

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Application of the theories that explain the causes of civil conflicts in Zimbabwean conflicts

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**There are several theories which tend to explain the causes of civil conflicts. These theories have identified certain elements or conditions which make civil conflicts feasible. Zimbabwe has experienced conflicts. Each time such conflicts have occurred, no one has been well prepared to handle them or prevent them. This paper attempts to examine and analyse various theories relating to the causes of civil conflicts and identifies elements in the theories which are critical to the causes of a civil conflict. The purpose is to identify natural and man-made elements that would make civil conflicts inevitable. By identifying such elements, the country can adequately prepare itself in preventing civil conflicts before they occur. The presence of abundant natural resources in Zimbabwe is seen as endowment and a blessing. Theory, however, predicts it as a source of its problems. By knowing the risks posed by such primary commodity export, measures can be taken to minimise the opportunities of civil conflicts through equitable distribution of their benefits or other measures as seen fit.**

**Keywords:** Civil conflicts, man-made elements, natural resources

## INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe has gone through several civil conflicts. These conflicts include the war of independence, disturbances in assembly points during cease fire, the dissidents' activities in Matebeland and Midlands provinces and the response to the same. Finally, there is the conflict which has led Zimbabwe to the current post-conflict-reconstruction and establishment of the government of national unity (GNU). Zimbabwe has also experienced civil conflicts prior to the war of independence. However, this paper will not deal with issues prior to the conflict leading to independence. There are several theories which have been crafted to explain the causes of civil conflicts. These theories have come up with some ingredients and conditions that lead to the causes of civil conflicts.

In other words, the theories claim that if certain conditions exist they can likely lead to civil conflicts. The theories also claim, for example, that the presence of a mountainous terrain makes war feasible. If a country is gifted with a primary commodity export the possibility of a

civil war is very high. Various proxies such as GDP, GDP per capita have been used to advance reasons why civil conflicts may occur. Based on the behaviour of these proxies, conclusions have been drawn to give universal conditions which lead to civil wars.

The fact that there are many countries including Zimbabwe which depend on a particular primary commodity export and have experienced civil conflicts provides relevance of these theories. By analysing them and conceptualising them on individual country's experiences, they can offer information which can be used to develop measures in a particular country on how to prevent them. Many countries, including Zimbabwe, have not recognised that what is called a blessing (natural resources) is the root cause of their conflicts.

The objective of this paper is to analyse the theories, explaining the causes of civil conflicts and conceptualising them in Zimbabwe's internal conflicts. It intends to show how far these theories theoretically and empirically explain the causes of conflicts in Zimbabwe

and, to larger extent, explaining conflicts in general.

## ZIMBABWE'S CONFLICTS

Zimbabwe has experienced several conflicts. The war of independence was a civil war by any definition. The conflict began in the early 1960s and by late 1960s and throughout most of 1970s, it had translated into an armed conflict.

There were two liberation movements, namely Zimbabwe national union (Patriotic Front), (ZANU PF) led by Robert Mugabe and its armed wing, Zimbabwe national liberation army (ZANLA), and patriotic front Zimbabwe national people's union (PF ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo (now late) and its armed wing known as Zimbabwe people's revolutionary army (ZIPRA) fighting on one side against the Rhodesian government led by Ian Smith (now late) on the other. The Rhodesian forces killed thousands of civilians at refugee camps at Chimoio in Mozambique and at another camp in Zambia. PF ZAPU was based in Zambia while ZANU PF was based in Mozambique. Scores of people killed by the Rhodesian forces were black Zimbabwean refugees. The war also killed many other people and displaced many people internally and outside the country (Tekere, 2007).

ZIPRA forces also downed a plane which was coming from Kariba after receiving intelligence information that the commander of the Rhodesian forces, General Peter Walls (now late) was on board. He was however, not on the plane but several white Zimbabwean civilians were killed (Tekere, 2007). The war ended with the Lancaster house agreement and negotiated current constitution in 1979 (Kagoro, 2005).

Before independence in 1980 and immediately after independence, ZIPRA and ZANLA forces were involved in fighting in their assembly camps while awaiting redeployment into the national army or demobilisation to civilian life. There were no known causes of the conflict, then soon after independence a group of ex-ZIPRA began to operate as dissidents in the Midlands and Matebeland provinces where they began to terrorise people and security forces responded with a heavy hand. About 3,750 civilians were killed or missing, 680 homesteads were destroyed, 10,000 were detained and 2000 were tortured (The catholic commission for justice and peace in Zimbabwe, 1997). Peace only returned after the two parties ZANU PF and PF ZAPU and their leaders Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo signed a unity accord on December 22, 1987 and subsequently merged their parties into one single party that became known as ZANU PF on December 22, 1989 (Moyo, 1991).

In 2000, the Zimbabwe government drafted a new constitution and then it subjected it to a referendum conducted on 12 and 13th February, 2000. The government lost by 54% while it managed to get a yes support

of only 46% (Kagoro, 2005). The birth of an opposition party known as the movement of democratic change (MDC) led by a trade unionist, Morgan Tsvangirai occurred at the same period and opposed the draft constitution.

According to Timbe (2007: 124) after losing in the referendum ZANU PF began to mobilise itself to prevent an outcome of similar nature in the next general elections. When the war veterans began with the forcible occupations of white commercial farms, the ZANU PF government embraced this move to turn around its political fortunes. MDC, the United Kingdom and the entire European Union condemned the government's occupations of white commercial farms. The United Kingdom, European Union, the United States and some other western governments, imposed a travel ban on top officials from both government and ZANU PF to demonstrate their displeasure (Timbe, 2005). These travel bans are now known as sanctions because of their devastating nature on ordinary people and the economy and have included other measures too.

In the 2000 presidential election campaign, there were 1,096 acts of violence and included 35 deaths (Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ), 2009). However, according to The catholic commission for justice and peace in Zimbabwe (2001), violence erupted during the pre and post parliamentary elections period and about 24 people were killed, seven of them white commercial farmers, and a number of others tortured.

In 2005 elections, Zimbabwe human rights watchdogs reported 1,221 acts of violence including 1 murder. In the 2008 harmonised elections, there were 8,558 incidents of political violence including scores of murders, unlawful detention and arrests, harassments, abductions, assault, torture and property destruction (MMPZ, 2009).

The 2008 elections did not produce a conclusive winner at presidential level. Three political parties namely ZANU PF, MDC (Tsvangirai) and MDC (Mutambara) (now involved in a fight of control of the party against Welshman Ncube) then signed a global political agreement (GPA) on 15th September, 2008 to form a Government of National Unity (GNU) (Government of Zimbabwe, 2008).

It resulted in the amendment of the constitution (no. 19) Act creating the positions of the Prime Minister and the two Deputy Prime Ministers and spelled out their functions, shared power and the operations of the government (The parliament of Zimbabwe, 2010: 13). Robert Gabriel Mugabe became the President of Zimbabwe within the ambit of the GNU representing ZANU PF. Morgan Tsvangirai became Prime Minister representing MDC (Tsvangirai), Arthur Mutambara became Deputy Prime Minister representing MDC (Mutambara) and Thokozani Khupe another Deputy Prime Minister, representing MDC (Tsvangirai). There are two Vice

Presidents, both from ZANU PF (Joyce Mujuru and John Landa Nkomo).

## JUSTIFICATION OF THIS STUDY

Conflicts have left many economies in bad shape (Collier et al., 2008). They impact negatively on economic growth through weakening and destroying institutions resulting in stagnant and declining economic activity (Mlambo et al., 2009: 59). In addition to factors such as fragility of the state, there are other factors such as the new triangle trade which weakens the states.

Chataigner and Gaulme (2005: 7) have come up with this new triangle trade which comprises of Southern countries, Western countries, and Eastern European countries. In the triangle, Southern countries are generally African countries and other developing countries which export illicit raw materials or primary products such as conflict diamonds to Western countries. At the instruction of the Southern countries, Western countries transfer the proceeds to Eastern European countries for the purpose of payment of arms. The Eastern European countries then supply the illegal arms to the Southern countries. The arms are then used in the internal conflicts and may prolong the conflicts. The triangle is based on corruption which exists in the three categories of countries involved. Chaitaigner and Gaulme (2005) point out further that this illegal trade does not only cause the fragility of the Southern countries, but it is also the root of their poverty, their criminalisation and indeed the devastation of their countries. The proceeds of exports instead of being used to eradicate poverty, they are then used by the elite to acquire arms to enhance their personal or collective ambitions at the expense of their people.

UNDP (2008) provides a list of 35 countries worldwide that have experienced conflicts and have gone through or are still in the process of post-conflict reconstruction. The period 1990 to 2000 was characterised by 19 armed conflicts in different parts of Africa (Obwona and Guloba, 2009). Zimbabwe is both a fragile state and post-conflict country (World Bank, 2011; African Development Bank, 2010).

It is also important to understand the causes of conflicts in order to be able to resolve them (Michailof et al., 2002; Mlambo et al., 2009). Since these conflicts result in civil wars and the episode, there is a need to define them before the theories are discussed. Collier and Hoeffler (2000: 2) define a civil war as intra-state conflict with at least 1,000 battle related deaths with both the rebel group and government troops suffering human losses and the latter at least suffering 5% of those losses.

Ajakaiye and Ali (2009) on the other hand, define a civil war as local conflict that involves the state with a minimum of 1,000 battle inflicted deaths per annum. It is

assumed that the war results in over a 1,000 battle inflicted deaths in the first year. Then in the second year there is a decrease below threshold. If in the third year the threshold is maintained, a crude application of the 1000 death measurement can be used. In such a case, the episode will be classified as a failed post-conflict situation. On the other hand, a lower threshold is used to define restoration of peace; in that case the episode is classified as a continuous war (Collier, 2008). An episode is a conflict incident in some series of conflict events.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this article is qualitative using historical and comparative approaches.

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE THEORIES EXPLAINING THE CAUSES OF CIVIL CONFLICTS AND THEIR EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE AND CONCEPTUALISING THEM IN ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT OF CONFLICTS

In this part, various theories which explain the causes of civil conflicts are reviewed and analysed for their relevance in the Zimbabwean context of conflict and in general.

### Grievance theory

Communities consist of different segments and some of these segments may have grievances that can lead them to violence in their aim to resolve the grievances (Ali, 2009). Rugumamu and Gbla (2003) assert that the possibility of a conflict occurring is inherent in all communities.

The divergence in views and interests among different groups of people is natural, but how divergences are expressed and managed will determine whether the conflict will be political (peaceful) or violent. The theory is based on how grievances are managed by those who feel aggrieved and those who promote inequalities and inflict injustices.

Collier and Hoeffler (2000) identify the three types of grievance namely, hatreds between groups, political exclusion and vengeance. Hatreds between different ethnic groups or hatreds between religious groups are believed to be the one of the most frequent causes of the civil conflicts. These hatreds can only exist in communities which have ethnic diversity or have multiple religious ideologies. Hatreds between groups also exist in the communities that are fractionalised compared to those that are of the same origin. However, Collier and Hoeffler (2000) observe that polarised communities are

more prone to conflicts than those with a deep intensity of fractionalisation.

Political exclusion can occur when certain people are denied political rights and participation. It can also occur when minorities are not protected through constitutional provisions. Some communities may be victimised for supporting certain leaders in the past that may not be in power or are considered a threat. They may also be victimised for holding certain views which may not be favoured by the majority.

Political exclusion can also occur when the poor are marginalised. A good example is when there is skewed wealth distribution in favour of the rich and also when there is inequality in resource distribution among regions or provinces. Where the rich regions or provinces use their influence to get hefty portions of national resources at the expense of the poor regions or provinces the latter may advocate for secession and may go to war to achieve this. This, in Collier and Hoeffler's (2000) view would give them the ability to control their own resources and destiny. This will be better than the former as in the former, large resources would be apportioned to rich regions or provinces. Collier and Hoeffler (2008) add that democracy which is cherished worldwide may not be inclusive when minority groups are denied privileges extended to majority groups by the system. The incentive to exploit those in the minority increases the larger the size of the minority. This is so because the large minority is a threat to the privileges enjoyed by the majority. They may also be threatened that the minority may catch up with them in numbers, wealth, and so on. There is therefore more potential to exploit the large minority in order to suppress them. On the other hand, a small minority is insignificant and does not pose a threat to privileges even if the privileges are extended to them. Hence there is no justified potential to exploit them. Those who are excluded or victimised according to this theory may rise to fight those who abuse them in order for them to be included and have victimisation stopped. This then leads to a civil war.

In order to analyse this theory, one has to look on what it is based. It is based on the existence of grievances and how they are managed. These grievances sometimes arise even in countries where democracy exists. The majority who win may deny political rights to the minority. If the minority is large enough, the threat on the majority's privileges is big and it motivates the majority to suppress the minority even harder. The theory assumes that the existence of the so-called grievances would lead to a civil war. This is a very weak assumption as in real life, in every community, there are some grievances where even the majority may not get the same privileges but they do not all lead to a civil war. As such, the premises of the theory are very weak in explaining the causes of civil wars. The theory does not show which grievances in fact result into a civil war and which ones do not. It also down

plays the role played by various mechanisms which may be in place such as community leaders, church leaders, conflict management processes in solving grievances.

Applying the theory in the Zimbabwean context, one can see that there were elements of grievances resulting in the dissident activities soon after independence in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe. A group of former ZIPRA ex-fighters began to terrorise people in the above two provinces. Then the security forces began to hunt them down but in the process scores of innocent civilians were killed, abducted, tortured and their property destroyed. This operation by the security forces was referred to as Gukurahundi. It is not clear whether the violence was actually caused by any grievances. There were no identified causes (The catholic commission for justice and peace in Zimbabwe, 1997).

However, the dissidents had grievances although they were not enunciated. They began to get attention by killing innocent civilians, abducting them and destroying property in the Matabeleland and Midland provinces. The security forces responded with a heavy hand that killed scores of civilians, detained and tortured many and destroyed homesteads and property.

It is estimated that 3,750 people were killed, 680 homesteads were destroyed, 10,000 civilians were detained and 2,000 were tortured. These were mostly committed by the state security forces. The government accused the PF ZAPU party leadership and its supporters as supporters of dissidents, a clear indication that there were presumed political grievances. Both patriotic front Zimbabwe national people's union (PF ZAPU) leadership and the dissidents themselves denied that they were in partnership in destabilising the country (Catholic commission for justice and peace in Zimbabwe, 1997). The dissident activities stopped when the ruling party then Zimbabwe national union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU PF) and Patriotic front Zimbabwe National People's Union (PF ZAPU) merged and PF ZAPU leadership were brought into the new party structures and into government. One can conclude that there were grievances of the nature of political exclusion, as the PF ZAPU leadership had been removed from government after the discovery of arms caches which the government accused it to have planted immediately after independence.

The ZANU PF government had also confiscated commercial companies and projects belonging to PF ZAPU. As a result of that, PF ZAPU and the dissidents therefore had grievances which were addressed through the merger of the two political parties under the unity accord. However, ZAPU has been revived again by some elements who feel the unity accord has not benefited them giving rise to a new dimension of grievances.

The grievance theory is weak in that almost all countries and communities have some sort of grievances but not all countries have experienced civil wars hence it can

easily be eliminated as a factor that causes civil wars. People may not rise to fight because of grievances as they are used to them as they occur in a family, community and in a nation. There are many grievances which have not been managed at all or have been poorly managed but have not led to civil wars. The paper discusses empirical evidence of the grievance theory.

### ***Collier and Hoeffler (2000)***

Collier and Hoeffler (2000) tested the risk of civil war, using a comprehensive panel data set of 161 countries including Zimbabwe covering the period 1960 to 1999 with 1,288 potential observations. They used social fractionalisation, ethnic dominance, democracy, geographic dispersion, mountainous terrain, income inequality, and land inequality and peace duration as proxies.

They examined the relationship between ethnic dominance, social fractionalisation, democracy and duration of peace. Geographic dispersion of population and mountainous terrain were controlled. Ethnic dominance and democracy were statistically significant. The results showed that one large ethnic group (45 to 90% of the population belonging to the same ethnic group) has a high probability of experiencing a conflict. In Zimbabwe there are largely two ethnic groups, the Ndebele and Shona, the Shona being dominant in numbers. In the period leading up to independence, fighting erupted between the two liberation armies, ZIPRA (predominantly Ndebele) and ZANLA (predominantly Shona), while still awaiting demobilisation.

After independence, the dissidents who were mainly from the Ndebele tribe and security forces which predominantly were Shona fought. The security forces retaliated by killing civilians who were predominantly Ndebele. The researchers also found that greater openness of political institutions reduces the risk of conflict. In Zimbabwe, immediately after the constitutional referendum in 2000, the country's institutions became less democratic hence fuelled the conflict in line with the results of this study. They further found that income inequality and land inequality were statistically insignificant. The results of this study regarding land inequality are surprising.

In Zimbabwe, contrary to the findings of this study, the conflict was fuelled by an action by war veterans who invaded white commercial farms. The war veterans, and others, were landless and they were the majority, while about 4,000 white commercial farmers from the minority community owned about 90% of arable land. Therefore in the case of Zimbabwe, land inequality was a factor in fuelling the conflict. The other piece of empirical evidence is presented as follows:

### ***Collier and Hoeffler (2002)***

Collier and Hoeffler (2002) investigated the causes of civil

wars. They looked at the wars which took place during 1960 to 1999. This was expanded and updated data covering 161 including Zimbabwe and identified 78 civil wars. Their models had more proxies than their models in Collier and Hoeffler (2000). The Grievance model was tested using proxies such as ethnic fractionalisation, religious fractionalisation, ethnic polarisation, ethnic dominance, democracy, peace duration, income inequality, land inequality, population, geographic dispersion and mountainous terrain.

Collier and Hoeffler (2000) had social fractionalisation as a variable but did not have ethnic fractionalisation, religious fractionalisation, ethnic polarisation and population. They controlled geographic military advantage by inclusion of population, the dispersion of the population and mountainous terrain.

The results were ethnic fractionalisation was statistically insignificant. It increases the risk of war. Democracy was found statistically significant. They concluded that greater openness of political institutions reduces the risk of conflict. This was true for Zimbabwe; as the country became less democratic, prevailing conditions fuelled conflict. Religious fractionalisation, ethnic polarisation and ethnic dominance were found to be statistically insignificant both on their own and jointly.

The universal grievance theory is however preferred by many political scientists most probably because of the element of political exclusion in it while economists favour the economic theory of conflict which bases on the feasibility of the war (Ali, 2009). The economic theory of conflict looks at factors that focus on the feasibility of a rebellion not preference as discussed next.

### **Economic theory of conflict**

The two theories which have been discussed previously focus on the constraint and preference. The economic theory of conflict on the other hand, according to Collier (2006) does not regard motivation as an important factor in the cause of a civil war. The defining characteristic of a civil war is the existence and durability of a private rebel army. In most cases, such a rebel army is likely to be neither financially nor militarily feasible (Collier et al., 2008).

In this theory the most important consideration is whether or not an entity can sustain its operations financially and militarily. In other words the rebel group should be able to sustain their insurgency financially and militarily as it emphasises on the feasibility of the rebellion. In the theory, even a small rebel group can operate. There can also be several rebel groups which can operate if there is adequate space. The variables which are interpreted as the proxy of feasibility; mountainous terrain, protection through external security agreement, low per capita income, stagnant economic growth and large primary resource are significant (Collier,

2008). This could also have been true during the disturbances in Matabeleland and Midland provinces of Zimbabwe.

The dissidents operated in small groups and once they struck, they could hide in the bush until the security forces left. So it was the thick forest rather than the mountainous terrain which helped the dissidents to sustain their activities against the government forces. The dissidents knew they could easily hide once they struck.

The economic feasibility was that the dissidents were not defeated by the security forces through military engagement. The activities of the dissidents only stopped when there was a political settlement through the merger of the two political parties. France guaranteed all her former colonies through the protection agreement. This induces them to go to war whenever there is a threat. French troops have always been present in conflicts in some North African countries with protection agreements. Instead of engaging in talks, they will prefer crashing the rebels militarily because France would help them. It increases the feasibility of war (Collier, 2008).

Zimbabwe however does not have any protection agreement with her former colonial master, Britain. So the aspect of protection is not relevant to Zimbabwe. Low per capita income is a factor in that in such countries poverty exists and unemployment is very high, making it easy for a social entrepreneur to recruit rebel forces. Of late, Zimbabwe's per capita income has significantly fallen and poverty has increased.

Political parties have capitalised on those to recruit their members, not for military purpose but as members and pressure groups for civil disobedience. The political parties promise them a better future and prosperity. The stagnant economic growth assists the social entrepreneurs to recruit their forces as the population is not gainfully employed. . In the other words, the economic theory rejects the grievance theory explanation as the causes of civil wars. It presumes that the so-called grievances or strong desire of power are common in many communities. The underlining feature is that rebellion is independent of the grievances. It is caused by feasibility of the rebellion (Collier, 2006:3).

Collier et al. (2007) view the economic theory of conflict as emphasising on the feasibility of the rebellion. The most important feature to take note of is that the rebellion can be sustained both financially and militarily. The rebel group can be driven by many objectives. They may think they have grievances or they may just be power hungry. The original objective is guided by the preference of a social entrepreneur who leads the entity that will carry out rebellion. The original goal may be to make profit (money) or may have nothing about profit (money) or it may be religious. The original objectives of the rebels are not the ones which lead them to start civil conflicts. If the space is big there can be a room for other rebel forces too to operate (Collier et al, 2007).

The hand book of defence economics makes emphasis on the feasibility of the rebellion not the motive. As indicated earlier, motivating factors could be so many but whether the rebel group can launch the war or not, depends on the feasibility of the rebellion (Collier et al., 2007). If it is feasible, it will take place regardless of the objective. The feasibility hypothesis upon which the economic theory of conflict is built concludes that when a rebellion is feasible it will occur no matter what (Ali, 2009). The feasibility hypothesis ignores the motivations of the rebel forces. What sets the stage for a rebellion are financial and military viability. A rebellion is not the same as a political protest. The former requires large financial resources. A rebellion can therefore be out of reach for those politically opposed to the state (Collier, 2007).

Ali (2009) believes that to sustain the rebellion immediately poses a financial constraint in such a manner that the rebel group should be able to finance a viable military force to mount a rebellion. Lack of sustainability and financial problems are found in societies where the government is unable to build a big force and where rebels have the means to finance the act of violence. Subsequently, the paper discusses the empirical evidence of the economic theory of conflict.

### **Collier (2006)**

Collier (2006) tested the validity of the economic theory of civil conflicts. The study covered 161 countries during the time in which 73 civil wars had taken place. The study used the following proxies; primary commodity exports, geography, history, economic opportunities, ethnicity and religious ethnicity. The study used logit and probit regression.

The study found that a primary commodity export was statistically significant. Countries which depend extensively on the export of primary commodities are prone to conflicts. If for example, the primary commodity exports contribute 26% of GDP, then the country is at risk (the risk is 23%). If there is no primary commodity export, the risk is 0.5%.

Countries without a primary commodity export are not prone to civil wars. The effect of primary commodity exports perhaps explains why Zimbabwe is prone to conflicts. Geography was found to be statistically significant. A highly dispersed population (geographically) makes it very hard for the state to exercise full control. For example, the DR Congo's jungle is a problem for the government forces. Countries such as the DR Congo and similar ones have 50% risk of a civil war occurring.

In countries whose population is concentrated in a city such as Singapore, the risk of war decreases to 3% because government forces can reach all the areas of trouble within less than an hour and there is, in a sense, no jungle to hide in. A mountainous terrain increases the

risk of a war because it offers hiding places for rebel troops when faced by government troops. ZANLA and ZIPRA, the two liberation war armies of Zimbabwe liberation used such terrains when they were fighting against the government forces of Rhodesia during the Smith's regime. They offered them a sanctuary when faced by sophisticated government troops.

History was found to be statistically significant. A country that has experienced a civil war increases the risk of that country having another one. This probably explains why Zimbabwe has experienced conflicts. After the liberation war, the country has experienced subsequent conflicts.

Economic opportunities were also found to be statistically significant. Areas with little education are prone to the conflict. These results do not shade light why Zimbabwe with the highest literacy rate of over 98% in Sub Saharan Africa is prone to conflicts. Does it mean there are other factors which play havoc on Zimbabwe other than literacy rate?

The study also found that countries with fastest population growth rates are prone to civil conflicts. This is true for Kenya. Kenya has about 4% population growth rate and indeed has experienced civil conflicts. Zimbabwe's growth rate although not the same with Kenya is relatively high at about 3.5% hence it is at high risk of a civil war. It is important that researchers relying on population growth rates must look at the death rates also before making conclusions especially in developing countries specifically in Sub Saharan Africa where there is high death rate now due to HIV/AIDS related ailments.

These positive checks could as well be wiping out population to the point that the growth rate may not be relevant. What is the implication of countries such as Zimbabwe where more than one quarter of her population is now in the Diaspora (Moss, 2005; Parsons, 2007) and it has also a very high death rate from HIV/AIDS complications. Zimbabwe has also experienced downturn in economic activities thereby being very prone to civil conflicts.

The findings of the study validate the findings of an earlier study conducted by Collier and Hoeffler (2004). This study validates the economic theory of conflict tested by Collier (2006). Collier et al. (2008) study tests the same theory as discussed in the study.

### ***Collier et al. (2008)***

Collier et al. (2008) tested empirically the economic theory of conflict. They used a global panel data with 1,063 observations for 172 countries including Zimbabwe for the period 1960 to 2004. They used the following proxies to test the feasibility of a civil war; GDP per capita, GDP per capita Growth, primary commodity exports, post cold war environment, previous wars,

peace, former French African colonies, social fractionalisation, proportion of young men, population, mountainous terrain and democracy. The following proxies were found statistically significant; they found that the risk of war is greater at lower level of initial income. GDP per capita income growth reduces the risk of a conflict. They also found an inverted U-shaped relationship between natural resources and a conflict. The primary commodity export was statistically significant and positive.

They further concluded that the risk of dependence on a primary commodity export is at its highest level when exports make 25% of GDP. They also observed primary commodity export provides finance to rebels to embark and sustain rebellion; the examples being Sierra Leone, where rebels financed their rebellion using diamonds, and Angola where UNITA rebels used oil and diamonds to sustain their insurgency. There were further observations that civil conflicts are experienced in the areas where natural resources are mined. In terms of peace, they found that the risk declines as duration of peace lengthens. However, this is at a very slow pace. Population size increases the risk of war. The findings relating to four proxies, income growth, natural resources, peace duration and population are consistent with earlier studies, for example, (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000, 2002). Social fractionalisation increases risk of a civil war. In the previous studies such as the example given, ethnic fractionalisation had an ambiguous effect of first increasing then decreasing afterwards. However, in Collier et al., (2008), it was a simple and straight forward relationship.

The dummy former French colony in Africa was found statistically significant and negative. The French government provided de-facto security guarantees to its former colonies although recently they have departed from that policy by allowing the coup in Cote d'Ivoire without intervening to crush it. The British also adopted the French policy by intervening in Sierra Leone when post conflict peace was threatened. The proportion of young males (between the ages of 15 to 29) was close to significant and treated as significant.

They concluded that doubling in this category increases the risk of a civil war. The variable of mountains was found to be statistically significant. The results support the feasibility hypothesis which states that where rebellion is feasible it will take place.

Analysing the above results and conceptualising them in the Zimbabwean context, one can observe the following: Zimbabwe's income has fallen; GDP per capita growth has also fallen; Zimbabwe is dependent on some natural resources; the population has increased faster than GDP; Zimbabwe does not have security guarantee agreement with Britain, its former coloniser; and it is mountainous. The economy almost collapsed.

Zimbabwe has a large deposit of mineral resources.

Gold reserves in Zimbabwe are 13 million tonnes and it will take 650,000 years to exhaust them. Platinum reserves are 2.8 billion ounces and are to last 1,200 years. Chromite reserves amount to 700,000 tonnes and will take 1,300 years to exhaust them. Nickel reserves amount to 761,000 tonnes and will take 500 years to exhaust them. Diamonds deposits are 16.5 million tonnes and will take 300 years to exhaust them. Iron ore reserves are 30 billion tonnes and will take 100 years to exhaust them. Copper deposits amount to 5.2 million tonnes.

Zimbabwe has the largest known reserves in Sub Saharan Africa of coal -bed methane (Mzumara et al., 2007). Zimbabwe is richly blessed with abundant natural resources hence it stands at high risk of civil wars and conflicts caused by these primary resources. The risk will continue for many years to come as the deposits will take many years to be exhausted. Zimbabwe recently passed the economic empowerment and indigenisation Act which seeks to transfer at least 51% of ownership of interest of every sector including mining to indigenous Zimbabweans (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2007). This is going to heighten the risk of Zimbabwe experiencing civil conflicts as the scramble of control of these resources intensifies. Already the youth are calling for a big cake from these resources under indigenisation and are demanding 30% of the resources even though they do not have the ability and resources to run these ventures. It is a time bomb as different interest groups may feel short changed and will heighten the risk beyond what is prescribed by the theory.

In general, Zimbabwe with the factors described above provides impetus that conflicts will always be feasible in line with the economic theory of civil conflict. Only through a careful policy which can ensure equitable distribution of these primary resources will the risk be minimised.

The economic theory of conflict differs from the relative deprivation theory. The latter states that, if there exists a gap between what individuals perceive they deserve from their society and what they actually get there may develop discontent. It is this discontent which causes a civil war. The relative deprivation theory is discussion follows.

### **Relative deprivation theory**

The relative deprivation theory focuses on economic inequality. Box-Steffensmeier et al. (2005) assert that if people perceive that there is a gap between what they are currently getting and what they deserve to get, it creates discontentment. There is a general feeling that the society owes them. The hypothesis states that if the gap is too big for a reasonable group of people within a specific population, there is a likelihood that the people will rebel. The theory refers to the assumed gaps between

individual's value expectations and how they anticipate the value of their capabilities. This is the discrepancy between what they are entitled to from a society and what they believe they will get.

The origin of the relative deprivation theory stresses the degree of the economic inequality in a community (Schock, 1996). The economic inequality may not necessarily comprise the poor on one side and the rich on the other. It includes those who are rich on one side and those who are extremely rich on the other.

Economic inequality also exists in such scenarios. Douma (2006) emphasizes the element of poverty. The degree of poverty is not directly linked to an occurrence of violence in communities. He however, states that once poverty can be associated with specific group of people, their group identity as poor will emerge and may then suffer discrimination and that increases the risk of violence to oppose the state institutions which promote discrimination or the other groups such as the rich people.

Douma (2006) further explains that the relative deprivation evolves from one's judgment regarding his or her circumstance and status in the community. What follows then are the issues of discontent, anger and resentment and a host of the other emotional factors. The intensity depends on the degree of the subjective evaluation of one's status in the society as he or she feels owed by the society. The emotional factors are supported by Bernstein and Croshy (1980). They point out that an individual's management of self over desired outcomes is the most essential aspect in the theory.

In analysing this theory, it is very doubtful that all individuals would use subjective judgment to evaluate or assess themselves how they are fairing in the community. The theory does not say what will happen to those who may face the truth when they use objective evaluation of themselves. In this case they will discover that the reason they are not getting enough from society is because they did not work very hard to develop skills which their community needs or the skills they developed are no longer relevant to society with changed times. In such a case, the blame may not be on the society hence there will be no discontent. The objective judgment may reduce any possibility of a civil war. It is a bit far-fetched and naïve that the whole community can behave irrationally by using subjective evaluation of self.

In addition to the discussion, the relative deprivation theory is closer to grievance theory than economic theory of conflict. The perceived economic inequality amounts to presumed grievance. In other words those who experience economic inequality in fact have a grievance against their society. However, in the previous analysis of the grievance theory it has been noted that it is very weak in explaining the causes of a civil war. There are many societies where economic inequality exists but these have not experienced civil wars. There is no formula that can completely eliminate inequalities although they can

be reduced. Although there is an element of economic inequality in relative deprivation theory, it is not a factor in the economic theory of conflict. It is the feasibility of the rebellion which matters. Economic inequality arises for example when a group comprising two rich people have different figures of their net worth. Between the two groups, economic inequality may exist but it may not motivate them to go to war and fight because even in their economic inequality, they can still live a decent and fulfilling life. Hence a social entrepreneur in the economic theory of conflict cannot recruit this group. So economic inequality may not be a factor because it is not known at what level it is a threat to cause a civil war.

However, in the Zimbabwean context in 2000, the war veterans felt society owed them at least a farm. So they mobilised themselves and invaded the farms owned by white commercial farmers. It is perceived that they were not happy with what they were getting since independence. They felt that society owed them for participating in the liberation war of Zimbabwe and what they were getting was not enough considering the sacrifices they made in participating in the war. One can see the element of subjectivity. The invasions were violent in nature and heightened the conflict. The invasions were facilitated with the support of the government (Timbe, 2007). It is unlikely that without the support of the government, war veterans would have succeeded in invading the farms in the process dispossessing their owners. The war veterans constituted a reasonable size as predicted by the theory but they were joined by others who felt the same way and wanted a piece of land. However, there are others who feel society owes them but they do not resort to war but steal from those who possess the things they want violently some times. However, when caught these are punished by the state. This is basically organised or non organised crime, not a civil war. However, it shows that there is an avenue of dealing with economic inequality without necessarily resorting to a civil war although not morally correct. The relative deprivation theory has an element of a class of people like in the Marxist theory of rebellion. Also, economic inequality exists in the theory as well as the Marxist theory of rebellion. The Marxist theory of rebellion is next on discussion.

### **The Marxist theory of rebellion**

Market crises lead to revolts amongst the peasantry and other classes who experience secondary exploitation, leading to alliances of all those who are exploited (Marx, 1852). In the event that market crises spread rebellious conflict to all classes and segments of society at the same time the situation assumes revolutionary character (Marx, 1850).

The state and its policies, not the economy, become the crux and goal of class conflict. This is so because the

state is held responsible for the economy as a whole. Working class divisions are basically ethnic or some internal differences which cause conflict prevent solidarity class action. One example is the conflict which involved the English and the Irish which Marx (1870) compared to the conflict which involved blacks and poor whites in the South of the United States of America, prevented class cohesion and rebellion by the English proletariat. The proletariat refers to a class of people involved in a manual labour or work for a wage.

The Marxist theory of rebellion, like the economic theory, is based on the economic inequalities that prevail in a capitalist state. Schock (1996) describes the theory as Marxist ideology of class struggle which is viewed as a historical force on social change, political conflict and revolution. In the capitalist state, structural inequalities lead to economic exploitation of the workers, which in turn lead to a class struggle between workers and capitalists.

Schock (1996) further explains that Marx referred to economic exploitation as expropriation of surplus value by the capitalist from the workers. Surplus value is the total of a product minus the cost of its production. Capitalists are motivated by making large profits. They achieve this by lowering the costs of production, thereby exploiting the workers through the reduction of the wages and the benefits. The essence here is that a higher degree of economic exploitation leads to a higher probability of the workers developing discontentment. This discontentment creates frustration and causes misery. The higher the probability that a nation and its policies will be challenged violently by the poor workers, the higher is the probability that a revolution will take place.

The liberation war in Zimbabwe in the 1970s can be referred to as class struggle. What motivated the fighters to leave the country for Mozambique, Zambia and other countries was the "raw deal" they were getting as workers and as indigenous people. These workers were basically indigenous blacks and did not own any means of production. The treatment they got as workers including political exclusion motivated them to mobilise themselves around their predicament and this consequently led to a revolution (Tekere, 2007).

Economic exploitation which creates a class of people, who are severely pushed into misery, may use violence to challenge the impact of the exploitation. A period of revolution then occurs. Another theory that also emphasises economic inequalities and violence is discussed below.

### **Conjuncture model of the relationship between economic inequality, political opportunities and violent political conflict**

The conjuncture model was developed by Schock (1996).

He emphasises the political context in conjunction with economic inequality in order to build a general theory of political conflict where the economic inequality is linked directly to violent political strife. He argues that by doing so, it upholds the findings of the theories of economic discontent.

In such theories, political processes and structures are directly associated with political violent strife thereby upholding opportunities theories. Accordingly, a regime of repressiveness which is the most important variable of the political opportunity regime should be able to control or enhance the transformation of discontent that resulted from an economic inequality into violent political strife (Schock, 1996). He further points out that the economic discontent, should automatically transform into a violent political strife in states with semi-repressive regimes. Contrary to states with high level of democratic institutions, the inequalities that cause discontentment can be voiced through a political participation process. In such states, there is no incentive to engage in a violent civil strife as issues can be addressed through political participation. However in totally undemocratic states, that are highly autocratic, inequality caused discontentment must be channelled through a defiant civil action.

In analysing the foregoing, one can dispute that there is no room in highly autocratic governments for defiant civil action. In such a government there is no room for civil disobedience as the autocratic government machinery can easily crush those who organise it. It is only where autocratic state is weak that citizens can resort to civil disobedience.

In the context of Zimbabwe, after the government lost the constitutional referendum, it became increasingly autocratic. Any civil disobedience by the two movement for democratic change (MDCs) formations or even before MDC split was quickly crushed with heavy force by police. Tsvangirai, Biti, Mutambara and others were hauled to a prison. Any planned march by MDC was met with a threat and physical action as their leaders were beaten up thereby destroying the civil disobedience. This was possible because the government had become very autocratic. So the theory may not be correct to say that civil disobedience occurs in totally undemocratic and totally autocratic states. The next section discusses the empirical evidence of this theory.

### **Schock (1996)**

Schock (1996) tested a conjuncture model of political conflict – the impact of political opportunities on the relationship between economic inequality and violent political conflict. The study was tested using quantitative cross-national lagged panel design with a sample of global population of independent countries. The study used the following proxies: income inequality, class

exploitation, separatist potential, government sanctions, semi-repressiveness, political institutionalisation and military interventions. The dependent variable, violent political conflict, was measured by the total deaths from no routine political participation events; for example demonstrations, political strikes, riots, armed attacks and assassinations.

The study found that class exploitation has a stronger impact on political violence in semi-repressive regimes compared with open and closed regimes. The study further found that class exploitation has a stronger impact on political violence at a higher level of political institutionalisation but positive at higher levels of political institutionalisation. The results revealed that class exploitation and political violence is not moderated by military interventions.

On income inequality and political violence, the results showed that income inequality has a strong impact on violence at lower levels of political institutionalisation. It further showed that income inequality has stronger effect on political violence at higher levels of military interventions. The study showed that positive relationship is enhanced in respect in which the military sovereignty of state has been compromised. The study further found that the two of the three interaction relationship between income inequality and political opportunity structures were significant. Separatists potential had a positive impact on political violence at lower levels of political institutionalisation and was negligible somewhat negative at higher level of political institutionalisation.

The study further showed that the effect of separatist potential on political violence is negative in respect of no military intervention and positive in the context of military interventions. The study underneath provides empirical evidence cutting across several theories which have been discussed not necessarily the above theory.

### **Collier et al. (2008)**

Collier et al. (2008) study tested the risk of conflict reversion by using hazard functions. The data covered the period 1960 to 2002 covering 68 post-conflict countries including Zimbabwe. The study used the following proxies: per capita income, per capita income growth, democracy, regional autonomy, election shift, economic freedom, the Diaspora, ethnic diversity, and UN peace keeping expenditure. The study grouped the factors in the following groups; temporal, economic, political, social and military.

The results showed that out of the sample of 68 post-conflict countries, 31 reverted to war and the average risk was set at 46%. The study used Kaplan-Meier estimator and it indicated the probability of survival for a minimum of 10 years was 60%. The implied probability of a failure in the first decade of post-conflict peace was 40%.

The study established a survival function estimated at  $t = 10$  years. The study tested for joint significance of  $\lambda_2 \dots \lambda_5$  and found could not reject the null hypothesis that the coefficients were jointly zero. It suggested that the baseline hazard could. In other words the risk of the conflict does not depend on the length of peace.

This finding is contrary to Sambanis (2001) in which it found that long period of peace reduces risk of civil war. It further differs with Collier et al. (2008) where it was found that risk declines as the duration of peace lengthens. The difference could be due to the use of hazard functions. However for spells longer than 4 years it is negative, implying a reduction in the risk of war after the expiry of 4 years but the effect is small and is not statistically significant. The risk during the first 4 years is 23% and the remaining 6 years is 17%.

The level of per capita income (in logarithm form) is statistically significant and has a large effect. When compared with the 40% risk of the mean characteristics, suppose the initial level of income is twice mean and all other characteristics held constant, the risk for the decade falls to 31%. The study concluded that low income countries such as DR Congo, Liberia and Timor letse are at very high risk.

Zimbabwe's income has significantly fallen in the past decade hence stands at a very high risk. Countries with high income bring down the risk. Per capita income growth was statistically significant. Faster growth directly and significantly reduces risk in the year which it occurs in addition to cumulating into higher level income. Zimbabwe did not experience any positive growth in the last decade hence her risk was never reduced. However, in 2009 and 2010 the country registered a positive growth (Biti, 2011; NKC, 2012) thereby reducing its risk.

In terms of political proxies, the study first dealt with the degree of democracy. The study used standard classification of states on a scale of autocracy and democracy and that of polity. Since the scale was ordinal, the study searched for significant break points. This was located with the range of autocracy.

The study found a significant difference between states in which polity is highly repressive with an autocracy ranking worse than -5 and all other states. Outside that, the degree of democracy or autocracy has no impact. Zimbabwe slid too much in the category of autocracy after the rejection of the constitutional referendum thereby increasing the risk and according to the findings of this study, severe autocracy was found to be highly successful in maintaining peace in the post-conflict era. Although there might be some truth in this, Zimbabwe in the post-conflict period seems to have achieved a semblance of democracy through the establishment of an inclusive government which comprises three major parties but excludes other parties which were before then had not been formed, nor do they have any seats in the Parliament.

Zimbabwe seems to be maintaining peace outside autocracy. However, there is regular in-fighting within the power sharing parties with accusations of one party acting unilaterally in making important decisions - an element of autocracy still existing. Applying the bench mark of 40% risk if the polity is severe autocratic, the risk is only 24.6%. This is the point where Zimbabwe after the referendum had slid to. Any civil disobedience was met with a heavy hand. In the not highly autocratic state, the risk is twice as much amounting to 62%.

Zimbabwe, by moving to a very extreme autocratic position, although not morally good, managed to reduce her risk by almost half. However, with the formation of a power-sharing government, the risk is now doubled to 62% as Zimbabwe has become less autocratic through the inclusive government. It is not clear, with the call for early elections by the two major partners in the inclusive government, whether this is meant to reduce this risk or make Zimbabwean society more open. The study concluded that democracy is not a variable which appears to be an instrument enhancing the durability of post-conflict peace. One can add something to the findings of this study that developed countries and the international donor community can do much more to help countries in the post-conflict process to maintain democratic principles and at the same time reducing the high risk which they face.

The assistance in improving economic performance, reduction of poverty, creation of economic opportunities such as jobs and entrepreneurship assistance, provision of goods and services would certainly reduce the risk. If there is no such assistance, leaders who desire power can use the excuse of creating stability in a particular country as reason for not practising democracy. It gives them ammunition that democracy would destabilise their countries when in fact they desire the power themselves for their own selfish reasons. So any call to practice greater democracy must be followed with financial assistance so that there are no negative opportunities that can lead to the weakening of the state while adhering to democratic principles in the post-conflict process. The study further found post-conflict elections is statistically significant.

The study concluded that elections shift the risk between years either lowering or raising. An election reduces risk in the year of election thereafter the losers can pose a risk again. If the election is held in year three, the risk is reduced from about 6.2 to 3.4%. It further found that in the following year, the risk will increase from 5.2 to about 10.6%. The study finally concluded that elections should not be treated as a systemic answer to the acute problem of post-conflict process, as democracy, in post-conflict elections should be encouraged as intrinsically desirable rather than using it as a tool for sustaining the post-conflict peace.

Analysing such findings and conceptualising in

Zimbabwe's context one can make some observations. There have been calls by the leaders of the two major political parties in the power sharing arrangement in the Zimbabwe government for early elections (NKC, 2012). On face value, early elections will probably give a mandate and legitimacy to whichever party and individual who will win.

The current arrangement has only favoured the three political parties which won seats in Parliament during the 2008 elections. However, there are many other political parties which were left out and others which were launched after the global political agreement in Zimbabwe. Therefore the current arrangement and any future extension require legitimacy through elections.

However, according to the conclusions of this study, post-conflict elections should only be promoted only as intrinsically desirable rather than as a tool for increasing the sustainability of post-conflict peace. This is what is happening in Zimbabwe: the elections are being called because the leaders in the unity government are finding it uncomfortable working with one another. Hence, it is not an appropriate reason for calling for and holding the elections, according to the findings of this study. The business community in Zimbabwe is opposing the holding of early elections because of the impact elections will have on business without real national healing having taken place (NKC, 2012). The business community therefore supports the findings of this study that elections may not guarantee peace.

The elections in Zimbabwe are not adequately explained by this study. For example, there were acts of violence during election campaigns, during the actual voting and after the election (Media monitoring project Zimbabwe, 2009), although peace returned within the year after the formation of the unity government.

The findings do not address pre-election, during election and post-election violence as witnessed in Zimbabwe. These are the acts which scare the business community in Zimbabwe regarding holding of the election that the country will return to anarchy again. Early elections in Zimbabwe can also produce inconclusive results as they happened in the 2008 elections when meaningful reforms and adequate healing have not taken off within the Zimbabwean society. One can also add the dimension of empirical evidence that was on the ground differing with the findings of this study. The study fails to address circumstances where peace may be threatened almost immediately and be followed by protracted war.

## CONCLUSION

In analysing the theories explaining the causes of civil conflicts it has been found that some theories and variables used are irrelevant in explaining conflicts which have occurred in Zimbabwe. However, certain theories

do explain or are close enough to explaining the causes of civil conflicts relevant to Zimbabwe.

In general, the theories explain the causes of conflicts in different parts of the world. However, amongst the theories themselves, there are others which are very strong in explaining most of the causes of civil conflicts and there are others with very weak foundations and explain very little or are subject to much debate and challenge. Theories such as the grievance theory are very weak in explaining the causes of civil conflicts. Its failure to define or single out which grievances result in civil conflicts leaves the theory very much ineffective and weak. All societies have grievances but not all of them have experienced civil conflicts.

The question that may arise is, which types or categories of grievances in fact result in civil conflicts? The theories also make great emphasis on causing civil wars than mere causing conflicts. The latest conflict in Zimbabwe did not result in a civil war but it did result in civil conflict. Such countries as Zimbabwe had a conflict but it did not result in a civil war. There was however, massive exodus of people displaced to other countries in the manner associated with a full-scale civil war yet without a full-scale civil war having occurred. Such countries need separate theories to explain their unique phenomena. Countries such as Zambia and Botswana which have substantial resources and depend on primary commodity exports have not experienced civil wars as predicted by some theories.

In addition, Zambia has many tribes and dialects which would have triggered civil conflicts or civil wars. A study may be done on such countries in order to uncover why they have not conformed to the theory and what helps them to avoid pitfalls that have occurred in other countries. Such a study may provide solutions as to how other countries can replicate and avoid internal conflicts. However, to a greater extent the theories provide theoretical premises, mirrors as it were, through which countries can view themselves and avoid civil wars or civil conflicts, by doing or not doing certain practices within their societies.

In the final analysis, countries can prevent conflicts. It is further recommended that stakeholders in Zimbabwe can use this paper to come up with programmes of action which will prevent civil conflicts in future by addressing the factors identified in various theories as the cause of civil conflicts.

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