as Bratton’s power dynamics, Svolik’s authoritarian rule and the dominant party system. Chapter three focuses on the case study itself and index data. Chapter four discusses findings and analysis from both the case and the theoretical framework, providing a critical discussion of the issues challenging the democratization of Zimbabwe. Finally, the conclusions are presented and the way forward in Zimbabwe is discussed.
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“To what degree can societal actors decide their course of action, and to what degree are they compelled to follow a course not chosen by them?” (Etzioni 1968 ctd in Silander, 2005).

By those words, it is important to highlight that the research follows an actor-oriented dimension on democratization in its theoretical perspective as well as its analytical level. Since this thesis aims to focus on elite level dynamics, the actor-oriented dimension is best suited as it provides a good insight about the elites strategies, alliances and conduct in the political arena (Silander, 2005). As Huntington (1991) argues, political elites have the best chance of transforming and shaping the political system, since they occupy higher offices of the state and have authority to make policy decisions. Thus in most transitions either towards a democracy or authoritarian, political elites play a major role (ibid p.121-163).

2.1 Previous Research on challenges of democratization in Africa

This section dwells on academic research and the challenges of democratization that transpired in Africa due to authoritarian politics in the region. Huntington (1991) argues that reversals in democratic transitions are not new or an unexpected phenomenon, but what is significant is to understand why reversals take place in the first instance. According to different studies, reversals take place when countries experience dire needs that pave way to authoritarian politics (Huntington, 1991 p.12-34). Huntington goes on further to argue that election, as a definition of democracy is minimal. Thus, those that are elected to govern sometimes may be acting as mere agitating bodies of some other groups in the society; making institutionalizations of democracy difficult to achieve in it’s purpose and composition as a function of greater good (Huntington, 1991). Hence, the failure to share power in the society may be resulting from these reversals, as in each group seeks to turn elections into contests for accessing political power and or influence.
Norris (2008) studying on what causes the divergent political pathways taken by Togo and Benin, also examines institutional arrangements created by new constitutions introduced within each country after their independence was gained (ibid). Norris argues that the type of institutional arrangement has significant impacts on the democratic development of a country (2008). Furthermore, that each regime with a greater degree of power sharing amongst multiple stakeholders can influence a more democratic culture and society as compared to institutions that lack checks and balances on the executive organ (Norris, 2008 p.20). Additionally, Kanyinga and Okello (2010), argue that the democratisation in Zimbabwe has taken place without legitimate and comprehensive processes of change in the institutions of governance or even in the state itself. Institutions in Zimbabwe retained their one-party legal and operational character; yet, they carried the burden of overseeing the transition process (ibid). Moreover, the legislature and the judiciary remained subordinated to the executive which had its imperial character supported by an unreconstructed patronage system (Kanyinga and Okello, 2010 p.5).

In respect to the contribution of political parties on democratic transition, Sartori (1968) highlights that they are more relevant and important for distinguishing between the different types of party systems that is dominating authoritarian, non-authoritarian and non-dominant groups. The trend in Sub-Saharan Africa is evidently that the entrenchment of incumbent presidents and domination of politics by the ruling political parties is the according to Bratton, “…endearing and unrelenting notion of fact” (1998, p.64). In Zimbabwe, the incumbent ruling party has always been in power due to its advantage in any electoral contest even in a context of multi-party politics. Thus, researchers such as Southall and Wood (1998) argue that the ruling parties are usually strong formal entities within the state as they have access to state resources at their disposal such as media and finance (p.202-228). Molomo and Somolekae (2000) state that the dominant party system is favoured in Botswana as rules for state funding are heavily diverted towards the governing party. Moreover, state funded violence and repression of the
opposition is also resorted to as the case in Zimbabwe’s parliamentary elections in 2000 (ctd in Randall and Svåsand, 2001).

Nevertheless, one party dominance is not inherently contradictory to democratic governance as Pempel -(1990) argues. What is indicated is that; there are situations where a party is successful in democracy, electorally dominating its’ opposition for a long period of time, while still maintaining all the procedures of democracy (Pempel, 1990 ctd by Randall and Svåsand, 2001). Critics argue that the dominant party system still has a structural feature that makes it non-conducive to democracy (ibid). Crotty also argue that the contribution of political parties to democratic transition depends on the context of politics, as far as the party system needs to be independent of state apparatus (Crotty, 1993 p.687-691). As van de Walle and Butler propound that, “African political parties are plagued by weak organisation, low levels of institutionalisation and weak links to the society they are supposed to represent” (1999 p.15). Diamond et al (1988), argues that the tension between two major political parties in Zimbabwe (Zanu-Pf and Pf-Zapu) resulted in a cycle of distrust among political elites. This resulted in massive political violence that weakened the viability of democracy in Zimbabwe. This is strikingly familiar in many African countries.

2.2 Conceptualising democracy and democratic transition

Democracy is literally translated as, “rule by the people”. This originates from the Hellenic political culture but; there are different models of democracy and how this concept should be understood is overly complex (Zagel, 2010 p.2). It is therefore important for each researcher to shed light on these concepts and complexities before an analysis of an authoritarian rule can be concluded. Schumpeter (2003) argues, “the democratic method is an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire power to decide by means of competitive struggle for the peoples votes” (p. 9). Huntington (1991) states that when democracy is defined in terms of sources of authority or in terms of purposes as what classical theory does, there is risk for problems of imprecision and ambiguity (Zagel, 2010 p.3). Huntington followed Schumpeter’s path and focused on the electoral process as a legitimate source of governing (ibid). Critics
argue that this definition of democracy is narrow and minimalistic as well as insufficient in understanding democracy since it overlooks any values on civil and liberal freedoms and what democracy is expected to achieve. Contrary to this argument, Dahl (1971) argues that the competitive electoral process is essential in a democracy and, added a new concept in his understanding, “polyarchy”. The concept entrenches both political and civil freedoms, often connected to the Freedom House measurements of freedom in the world (Freedom House, 2019). A democratic transition is often regarded as a period where one country leaves from one regime type to another, thus it entails motion from one point to another point (Sachikonye, 2017 p.120). A democratic transition, with a special reference to Africa, has been observed to usually consist of two closely processes, that are political liberalization and democratization (Sachikonye, 2017 p.120). The Liberalization process basically means certain constitutional guarantees of civil and political rights replace personal and arbitrary rule (ibid). Thus, certain parts of authoritarian regimes open up and the civil society thereby take steps in a democratic direction without submitting the decision makers to the electoral test (Huntington, 1991 p.9, Linz and Stepan, 1996; Sachikonye, 2017). Liberalization and Democratization are concepts that are interrelated in practise, since liberalization is regarded as necessary for democratization but, however may not necessarily lead to it, it can actually result in flawed democratization (Huntington, 1991 p.9; Sachikonye, 2017 p.120).

2.3 Authoritarian rule

Since Zimbabwe diverted its democratic transition and has become increasingly authoritarian, the concept of “authoritarian rule/authoritarianism” needs to be clarified. Linz & Stepan characterise authoritarianism as follows: “political systems limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive or intensive political mobilization, except at some point in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small groups exercises power formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones” (1996 p.38). Linz & Stepan (1996) brought an understanding of to the term authoritarian as they tries to distinguish it from totalitarian and other scholars have either followed Linz & Stepan (1996)
understanding but also stresses different approach to the conceptualisation of these non-democratic regimes (ctd in Liden, 2014 p.52).

Karvonen (2008) stresses the absence of pluralism in such regimes and highlights the lack of civil rights and scrutiny of citizen’s movement as more common in authoritarian states (ctd in Liden, 2014). Thus authoritarianism is characterised by violation of basic individual freedoms (ibid). Institutions in such regimes/ state usually supports and safeguard the interests of the regime and powers are exercised without regard to laws of the state (Diamond, 1999 ctd in Liden, 2014). Ekman et al (2014) argued that an authoritarian do not tolerate any real opposition but can still be limited in its rule by constitutional laws and regulations. Thus unlike a totalitarian regime where the regime represents all institutions, an authoritarian one may also be subordinate to certain social institutions (Ekman et al, 2014 p.130). However, Linz& Stepan, (1996) thicker definition of authoritarianism is open for discussion since there is no clear distinction on how these characteristics are related to each other or if all these factors are of equal importance in regarding a country as an authoritarian.

In summary, the conceptualisation that is mostly accepted is that political power may and should be distributed by other methods instead of competitive elections that are free and fair and that in such societies the political and civil rights of the citizens are mostly violated (Sartori, 1970 ctd in Liden, 2014). Since there are different understandings of authoritarianism, in this thesis authoritarian rule will be viewed as any system with high levels of state repression. In this system, civil and political rights are circumscribed and incumbents normally resort to repression and co-option to silence and intimidate opponents whether within the ruling elites or outside the regime (Rorbaek, Skanning amd Tolstrup, 2014 p.3; Svolik, 2012). However, repression is the standard instrument of the authoritarian rule used to uphold and extend political and social control (Svolik, 2012). These classifications make it necessary for a country to be regarded as a dictatorship (ibid).
2.3.1 The Problems of Power dynamics in authoritarian rule

Power dynamics in this essence will be discussed in relation to how Bratton (2014) understands power politics and power dynamics in Zimbabwe, where three different political settlements are proposed: power capture by the dominant elites, power sharing meaning that contending elites have difficulties in institutionalising competing sets of results and finally power division among said elites (Bratton, 2014 p.10-11). Power capture is defined by the Bratton (2014) as capturing of state power where the dominant ruling elites unilaterally imposes its own rules; power sharing, where elites are forced to negotiate settlements are with contending rivals or opposition and finally power-division which is characterized by power struggles within the ruling coalition where violence is ever occurring to generate organizational discipline (ibid, p.10-11). Additionally, rules are set for the purpose of circulating power among elites through democratic institutions such as rule of law (Bratton, 2014). Bratton looks how power is being consolidated and exercised by the ruling party under the leadership of Robert Mugabe, in a bid to continue their tyrannical grip on the political leadership of Zimbabwe for over 30 years since its independence in 1980 (ibid).

Many explanations are elaborated by the author in-terms of power politics where three different political settlements are proposed. The author argues that during power capture, power-sharing and power division by the ruling elites three power resources are used that are coercion, incentives or persuasion (Bratton, 2014 p.6). In this case coercion happens when there is domination of A over B, established through repression to force submission. Incentives are used when A may reward B’s obedience by material resources and finally A can use reasoned arguments to persuade B to submit to his request, for example… by using popular ideas or ethical values (Bratton, 2014 p.6). Additionally, Bratton (2014) state that these power resources are basically employed by all ruling elites whether democratic or authoritarian as tools of ruling and that more than one approach is often used (p.6). However, he asserts that authoritarian regimes often rely on methods that are heavily coercive rather than persuasive in a bid to try to legitimize their rule (ibid).
In power politics, the Bratton argues the main source of authority is military strength and selective distribution of economic resources and that “little room remains for ethical values and constitutional rules to constrain the unlimited exercise of power” (2014 p.7). Additionally, he summed that the problem of authoritarian politics should be highlighted as the, “domestication of power politics” (Bratton, 2014 p.7). This is where leaders in these regimes are motivated by the self-interest of the ruling elites, determined to sustain the dominance of opposition and rivals, and resist independent constraints embodied in the rule of law (ibid). Hence, in political struggles with rivals, the ruling elites in authoritarian regimes do not hesitate to unleash what Bratton calls the “full panoply of power politics” and these include power capturing, power sharing, and power –division (2014 p.7).

The power politics of Bratton (2014) has been criticized for granting unnecessary attention to individual authoritarian leaders who play starring roles in the political scene. However, the author argues that the power of politics in this instance should be understood, through elite coalitions and the inherited political institutions through which they operate (Bratton, 2014). In his understanding, the ruling elites gets its way mainly by monopolizing state institutions such as military and the prevalence of violence which imparts gruesome features of authoritarian rule as explained by Svolik, 2012 p.13-15 (ctd in Bratton, 2014). Additionally, in authoritarian politics power dynamics are complicated. As they include power sharing deals and controlling of power either between the ruling elites, toward the citizens, or between the elites themselves since dictators never rule alone (ibid). Dictators need a support group hence, the struggle of power between ruling elite groups are common (Svolik 2009, 2012 ctd in Bratton, 2014). In an authoritarian regime, the power dynamic follows the interactions between the dictator and other members within ruling elites.

2.3.2 Politics of Authoritarian Rule as understood by Svolik

Svolik (2012) presents that authoritarian politics emanate particularly from a caustic and violent “state of nature” that is a product of lack of independent authority capable of enforcing credible commitments amongst political actors as
well as the preponderance of gruesome violence as mechanism of resolving conflicts (p14). Consequently, authoritarian politics are shaped by two principal conflicts that are: the problem of authoritarian control, which is characterized by conflicts between the ruling elite and the citizens being excluded from power. Moreover, there is the problem of authoritarian power-sharing, between the dictator and his ruling coalition (Svolik, 2012 p.2). In resolving the problems of power-sharing and authoritarian control, the role of political institutions is curtailed. Hence the absence or ineffectiveness of these institutions such as rule of law, elections and constitutions that act as arbiters of conflicts explains why the conduct of authoritarian politics is characterised by repression and appalling violence (ibid).

To understand these power dynamics, it is imperative to examine how an authoritarian leader acquires power and maintains it (Svolik, 2012). According to the author, “the problem of power sharing is shaped by the dictator’s attempts to monopolize and maintain power while his ruling allies simultaneously try to limit his power ”(Svolik, 2012 p.60-61). Svolik argues, “The key standpoint is the adoption, of institutions such as politburos, councils that are embedded in authoritarian parties and legislatures” (p.86-87), to enable the ruling coalition to communicate with each other and monitoring of the dictators powers (p.87). Therefore, the main function of democratic institutions such as political parties and legislatures in authoritarian rule according to Svolik (2012) “is distinctly authoritarian”(p.88). To conclude, Svolik’s statistical results, show, “a strong, systematic empirical association between authoritarian parties or legislatures and the stability of dictatorships” (Svolik, 2012 p.115).

With regard to authoritarian control, Svolik (2012) argues that the dictator has to rely on repression to guard popular uprisings or suppress opposition that try to empower itself (p.124). He notes, the importance of the military and how the military is equipped and organised depends on the strength of the opposition (p.123-134). Svolik continues to present why dictators would tolerate or benefit from a regime party. He argues that regime political parties strengthen authoritarian control by, “hierarchical assignment of service and benefits, political
control over appointments and selective recruitment and repression” (Svolik, 2012, p.163). Hence political communication is enhanced through mobilizations that are done either by co-option or force allowing the dictator “direct political control over his members” (ibid p.164). Evidence from empirical results shows, “empirical association between dictatorships with single parties and the survival of the regimes that maintain them” (Svolik, p.192).

2.3.3 Authoritarian rule through the dominant-party system

Introduced by Maurice Duverger in 1951, the author put forward the idea that a party is dominant when, “its doctrines, ideas, methods and style coincide with those of the epoch…” hence domination was as much a question of influence as of strength (ctd in White, 2011 p.658). The concept of the dominant party systems highlights a model of how democracy and stability may be combined under difficult conditions and since it allows more than one party to compete, it is regarded as democratic in the procedural sense (Arian & Barnes, 1974). However, as highlighted by De Jager & Meintjes (2013), the chance of losing an election is limited or more or less do not exist (p.234). This type of system is often associated as resemblance of developing countries politics, where low levels of mobilisation combined with independence movements gave rise to parties that tend to dominate their polities without doing away with democratic procedures and symbols (Arian & Barnes, 1974, p.593). Thus, in most of these countries states have become more like one-party states, whereby patronage permeates the regimes, and as Duverger (1951) state that dominant party is usually identified with the regime and even with the epoch (ctd in Arian & Barnes, 1974; Von Seth, 2016). As evidenced, this may influence how others may perceive the political system; therefore it is imperative to distinguish it from a one-party system, which is naturally authoritarian, since only one party is permitted to participate in elections.

Arian & Barnes (1974) further highlight how the dominant party perpetuate their hegemony through implementing strategies that define the boundaries between the permissible and the impermissible. Therefore, leaders of dominant parties first and foremost must be authorities of power and should be excellent in exercising the power (ibid, 597). This power will ensure the marginalization of opposition parties
to ensure the maintenance of one-party dominance, as Levitsky & Way (2010) propounds about the, ”creation of an uneven playing field”, where one party has won more than four consecutive national elections (ctd in de Jager & Meintjes 2013). The scholars explain this disparity as one that partly controls resources by the dominant party, media access and unequal access to state institutions thereby impairing the ability of oppositional parties to compete in national elections (de Jager & Meintjes 2013 p.234). Regimes with dominant party government are often characterized by restricted access in these areas. One such case is the ruling party of Zanu-Pf according to de Jager & du Toit (2013), Zanu-Pf has exercised their power in an authoritarian manner contrary to its neighbours Botswana and South Africa whose dominant party system has existed stably exercising power in a non-authoritarian manner.

Additionally, Sartori (1976) has identified two types of dominant party systems, which are: the predominant party system, where there is limited political competition since one party is dominating the political field and the hegemonic system, which is non-competitive (ctd deJager & duToit, 2013 p.11). This system is characterized by various mechanisms that permanently exclude opponents from power. Mechanisms in place include but are not limited to: fraudulent elections, repression of opponents and a systemic aggregation of gagged press (deJager & duToit, 2013 p.11).

In relation to this understanding of dominant party systems is Huntington (1991) and Przeworskis et al (2000) concept on regimes. They both argue that lack of alternation of power would characterise a regime as not being democratic, but authoritarian (ctd in von Seth, 2016). Under the circumstances, Huntington poses doubts in government that are in continuous position of power and have not handed over power once or twice, in what he terms the two-turnover test and terms such regimes as authoritarian (Huntington 1991 p.266-267; Przeworskis et al 2000 p.29).

In summation, the theoretical frameworks of Bratton’s understanding of power dynamics together with the help of Svolik’s politics of authoritarian politics and
the dominant-party systems provides a key understanding when investigating how the newly elected elites under Mugabe consolidated and maintained power within themselves. The theoretical perspectives guide the case, and address how and why power was being captured, shared, divided and maintained within the ruling coalition of Mugabe with the help of the dominant ruling party Zanu-Pf. The theoretical perspectives therefore specified the important variables in term of power capture, power division and power sharing that influenced the authoritarian politics in Zimbabwe.
3 Diverted in Transition: The case of Zimbabwe’s path to authoritarian rule

This chapter seeks to introduce the empirical material on the Zimbabwean case. A historical background containing pre and postcolonial rule is presented, followed by the review of the ruling party of Zanu-Pf and Mugabe’s political leadership. Using the above-mentioned broad parameters, I set to explore how the power dynamics within the ruling elites in Zimbabwe will allow me to understand Robert Mugabe’s merciless reign in Zimbabwe that had stretched over a quarter century. As Diamond (1988) argues, we do need to understand better how this “big man of Africa” generated and sustained power to his triumph at the expense of the ordinary citizens.

3.1 Historical Background

To understand the nature of power dynamics within the newly elected ruling party of Zanu-Pf under leadership of Robert Mugabe it is important to understand the colonial history of the country. According to Huntington, a colonial history of a country “has shaped the nature and level of democratization that happens there” (Huntington, 1991). Additionally, Bratton (2014) argues, authoritarian rule that is built upon foundations of political violence will consist of some authoritarian leaders who continue to use a comprehensive system of ideas to maintain their grip on power. Since Zanu-Pf is led by war veterans who have war credentials that are unquestionable. The ruling party together with its leader Mugabe, relied heavily on a nationalistic rhetoric based on its role in the war of liberation and bringing independence from British colonial rule to maintain its grip on political power in the country (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007). More information about Zanu-Pf under the leadership of Mugabe is yet to come, but first let us understand the pre and post-colonial history of the country.

Zimbabwe’s population group consists of the Shona, Ndebele and minority groups such as the Tonga and the Venda. All these groups originated from the Bantu people of Southern Africa (Zvobgo, 2009). In 1890, the British began occupation of the country. This occupation must be understood in the broader context of the scramble for Africa by European colonizers of African countries (Zvobgo, 2009 p.1-22). The British settlers that came into the country were awarded certain rights
to land and exploration (ibid). Due to this process, by 1894 basically all fertile land had been alienated to companies or individuals. Reserves, with unfertile land and infested with tsetse flies were created for the natives (Zvobgo, 2009 p.1-22). The establishment of reserves led to the shortage of land for the natives, the land issue became the most dominant issue in Zimbabwean politics, even today ever since this decision (ibid). The resentment of colonial rule led to the first Ndebele and Shona uprisings of 1896-1897 in which the natives lost, and leaders of the uprisings were hanged. The independence of Ghana in 1957 inspired many Africans to organise themselves in political parties to fight against occupation of their land and injustices that came along with colonial rule (Zvobgo, 2009 p.1-22). Hence, between 1957-1965, the political developments in Zimbabwe were dominated by the rise of nationalism and, ideology against the white domination of the country (ibid). The Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) was formed in 1961 and was mainly dominated by the Ndebele ethnic group in the Matebeleland province. The 1963 Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) dominated by the Shona ethnic group was also formed in Mashonaland province (Zvobgo, 2009 p.1-22).

In 1963, Prime Minister Ian Smith took office under the Rhodesian Front, after failed negotiations with the British government over the independence of Zimbabwe (Zvobgo, 2009 p.1-22). Smith declared Zimbabwe independent from Britain in 1965 and he continued to have a minority government without the support of the British Crown (Zvobgo, 2009). He found inspiration from apartheid in South Africa and passed repressive legislative measures (Sims, 2015). More acquisition of land transpired to the extent that about 80% of arable land was only owned by 5% of the white minority and blacks were overcrowded in dry reserves (ibid). To eliminate opposition from the black majority, the Rhodesian Front passed the Preservation of Constitutional government Act and imposed 20 years in prison with hard labour for any conviction of “subversive activities”, the Public order Act, the African registration and identification Act and the Law and Order Act were passed (Sims, 2015). These laws were meant to restrict Africans freedom and movements and; racial segregation was increased (ibid). African nationalists parties were banned and leaders detained and tortured in the prisons –Robert
Mugabe was one of them (Zvobgo, 2009). These actions by the government of Ian Smith resulted in the formation and mobilization of the liberation struggles by the natives that followed. The victory by the FRELIMO armed liberation struggle in Mozambique against Portuguese rule inspired the nationalist freedom fighters in Zimbabwe to continue with their guerrilla warfare against the racial minority government of Ian Smith (Zvobgo, 2009).

3.1.1 Political transition: Reconciliation through power –sharing arrangements

Due to various pressure, predominately the sanctions from Britain, and the escalating guerrilla warfare that had reached urban areas the minority government of Ian Smith was forced to reach a negotiated political settlement with black nationalist leaders in Rhodesia (Zvobgo, 2019). The famous Lancaster House conference was held with leaders from various political parties. The conference laid the basis of the new constitution for a new Zimbabwe, and in 1980 elections were held. The constitution embodied a series of compromises over minority rights, guarantees of land ownership in the country and guaranteed white representation in parliament (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2008). This conference forced the newly formed government of Robert Mugabe to balance antagonistic contradictions between its liberation movement at one hand and the white – Rhodesians on the other hand (Sims, 2015). Thus, Herbst (1990) argues that, “the Lancaster house contained powerful anachronistic elements that were hostile to the political project of the new regime”. He added that the newly elected Zanu-Pf was plagued with uncertainty over how to design its policies and how to exert its influence in order to control the state and the economy (ctd Sims, 2015 p.76). Nevertheless, Zimbabwe achieved its independence on the 18 April with Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister in the government of national unity forged between Zanu-Pf and Zapu and Reverend Canaan Banana as a ceremonial President. This resulted to an end to nearly ninety years of British colonial rule (Zvobgo, 2009 p.254).

Soon after the elections of 1980, Zanu-Pf with its overwhelming majority of 57 out of 100 parliamentary seats and control of government led by Mugabe, initially
focused on a policy of reconciliation (Sims, 2015 p.78). This was meant to do away with the resentment that existed among the whites and the blacks caused by the liberation struggle and racial discrimination (ibid). However, other researchers argue that the reconciliation was a necessity to prevent the mass exodus of white Zimbabweans leaving the country with their expertise and finance since it would ruin the economy of the new Zimbabwe (Sims, 2015 p.78). Hence, Robert Mugabe appointed whites into key positions in his new government for example Denis Norman became the President of the Commercial farmers Union. David Smith was appointed Minister of Trade and Commerce and many others. This policy was a success and there were high hopes for the post –independent Zimbabwe in terms of democracy and better quality of life for the masses. However, this hope was short-lived as cracks soon emerged within the newly elected government (Sims, 2015 p.79).

3.2 Brief description of the political structure in Zimbabwe after 1980

In order to understand how the ruling party led by Robert Mugabe captured, shared and divided political power, it is imperative to understand the political structure of the country. The Lancaster House constitution of 1979 that governed the post-independent Zimbabwe was based on the concepts of separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, supremacy of the legislature over the executive, public service neutrality and accountability of the government (Sachikonye, 2003). In 1980, the proportional representative system was used and incorporated with it was the 5% threshold in the allocation of seats to the contesting parties, that is Zanu-Pf under Robert Mugabe, Pf-Zapu under Nkomo, UANC under Muzorewa and Rhodesian Front had 20 reserved seats under Ian Smith (Sachikonye, 2003 p. 120). However, this was the last time this system was used, the electoral Act was amended in 1987 to introduce the “winner takes all system” and until 2000 elections, the ruling party Zanu-Pf has been the main beneficiary of the system (Sachikonye, 2003). The amendment also removed the 20 reserved seats for the white minority, and instead replaced them with a powerful executive presidency (ibid). The legislative body, which is the parliament from 1980-1985, consisted of 100 elected members of parliament. From 1990 the number increased to 120, of which 30 members were non –constituency members selected by the president
(Sachikonye, 2003). The executive body consists of the president as the head of state, which is elected by popular vote based on winner, takes all. From 1985, the president could serve for an unlimited number of terms (ibid). This was however changed with the 2013 constitution, where the president serves two terms. The Judicial Branch is headed by the Chief Justice with a Judicial Service commission and Supreme Court is the highest court (Sachikonye, 2003).

3.3 Zanu-Pf ruling party and leadership of Robert Mugabe

As highlighted above, Zanu-Pf, under leadership of Robert Mugabe’s collective identity, is traced down to the liberation struggle against British colonial rule (Bratton, 2014). Dominated by the Shona ethnic group, the party was formed in 1963, with an elitist background since the leading members were all emerging educated Shona elites in the then Southern Rhodesia (Chigora et al, 2015 p.4). However, the party was able to gain its popularity with the masses as it raised vital issues such general segregation, discriminative policies, the land issue and violation of other human rights of the black natives in the country (ibid). Through its armed wing, (ZANLA), and the collaboration with ZAPU led by Joshua Nkomo, the party managed to recruit young men and women to fight the war against white minority rule in Zimbabwe until its achievement of majority rule through the 1980 elections (Chigora et al, 2015 p.4). Moyo (1993) argues that Zanu-pf claimed that it is the sole legitimate representative of the people. Hence, other organisations that intend to work independently should, join Zanu-pf to prove their allegiance to the newly liberated state (ctd in Sims, 2015 p.83). Furthermore, the ruling party also set processes and wages; it is the mediator of industrial disputes; one of Robert Mugabe’s brothers was secretary-general of all the trade unions; and, it is also responsible for developmental investment and the land resettlement process (Saunders 2000 p. 52-53 ctd in Sims, 2015). Moreover, many of the founding members of civil society were members of Zanu-pf (ibid). Organisations that were critical towards the ruling party had their legitimacy, liberation credentials and nationalism challenged (Moyo 1993 ctd in Sims, 2015 p.83-85).
3.4 Tracing power dynamics of Mugabe’s Zanu-Pf

3.4.1 The construction of the Zimbabwe national army

Immediately after the election, by end of December 1980, the newly elected ruling part announced that a national integrated army would be formed. This would constitute the Zanu-Pf liberal army wing called ZANLA and the Pf-Zapu army wing called ZIPRA, in order to provide employment for the former combatants that had liberated the country (Rupiya, 2013; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007). ZANLA’s former commander was appointed the overall Commander of the Army as well as the ZIPRA deputy. Thousands of ZANLA liberation troops hence became integrated and “acceptable” elements of the new Zimbabwean army or part of the police force. Ndlovu Gatsheni (2013) postulates that “the constitution of the military witnessed Zanlafication,” as Mugabe’s leadership strategically positioned ex-ZANLA cadres into dominant positions within the military and at the same time side lining ex-ZIPRAs cadres (ctd in Rupiya, 2013). When defining the role of the military, Robert Mugabe stated that “our vote must go together with our guns… the people’s vote and the people’s guns are always inseparable twins” (ctd in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007 p.50). According to Rupiya (2013) several generals in the military were also represented in the politburo, the central committee and other Zanu-Pf party structures (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007 p 50).

3.4.2 The Matebeleland crisis

In 1982, the government of national unity that was forged between Zapu, led by Nkomo, and Zanu, led by Mugabe, fell apart. Nkomo was dismissed from the cabinet and went into exile (Sims, 2015 p.81). The act resulted in a civil conflict between Shona’s and Ndebele’s that ended in 1987, where reports alleged that Zanu-Pf severely violated human rights and many civilians were massacred by in Matebeleland and Midlands (ibid). Members and supporters of Zapu were detained and intimidated. Zipra combatants who were part of the Zimbabwe integrated national army were in turn arrested and accused for planning a coup, disarmed and some disappeared (Jackson, 2011). In 1987, Zapu was finally disembarked and incorporated into Zanu-Pf. At that point, in a move to lead the country away from a possible civil war, Nkomo became the Vice-President under leadership of Robert
Mugabe (Chigora et al 2015; Zvobgo 2009). The massacres in Matebeleland and Midlands in 1982-1987 displayed the first straits to authoritarian state-ism, as this shows that Zanu-Pf under the leadership of Mugabe preferred confrontation before reconciliation (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2008 p.28). As noted, the end of this conflict resulted in the emasculation of the main opposition party Zapu, creating a de facto one-party state and confirming the regional subordination of Matebeleland (ibid, p.29). The leadership of Mugabe set out to establish its sovereignty on the new state through territorial control and the monopolisation of means of violence (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2008).

3.4.3 Disembarking of democratic institutions through various constitutional amendments

After eliminating Nkomo and Zapu from the political spotlight, the ruling party, with an overwhelming majority in the parliament, merged the positions of the president and prime minister (Bratton & Masunungure, 2008 p.44-46). In other words, Zimbabwe turned into a one–party state under Mugabe’s leadership (ibid). By amending the constitution to create the executive presidency, Zanu-Pf ensured that the executive president was vested with the powers of the prime minister. The executive president would hold office for a period of six years with the provision to be re-elected again and then have no term-limits (Moyo, 1992 p.30). In comparison, the original Lancaster House Constitution of 1979 had a ceremonial president with a maximum of two terms in office. The constitutional amendment gave more powers to the executive president (Ndulo 2010 ctd in Miller & Aucoin, 2010 p.184).

In 1989, major amendments were made to the constitution that limited the separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The president was placed above the judiciary, as the courts were denied the right to question his decisions (Ndulo 2010 ctd in Miller & Aucoin, 2010). The government could resort to legislative powers and overrule decisions made by the courts when in disagreement with them for example in the case of *S vs Juvenile 1989* (Ndulo 2010 ctd in Miller & Aucoin, 2010 p.184). In this case the courts ruled out to outlaw corporal punishment of children, the ruling party used the
legislature to amend the constitution to permit corporal punishment on children by the schools, parents, guardians and on male juveniles convicted of any crime (ibid). Ndulo (2010) argues that these amendments even limited the jurisdiction of the courts, as for example, the Supreme court could not hear certain cases regarding the fundamental rights provisions, and the issue of death penalty was left in hands of the executive president and the parliament (which had mainly Zanu-pf candidates) (ibid). The president was therefore shielded from being answerable and accountable to the parliament. Mostly, the most powerful amendment was giving the president rule-making powers equal to the parliament (ctd by Muna Ndulo in Miller & Aucoin, 2010 p.184). Moreover, the president had the power to appoint two vice-presidents. Following demonstrations by students in 1988 and 1989 at the university of Zimbabwe, the government passed the University of Zimbabwe Amendment Act in 1990, which restricted universities from protesting (Sim, 2015 p.85). The 1990’s was also marked with the government removal of the land provision which was based on the “willing buyer, willing seller provision” to enable the government to acquire land for redistribution (Sims, 2015 p.103).

3.4. 4 1990 and 1995 electoral process

There were several reports of Zanu-Pf intra–party political tensions, and this resulted in 12 leaders contesting the elections as independent candidates since party leaders interfered with candidate nomination processes and sabotaging primary results that are unfavourable to their choice of candidates (Sims, 2015 p.109). It is worth to mention the former secretary-general of Zanu-Pf, Edgar Tekere, here, who formed his own political party called Zum, after he was expelled from the ruling party for openly criticizing the leadership and issues of corruption (Sims, 2015 p.109). In the 1995 elections, legitimacy was questionable as eight opposition parties boycotted the elections due to “partisan state control of the electoral process and unfair press coverage” (ibid). Thus, 55 members of Zanu-Pf ran unopposed, and in conjunction with Robert Mugabe’s 30 non-constituency parliamentary seat appointments, Zanu-Pf had effectively retained its power before the polls even started (Sims, 2015 p.109). It is important to highlight that after the merging of Zanu-Pf and Pf-Zapu by Nkomo in 1987, Zanu-Pf dominated the
election results in 1990 and 1995 with 117 elected seats out of 120 and in 1995, it retained the seats (Sachikonye, 2003 p.124).

Voters’ turnout decreased as well from 1980, from an estimation that 94% voted in 1980, to 57% in 1995 and to 32% in the 1996 presidential elections (Sims, 2015 p.110). This was due to various issues ranging from dissatisfaction of the electoral process that favoured the ruling party, and then the violence that followed every election campaign after 1980 (Sachikonye, 2003). Sithole (1986) states, “Zanu-pf supporters, after their victory in 1985, went on a rampage of beating and intimidating members of the opposition” (ctd in Sachikonye, 2003). Furthermore, violence and human rights violations were carried out during the 1990 elections in most urban areas, and the most notable was shooting of opposition members contesting against the Vice-President Simon Muzenda (Sachikonye, 2003 p.126).

### Parliamentary Election results: Elected Seats during the period 1980-2000

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#### 3.4.5 War veterans crisis

Around 1997 the war veterans began to challenge the authority of the executive within the Zanu-Pf party structures and the government of Mugabe (Carver, 2000 p.10-12). Protests were held in the capital city of Harare, against the plundering of the War Victims Compensation Fund by some government officials and their
relatives (ibid, p.11). Mugabe and his ruling party responded by awarding all the war veterans 50,000 Zimbabwean dollars plus a monthly pension of 2000 Zimbabwean dollars. These payments however prompted a general economic crisis for the country, but it served its purpose politically for the ruling party (Carver, 2000 p.11).

3.4.6 Formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)

In September 1999, the new opposition MDC was formed by former workers’ union leaders, one of them Tsvangirai. This was due to deteriorating economic problems strongly affecting the urban and rural working class (Carver, 2000 p.12). Many of the members had a background in human rights activism and the party began to gain support from both the Shona’s and Ndebele’s. Many white farmers supported and funded the opposition in response to the Land Acquisition Act that was put in place by the government of Mugabe (Carver, 2000 p.12). The party was the first opposition to make an impact in Zimbabwean politics. The Zanu-Pf ruling party and Mugabe responded by serious police violence against the leadership of the party as well as their supporters (ibid, p.13).

3.4.7 Land issue: Farm occupations

The Lancaster House agreement meant that the government could only purchase land for resettlements. The British government supported the government with money to purchase the land, since after independence the white minority still owned majority of the land (Carver, 2000 p.5). The Land Acquisition Act of 1992 allowed the government of Mugabe to acquire land that remained underutilized (ibid). The aim of this program was to benefit the poor still living in the reserves created under colonial rule. By the beginning of 2000, before parliamentary elections, more than 1000 commercial farms were violently occupied by the War veterans, military and Zanu-Pf supporters (Carver, 2000 p.16). The financial support that the white commercial farmers had shown to the MDC gave the Mugabe regime an opportunity to drive them with force from their farms (ibid). Reports about serious humanitarian crisis emerged, as there were gross violations of human rights towards white commercial farmers and thousands of farm workers (Carver, 2000).
3.5 Zimbabwe’s democracy according to index rating

Since the 1980 elections after attaining its independence, Zimbabwe was categorised as *partly free* according to the Freedom House indices (Freedom House, 2009). Reports highlight that the existing Rhodesian government administered the 1980 elections and deep concerns were held by Zanu-Pf and Pf-Zapu as an estimation of 20,000 members of Zanu-Pf were arrested and harassed by former Rhodesian police during the election campaigns (Sims, 2015 p.76). Additionally, Robert Mugabe survived assassination attempts during his campaigns in 1980 (ibid). A clear recession on both political and civil rights is noted after 1980, due to political setbacks in 1982-1987 where human rights atrocities named *Gukurahundi* was waged by Zanu-Pf in Matebeleland and Midlands against opposition (Freedom House report, 2009). Civil and political rights continued to be curtailed as the leadership of Mugabe consolidated power through violence against opposition and civilians and new constitutional amendments that sought to limiting rule of law and increasing executive powers (ibid). During the 1990 and 1995 elections, opposition could contest and do their campaigns in the elections, but they rarely won (Zanu-Pf won 117 seats out of 120) (Sims, 2015; Sachikonye, 2003). However, the election violence and human rights violation related to election period is noted, mostly in urban areas where growing opposition against Zanu-pf and Mugabe was present (Sachikonye, 2003). The survey below shows the decline of both civil and political freedoms in Zimbabwe after the 1980 elections.

*Freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa 2009: A Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*

![Graph showing Zimbabwe's ratings from 1980 to 2009.](image)

Source: Freedom House Survey, 2009
4 ANALYSIS

Without a doubt, Zimbabwe’s path towards a more increasingly authoritarian rule during the third wave of democracy in the region of southern Africa has made this “most likely” case stand out as a “deviant case” when compared to other countries in the region. A central objective of this thesis is to analyse the paradox of the unsuccessful democratic transition of the country. This is achieved by looking closely at power dynamics within the newly elected ruling elites of Zanu-Pf under the leadership of Robert Mugabe during the period, 1980 up to 2000. In this chapter, the empirical results from the process tracing will be analysed applying the earlier presented theoretical framework of power capture, power sharing, power division and the dominant party system.

4.1 Power dynamics within the newly elected ruling coalition as the root of authoritarian rule?

“Nearer home, we have since witnessed ... the tragic failure of leadership in our neighbouring Zimbabwe” Nelson Mandela, 2008.

The 1980 independence of Zimbabwe paved a path forward for the black majority to govern themselves through elections, and to achieve a political settlement for the country that encouraged the institutionalisation of democracy (Sachikonye, 2013). This is reflected in the Lancaster House Constitution, signed in 1979, which governed the post-independent Zimbabwe, as noted above. Thus, the newly elected government inherited, for better or worse, the political, economic and social institutions from the colonial government. For better, this meant that the country inherited the necessary institutions that could have yielded a political and constitutional order that gave it a head start in its democratic transition (Sachikonye, 2017 p.118). Hence, despite the liberation struggle the society remained resilient socially and economically (ibid).

For worse, with these institutions followed, for example, the propagandist Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation as the only television media. The corporation was just replaced with people from Zanu-Pf and then continued with the same
broadcasting monopoly (Sims, 2015 p.109). Only news that was beneficial and positive towards the state is aired (ibid). Hence, the independence of the country is often described by Chikwanha et al as a “political watershed” since there was more continuities in political terms than discontinuities (2001 ctd in Olaleye, 2005). Instead of focusing on broad based economic, social and political development for the benefits of those that put them in power, Zimbabwe’s newly elected political incumbents developed a narrow coalition of ruling elites, backed by military allies to thwart who ever stands in their way, and a dominant ruling party to consolidate and maintain their grip on state power (Bratton & Masunungure, 2011). Just like Svolik explains, “authoritarian politics takes place in the shadow of betrayal and violence” (Svolik, 2012 p.3).

In short, the central claim of this thesis is that the main reasons that resulted in unsuccessful democratic transition can be traced back to the power-capture, power division and power sharing by the newly elected ruling elites headed by Mugabe. As Svolik argues, key features of authoritarianism such as institutions, policies, and the leadership in these regimes are shaped by the problem of power sharing and control (Svolik, 2012). Therefore, I will discuss and analyse these problems of power dynamics in authoritarian rule with reference to the empirical evidence gathered through the process tracing that in turn support my theoretical arguments.

4.1.1 Power-capture in authoritarian rule

Thrilled with the excitement of dislodging the minority regime of Smith in 1980, the newly elected political incumbents in Zimbabwe were more committed to amass newly won state power, “for nation building” than to laying foundations for a broad-based democracy (Sachikonye, 2014 p.122). Bratton (2014) stresses that, in capturing power, the most dominant players in the political game seek to shape institutions of the state to address their own ends, such as imposing their own rules that serve their own interests. Hence, state institutions upholding the rule of law and political parties will eventually evolve to reflect a concealed and necessary “elite-driven social order” (Bratton, 2014; Bratton & Masunungure, 2011). Potentially inspired by Kwame Nkrumah’s (1957) famous injunction, in which he said to his compatriots “seek ye first the political kingdom, and all else shall be
added unto you,” the newly elected ruling elites under Mugabe gave first priority to ensure party control over vital institutions (Bratton & Masunungure, 2011). For illustration, as highlighted above, coercive organs of the state such as the military were reinforced through integrating Zanu-Pf military wing Zanla to form part of the Zimbabwean national army in 1980, just after the elections. Raftopoulos (2006) argues that this integration was advantageous to the ruling elites as the army’s loyalty is to Zanu-Pf and not the nation since it was created by Zanu-Pf (ctd in Moyo, 2014 p.28). Although Zipra forces, the military wing to Pf-Zapu, were integrated, research shows that fundamental effort was made to de-legitimise them (Ndlovu-Gatscheni, 2007 p.63). Additionally, the Zipra forces were later casted as a threat to the sovereignty of Zimbabwe during the Matebeleland crises in 1982-1987 and were disembarked from the army (ibid). Thus, in constant struggle for power and control, Svolik (2012) argues that interaction between the government and military may emerge, and in this case, this would be the “perfect political control” for Mugabe’s regime.

To survive in office, the “big man” had to set the tone for his governance, thereby setting his own rules (Diamond, 2008). This was achieved through seizing democratic institutions to realise his interest of accumulating power and state resources (Bratton, 2014). Bratton also stresses that, by capturing state power, ruling elites invariably extract and consolidate resources for their own benefits (ibid, p.9). The allocation of financial benefits to war veterans in 1997 and the farm occupations by 2000, where only Zanu-Pf supporters benefited from the occupations fit into this description. Additionally, after the 1985 elections and the elimination of Pf-Zapu, Mugabe created the executive presidency whose power symbolises a systematic concentration of power in the hands of one individual with absolute control over the country’s state of affairs (Bratton, 2014). Moyo (1992) argues that the executive presidency gave Mugabe, “omnipotent powers typically given to executive presidents in a one –party state” (p.30 ctd in Sim, 2015 p.106). By empowering himself with this position, through amendment of the constitution, Mugabe shielded himself from being accountable to the legislature and the judiciary that could uphold the check and balances of power. Those that were loyal to the Zanu-Pf party and their family members were
allocated state positions (Bratton & Masunungure, 2011). By doing so, the ruling elites quickly penetrated the majority of state apparatus, capturing democratic institutions for self-interest. Thus, Zanu-Pf, under the leadership of Mugabe, sacrificed democracy and state building for its own political gains, through implementing laws that silenced opposition and abused certain political and civil rights (Bratton, 2014 p.24).

To summarise, formal political institutions such as the judiciary, legislature, media and elections that were once useful for settling scores and grievances between elites themselves and the people in a democracy, were “captured.” In that, they have become dysfunctional and ineffective, as the conduct of authoritarian politics is characterised by repression and violence (Magaisa, 2019; Svolik, 2012). Since 1980, conflict resolution with Zanu-Pf has resulted in gross atrocities and violation of human rights, as witnessed by the 1990 and 1995 election process, the Matebeleland crises and the formation of new opposition MDC (Sims, 2015; Carver, 2000). When democratic institutions are captured, the only purpose they will serve is to reinforce its authoritarian ends by giving it a veneer of legitimacy and help them resolve the problems of power sharing and control (Magaisa, 2019; Svolik, 2012).

4.1.2 Power-division in authoritarian rule

A meaningful division of power, as explained by Bratton (2014), would be where ruling elites agrees on rules for periodically circulating power, among contending elites through free and fair elections and rule of law (p.10). However, politics under authoritarian rule means that power is highly centralized, with overpowering presidencies where division of power is steeply hierarchical (Diamond 2008, p. 138-149 ctd in Bratton, 2014). Therefore, power is organised around networks of patron-client relations and emotional glue from ethnic bonds (ibid). Through such power dynamics, loyalty is built on individual people rather than democratic institutions such as laws (Diamond, 2008). State resources are used to maintain these power dynamics between different actors and in different levels to maintain political dominance (Diamond, 2008; Bratton & Masunungure, 2011). As highlighted above, the ruling elites under Mugabe ensured that Zanu-Pf party
dominated by the Shona ethnic group is represented in all spheres of lives from political organisation to civic society and are part of any development in the country (Sims, 2015). Svolik (2012) regards this as a consequence of the problems of authoritarian control, where the dictator relies on co-optation (through assignment of benefits, selective recruitment, appointments and services) and repression (violence is used co-optation has failed) to strengthen the regime. Svolik (2012) further adds, that in order to co-opt effectively, most dictators use their ruling political parties. Hence, authoritarian parties are the best incentive structure and the institution that is used to co-opt rather than social spending alone (ibid). The organizational features of political parties accomplish more than ruling alone. That is why authoritarian parties are structured in such a way that they maintain a loyal and popular base for the system (Svolik, 2012). This explains how Mugabe’s leadership saw the importance of strengthening and reinforcing his ruling party. By the 1990’s, Zanu-Pf had gradually usurped all policy-making roles of the cabinet and the legislature to ensure domination of every political institution in Zimbabwe (Makumbe, 2003 ctd in Bratton & Masunungure, 2014). As Bratton (2014) explains, “power politics is the organizational efforts of entrenched authoritarian rulers to bludgeon their way into retaining power”. The government of Mugabe was, in its power division, also heavily unsympathetic to those critical to their power and violence was a tool used against its opponents (Bratton, 2014).

4.1.3 Power sharing in authoritarian rule

To understand power sharing in authoritarian rule, there is a need to examine the politics among the governing authorities since power sharing in these regimes resembles elite pacts rather than social contracts (Svolik, 2012, Bratton, 2014 p.14). Several factors determine the outcome of the political settlements, which can range from incentives, credibility, trust and balance of power (Bratton, 2014 pp.19-20). After the attainment of independence, Mugabe invited pf-Zapu led by Nkomo to form a coalition government, to work as one entity and commence on nation building. Nkomo was first offered the ceremonial position of President of Zimbabwe but he preferred a ministerial post (Bratton & Masunungure, 2011). The ceremonial presidential post was then given to the leader of UANC-Banana. This political settlement, using the game theory of Svolik in explaining authoritarian
power sharing between the ruling coalition and the dictator, highlights how the ruling coalition together with the dictator forge settlements in order to gain enough power to be both necessary and sufficient for the survival of the government (Svolik, 2012 p.63).

However, once the dictator acquires power, he will later use it to discard members of the ruling coalition that are no longer necessary to the survival of his rule (Svolik, 2012). The Matebeleland crisis is one such example, where Mugabe accused Nkomo and his Zipra forces of plotting a coup against the government; Nkomo was fired and driven into exile (Zvobgo 2009; Chigora et al, 2015). This resembles the issue of lack of trust in political settlements in authoritarian regimes.

In 1987, due to atrocities in Midlands and Matabeleland committed by military under leadership of Mugabe. Nkomo was forced to agree on a new political settlement called the Unity Accord and this was the last of Mugabe’s top rival, Pf-Zapu (Bratton & Masunungure, 2011 p.10). As noted by Bratton, in power dynamics, there are three general outcomes that come from power sharing settlements (2014). These are, either concentration of power in the hands of a dominant settlement partner; exercise of power via cooperation of rival groups or division of power that allows the other party to accept that one set of interests counterbalances the other (Bratton, 2014 p.20). In this case, the political outcome only led to consolidation of power by Zanu-Pf elites lead by Mugabe. Bratton and Masunungure (2011) highlights that, “one salutary effect of this rapprochement was that the former Pf-Zapu leaders were now positioned to urge moderation against the push to create a de jure one party state in Zimbabwe” (ibid, p.10).

Hence, the key to successful power sharing in any authoritarian desire and opportunity is to acquire more power at the expense of allies (Svolik, 2012 p.56). Svolik argues that when a dictator has succeeded in consolidating enough power that the ruling coalition can no longer credibly threaten him. Thus, under this “degenerated” power-sharing regime, rebellions do not occur, and the dictator has managed to eliminate the support of the ruling coalition for his survival (Svolik, 2012 p.61). Additionally, Jackson and Rosberg (1982) call such dictators “African autocrats,” defining their ruling style as one that gives them greater freedom to act
as they want; either through breaking settlements or not bonded by them in the first place, as there are no powerful rivals in his coalition that he must contend (ctd in Svolik, 2012).

On the other hand, power-sharing agreements can also act as a way of stopping conflicts where there is political instability. Hence, peaceful procedures are regarded as less costly than the continued use of violence for resolving conflicts of interest even in authoritarian politics (Bratton, 2014 p.14). Reports suggest that Nkomo, only resorted to this power sharing agreement of 1987, to stop the massacres towards his ethnic group, the Ndebele’s in Midlands and Matebeleland. However, Svolik (2012) argues that what shapes authoritarian politics is the ever present of violence, as it is central in their politics and the ruling elites seem to have no regard to the cost of violence. This is evidenced in 1999, when the regime responded to the formation of MDC by intimidating and harassing the leadership and supporters of the opposition party (Carver, 2000). Additionally, the 1990 and 1995 electoral processes were marked with gruesome violence towards any opposition, despite the fact that the ruling party won with a majority in the elections (Sachikonye, 2003). To Svolik (2012), authoritarian politics is messy and dangerous!

4.2 Zanu-Pf - dominance and the fate of democratic transition

The newly elected government after 1980, acquired a dominant-party system after its liberation struggle against British colonial rule. The ruling party Zanu-Pf has all the characteristics of a predominant party illustrated in Sartori (1976). Zanu-Pf has clearly maintained its dominance since 1980 up to 2000. This dominance was not only based on Zanu-Pf overwhelming voter support and a majority seats in parliament during the 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995 elections (Sims, 2015; Sachikonye, 2003). It is also due to obvious lack of political competition during that period until 2000, when the MDC was established and challenged Zanu-Pf. To maintain its prolonged dominance, Zanu-Pf has long created “an uneven playing field,” propounded by Levitsky &Way (2010) where democratic competition is undermined by control of state resources by the dominant party at the expense of opposition. There were reports during the 1990 election process, revealing that
Zanu-Pf cabinet ministers threatened to dismiss government employees from their work if they supported any opposition party in the 1990 elections (Bratton & Masunungure, 2011 p.17). On the other hand, some scholars argue that the dominant parties that came into power on the wave of significant historic events, as in this case a liberation struggle, tend to maximize on that ideology to ensure their dominance (de Jager & du Toit, 2012).

As a result of this prolonged dominance, Huntington (1991) and Przeworkis et. al (2000) argue that Zimbabwe, due to its lack of shift in political power and Zanu-Pf’s continuous overwhelming position of power, would be an authoritarian regime (ctd in von Seth, 2016). Zimbabwe also fails Huntington’s two-turnover test (Huntington, 1991 p.266-267). However, critics may argue that the dominant party system may not be necessarily used to classify nations as authoritarian or democracies since, for example in southern Africa, dominant party systems replaced the one party system during the third wave of democracy (de Jager & du Toit, 2012; von Seth, 2016). As an illustration, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa have dominant party systems, where a shift of power has never occurred and have not passed the two-turnover test, but the countries are still regarded as free (Freedom, House 2019; von Seth, 2016).

Nevertheless, de Jager & du Toit argues that Zimbabwe appears “to be a dominant party system of a most malevolent kind” (2012, p.4). This is due to Zanu-Pf gross human rights violations to citizens and opposition, yet elections are being held regularly and power is continuously being contested (ibid). Hence, for the dominant party system to be viewed as democratic, it should be instituted and maintained through regular elections in which many other parties also participate (de Jager & du Toit, 2012). However, as Svolik (2012) highlights, in authoritarian politics, dominant party systems are usually characterised by fraudulent electoral processes and with high levels of political violence. As an example the 1990 and 1995 elections, legitimacy was questioned due to Zanu-Pf interference (Sims, 2015 p.109). This has also resulted in decreased numbers of voter turnout after 1980, from 94% to 57% in 1995, as citizens display their dissatisfaction towards democratic institutions (ibid; Sachikonye, 2003). Thus, such elections distinctively
serve authoritarian ends (Svolik, 2012). In the light of this, the dominance party system may result in a negative impact on democracy (de Jager & du Toit, 2012 p.15-16). Since, the ruling dominant party have to induce and maintain loyalty using different mechanism that may infringe on the political and civil rights of the citizens they intend to represent (ibid). Furthermore, Arian & Barnes states that “the dominant party system is one in which politics is King, in which dominance results from strategic political decisions made by the party elite” (1974).

However, there is a considerable risk that the dominant party system will be more or less like a one-party state, where the dominant party is identified with the regime and is authoritarian in nature (de Jager & du Toit, 2012). According to Kriger (2003), from the start, the newly elected Zanu-Pf aimed to build a party nation and a party state, backed by its military wing (Zanla). This further evidenced, that the most credible post-colonial opposition in Zimbabwe Pf-Zapu was eliminated with repression after disunity among the political elites in the 1980s (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007). Additionally, the frequent use of party slogans, party symbols, party songs at national ceremonies like Independence and Heroes Days resembles a one-party system rather than a dominant party system (Ndlovu-Gatscheni, 2007 p.63). The party dominance in Zimbabwe made the political system shift from democracy to authoritarianism, since the ruling party could not, and cannot, separate itself from the state (de Jager & du Toit, 2012). Dominance in this case is achieved through capturing and monopolising the symbolism associated with independence and heroes’ events (ibid). Dominant party systems do not necessarily result in authoritarian rule (de Jager & du Toit, 2012). However, the strategies that most dominant parties use to consolidate their dominance, such as the use of the availability of resources to dominate at the expense of the opposition party may lead to oppressive and authoritarian politics, as in the case of Zimbabwe (de Jager & du Toit, 2012).

In summary, the analysis presents findings that show that several explanatory factors appear to have jeopardized Zimbabwe’s attempt to democratic transition, as compared to its neighbours, during the third wave of democratization. Due to the combination of power capture, power division and power sharing by the ruling
elites led by Mugabe, along with a predominant party-system, democratic transition had no chance as authoritarianism engulfed the state. Just as Svolik (2012) summates the unsuccessful democratic transition in Zimbabwe, it is a classical problem of authoritarian politics.
5 Conclusions and Discussion

The aim of this thesis has been to understand Zimbabwe’s unsuccessful democratic transition during the third wave of democratization. As mentioned, the country was a “most likely” case of democratization that failed and slipped into authoritarianism, in contrast to its neighbours in the southern African region. Zimbabwe, just like Namibia, South Africa and Botswana is built upon the foundations of British model of an administrative state, with elements of Westminster constitutionalism and democratically elected ruling elites (de Jager & du Toit, 2012 p.6).

The fact that the country inherited the necessary democratic institutions in 1980 could have resulted in a full-fledged transition as compared to some of its neighbours (Sachikonye, 2017). The southern African region was unique during the third wave of democratization as most of the countries made concerted efforts to democratize (Bauer & Taylor, 2005). Nevertheless, the case of Zimbabwe stood out as a, “deviant case” in the region as the country became increasingly authoritarian after its 1980 independence under the leadership of Mugabe. As highlighted by Huntington (1991), there exist several explanatory variables that explain why countries such as Zimbabwe fail considerably in their democratic transition and easily slip in authoritarianism. Using process tracing and case study techniques, I was able to investigate the elite level dynamics within the newly elected ruling elites of Zanu-Pf under the leadership of Mugabe. Process tracing has been useful in the research in terms of establishing timeline, how far, historically, I had to go back to seek out a cause. Additionally, it was useful in identifying a sequence of events that needed to be focused on, as well as actions by different actors that were theoretically significant in establishing my case.

The specific research question that was asked and answered in this study is: To what extent and in what ways did the newly elected ruling party in the leadership of Robert Mugabe during the period of 1980-2000 use its power dynamics to undermine the democratic transition in the country?
It is evident that democracy has been a problematic component of African political development for many decades (Mozaffar, 1997). This is evidenced by most of sub-Saharan countries that embarked on a democratization process after their liberalization and soon reverted back authoritarian rule or are flawed democracies (Cheeseman, 2015; Huntington, 1991). The Zimbabwean case illustrates that, not all countries that go through successful political liberalization accomplish successful democratic transitions. Zimbabwe’s case represents a move from complete liberalization to authoritarianism (Sachikonye, 2017). Huntington (1991), explains that no single factor can be responsible for explaining the failure or success of democratization as this depends on a combination of variables. In this case, the main obstacles to democratic transition in the country is explained in terms of the existing power dynamics that lies within the ruling elites, under the leadership of Mugabe, as well as by the dominance of Zanu-Pf in politics. These power dynamics were exercised through power capturing, power-division and power sharing resembling the struggles that exists in authoritarian politics. Using Svolik’s (2012) understanding of politics of authoritarian rule, it is clear that Mugabe’s rule was not been guided by democracy but instead shaped by two principal problems; the problem of authoritarian control and power-sharing. Thus, Mugabe’s regime has constantly relied on repression, capturing institutions and co-optation to safeguard their survival. In light of the above, I found the theoretical framework to be useful and corresponding well with the Zimbabwean trajectory to a larger extent.

Understanding the conduct of politics by the Zanu-Pf elites under Mugabe’s leadership during the period 1980-2000, is vital since it can assist us to see how the future looks in terms of possible democracy. Does democracy have a future in Zimbabwe? According to Svolik (2012) authoritarian rule and their regimes do not usually end through normal democratic institutions, since these have already been captured in order to serve only authoritarian ends. However, history has shown us that authoritarian regimes often suffer violent ends either through a coup or popular uprising (Svolik, 2012). Robert Mugabe’s reign took an end due to a coup by his former vice president and long ally Emmerson Mnangagwa, who was backed by the military, in November 2017 (Magaisa, 2019). However, removing
Mugabe did not end authoritarian rule as this is engulfed in the system that is still under the reign of Zanu-pf (ibid). The future of democracy in Zimbabwe is, therefore, still uncertain.

To conclude, this study has shown us that democratic transitions are complex and marred with uncertainties; their outcome proves that there is no “one size fits all model” for the process (Sachikonye, 2012). Hence, there are many dimensions that still need to be explored, that I did not take into consideration due to the scope and limitations of the research. As an illustration, it would have been interesting to investigate the extent to which British colonial rule has impacted on the democratic transition of Zimbabwe. Bernhard et al (2004) argues, that most studies that examine the relationship between colonialism and democracy highlight that the effect of colonialism is negative on the prospects for democracy (p.230). Colonial rule has generally left both elites and the masses unprepared for democracy, due to ethnic fractionalization (Bernhard et al 2004). Since colonialism was built on status differentiation based on ethnic differences, this has complicated the establishment of democracy as civil wars have frequently broken out among ethnic groups (ibid). The question to be asked would be: What effect did the, “legacy of colonial rule” especially the use of violence by the colonial power had on shaping the newly elected ruling elites political path that they adopted after gaining independence?

Furthermore, future research could also focus on citizen’s level instead of the elite level, by examining the role of ordinary people or civil society on democratization process in Zimbabwe. Finally, it would be interesting to understand why Zimbabwe fell into authoritarianism yet Botswana, South Africa and Namibia succeeded in their democratization despite similarities that exist between the neighbouring countries. Hence, the most similar system design (MSSD) would be interesting to pursue for future studies, to understand what explains the divergent variation in democratization between these neighbouring countries.
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