

NEW DEAL FOR ZIMBABWE – A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE?

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From New Deal to Dead Deal

The title for this panel was formulated over a month ago in a slightly more hopeful moment. Certainly, it was a moment when the so-called **New Deal** signed in mid-September between Zanu (PF) and both MDC parties was already in doubt. But it was *before* the back-tracking of SADC leaders in Johannesburg a few days ago resulted in a de facto **Dead Deal**.

Initially, the signing of the Global Agreement in September between the contesting parties, after difficult and sustained negotiations, provided what we all thought might be **a basic framework for change** (as the title suggests). At the very least, it was an important mutual **gesture of non-partisan good will** that, even if fragile, appeared momentarily to put the well being and democratic rights of Zimbabweans – rather than partisan power – first.

But the very glue that would have ensured a real **binding** agreement, that would have sealed the deal and forced a commitment from both sides, but in particular from Zanu (PF); that would have been signed and witnessed in full view of SADC and AU leaders, and in front of the eyes of the world; *was not included*. This glue was the **specified, fair and actual distribution of real power** amongst the parties as part of the signed agreement. The failure to allocate and agree publicly on the key ministries – such as Defense, Home Affairs, Justice, Finance, Information, and Local Government, among others – in the Global agreement, was **a crucial opportunity squandered** by the mediators who may have rushed too quickly and pushed too hard

to embrace the *form* of the agreement without due consideration for its *substance* (or lack of substance) and its implications.

The consequences of that lost opportunity have been in evidence for almost two months now, culminating in **the current political impasse**, in the face of which Zimbabwe's wounds deepen and bleed more extensively by the day.

The blame for the impasse is itself part of the present **politics of positioning** in Zimbabwe and the region, in which each side is using whatever muscle and resources it has at its disposal to claim control over the **crucial centres of governmental power** in a future Zimbabwe. Mugabe and Zanu (PF) are drawing on the fact that they have direct (if illegal) control over the mechanisms of state security, public media, the judiciary, public finance, local government and so on, as well as historical support from African leaders in the region. The MDC is trying to draw on its moral high ground, its local political legitimacy – including an election victory – and international/western credibility, and a slight shift in support amongst some regional leaders such as Botswana and Tanzania. Yet it seems from the recent SADC meeting that none of the latter is enough, leaving **Tsvangirai being cast as the spoiler**, and **Mugabe once again winning** perhaps one of the last serious political battles of his long career. Indeed, he may soon form his own unilateral cabinet, the consequences of which are likely to be disastrous for Zimbabwe.

In this present **atmosphere of blaming**, however, I would suggest that the refusal of the Tsvangirai faction to accept Mugabe's (and now one could add SADC's) proposed **distorted division of ministries** and hence power, is not merely a matter of the MDC insisting petulantly on its democratic dues, which in fact it is entitled to after winning the March elections. Rather, it might be read as Tsvangirai's astute realization that without **shifting the real balance of power** in running the government, which means changing the guard especially at the key disputed ministries, little if anything will change in Zimbabwe. And by accepting such terms, he would be **betraying** not only those supporters who have suffered directly by daring to campaign or vote for the MDC, but all the millions of displaced, struggling and starving Zimbabweans who are desperate for change.

The evidence from the past eight years would suggest that it is Zanu (PF)'s profound **de-professionalisation of the bureaucracy** – its politicization and indeed

militarization – and its use not only for **suppressing and brutalizing** all forms of opposition, but as a **channel for patronage** at all levels and widespread accumulation amongst a political elite, is a key reason for the sustained crisis in Zimbabwe.

So, we are unfortunately – but not surprisingly – again dealing with **our own dashed hopes** for a new start at this moment in time.

Looking Ahead to a Renewed Zimbabwe

But even if not now, there *will certainly* be a moment at some point in time when some form of change will occur; when some other ‘new deal’ will be put on the table, and at that time possibly succeed. And we need to be prepared for that moment; for **what needs to be done** to ensure a reversal of the spiraling economic crisis, a healing of the physical and symbolic wounds of the political crisis, a rebuilding of institutions and infrastructure, a revitalisation of production and markets, a re-establishment of security and justice and of self-sufficiency, dignity and pride, and a regeneration of trust and sustained hope.

So while the present New Deal is all but dead, we need to consider what will ensure a **Renewed Zimbabwe**? Firstly, I would like to mention some key **conditions required** for any meaningful and sustained renewal. Secondly, I would like to say something about the **basic challenges** that would have to be faced, and thirdly, what **available resources** one might be able to draw upon to assist in such renewal.

Conditions of renewal

Any hope for sustained renewal in Zimbabwe, or even to open the door to it, with significant implications for the region as a whole, requires at least the following:

- **Active inclusion of a wide range of actors** in Zimbabwe in the processes of negotiation and formulation of the new terms of government.
- **A new political vision and changed political and moral stance** amongst SADC leaders towards questions of so-called national sovereignty and regional solidarity; and a greater commitment by SADC not simply to an old-guard

nationalist leadership but to the combined material needs, human rights and democratic entitlements of ordinary citizens.

- Zanu (PF) and Robert Mugabe publicly **taking responsibility** for their key role in sustaining Zimbabwe's crisis, and hence being made accountable for ensuring the necessary changes that will alter the direction it is moving in. This would include acknowledging its minority electoral position and working genuinely and closely towards recovery and reconstruction with the majority MDC in a transitional government.
- The MDC factions becoming **more united**, and at the same time acknowledging the reality of Zanu (PF)'s ongoing political presence; finding **more strategic and creative** ways to engage with the interests and ideologies of the party and its constituencies, while not over-compromising on its own principles and the mandates of its own constituencies.
- A broader international environment of **support for dialogue and reconciliation** in the first instance, and **commitment to fund** the rebuilding of Zimbabwe, but with clear and **reasonable conditionalities** attached.

Basic Challenges

Any transitional or long-term government in a Renewed Zimbabwe will be faced with a host of profound challenges arising from almost a decade of deep and ever-worsening political, economic and social crisis. This includes, not least:

- Attending to and reversing the emergency situation of **widespread hunger**, now verging on mass (man-made) starvation;
- Halting all forms of **political violence and abuse**, including in prisons, and ensuring **absolute security and protection** for all citizens; also considering establishing well-crafted forms of compensation and **truth and justice processes**;

- Bringing **hyperinflation** under control and efficiently addressing the key dimensions of a collapsing economy; trying to **re-formalise business** practices while simultaneously immediately **decriminalising the informal sector**;
- Addressing the devastating effects on multiple levels of **mass rural and urban displacement** and accompanying violence; ensuring access to land and/or secure livelihoods and shelter for all displaced citizens; in the rural sector paying special attention to displaced farm workers; in the urban sector, includes rethinking urban planning parameters and allowing and supporting hundreds of thousands of displaced urban residents to recover and rebuild their homes and retrieve their livelihoods in safety;
- Rebuilding **basic social services** such as provision of health care and safe drinking water, and regenerating the collapsed education system;
- Regenerating **productive sectors**, in agriculture and industry, mining, tourism and so on, through investments and other favourable, fair and transparent forms of policy support; especially with regard to the **new settlers**, or ‘replacees’, providing appropriate inputs and incentives for farming, and strengthening relevant marketing, extension, and research and development support for both smallholder and small-scale commercial agriculture.

Available ‘Resources’

This refers to resources in a very broad and perhaps non-traditional way. These are not ‘normal’ circumstances in Zimbabwe and such times require thinking beyond ‘the normal’. The past eight years have been a period of immense and unprecedented turbulence, disruption and displacement, and a range of activities and forms of taken-for-granted ‘resources’ have been either lost or permanently altered. As such, one has to read the landscape of possibilities differently from before, and consider both more familiar *and* less obvious ‘resources’ to draw on that might help rebuild Zimbabwe.

- Starting with the more traditional sources, a renewed Zimbabwe (under the conditions previously mentioned) would generate substantial **good will** in the international community, which are to be highly valued. However, this will be

tempered by the realities of a **global economic crisis** which has already demonstrated that priorities towards developing countries are shifting. (Note for example the disturbing lack of response to the WFP's appeal for funds for humanitarian food aid to Zimbabwe.)

- One of the **paradoxes** of this era of crisis and displacement is that, in addition to causing great loss and suffering, it has also generated new opportunities for some, new skills and experiences, and new social and economic networks, all of which need to be acknowledged and drawn upon productively; in this regard, for example, more **flexible trading and border/visa regimes** need to be instituted with neighbouring states.
- Social relations have been substantially altered in many contexts due to impoverishment related to the economic crisis; for example, both **gender and generational relations** are changing: many younger members of families are now engaging in informal sector activities, replacing older parents, especially fathers, who used to be primary bread-winners in the formal sector; in addition, many women have been forced to enter the informal economy, especially through cross-border trade; while some of these new dynamics are negatively affecting more traditional family structures and relationships, it has **empowered many women** in particular in new ways.
- Ironically, despite or because of the crisis, in some (limited) sectors, including in parts of the agricultural sector, **new forms of production, exchange and enterprise** have developed and new economic players have entered the field. The most well-documented example so far is the livestock sector in south-west Zimbabwe, which has shifted from being export-oriented and based mainly on large-scale ranching dominated by a few white commercial farmers, to now involving a much wider range of mostly local actors in a new commodity chain that includes a diversity of producers, buyers, abattoirs, butcheries, transporters and so on.
- Related to the above, there are a limited but interesting set of examples of successful cooperation between former white commercial farmers and new black settlers. There is much scope for exploring different options for **reintegrating former commercial farmers** back into the agricultural sector,

some through access to land for their own farming, but also looking into other possible roles they may play in service provision, advisory services and, in various ways, either collectively or individually, establishing productive partnerships with new farmers. However, this depends on a stable and secure property regime that protects basic rights of all concerned.

- Related to this, with regard to both the region and the more **distant diasporas**, there is a growing **wealth in skills and resources** especially but not only amongst the more well-established and/or professional migrants. When such a large proportion of Zimbabweans currently live outside the country, creative and flexible strategies will be needed (including the possibility of accepting dual citizenship) in order to draw on these human and financial resources to regenerate key public and private sectors affected by the professional brain drain. Among other things, **remittances** need to be made a more integral part of the economic recovery strategy. But as in all other spheres of potential rebuilding, this depends on (re)establishing trust between a responsible, transparent and just state and its citizens, both at home and abroad.

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