

Laying the Foundation for 2009

The Inconvenient Truths about the West

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Introduction

The year 2008 was a very difficult year for us as a nation. Since the inconclusive harmonized elections held on the 29th of March, there has been a political impasse in our land. The country has been without a legitimate government. Our economy has virtually collapsed, while disease and starvation are ravaging our people. Hopelessness and despair characterize and define the national psyche. There has been complete leadership failure across the

board, within Zimbabwe, in the region and in the international community. As we start a new year, let us reflect on some of the major debates that are shaping our politics as we exit 2008. Of particular interest in this treatise are the uncomfortable realities and challenges that sometimes we shy away from confronting. In particular we seek to slay that elephant in the national living room: *How ignorant and unstrategic external involvement in the Zimbabwean discourse does more harm than good.* We seek to argue that in the year 2008, brazen and crass Western shenanigans have actually undermined the opposition and strengthened Robert Mugabe. More importantly, it is our submission that the uninformed and reckless foreign policy positions of Western governments, in particular the US and the UK, have negatively impacted our national interest. Zimbabweans have to clearly understand this for our collective fortunes to be different in the year 2009.

The Mugabe Must Go Chorus

As we exited 2008, in the month of December, there was a crescendo of demands for the departure of Mugabe from the political stage. There is nothing new and creative in this *Mugabe must go* mantra. The trouble is that many people and institutions on this track suffer from the disease of the heart being in the right place, while the mind is not being applied. One needs both a good heart and a good mind. Some of us have been singing the *Mugabe must go* mantra for the past 21 years, to no avail. Incidentally, Western governments disagreed with us in 1988 when we turned against the ZANU-PF regime. Now they patronize us, as if they understand why Mugabe must go, better than us, his Zimbabwean victims. We have been fighting Mugabe for two decades, where have you been America and Europe? Why did you support Mugabe in the late 80's when we were opposing him? Why did you actively back him during Gukurahundi? We never heard you say Mugabe

must go during that period. Instead you gave him prestigious awards on both sides of the Atlantic. We can understand it if your defense is that you are slow learners and late bloomers where our matters are concerned. We can accept that. But it then also means you must take your cue from us who understand the Zimbabwean terrain better. You must accept that you are essentially ignorant, unstrategic, and hence ineffective where African matters are concerned. While you seek to assist us in our struggles for change, your brazen behaviour effectively undermines us and strengthens our opponents. You must listen to us and not the other way round.

The December 2008 *Mugabe must go* chorus was as pathetic as it was both unimaginative and predictable. It started with Raila Odinga, Bishop John Sentamu and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in that order. As soon as they were done, David Milliband and Condi Rice came in to support the “*many*” voices of African leaders. Thereafter, it was Gordon Brown, George Bush, Sarkozy, and Merkel. Every European leader and their grandmother joined in, supporting the “*many*” voices of African leaders. To crown it all, there was an incompetent dash to the UN Security Council, where everything came crumbling down; what an embarrassing non-event. Why was anyone surprised by this unmitigated failure? Was there ever a method in the madness? What was to be the logical conclusion of the chorus?

First and foremost there was no African leader who had spoken. So whom, were the Western leaders purporting to support? Soon after Raila Odinga spoke, he was contradicted by his own Foreign Minister. This means he was not speaking on behalf of Kenya or Kibaki. Bishop Sentamu does not speak for any African country. Well, the same for Tutu; he is a good African who speaks for no African nation. For him to be effective he should work on convincing the South African political leadership to adopt his views. Interesting enough, even the usually reckless and unimaginative Ian Khama was not part of the African voices. So

when these American and European leaders went into chorus who were they supporting? In a continent of 53 countries, the US and UK could not convince a single African President to be part of their elegant chorus. If the Western leaders were indeed just supporting themselves why did they lie that they were supporting voices of African leaders. If they care about what African leaders think, why did they not spend enough time convincing the real African leaders of the correctness of Western positions and thereafter, have the African leaders speak first. Surely if, for example, Presidents Kgalema Motlanthe, Armando Geubuza, José Eduardo dos Santos, Jakaya Kikwete and Mwai Kibaki had taken a particular collective position on Zimbabwe, and Western governments had come in to support them, there would have been some traction.

But no, the Western powers chose to create their own pseudo African leaders, and then force a world chorus. This was sure to fail. Beyond the chorus, there was no real strategy to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe. There was no specific action that the US and the UK were going to take after the chorus. Would it not have been logical to back the slogans with both procedural plans and proper African buy-in? It seems the rationale was that Mugabe was just going to fall off the Zimbabwe political stage because of the deafening sound of Western leaders repeating the same meaningless message. How pathetic! Well, shame on you for trivializing the legitimate struggle of our people.

The Avenues through which Mugabe Can Go

There are three ways Mugabe can be removed from the Presidency and leadership of Zimbabwe: (1) use of violence or arms of war (2) peaceful mass uprising or demonstrations (3) free and fair elections. The use of violence to drive out Mugabe has been

suggested in certain quarters. What has not been done is an interrogation of what form this will take, its meaning, consequences and the aftermath. One way a violent overthrow can be envisaged is to have American and British troops invade Zimbabwe as they did in Iraq. Of course they can get rid of Mugabe that way. However, Western forces will have to bleed on Zimbabwean soil in the process. It will not be a walk in the park. After the US misadventure in Somalia, where American marines were slaughtered in the streets of Mogadishu, the debate in the US Senate was very instructive. The key sentiment was quite unequivocal, *“That entire country of Somalia is not worth a single American life. We should never allow American lives to be lost in defense of these worthless African countries.”* That was the attitude then. Has anything changed? Jendayi Frazer, Condi Rice and George Bush, are you now ready to bleed in pursuit of African freedom and prosperity? If you are not prepared to have US marines killed in Zimbabwe, please just shut up on the issue of military intervention to remove Mugabe.

Let us assume for a minute that these Western leaders are serious players and not just careless talkers. They can then actually bring their troops into Zimbabwe and get the job done. After Mugabe is gone the Saddam way, what happens next? What has US military intervention produced in Iraq and Afghanistan? Do we have democratic outcomes in these countries? Are they peaceful, democratic and prosperous nations? Why would the Zimbabwean outcome be any different? If not, then why should this even be considered as an option?

In terms of foreign armies invading Zimbabwe, it is only Western nations that are worth analyzing as we have attempted above. Only two African countries, Botswana and Kenya have expressed an appetite for physical confrontation with Zimbabwe. We will not even dignify Botswana's posturing with too much discussion. They

have no army but an incompetent police force which has no capacity to invade a desert much less a country with Zimbabwe's military experience. Raila Odinga does not speak for the Kenyan government, so the analysis ends there. If only he could start by convincing his own government, we will have more to say about the efficacy of his utterances.

The other version of violence that can certainly topple Mugabe is an armed struggle waged by Zimbabweans themselves in the same way that ZANLA and ZIPRA executed war against Smith. How feasible and practical is this proposition at this point in time and within the geopolitical context of the SADC region? Is it even a desirable alternative for the people of Zimbabwe? We believe there are no affirmative responses to either of these questions.

The second possible method by which Mugabe can be deposed is through peaceful mass uprisings or demonstrations. Do we have the capacity as Zimbabweans to execute these? What do the gallant efforts of the NCA and WOZA teach us. How many of us join their brave marches? How many Zimbabweans joined the soldiers when they went on the rampage on the streets of Harare? It is clear that the appetite for an orange revolution in Zimbabwe has still to be developed, before a mass uprising becomes a realistic platform to drive Mugabe out. Our politicians within the opposition movement also have to be ready to assume the sacrifices that this option entails. Where political leaders go into hiding at the slightest threat of persecution, we fail to see how this option can be brought to fruition.

This leaves us with the third and only avenue for the departure of Mugabe, that is, through free and fair elections. The question then becomes how do we achieve a free and fair election in Zimbabwe? Certainly not through demanding harmonized elections today which will be conducted under June 27 conditions. Needless to say in such a plebiscite Mugabe will capture the Presidency and the

current combined opposition majority in Parliament will be completely reversed. Let us be strategic. Our people and country are not election ready at the moment. We need to go through a transitional period in which we resolve the humanitarian crisis afflicting our people, carry out national healing, begin economic recovery, and more importantly adopt a new people driven democratic constitution. This is the bridge that Zimbabwe needs in its march to democracy. After that we can then carry out free and fair elections. If Mugabe participates in those elections, he will then be defeated. This is the only practical way that will lead to Mugabe's departure. The GPA of 15th September 2008 seeks to facilitate such a possibility. Folks, this is as good as it gets. Unfortunately, Mugabe will have to be part of the transition, as we explain in the next section. Please Mr. Brown and Mr. Bush get over your foolish, uninformed and unstrategic obsession with Mugabe going today. If you cannot explicitly articulate how you are going to remove him, please just back off, and allow our country to move on. We have to save Zimbabwean lives that are being lost needlessly.

Why Mugabe Cannot Go Away Through Talks

The election results from March 29th 2008 produced no outright winner both in Parliament and at the Presidency. The June 27th re-run was an illegitimate farce, so we are stuck with the March inconclusive outcome. As democrats we must accept that this means that Mugabe and his party are as much a factor as Tsvangirai and his Party are. Short of a new set of elections or change of leadership by their parties, it means neither Tsvangirai nor Mugabe can be negotiated away. On what basis can we have a negotiated agreement that excludes Robert Mugabe? If we accept the March results as legitimate, he is a leader of a party which won 99 MPs vs. 100 for MDC-T, 30 Senators vs. 24 for MDC-T. He came second to Tsvangirai, 43.2% vs. 47.8%. More importantly Mugabe currently possesses the Presidency of Zimbabwe, yes

illegitimately. Well, at law they say that possession is 90% of ownership. The fact that Mugabe has this power of incumbency is the reason why Arthur Mutambara is still on trial in the Supreme Court, Tendai Biti has treason charges around his neck, activists are being abducted, and Morgan Tsvangirai, the Prime Minister-Designate, had a torrid time getting a passport. This means Mr. Mugabe is in charge of the Zimbabwean State. Given this reality on the ground and the electoral outcome of March 29th 2008 (*which because of our lack of strategic thinking we have all sanitized as a legitimate outcome*), it is foolishness to think that you can negotiate Robert Mugabe out of power, and somehow miraculously achieve a power sharing arrangement that excludes him. In terms of democratic practice it will be unjust, and in terms of real politick it will be impossible. Oh yes, on the basis of the March 29th harmonized results Mugabe should be part of any power sharing transitional authority in Zimbabwe, since he is President of a Party well represented in both legislative houses, and he came second in the inconclusive Presidential race. We might not like these democratic circumstances, but we have to live with that reality. Politics is an art of the possible. In the current Zimbabwean political landscape, the possibilities belong to both Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai. They need each other. We can debate the specific role that Mugabe should play. For now that debate was settled by Mugabe, Tsvangirai and Mutambara when they signed the Global Political Agreement (GPA) on the 15th of September 2008. Robert Mugabe is President Designate and Morgan Tsvangirai is Prime Minister Designate. But, are we saying that GPA is the only show in town? No, absolutely not.

Alternative Frameworks to the September 15th GPA

A lot of debates and thinking has gone into crafting alternatives to the agreement of September 15th 2008. Unfortunately, it has been a comedy of errors and unsophisticated hallucinations. Even well

respected international bodies like the International Crisis Group (ICG) have been found miserably wanting. Renowned conflict resolution experts, civic society leaders and Western pundits have shown astonishing lack of creativity and imagination. The starting point in establishing an alternative path for Zimbabwe consists of grasping a clear understanding of why we are having challenges in implementing the current GPA. The new formulation must then robustly illustrate how it will avoid these current challenges. Beyond this, the efficacy, process details, timelines and milestones of any new strategy must then be clearly articulated. None of the critics of the current GPA has even begun to do any of the above. Among a number of obstacles to consummation, the major challenge we have faced in executing the Zimbabwean GPA is the inability to achieve sufficient buy in from the two major protagonists in the political impasse; ZANU-PF and MDC-T. They are the critical players in any national transitional discussion, because any agreed arrangement will require legal effect through a constitutional amendment in parliament. Such a change will require a two thirds majority which can only be achieved by the participation of both ZANU-PF and MDC-T, as a minimum requirement. None of the proposals from the ICG, the civic society groups (both national and regional), or the arrogant and ignorant international community has addressed this simple challenge: How are you going to ensure that both MDC-T and ZANU-PF will embrace your new grand proposal? If one or both of them do not accept your framework what are you going to do? Please, this is commonsensical. Anyone seeking to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis democratically and within the laws of Zimbabwe must apply their mind to this critical success factor: the show stopper. The busy bodies at the ICG and in civic society do not even have the capacity to appreciate the existence of the problem, much less the intellect to develop the requisite solution. We are not saying it is impossible to develop an alternative negotiated framework to the September GPA. We are emphasizing that it will require good and rigorously working minds to come up with one.

The reasons why we insist on fixing and then implementing the current flawed and imperfect GPA is because at some point the buy-in between the two key protagonist was achieved through the signatures of the MOU on the 21st of July 2008 and the GPA on the 15th of September 2008. Yes, there are disagreements now, but there are two agreed reference points. The key players and their teams have been actively negotiating the political impasse from March 29th 2008, and now four months after signing the GPA there are still implementation challenges. Yes, this is bad and regrettable. However, let us be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water. If we adopt a completely new process, how and when are we going to convince the two key players to start working towards an MOU? Are you going to get that MOU signed soon, and after that how much time will be required to get to a new GPA of sorts. Furthermore, while we embark on these new processes that require time and resources what will be happening to the suffering people of Zimbabwe, the collapsed economy, and the destroyed industrial base? Given the hardened positions of the two protagonists at the moment can you even begin to sell the new path to them? The most bizarre, irritating and clearly ineffective critics of the current GPA are those that premise their proposals by denouncing one of the two key protagonists. Usually it is Mugabe and his ZANU-PF who are dismissed. How do you even conceptualize a negotiated outcome without the involvement of the ZANU-PF group? We thought it was common cause that you do not make peace with your friends, but with your opponents.

One would expect someone of Jendayi Frazer's stature to understand all this. How does she say that the US supports the negotiated power sharing, but insists that Mugabe must not be involved? Making these statements while defying the consistent advice that she received from all the South African leaders that she interacted with means that Jendayi is insulting the SA leadership at every level. By this disrespectful conduct, she is humiliating both

SADC and the AU. In this situation, with respect to the US proposed dialogue framework, who will be the principals, negotiators, facilitators and guarantors? South Africa is the only country with leverage on Zimbabwe. To bring any kind of change in Zimbabwe you have to work with SA, and not insult or humiliate them. Anyone serious about the Zimbabwean agenda must grasp this.

Jendayi, I assume that you are supportive of Mr Tsvangirai and you want him to succeed. Do you actually have any respect for him? He signed the GPA in which Mugabe is designated as the President. Is it that you think Mr. Tsvangirai does not know what is good for him and therefore you have to lead him every step of the way? By the way, it is not true that the US government supported the agreement when it was signed. For the record both the US and the UK were opposed to the GPA from the beginning. They did not like the fact that Mugabe was both Head of State and Chairman of Cabinet, and they despised the GPA positions on land reform and sanctions. Everyone knows this. We are not children. The US and the UK are now taking advantage of the delay in implementation of the agreement to savage and destroy the GPA. Jendayi, do you have a workable alternative framework to the current GPA, together with an enforcement mechanism? And what is this that you said about the weakness and incompetence of your favorite GPA principal? Did you not say the following; *“Tsvangirai is too weak and incompetent for us to allow him to be in an inclusive government with Mugabe. He will be completely outmaneuvered. Tsvangirai is not as strong as Odinga. If he was, we would have allowed him to get into the GNU with Mugabe.”* How can you possibly say such insulting remarks about your favorite opposition leader? With friends like these who needs enemies. Incidentally, did you share your views about Tsvangirai with him? Why not? Anyway, who are you to *allow or disallow* African leaders? Does the US government have *locus standi* to do this? From where do you derive such legal, political or moral authority? Would a

reverse scenario where international players seek to influence US politics be acceptable to the US?

Can't you see that you are ruining the opposition you seek to assist, and strengthening Mugabe that you seek to destroy? You are foolishly confirming everything that Mugabe has said about the opposition; that we are puppets. Moreover, Mugabe's strengths are Africa, Pan-Africanism and anti-Imperialism. Any foreign policy that undermines African leaders and African institutions plays right into Mugabe's game plan. Why can't Western diplomats master these basics? Why do we have a premonition that most of the destructive grandstanding by Western governments is meant for their domestic constituencies? More specifically, US foreign policy is always characterized by double standards, hypocrisy and dishonesty all rooted in the pursuit of US permanent interests. We seriously hope that incoming US President Obama and his new team will depart from this ignorant, ruinous and ineffective foreign policy that effectively undermines its intended beneficiaries, strengthens the targeted villains, while blighting the US standing in the World. Things have to change in 2009. We are not naïve. We know that the general thrust of the US foreign policy objective is largely independent of both the individual who is US President and the Party they belong to. However, we hope the policy execution, nuances and tactics will be different. Zimbabweans have great expectations.

Collapse of the Mugabe Regime

It is clear that the Mugabe regime will not collapse because of economic decay, mass starvation or epidemics such as cholera. The formal economy collapsed way back when. The regime survives on the informal sector and through rent-seeking behaviors. Yes, ordinary people are perishing and will continue to do so, but the regime will not collapse. Can we all come to grips with this? The

diamonds of Chiadzwa, the Platinum Mines, and assistance from friendly nations such as DRC, Angola, China and Russia will see the regime pull through another 5-10 years. Of course this will be at major cost to the population. Zimbabweans should care about this. However, to the external players that suggest that we must wait for the collapse of the regime at any cost, the needless loss of life in pursuit of the departure of Mugabe is a small price to pay. After all the lives lost are Black lives which are not equivalent to White lives. Since September 15th 2008 we have had Western governments encouraging the continuation of suffering and death of our people in the misguided belief that this will lead to the collapse of the Mugabe regime. Well, this will not happen, and our people are dying in vain. All Zimbabwean leaders must understand this. We must collectively take responsibility for the calamity afflicting our country. In particular, Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai are equally culpable for the failure to work together. They are effectively working against the interests of their supporters and the generality of our citizenry. The two leaders are more concerned about a misguided power play executed at the expense of Zimbabwean lives. They have blood on their hands. The US and UK governments who are specifically undermining SADC efforts to establish an inclusive government in Zimbabwe are complicity in this crime against humanity. In the case of these Western governments, they are driven by racism and utter disrespect for African lives. As Africans our position is that not a single Zimbabwean life should be used as stick to inflict pain on Robert Mugabe. People's lives are too important to be used as ineffective political tools and weapons. We all know that Mugabe will not collapse because of Cholera, mass starvation and a collapsed economy, so why are we supporting this ineffective strategy?

Nevertheless, let us humour ourselves and assume the game plan works and the Mugabe regime actually collapses through the existing crisis. Why are we assuming that such a demise of

Mugabe will lead to a democratic outcome? We saw what happened in Guinea when their dictator died. Did the opposition take over? Nope. If the Mugabe regime collapses, it is most likely that the army will take over. Some ambitious and gutsy colonel or general will step in. Our democratization processes will, resultantly, regress at least 10 years. There is absolutely no way Tsvangirai and his Party will be the beneficiaries of the collapse of Robert Mugabe. Quite to the contrary, the ZANU-PF regime will make sure they collapse together with Tsvangirai and MDC-T. Do the current abductions, confessions and dubious trials of activists mean anything to anyone? MDC-T will not exist after the demise of Mugabe. I hope Mr. Tsvangirai understands this in no uncertain terms. I wish our brazen and unintelligent Western friends will do more listening and thinking. This *Mugabe must collapse* strategy is not in the best interest of Zimbabwe. A regime change agenda achieved through a scorched earth policy is not what we need in our country. It will not benefit anyone. As Zimbabweans, we should think seriously about options that will allow us to continue to build, brick by brick, our democratic institutions.

Conclusion

The year 2009 presents us with an opportunity for a new beginning. However, for this to be achieved, we have to learn some difficult lessons from inconvenient truths. We have to do things differently. We must embrace self-criticism as part of our best practices, and adopt an interrogative and questioning attitude to all stakeholders, including those that purport to support our struggles and our national interest. In the struggle for peaceful, democratic and prosperous Zimbabwe, it is not enough to be right. It is not enough to be a victim or to have the higher moral authority. The victims must behave well. Those with moral high ground must be driven by principles and values. Those on the right side of history must be thoughtful and strategic. Those that support victims of

despotic regimes must apply their analytical skills. Good heart, bad mind will not cut it. In all this we must always put the people first. We must cherish servant leadership. Only then can we succeed. While external players and events affect our country, we must take responsibility for our own circumstances. We should be at the centre of our struggles and be the drivers of our nation building processes. We must have enough leadership strength to define and determine both the terms of reference and frameworks through which foreigners participate in the affairs of our nation. In 2009 Zimbabweans must set the agenda and own the rules of the game. We must be masters of our own destiny. The critique of external influences that has been proffered should not be used to absolve us as citizens. We as Zimbabweans, created the current socio-political and economic crisis, and we will be the primary drivers and developers of the sustainable answers. And yes, a people do get a government that they deserve. Let us all be the change we wish to see in the year 2009.