

It is almost a year since the much heralded signing of the Global Political Agreement, GPA between ZANU PF and the two MDC formations and six months since the consummation of that agreement with the formation of the inclusive government comprising the three signatory parties to the accord. The southern African regional bloc SADC, the guarantor for the settlement, set a timeline of six months to review both the implementation of the GPA and the workability of the inclusive government. It is therefore appropriate for us Zimbabweans to undertake a non partisan debate of these entities ahead of the regional summit. We should not be only recipients of edicts from SADC but exercise our sovereign right as Zimbabweans to determine what is in our best interests; irrespective of what regional leaders say or think.

Lest we forget, it would be instructive to revisit the Global Political Agreement and put in context and in the proper perspective the circumstances that necessitated it. This exercise is indispensable if we are not to lose focus. The signing of the GPA raised unrealistic expectations and lulled many into a sense of euphoria that wiped off the bitter memories of the post 29 March 2008 Election aftermath. Mugabe and his Joint Operations Command had unleashed a reign of terror, unprecedented since the Gukurahundi, in a flagrant attempt at electoral rape and to reverse Mugabe and ZANU PF's setbacks in the 29 March 2008. It was these tragic events, in clear violation of the provisions SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security and electoral conduct that triggered the signing of the GPA. In other words, the GPA and its side-kick, the inclusive government, were a consequence of the failure of democracy in Zimbabwe in general and in particular the denial of the right for the people of Zimbabwe to exercise their will to elect their representatives and leaders and political parties of their choice in free and fair elections.

It is only logical that the performance of both the GPA and the inclusive government should be evaluated against the background of how much of the factors that prompted them to life have been satisfactorily addressed. Any other approach would be tantamount to the proverbial burying of heads in the sand and adopting the 'see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil' approach. Otherwise we run the risk of being saddled with a government that has neither legitimacy nor a mandate from the people of Zimbabwe for the next five years, if some of the recent comments by politicians are anything to go by. Such a development would be a clear case of two steps forward and three steps back yielding a net regression. Legitimacy of a government derives from consent and not from regional edicts. Nor can political parties confer legitimacy on a government formed without the people's consent. The inclusive government has therefore its task clearly cut out; it should achieve the restoration of legitimate rule based on a mandate of the people in the shortest practicable timeframe. That is the inclusive government's central task and its *raison d'être*. All other issues, though important, take secondary place.

Some have argued that the driving consideration in signing the GPA and in forming the inclusive government was the overriding need to address the humanitarian crisis, the collapsed economy, restoration of health, education and service delivery and resuscitating the failed state. Is it really conceivable that GPA and the inclusive government could have come about in the first place, had the outcome of the 29 March 2008 election not been manipulated and had the electorate not been bludgeoned into submission in the 27 June 2008 electoral run-off charade? Through what justification and logic would the GPA and the inclusive government be formed to speak to and address issues that did not prompt them into existence in the first place? Or was someone trying to take people for a ride? Important as these issues may be, they are nothing more than presenting symptoms of the failure of government much like tuberculosis, hair loss, loss of weight, diarrhoea and skin disorders are presenting symptoms for HIV infection. Are the medical practitioners more concerned about these

symptoms than the underlying cause for their expression? What would be the rationale of paying attention to these symptoms that would only reappear as long as the root cause remains un-addressed? Similarly, focusing on the symptoms of the failure of government, without addressing the underlying cause that engendered the crisis of government in the first place, is contrary to common sense. It is indeed an exercise in futility that will lead nowhere. What is the guarantee that when these issues are prioritised there will be no relapse to the status ante, given that the factors that generated them are still at play? With Mugabe and his henchmen, who presided over Zimbabwe's collapse, remaining entrenched with the levers of control and power firmly in their hands, it would be naive to rule out such an eventuality. They have absolutely no incentive or motivation whatsoever to dictate their own obituary, at least for now.

Both the GPA and the inclusive government were the brain child of the SADC mediator, former South African president Thabo Mbeki, who appeared to be on a self-proclaimed mission not only to destroy Zimbabwe but the African national Congress, ANC and the South Africa as well in his wake. The crisis of service delivery in South Africa and the attendant recent social unrest that lies squarely at the former president's feet as does the formation of COPE, speak for themselves. Some observers have referred to Mbeki as the spiritual leader or the Dalai Lama of COPE. Whilst Mbeki masterminded the flawed framework agreement, both the regional leaders and the Movement for Democratic Change, MDC cannot be absolved of responsibility by acts of commission or omission. They are both complicit in perpetuating Zimbabwe's tragedy.

The SADC Heads of State, with the notable and respectful exceptions of Botswana's President Khama and the late gallant former Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa, failed to stand up to Mbeki's diabolical scheme that sought to shift focus and attention from the real problem; Mugabe's refusal to accept defeat at the hands of the MDC and Morgan Tsvangirai. The regional bloc has its norms and standards for good governance, democratic practice, the conduct of free and fair elections, respect for the rule of law and for human rights. It is incomprehensible how they could be cowed into submission to support a complete sham of an agreement that ensured that, Mugabe, the loser of the elections would continue to call the shots. They virtually sold their souls and moral dignity to the devil and threw the very noble SADC principles overboard, despite the cries for help from the suffering people of Zimbabwe.

The MDC on its part, should have put the interests of the people of Zimbabwe first rather than succumb to regional pressure to sign a patently one-sided accord that robbed them of their hard won victory. It is incomprehensible how the MDC could have consented to arrogating Mugabe total control of the state security forces, not only at the political but at the institutional and operational levels as well. The security forces constitute Mugabe's power base and leaving them intact defies all logic for those yearning for real democratic change. It is this very terror ensemble that has been used to break the back of popular resistance to his rule. Furthermore, retaining all of the Mugabe appointees for permanent secretaries, much less the likes of Mariyawanda Nzuwa- Chairman of the Public Service Commission and formally head of the Election Directorate, Tobias Mudede – the Registrar General and formally Registrar of Elections, George Charamba of the Nathaniel Manheru fame as the Secretary for Information and Publicity is as perplexing as it is inexplicable. By what stretch of imagination could Nzuwa, Mudede, Charamba be considered to be non-partisan professionals as some would have us believe?

Some have averred that with the formation of the inclusive government, the MDC now has one foot in the door of government. What is lost on the proponents of this argument is that, following the 29 March 2008 electoral defeat and the terror campaign ahead of the 27 June 2008 election run-off charade, ZANU PF and its leader already had one foot out of the door. However, with the formation of the inclusive government, it now has both feet inside compared to the MDC's single locomotion appendage within. It does not take fertile imagination to visualise the outcome of a contest between an amputee and an able bodied athlete. The consequence of this scenario is all too evident. The

conduct of the police, the courts, the prosecution, and the official mouthpieces is eloquent testimony to the entirely predictable outcome of the duel. Would it really be prudent to exhort Zimbabweans in the diaspora to come back home to a country without freedom, security, functioning services, jobs, salaries, health and education; with the hope that they would make it through with only the promise of a better future on the horizon? Wouldn't that only serve to compound the problem?

The only area of the GPA that had appeared to offer some respite was the possibility of crafting a democratic constitution but all hope of it yielding the desired results has since receded. Though ZANU PF was never committed to a new constitution as it threatens trimming down their 'supreme leader's executive powers, both the MDC and some sections of civil society have played directly into Mugabe's hands by failing to present a common and united platform on this critical issue. This is inexcusable as it will ensure that ZANU PF carries the day on the matter without having to soil its hands with diabolical machinations like they tried to do at the first stakeholders meeting. It is as unfathomable what the NCA and the ZCTU hope to achieve by going it alone or campaigning for a no vote in the expected referendum just as it inexplicable how the MDC is going to convince the nation that the constitution making process is people driven when mere negotiators, some of whom were not even parliamentarians at the time, have the temerity to impose the Kariba Draft on the Parliamentary Select Committee for the new Constitution. We all know who is sponsoring the Kariba Draft. It is therefore pointless for the MDC to pretend that there is still life in the constitution making process in terms of it being people driven. What is the point of both the MDC and the NCA and its allies maintaining their entrenched positions when both camps are fully aware that they will not achieve anything other than facilitating a ZANU PF triumph in the process? It really boggles the mind. The only sensible and honourable thing in the circumstances would be for both camps to look in the mirror and check at whom their swords are trained and with what consequences. We cannot afford the luxury of depleting our forces through the infliction of friendly fire casualties at this critical juncture whilst the real adversaries are popping up bottles of champagne in celebration. Should these parties still doggedly persist with such a dysfunctional approach it would be worthwhile drawing lessons from General Franco's Spanish Civil War concept of 'advancing on Madrid with four columns with the fifth one already in the city'.

The Zimbabweans in the diaspora, particularly within the region, the majority of whom are below twenty five years of age, are a very miserable lot indeed. A magnitude of up to five million Zimbabweans have voted with their feet in the past ten years, most of them in the last two to three years. Many struggle to make ends meet, day in and day out, against insurmountable odds and far removed from their families for solace and comfort. Their dislocation outside the country is not out of choice but forced on them by circumstances beyond their own control. It was thanks to the imperatives of security and survival that the exodus materialised. Any other human being subjected to similar exigencies would behave likewise. It is noteworthy that more Zimbabweans have fled their conflict ridden land than those that fled the armed conflicts of Iraq, Afghanistan and Darfur. That in itself tells a story that should wake up any political leaders with a conscience and still in full control of their faculties from their slumber and prompt them to sound alarm bells. The semantic categorisation of Zimbabwe's tragedy as a peacetime phenomenon not warranting serious attention is a fig leaf and a lame excuse for inaction. What matters is the humanitarian consequence of a situation. Simply because some people happen to be victims of war or natural disasters, it does not make them more deserving of human support and sympathy than the victims of tyranny. In both cases you are faced with hapless and helpless human souls without the wherewithal or means to help themselves. The overwhelming majority of Zimbabweans who fled their country do not look for handouts from the host countries but for opportunities to help them make a living and for commiseration and empathy as would any human being in a dire situation.

The point is that SADC had it within their power to have prevented this monumental humanitarian catastrophe from unfolding and could very well have nipped it in the bud as far back as the year 2000 when Mugabe threw caution to the wind and pressed the self destruct button. Ever since,

Zimbabweans have tried everything in the book to confront the tyranny and save their country before hitting the road. Without SADC's shameless, indefensible and unrelenting support for the despot, Mugabe would long be history by now. The plight of Zimbabweans is akin to that of the Palestinians who are left to suffer at the hands of the Israelis thanks to the unflinching and mindless support for the Jewish state from major Western powers. This tragedy has spawned the era of Islamic and Arab radicalism and suicide bombers that have left the world unsafe and air travel a nightmare for everyone. This parallel is fitting in view of Israel's previous collaboration with both apartheid South African racist rule and the Rhodesian minority regime despite enjoying cordial relations with the Mugabe regime today. Is the Western support for the Jewish state really worth that much for it to be traded for the world's peace, security and stability and our common humanity?

It is the height of hypocrisy for SADC countries to cry foul at the influx of their Zimbabwean neighbours, ironically thanks to a situation triggered by their leaders' failure to rein in their wayward colleague. As the saying goes, 'you make your bed, you lie on it'. It was axiomatic that the influx of Zimbabweans into neighbouring countries would fan the flames of xenophobia on account of competition for scarce resources and jobs; none of which the SADC countries have in abundance. It is a fact of life that the regional leaders cannot hide from. They cannot have it both ways; to prop up a dictator's illegitimate, unpopular and tenuous rule and expect his victims to consider their borders sacrosanct. In any case, the SADC leaders were the first to 'trespass' Zimbabwe's borders without the consent of the people of Zimbabwe to offer a lifeline, legitimacy, political protection and support to a besieged dictator; the very critical intangibles they are denying the victims of his misrule and repression. Call it double standards and hypocrisy that are making the region a laughing stock in today's global village. A person's reputation is as much a function of his or her deeds as it of the company he or she chooses to keep and fraternise with.

The SADC region cries out for principled, moral and enlightened leadership that places the wellbeing, interests and livelihoods of its citizens at the centre rather than pandering to the whims of an ageing dictator long past his sell by date and whose hands drip with the blood of his people. The myth of supporting a liberation hero has to be exploded for what it is; just hogwash. Mugabe is not the only one who spent ten years in prison with the comforts he is now denying his own people. If anything, he was actually a beneficiary of the liberation process and not the other way round. How many of Zimbabwe's gallant daughters and sons fell victim to his sadistic pursuit of power during and after the liberation struggle? Mugabe was more of a liability in the liberation struggle than an asset and has caused more harm than good to the country, its development and its heroic people.

As the SADC leaders will gather to review the pulse of the inclusive authority, it would be important to come back to their senses and for once suspend leave of their senses. The power to end the circus is in their hands. The following is a road map they could deliberate on:-

Set up a two year transitional administration not led by politicians whose mandate will be:-

- To set in motion security sector reform; the only basic guarantee for peace, stability and democratisation in Zimbabwean
- To facilitate the crafting of a democratic constitution without undue influence from politicians
- To effect an overhaul of central and local administration and of all state entities to ensure compatibility with a new order and to expedite service delivery
- To undertake institutional reform to divest state institutions of the corrupting partisan influence
- To undertake legislative reform to repeal repressive laws from the statute books
- To set in motion a process of transitional justice that takes into account the rights and interests of the victims
- To carry out electoral reform to pave the way for internationally supervised elections to be held at the end of the two years
- To secure the country's resources through a national audit and plugging off all loopholes
- To establish a framework for economic recovery and restoration of basic services

- To ensure the unfailing full involvement of all Zimbabweans in the diaspora in the political process of their country as they are no less Zimbabwean than those inside the country

The authorities of the inclusive government should not have the luxury of obstructing what is best for the people of Zimbabwe at the expense of both the people of Zimbabwe and regional peace and harmony. Should they offer any resistance, all the region needs to do is close their borders, suspend all flight services to and from Zimbabwe and switch off the lights and leave the Zimbabweans to slug it out with their tyrant in darkness. There is absolutely no need for an invasion force. All that is required is a hands-off approach from SADC and we will see soon how many lives the tyrant has at his disposal.

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Zimbabwe