Zimbabwe
Rice

In 1964, Zimbabwe was known as Southern Rhodesia and was a British protectorate. At the time, the political sphere was dominated by Europeans, and the African citizens of the protectorate were not granted political rights. Ian Smith, a member of the Rhodesian Front Party (RF) was elected Prime Minister in 1964, and in 1965 published a Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Great Britain. The UDI was the result of unsuccessful negotiations for independence: the British wanted to ensure that Smith's party intended to legally achieve majority rule, but Smith and other white Rhodesians refused to agree to this condition (United States Department of State, 2010). The British government declared the UDI to be unconstitutional, and the United Nations agreed that Smith's government was illegal. Member states were called upon to not assist or recognizing the independent Rhodesian government and sanctions were imposed upon the new country.

Based on our coding rules Zimbabwe is coded non-democratic from 1965 until 1969, as democratic from 1970 through 1978 and then again as non-democratic until the end of the observation period. The coding of a parliamentary democracy during 1970-1978 is problematic as this is a white minority rule where large parts of the population were excluded. However, several sources corroborate a coding of parliamentary democracy (Nijzink et al. 2013; Madhuku 2010; Giliomee 1999; though note that Cheibub et al. 2010 do not consider Zimbabwe a democracy in any period).

Antigovernment guerrilla activity began in the late 1960s, but severely escalated after 1972, leading to turmoil throughout the country and decreases in white morale. In 1974, the major African nationalist groups in the country united their military forces, bringing the activity to a much larger scale. By 1976, the Rhodesian government had been worn down by the many conflicts it faced, and agreed to majority rule (in principle), as well as to a meeting in Geneva with the African nationalist leaders (United States Department of State, 2010). In 1977, an agreement guaranteeing majority rule and universal suffrage was signed by the Smith government. In 1979, free elections were held, and Bishop Abel Muzorewa, a member of the United African National Congress party (UANC) was elected Prime Minister. This is a SOLS change.

In 1980, after much negotiation, a return of Rhodesia to de-facto colonial status under Great Britain, and a new constitution, pre-independence elections were held. Out of nine participating parties, the Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front party (ZANU-PF) won an absolute majority of seats, and formed a government under its leader, Robert Mugabe. This is a SOLS change. Upon official independence from Great Britain on April 18, 1980, the name of the country changed from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe.

Though initially, Mugabe made efforts to include opposition parties in his government, Geddes characterizes Zimbabwe as a single-party state under ZANU-PF from 1980 until the present day. Mugabe changed his role from Prime Minister to President shortly after independence. Though some opposition parties participated in legislative elections, elections were marred by large amounts of demonstrations and political violence, as well as assertions of irregularities (United States Department of State, 2010).

Robert Mugabe resigned in 2017, ending his 37 year rule (BBC News 2017a). Vice-President Phelekezela Mphoko served as acting president while tensions within the ruling party rose over who would succeed Mugabe (BBC News 2017b). The ruling party, ZANU-PF, sworn in Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa as president in November 2017 (Griffiths 2017), and in 2018, he won the presidential elections (BBC News 2018). Zimbabwe is a single party system during this period, so SOLS changes only occur when the leader is not from the ruling party. The transition from Mugabe to Mphoko is not coded as a SOLS change because Mphoko is considered an interim leader. The transition from Mphoko to Mnangagwa is not coded as a SOLS change because Mnangagwa and Mugabe we both members of the ruling party, ZANU-PF.

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Coded by Meera Krishnan September 4, 2010
Revised by Bryan Rooney 10/15/2012
Edited by Andrew Wood (Rice) 05/24/2014
Edited by Kristin Bryant to include information about 2009-2018 period coded by Alex Pugh on 08/08/2020