

A Critical Analysis of the Dynamics of Intergovernmental Relations in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The study of inter-government relations in Zimbabwe presents a dynamic discourse with a complex political and constitutional history. This discourse occurs in the context of different political systems with diverse ideological orientations. In Zimbabwe, IGR has undergone different phases of transformation affecting the role and functions of different tiers of government. From colonial to post-independence era, the different governments have vacillated from centralism to decentralism, overregulation and protectionism. In the process, this has affected the intergovernmental balance of power in varying degrees. This paper critically examines the dynamics of the IGR discourse in Zimbabwe dwelling on its historical legacies, constitutional foundations, ideological orientation and institutional frameworks. The endeavor is to establish the nature and scope of the relationship between different tiers of government as shaped by the governing legislation and enforced through the established institutions. The paper established that the unitary system of Zimbabwe is anchored on a strong centralist ideology that suffocates the autonomy of sub-national institutions. In the same context, there is absence of political to implement crucial constitutional reforms that have a bearing on the configuration of IGR. The paper also revealed that political party incongruence is a threat to intergovernmental coordination, integrated planning and collaborative development.

Keywords: Intergovernmental relations; Decentralization; Unitarism

Introduction

Zimbabwe is politically and constitutionally a unitary nation with a three tier government: national government, provincial and metropolitan councils and local government. The country got independence from Britain in 1980 after 90 years under colonial rule. The IGR system of Zimbabwe is a product of a fairly long and complex historical and institutional context. Throughout this historical transformation there has been a wide shift of IGR reflecting varied ideological contexts. The relationship between the different levels of government has been configured at each different point to reflect the peculiarities of each political system. The paper is a critical analysis of the dynamics of IGR in Zimbabwe. It presents the nature of IGR from the colonial era to the post-independence period. Key IGR and political developments particularly the Constitution of Zimbabwe and devolution of power are analyzed [1-3].

Conceptualization of IGR

According to Wright [1], 'in comet-like fashion', the concept IGR has entered the scope of general political discourse and enjoys wide usage among scholars and policy-makers of various types and persuasion. Wight [1] related the earliest use of the term IGR to Professor Clyde F. Snider's 1937 article on county and township government in the U.S. Wright's engagements with Professor Snider with reference to the history and usage of the term IGR elicited the following comment from the latter: 'I doubt very much that I was the first to use the term but have no notion from whom or from what I borrowed it'.

McEwen [2] argue that IGR are indispensable to virtually all political systems with a multi-level form of government 'given the necessity of governmental interaction to address the disputes, interdependencies and spill-over effects resulting from constitutional overlaps', as well as the 'need to confront policy problems that defy competence divisions'. This is the case in both unitary and federal nations because found multi-level governance to be an indispensable and fundamental characteristic of the modern state. However, there are contestations over the history and conceptions of IGR due to a multiplicity of factors. To Mathebula [4] the relationship and connections among different government jurisdictions, mostly pertaining to the exercise and undertaking of 'defined' power and functions has elevated the crucial role IGR play in contemporary governments and politics. The magnitude of interest has culminated in a scholarly conceptual race that provokes the centrality of reopening the inquest. Ongaro, Massey, Holzer and Wayenberg [5] added that the exploration of IGR and multi-level governance has historical, conceptual and contextual dimensions which can better be resolved through providing a contextual complement to the conceptual perspectives. Over the years, many authors have attempted to define the conceptual boundary of IGR. However, there seems to be a general agreement with Rosenthal that 'drawing conceptual boundaries around the structures of IGR is not only difficult, but also problematic in terms of understanding the processes associated with IGR'. Thus, even while some effort has gone in to describing cooperative patterns of behaviour, much remains to be done in identifying the various factors which either promotes cooperation or conflict.

William Anderson, regarded by Wright [1] as 'one of the intellectual parents of the intergovernmental relations field' defined IGR as a term intended 'to designate an important body of activities or interactions occurring between governmental units of all types and levels within

the [United States] federal system'. There are two fundamental dichotomies to this conception. The first is that intergovernmental activities occur across different levels and units of government in a political system which can be unitary or federal. The second is that such activities are diverse and span different fields, reflecting the diverse dimensions of IGR, which can be political, social, economic etc.

Many scholars also weighed in with different conceptions of IGR. According to Edwards [6] IGR are a vehicle for promoting and facilitating cooperative governance and integrated development by promoting policies, programs and activities across different spheres of government that encourage effective service provision to satisfy the needs of society in a sustainable way. McEwen [2] defines IGR simply as 'relations between governments' and to Sunday [7] IGR concern the links between different levels of government in a decentralized system that is, the centre, province and district. In other words, IGR refers to a network of interactions and relationships in the execution of governmental activities. The thrust is to achieve common goals through mutual relationships between and across vertical and horizontal governmental arrangements, alignment and cohesion across all levels of government. In addition, IGR seeks to promote governmental activities through synergies for efficiency and effectiveness in order to sustain democracy and strengthen delivery capacity across all levels of government for the common good.

A summation of the conceptual elasticity of IGR reflects that it is concerned with interactions and relations of various levels of government, influenced largely by the macro political system, socio-economic and geo-political diversities and how these can be harnessed to promote cooperation and integration without compromising the autonomy of either level of government. It is therefore not desired at promoting secessionism or divisionism or the parochial interests of any individual level of government but to entrench democracy, good and transparent government by fostering synergies and synchronizing the operations of different levels of government in the execution of their functions. Thus to Baatjies 'If IGR are the oil in the government machinery, then, just as good IGR can help make service delivery efficient and effective, so poor IGR can lead to duplication, inefficiency and competition'.

History and Context of IGR in Zimbabwe

The evolution of IGR in Zimbabwe is an expression of diverse historical developments reflecting changes in the political regimes and constitutional contexts from the colonial era to date. The advent of colonialism in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) gave birth to a dualised form of government with a separatist development agenda. The dualistic model of government was anchored on a segregationist centralist ideology that advanced a white supremacist agenda while entrenching underdevelopment in native areas. This was attained through the use of draconic and ingrained racially discriminatory laws, ordinances and policy enactments, inter alia, the 1910 High Commissioner's Proclamation, the Native Councils Act, the African Councils Act, and the District Councils Act which supported the overriding philosophy of colonialist hegemony. The dualistic governance model applied in Southern Rhodesia, Mills argues, was the equivalence of the British policy of differentiation in the Natal, South Africa. The policy of differentiation as was with dualism implied that there were separate legal and political systems for whites and the black people. Other scholars used different terms to refer to dualism with

Muchadenyika [8] calling it the 'binary system' while Chigwata [9] refers to it as 'the system of separatist development of races'.

According to Madhekeni and Zhou [10], dualistic colonial structures, modelled along racial lines, were the bedrock of a highly centralised government system anchored on white supremacist policies and the imposition of centrally defined substandard programmes on Native Councils and nourishment of African self-government. They further argued that the colonial system of Southern Rhodesia demonstrated central government supremacy on sub national governments through ingrained draconian and tribal, legal and institutional frameworks. Masunungure [11] concurred with the above argument adding that 'from its inception, the overriding imperative was the consolidation of the colonialist hegemony and its attendant infrastructures of control.' The direct rule policy was used and in practice, administrative, political, judicial and legislative powers were under the purview of the whites. Under this political dispensation, the nature of IGR was typically a master-servant relationship as African institutions had limited policy latitude under the tentacles of race-driven white control over the socio-economic and political space with an exploitative and subservient underpinning.

The demise of colonialism and the birth of independent Zimbabwe in 1980 ushered a new political dispensation. The post-independence government embarked on a number of reforms aimed at dismantling the racist undertones of government. These reforms include the expanded decentralization frameworks supported by legislative instruments and policies such as the 1984 Prime Minister's Directive and the 1996 thirteen principles of decentralization. Other key reforms are the 1996 Urban Councils Act, Chapter 29:15 and the 1988 Rural District Councils Act, Chapter 29:13. However, it is important to note that despite this plethora of legislation and reforms purportedly meant to dismantle racist backed institutional differentiation, the new national government did not depose its excessive control on sub-national governments. It is therefore an insoluble contradiction that the legislation and institutions created in post-independence Zimbabwe promoted the autonomy of sub-national governments while broadening democracy and citizen participation. This era rather presents an aporetic discourse epitomized by the national government's perfection of colonial dominance approaches through creating legislation and institutions to retain wide and extensive control of sub-national governments.

Madhekeni and Zhou [10] stress that inspite of independence from the colonial regime; Zimbabwe's new legal and institutional framework did not depose the centre's excessive control on sub national governments. Central government perfected its dominance by fostering control through crafting legal and institutional frameworks to retain unlimited powers and discretion whilst the institutional framework anchoring the necessary levers to execute the powerful legal provisions were developed. Whilst the need for checks and balances on sub national governments need not be overemphasized, the dynamics of post-independence Zimbabwe are slowly turning into a déjà vu as the machinations of colonial period harsh ordinances and directives appear to start haunting contemporary IGR.

As noted above, in spite of independence, central government's grip on sub national government was not deposed. The post-independence era has been characterized by what Olowu [12] refers to as expansion of centralism disguised in decentralism where principles of decentralization and the purported transfer of functions and authority to sub national governments is largely rhetoric. Machingauta [13] seems to concur with the above argument and added that functionally,

the central government should provide a facilitative framework for sub national government to operate. In practice, however, the centre has played a manipulative, control and directive roles especially after the advent of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). According to the RTI International, from 2000 the MDC, a powerful opposition political party to the Robert Mugabe led government and ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), dominated urban councils in elections and gained seats in Rural District Councils as well. In 2008, MDC won almost half of the Rural District Councils. Marume [14] points out that, the MDC's local government electoral dominance, especially in the major urban councils, gave rise to the operative intergovernmental political dynamics in Zimbabwe. As the ruling party, ZANU PF controls the Ministry of Local Government (MLG) and levers of local power at the national level while MDC controls most of the councils. This level of political party incongruence has culminated into massive political conflict, including controversial suspension and dismissal of MDC mayors by the MLG, claiming to be acting in the interest of effective administration.

A new Constitution was adopted in July 2013, replacing the 1979 Lancaster House Constitution. The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 established government as constituted by three tiers (central government, provincial and metropolitan councils and local government). One of the founding provisions of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe is that of the superlative position of the Constitution (Section 2). It declares that the Constitution is the supreme law of Zimbabwe and any law, practice, custom or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid to the extent of its inconsistency. Additionally, the 2013 Constitution provides broad parameters for IGR in terms of section 265 (3) which provides for an Act of Parliament to provide mechanisms and procedures to facilitate coordination between different levels of government. However, the current government is lethargic to implement these key provisions of the Constitution considering the slow pace at which new institutions and structures and alignment of legislation with the Constitution is taking place. The absence of an Act of parliament to regulate IGR has created a legislative vacuum in synchronising government and promoting cooperation among the three tiers of government. At the same time, whilst the 2013 Constitution entails devolution in the preamble of chapter 14 and section 264 (a major achievement commensurate with key tenets of democracy), there is nonetheless concern that government under ZANU PF is deliberately not enforcing this key constitutional position through developing the necessary legislation and institutions.

Decentralization Reforms and IGR in Zimbabwe (1980-2017)

There is abundant literature which is strongly in support of the commitment of the government of Zimbabwe to decentralization through legislative and institutional arrangements. According to Kurebwa [15] the post-independence system of sub national government in Zimbabwe should be examined and understood in the context of decentralization. Seen as a strategic policy grid of government, decentralization started in 1980 with the purpose of redressing inherited colonial inequities; improve people participation in governance and transfer powers and functions from central government to sub national levels. At the same time, the government sought to introduce a myriad of reforms to replace the dualised colonial government system and remove the racist sub national

government contexts characteristic of the colonial system. These reforms ranged from removal of race based restrictions; creating a new electoral system with equal voting rights to whites and blacks and the redistribution of resources. Nyikadzino and Nhema [16] argue that the advent of independence saw the new government introducing aggressive strategies to counter white domination of sub national government. The new decentralised structures and configurations were designed to cater for the majority of the people that had been disenfranchised before independence in 1980. Tanyanyiwa [17] justifies decentralisation in Zimbabwe as a reaction to the dysfunctional national government which was bureaucratic and the need for a growing commitment to more socially just and equitable sub national government at independence.

According to Conyers [18] decentralization has defined the Government of Zimbabwe policy objectives since independence but its objectives and nature have changed over time. Tanyanyiwa [17] argues that decentralization has three fundamental elements which are: accountability, discretion and security while Chigwenya [19] stresses that decentralization brings dimensions of good governance, accountability and transparency by easy coordination which cannot be attained under centralized systems. In the same context, three broad categories of interest to this paper and which have either been operational or debated in Zimbabwe can be identified. These are political decentralization, administrative decentralization and fiscal decentralization. In the 1980s, the thrust was to streamline and coordinate various agencies to accelerate local development, and hence decentralization of functions to provincial, district and local development committees comprised of elected and appointed officials. In the early 1990s, decentralization was largely viewed as a vehicle for deepening democracy and rationalizing the public sector [18]. However, it is important to note that there is a gap between rhetoric and reality as little effective power was decentralized in practice for a myriad of reasons but largely expressive of the unwillingness of central government institutions to relinquish power. The situation was further compounded by the post-2000 political tensions, which resulted in a new wave of recentralization. The declining economic situation weakened central government's fiscal commitments to decentralized institutions particularly local authorities leading to a number of unfunded mandates, for example, government's failure to disburse the health and education grant since 1997.

In the facet of institutional development, the advent of independence in 1980 heralded the creation of a single local government Ministry and the amalgamation of African Councils into District Councils. At the same time the Prime Minister's Directive on Decentralization of 1984 captured the new political dispensation by establishing sub district organizational structures to implement decentralization. This saw the birth of Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs) through which rural communities were networked into the district local governance system. The VIDCOs and WADCOs were conduits for grassroots participation in governance and laid the basis for the coordination of government institutions and participation in rural development. In 1985, the Provincial Councils and Administration Act Chapter 29:11 was enacted. The Act provided for the establishment of a Provincial Council (PC) for every province chaired by a Governor of the Province (now Minister of State for Provincial Affairs) to spearhead and coordinate planning and development of provinces. Adjunct to the PC was the Provincial Development Committee (PDC) to provide technical expertise to the

latter. At the district level, the Rural District Development Committee (RDCC) was established to coordinate the development of the district.

The above institutional framework was supported by the thirteen principles of decentralization gazetted in 1996. This created a clear intergovernmental network from the local level to the provincial level for promoting development within provinces. Nyikadzino and Nhema [16] however concluded that this institutional and legislative framework did not completely restrict central government interference and meddling with the affairs of local government as the Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15) and RDC Act (Chapter 29:13) subjected local government to too much central government strictures through unfettered ministerial discretion in local affairs. Machingauta [13] supports this view, remarking that there is simply too much 'shall' concept in the above Acts citing over 250 instances in the RDC (Chapter 29:13) where the Minister of Local Government can exercise control over local authorities. Equally, in their study of centre-local relations in Chitungwiza [16] note that the relations are highly centralized and the balance of power is largely tilted in favour of the Ministry of Local Government. Olowu [12] concluded that centralization is not peculiar to Zimbabwe alone but is operational in most African countries as central government politicians are skeptical of decentralization fearing that it represents a zero sum game especially considering the level of political party incongruence in Zimbabwe. Botswana presents classic cases of centralism and an IGR system dominated by the central government. In Botswana local government is simply an appendage of the national government exercising delegated powers. The nature of IGR in Botswana therefore subject local government to torturous control and strictures by the national government to the detriment of efficient service delivery [20].

The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013 broadened the scope of decentralization in Zimbabwe through Chapter 14 section 264 on devolution. The chapter clearly provides for the devolution of governmental powers to sub national institutions. The inclusion of devolution in the Constitution (in principle) has transfigured the power matrix in Zimbabwe. However, devolution both as a concept and a practice has always been a centre of controversy in Zimbabwe as is the case with most unitary nations. Mapuva [21] argue that as opposed to federal nations where political configurations allow for such a dispensation, devolution in unitary nations comes with different ramifications. Nevertheless, despite a number of actual and potential setbacks, the concept of devolution has gained traction in the Zimbabwean political narrative. The major issues raised by central government politicians against devolution are that it limits the former's oversight role over sub-national government in IGR terms and increase interregional conflict in areas such as resources allocation hence promoting separatism. Most of the anti-devolution politicians felt that devolution has divisive effects on the socio-political disposition of the country and therefore represents an erroneous and defective clause in the Constitution. Various government officials have been quoted in the public arena attacking devolution as a secessionist principle of decentralization and public administration morphed into the Constitution carrying the baggage of federalism which the ruling ZANU PF is strongly opposed to. However, protagonists of devolution, especially opposition political parties argued that devolution should never be confused either with secessionism, separatism and tribalism as earlier argued but is a solution to challenges of asymmetric development and an IGR system skewed in favour of central government in Zimbabwe [16,17].

Considering the opposing and contrasting views of politicians and technocrats who should drive the process, it is abundantly clear that implementation of devolution in the letter and spirit of the Constitution is likely to take longer, if ever, as currently there are dissenting voices intending to amend the Constitution and delete the whole chapter on devolution. Perhaps further worsening the confusion is a thin line distinguishing devolution from federalism. This confusion has been sustained by the view that devolution as a concept sounds highly erudite and the only political architecture to achieve it is federalism. This strongly contrasts with both the ruling ZANUPF government and the Constitution that seeks to promote the indivisibility of Zimbabwe by maintaining a strong unitary system. But is devolution synonymous with federalism? There are strong arguments in literature to the effect that these are two different constructs both in theory and praxis.

In relation to the above, Conyers [18] argues that the impact of devolution on cooperation between different tiers of government, development and IGR is not guaranteed. The argument is that if sub national governments are given the power to utilize the revenue from resources in their regions and there are major variations in resources endowments between regions, devolution will therefore benefit resource rich regions only and ultimately create regional inequalities. Simultaneously, if provincial and local governments lack the requisite technical and management skills to manage devolved functions, problems may arise. However, Conyers concluded that these diverse perspectives should not shatter the implementation of devolution as it is best practice. Zimbabwe should rather design a model that best fits devolution into the fundamental socio-economic, regional, ethnical and political realities of the country. Generally, devolution has an overarching bearing on IGR as it will create autonomous sub national governments with significant control of local resources, shifting away power from the central government institutions thereby seriously reconfiguring the intergovernmental balance of power in favour of sub national governments.

Fiscal IGR is at the heart of the success of decentralized activities and this has seriously hampered the decentralization efforts of Zimbabwe through unfunded mandates. The tendency has been to decentralise functions without adequate financial resources. For example, development planning was decentralised in the 1980s, but the allocation of development funds remained centralised. Consequently, the main impact of decentralisation is frustration at a sub-national level. At the same time, while there are notable problems in relation to the consistent disbursement of fiscal resources from the central government, a study conducted by Conyers [18] in Binga RDC concluded that certain fundamental problems within the council compromised the capacity for proper utilisation of the resources and these include, lack of planning and management skills, political conflicts among councillors and officials and alleged abuses of power. Section 301 of the Constitution provides for 5% of all revenues collected by the national treasury to be decentralised to provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities. However, an Act of Parliament for the implementation of this clause as required by the Constitution is yet to be created. Such an intergovernmental fiscal arrangement will have far reaching implications if implemented as it will help salvage sub-national governments against a subdued fiscal space ubiquitously dominated by the central government. The next section focuses on inroads made through the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013 in reconfiguring the intergovernmental discourse.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013 and IGR

In 2013, the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 was passed after a referendum. The Constitution ushered a number of fundamental clauses with far reaching implications on IGR. These include among others; the enshrinement of Provincial and Metropolitan Councils and Local Government in the Constitution as second and third tiers, respectively. This is a departure from the previous arrangements where the two tiers mentioned were creatures of statutes with no constitutional recognition of their existence. The Constitution also contains provisions relating to devolution of powers in terms of section 264 and intergovernmental fiscal equalisation in terms of section 301. However, most fundamental is section 265 (3) which provides for the codification of IGR through an Act of Parliament, explicitly stating that, 'An Act of Parliament must provide for mechanisms and procedures to facilitate the coordination between central government, provincial and metropolitan councils.' A number of scholars have argued that sustainable IGR systems are codified and such cases include South Africa, U.S, and Nigeria. De Villiers [22] submits that in almost all decentralised countries, unitary or federal, the IGR arena have 'developed into a unique, albeit complex and confusing art-form of interaction between governments with extensive policies, institutions, protocols, conventions and practices' in contrast to previous arrangements which were largely informal and ad hoc driven by pragmatism rather than a philosophical plan or scheme.

However, the current central government has been lethargic in implementing all the key constitutional provisions necessary for improved IGR thereby provoking questions of whether there is political will or not. At the time of writing, for instance, the Provincial and Metropolitan Councils bill is yet to be finalised, five years after the promulgation of the Constitution. This means that government is effectively functioning at two levels (the national government and local government) against the provisions of section 5 of the Constitution. This delayed implementation of the Constitution has been condemned as expressive of centralist tendencies of the current ZANU PF government which has been strongly advocating against devolution citing it as the equivalence of federating the nation. In relation to this, the paper examines the level of political will on the part of central government to implement the Constitution and reconfigure IGR. This is critical as the provisions of the Constitution relating to IGR are likely to reconfigure the state of the relations between different levels of government if fully implemented. In the same vein, the paper examines the extent to which the Constitution induced reconfiguration of IGR which threatens the interests of national level politicians and bureaucrats. In relation to the last dimension of the constitutional discourse on IGR underpinning the study, Moyo and Ncube [23] question whether the anti-devolutionist ZANU-PF dominated government has the political will to fully implement devolution or whether devolution of power will remain a symbolic constitutional provision while the deconcentration status quo remains.

Political Party Incongruence and IGR in Zimbabwe

Political developments in Zimbabwe from the late 1990s, especially the advent of MDC, a vibrant political opposition to the ZANU PF government, that have been in power uninterrupted since 1980, provide a viable test-bed for examining the significance of political parties as an independent variable capable of explaining change in the nature and form of IGR. From 1980 to 1999, the political composition of government at its different levels in Zimbabwe was largely

congruent. Whilst the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) posed a serious political competitor to ZANU PF at independence, the signing of the unity accord of 1987 resulted into the merging of ZAPU under ZANU PF and between 1987 and 1999, political opposition to ZANU PF was spontaneous and posed less threat to both the latter and IGR. The advent of the MDC changed the political landscape and significantly reconfigured IGR in Zimbabwe. While ZANU PF retained the control of central government, especially the presidency, the MDC won the majority of local government seats especially in major cities and towns. Chakunda argued that the new political dispensation of party incongruence had multifaceted implications on IGR. First, it fuelled horizontal and vertical conflict in government and secondly, it exacerbated the programmatic differences between tiers of government.

McEwen [2] reflect on the correlation between political party incongruence and IGR and argued that the former configures IGR from both an organisational and a programmatic sense. Firstly, political parties can provide vital organisational linkages bridging jurisdictional divisions. When operating in different constituent governments or different governmental levels, 'they fulfil an important integrative function and facilitate policy co-ordination by providing channels for information exchange and conflict resolution.' Secondly, it can worsen programmatic differences between different levels of government and this 'can complicate the intergovernmental co-ordination of legislative and policy outcomes necessitated by overlapping competencies and spillover effects.'

Two paradigms of incongruence are common. The first paradigm is complete incongruence where there is no overlap in the composition of government by political parties and where the different tiers of government are composed by different political parties with different political ideologies. Secondly, partial incongruence, that is where there is fair or equal representation of political parties at similar level of government with such equality of representation repeated across all other levels of government as is the situation in most coalition governments [24]. IGR in Zimbabwe is reflective of the second scenario considering the fair representation of ZANU PF and MDC as the major parties across the different levels government. Though it has not disabled vertical integration of IGR, political party incongruence has largely promoted very conflictual relations that resemble political party identities. Barrel seems to agree with this view noting that the 'context of deep ideological and historic cleavages between parties has a major influence on attitudes towards IGR.'

In the context of the above view, the ZANU PF controlled central government has largely resorted to the issuing of directives and reducing intergovernmental transfers to opposition party controlled local governments. Typical of such a directive was issued by central government in 2013 towards the national harmonised elections directing all local authorities to cancel all domestic water consumption debts accumulated from January 2009 to July 2013. Added to this has been the dishonouring of statutory intergovernmental transfers such as the health grant with the seeming intention of financially crippling opposition party led councils and present them to the electorate as failures. In this vein, McEwen [2] concluded that the 'effect of party incongruence on IGR may thus depend on which particular parties make up the incongruent relationship, and the nature of party competition between them.'

Conclusion

The paper concludes that the system of IGR in Zimbabwe is punctuated by a typical parent-child relationship in which the national government is the former whereas sub-national governments are represented by the latter. The relationship has been defined by policy directives to sub-national governments, some of which have tended to compromise the autonomy and discretion of the former or contradict agreed policy positions at sub-national level. Their paper also unpacked a notable trend towards (re)centralisation of power where the national government is taking control of functions that could ideally be performed by sub-national governments. From these views, there overriding conclusion drawn is that Zimbabwe represents a classical unitary state that is opposed to the ideas of decentralisation, particularly the devolution of power.

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