

## **THE 26 MARCH BY-ELECTIONS: A Dress Rehearsal for Election 2023**

Greetings to you all and welcome to this our third forum for this year. Greetings to all of you. Especially those from far afield who have joined us from TNT, David Johnson. From the Queen's Country here. Chris Mukofa. From a fire seal. There's no way. Hedy running. And we also have a don't anybody out there. Um Okay. Next door. My dear sister Nana Mudenda. In the UK. Zamshia in Cape Town together with a brother here. So our topic today is looking at the 26th of March by elections. And to consider whether is this truly a dress rehearsal? For twenty twenty-three? But of course soon after we acquaint this title with the amazing news a few days ago. The announcement of the three C's. citizens was this what does it what does it say Brian? Three C's. Anyway, the new not so new kid on the block. But more significant, what does that mean? For the political dynamics in Zimbabwe. What does it mean for Mwonozora and his group? Was it mean for Zanu PF itself? Mm. Was in for the Chiwenga factor. If it has been affected or we want to through three experts that we have here. And the chair got moderate himself. He's next player in the field. And I therefore like to welcome him. And introduce him. Arnold

Tunga. Country director for NDI but I promise Zimbabwean former legislator. a man who's part of the debate on the democratization process in Zimbabwe. Welcome Arnold. I'll be handing over to you soon. And then we have brand rep toppers. Director of research and advocacy. At the Ukutula Trust. In South Africa. And the senior research fellow. The National Mandela School of Public Governance. University of Cape Town. Welcome Brian. Thanks. He's a regular year and and of course he's just a moment by the way. People think it's some Greek or some South African. He's one of ours. And we're proud and proudly so. And then my dear sister Samukele Kumalo. Founder and a director of Women's Institute for Leadership Development. Samuel you are somewhere in the bush there but it's nice to you're able to link up with us. Welcome. And last but not least my brother Trevor Ngube. The doyan of Zimbabwean journalism. The chairman of Alpha Media. A long history in the media. And was most pleased to have him. Here. We or is receiving others on his programme today. We receive him and we're most pleased that he's able to find time to be with us. So with that I hand over to Arnold Sunga. Thank you. Thank you very much Doctor Ibo Mandaza and let me thank yourself and for creating this platform.

Which I've always admired and I think it's an absolutely important platform to deal with issues that affect the life of democracy in our country. Zimbabwe. Um and and things a lot for already introducing the panel. Because that already saves us a lot of time since my idea is that we have quite a bit of aspects around the by-elections as well as the twenty twenty-three elections that I hope we can be able to discuss with the panelists as well as the audience. The participant. Um so the things that I hope we going to be able to cover generally would include recalls and democracy in general, Uh the person of voter apathy. The issues of delimitation. Um the issues of media. Uh especially the role of public media. In providing fair and balanced coverage during elections. Uh the question of gender and elections. Questions of women. Participation. Also participation of people with disability And their inclusion in politics. The issues of civic participation engagement that may take us to look at the question of civic space. Um as well is the strength of our institutions for supporting and protecting democracy that are provided for in the constitution of Zimbabwe. And then maybe eh if we we we could also look at the strength of the political parties

themselves. Since they are the main drivers through which the growth of democracy and good governance in our country is supposed to be entrenched. Um it's our constitution I through section one 58 provides for recalls. And at the execution of those recalls has left more questions than answers on the impact of this practice. On the health of our democracy as a country. The recalls have resulted in many constituents being unrepresented for prolonged period of time. Uh currently with the by-elections we have twenty-eight vacancies that are due for elections. One out of the twenty<sup>9</sup> that vacant is not going for the by-elections because of I think the the the question of time within which a proclamation needs to be made. And then there's currently doubt about six of the the people who were recalled. Because for some reason the headquarters given too conflicting orders. The first one being to stop denomination process from going on on account of the things that the vacancies don't exist. And then within 24 hours later the same court making a decision that in fact the by-elections should proceed. The nomination should proceed. But as it is the timeline the the period within which the nomination process needed to happen. Um expired before the six constituencies could have

nominations. So as of now we are in a bit of doubt. And then on the local government authorities. We see that as in 120 wards are going to be contested. The by-elections themselves are almost like a mini national election. So there's a huge impact on the fiscals. Um then one of the other factors that I hope we will be able to deal with around the question of voter apathy or lack of it. You know in twenty eight elections after the end of Mugabe's Mugabe Sauru or era as a president. We had an eighty-five percent turnout of the registered voters which was quite a huge turnout. And that in itself I think showed that the people of Zimbabwe felt that the end of Mugabe's era was in entry. into a new era where there will be a growth of multiparty democracy and pluralism in Zimbabwe after almost what I can call a wasted four decades during the first republic where the voting had begun to be more and more associated with apathy and more turnout. And then so so the question is Doctor Ibo Mandaza said is whether these by elections can be clear indicator of what is likely to happen in twenty twenty-three around these issues that we are speaking to. Um I know that it's an area where political parties are going to be experimenting in the ruling

party trying to see whether the political temperature is changing but the opposition forces beginning to try and make an assessment of where the lie terms of the popular support especially given the infighting and factional fights that have happened and that has now resulted in the birth of the new formation the city citizens coalition for change. The CCC. So with those let me ask

Professor Raft generally to give us your initial presentation for about 20 minutes On these issues that I have spoken to and whether this by-elections issued really be an indicator of anything and and what we should be worried about and what 2023 has in store for us. So Professor I've covered you. Thank you Arnold and thank you Ebo once again for the opportunity join this conversation. And good evening to all the participants and the fellow speakers. Look I think that what we're seeing in Zimbabwe is at the battle for democratization is the long wall. As we've seen globally and historically. And it's clear to me that what we've seen since the coup and the post-coup period is that the state this current state regime is in the process of trying to systematically dismantle the opposition. Even more so than Mugabe did. And they've done it through a

number of means. They're doing it through a number of attempts. One is of course the use of the judiciary in 2020 to remove Chamisa from his position of the MDC Alliance Led by former president Morgan Swange. And to then allow for an alternative MDC which is much more pliable for the Mnangagwa government under Mwonzora. Uh the removal of their resources, the buildings, the the building, their headquarters, the removal of their state funding through parliament of course the removal of the MPs and the local councillors which which is seen has caused so much damage. The creation of Paulette which is a a dialogue forum which is very much under the control of the of the and does not include the major opposition player, Chamisa grouping, and is therefore like really a side side event and not likely to really produce a national dialogue. Uh the suspension in the pass of the by-elections which will only take place in March. Of course the violence which we saw against the MDC Chamisa in places like Nicola, Mashingo, Mashonaland when they attempted to go out to speak to the and then of course the gazetteting of the private voluntary organisation's amendment act Which essentially seeks to comprehensively police the activities and messaging of

civil society groups. These are all a clear message that the the the current party, the current ruling party is very uncomfortable with having an opposition party in the form of of the current Chamisa leadership. Because as we saw in 2018, they had a substantial support and still likely to have substantial support. But we also know that elections have been a problem throughout the post-colonial period. The electoral processes themselves, the the registration, the monitoring, the counting, the violence which has pervaded all elections and to this day, we still do not have one of the main mantras of the liberation movement which was one person, one vote. It's a sad and stressful situation that people are still fighting for their for their right to vote. Which was central to the liberation struggle. Not just the land question. But the human rights question and the voting question. Which was central issues. Which have yet to be delivered. By the the the once liberation movement. I think the the emergence of the Citizens Coalition for Change is going to face major challenges. First of all let me say it's remarkable that they've still survived this major onslaught of the state. Because the state has really gone at them through the judiciary, through violence,

through attacks on their alliances. And of course they've had to date the support of the region SADAC which has placed the question of sovereignty and liberation fellow ahead of democratic demands. And so they've had to really fight this battle. Uh on a on a terrain. Which is totally disadvantageous to them. Uh we've also seen the Mnangagwa regime use the sanctions debate as a kind of anti-imperial as part of an anti-imperialist messaging around issues of sovereignty. When we know that the sanctions did not cause the crisis in Zimbabwe. They might have exacerbated it. But they were not the cause of the economic crisis. And there's a lot of discussion around that. Having said that I think the the coalition, the new triple C is going to have to face a number of of of challenges. One is to take a critical look at how it got to this place in the first place. Not only through the state actions, but also through bad decisions internally. Bad decisions with which date back to the 2005 split. Which was not just a out the senate issue. It was also about internal accountability issues. It was about ethnic questions. It was about leadership issues around Swangai Rai. And that the the the prelude a series of other splits. In which issues were around holding of

positions and and getting getting jobs. Issues of principle, of accountability, of vision. Increasingly dropped to the site. As the battle opposition as as as it is in many post-colonial states often turns to questions of livelihood. And we're seeing that happen. So this is one issue. The second of course is that the the triple C now has to deal with a very different political economy. In terms of the citizenry. When the MDC was formed in the 1990s. There was a fairly large formal sector. Um there was a fairly strong Labour movement. In both the public and the private sectors. And there the messaging that was coming out of the NGO of the CSO movement, the civil society movement which actually led the debate in the 19 90s. It led the debate around democratization, around constitutionalism. It took the state and the the after effects of the fast track and the violence that followed that to push back on that. And we've seen the effects of that today. So as it stands now, the Triple C has to deal with the an largely informal economy. Whereas in the 1980s, the Rodal Commission could talk about the informal economy in tens of thousands. By 2016 we're talking about already we were talking about between eighty eighty-five of the economy informalised. This has huge

implications because it means there's less organisational forms. We've seen different attempts in the informal sector to organize the #movements. This flag. Uh you know, the, the, the, the, all the different #movements that have emerged. But what we've seen with those is a lack of sustainability, organizational sustainability. Which the Labour Movement had, which it does not have, because the formal sector has been decimated. And this has affected the membership of the Labour Movement. The largest former sector workers are now in the public sector, which we are seeing where we're seeing many of the complaints and strikes. But it's also sector where the state is deeply entrenched in terms of the unions. So it's a, it's a problematic issue. They're also having to deal with the rural massive reconfiguration in the rural areas. Where we now have much more small scale farmers, a much greater differentiation within the rural sector. Which also means that you have to deal with different kinds of politics. In those rural areas. And their relationship to traditional authorities to parties and to the state. And the messaging that you give out in terms of the kind of livelihoods that are emerging within those those sectors. So we have a massively transformed

livelihood, political economy, which the CCC has to be able to deal with. To send a messaging that will be able to connect with those issues. And to deal with those issues. Um in the region we're seeing what we're seeing in the region is a real crisis. If we if we locate the Zimbabwe politics within the region. South Africa itself is kind of facing an its own existential crisis. Over state capture, constitutionalism, the crisis, the faction of battles within the ANC. Um and the future of, of, of the ANC and the future, the fact that even though the ANC is in trouble, there doesn't seem to be any alternatives, and that seems to be the case in other parts of the region. So, South Africa at the moment does not have the confidence to take the lead around issues like the Zimbabwe crisis, as it did in previous years. Uh, for example, named Becky Pierre, whatever the problems in Becky showed when he dealt with Zimbabwe. And so we're not likely to see any initiatives. We saw them tried in 20 19 and 2020 with little effect to largely dismissed by Zanu PF. Uh and that just showed the kind of loss of of of authority I think that the South African government as he has in in the region. We're also seeing of course the problems emerging corruption again in Malawi. securitization

of politics in Mozambique because of the crisis in Cabo Delgado. Um Zambia still early days for HH presidency. But the region is as a whole facing a series of challenges. Which then puts the Zimbabwe crisis in the context of these broader problems. Uh which are taking place. And and sometimes seem to be well maybe it's not as big as some of the other problems that are there. Such as Mozambique. But we're seeing generally in the region the the limits of the liberation politics that we've inherited. The liberation movement which offered and promised so much to the citizenry in the 70s and the eighties. We're seeing that within a within the context of post-colonial states. There's no exceptionalism about post-colonial states under liberation movements. They show the same propensities around corruption, state capture, reliance coercion rather than consent that we've seen in other parts of the continent, other post-colonial states. That sense at one time in the 70s that Southern Africa because of its prolonged liberation struggle was kind of exceptional in what possibilities it had. It's simply not there anymore. Uh and certainly it's not the case in South Africa. Uh at a broader international level the I think in terms of the EU we're seeing a wait and see

approach on Zimbabwe. Uh there are also themselves unsure what to do beyond sanctions issue. Similarly with the British government. Uh for the US, the sanctions will remain in place And of course for the Biden administration, they have much bigger issues. Not least the current conflict on Ukraine and their potential confrontation with Russia. And this of course dates back to the post communist politics of Nato and the EU. Uh in in the post communist period. And that's another another issue that can be discussed. So yeah, I think that the the in looking at the way forward, clearly also civil society groups, I'm sure others will talk about this. They're facing a lot of new challenges, not least. Uh, funding challenges, space, political space, competition amongst NGOs for funding. And the, the kind of a lack of a unified positioning, which I think needs to come much more to the all. If the messaging is going to grow. Um so we're facing a earlier state. Increasingly and a ruling party which is factional ised. Not for the first time. Zanu's history is riddled with factionalism. From its inception. From the 70s during the liberation struggle. You know the Nari rebellion, the Kashandi issue, Chitepo assassination, we seen the post-colonial factionalism within Zanu PF which led to

what the coup was in 2017,  
which wasn't about  
democratisation, other about  
the transfer of power from one  
part of Zanu PF to another. For  
those whoever thought and were  
hopeful about the possibilities  
of Zanu PF reforming through  
the new dispensation, that was  
in very quickly dispelled in  
the post 20 18 election period,  
and in the kind of politics  
that's emerged, since then. We  
have a state Which is largely  
based or on the economy.  
Whether it's in the mineral  
sector, energy, on the land.  
And based on not building a  
broad national citizenry around  
consensual issues and  
constitutionalism. But an  
increasing intensification of  
coercion, exclusion, and the  
politics of sovereignty which  
is to deny democratic rights.  
And we've seen this over and  
over again since the Mugabe  
period and we're seeing it now  
in a more intensified form in a  
Zanu PF which ideologically is  
much less much more inept than  
it's ever been. We we can  
speculate about the factional  
battles in in in Zanu PF  
between there's people better  
able to talk to that. My sense  
is despite these battles  
they're likely to come together  
for the sake of the election in  
in 2023. If only because for  
elites like this the state is  
everything. This is with the  
centre of accumulation. Without  
the state, they have nothing.

And so holding onto the state and the assets and the viability and the avenues for rentiership and accumulation. Which is linked to the state. And not to and a productive class which has a distance from the state which this ruling party has persistently denied the possibility of that happening. Uh then we going to have this battle for the state is the battle for it's a zero sound game for Zanu PF. Once they're out of the state, they know they have real problems. Problems not only about their own accumulation and their own private assets. But also about historical accountability. For the violence that they've inflicted on the citizenry. Since the period of Gukuruande, the violence of the elections in the 2000s, all issues which remain unresolved. And which are festering, particularly the Gukurandi issue in Matabil lands. It has not gone away, it's not going to go away. And it's going to continuously be a reminder of the manner in which this state has conducted its form of law. Which has been frankly disgraceful. And so I think this is the challenge that the coalition the new coalition must face. Not only the challenges of a depressive state, the limits in the region, the limits internationally. But also coming to terms critically with its own history. And the

mistakes it has made internally. And I've not seen enough of that within the Chamisa discussions. There needs to be a much more critical discussion about its own history. We're going to move beyond some of those issues into a new kind of politics. Which take us takes us beyond politics as just employment and jobs. But the vision which produces new citizenries with new subjectivities which can then place long term issues of not just redistribution but about democratisation. Both issues which were central to the liberation struggle and which are central to politics throughout the region at the moment. And which are as I said playing out in their own way currently in South Africa. In a way that's it to impact on Zimbabwe, not least through the anti-immigration politics, which is pervading all the parties here, including the ANC. Uh this kind of populist anti-immigration, blaming everything on immigrants particularly Zimbabweans. Um, and take not take into account the failures of the Zimbabwean state and the failures of the region to deal with those issues over a long period of time. When citizens win NGOs, when CSOs and opposition parties have been calling on the region to deal with this for over two decades. And

they've simply continued with a kind of regressive solidarity. Which has pushed Zimbabwe continuously into further crisis. And so yes I think this is a massive task we have ahead of us. We have a long struggle ahead of us I think and we just need to face that. Thank you Arnold and thank you Igbo. Thank you. Thanks a lot professor for that wonderful introduction. Um before I go to the other panelists, maybe I should actually ask that maybe to to to allow for one or two follow-up questions that I have before we can open up to the panel. I've already seen that there's already a good use of the chart. Um function to raise questions that you want as an audience for the for the panelist to speak to. Please continue on that path. Uh and then at an appropriate time we're going to get those responses. But just one or two questions to you before I go to the next panelist Professor Ralph you spoke of eh eh the fact that the ruling party is trying to dismantle the opposition using a variety of tools. Including the judiciary, including the creation of Pollard, the violence that is systematically sustained against the opposition. As well as the promulgation of repressive pieces of legislation. Uh such as the private voluntary

amendment bill. Uh that will create a mindful for civil society especially those that are involved in the democracy governance eh sector. But then on the judiciary can can I push back a little bit? You know institutions like Zimbabwe lawyers for human rights. The the they have really been able to get global recognition. For their use of the judiciary. To deal with what I can call weaponisation of the legal system or instrument as a instrumentalisation of the legal system. To the point that many of the human rights activists or pro-demo at which legitimate political actors who have come into contact with the law and been arbitrarily arrested and detained. They have relied on the courts for them to be released. And so you find the likes of young Mister Makomore Aruzi Vishe who was in custody for nine months. Uh precisely for his pro-democracy activism. But it took the judiciary to grant him bail when they seemed to be determination to keep him inside. Uh you have people young with female leaders like Joanna Mombe, Netsai, Naruba and Cecilia. Um who were at some point claimed to have been abducted. I think they were actually abducted and then but later the state turned against them to say they had faked their abduction. But despite

being arrested. The only reason why they are out is because the judiciary intervened. Would we say that our our about the judiciary not playing ball in terms of defending human rights and democracy. We are stretching it too far prof. That's one. The second one. Oh sorry. The second one is really I think you are right when you say South Africa and our neighbours. They seem to have a lot on their plate in terms of own problems but also maybe limited capacity to intervene on Zimbabwe. Despite the fact that civil society in Zimbabwe and possibly the political have felt that maybe they needed to be a bit more robust in the way like the ECOAS does you know in ahm dealing with eh attacks on ah democracy and the failure to allow for ehm the elections to be a basis on which the authority to govern is derived from. I know that in the there are a lot of coups and therefore maybe their response is a bit tougher because of the fact that you have a phenomenon of course and eh changes of that are merely assisted by the military. So I'm wondering whether that shouldn't really be a clear sign that Zimbabweans cannot continue trying to outsource the resolution of their own problems. Isn't it time that Zimmigrants should really be able to use the democratic process, the electoral process

to accept their rights and come in numbers so that they can resolve the crisis once and for all. Those are the two persons. Thank you. First of all I agree with you Torti about organisations like ZRHR. They've done a magnificent job. They've kept the debate alive about constitutionalism, about human rights, about individual rights. Uh they they've set the terrain for possible future. The constitutionalism. And they've kept the the the judiciary as a contested terrain of around the law. They've been absolutely wonderful and I think that I I don't disagree with you about that at all. Without them we would have seen a much more problematic judiciary than we've seen. And they've kept alive the possibility of legal action within the Zim equality. And they must be congratulated for that. The second is that we should stop outsourcing. Well first of all Zimbabweans have been trying to do it on their own for a long time. There's this idea that sometimes comes up that were you know Zimbabweans are not trying to do enough for to change their own. That's just historically inaccurate. Since the nineteen nineties Zimbabwean citizens have done pretty much everything except pick up a gun. To change. They've been strikes. Stay aways. demonstrations, they've they've

fought for a new constitution  
They've they've fought for, as  
you said, in, in terms of the  
LHR, they fought for more legal  
space. There's been a political  
parties, which have fought  
elections, one elections and  
been denied the right to take  
power. So it's not a question  
that Zimbabweans are need to  
stop outsourcing. They've,  
they've been trying for decades  
to do it on their own. But what  
it mean is that whatever's done  
nationally has regional and  
international needs to keep  
those regional and  
international context within  
the understanding of that  
within the strategies that are  
available. I'll stop there.  
Thank you. Thank you very much.  
Um let me come to you my sister  
Sangele Soenda totally  
appreciate that you could find  
time to join us. Um what I  
wanted to ask is a bit more  
maybe also a little technical  
especially for people who are  
involved in election  
programming. Uh because you  
know in my introduction  
somewhere I said that the  
twenty eighteen elections had a  
high voter turnout at  
eighty-five percent. of his  
rates and voters participating.  
Um but then immediately after  
the elections that's when we  
saw we saw the the shooting  
essentially in cold blood. The  
killing of civilians who were  
and during the protests. And  
and since that time it appears

like like we have generally been one way in terms of you know the question of civic space. But also generally the perception that there's an uptick. Uh again unfortunately. In the violations of the human rights. Would you say that to be what is happening? What's your impression about civic space and whether we're going to to to see election that will have a high turnout. Whether in the by-elections or in the in in 20 2-three. Why I ask someone? Let me also maybe get a bit more detailed about it. Is that the Zimbabwe Election Commission has announced that as of eight January 2022, we have 5. 6 million people who have now been registered to vote. And then from the same statistics, Bulawayo has lowest number of registered voters which is about two hundred and fifty-four thousand six hundred Followed by Matibuleri South. Matiplan South with two hundred and fifty-nine six hundred voters And then Martin North with 335, 800 voters. So it looks like multibuilding is shrinking. And could this be an indicator that they are dangers or the voter turnout could be weak. What's what's your perspective Samuel? Ah good evening. Thank you ah my brother note for the question. Um yeah. It is a really difficult terrain that we see ourselves in throughout the electoral periods in

Zimbabwe. Uh since twenty 2018 I guess and now we are in twenty twenty-two. We are we are getting ready for for for the by-elections. Um for me coming to to to the electoral process itself. The starting point for inclusive electoral processes is ensuring that all eligible voters including women and and the minority groups are registered to vote. Um in the case of Zimbabwe, the politics of elections start to take centre stage when it comes to the management of elections. And in particular voter registration. There seems to be a deliberate complication of registration. Both of IDs and and voter registration. Um I would make reference to an Amnesty International report that was titled we are like stray animals. That actually reveals that hundreds of thousands of citizens are trapped in the misery of statelessness in Zimbabwe. They can't vote. Um they can't be formally employed. They can't access banks. They can't register as citizens to directly benefit from say social protection schemes. They can't buy land or property or even register it in their names. They can't get passports. They're simply living like animals as they report alludes. This is due to discriminatory and arbitrary documentation laws that have left generations of migrant

labours and their families living in the margins with no form of documentation. It is no brainer that most of these workers and their families are found in Matebele land. As historically Bulawayo was the industrial hub. Then that attracted migrant workers from different parts of Southern Africa. Um added to that problem is the unresolved issue of Kukrawundi. That is that left thousands and thousands of citizens without proper documentation. As they cannot obtain death certificates for their family heads would disappeared or were buried in mass graves during the massacres. And they cannot prove their citizenship and the issue itself really makes it difficult for citizens particularly from this part of the regions that will directly affected to really openly participate in these public processes and air their views, air their concerns, in fear of intimidation, in fear of also like what we have seen in the past where plagues have been destroyed where citizens are trying to go and commemorate the loss of their loved ones during the and this is an effect in terms of the level of participation in in the coming elections sorry the by-elections and also in the in the 2023 elections. As people of three of the region are feeling that they are still

left out. They are still threatened. They are not part of of of the of the of the national definition of of of Zimbabwe. Um maybe since the ruling party knows also the socioeconomic effects of of being stateless. And and and also the the the perpetuated discrimination of of of people from from from this region. They may assume that if these people are documented they may not vote for them. It is then not surprising to see these complications I mean in getting identity documents such as birth certificates. The 20twenty1 political outcome in Zambia that publicly was alluded to young people's participation in the general elections. Seemed to be having a major effect in denying or a major factor in denying young people to get identity documents in Zimbabwe. The registrar general's office is said to be citing resource constraints in in ensuring that young people do not get IDs. Um Zach as well has urgently decentralised. He has to sit urgently decentralise its registration points to where citizens are. Considering that a lot cannot afford transport to this centralised points of registration. Where when CSO to come in to assist these desperate citizens to manage to access these centralised registration points. They are labelled voter buyers and

agents of the opposition. Uh we saw a statement recently where Civic Society was being accused of funding potential register of voters to to to go and register to vote and they were even saying that they are sponsoring them to double vote. registered I mean to to to register double. Ja. Um again you you see that this is an effort really to to curtail the work of civic society in ensuring that it assists it assists citizens to register to vote. Particularly the young people. Um the affected regions by law of voter registration are also adversely affected by the geopolitics and are already vulnerable. To say extreme geometric changes and are therefore contribute the largest percentages when it comes to economic migration. We are going into these by-elections in March. The delimitation exercise in August and general elections in 2023 but there is no talk of diaspora voter registration and voting. Uh this blind eye to diasporans is hypocritical considering that this government is projected to be collecting close to about 1.3 billion from diaspora remittances by by say end of of twenty twenty-one That is a significant contribution to Zimbabwe's economy. And and and yet these citizens are still marginalised and are excluded from participating in in in the

in the in electoral processes.  
Um for example also South  
Africa is estimated to be  
hosting over over a million  
Zimbabweans. And we all know  
that the majority of these  
people are coming from these  
affected regions. Um and and  
also my you've already  
highlighted the the the of of  
of the registered voters across  
the regions. Um and and and if  
these regions lose these  
constituencies it they are  
going to be affected by a  
proportionately lower  
allocation from the national  
treasury when it comes to  
development resources. So it is  
not just about losing  
constituencies. It is also  
about losing allocation from  
from the national treasury.  
Especially in the absence of  
comprehensive devolution and  
decentralisation where regions  
are able to control and manage  
their own resources. We will  
see more and more of regional  
poverty resulting from these  
imminent inequalities. And then  
also when it comes to women's  
participation. Um I mean the  
the exact reports are revealing  
that 5 million registered  
voters and of that 5 million 3  
million are women. And then one  
can outlet that out of a  
population that is estimated to  
be about 15 million And then  
say minus 35% of say kids are  
under eighteen. Only 5 million  
are registered to vote. And of  
the 5 million, 3 million are

women. And you ask yourself, where are men in this regard? Why are men the majority of men not registered to vote? Possibly, maybe this question is going to be answered as we as we discuss. And as a country, we have a constitution laws and policies as well as regional and international instruments that promote and protect and defend women's rights and empowerment. However, there is what our learned friends are calling state feminism. A common phenomenon in non-democratic settings by authoritarian systems. And and what they do, the state does basically is to embrace and portray itself as a vanguard of gender equality and women's empowerment in the public arena. Through enactment of seemingly gender responsive national policies. but in the private space we see them really undermining women. And we have seen women going through torture, abuse and and all forms of discrimination and abuses. Here is the catch. In this regard, women friendly discourse is just an outward cover by the regime. And yet in practice, women are disparaged, tortured, violated and treated unfairly even at law. In a lot of times, political parties and even the states opportunity to raise their public image. And resources they always seem to comply to international standards. But in actual fact

this is all just a smoke screen. It is then not surprising that women in politics find themselves. One minute their darlings of the male political leadership. And the next and the next minute they are being denigrated and even suspended from these political parties. And we have seen this happening in the in the current political landscape. State feminism is an autocratic system that controls country's gender machinery does not seek to empower women. But it just fragments them as much as possible. And even weakens their solidarity. So you find that the the women that has been I mean that have been affected by state sponsored violence. Have received little solidarity from their counterparts. Because the system itself has actually framed itself in such a way that it controls the gender missionary. It controls the women's groups. It controls even the powerful women that are supposed to be standing up and protecting their fellow other women. So so the question remains when it comes to gender equality in the next general elections. Does the current setup show us a different way of doing politics? I guess no. Thank you. Thanks a lot Samuel. Let me just one have one follow-up question. Because I've actually been very concerned. Uh and worried that

it looks like from what you're saying in terms of the Zak statistics on the registration of new voters. Or the voters role as it is now. That Matebellian provinces may lose between three and four constituencies. If the limitation is done because the limitation is done the basis of the voters role and not on the basis of the census results. Is that correct? Yes, it is correct. It is correct. Okay, and then Zach, meanwhile, have said that they want to try and do a voter registration blitz in February, as well as in April. Um, and the hope is that that bleeds may result in maybe some of these provinces, as well as generally the whole country. Being able to get all those who are not on the voters role. In particular, the new voters, the first entrance to voting, being able to be given a chance to contribute to selection of leaders. In their own country but then you raise the question that whilst the voter registration blitzed by Zach is welcome. You're saying that the registrar general who has discharged or responsibility to issue national IDs and national documentation is also resource constrained and unable to issue the national registration documents that will then enable the exact process of the voter blitz to have impact. How how does that get addressed. Is

civil society raising issues with Zach? And maybe the Ministry of Finance on the need to harmonise especially the resource allocation to these two important departments. Um thank you. Um so far what did I see with society has been doing is to engage the the Zac offices at local level. Which for me they've been upcoming in terms of supporting all the initiatives by Civic Society. We've seen them also coming into to to the to where people are for instance where civic society has been carrying out its activities. And they come in there with their registration kits and they they help register. But of course then we heard that was it just before the of last year. Where they got an instruction to stop operating outside their their offices. So now that also then poses complications in terms of now making sure that we are we bust people from the different areas to the the the centralised registration point. So for me there's there's a bit of a willingness at local level by Zach. To to to make sure that there's registration takes place and working with society. But I think there are challenges when it comes to the local level sorry the national levels act. Um that actually gets in my view gets in directly from from from the authorities above. So the language that you usually get

from the local office and the language that you get from Zac National Office is totally different. Um the National Office seems not keen in terms of it looks at civic society with suspicions. And but the local level office looks at civil society that they work within at community level as partners. So ja this is what civil society is trying to do. But it is also right now it is in the process of also engaging with the ROG's office. Because the the excuse that we are getting or the the excuse that people get when they try to to go and and and get IDs is that the registrar's office does not have. It's not resourced. It doesn't have equipment. So for me that that is a policy issue because we cannot have citizens or a country that that has more say around maybe 40 to 50% of its citizens undocumented. For me that's also even a security issue of of of a of a country. Um but what we hadn't done is also approached the the the ministry of finance to make sure that they they they actually avail resources to support the RHG's office. Cos all this for me is is is a political move. that really is fractured. So we may need really to ah engage with the political leadership Um to to find a solution to this because I don't think the RHG's office or the Ministry of Finance Office has the answers

that it can give. I think it so there is really need for a very holistic approach. And also we've been engaging Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights to see if their their opportunities of litigation because for me I mean for a person who does not an identity document. That's a human rights violation. So but then it's a it's a territory. He's been handling these cases on a case to case basis. But now looking at it we have a national crisis and that needs a holistic approach by civic society. Um to make sure that at least this is handled not on a case to case basis but as a national driveway, a national policy agenda. Thank you. Thank you very much Samuel. For that exhaustive explanation. And I think let's pack the delimitation issue a bit and move on so that we cover as much areas and and that are important to elections. But the limitation I can say it is going to be the biggest intervention before the main election 20twenty-three That will give greater credibility or lack of it to the election process because of its importance. I think the fact that the the limitation map which is basically the drawing of boundaries that we have in our country. Uh we have been relying on the one that was done in 2007. It is one that was used in the two thousand and eight elections in the two

thousand and 13 elections. And in the two thousand and eighteen harmonised elections. So the constitution requires that every 10 years there should be a limitation exercise as well as a census. Um but then if this process is not finalised by March next year. Then which means constitutional is no longer possible for Zac to use a new the limited new boundaries for the twenty twenty-three elections. Which then means that the elections for twenty twenty-three will be relying on the boundaries that were determined in two thousand and seven. And that in itself I think will introduce significant integrity problems to the elections. This is why I think the delimitation is important and this is why also the voter registration has to be supported. Some as you say with an appropriate national documentation and national registration of the potential voters. Because we have an awful amount of young people who are undocumented. We have to be given a chance in terms of our constitution to determine who leads them in the politics and public office of our country. So I think it's extremely important. We are going to come back to that. But for now let me move to the media terrain and speak to my brother Trevor Ngube. Um you know yesterday as the media institute of Southern Africa.

Which is a regional non-governmental organisation with members in aid of this Southern Africa development countries. They wrote to the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, Chief Executive Officer, Missus Miss Adelaide Chikunguru, requesting for the state broadcasters implementation plan for fair and balanced coverage of political parties during elections and I had of these by elections as well as ahead of that twenty-three elections in order to comply with the requirements of the constitution, the electoral act and international best practice. So they cited in their letter to the chief executive officer that the Supreme Court the Supreme Court the the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe citing Chief Justice Malaba as well as Justice Mafosile as having ordered that the public broadcaster was in breach of the constitution by giving one sided attention you know in terms of the media. They also cited several observer missions like the African Union, Election Observer Mission, the Sardak Electoral Observer Mission, as well as the EU Election Observer Mission, that stated how the public media, the ZBC and the Zim papers should cover the country's elections. Uh, following the Zimbabwe's 2018 harmonized elections. So what

do you see as the whether do  
you see the public broadcasts  
are being allowed by the powers  
that be to give the same  
balance coverage? Or have you  
seen any any progress that has  
been made in complying with  
Justice Mafusire's court order  
that the public broadcaster  
should not violate the  
constitution. Over to you  
brother Trevor Nole. And thanks  
thanks a lot a lot Arnold and  
thanks to for and and Tony for  
having me here. Um the question  
that thanks and thanks for that  
question Arnold. Um the the  
question that Igbo posed in in  
gathering all all of us here  
was addressed here. Rehearsal  
for twenty twenty-three. And I  
think all intents and purposes.  
Um what we are likely to see or  
what we're seeing happening  
until twenty twenty-three. It's  
going to be essentially that at  
Dress Rehearsal. I'll get back  
to I'll get to the question  
that you you have asked Arnold.  
Um but I think it's it's  
important to realise that the  
crisis that we face as a nation  
is huge. And that at the centre  
of all that is what  
professor of Topolis called you  
know employment for jobs. And  
that the if it is employment  
for jobs sadly it's an issue  
that has become very strong  
within Zanu PF. It's an issue  
that has become strong within  
the opposition  
ah very little of what is being  
done by the politicians

addresses the people's agenda. And yet the crisis that we face as a nation is beyond the ability of any single political party. To resolve. And therefore the the question that you ask Arnold is an important one. But it's an important one within a nation that manifests clear. Um attempts to implement democratic practices, Uh constitutionalism and and an independent judiciary, an independent media and that kind of stuff. Unfortunately, that's not where we are. We are going through we are going through the motions of what appears to be a democratic election. Which really in reality is another process at Park Rep by another section of Zanu PF. And we there's a tendency for us to look at this as oh it's an election. All things that are expected to happen in a democratic election are going to happen. And my my submission to that it's we are being slightly political naive. We are we are dealing with entrenched political system using the vehicle of Zanu PF to get to political power and to get close to national resources. And abuse those national resources for selfish personal gain. Sadly this the the you not seeing the upping up of the game within the opposition political parties. To come up with visionary principled people's agenda. That's

inspirational. That excites everybody to what to get involved in in elections. You're seeing a in a way the the opposition reproducing what is happening within Zanu PF. And if you look at the fights that take place at primaries in in in opposition and in Zanu PF. You really do the sense that one the people that are contesting the their commitment to democracy, their commitment to the people's broad agenda is questionable. And that everybody is in this thing for what they can get themselves. So I agree with to to a very large extent that the politics of employment and jobs. It has become the the end thing. Um in Zimbabwe's politics Zimbabwe's politics. So what I'm what I see is the way out, sadly, is that we've had many elections since 1980. And my sense is that I'm not a politician, but what we've seen is that, elections have tended to be divisive. They've tended to be generators of violence. Uh, the winner take hold elections has basically been a license for power grip by whatever. Um, click ehm faction within the ruling party to grab power and therefore to grab ah resources. What am I what am I suggesting? Um what I'm suggesting is that to to address the issue that again Professor of Topolas did raise and I think you you did come in. Which is have we been

outsourcing?

solution, resolution to our crisis to other people, to the region. And I think for me the question is, no, we haven't been outsourcing, we've been engaged, we've tried strikes, we've tried stairways, we've tried voting, the opposition is one elections, but they've not been allowed to get into office. I think I'm, I'm saying it's, it's about time that we step back and say it to ourselves, what is it that is required to be done by the majority of Zimbabweans because if 5.6 million people are registered in a population of sixteen, 17 million, that number is, you know, tells you, tells you something. Is it not the time that we reflect and say, what we've done so far over the past 40 years has not gotten us to where we want, which is democratic elections, which is the Zimbabwe that we want, which is one man, one vote. And in, in any case, what has happened is that, we have seen the erosion of the you know the rights ah the constitutional ah democratic principles that that we saw ah that we saw cherish. We've seen the poisoning of the political environment. We've seen the personalisation of ownership of national institutions which are supposed to deliver democracy and economic growth. And it's going to take a long time for us to think that one political

party can resolve this crisis that faces. I'm saying that there is need for us to regroup. As a country and begin to define the Zimbabwe that we want. Not that this has not been done before. But I think seriously it's it's time for us to step back and say can we engage the broader stakeholder community in Zimbabwe. Business civil society, women's organisation, the church, the youth, the labour movement Can we have a stakeholder? Uh and all stakeholder conference. That begins to engage first of all what has gone wrong in the opposition in the ruling party, in government. What has gone wrong? How do we rectify these things? Um it must be inclusive. It must not just be political actors but it must be everybody involved. To begin to say let's redefine what it is that we want to do. Because the the stuff that I've had professor of Topolis talk about the analysis and so forth. It's all well and good. But unfortunately if we are if we we don't change course. If we don't change the way we have approached the problems that the nation faces. We are bound to find ourselves in the same space that we are in at the present moment. A toxic political environment. An environment where the civil servants married to the politicians because they have

an interest in ensuring that the political system that exists at the moment continues because a benefit from that. That the military ah the central intelligence organisation and the police are working the politicians because they benefit from the politicians. I think what I want what I'm saying is that I do not see anything right that has happened right now and anything that's going to happen in future. That says to me Zanu PF is interested in relinquishing power at all. The dismantling of the opposition that eh Professor Raptorpolas outlined. The assault on the judiciary. Uh that we that we that we have we have seen. The entrenching of a faction of Zanu PF. Uh and the suffocation of public spaces. To me it announces not even a dress rehearsal that we might see worse things. And I would, you know, I get a sense that there's a lot of the a lot of Zimbabweans who are now disconnected, Disinterested in politics. Because of the way that the ruling party, the opposition they have conducted themselves. We need a new politics. We need a new terrain in which that politics is going to be conducted. We are trying to build. We we will not be able build a new nation on this faulty foundation. I'm inviting all of us to engage in looking at the foundation.

rebuilding a new foundation, upon which we can build a new nation. We have never been a nation up to now. And what we're doing right now is not going to get us there. So to conclude my my remarks Arnold. They they is I would be surprised if ZBC does anything to change. Their coverage of ah ah ah the elections. I suspect that ZBC will continue to do what they are expected to do which is give the majority of coverage ah to the ruling party. Because otherwise some people are are going to lose their jobs if if they do not do so. So yes I think it's good to be optimistic and say maybe things might change. But I don't see that changing. I don't see that even that the coach judgment being being observed. So what I'm saying is we going to see the same same in the ah government owned newspapers. Ah the state broadcaster not carrying out broadcaster function. So I I I do not have much hope in things being done differently. I do not see Zanu PF relinquishing power as easily because it's not just about power itself. It's about what power allows people to access. Power allows politicians and the small click to access resources to to get rich through tenders and that kind of stuff. And we are seeing more of it in this in the Mnangagwa administration than we've ever seen before.

I'll stop here and and engage and listen to others. Thank you very much Arnold. Thank you very much Mkoma. Uh Trevor. Um I just have one follow up question before. Uh and I'm mindful that we need to get to a situation where we give it to a wider wider audience. You end only by saying that we need a a new foundation and a new way of doing things as a country. And that the ruling party and the opposition party have been sort of mimicking each other and not necessarily presenting a different value system or approach. And that you also generally doubt the commitment of some of the leaders including in the opposition. Their commitment to democracy. Um so I just want to challenge you on the foundation. Don't you think that the global political agreement as and the inclusive government that emerged after that when President Thabo Mbeki negotiated or provided some basis for dialogue. Um which then gave us the new constitution in 2013. Isn't that new constitution the foundation that is should actually be building on. Uh so in other words the constitutional framework is there. But what is missing is the statesmanship to build on that. That's my question Trevor. Thank you. I I think you you're right Arnold. The the constitution that was

produced by the the players in the GNU. Um is is a good document. Uh is is a good starting point as it were. But is it not an issue of concern? That one of the players namely PF has gone gung ho. Uh a full onslaught on the same constitution that they participated in in in drafting. Which says to me that there was never a genuine underwriting of that constitution by players in Zanu in Zanu PF which says to me that the democratic culture, the human rights culture, is not is is not entrenched within Zanu PF. What, what we're seeing now as by way of the assault on the constitution by Mnangagwa's government. Uh, says to you that there was never a full embrace of the democratic principles and tenets, that that I found in in that in that in that in that constitution. And as as to the opposition my my sense would be if you look at a few things that has happened within within the the opposition. You do get a sense also that there isn't the full embrace of what democracy is all about. But also Arnold let's remember that the GNU in as much as you know it was two big political parties was was was a political accommodation of two players that contested in a in an election. I think what I'm meeting is that we need a broader participation of Zimbabweans in defining what

that future is going to be. So that should there be a straying as we are seeing right now as far as the constitution is concerned. You have a bigger bold and powerful body that holds everybody to to to their feet to to to the fire as it were to say. This is what we are we agreed on. At the moment unfortunately we don't have that that that situation. I am concerned by the fact that we have no unanimity in defining who we are. What kind of country we we want we want to build. We are not united in in defining the things that are important to us. Um, as, as, as, as a people, and I think we need a broader, a bigger table, that includes more participants. In, in, if we going to come up with something, which is durable. What we have at the moment, is not durable, and I don't believe that we have political players who are genuinely interested in in in in resolving this manner beyond the jobs and the employment that Professor Ralph Topolos so eloquently outlined. I hope that answers your question. Yes it does and thank you very much indeed. So colleagues in the audience please if you have got any questions that you want the panelists to answer. You can also make use of the chat function. I'll try as much as I can to make sure that everyone has their questions attended to

by the panelists. Now Ellen I'm hoping that Ellen is here. I saw that you had put in something that spoke to the election model. Trevor was saying that the elections in Zimbabwe have become toxic. One of the reason why they appear to be toxic. As you say it seems to be the first past the post system that really makes it a winner take all. And therefore increases the stakes. Um in elections. And you had put I think on the box that PR system seems to be the the best electoral system. Ellen do you want to vocalise your opinion on whether changing the electoral system would actually make our democracy grow then let's talk less toxic over here. Thank you. Thank you Arnold. And I'm really excited to be listening to this debate. Um I think as Trevor was speaking. I started to think to reflect on what he was saying that they first passed the post as a model as an electoral system is not the best. Given the toxicity of our environment in Zimbabwe. Uh whereby we are always in an election mode. Uh I totally agree with you. Primary elections are also using the same electoral system. And which makes our elections very very competitive. and the winner text or model whereby if you even if you win with one vote you are declared a candidate. So I I totally agree. I think

slowly I'm thinking and trying to digress what he was saying and I think ja we may need to move from this current electoral system maybe to another one. But however to also respond to Tony I think we need to interrogate all the electoral systems maybe in more detail. And come up with the what we may call a homegrown based model. Uh that we can adopt a country. Not just to say we want PR, PRA will solve our problems. I don't think that will work but we need to interrogate the electoral system models that we have and see which one is best. Uh since I'm already speaking Arnold if I can pause a few questions or one question to any of the panelists. Maybe Trevor in particular. should I go ahead? Yes, proceed, proceed Ellen, thank you. Okay. Thank you very much. Um, so my question is on, I think the way that the, the panelists have unpacked and painted the environment, our electoral environment, I think it also makes us think as citizens, whether we should continue with the elections, in the absence of reforms in Zimbabwe. Trevor spoke about the Zimbabwe, we want, we are not yet there on the, with regard we want. So what should we do? We need to continue pushing for reforms so that we get to the Zimbabwe we want. So should we continue having election? That's my question to

Trevor even Samu. In the absence of key reforms such as the independence of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. It remains an issue. The absence of transparency in key electoral processes. The absence of critical information. Like what Arnold you were saying. The delimitation process is coming. We don't even know what it is about and how citizens are going to be engaged. There's no information about that particular process as much as we want to tell. To know the so that we can plan accordingly a civic society. The issue that Samu spoke about the same of youth that don't have IDs. We are we are planning for the BVR as Zimbabweans to go out and inspect and register to vote. But what about those youth that do not have identity documents because the civil registry does not have resources? What does it mean? In terms of ensuring their participation. Should we proceed with the elections in such a scenario? And also the issue of absence of devolution that also some spoke about. So my worry is what do we need to do in terms of elections? Is it necessary for us to even talk about elections in Zimbabwe in such an environment that has been painted and that is so gloomy in my view. Of moderate. Thank you very much. Thank you. I'm going to ask the question that you asked to be parked so

that when we get to the round where the panelists are going to come back then they can incorporate an answer to that question. Um for now I was thinking that one of the things I saw Pearce pick you on a year. And I know that spoke about effect that the economic exploitation of resources and the proximity of those in power with access to economic opportunity. Um was something that made our our politics also a bit more complex. And at the same time that the the state is the centre. Ja. That's the phrase used. The state is the centre of accumulation. And that violence and impunity for human rights violations coupled with fear of losing the economic opportunity arising from disturbing the centre of economic accumulation. I know that certainly Zimbabwe as of late we have started seeing more and more. the the weaknesses of the natural resource governance. Um framework That is now resulted in a lot of you know informal can I say activity around precious metals, gold, jewel, I mean gold, diamonds etcetera. And and and so this sometimes ends up having a negative effect on elections and I know that peers that's one thing that you've generally been monitoring to see the political economy of ah a state that seems to have ah limited

capacity of effective governance. But that then creates an opportunity for maximum acquisition. Would you want to be able to comment a bit on ah that in the context of elections or the impact of that on elections in a country like Zimbabwe? Yes. Hi Arnold. Thanks very much. Ah for the opportunity and and thank you to Safi's fascinating discussion. Ah Ja I mean I I'm I'm not sure I feel qualified to to answer that that question Uh but I think we are certainly locked in in the current state into a trajectory that will not effectively address those concerns around greater transparency in the political economy, a greater understanding of who owns, what, who benefits and and so forth. Uh the one comment I well two comments I wanted to make about elections. I may have missed Arnold whether there was any commentary about having a robust assessment of conditions in the current situation and what's opportunity there might be for civil society to make a loud shout for CAC to conduct an assessment in the area. I saw Hasid Patel was on earlier but he's not there anymore. Uh and as previously I think he I'm not sure if he's still the Zimbabwe rep there but but an opportunity to get the conversation going around the Democratic deficits. Many of

which have been highlight both in terms of specific electoral related processes or wider conditional issues. This is a conversation where those concerns need to be as broadly engaged with and and amplified in terms of public discourse. Uh now, you know, a year or so ahead of the elections. Uh which should be part of the process of defending the integrity of of of the voting process. Uh so, I'm I'm I mean I was in some discussions last year with people working around late last year in discussions around that and and around elections, the mismatch between Z position on issues, civil society's position, where things stand with draft legislation, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera and and a whole host of things have been identified and have been identified for a very long time. It's sitting on the outside what we're faced with is is a tale of of of contradictory narratives. And and I'm curious as to what work might be done to kind of shine the light on these contradictions in order to to remove some of the the noise that's in play around you know reform, no reform, crisis, no crisis etcetera. So what these things really mean in terms of of perhaps laying a more critical foundation for a discussion than needs to take place on a range of these

issues. So for me the the the opportunity is to shine light in in in you know with with that without having unrealistic expectations as to what the state will do. The zero sum game that's in play around politics and political control of the state. Uh in Zimbabwe. Uh you know one has to assess what aspects of an incrementalist approach are going to be effective in this situation. Uh but at the very least we need to to to try and make sure that we have a much clearer understanding of the key issues in play because I want one there is an enormous amount of that comes out of Zimbabwe. A lot of noise comes out of Zimbabwe. It is very very difficult unless you are imbued in the weeds of this. To sort the wheat out from the chaff in these discussions. Uh from the outside to get a greater and I and I think you know I'm not saying it's not happening but I think that that much more needs to happen on that front. Uh and and that does also relate to issues around political economy. I saw a comment earlier about you know or a question about the business community that was pushed towards Trevo think it would be a good thing for for him to to help us understand his perspectives on how the business community navigates this space. Uh whether it whether there are real

prospects for it to come to the party around the challenges of governance in in in Zimbabwe. Uh which seemed to me to be a space where you can get a kind of cross pollination of ideas domestically and regionally. Uh around a governance mandate. Uh as opposed to an emphasis on human rights per se in terms of narratives and discourse which can be smuggled in under the governance rubric but are often used as a tool for deflecting attention from issues. Uh in part of that kind of polarized polity that that certainly suits the incumbents at the moment. Thanks Alan. A lot of noise but perhaps not very much substance. No, no, quite, quite a bit of substance as usual. Um eh my brother Pierce. Now Igbo is Igbo still with us. I just wanted because there are a number of issues that have been raised which I think eh you would be an excellent eh eh person to reflect on. You know the the one comment made especially by Trevor that the commitment of the opposition to a broad based growth of democracy. Um in our country so that politics becomes a resource. So that can generate development in our country. And ah that elections generally generate violence. And ahm eh he then says that you know said there's so much systematic and sustained attack on the opposition. But Trevor

suggested that in fact eh the one of the other problem is that the opposition is trying to mimic being like Zanu PF And and all the ruling party and therefore the the strength or the structure or quality of our political parties becomes an issue. And so during the primaries I think in Zanu PF there was quite reported on introductory violence including gunshots as well as the use of machetes during primaries, whilst on the oppositions. The nomination caught that set yesterday. I think the reports that you have been coming is that in Mbulawayo they were I think two situations of double candidacy. As well as some double candidacy in Machingo. Which means that that needs off shows. Uh lack of consensus or a failed primary primary elections process. To be able to see the same party nominating more than one person for the same word. Um in the in in the violations that are coming. So so how how what's your views one on generally the strengths of our political parties as the main drivers of the building of democracy in our in our country. That's one. The second point Igbo would be the the the Trevor calls it marriage. Marriage between the ruling party and the public servants. And a lot of people have generally been complaining about the conflation of the

state With the ruling party. Um under which this issue of marriage between party and public servants becomes possible. And and and others say that the ruling party complexion the security sector. How how does, how can Zimbabwe effectively divorce that practice over to you Igbo? Thanks Arnold. Thank you very much. I want, I want to really acknowledge the contribution of the the panel, including yourself, the chair in this very rich discussion. Uh, to be specific to your questions, yes, I agree with Trevor. Uh, Trevor's lament about the lack of a national vision on the part of all of us and the part of the ruling party on the part of the opposition. And that's and they are they are they are very eh historical reasons for that. And I think Brian has touched on it. The the opposition in this country has always been eh confined, confined its vision to simply overtaking the incumbent. In the same way that the liberation movement essentially was to replace its mission was to take off from the whites. That's all we did. There was no vision beyond that. That is self-evident now. 40 years after independence. It appears to me the MDC his main mission under Morgan Tangarai was simply to replace Zanu PF. Sadly that remains the mission of the opposition. To move the

incumbent. There's been no clear definition over the last year since we saw the the opposition emerge in nineteen ninety-nine. Uh in in terms of defining an alternative vision and alternative programme and alternative productive framework. I was saying and I tweeted likewise that the hope our hope is that the yellow party the three C's the Citizen Coalition for Change. Would live up to its to the expectations that are implicit in the name itself. One, the idea of being based in the people and for the people. And to the idea of mobilising the the population towards a vision for change. And defining that change. Regrettably and and I think predictably they will not be a definition of the change. which so we are stuck in the what what famous political philosopher Wilfred Papareto if you remember him. Said the circulation of elites. He just simply circulating off your leads and that is the situation in our region. In Malawi, in Zambia. The place you want to lead to another.

The second question is the the party state. conflation. That has been the the the heart of the matter. Especially since two thousand. And when people talk about as I've heard people in the so-called G 40 black square and others saying look we want to revive the party. We

want to get back to the party.  
The party where it was. Sadly  
the what they're talking about  
is getting back into office  
into power. Into the same  
confession of party. The state.  
in which the party is less  
important now. If it's there at  
all. It's really about getting  
into the state. the site of  
livelihood. The site of  
accumulation. And therefore I  
know the politics have become  
livelihood. And this is why  
in spite of what was saying  
earlier on. This is why there  
won't be boycott of elections.  
If if Shamisa and them had  
boycotted the by elections he'd  
be he'd be sure that there were  
the BPO standing as  
independence to get back into a  
livelihood. The difference  
between being unemployed and  
having a car and a stipend from  
parliament is big. Especially  
in our current circumstances  
economically. So Yes, yes, a  
famous author once said, the  
beautiful ones are not yet  
born. So we're, we're going to  
expect, we have to expect much  
of the same as before. And  
therefore it brings me to the  
question, if I may, one not.  
The, is this these by elections  
rehearsal? For twenty  
twenty-three? in raising that  
question I also want to  
acknowledge Jonathan Moyo. He's  
the one that wrote that concept  
note.  
and it  
is also he who raised

the subtext in that concept  
note which is is this, are  
these by elections a referendum  
on MSM Mnangagwa?  
And  
the questions are being  
raised in the context of  
a parent acknowledgement that  
elections were gone. Not  
withstanding the lack of  
reforms. and that Zimbabwe is  
not withstanding the enormous  
constraints  
to free  
and fair elections ever  
since 2000. Zimbabweans still  
run up  
respond to election fever  
Enormously. You mentioned 2018,  
85% turnout. under normal  
circumstances. Uh and given  
what was clear that in a  
post-coup situation. Why would  
one expect free and fair  
elections? Where would the core  
leaders simply allow the  
opposition to to win? And as  
you saw on the first of August  
they killed. To make a point.  
And yet there was this 85%  
turnout  
To hope against hope. To expect  
the unexpected. And it it  
appears also logical that in  
2023 it it will be the same.  
And yet the question the  
questions are there before us.  
Is this a dress rehearsal?  
Twenty-three? Or are they  
twists and turns before we get  
there? What in fact the  
questions to the panelists?  
What how might the military  
behave. The in the centre of of

elections since 2000. They have virtually run elections. They have virtually the heart of the Zach, the Zecrocrat, Zecrocrats. What might they plan between 23. Especially where clearly Zanu PF whatever they call it. Can not will never win elections. Certainly not the presidential elections. So what might be the scenario. taking into account also the the the now legendary Nangagwa, Chiwenga conflict. Would the military behave as consistent as it has behaved the previous elections in twenty twenty-three? And secondly, what is likely to be a fate of the presidential elections? We know clearly that MSMA will not win. Elections. what is likely to be the scenario in 2020. I would I would hope that the the panelists would address some of these questions. I hope I've read very well. And thank you. I think let's ask Profraft to be the first to go at very important questions. Unless as you said Professor Moyo. Or wanted to to to speak. But let's start with Profraft and then we we can get Professor Moyo to to weigh in if he's interested to to speak as well. Profraft over you? Thank you, Arnold. Yeah, look, I think someone like professor Moya, he'd been a much better position to throw some light on this and I hope he would intervene. Uh, my sense is that, you know, there's,

there's, there's always a chance of contingencies. Uh, producing new dynamics within a political context. Um, and that those contingencies could very well hinge on the internal dynamics of Zanu PF power play. And how far the military is prepared to go towards removing the current president and replacing him with another. That's a open question. And I certainly don't have enough information. To to talk on that. What I will say is that you know if if the past is aiming to go by despite these challenges within Zanu PF. Um when faced with a serious opposition, they may well be some temporary alliances which to get them beyond an election and into a new period of factional battles. But again this might be a different context. Given that we've already seen a factional change that the presidency and they may well be a move towards another. The internal dynamics of Zanu PF. Uh we would need to look for those who are studying it to look more closely and to give us a better idea of that. Um whether we should or should not fight election I think we we have to continue to fight for elections. Uh staying out of elections is not an option, not withstanding all the challenges. Uh we look at global history around the fight for democratization. It's precisely fighting those

elections, pressing through the challenges. exposing the weaknesses. Building alliances for changes. That led to a growth in democratic structures globally. Um and it's part of the problem we've seen even in the so-called established democratic states. Has been the loss of momentum in keeping those democratic structures alive. And even in advanced countries you could see regress. Around democratic structures. Unless there's a consistent and persistent fight for those democratic spaces. And so notwithstanding the challenges that opposition civic groups face this battle for elections has to continue. Uh and in conjunction with other struggles that need to take place. I'll stop there. Thanks a lot. Thanks a lot professor Raft. Uh Professor Moyo, do you want to come on that point maybe for 2 minutes or so?

I think he's left the room. He's left the room. He's back. He's back. Ja. Okay. Um but otherwise the the other panelists Samu, did you want to have any comments on the issues that you were raised with you are also going to go on some technical aspects in terms of the strength of the institutions of democracy. But let let's resolve this aspect first. If you have got a comment to matter. I'll let the stone pass. Okay,

good. And if the professor if you are here, I hope you followed the previous question on whether this is a rehearsal. Um, to the 2023 elections or not. If you've got any views, to share, please, go ahead. is there

No? Okay. Then in that case, let me ask my brother Trevor. There's a question about the role of business which you raised. But then there's interest to hear your views. Around the role of business in building of democracy. And a different type of politics that allows for opportunities to be available for everyone in Zimbabwe. Did you have any views on that element? Yes yes I do. Um and and before I do that in in trying to directly respond to the question posed to the panel And also that Ibo has reiterated whether this is the address rehearsal. And Professor Topoulos on the issue of of of the military. Um I think we face a clearly situation of one of the factions in Zanu PF entrenching themselves And if writing we going to say what role is the military going to take? Are we not asking the question that we asked prior to the coup? What role is the military going to take? And we saw what role the military did take there. Is the military ever going to be in a position to want to support a faction of the opposition to take over. Um I dare say I

don't see that happening. so what's happening? What's going to happen between now and 2023 and beyond that to me I mean I'll be surprised to see anything that upsets the status quo as far as entrenching of a certain clique of Zanu PF. I think it's important to understand that this is not a just about politics. This is just about this is more importantly about proximity to resources. Will those people that have a hand on resources willingly hand over the resources to anybody. I think that that's that's not likely to happen. And we talk about sanctions. Uh and yes the sanctions have been you know politicised. But the truth is that the sanctions don't hurt the ruling power. The sanctions do not hurt the elite. The sanctions are being used as a as a propaganda tool by the elite and particularly those in in in in Zan MPF. So there are queues and with with sanctions because the sanctions are are you know benefit them. Let me go now to the issue that you ask about about business. The sense I'm getting is that business is uncomfortable with the opposition. Because opposition does not seem to speak the language of business. Point number one. Point number two. The opposition looks very disorganised. And business is conservative and is an is uncomfortable with the

disorganisation that is within within the opposition. Business is conservative. Business wants to put their money you know where you know risks are slightly reduced. And at the moment the business gets a sense that, Zanu PF might not be the cleanest political party around. But Zanu PF is behaving in a manner that accommodates, accommodates certain business interests, interests to prosper. And certain business people will be pretty comfortable to align themselves with a Zanu P that is ah ah that is business friendly.

We've seen for instance the ah the deal that has been done ah in South Africa and many other other deals that have been done. I think the the the thing is

MDC should see the business as a big stakeholder that ought to be addressed. Whether it's behind closed doors. But in the manner in which MDC carries itself that gives the confidence that where these people go to take over they would be a stable dependable hand that would allow business to carry on doing their businesses as as it were. At the moment I doubt that business as as as that that kind of of of confidence. Not that they are 100% that they have at all completely the with with with Zan PF as as it were. So I think there's a lot of things that needs to be done.

But primarily the sense I'm I get is that businesses interested in a solution that's going to put to bed to a large extent our political differences and the toxicity. Because the toxicity and the fights and the violence. In the long term had business had employment creation had investments and that kind of stuff. And business has been here for a very long time. And business would want to move on and has the importance of an inclusive solution that involves all stakeholders. For us to draw the line in the sand and say we've we've been here before. Can we structure a new foundation and a new way forward? I hope that that helps the that are response to the question that was asked. Thank you. Yes, no, no, thanks a lot. And already Doctor Keith Silika. Sorry also responded. Um ah on on the chat box because yesterday is now now that eh ehm as of now it is the opposition that is out of power. And therefore maybe they would need to be given a chance because they cannot control business. Anyway eh Tony please come in eh in a minute. I'm really wanting to start moving towards closure. There are still 2 substantive issues that are left. One on ah social media. So I want to travel Samuel to speak to to to think about with the the formal media

is still as important in elections in the face of social media. But also on the question of disinformation, fake news, misinformation etcetera. So let's hear from Tony and then I'm coming to come back to you on that. Tony over to you. Thank you Arnold and thank you everybody. This is illuminating. Um apart from these very important political economy questions that everyone is raising. There still is the fundamental problem that of power happens with an election. And what we've seen is repeated processes in which these elections are protested, allegations of rigging are made. We go to the courts. Uh I feel the same process. I think the the critical issue is that you cannot deal with all the evidence that we have and Excel Gate was a very very useful exposition of that. Without challenging all the sources of error and lack of transparency prior to the election. There has to be complete scrutiny and complete agreement that none of the conditions for an election are suitable for the judgment of a free and fair election. That has to be there and the election if it's looking foul must be called foul ahead of the time. And not post hock. If you call it afterwards we go back to the same process. The critical thing for the opposition political parties and civics is to expose now all

the ways in which this electoral process does not meet neat any of the conditions for a genuine election. And to call it out ahead of time. If we don't do that Then we go back to the problem that everyone's talking about is disputed the election to courts that you yourself Arnold have raised are are dubious in their treatment of elections and we've seen that in two thousand and two thousand and two and so in 2018. so the critical thing is we have to accept that an election will happen and at the end of it the game is that an an axle gate showed that and what it said was in the end what you do is you make up the numbers you declare yourselves the victory you call yourself the facto and thereafter you you get accepted as day dura by a weakened supine static. We have to deal with that process against everything else. Thank you. Thanks a lot. Thanks a lot Tony. Let let's let me move to the question I was asking about the increase in importance of the role of social media. Um in electoral democracy globally. Um the challenges of misinformation, disinformation, fake news. But also the real positive opportunity that social media offers in a closed space. We saw what happened in Zambia. Where the public media was heavily biased towards the ruling party. But then the now ruling party was obviously then

was able to propagate their messages through a variety of means including social media. But then it becomes really a battle front. In Zimbabwe in particular we know that there's specific social media armies that have been established by political parties. In order to fight the truth in some instances also propagate lies and disinformation. Uh Galaxy A 12, I don't know who he is, but said I question the centrality of state media in information, dissemination on election messages. It's no longer the same as it was in the past. I think social media has become a force which must be recognised. Let me ask some of us and then Trevor and

Um hello. Can you hear me? Yes we can hear you. Please go ahead. Okay. Okay then thank you. Um yes social media is playing a very critical role in educating and mobilising citizens. Especially the the young demography. Uh in the absence of of independent mainstream media. Um like you've just said we we've seen the mobilisation of of of young people Particularly on on social media around issues. Um and also taking action to a point where they've even upset the the the those in authority and leading to the shutdown of of of internet in a in a number of cases. So definitely social media is playing a very critical role. However the

challenges that we've that that have faced with social media is that like if you've seen now the the high cost of of of of of data. And that already means that we are living out great deal of, of, of, of, of young people from participating, as well as even citizens themselves that are, are not employed. And also, social media in the, in, in the, the limited access of, of, of, of, of say maybe the failure really to, to, to afford data means that also the rural population is, is left out. But of course we have platforms that kind of, a reasonable and affordable, like, like WhatsApp and we've seen a lot of information circulating and getting really right round the globe in in seconds and in minutes. Um and then of course the challenge again is around the misinformation that then there are you know the authorities really sit down and and invest in making sure that there's misinformation. Information is shared but then by the time it gets to different recipients it is it has already maybe changed in the in the and deliberately to misinform the public. So in my in my view I think that there's really need for investment by civic society in making sure that they they generate content and, and circulated in, to deal with misinformation and and, and

inform the public with regards to, you know, the truth in terms of what is happening on the ground. So and, and also there's also a, a challenge in terms of ensuring that, the information that is circulated on social media ah it it is really appealing to catch the attention of the youthful demography. I think we've seen the the the so-called celebrities on on social media that are are diverting attention from you know from from young people in in terms of addressing all participating in in progressive issues and instead they are following these celebrities and following fame and money and really this is for me this is a really a ploy deliberately being being used to divert or to digress social media users to do I mean and their attention and and focus. So thank you. Ja so for me it's it is really about investing. If if really we invest in in messaging. Invest in in in institutions that actually generate the correct information. Also also in terms of popularising maybe say the Data act. So that at the end of the day people know their limits in terms of what they can say or what they can circulate on social media and they are protected. Thank you. Thanks a lot Slami. Uh in fact I'm no longer going to come back to you and so let's give Trevor a minute just to wind up

before I also give professor of  
the minute to end up Trevor.  
The thing's handled and and  
everybody. The the issue of  
social media is is important  
good people but we we must  
realise just how  
it's got its  
negative aspects  
which right now basically says  
whoever has the largest check  
that buys the influencers. Um  
that poisons social media ah ah  
which is toxic, which is  
misleading, which is noisy,  
which doesn't reflect what is  
on the ground Um, basically  
buys that influence. Um, we  
have seen worldwide, the return  
to quality media of some sort.  
So maybe the issue around  
NGOs  
investing in their own  
quality media, or, or something  
of that sort. It's, it's  
something that that needs to be  
looked at. What are the point I  
was going to say Arnold is that  
we're seeing the for instance  
in in in America the Trump  
bounce which is you know,  
quality media, the Washington  
Post, New York Times, gaining  
ascendance on the basis of  
people, not trusting social  
media, realising that WhatsApp  
is a source of misinformation I  
mean, for the dialogue, I'll  
call you back. Social media is  
a source of misinformation. You  
can buy influence  
you can, sorry, I'd, I'd, I'd  
gotten muted there. You can buy  
influencers, you can buy

influence on social media, by buying these influencers coming up with hashtags, which don't mirror what the reality on the ground is. So I think the, the question that remains is, how do you ensure that there's quality that gets out? Social media is not going to be the platform for quality media, for quality, for quality content, for content that is not exaggerated, that is not toxic, that is, that is that is not noisy. We are seeing what I call a walk back to quality because where you have gatekeepers that cost check information that can be trusted. So I don't I don't see social media as as being the answer to quality content that informs democratic processes. Very important. Thanks a lot Trevor for that. Uh Professor Raft we can go on and on. But do you mind if you can wind up maybe in a minute? Ja no thanks. I haven't much more to say. Just to say that despite all the challenges we're facing. Let's not underestimate the gains that the democratic movement and people involved in democratic struggle have made. In keeping open spaces in the public sphere. In fighting for over the questions of the law. In keeping human rights debate on the agenda in keeping electoral openness and the need for electoral integrity on the agenda. Uh and in in effect also affecting the dynamics of

politics within Zanu PF itself. So let's not underestimate the gains that have been made despite the long road that still we have ahead of us. Thank you. Thanks a lot to end on such a positive and encouraging note. Uh which is very consistent with the African Union's you know good governance framework where it is clear that the will to govern. I mean I mean the authority to govern is derived from the will of the people that is freely expressed in free and fair elections. So on that basis let me take this opportunity to thank the panelists and then to thank Doctor Igbo Mandaza Sapes and all those behind the scenes to make this possible this conversation which I think is the beginning of the election season and Zimbabwe possible. So back to you Doctor Mandasa. thanks to Arnold. Uh my job is really not to try and summarise a very rich discussion that was. Um thank you in particular for conducting a very one of the recent discussion we ever had. And to thank Brian for setting the pace with a with a very comprehensive introduction. And Samuel for finding time to give us some details on the state of of voter voter registration which is very depressing picture she gave. And Trevor for raising fundamental questions. Which are really the site of the

debate that we should have in the next few months. Um really what is the vision of the Zimbabwe want? And we we need to redefine that. I think I think I think Trevor did very well to underline that point. for me is to think this of all the Jonathan Moya for the concept note and for suggesting this topic. and and on the back of that to also request our audience, our membership to come up with topics for discussion. And offer concept notes such as Jonathan has done. And we have next week for example a a meeting on the constitutionalism. The raging debate in South Africa on the constitution. And how that relates or contrasts with the Zimbabwe situation where there is no constitutionalism at all. And and how that relates to the African continent as a whole. So we're helping next week to have a debate with the Minister of Justice of South Africa as a main person. Everybody also have someone from Kenya. And Professor Washman Numbe from Zimbabwe. So that we we highlight thereby the centrality of the constitution. Constitution rule of law. And return of the military to the barracks. that note I want to thank you all. And again thank you Arnold. And your panel. On this discussion. Thank you. And good night. Bye bye. Thank you

very much.  
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