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# **POLITICAL CONTESTATIONS AS PART OF THE HUMAN SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DEBATE: A CASE STUDY OF BUHERA SOUTH, ZIMBABWE**

JOHN MAKAMBANGA<sup>1</sup> AND CHRISTOPHER ZISHIRI<sup>2</sup>

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## **Abstract**

This article focuses on the concept of human security and political contestations in Zimbabwe. It analyses how political electioneering and political violence affected development in Zimbabwe since 1980. While the war of liberation was fought to end discrimination in all its forms, the coming of black majority rule did not immediately bring the desired results of freedom and equality. Rather, it brought new forms of violence as the victors usurped institutions to the detriment of the democratic ideals fought for. While the new system led to negative peace, it was detrimental to positive peace that aims at building sustainability to the development discourse. This study is a qualitative study drawing data from desktop research, interviews and focus group discussions. The central argument is that violence has been a major affront to human security, thereby affecting development. The study deploys the human security theory to unmask political violence and development processes. It leans towards the pursuit of human security to achieve development and as an approach to conflict resolution and peace-building. This can help Zimbabwe to achieve its human development goals. The article recommends that governments and political parties must strive to achieve peace, human security and development.

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Keywords: democratic ideals, conflict resolution, peace building, human development goals, negative peace, positive peace

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of human security has gained increasing attention in recent years as a framework for addressing the complex and interconnected challenges facing communities around the world. This includes the pursuit of sustainable development that aims to promote economic growth, social well-being and environmental sustainability in a way that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. However, the achievement of human security and sustainable development is often undermined by political contestations that often create tension and conflict among supporters of rival political parties and weaken efforts to promote inclusive and equitable development. Through the lens of non-violent means, this study focused on the case of Zimbabwe, a country that has faced significant political contestations in recent years. The study identified the key drivers of political contestations in Zimbabwe and examined how these drivers affected efforts to promote human security and sustainable development in the country. By shedding light on the complex interplay between politics, security and development, this study contributed to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with promoting human security and sustainable development in contexts of political contestation.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The use of the human security lens as the theoretical framework for this study was motivated by several factors. Firstly, the concept of human security emphasizes the importance of protecting individuals from all forms of violence and insecurity, not only physical violence but also economic, social and political insecurity (Adebayo and Ogunyemi, 2020; MEENA, 2022). The use of human security lens helped this study to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of violent political contestations and prospects of non-violence on various dimensions of human security, including economic, social and political security. Secondly, the human security lens is particularly relevant to Zimbabwe, a country that has experienced significant political turmoil and social unrest in recent years. It also helped to shed light on the root causes of these problems, resulting in the identification of strategies for promoting peace,

stability and sustainable development in the country. Thirdly, the human security lens is a useful framework for analysing the relationship between political contestations and sustainable development. Sustainable development requires not only economic growth, but also social and environmental sustainability (UNDP, 1994;; Adebayo and Ogunyemi, 2020; Granoff, 2022). By using the human security lens to analyse the impact of political contestations on sustainable development, the researchers gained a better understanding of how political instability and social unrest can undermine sustainable development efforts.

The UN General Assembly 66th Session of 25 October 2022 provided the link between human security and development. The report concludes that:

human security recognises the interlinkages between peace, development and human rights and equally considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights; thus human security forms part of the family of human concepts (including human rights, human needs, human development) (UN General Assembly, 66th Session —Follow-up to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome) A/RES/66/290, 25 October 2012).

Given that ZANU-PF, as the sitting government, prioritises regime preservation at all costs at the expense of human security, the use of the human security lens in this study was helpful in highlighting the political violence that hindered sustainable development in Buhera South Constituency, in particular, and Zimbabwe, in general.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of human security came into prominence after 1994 following the commissioning of a study by the United Nations (UN) on the new dimensions of security. Essentially, it marked a change from the traditional state-centric security to encompass seven human-centric security components: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security; personal security, community security and political security (UN, 1994: 24-25). Human security is about protecting the vital core of humanity to enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. It means protecting fundamental freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from severe and widespread threats and situations. Human security means building on people's strengths and aspirations and —creating political, social, environmental, economic, military

and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity (CHS, 2003: 4). —Human security complements state security, strengthens human development and enhances human rights (CHS, 2003: 2).

The concept of human security is focused on enhancing people's capability to improve their lives and is developmental in orientation. The practice of violence in politics is contrary to the basic concepts of development as it threatens the livelihood of people and what the government should seek to protect. Violence is anti-development. Human security aims to be holistic and recognises that qualitative improvement to lives must be constructed around not only the notion of people as economic producers and consumers, but also as cultural producers and consumers (Abatudu, 2001). Violence creates human insecurity, as it is rooted in existing structures of power that determine who enjoys security and who does not (Thomas, 2001). Development contributes to human security by addressing the long-term structural causes of conflict and strengthening the capability of societies to deal with conflict peacefully (Lodgaard cited in Chillers, 2004: 18). Human security includes an obligation on the state to provide an environment that promotes equality and individual participation through democracy, adherence to human rights and civil society participation (ibid.).

Human security is value-centric, focusing on the security, stability and sustainability of development. It involves protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in daily life and requires both protection and empowerment (Adebayo and Ogunyemi, 2020; MEENA, 2022; Oksamytna, 2022). The concept has been criticised but has opened up new frontiers for development by focusing on the security of the individual, rather than the state. Human security is about the survival, daily life and dignity of human beings and it highlights the intricate relationship between individuals and development in communities (Johnmary, Ojakorotu and Bribena, 2021; MEENA, 2022). The duty of the state is to facilitate development and where violence is pervasive, development is affected, leading to multiple deprivations for the citizenry (UNDP, 1994). In the Zimbabwean context, the notion of violence in politics affected the core values of development. Through violence, the people in Buhera South, a district in the Manicaland

Province of Zimbabwe, suffered from life deprivations. As noted by the then United Nations Secretary General, Koffi Annan,

Africa must reject the ways of the past and commit itself to building a future of democratic governance subject to the rule of law. Such a future is only achievable on the condition that we end Africa's conflicts, without that no amount of aid or trade, assistance or advice, will make the difference (Annan, 2001).

The history of political contestations in Zimbabwe dates back to the Shona passive resistance against colonialism in the 1890s, but a violent response occurred in 1896. Zimbabwean nationalists formed political parties demanding majority rule, but they were banned by the Rhodesian government. The formation of the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress (SRTUC) and the African National Congress (ANC) laid the basis for revolts against discriminatory laws and contributed to the development of African nationalism in Zimbabwe. The formation of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in 1960 signalled a drift towards militarism that culminated in the formation of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in 1963. The ensuing protracted war lasted nearly 14 years, ending in 1979 with the Lancaster House Agreement. The agreement charted the course for the transition from white minority rule to black majority rule in Zimbabwe, with the first elections held in 1980. The newly elected Prime Minister, Robert Gabriel Mugabe, announced the policy of reconciliation soon after taking office.

—We are called to be constructive, progressive and forever forward-looking, or we cannot afford to be men of yesterday, backward looking, retrogressive and destructive.... If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you... The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten...! (De Waal, 1990: 48-9).

In the name and spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness, all the grievances of the past were supposed to be forgotten.

While reconciliation was pronounced as a hallmark of statesmanship, there were divisive undercurrents in the nascent but fractured unity government. As articulated by Masunungure (2009), —Zimbabwe, as a state, came into being in 1980 but Zimbabwe, as a nation, did not.¶ There was outright and unapologetic building of the state as a ZANU-PF and Shona-dominated political formation, where other political actors like PF-ZAPU that drew most of its support from Matabeleland and Midlands regions, had no dignified space and the Ndebele

were an inconvenience that had to be dealt with. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009: 12) argues that:

from the very day of achievement of independence, the triumphant Shonadominated ZANU-PF leadership displayed a unique desire to build a partynation and a party-state that excluded other political formations, crafted around and backed by ZANU-PFs war-time military wing (ZANLA) and Shona historical experiences.l

The Matabeleland crisis that hit the post-colonial nation-building project was sparked off by ethnicity and the integration of military forces. The crisis began in the ranks of the military and it involved open exchange of fire between the triumphant Shona-dominant Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Ndebele-dominated Zimbabwe People's

Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) in Connemara (Gweru) and Entumbane (Bulawayo). This set-in motion a reign of state terror in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions in the period 1982 to 1987. As noted by NdlovuGatsheni, the violence was somehow an inevitable consequence of the way nationalism had evolved and how the nationalist armies had been formed. This is how he puts it:

to some extent, we accept the notion of the inevitability of a violent post-colonial civil war pitting the former liberation movements and their former armies against each other. But there is need to posit that the inevitability of violence was underwritten by incompatibilities of Ndebele and Shona particularities. The violence was in a way symptomatic of the failure of a smooth blending of major ethnicities into a new national identity called Zimbabwe. The net effect of this was that violence was the only invitation card by that the Ndebele were invited into a Shona-imagined nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 14).

In this analysis, Ndlovu-Gatsheni shows the shaky ground on which the nation state was born in 1980. While independence produced tribalised nationalism, the unfolding years later proved that tribalism was not the only inherent problem in post-independence Zimbabwe politics and power dynamics. In 1982, the Ndebele became victims of political violence (Gukurahundi), but after 1990 ZANU-PF violence became national and victims transcended tribal lines. In short, the Gukurahundi period became —necessary for the purification of the rest of the nation from the undesirable elementsl (ibid.). In essence, the way the Ndebele were treated was an attempt at ethnic cleansing. A Commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade named Jesus summed it up by saying:

You are going to eat eggs, after eggs hens, after hens, goats, after goats, cattle. Then you shall eat cats, dogs and donkeys. Then you are going to eat your children. After that you shall eat your wives. Then the men will remain and because dissidents have guns, they will kill the men and only dissidents will remain. That's when we will find the dissidents (CCJP, 1997: 96).

The conduct of the military during Gukurahundi served as a direct warning to future opponents of the regime. This betrayed the regime's lack of hesitancy in eliminating opponents.

Gukurahundi ended after the signing of the Unity Accord on 22 December 1987 between Prime Minister Mugabe and the ZAPU leader, Joshua Nkomo. In the words of Sisulu (2008: 494), —the Unity Accord completed what the Gukurahundi had failed to do. It has been observed that —the Unity Accord was a surrender deal by Nkomo to ZANU-PF hegemony, accepting to play a second fiddle as Senior Minister and later Vice President under Robert Mugabe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 30). Constitutional Amendment Act (No.7) of 1987 created an executive presidency, with Mugabe assuming the post of Executive President, and Nkomo becoming one of two national Vice Presidents. Pursuant to that was the need by ZANU-PF to create a one-party state that was vehemently opposed by one of their own, Secretary-General Edgar Tekere, culminating in the formation of the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) that contested in the 1990 elections. Mugabe had hoped to consolidate power in the aftermath of the Unity Accord through the creation of a one-party state.

After 1990, economic conditions in Zimbabwe began to deteriorate such that the government was running budget deficits. Mugabe had to go to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to seek budgetary support. The adopted Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) created social and economic problems that gave rise to opposition to Mugabe's regime. These measures had serious implications for the welfare of ordinary Zimbabweans. ESAP led to sudden shrinkage of public service jobs as the government was advised to privatise state-owned enterprises. It further caused a continuous decline in workers' income through devaluation of the currency. Company closures and employee layoffs became regular occurrences following the liberalisation of the economy. Hospital fees and tuition fees skyrocketed beyond the reach of ordinary citizens. Student demonstrations and industrial

actions became the order of the day. All these occurrences became the catalyst for the mushrooming of strong opposition politics in the country.

The call for better wages and working conditions from workers became even more strident. The 1996 public sector strike brought the country to a standstill as nurses, doctors, public service workers and teachers withdrew their services. Confronted with such a situation, the Zimbabwean government responded by waging an undeclared war against its people (Dzimiri et al., 2014: 231). The ZANU-PF government assumed that its power was being challenged and, as result, it unleashed military violence on its citizens. The state security forces used brutal force on protesters, souring relations between the military and the civilian populace. This discontentment culminated in the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. The MDC quickly became a powerful opposition political party against the ruling ZANU-PF. Its support base grew among university students, the working class and urban dwellers who acutely felt the pain of the deteriorating economic situation. To maintain its stranglehold on power, the ZANU-PF government used repressive state apparatus against the opposition.

While violence has been an endemic aspect of ZANU-PF's rule since independence, things took a drastic turn after the formation of the MDC. Buhera South constituency witnessed an unprecedented wave of violence after the formation of the MDC. The MDC recorded increased violence during the 2000 parliamentary elections in which a ZANU-PF member, Kumbirai Kangai, narrowly defeated the MDC candidate. Political violence in Buhera was first recorded on 15 April 2000, when MDC supporters, Tichaona Chiminya and Talent Mabika, were petrol-bombed by ZANU-PF supporters after a meeting in Murambinda (BBC, April 2000). This incident flared up violence in Buhera South as the ZANU-PF leadership intensified its targeting of opponents, resulting in politically motivated deaths, displacements and violence in the constituency since then. The 2008 elections, in which Joseph Chinotimba of ZANU-PF lost to Naison Nemadziya of the MDC, was a continuation of political violence in the constituency.

While the violence produced wins for ZANU-PF, such victory cost human lives and negatively affected prospects of sustainable development in Buhera South.

The MDC promoted non-violent resistance. Non-violent political contestations have been shown to be effective in promoting human security and sustainable development, as they offer a peaceful alternative to violent conflict and can help to address the underlying causes of social and political unrest (Zunes, 2010). Firstly, non-violent political contestations promote human security by reducing the risk of violence and conflict. This creates a stable environment that allows for sustainable development to take place. Non-violent actions, such as peaceful protests, boycotts and civil disobedience, can also draw attention to social and political issues, leading to positive changes in policy and government practices that promote human security (Martin, 2018). Secondly, non-violent political contestations promote sustainable development by promoting inclusive and participatory decision-making processes. Non-violent movements often involve a diverse range of individuals and groups, including marginalised communities, who are able to participate in the decision-making process and have their voices heard (Chung, 2006). This leads to more equitable and sustainable development outcomes that benefit all members of society. Thirdly, nonviolent political contestations can lead to the development of stronger civil society institutions. When individuals and groups come together to advocate change through non-violent means, they often form networks and organisations that work to promote human security and sustainable development over the long term (Stephen. and Chenoweth., 2013).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted under the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm is a philosophical approach to research that aims to understand the subjective experiences and meanings that people attach to their social world (Gray, 2014; Alsaigh and Coyne, 2021). It recognises that people's actions and behaviour are influenced by their cultural, social and historical contexts and that these factors must be considered to understand human phenomena. The study used a qualitative research approach and a case study research design to provide an in-depth analysis of the studied phenomenon. Qualitative research approaches involve interpretive and naturalistic approach to the subject matter and attempt to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (van Fusch, Fusch and Ness, 2018; Manen and van Manen, 2021). The case study methodology enabled the researchers to gain a rich understanding of the complex relationship between political contestations,



human security and sustainable development in Buhera South Constituency of Zimbabwe.

The research used various data collection methods, including interviews, focus group discussions, observations and document analyses. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including politicians, civil society activists and members of the public. Focus group discussions were held with community members to gain their perspectives on the impact of political contestations on human security and sustainable development. Observations were made of political events and activities and documents such as policy papers and reports were analysed to provide context and background information.

The adopted methodology was influenced by the theoretical framework and research practice, assumptions about the nature of knowledge and reality, value systems and ethical principles. The research practice was guided by ethical principles, including informed consent and confidentiality. Data were analysed using thematic data analysis procedures which produced important insights into the role of non-violent political contestations in promoting human security and sustainable development in Zimbabwe. The findings can inform policy and decision-making processes in the country and beyond.

## RESULTS

Zimbabwe has a history marked by violence since colonialism in 1890. From 1890 through to 1979, successive white minority governments used violent and exploitative means to enforce their rule during colonialism, leading to violent responses from the local people such as the Shona and the Ndebele, as they fought to liberate themselves from the numerous injustices they suffered under colonial misrule. Zimbabwe achieved independence in 1980 after an armed struggle named the Second Chimurenga that lasted from 1966 through to 1979. However, violence continued to be a part of the newly independent Zimbabwe. The policy of reconciliation under Prime Minister Robert Mugabe in 1980 did not effectively achieve human security, as it was used mainly to appease white capital.

The years after independence marked a continuation of violence, beginning in 1982, the Gukurahundi military campaign in Matabeleland, the 1990 electoral

violence, perpetrated mostly against (ZUM) members, their sympathisers, caught-between citizens, trade unionists and other opposition supporters. The Gukurahundi in Matebeleland and Midlands provinces was a war targeting mainly PF-ZAPU and its supporters. Mugabe accused Nkomo and PF-ZAPU leaders of harbouring dissidents and threatening to take over power. However, the hunt for dissidents led to indiscriminate killings of the mainly Ndebele ethnic population. In his entire rule, Mugabe was a prisoner of his declaration in 1976 that ‘The gun that produces the vote should remain its security officer, its guarantor. The people’s votes and...guns are always inseparable twins’ (Mugabe, 1981: 100).

The formation of the MDC in 1999 rekindled the Mugabe ideology of violence as he unleashed the state security apparatus, the ZANU-PF Youth militia and the war veterans, on members of the MDC. While the MDC could not be exonerated from election-motivated violence, the party had no apparatus to face state-supported violence, hence the opposition party oftentimes resorted to non-violent resistance to counter statecraft engineered violence. However, the clash of violence and non-violence produced violent conflict in many parts of Zimbabwe. Thus, during Robert Mugabe's rule in Zimbabwe, political contestations led to a range of negative outcomes that had significant impacts on the country's development and human security. Some of the key negative outcomes include political violence and human rights abuses, economic decline and poverty, social fragmentation and polarisation and brain drain and loss of human capital.

Political contestations in Zimbabwe often led to violence and human rights abuses perpetrated by state security forces and ZANU-PF party supporters. Political violence and human rights abuses emanating from political contestations resulted in extrajudicial killings, torture and arbitrary arrests and detentions that contributed to a climate of fear and insecurity among citizens. Political contestations also contributed to Zimbabwe's economic decline, as Mugabe's government pursued policies that undermined investor confidence and led to hyperinflation and shortages of basic goods and services. This, in turn, contributed to high levels of poverty and unemployment that disproportionately affected marginalised communities and the generality of Zimbabweans. Furthermore, political contestations also contributed to the

fragmentation and polarisation of Zimbabwean society, as different political groups became increasingly divided along political and ethnic lines. This led to a breakdown in social cohesion and trust, undermining efforts to promote inclusive and equitable development. Political contestations also contributed to a brain drain in Zimbabwe, as many educated and skilled professionals left the country in search of better opportunities and political stability. This loss of human capital negatively impacted the country's development and undermined efforts to build a skilled and educated workforce. This study argues that negative outcomes produced by violent political contestations can be addressed if political parties conduct their political campaigns in a non-violent manner, guided by the need to promote human security.

The following shows how political violence has undermined human security and prospects for sustainable development in Buhera South Constituency:

Political violence in Buhera critically affected the livelihoods of the district, especially the material aspect of human security, owing to deprivation, destruction and displacement of people. Since 2000, the Zimbabwean government ran different economic support initiatives throughout the country. The land reform programme, various farmer support schemes in the country such as farm implements scheme through the Farm Mechanisation Scheme, were some of the government initiatives. These government-aided schemes were often hijacked for political ends. While these were government-funded schemes, the new unwritten policy was that the implementation of government initiatives was to be done through traditional chiefs, supervised by ZANU-PF councillors and the local Member of Parliament (MP). From 2000 to 2008, Buhera District had two constituencies whose MPs were ZANU-PF members, notably Kumbirai Kangai in Buhera South and Kenneth Manyonda in Buhera North.

Suspected MDC sympathisers in the civil service were often haunted out of office. Chokuda, a Headmaster at Murove Primary School in Buhera South, was killed during the 2002 elections. At the height of the economic decline, most teachers left their jobs for Chiadzwa diamond fields. MDC youths went to Chiadzwa, set their bases there, and hounded ZANU-PF youths out of the fields. Where NGOs wanted to give farming aid, ZANU-PF attempted to use its

structures to deny members of the opposition. This seemed to be a common trend in Buhera South as the ruling party got political mileage from donated foodstuff. The major donor agencies in Buhera South were Christian Care, World Vision and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). The ZANU-PF leadership made sure that they were involved in at least one of the stages of either offloading or compiling names or maintaining order.

One critical aspect of the period under review was the lack of personal and community security. Many people in Buhera South were not secure as they were subjected to constant threats. The worst aspect was that all avenues for recourse were closed to the public. The judiciary and police became appendages of ZANU-PF. The MDC suffered the fate, a pattern that once they got arrested for flimsy reasons, they then were denied bail at the courts. Instead of providing personal and community security, the police brutalised people for attending MDC rallies, while the courts denied bail anyone accused of being MDC. In one instance, a human right non-governmental organisation (NGO), Forum, reported that:

Buhera South 20 March 2008. Anti-riot police reportedly assaulted MDC supporters who were attending a rally in Birchenough Bridge. The rally was being held close to where a ZANU-PF rally was also being held. The police were apparently called in by the ZANU-PF supporters on allegations that they were being provoked by the MDC supporters. There was a stampede of MDC supporters fleeing from the police, resulting in injuries. A male victim reports that he was beaten three times on the right hand and also lost his glasses during the chaos (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO, March 2008: 12).

This report is one of many cases of personal and community insecurity in Buhera South. There was a systematic profiling of citizens and communities in political terms. Those classified as MDC bore the brunt of violence and deprivation.

Since the formation of the MDC, various legal instruments came into place to forestall democratic participation. Legislation became a means to stop and subvert democratic participation. As argued by Klingibel (2006: 1):

security has fundamentally evolved in the international debate from a concept that focused on the stability of the state to a protective approach related to the individual... For the conceptual debates "human security" has become a key term. A constituent element of the concept of human security is the protection of people or individuals.

ZANU-PF, through the control of the legislature, hid behind the need to protect human security to enact such laws. Chief laws used post-2000 were the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (2002) (AIPA). Through AIPPA, newspapers and pirate radio stations were shut. It became a criminal offence in Buhera South to be seen moving around with independent newspapers or listening to the Voice of America's Studio 7 radio station. One notable feature of POSA was that it authorised police brutality. Section 29, subsection 2 of POSA, gave the police or those assisting them the right to kill. It stated that:

the police may use all necessary force to disperse an unlawful meeting in terms of other sections, and if a person is killed by the police – or any other person assisting them during dispersal - this killing shall be considered lawful (The Solidarity Peace Trust, 2004: 11).

Political security, an essential element of human security, was compromised during the period. As articulated by Mhanda (2005), —political power became the dominant social good and those in control of it have a control of a whole range of other goods in society. At local level, the district, ward and cell leadership clearly understood this philosophy. The benefits to them included the corrupt allocation of stands at Murambinda Growth Point, Mutiusinazita Shopping Centre and Muzokomba Shopping Centre. They also shared government-provided aid such as maize and maize seeds. During the farm mechanisation programme, they took farming implements, such as ploughs, scotch carts, hoes and even generators for personal use. Political power became a tool for corruption that ZANU-PF and its supporters exhibited with impunity. They felt any loss of power would result in loss of privileges to them. They worked hand in glove with the national and provincial leadership to suppress political rights. The judiciary, executive, legislature, electoral commission, security services, media and other independent commissions were under Mugabe's armpits for the sole purpose of advancing his political interests. Sachikonye, (2003: 99) observed that —ZANU-PF...uses coercive instruments of the state to expedite its own purposes of monopolising power while denying political rights and opportunities to other groups to compete for that power.

One notable feature of the period under study is that Buhera South MDC members became victims of coordinated extortion orchestrated by members of the ZANU-PF Youth League and war veterans. Often, MDC supporters were

forced to pay ‘fines’ at rallies in the form of livestock to base commanders. Many claimed that they lost goats, sheep and, to some extent, cattle as payment to the leaders for their alleged support for the MDC. Some of the livestock thus acquired were slaughtered at rallies or bases to feed the leadership. One elderly MDC supporter claimed that he lost four goats as punishment for his sons’ support for the MDC. He claimed that he paid out of fear of further harm from the ‘commanders’ (Interview with Participant 23 13/02/22). This was not an isolated case but, rather, one of the many cases that went unreported to the police. In fact, most claim that it was of no use to report matters to the police as the police were fearful of retribution from political leaders. Most youths were promised land in return for supporting ZANU-PF. In Wards 28 and 26, many reported that youths invaded their lands with the help of ZANU-PF cell leaders. However, this failed to materialise as the village heads resisted these moves since communal lands were under their jurisdiction.

## DISCUSSION

Political violence is a major impediment to both human security and sustainable development. The negative impacts of violence on development are evident in Buhera South, where violence resulting from political contestations has hampered the area's progress. Development is a complex process that involves achieving more prosperous and equitable standards of living for societies and states. However, political violence undermines this process by creating an environment of fear and insecurity that, in turn, hinders economic growth, social stability and political progress. Traditionally, development experts have neglected the link between human security and sustainable development. However, this study found overwhelming evidence showing that there is a growing convergence between these two concepts, especially in Buhera South, an area that is characterised by violence caused by political contestations. Human insecurity and development are closely intertwined and without addressing the former, the latter cannot be achieved. As the International Peace Security Report (2004: 3) notes, security and development actors are increasingly recognising that the challenges facing conflict-ridden countries must be addressed in a holistic and integrated manner to achieve sustainable peace and long-term prosperity. This underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing conflict and violence, one that prioritises human security and takes a long-term perspective on development. Only by addressing the root

causes of violence and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, can we hope to achieve sustainable development and a more prosperous and equitable world for all.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study emphasizes the importance of human security and sustainable development in the context of political contestations. Political violence hinders the development of areas and creates an environment of fear and insecurity that undermines economic growth, social stability and political progress (Zunes, 2010; Martin, 2018). The traditional approach to development neglected the link between human security and sustainable development, but recent research (Adebayo and Ogunyemi, 2020; Granoff, 2022) show that these two concepts are closely intertwined. Therefore, it is essential to address the root causes of violence and prioritise human security to achieve sustainable development and a more prosperous and equitable world for all.

Given the negative outcomes produced by violent political contestations that characterised Zimbabwe's political landscape, this study argued that prioritisation of human security is vital for promoting sustainable development in the face of political contestations for several reasons. First, non-violent political approaches promote inclusive development. Political contestations employing violent means often lead to the marginalisation of certain groups within society, impeding efforts to promote inclusive and equitable development. Thus, prioritising human security ensures that the needs and rights of all individuals, particularly those who are politically and socially marginalised or at risk, are considered in development planning and implementation. Second, human security enhances social stability. Violent political contestations lead to social instability and conflict that undermine development efforts. Therefore, prioritising human security can help to address the underlying causes of conflict and promote social stability, creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. Third, nonviolent political approaches tend to produce improved governance systems.

While violent political contestations often arise out of governance failures and the lack of democratic accountability, prioritising human security helps to strengthen democratic institutions, improve governance and promote the rule of

law which are all essential for sustainable development. Fourth, human rights can be enjoyed under peaceful and stable political environments. Thus, prioritising human security helps to protect and promote human rights essential for sustainable development. By ensuring that individuals are safe, healthy and have access to basic services and opportunities, human security helps to advance human rights and promotes the development of inclusive, equitable and sustainable societies. It is apparent that prioritising human security is essential for promoting sustainable development in the face of political contestations. By addressing the underlying causes of conflict and promoting social stability, inclusive development, good governance and human rights, human security creates an enabling environment for sustainable development that benefits all members of society, across the political divide.

In terms of recommendations,

- political parties should conduct their election campaigns in a nonviolent manner.
- government should strengthen institutions such as the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, Gender Commission and security institutions to ensure that political parties uphold principles of nonviolence.
- human security should be prioritised to ensure sustainable development.
- the Southern African Development Community (SADC) must ensure that the SADC Guidelines on Elections are adhered to so that politics does not affect human security.
- in cases of tense political contestations, dialogue should be used to ensure there is no violence and human security breaches.

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