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### Elections in Africa: A Contested Space and the Place of Diplomacy in Bridging the Gap between Contesting Parties

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#### Abstract

The world over all nations are endowed with limited resources. Where resources are limited political decisions will need to be made to decide on the economic route to take so as to settle for the best alternatives that will advance the interests of the majority of citizens. The process of coming up with the decisions that will satisfy all is not always easy. This then calls for the political processes to define who will be able to sufficiently address the interests of the citizens.

Resultantly elections are done periodically within nations so as to vote for political leadership that will then be entrusted to carry out the task of running the affairs of the country on behalf of the people. The elections at times are contested or defined as unfair by some actors within the political landscape or those actors with interests invited to monitor the electoral process.

A lot of name calling, throwing of missiles and attacks on rivalries is rampant during the campaign period. This results in destruction of property and injury to persons. The clashes are at times fuelled by the leaders who propagate hate speech as they attempt to de-campaign a rivalry. Once these conditions are experienced the environment will no longer be able to allow a fair election. Consequently, the results of the election will cause many players to challenge the credibility of the conditions proceeding the election.

**Keywords:** Elections, conflict, political party, opposition party

#### Introduction

##### Elections in Africa: A Contested Space and the Place of Diplomacy in bridging the gap between Contesting Parties

An election refers to the formal process of selecting an individual for public office or the process of rejecting a political proposal. The process of using elections to confirm an outcome or position dates back to Athens in Rome and in the selection of the popes and Holy Roman Emperors. Elections as they are known by many today started in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe and North America which confirms that they are not a new phenomena. They were meant to promote representation. The outcome of an election was believed to pronounce the consent of the people to be led by that particular government within that particular time period. It was believed that the government could be recalled anytime as long the people felt that it was no longer relevant to the needs of the people. Once the citizens felt or had a conviction that the politicians were now concerned about themselves an election was seen as the only tool to retake the trust bestowed

upon them during the previous election. As this happened the political actors were expected to take political process outcomes graciously. Any hard feelings were seen as a weakness.

Unfairness in the electoral process is believed to be characterised by a number of tenets that include Electoral fraud, Voter suppression, Intimidation, Unbalanced campaign finance rules: This aspect of the electoral process is clearly articulated in the case of Buckley v Valeo, 424 US 1 (1976)] and an Imbalance in access to media

On the other hand there has been talk about elections being free and fair. This is the envisaged position preceding any election outcome. Once the election is defined as otherwise then the outcome will not have any takers. It will be regarded as a legal nullity until it is ratified by a judicial process. This is usually complicated and tedious. Everything being constant this route ought to be avoided because it delays progress as such ratification is awaited. The longer court battles at times frustrate the development agenda yet what the citizens want at

the end of the day are solutions to their many challenges. They want bread and butter on the table not the intricacies of electoral processes.

Free and fair elections are characterised by equal voting rights without unreasonable restrictions. During the run up to the elections the political actors ought to be allowed the latitude to exercise freedom of association as they mobilise their followership during the process of popularising their manifesto. Without being allowed to meet as is sometimes the case within some jurisdictions it would be difficult for such a party to then reach out to new members hence the outcome of the election will be tilted in favour of the party that would have been allowed to meet with its followers. Once any contesting party is denied the time to meet with its followers and prospective followers the party would be allowed then to raise that position or situation as an unfair political environment in the run up to an election. Section 67 of the Zimbabwean Constitution for instance allows citizens to choose their political party freely. This is also complimented by the right to allow them to assemble and associate as they feel. This has not been the case in many jurisdictions in the global south, where elections have been dreaded whenever they fall due because of the intimidation and violence that characterise them.

Within some jurisdictions there are resources that all political parties must receive from government in support of the electoral process. The distribution of such resources has to be fair and timeous yet this has been skewed within many jurisdictions. If it only favours some parties and secluding others that will in no doubt create an unfair advantage on those that will be denied the resources. The distribution of resources undoubtedly need to be characterised by parity and timely disbursements.

The electoral process has been left to the independent commissions within many jurisdictions. These commissions have however been seen by some observers as being partisan and bent on suppressing the opposition actors and manipulating the outcomes. This is said to have been the case within many jurisdictions though the courts proceed to overturn the allegations on the basis of inadequate evidence and frivolous claims. The courts are expected to look at such allegations or cases with an open mind that dismisses any emotions but uphold facts and figures that are material to the matter.

The most fundamental principle defining credible elections within jurisdictions committed to promoting democracy is that they must reflect the free expression of the will of the ordinary citizens who would want bread and butter issues addressed. To achieve this fit elections should be conducted in a free and transparent manner. They also have to be inclusive and accountable and there must be equitable opportunities to compete in the elections. Once opportunities are tilted the outcome will equally be tilted and this promotes discord within the electoral outcomes.

The elections within various jurisdictions are believed to fulfil the following functions:

- Promote democratic governance of States
- Voters have the power to elect the leaders of their choice
- Elections hold politicians accountable; when they renege they are recalled or will not be re-elected in future elections.
- Allows other actors to educate citizens in the run up to an election so that they understand what elections entail but some governments have complained that some civil society organisations (CSOs) use this as a tool to

campaign for the opposition political actors. They take this as an opportunity to school the citizens or local communities on how to vote right (Chingozha 2013)

- Elections also reinforce, stabilize and legitimate a government

Electoral violence is a recurring challenge in countries around the world. Over three quarters, that is 78% of the elections in countries that are considered as vulnerable to electoral violence experienced violent events during their elections. This has also been seen to be caused by individuals and groups that would have seen or realised that their prospects of winning are marginal. They intentionally provoke their opponents forcing the law enforcement to respond with brute force.

In a bid to curtail electoral violence it is now believed by many progressive authorities that the perpetrators of such violence need to be neutralized, a fit that is only possible through dissuading them through holding them accountable. Any politicians with an appetite for violence would need the law enforcement officers as well some civil society organisations to challenge so that they mature in their politics. Hurting each other because of varying political opinion is now viewed as being primitive, unnecessary and uncalled for. Anyone who thus decide to tread along that path should be made to pay for whatever damage or pain inflicted on another. Information asymmetry has also been seen as another aspect that foment discontent during the electoral process. All contestants in the political game need to have access to every piece of information. Once they feel that they have been denied access to pertinent information to inform their decisions they will not embrace result of the poll. Information helps to create convergence among political actors. Being denied of information limits the efficacy of the decision process for all those involved in the political conquest. Sharing of the electoral process information eliminates perceptions related to electoral fraud and theft. All political actors need their political space and recognition that they are equal players in the game. Once they feel belittled they will not cooperate where it matters.

In the spirit of promoting fair competition during elections, the system should come up with an Electoral Management Board that oversees the entire process. It will strengthen the integrity of the process by eliminating any prospects of electoral fraud. The electoral management board will ideally be consisted of men and women of integrity who command respect among citizens.

Electoral violence is not simply a technical problem but a political one. The enforcement potential should not be weak. Any perpetrators of violence ought to be followed up no matter their political standing. The civil society organization is actually on record decrying the biases that characterise the electoral landscape to the extent that those perpetrating violence from the ruling parties are left untouched. The opposite is true for those that are identified as trouble makers and coming from the opposition political parties.

It has also been noted that addressing the underlying power dynamics is also a sure way of dealing with electoral violence. Modern democracy now considers embracing political transitions that co-opt opposition elites to advance certain political interests or deal with grievances of all parties. The Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD) created in Zimbabwe after the elections of 2018 is a perfect example of such an intervention. All political actors except for one joined this

progressive group in the spirit of unity of purpose. The main objectives of POLAD were:

- To promote sustainable dialogue in Zimbabwe
- To promote a culture of peace, tolerance, unity and non-discrimination
- To promote national healing and reconciliation
- To rebuild trust and restore confidence among communities in Zimbabwe

The electoral process requires the participation of all stakeholders that include the citizens in an environment that is seamlessly embracing. Citizens' participation builds democracy within a country. The background of democracy is premised on the thinking that everyone must be allowed to share their viewpoints and thoughts.

As the elections are done within various jurisdictions it is almost inevitable in the course of electoral competition that disparities will arise and so effective electoral dispute resolution mechanisms are vital. Elections the world over have been seen to be characterised in the majority of cases with contestations, violence, threats of violence and intimidation which resultantly tarnishes the integrity and credibility of the electoral process.

Every electoral process must allow for an appeal for those not satisfied by the outcome so that the will or voice of citizens will prevail. The electoral process should thus stand for the truth within the various stages of the process so that the will of the people is not frustrated by some politicians who may only be interested in advancing their personal interests.

A good electoral process ought to be characterised by the following tenets:

- Legality
- Impartiality
- Justice
- Certainty
- Objectivity
- Clarity
- Authenticity

The electoral process must also be presided over by judicial officers who are independent, impartial and technically proficient, but many scholars and social commentators believe that this is not possible in Africa. Their understanding is that Africa is characterised by significant politics of patronage. Section 9(b) of the constitution of Zimbabwe however, compels the government to appoint government officials on the basis of competencies and merit.

As a way of reducing the prospects of having disputed elections it is paramount to ensure that:

- There is an early deployment of observer missions to monitor the pre-election climate
- Sufficient deployment of security personnel to quell potential for volatility.
- Deal decisively with all individuals and groups fermenting violence before and during an election
- Availing campaigning space to all those within the race on all available media platforms.
- Ensure that the election is run by an independent commission though according to some scholars independence is seldom practically possible within many jurisdiction.

The ruling political parties in Africa have always been accused by opposition political parties of connivance with the

Electoral Commissions to manipulate the election results. Odinga in Kenya also claimed this rhetoric but all his claims were thrown out by a Supreme Court. Their argument is always premised on the belief that there is no way they (Commissions) can challenge their appointing authority, who is their pay master. Government authorities dismiss this on the basis that these officials took an oath to service with fear and favour. Their decisions are therefore believed to be professional.

It needs to be understood that within democracies across the world, the executive and legislative organs of the State are run by individuals who come from political parties. These individuals would have been chosen through the electoral process, in this vein this process ought to be such that it brings to these institutions, individuals with competencies approved by electorate. Literature has however, revealed that there are instances when individuals are just elected because they belong to a political party without any regard of what they would bring to these critical institutions of government. The lack of competencies at times derails government business of lack of objectivity and thoughtfulness during the elections. The electoral process thus needs to be redefined or re-crafted to clearly spell out the criterion that would produce office bearers of repute with appropriate competencies and experiences. Within many political parties some individuals end up being in the political race because of being linked to some powerful politicians or by virtue of being able to ride on power of the influential individual yet competencies are marginal. What needs to be understood is that government goes beyond campaign language and ability to stir emotion among citizens. Performance is a function of competencies and experience.

Political parties ideally help to promote and sustain debate which creates a health situation for the political environment within a democracy. The diversity that comes with multipartyism at times helps to challenge government action and inaction. In this vein many political analysts provide that elections which are fair help to provide the citizens who will then assume this important task for government.

The debates if done well only challenge the competing political parties to develop functional programmes so as to appeal to electorate. Their competitive ideas and programmes when ushered into office would then help to drive the national agenda.

Through the activities of political parties the citizens within countries will be in a position to speak and challenge the government machinery. Citizens should be in a position to contribute towards how they are governed by the authorities. This explains why every political party should have its leaders, active members and the followers. The world over no democracy can exist without the presence of political parties.

The politics in Africa has also been seen to have a third force or hidden hand that drives political pieces or the agenda from behind the scenes. The third force never comes out clear that they have an interest in the affairs of the State and are siding with one of the parties in the political game. The Montevideo declaration of 1933 acknowledges that all States need to exercise their Statehood which manifest in autonomy. Any interference no matter how marginal will not be unfair but unconstitutional at law. Every State should be in a position to define its own destiny.

To safe guard their interest, these forces back the losing horse by supporting a claim of unfair elections. In the majority of cases those losing elections are opposition political parties. A case in point in recent times is Raila Odinga of Kenya whom

the EFF leader Julius Malema of South African (August 2022) has described as someone who in his entire political life could just not accept defeat. Accepting defeat for him has always been something remote. For him a fair election was about him winning. Each time he lost then the election was defined as being unfair, yet mature politicians ought to understand that democracy is about being rationale, reasonable and adopt objectivity even when it hurts. In this vein Professors PLO Lumumba (2021) argued that Statesmen look forward to the next generation when they go through elections but politicians lookup to the next election. What this adds up to is the fact that the short-sighted politicians only look at themselves as the ones to benefit from the political process. No matter how well run an election is they will always choreograph acts that discredit the process.

At times the dispute arises from the conflict that characterise the run up to the elections. Once the losing party feels that they were intimidated during the run up to the plebiscite, they will seek to tell the world. They will allege that the terrain was not even for the conduct of a fair and credible contest.

The 2008 election in Zimbabwe was described as a watershed election that was heavily and closely contested between the main contenders that were ZANU PF and MDC-T. This general election was held to elect the President and Parliament (lower and upper houses). Many social and political commentators have defined this election as having been a period that provided the incumbent President, Robert Mugabe of ZANU PF with the toughest electoral challenge since 1980 which was the year when ZANU PF won the election with a majority vote of 57 seats securing the Independence that Zimbabwe had fought for, for a long time. The runner up in this election had 23 seats. If statistics are anything to go by then Mugabe was popular in 1980.

Mugabe and his party faced so much challenge in the 2008 election because of the biting economic challenges that were prevailing at the time to the extent that even his one-time minister of Finance and most trusted ally Simba Makoni went into the ring to challenge him for presidency, with his own political outfit known as Mavambo.

In the run up to this tightly contested election supporters of the opposition party are said to have been harassed, intimidated and victimised through violent attacks by government forces that included the army and the police (NewsDay 2008). The government did not agree with these allegations. Instead the government made counter allegations that it was the MDC supporters that were perpetrating violence. The government went on to define the utterances by the MDC-T as a mere act of mischief, unsubstantiated claim and meant to discredit the ZANU PF led government as well as a way to seek sympathy from the international community. The first round of this election result failed to provide an ultimate and conclusive winner. At this stage the political situation was made complex by Tendai Biti from the MDC-T stable who made an announcement of unofficial preliminary results that indicated that the MDC-T had a favourable outcome from the poll which was in violation of the provisions of the Electoral Act. In terms of this Act the announcement of results was the preserve of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). This is however, unknown to the citizens, who believed, the announcement of the final result of this plebiscite was delayed significantly to the extent that it steered panic and suspicion within the opposition camp as well as the international community. Resultantly there was growth of sentiments that Mugabe might have been trying to manipulate the results during the period of this silence. When

the results were finally released they indicated that the MDC T had won the majority of seats for house of assembly with 47, 9 percent for the presidential candidate while Mugabe was trailing with 43.2 percent. Since the MDC had not secured a majority of the votes as required by law there was need for a run-off election so as to have a result that pronounced an outright winner.

The opposition claimed that the period preceding this run off was characterised by intimidation and violence. Resultantly there was heated tension that resulted in Tsvangirai the president of the MDC-T announcing that he was withdrawing from the election. His argument was that the election was not going to be free and fair. According to `Mugabe this was just an attempt to smear the process by one who had realised that it was not going to be easy to romp to victory. Consequently, the election went ahead as planned and Mugabe was declared the winner, a decision which was not taken kindly and lightly by the opposition and their sympathisers from the international arena.

The result of the runoff created an impasse. The opposition party MDC-T failed to concede defeat and took their issues globally. This meant that ZANU PF had to engage with the MDC-T and other political formations who had significant representation in the election with a view of coming up with a functional matrix that would take the country forward post the election.

The pressure from several quotas led to the idea of a Government of National Unity being borne. To champion this direction a mediator was decided. The parties agreed on Thabo Mbeki, who was the President of South Africa. The idea of taking aboard Thabo Mbeki as the mediator for the negotiations was meant to reduce the rift between these political formations as they sought to advance their interests in the proposed political arrangement.

This was paramount because the country was never going to move forward without a workable matrix having been agreed upon by the political parties. Though there were instances when Mbeki's impartiality was doubted, he proved through his diplomacy that he had the kind of chemistry that would bring the conflicting parties together, and he did. Diplomacy which is the strategy that Mbeki used refers to the interaction of two or more States through their organs to peacefully achieve, protect and maintain their rights and interests as well as their nationals. The motivating understanding here is the fact premised on the Montevideo Declaration of 1933 on Statehood. This acknowledges that all States are equal once they attain Statehood. In this vein no State can decide to belittle another whatever situation it finds itself in. As much as the world put immense pressure on Thabo Mbeki he solidly stood on the understanding that Zimbabwe was a sovereign State and not a province of South Africa. In all that he had to do he was sure not to treat Mugabe like a little boy as much as there were issues in his country for which Mbeki had been engaged as a mediator. He also understood well that a mediator gives the parties room to discuss issues and allow them space to find each other. The solution was not to be suggested by the third party but by the parties themselves.

There are many times when the opposition was really hard on him yet that did not sway him into acting in a manner that would frustrate the process. He remained steadfast as he continued to shuttle between the conflicting parties. Shuttle diplomacy entails negotiations between nations carried on by an intermediary who shuttles back and forth the disputants. This allows him to get to understand the real issues from the disputant's standpoint in a free environment The opposition

according to available literature believed Thabo Mbeki had a soft spot for Mugabe since they had worked closely together during the liberation struggles that brought independence to their countries. He however remained unintimidated, steadfast and the conflicting parties came nearer and nearer by day. Ultimately his diplomacy led to a Government of National Unity realising that diplomatic relations are established by mutual consent between States. These may also be terminated unilaterally to register disapproval of some acts and actions by other States. This was not the case here.

When the elections are disputed all the serenity within communities is ruptured extensively. The locals may be displaced from their homes. This comes with a lot of pain, suffering and destruction of property. In this regard many political analysts believe that election disputes ought to be resolved before they degenerate.

Conflicts that come with disputed elections have been seen to bring a lot of suffering to ordinary citizens. When the conflict escalate the innocent citizens may actually be harmed by political players as they fight for supremacy. Those that suffer the most have been known to be elderly, women and children. These are vulnerable within communities, yet they equally have rights that need to be recognised and upheld. To this end David little suggested that Violation of human rights is an important source of conflict and compliance with human rights is a crucial foundation for peace.

The impact of this view is that once human rights are upheld then the challenges that characterise conflicts will be eliminated or curtailed.



Fig 1: Victims of disputed elections

### Victims of disputed elections

Diplomacy which is the tool that Mbeki used can be defined as the interaction in foreign policy of two or more States through their organs to peacefully achieve, protect and maintain their rights and interests as well as those of their nationals. It can also be defined as the vehicle through which States implement their foreign policies. Important to note is the fact that diplomatic relations are established by mutual consent between States. This relationship can also be terminated unilaterally to register disapproval of some act by the other party. Diplomatic effort has the power to diffuse tensions and preventing the escalation of violence and promotes peace.

Elections in Zimbabwe and indeed everywhere are conducted in an environment which is characterised by significant tension. This is because of the power and resources groups and individuals are set to realise after romping into power. Democracies however, believe in an environment that is neutral for the participation of all and sundry as long as they feel that they have what it takes to improve the lives and livelihoods of the citizens.

The conduct of elections has been seen to be a stressful and thankless undertaking because people do not just appreciate, even as much as police/law enforcement do their best to ensure serenity and coexistence between and among the political actors and their followers. The law enforcement officers are said to be guided by the PLAN matrix. This matrix provides that the police use force consistent with:

P: Proportionality  
L: Legality  
A: Accountability  
N: Necessity

Through this thinking the political actors and their followers are reminded that the police will enforce the electoral laws without fear or favour. To this end literature available indicates that the police forces have always reminded political actors that they will not hesitate to enforce the law to all individuals and groups that decide to be deviant or a law unto themselves.

These statutes or provisions at law should be seen to convey justice, order and stability to the communities and should be expressive of the spirit of harmony, oneness and progressiveness. Through the Constitution of Zimbabwe diversity is accommodated within communities. It provides for political rights under section 67. It says 'Every Zimbabwean citizen has the right to

- a) To free, fair and regular elections for any elective public office established in terms of the Constitution or any other law and
- b) To make political choices freely.

In view of the provisions of this section no political party is allowed therefore to coerce voters in any way. Every group or individual has the liberty to make political choices. If this is allowed the contestations of political outcomes would be marginal.

Many democracies now understand that all citizens have the uncontested right to form, join or participate in the activities of any political party as well as campaigning freely. Literature accessed during this study pointed to significant manipulation and coaxing of voters which ultimately promotes challenging of the election outcomes.

Crime within communities is confirmation that the community would have failed to self-regulate. When this happens the Constitution in terms of section 219 creates the police to assume various roles that include:

- Detecting the internal security of Zimbabwe
- Protecting and securing the lives and property of the people
- Maintaining law and order
- Upholding this Constitution and enforcing the law without fear or favour

As political parties therefore battle within the election space, the constitution demands that they do so peacefully. This is why the Constitution provides for political rights through section 67.

The Zimbabwe Constitution provides for an acceptable way of conducting elections. This derives from the point that authority to govern derives from the will of the citizens within the country to make the running of the country possible. Consequently the citizen within every community has an uncontested right to:

- To participate in government directly or indirectly through freely chosen representatives. Those standing for

office should not be discriminated in whatever way. As these men and women are elected, any efforts to frustrate this or derailment of the wishes of the people will be frowned at. Resultantly, the election outcomes would be challenged.

- To mobilise support. Those interested in being active in the political affairs of their communities should not be hindered as they seek to recruit members for their parties. Once their efforts are frustrated then concerns will be raised with the view of challenging the political outcomes. In this view all citizens should be allowed to relate with those they are comfortable with.
- The electoral act also provides for a peaceful participation in all political activities that are intended to influence the composition and policies of Government. The choice of the people should not be hindered if the outcome should be credible. If the political parties feel restricted or constrained in their activities they will not embrace the political outcome. This has been seen to cause a lot of clashes between the contesting parties. Too many casualties in the 2008 plebiscite were witnessed as parties clashed after the outcome to the elections was seen as having been manipulated. This could have been avoided with the respect of each political player as an equal player in the electoral process.
- Civic society organisations have also been seen as a critical and necessary leg in the electoral process. They help to educate the citizens so that they understand their political rights. They have however, been seen to be biased at times, to the extent that they ‘make efforts to teach citizens how to vote right’ and *to vote right*. This would be synonymous will meddling with internal affairs of a State. This would cause clashes between them and the host government. Once there are battles between these parties that will influence many processes and programmes. In the end it is the general populace that suffers

There was convergence from the respondents who participated in the study through interviews, questionnaires and the document analysis, that diplomacy undeniably plays a significant role in conflict resolution. According to the respondents diplomacy creates a neutral ground for conflicting parties to achieve or establish an environment ideal for engaging.

According to respondent PP007 ‘once there is an umpire the ruling party will shy, climbs down on their bullish tendencies and look at the other contesting parties as equal players in the game. This will allow for a fair engagement as we feel secure to say exactly what we want to say, or believe in, so as to achieve a win-win scenario.’

This view was complimented by content reviewed that confirmed that a mediator constantly reminds the parties negotiating on the need to come up with a resolution to the problem because the world would be watching.

However, a contrary view was raised by GP27 who suggested that the mediators can never be neutral but find a way of tilting the deliberations towards either party. He further went on to suggest that it is practically impossible to be neutral. Every individual will always be more or less inclined towards either of the pole positions characterizing the conflict.

Available literature equally confirmed this position. Resultantly, many voices doubted that Thabo Mbeki would be neutral having related with Mugabe for a very long time

during the struggles for independence for the Republic of South Africa.

The majority of respondents indicated that diplomacy was key in helping the conflicting parties deal with their impasse. Zanu PF and MDC-T the main contenders in this disputed election were headed for a show down. Neither party was prepared to give in to the challenges that characterized the dispute. Consequently, Thabo Mbeki employed quiet and shuttle diplomacy. He continued to engage the parties without declaring the context of the discussions. Many observers criticized him for that strategy but he maintained his resolve. According to PP011 Mbeki’s strategy ‘was the card that resolved the impasse.’ He went further to suggest that he was, ‘calculative, patient and engaging.’ Otherwise in view of the pressure he was going through from various sectors he would have given up the role.

The majority of respondents in this study indicated that many disputed elections within Africa and even beyond were only resolved because of the intervention of mediators. Respondent GP014 suggested that diplomacy only works well when the mediator respects the contesting parties, operates within the agreed framework and is also respected by the conflicting parties. Once the mediator shows biasness the whole process will collapse.

Weighing in PP19 added that, ‘the major aspect to be respected and considered is the fact that this person must be respected by all parties, the process may not even take off for fear that the mediator will favour one of the parties.’

The documents reviewed also revealed that the Global Political Agreement (GPA) for the 2008 disputed election in Zimbabwe came up as a result of the effort of Mbeki which stabilized the country during that season. The whole world appreciated the outcome of the process. The intervention by Mbeki reduced any possibility for further escalation of the conflict.

The results of the study led to the development of the CLIPE Melting Port Model shown below.

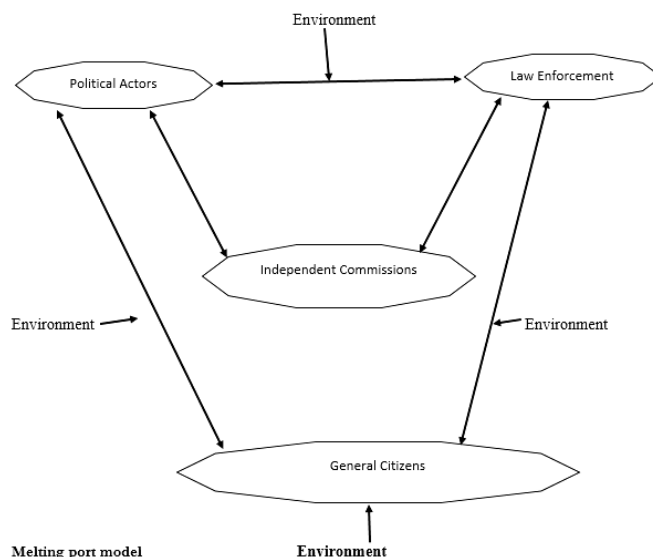


Fig 2: Melting port model

According to this model the data collected revealed that disputed elections can only be resolved through honest convergence of all issues. Once these issues are put in a CLIPE melting pot, which is then subjected to a lot of heat they will stand scrutiny.

The heat generated will melt unnecessary issues. Only the real issues will remain standing. As they remain standing, it will

then be possible to honestly look for ways of dealing with them. Those issues that matter in fostering healing and progression, within communities will be sustained. The interplay of conflicting and competing positions needs to be embraced to allow for the growth and stability of communities.

### Conclusion

The various perspectives that define democracy need to be engrained among all players so that there is respect of each other's views. The idea of defining the concept of democracy in the lens of the West now needs to be challenged. This will help to create a fair playing field for political players within the African political space. However when the parties in an election contest fail to agree on the outcome a third must immediately be engaged to help the parties to create common ground. If this is done with the right spirit the country will continue in its development trajectory peacefully. The parties will appreciate that there is positiveness in working together so that the general populace become the ultimate beneficiaries of the agreed political solutions.

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