📘 **Series Title**
**Reclaiming the Republic: A Civic Reckoning Against Constitutional Distortion**

🏛️ **Published By**
Springfield Center for Défense, National Security and Intelligence (MI9)
Ezulwini, Eswatini

✍️ **Authored By**
Dr. Godfrey Gandawa
**President, Springfield Research University**
Former Deputy Minister of Higher & Tertiary Education, Science & Technology Development
**Architect of Education 6.0**

📜 **Series Overview**

This six-paper series interrogates the constitutional distortion surrounding the proposed extension of President Mnangagwa's term and its continental echoes. It exposes the collapse of intellectual integrity, the weaponization of liberation credentials, and the entrenchment of military-political power. Each paper offers a sovereign counter-narrative—anchored in civic resistance, generational clarity, and continental dignity. The final paper expands the scope beyond Zimbabwe, diagnosing the regional spread of repression and the complicity of ceremonial institutions.

📚 **Paper Titles and Sequence**

1. **The Constitution Is Not a Canvas**
   *Diagnosing the Mnangagwa Extension Agenda*
2. **From Critique to Complicity**
   *The Intellectual Collapse Behind Zimbabwe's Constitutional Amendments*
3. **Liberation Without Guns**
   *Reclaiming Civic Resistance in Zimbabwe*
4. **The Military Mandate Is Not a Mandate**
   *Diagnosing the ZANU–Army Nexus*
5. **The People Are Not Passive**
   *Reawakening Zimbabwe's Civic Imagination*
6. **The Zanufication of Africa**
   *Diagnosing the Spread of Repressive Governance and the Normalization of Coups, Protests, and Black-on-Black Oppression*

# The Constitution Is Not a Canvas

## Section 1: The ED2030 Agenda as Constitutional Camouflage

### 1.1 From Slogan to Resolution

The ED2030 Agenda is no longer a vague developmental slogan—it has matured into a formal resolution to amend the national constitution. What began as a post-election branding exercise, promising economic revival and middle-income status by 2030, has since evolved into a political doctrine with constitutional consequences. At successive ZANU PF annual conferences, the party has adopted resolutions explicitly calling for the extension of President Emmerson Mnangagwa's tenure beyond the constitutional limit of 2028. These resolutions, passed without public consultation or parliamentary scrutiny, now function as internal mandates to reconfigure the legal architecture of the state in service of political continuity.

This is not maneuvering without basis—it is maneuvering with a declared objective, masked by developmental rhetoric and executed through party–state conflation. The ED2030 slogan, once projected as a national vision, has become a vessel for partisan ambition. By collapsing the distinction between party resolutions and state policy, ZANU PF has positioned its internal consensus as a substitute for constitutional process. The result is a dangerous precedent: a ruling party using its internal gatherings to pre-authorize amendments to the supreme law of the land, while presenting the move as a natural extension of national development. In this context, the ED2030 Agenda must be understood not as a roadmap to prosperity, but as a rhetorical shield for a premeditated constitutional assault.

### 1.2 The Collapse of Constitutional Separation

ZANU PF's internal resolutions now function as de facto national policy. What begins as party consensus in closed conference halls is swiftly projected onto the national stage as binding direction—without the procedural rigor that constitutional reform demands. The party no longer distinguishes between its political ambitions and the legal boundaries of the state. Instead, it treats the state as an extension of its internal machinery, collapsing the firewall that should separate partisan aspiration from national governance. This conflation is not rhetorical—it is operational. It allows ZANU PF to rehearse constitutional amendments within party structures, then execute them through state institutions without civic consent.

Party conferences have become legislative previews, where resolutions are passed with the expectation that Parliament—dominated by a ZANU PF supermajority—will simply affirm them. Slogans such as ED2030, originally framed as developmental visions, are repurposed as policy mandates that justify constitutional distortion. Resolutions bypass civic consultation, legal drafting, and parliamentary debate, entering the public domain not as proposals but as inevitabilities. The constitution, in this framework, is no longer a national covenant—it is a partisan document, amendable by internal consensus rather than national process.

This collapse of separation is not accidental—it is strategic. It is designed to neutralize resistance, simulate legality, and consolidate power under the guise of development. By treating the constitution as a party instrument, ZANU PF erodes the very foundation of democratic governance: the idea that law must be negotiated, not imposed; that the state must serve the people, not the party.

### 1.3 Strategic Camouflage and Public Distraction

Despite the resolution's gravity, the public narrative remains focused on infrastructure, investment, and economic revival. The ED2030 Agenda continues to project optimism—new roads, bridges, and industrial parks—while concealing its constitutional ambition beneath a veneer of progress. This strategic camouflage is deliberate: it allows ZANU PF to rehearse a constitutional extension in plain sight, without triggering civic alarm. The developmental imagery is not incidental—it is instrumental. It distracts the public from the legal implications of the party's resolutions, framing Mnangagwa's continued leadership as a prerequisite for national stability rather than a violation of constitutional order.

No public referendum is discussed, despite the constitutional requirement for popular input on amendments of national significance. No civic education campaign is launched to explain the legal consequences of extending presidential tenure. No legal roadmap is published to guide citizens through the amendment process. Instead, the resolution is buried beneath celebratory headlines and staged ribbon-cuttings, where the president is portrayed not as a constitutional subject but as the architect of national destiny. In this environment, silence becomes strategy, and distraction becomes consent. The people are invited to applaud development while their democratic inheritance is quietly redrawn.

### 1.4 Institutional Complicity and Silence

The camouflage is sustained not only by rhetorical distraction but by institutional silence. Parliament, despite its constitutional mandate to safeguard democratic process, has not interrogated the resolution's implications for presidential tenure, succession, or term limits. The legislature, dominated by ZANU PF's supermajority, has become a passive corridor—awaiting instructions rather than initiating scrutiny. No motion has been tabled, no debate convened, no committee inquiry launched. The silence is not procedural—it is political.

The judiciary, constitutionally entrusted with interpreting the supreme law and safeguarding its integrity, remains conspicuously passive in the face of ZANU PF's declared intent to amend the constitution. No advisory opinion has been issued to clarify the legal implications of party resolutions functioning as state mandates. No judicial commentary has emerged to interrogate the procedural legitimacy of constitutional reform initiated outside Parliament. No institutional alarm has been sounded to caution against the erosion of separation between party and state.

This passivity cannot be dismissed as procedural restraint—not when senior judges, including the Chief Justice, are visibly present at ZANU PF conferences where these resolutions are adopted. Their attendance signals more than proximity—it signals alignment. It transforms the judiciary from a constitutional guardian into a ceremonial witness to partisan ambition. In such a context, silence is not neutrality—it is choreography. It allows the ED2030 resolution to circulate as legitimate national policy, unchallenged by the very institution meant to defend the rule of law.

The absence of judicial engagement does not merely reflect caution—it reflects abdication. The judiciary is not expected to police party conferences, but it is expected to defend the constitution from being rewritten by resolution. When judges attend partisan gatherings where constitutional amendments are declared, interpretation is not interference—it is guardianship deferred. And when guardianship is deferred, distortion becomes doctrine.

Meanwhile, the media amplifies the ED2030 narrative with celebratory fervor, showcasing infrastructure projects and presidential pronouncements while ignoring the legal threat

embedded in the party's resolution. Investigative journalism is muted, civic education is absent, and constitutional discourse is displaced by development propaganda. The result is a manufactured consensus—engineered not through law, but through silence.

This silence is not benign—it is strategic. It is designed to normalize the resolution before it becomes law, to condition the public into viewing constitutional amendment as a natural extension of development, and to erase the distinction between political ambition and legal legitimacy. In such a climate, the constitution is not defended—it is deferred.

### 1.5 Comparative Precedents

Across the continent, party resolutions have repeatedly served as preludes to constitutional distortions—transforming internal consensus into national law without civic negotiation. In Rwanda, the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) passed internal motions endorsing President Paul Kagame's continued leadership, which paved the way for a 2015 referendum that revised term limits and reset the constitutional clock. While the maneuvering began within party structures, the process ultimately followed constitutional procedure—culminating in a public vote that formalized the amendment. The referendum was framed as a response to popular demand, and although civic space was tightly managed, the legal pathway was observed. In this regard, Rwanda's model reflects a strategic recalibration of constitutional boundaries, but one that acknowledged the procedural requirement of public ratification.

In Uganda, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) used party consensus to justify the removal of presidential age limits in 2017, effectively clearing the path for President Yoweri Museveni's indefinite rule. The amendment was passed amid public protest and parliamentary chaos, yet its legitimacy was anchored in the party's internal endorsement—not in civic will. Similarly, Cameroon's Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) conflated party loyalty with constitutional reform, removing term limits in 2008 under the guise of national stability, while silencing dissent and consolidating executive power.

ZANU PF's resolution to extend Emmerson Mnangagwa's tenure fits this continental pattern. It is not a policy—it is a prelude. Like its regional counterparts, it begins with internal motions, cloaked in developmental language, and proceeds toward constitutional revision without civic mandate. The trajectory is familiar: party consensus becomes parliamentary inevitability, and constitutional fidelity is sacrificed at the altar of incumbency.

Yet Zimbabwe's constitutional framework introduces a critical obstacle—**any amendment to presidential term limits requires a national referendum**. This is not a procedural footnote; it is a democratic firewall. And herein lies the strategic dilemma: Mnangagwa does not have the time. With the 2028 horizon approaching, and political uncertainty mounting, the referendum route is too slow, too public, and too unpredictable. It demands civic education, legal clarity, and popular consent—none of which can be guaranteed under current conditions.

Hence the choreography of avoidance. The ED2030 Agenda is not merely a slogan—it is a tactical diversion. It allows ZANU PF to rehearse permanence without triggering the constitutional safeguards designed to prevent it. The maneuvering is not just rhetorical—it is temporal. It seeks to bypass the referendum requirement by normalizing the extension through party resolution, parliamentary dominance, and institutional silence. To reinforce this illusion of legality, spin doctors have been deployed to shift the narrative—arguing, without constitutional basis, that the amendment can proceed without a referendum. This is not interpretation—it is distortion. It is an attempt to criminally coup the constitution under the guise of developmental urgency and political continuity.

In this context, ED2030 must be read not as a roadmap to prosperity, but as a rehearsal for permanence. And while this paper diagnoses the constitutional threat, the next will interrogate the intellectual collapse that enables it—where critics become apologists, and scholars become spectators to the slow undoing of the civic covenant.

### 1.6 Civic Implications

Citizens must recognize that the constitution is under declared threat—not merely from behind-the-scenes maneuvering, but from formal resolutions masquerading as development. The danger is not abstract; it is procedural, rhetorical, and institutional. When a ruling party passes internal motions to extend presidential tenure, and those motions are treated as national policy, the constitutional covenant is no longer protected by law—it is exposed to partisan redesign. In such a climate, civic passivity becomes complicity, and silence becomes surrender.

The civic response must be preemptive, strategic, and diagnostic. It must begin before the bill is tabled, before the amendment is gazetted, before the referendum is bypassed. Citizens must interrogate slogans, decode silence, and demand clarity—not just on roads and bridges, but on the legal future of the Republic. This is not a moment for applause—it is a moment for alarm. The constitution must be defended not only in courtrooms, but in classrooms, churches, unions, and public squares. It must be reclaimed as a civic inheritance, not a partisan instrument.

*"When the party becomes the state, the constitution becomes a manifesto—and the people become spectators."*

This is the threshold we now face. To remain spectators is to endorse the rewrite. To rise as citizens is to defend the covenant.

## Section 2: Pre-Amendment Maneuvering and Procedural Erosion

### 2.1 The Anatomy of a Constitutional Coup

A constitutional amendment is not merely a legal act—it is a civic ritual, requiring transparency, consultation, and procedural fidelity. It is a moment when the nation pauses to reflect, debate, and decide. It demands public education, parliamentary scrutiny, and—in cases involving presidential tenure—a national referendum. These are not bureaucratic hurdles; they are democratic safeguards. They ensure that the supreme law of the land is not rewritten in haste, nor hijacked by incumbency.

Yet ZANU PF's approach to the ED2030 extension bypasses all three. The resolution to amend is passed within party structures, away from the public eye and outside constitutional procedure. It is not tabled in Parliament as a bill. It is not debated in committee. It is not subjected to civic education or referendum planning. Instead, it is floated through state institutions as a foregone conclusion—an internal party decision masquerading as national destiny.

This is not reform—it is rehearsal. A constitutional coup rehearsed in silence. It is a choreography of power, where legality is simulated, and civic participation is erased. The constitution is not being amended—it is being pre-empted. And in that pre-emption lies the quiet collapse of constitutional discipline.

### 2.2 Bypassing the Civic Mandate

What we are witnessing is not a mere failure to follow constitutional procedure—it is a sustained campaign to condition the public into believing that such procedure is unnecessary. The Constitution of Zimbabwe is clear: any amendment, especially one affecting presidential tenure, must pass through defined stages—gazetting, parliamentary tabling, public consultation, and, where applicable, a national referendum. These are not optional rituals; they are the civic scaffolding of constitutional legitimacy.

Yet the ED2030 extension agenda has been carefully choreographed to bypass these requirements—not through brute force, but through narrative fatigue. There is no gazetted bill, yet the public is told the matter is already settled. There is no draft amendment, yet ministers speak of continuity as if it were law. There is no parliamentary motion, yet the legislature is expected to affirm what the party has already resolved. There is no civic education campaign, yet the media floods the airwaves with development slogans, not constitutional facts. There is no referendum roadmap, yet the public is being slowly weaned off the expectation that one is even necessary.

This is not administrative oversight—it is psychological erosion. It is the slow normalization of illegality through repetition, distraction, and silence. The people are not being consulted—they are being conditioned. And in that conditioning lies the deeper danger: a citizenry that forgets what constitutional fidelity looks like, and begins to accept party consensus as national law.

### 2.3 The Parliamentary Supermajority as a Rubber Stamp

ZANU PF's control of over two-thirds of Parliament renders the legislative process structurally compromised. The constitutional threshold for amendment is already met, meaning the party can pass changes to the supreme law without opposition support, civic consensus, or deliberative scrutiny. In theory, Parliament is a site of negotiation—a chamber where law is debated, refined, and defended. In practice, it has become a corridor of partisan affirmation, where resolutions passed at party conferences are simply ratified under the guise of legislative procedure.

Debate becomes ceremonial, not deliberative. Speeches echo party slogans, not constitutional analysis. Committees are bypassed or stacked with loyalists. Votes are foregone conclusions, not reflections of national will. The legislature functions as an extension of the party—not a guardian of the constitution. It does not interrogate the legal implications of ED2030; it rehearses its inevitability.

When the ruling party holds both the pen and the gavel, the constitution becomes a manifesto. It is rewritten not through civic consensus, but through partisan choreography. The supermajority does not protect the constitution—it pre-empts it. And in doing so, it transforms Parliament from a democratic institution into a procedural theatre, where legality is simulated and sovereignty is surrendered.

### 2.4 Institutional Complicity and Collapse

The erosion of constitutional discipline is not sustained by force—it is sustained by silence. Institutional silence. Parliament, despite its constitutional mandate to initiate and interrogate amendment processes, avoids the subject entirely. No motion is tabled, no committee

convened, no inquiry launched. The legislature, armed with the power to defend the constitution, chooses instead to rehearse party consensus.

The judiciary, entrusted with interpreting the law and advising on its integrity, offers no opinion on the legality of party-driven constitutional change. Even as resolutions are passed within ZANU PF structures with clear implications for presidential tenure, the courts remain passive. No advisory clarity is issued, no constitutional alarm sounded. This passivity is not procedural—it is political. It signals alignment, not neutrality.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), constitutionally responsible for managing electoral processes and referenda, remains conspicuously absent. Despite the clear implications for future electoral cycles—especially the requirement for a referendum in any term limit revision—ZEC has issued no preparatory roadmap, no civic education plan, no institutional alert. Its silence is not logistical—it is strategic.

This silence is not benign—it is engineered. It allows ZANU PF to simulate legality while bypassing constitutional discipline. It transforms institutions from guardians of the Republic into spectators of its slow undoing. And in that transformation lies the collapse—not of law alone, but of the civic covenant itself.

### 2.5 The Danger of Normalization

When constitutional amendments are rehearsed in silence and passed through party consensus, the danger is not just legal—it is psychological. It is the slow conditioning of a nation to accept distortion as doctrine. Citizens begin to internalize the idea that the constitution is amendable by resolution, not by law. That silence equals consent. That slogans equal mandates. The civic imagination is not crushed—it is recalibrated. People stop asking for bills, debates, and referenda. They start applauding announcements, headlines, and ribbon-cuttings.

This is the architecture of normalization. It does not require force—it requires repetition. It does not need censorship—it thrives on distraction. The constitution is not violently rewritten—it is quietly repurposed. And in that repurposing, the people become spectators to their own disenfranchisement.

*“A constitution amended in silence is a democracy rewritten in shadows.”*

This is the shadow we now inhabit. To normalize silence is to normalize surrender. And to normalize surrender is to erase the civic covenant that binds the Republic.

## Section 3: Reclaiming Constitutional Fidelity Before the Rewrite

### 3.1 The Constitution as Civic Inheritance

The Constitution is not a partisan tool—it is the civic inheritance of every Zimbabwean. It was born of struggle, negotiated in hope, and ratified in trust. It emerged from a moment when the nation sought to transcend its past and codify its future—not through party decree, but through public consensus. It is the document that binds the governed and the governors, not by loyalty, but by law.

To allow it to be redrawn by party resolution is to betray its origin and its purpose. It is to reduce a national covenant to a partisan instrument. It is to erase the memory of negotiation and

replace it with the choreography of dominance. The constitution was never meant to mirror power—it was designed to restrain it.

*"A constitution is not a mirror for power—it is a map for restraint."*

Reclaiming constitutional fidelity begins with reasserting its ownership. It belongs to the people, not the party. It must be defended not only in courtrooms, but in classrooms, churches, unions, and public squares. It must be taught, debated, and lived—not as a technical document, but as a civic compass. In this moment of preemptive distortion, fidelity is not nostalgia—it is resistance.

### 3.2 Preemptive Fidelity: Defending Before the Rewrite

The civic response must be preemptive, not reactive. Waiting for the bill to be gazetted is waiting too late. By then, the narrative will be entrenched, the institutions aligned, and the amendment rehearsed as inevitability. Constitutional fidelity must be defended while the maneuvering is still rhetorical, while the ink is still dry, while the silence can still be broken. This is not a moment for spectatorship—it is a moment for strategic resistance.

Key strategies must be deployed with urgency and precision:

- **Civic education campaigns** that decode ED2030 and expose its constitutional implications—reframing the slogan as a legal threat, not a developmental promise.
- **Legal watchdog coalitions** that monitor Parliament, ZEC, and the judiciary for signs of procedural compromise—documenting silence, delay, and complicity.
- **Strategic litigation** to challenge the legitimacy of party resolutions as constitutional triggers—forcing the courts to confront the bypass and clarify the law.
- **Public interest media** that shifts the narrative from development to democratic erosion—restoring civic imagination and constitutional literacy in the public square.

This is not just a defense of law—it is a defense of memory. Of the covenant forged in 2013. Of the promise that the constitution belongs to the people, not the party. Preemptive fidelity means acting before the rewrite—before silence becomes law, and law becomes theatre.

### 3.3 Reframing the Narrative

The ED2030 Agenda must be reframed—not as a development plan, but as a constitutional threat. Its language of roads, bridges, and industrial parks must be decoded as a strategic diversion from the erosion of democratic safeguards. Development is not the enemy—but when it is used to mask constitutional distortion, it becomes a tool of distraction. The civic imagination must be recalibrated to see beyond the asphalt and into the architecture of power.

This requires a shift in civic language. We must move:

- From **"vision" to vigilance**—recognizing that slogans can conceal strategy.
- From **"progress" to process**—insisting that development must follow constitutional procedure.
- From **"delivery" to democracy**—demanding that infrastructure never substitute for civic participation.

*“A road without rights is not development—it is diversion.”*

This is the narrative battle now underway. To win it is to restore clarity. To lose it is to rehearse surrender. The constitution must not be rewritten in the shadow of ribbon-cuttings. It must be defended in the light of civic truth.

### 3.4 Institutional Courage and Civic Solidarity

Institutions must be called to account—not just for what they do, but for what they allow. In moments of constitutional threat, silence is not procedural—it is political. Parliamentarians must be named and shamed for complicity, especially those who rehearse party resolutions as law without initiating public debate or defending constitutional fidelity. Their oath is not to the party—it is to the Republic.

Judges must be petitioned to issue advisory opinions on the legality of party-driven constitutional change. Their silence cannot be treated as neutrality when the constitution itself is under rhetorical siege. The judiciary must rise not as a spectator, but as a guardian—clarifying the boundaries between party ambition and constitutional legitimacy.

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) must be challenged to clarify its role in any referendum scenario. It cannot wait for a gazetted bill to begin civic education. It must act now—while the maneuvering is still rhetorical, while the public still remembers that term limit revisions require popular ratification.

At the same time, civic solidarity must be modeled across sectors. Churches must preach constitutional truth. Unions must defend democratic process. Universities must teach civic vigilance. Diaspora networks must amplify the alarm. The Constitution is not a canvas—it is a covenant. And that covenant must be defended not just by lawyers and activists, but by every Zimbabwean who refuses to be governed in silence.

### 3.5 Continental Implications

Zimbabwe’s constitutional erosion is not isolated. It signals a regional trend of slogan-driven authoritarianism, where party resolutions masquerade as national policy and constitutional amendments are rehearsed in silence. From Kigali to Kampala, Yaoundé to Harare, the pattern is familiar: internal motions become national mandates, referenda are bypassed or choreographed, and civic participation is replaced by partisan choreography. The continent is witnessing not just democratic fatigue—but constitutional repurposing.

Reclaiming fidelity in Zimbabwe is therefore not just a national imperative—it is a continental responsibility. It is a call to defend the civic covenant before it is rewritten in shadows. The struggle for constitutional clarity in Harare echoes in Lusaka, Nairobi, and Dakar. It is a reminder that African democracy must be built not on slogans, but on safeguards. Not on incumbency, but on institutional integrity.

*“To defend our constitution is to defend the soul of African democracy.”*

This is the soul now under siege. And to protect it, we must rise not just as citizens of Zimbabwe—but as custodians of a continental promise.

**Conclusion: The Covenant Must Hold**

The ED2030 Agenda is not just a political project—it is a constitutional threat. It seeks to rehearse permanence without procedure, to simulate legality without law, and to normalize distortion without debate. But it is not yet law. The ink has not yet spilled. The covenant can still hold—if the people rise before the silence becomes statute.

This is the threshold moment. To wait is to watch the constitution rewritten in shadows. To act is to reclaim the civic inheritance before it is repurposed by incumbency. The defense must be preemptive, strategic, and unified. It must come from every corner of the Republic—from lawyers and lecturers, pastors and poets, unions and universities, diaspora and domestic voices. The constitution must be defended not just as a document, but as a promise. A promise born of struggle, negotiated in hope, and sealed in trust.

*"Let no slogan become a scalpel. Let no silence become assent. Let the Constitution remain what it was born to be: the covenant of the people, etched in struggle, sealed in hope."*

This covenant must hold. And it will—if the people remember that silence is not neutrality, and that fidelity is not nostalgia. It is resistance.