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From the ashes of the Inclusive Government and disputed elections should emerge a new conception of 'national interest'

As Zimbabwe emerges from the electoral woods, which saw President Mugabe and ZANU PF romping to a 'landslide' triumph from the July 31 vote and an equally emphatic, effective, felling of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) parties, the conduct of the election has dominated the process post mortem. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that nothing can be done to reverse the electoral results, the reasonable questions surrounding the credibility of the vote notwithstanding.

This paper seeks to move beyond the election mood, arguing that there are equally important issues that Zimbabweans have either forgotten or simply overlooked due to the excitement, tensions as well as anxieties associated with elections. Indeed, it deduces lessons from the past 5-year 'inclusive' experience which, despite the virtually every day haggling between ZANU PF and the MDCs, managed to steer the ship reasonably well, especially if one appreciates the stability that the country has enjoyed politically and economically. Zimbabwe's present and future fortunes are inextricably tied to a common national soul which our leaders need to encourage, foster and inculcate for the state in an exemplary manner. For all its economic, political, social and diplomatic hurdles over the years, Zimbabwe has fortunately not descended into internecine chaos and that should be commended.

The interesting 2008-2013 political season which saw ZANU PF and the MDCs sharing power - at least to the extent that it can be described as such - demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that Zimbabwe is basically divided into two notable political camps. On the one hand is ZANU PF, the liberation war party and its supporters representing virtually the anti-imperial (specifically anti-West) designs; inward looking economic policies coupled with a South-South dimension; resource sovereignty as well as total independence. Admittedly, this is the case certainly at the rhetorical level and a case can be made on how this is actually true on the ground. That is however a discussion for another day. On the other hand stands the MDC parties representing attempts to modernise the state, at least in the sense of moving beyond the pre-occupation with fixations of the liberation struggle by embracing the wider international community and international norms in terms of business and politics, basically a carefree attitude in an era of deeper globalisation; democratisation of the state through rolling out political freedoms to the people as well as giving civil society and other stakeholders a stake in the running of the affairs of the state and also liberalism and free enterprise as the basis of economic organisation. In summary terms, it can be said the nation is diametrically divided into 2 probably equal halves.

The above dichotomy represents wonderful lenses through which one can understand the key challenging questions facing an emerging African independent state around state, economy and society that are complicated to solve and certainly not straightforward

in any way. With independence came expectations of total economic and political liberation and indeed civil liberties and democracy. These have become extremely difficult to fulfil simultaneously. In fact, elsewhere in Africa, wars and all sorts of violent conflicts have ensued due to the dynamic challenges occasioned by these questions. It's a typical challenge facing post-colonial Africa, nearly half a century on. For Zimbabwe, it has been so pronounced to a point where the polarisation that exists

tions. At the same time, there is no doubt that the MDCs deserve to make a contribution to national prosperity, not least because they are Zimbabweans too, but also due to the fact that their outward looking policies resonate with the undeniable fact that despite a skewed international system, no country can go it alone, no matter how mighty or proud. There is no doubt that a middle-of-the-road approach can be conceived. Indeed, all the other disparate members of the Zimbabwe state, including the neglected diaspora, have a role to play and their roles will become clearer if there is a genuine desire to embrace national consciousness. A lot of egoistic and selfish motivations have stood in the way of national progress and the results are there for all to see.



Partners in the just ended Inclusive Government

prevented a whole government from delivering its full potential during the 'inclusive' days. Zimbabweans have been delegitimised, segregated, disenfranchised, and divided through a process of official 'othering' sanctioned at the highest levels simply because they differ in opinion. That is catastrophic. From our disagreements should emerge honest, robust and pragmatic discussions and conversations with each other towards defining national interest because there seems to be a yawning gap in this regard. The writer is aware that ruling parties appropriate to themselves the right to define the national interest but in the case of Zimbabwe, a lot of problems emerge from this. It is self-serving, selfish and unhelpful for ZANU PF to impose its own worldview on all Zimbabweans as the only framework for defining the national interest. Categorising people into 'sell-outs' and 'patriots' in an arbitrary manner does not foster a sense of belonging or patriotism. It is time Zimbabweans found each other for the common, national good. Our society cannot be built on propaganda; that is not sustainable. There is also greater need than ever to craft a national interest narrative that suits and defines all instead of majoring on the narrow, parochial and party driven framework which in essence alienates other citizens.

The 5 years of inclusive government or power sharing as it were, represent both lessons and regrets. It is regrettable that a nation is so divided on fundamental issues central to the heartbeat of the state yet it is also encouraging to note that each one of us clearly has something to contribute. A platform needs to be built to make citizens, each from their respective fields, participate in building Zimbabwe. There is no better way of doing that than fostering a new political culture of tolerance and appreciating our diversity. In truth, ZANU PF, with its vigorous and vigilant nationalist credentials, has a lot to contribute for the betterment of Zimbabwe when one looks at the bigger picture: a blatantly unfair international system where weak nations are made to play second fiddle, serving the interests of the powerful, bullying na-

The thrust of this paper is two-fold: to acknowledge that Zimbabwe is populated by people with different, diametric standpoints on how the country should move and secondly, that there is no national dialogue at any level whatsoever for an honest discussion to brainstorm how a national, inclusive consensus can emerge from where a genuine national interest of Zimbabwe cognisant of our past realities but alive to present and future ones can be defined. Great nations have been built on conscious efforts to rally populations, in their variety, towards national goals and aspirations which the populace can relate to. In our diversity, Zimbabwe remains our rallying point and unless and until a genuine national conversation is imagined, then we lose easy opportunities to make this country better as we will fight each other to the detriment of the common good. We cannot afford to continue speaking past each other and the buck stops with the country's leadership to consider servant leadership first.

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Widespread water shortages – What caused Zimbabwe’s Empty Bucket?

*“Water gushed over parched land
fractures are slowly filled left by drought,”*

-“Water” by Wilma Neels

Empty basket case or empty water bucket

In the years following Zimbabwe’s contentious land reform program, spearheaded more through disorderly and violent invasions than actual planning, the country began experiencing challenges relating to acute food shortages and importing maize from the most unlikely neighbours in Southern Africa. Civil Rights Nobel Peace Prize Laureate from the neighbouring South Africa Archbishop Desmond Tutu then made a witty remark regarding the food insecurity in Zimbabwe when he stated that the Robert Mugabe-led country had become “the basket case” instead of the breadbasket of Southern Africa it had once been. Recent reports emanating from various parts of the country, indicate that the country is facing a serious shortage of water and slowly turning into an “empty bucket” to paraphrase the sentiments of Tutu. In simple terms, Zimbabwe is staring at an empty bucket without sufficient water – the precious liquid that is arguably the lifeblood of modern day civilization.

Water as a constitutional right and a necessity

The new Constitution of Zimbabwe states in Chapter 4, Section 77 that: “Every person has the right to— safe, clean and portable water...” Water in Zimbabwe is a constitutional right. On September 24, 2010, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a binding resolution recognizing that the human right to water and sanitation are a part of the right to an adequate standard of living. The resolution is enforceable when it is part of the Constitution like in Zimbabwe.

We need water to bath, we need water to drink (well, 70% of our bodies is made up of that clear liquid), we need water to push our sewer systems to their intended



An unidentified woman fetching water from an unclean and unsafe source

destinations; we need water to wash our clothes, we need water in the industries and cars as a coolant, and so forth and so on. The point is that we cannot do without water.

It neither rains nor pours in Zimbabwe

However one should admit that perhaps Zimbabwe has never been the water bucket of the region. Water neither frequently rains from our skies especially in dry parts of the country, nor pours from the taps in Zimbabwe. This is not to say that the current water woes faced by almost all of Zimbabwe’s urban councils and their residents are normal, and nothing could have been done about it because the truth is that the government has lacked the will to act on this subject of water provision for the greater part of our post-colonial decades.

Rural to urban migration

There has been a recognizable failure by the successive Zanu-Pf-led governments to invest in water, this vital component of urban life and civilization as the population and the demand for water steadily rose, putting a strain on the water systems and outpacing their capacities. Part of the challenges just like in terms of housing

and sewer reticulation has been caused by the reality of surges in urban populations due to rural-urban migration, stemming from the lack of development in the rural areas of Zimbabwe. This has been a result of unequal development and neglect of the rural populace.

Water woes in rural areas

Surprisingly, the trend of water shortages equally plagues rural communities as they usually do not have access to clean water, if at all. In some southern parts of the country, stretching to the west, such as the Masvingo and Bulawayo provinces cases of perpetual shortages of water underscore the gravity and widespread nature of the water crisis in Zimbabwe. As the crisis goes unabated, people in areas like Chivi resort to desperate measures and drink water from the rivers where they burrow unsafe wells in the dry rivers’ sands to quench their thirst. Fortunately, the United Nations International Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF) has lately been drilling boreholes to remedy the situation. Again, it is UNICEF which intervened with the drilling of boreholes in the city centres after the Cholera outbreak of 2008. But the underground boreholes in some areas have been blamed for the emergence of diseases such as typhoid, because of the unsafe underground urban water sources, which could be a sign that there is no substitute for piped water in the urban areas.

Lack of government investment

What stands out clearly is the Zimbabwean government’s lack of adequate initiatives since independence to deal with the water situation across the country, sometimes owing to its hostile stances to development partners given that some of these organisations were banned from carrying out humanitarian work in 2008. Most of the current major manmade water bodies such as the largest inland Lake Kyle, the Kariba Dam, Lake Chivero and others were all built by the then, pre-1980 Rhodesian government after which the new government which took over went to sleep on major water projects even those that had already been earmarked before independence. One such project the Tokwe-Mukosi dam is only beginning to take shape 33 years after independence. This is without mentioning the lack of refurbishment – dealing with siltation and water weeds – on the old ones. Some of the projects like the Zambezi water project which has always been on the government agenda remain paper tigers without any progress on the ground. In light of the Zambezi Water project, it is clear that had it been started and completed there would be no water woes in Zimbabwe’s industrial capital and second major city Bulawayo – the city would not be having a ridiculous inadequate water shedding routine.

Water problems and food insecurity

However, the issue of water shortages, especially in rural areas, cannot be mentioned without pinpointing its impact on rural agriculture in Zimbabwe’s dry regions, despite their capacity for irrigation farming should the necessary resources be availed. The government’s disinvestment in water infrastructure over the years has contributed to Zimbabwe’s empty water bucket and partly its empty breadbasket, plus desperate food situation in dry districts. What is worrying is that the lack of investment on the water front is also replicated on other infrastructural fronts such as the dilapidated road and rail networks, and sewer systems and housing backlogs which combine to tell the whole story of infrastructural backwardness and a government that fell asleep on the job.

Let’s see how it goes

With continued dry conditions across the country the issue of water has become a ticking time bomb which must be addressed urgently by the Zanu-PF government. Without being too an alarmist, there could be another water disease outbreak this summer as things stand if urgent steps are not taken to remedy the water situation. During the opening of the 8th Parliament of Zimbabwe on September 17, President Robert Mugabe mentioned this issue and the plans to deal with the problem, including a USD144 million from China to deal with water problems in the capital city Harare. The water projects include three more dams for Harare in seven years. We wait to see whether there will be genuine progress on the matter and whether Zimbabwe’s increasingly empty bucket of water will be filled, with clean water, after some three decades of neglect.

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Moyo's Herculean Task in the Era of Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp and Baba Jukwa

The past decade widely referred to as Zimbabwe's decade of crisis has seen the Southern Africa nation, once the breadbasket of Africa diminishing to a basket case. Political contestations with most, if not all of them, being disputed since 2000 have been the major discussion point but media has also received extensive study (Matsilele, 2013; Mare, 2010; Kuhlmann, 2010; Peel: 2008; Batist, 2010).



Minister of Information, Prof Jonathan Moyo

Since the dawn of the new millennium, the ruling ZANU PF has intensified its propaganda campaign through deliberate manipulation of the state print and electronic media to construct the narrative around issues of 'citizenship', 'patriotism' and 'traitors'. One of the leading historians on Zimbabwe, Terrence Ranger (2005), has made a seminal contribution on patriotic history and patriotic journalism that was promoted by Jonathan Moyo during his first spell as Information Minister. During Moyo's first spell, legal and extra-legal instruments were employed to promote positive coverage on the Zimbabwean government.

The discourse of language construction by ZANU PF has sought to redefine the issue of citizenship thereby creating social and political boundaries between those 'for us' and those 'against us'. Ndhlovu (2006) has conducted an intensive study on the language of politics in 21st century Zimbabwe with focus on discourse construction and discourse manipulation. It is in this milieu with Professor Jonathan Moyo, the architect of discourse manipulation being reassigned Information Minister and this time with protégé Supa Mandiwanzira that this scholar seeks to make a critical analysis of challenges and opportunities that this new regime faces.

Mandiwanzira and Moyo are reported to have started demanding for answers from the almost defunct Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation's (ZBC) Executive after its employees went for months without being remunerated. According to the Independent newspaper "Moyo faces an uphill task of, among other things, rationalising salary scales of senior managers at the troubled and top-heavy ZBC, with 46 managers gobbling up close to US\$800 000 in wages, the Zimbabwe Independent has been told".

The Independent recently also noted that "the least paid manager nets around US\$7 000, while general managers get about US\$18 000, heads of department around US\$14 000 and the highest paid manager more than \$20 000. The rest of the employees (reporters and supporting staff) get below US\$1 000," reported the standard. Apart from the ZBC quagmire, Moyo's mammoth task is on censoring alternative and social media and redeeming Mugabe's battered image.

The duo face several challenges among them is the issue of how to censor social media and alternative media especially the diasporic media. Moyo, upon being appointed Information Minister wasted no time in stating that the period for journalists to continue lying was over and that the season for ethical journalism had just but begun. If Moyo's words are to be believed this would be a welcome development in Zimbabwean journalism whose ethics have deteriorated in the past decade to lowest levels as noted by UCT's Dr Chuma in a recent report on the state of the media in Zimbabwe.

Dumisani Moyo (2007) conducted a research on 'Alternative Media, Diasporas and the Mediation of the Zimbabwe Crisis'. Moyo discussed the use of the new media, especially internet, to answer to the state repression of the mass media. His paper analysed the value of these, often foreign-based, journalistic websites in relation to state repression. In part, issues raised by Moyo in 2007 point to challenges the reassigned Minister is facing especially on how to police journalists and censor the ever sprouting bloggers, social media characters such as Baba Jukwa and Mugrade 7.



The most popular faceless facebook character with close to half a million followers Baba Jukwa at the time of writing had just issued threats to Jonathan Moyo that "unlike 2001 things are different in 2013. In 2001 there was no Baba Jukwa. In 2002, he was still a quiet steady voice, and during these times Jonathan Moyo could do whatever he wants and even get away with murder, that's why he could coordinate the bombing of the Daily News without being tracked. But 2013 is an entirely new battlefield where Jonso's (Jonathan Moyo) bombs, gongs and tongs will not work.", read the post by Baba Jukwa.

The above citation is just a tip of an iceberg pointing to the possible challenges Moyo and Mandiwanzira will be facing in the next five years. Other

than Facebook they also face challenges imposed by other social media platforms such as Whatsapp and blogs. Regardless of the levels of censorship the major challenges they will be faced with is on censoring faceless characters with some even operating from outside the country. Storck (2011) writing on contemporary politics postulates that "democracy is just a tweet away" or as the oft quoted Egyptian Google Executive Wael Ghonim famously said: "if you want to liberate a society, just give them internet"

Leading Zimbabwe media scholar and University of Cape Town senior lecture Dr Wallace Chuma captured succinctly when he noted on his facebook wall that "Jonathan Moyo comes back as Zimbabwe's Information Minister in an environment quite different from his first, infamous term between 2000 and 2004. There was no Facebook then. No Twitter. No broadband to write home about. No Baba Jukwa. Or even Mai Jukwa. No 'pirate' radio stations.

"He can use his tenure to heal a media fraternity that is fractured, divided and ethically degenerate. He can help liberate ZBC and Zimpapers to be truly public service media, if he chooses. Or he can pretend this is 2000 or thereabouts, and take off from where he left when he was sacked in 2004. If he chooses the latter path he will be frustrated. Because social media are here to stay, and they do well subverting institutionalised news production structures. And, close to 60 as he is, the minister would be better off avoiding the stress that comes with fighting phantom enemies, and instead channel his energy toward creating a media policy regime that makes all of us proud to be Zimbabwean" added Chuma.

Even with his repressive legal apparatus, Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Broadcasting Service Act (BSA) and the Public Order Security Act (POSA) still intact, Moyo still faces challenges on how to control what Zimbabwean audiences stomach considering that with overwhelming mobile penetration, it has become easier, cheaper and quicker to get both credible and discredited news on social media than traditional news media outlets. The next five years present an interesting case study on limitations of dictatorship, press censorship and silencing social media activists. The Zimbabwe government might have benefitted from SABC's switching off of SENTEC signals that made the country's populace to access free to air channels. However, the biggest threat to Zimbabwe government is on how to deal with social media activists especially Mugrade 7 and Baba Jukwa and maybe others who might emerge during this tenure.

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