

MDC-ZANU PF Government of National Unity: Prospects and Consequences

The Zimbabwean political leadership signed an historic power sharing day on the 15th of September 2008. There was no clear evidence of celebration in and outside Zimbabwe by Zimbabweans themselves. What most of them said was that it was a mere relief and waited to see the details of the plan and how it would be implemented. The deal seemed to raise more questions than answers. Zimbabweans and the entire global citizenry welcomed the deal with cautious optimism except for President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa who hailed the deal as a product of Zimbabweans themselves and called upon “all progressive humankind to support the people of Zimbabwe”.

Political Progress-Unlocking the Impasse/Reaching out

No doubt that this deal is a major step in the polarised political landscape of Zimbabwe. While the deal still does not fully reflect what Zimbabweans expressed on the 29th of March, it never the less has given recognition to that expression of Zimbabweans and paves way for possible political progress. It remains to be seen how the political leadership and the people of Zimbabwe will progress from here onwards.

The Mugabe regime has for the first time recognised the opposition MDC is an important player that they should work with rather than antagonise and demonise. This process will go a long way in opening up opportunities for national healing, policy realignment, international re-engagement and more importantly, the deal must set a stage to open up the democratic spaces for the non-state actors, independent media and civil society organizations to operate freely without any state hindrance and intimidation.

It provides an opportunity for reformation of the crucial state institutions which have been politicised and manipulated to meet the political ends of ZANU PF. The fact that the MDC is likely to control key economic ministries and the home affairs ministry will provide leverage for the MDC to be able to facilitate the restoration of law and order and the rule of law, economic stabilization and national healing.

Alleviating Human Pain and Suffering (Poverty starvation and political violence)

The most crucial process from now onwards is the humanitarian crisis currently decimating the ordinary people. The people of Zimbabwe have suffered enormous pain and death due to the

disastrous policies of the Mugabe regime which has led to Zimbabwe incurring a huge debt at the international financial institutions, becoming increasingly isolated, aid being withheld due to the government's failure to fulfil and adhere to internationally agreed human rights standards and upholding of the rule of law.

To date, more than 4000 Zimbabweans were affected directly and indirectly by the catastrophic violence which was orchestrated and overseen by high level military and political personnel that reconstituted themselves into a hit squad/mafia that designed and masterminded the brutal implementation of an unprecedented pattern of violence since the *gukurahundi* atrocities. The speeches of the Zimbabwe political leadership seemed to make no reference to or even evade these hot issues which will however remain central to the victims of the violence and state of terror that rocked the country when President Mugabe lost the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in March 2008.

More than 400 innocent people were murdered by state supported institutions of violence driven by high level military and political leadership and implemented by the war veterans and the youth militia. More than 4000 have been internally displaced; about 5 million have fled the country for fear of hunger, poverty and political prosecution and 3 million more face life threatening hunger/starvation and chronic poverty. The rest are either without a job/source of livelihood.

The problems described above are by far beyond the capacity of the current government of Zimbabwe. What is clear is that Zimbabwe will need international aid to kick-start the process of economic rebuilding and recovery. While the conditions which led to the withdrawal of international aid have not yet been totally eroded, the international community must do all that is possible to support poverty alleviation, economic recovery and the rebuilding and rebranding of key state-democratic institutions in order to enhance the democratic prospects of the Zimbabwean people.

The people expect to see substantial (not absolute) change in their daily lives and if the international community does not support this process it could weaken the MDC and the civil societies and offer

Mugabe breathing space to recover and reclaim "*lost ground*". In this regard, it is important for the international community to now make a clear distinction between the people of Zimbabwe, the civil society and other democratic forces on the one hand and ZANU PF on the other.

Transitional Justice, National Healing and Averting Impunity and Immunity

There is every indication that the Zimbabwean deal has not given priority to the process of attaining justice for the victims and perpetrators of violence and various other political crimes. The crimes

against humanity which have been perpetrated in Zimbabwe will not evaporate, the national political/civil leadership will have to confront and deal with these problems in a manner which will heal the wounds of the traumatic experiences of the people and lead to national unity and reconciliation. Otherwise, the country's political situation will remain polarised and the problems will continue to simmer and eventually erupt in an anomic volcanic pattern that will not be manageable.

Zimbabwe's political leadership should be encouraged to draw lessons from their South African and Rwandese counterparts who have gone through and emerged from traumatic experiences but have managed to confront the problems and ensure that those responsible for the extermination of human life for political ends are brought to book and pay for what justice demands. This was accompanied (particularly in the South African example) by an open process of confessions and public apologies which facilitated reconciliation and national unity. No doubt Zimbabwe will need a more or less similar process but one which takes into cognisance the peculiarity and uniqueness of the Zimbabwean situation and perspective. This is a process which cannot be wished away, it is not up to the political leaders alone to agree to put it under the carpet. It needs the collective wisdom of Zimbabweans themselves to constitute a transitional justice and reconciliation framework which will find a lasting solution to crimes committed in the name of political ideologies.

Repatriating the Diaspora: Reclaiming our brains from the brain drain syndrome and formalising of remittances for greater national benefit

There is need to devise strategies to facilitate for the return of the skilled labour which was now scattered around the world in search of greener pastures due to the failure of the economy. Most of the people who are outside the country are skilled persons who are working for the benefit of other countries which are better able to pay them. The stabilization of the economy must explore means and ways of re-integrating those who want to immediately return in a manner which guarantees them a *soft landing*.

For those who would like to stay put while assessing the situation and contributing to the economic recovery from outside the country, the government must work to urgently stabilise the foreign currency fluctuation and work towards a system which allows for the Diaspora to send their remittances through normal/legal channels. This will help the government access excess foreign currency and it will encourage the Diaspora to send money more comfortably through proper channels and thereby play their role as the fourth arm of development as recognised by the African Union.

Strengthening government institutions to avert/resolve internal power struggles

One of the greatest shortcomings of the Zimbabwean deal is that it has been conducted in extreme secrecy. It therefore did not and may not be able to pass the test of democratic scrutiny. To start with, the terms of the reference which have been availed to the public so far are too vague and open to various interpretations which could be recipe for conflict for the various leaders involved. The constitutional amendment process to facilitate for the implementation of the deal will cause a lot of quarrels in terms of the detailed technical wording of this amendment as derived from the text of the deal. There is therefore need for the mediator backed by SADC, AU and the international community to continue to monitor and accompany this process throughout this turbulent delicate phase. This should include the strengthening institutional mechanisms within which to function and resolve differences.

Composition of Government: Parallel Government?

It is a known fact that ZANU PF and MDC have had a very difficult relationship over the last ten years. The creation of a huge loosely defined government will not be helpful. First of all it is too top-heavy and therefore very expensive. Secondly, the more the Ministers, Deputies, Permanent Secretaries the greater and more inefficient will the bureaucracy be. It is understood that the cabinet may have been large in order to cover all sections but there is need to gradually scale down as soon as the most immediate concerns have been addressed i.e. in the mid to long term phases. We must see a much smaller cabinet which will be less expensive, more efficient.

There seems to be two governments put together. The MDC-T controls 13 Ministries, defines and oversees the day to day policy implementation, while Mugabe controls 15 Ministries, chairs cabinet and more importantly controls the army. The smaller faction of the MDC has three Ministers. It is hard to comprehend where "*final say*" resides. This will inevitably lead to some kind of two parallel governments in the event of disagreements which will not be easy to resolve. It is hard to count on such an unprecedented structure to work, hence the need to support institution building/strengthening and support democratic reforms and development by supporting the democratic forces and civil societies.

The timeline of this government is too long if it is to last for five years in the current configuration. It will be too expensive to maintain such a superstructure for five years and the bureaucracy may be entrenched further leading to administrative bungling/stagnation and lack of transparency. As stated above, there will be need to scale down on the cabinet in order to cut costs, create efficiency and

avoid duplication of roles in the many ministries with more or less similar titles and possibly even more similar if not one job description.

Conclusion

Whatever laws and institutions this process will define for Zimbabwe, it is imperative to note that institutions alone cannot implement or enforce good law and policies. The challenge is to ensure that the deal will ultimately lie with the actors (people). The deal must not only work for those who are in government but for the advancement of democracy, alleviation of poverty, facilitation of a transitional justice and national reconciliation process and lead to the democratisation of Zimbabwe.

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