

# DIALOGUE

## PANACEA TO THE ZIMBABWEAN CRISIS?



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# EDITORIAL

As Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political environment continues to deteriorate, there are increasing calls for a broad-based and inclusive National Dialogue to rescue Zimbabwe from the precipice and avert its implosion.

The crescendo in the calls for dialogue among all the national stakeholders come in the wake of an increasingly restless citizenry struggling to make ends meet resulting in the violent protests, demonstrations and lootings that tore the country in August 2018 and this year in January.

Regrettably, lives were lost as the army was deployed to quell the demonstrations, sparking local, regional and international outrage on the disproportionate use of force against unarmed civilians by security personnel.

This also comes on the backdrop of the findings and recommendations of the Motlanthe Commission of Inquiry into the August 2018 killings of six civilians of which the army was blamed for the deaths.

These unfolding events, notwithstanding the stalled pace of the envisaged economic and political reforms and the disputed 2018 presidential elections outcome, have placed Zimbabwe at the crossroads hence the increasing calls for genuine national dialogue.

Our theme for this edition of *Thinking Beyond*: *Dialogue: Panacea to the Zimbabwean Crisis?* seeks to generate ideas and debate on the shape,

form, content, course and actions the envisaged dialogue should take.

Zimbabwe and her people envisage a leadership that is responsive to the country's desperate plight for socio-economic and political stability critical to leapfrogging the country into a durable and sustainable orbit of prosperity and development. It is deplorable to note that the country has never gone for more than a decade without plunging into strife, which has stifled development and its ability to fend for its own citizens.

Suffice to note that the country has great potential to unlock development and economic growth, through visionary leadership. A leadership which sees beyond narrow personal gains and is subservient to the ethos of servant leadership to deliver the country from the current yoke of poverty, unemployment, biting economic crisis, run-away inflation and failing industry.

Zimbabwe has a health mix of minerals, fertile lands for agriculture, conducive climatic environment that lures tourists from across the globe coupled with a culture of hard working citizens which are critical ingredients for successful economies.

However, there is a glaring deficiency in leadership that is catalytic in pulling the feuding stakeholders to the negotiation table and write a new narrative for the country.

Without visionary leadership, Zimbabwe will remain barren, living far beneath its potential as the ruling elite line up and stamped to deep their fingers into the national treasury at a time when children and expecting mothers are dying in hospitals due to lack of medication.

Zimbabwe should rise beyond the petty polity of personalities and kick-start a genuine national dialogue process that takes the country forward.

While the views and opinions expressed in this edition do not reflect the position of the publishers of *Thinking Beyond*, in their articles contributors to this edition, proffer their ideas on issues critical to the dialogue such as:

- Setting the agenda: what are the issues and why they should be subjected to national discourse.
- Who are the key players/stakeholders and why?
- How do you ensure inclusivity: who gets invited to the table.
- Who should be entrusted with the mediation process and why.
- The role of SADC, African Union, United Nations and the international community.
- Conflict resolution: role and mandate of political parties, business, civic society, church/women's groups, youths.
- Lowering the political temperatures: the media and conflict sensitive journalism.
- Gender and National Dialogue: the issues.

# Towards the National Transitional Authority

I B B O M A N D A Z A & T O N Y R E E L E R

## Introduction:

In 2016, the Platform for Concerned Citizens (PCC) warned that the country was heading into deep trouble and a possible coup. This was the only possible outcome for the disintegrating *securocrat* state.

In 2019, we now have a dysfunctional state, made worse by a crisis of illegitimacy, and in desperate need for re-engagement with the international community. This re-engagement grows more remote by the day with reports of gross human rights proliferating, prompting some to term these crimes against humanity.

Underpinning all of this is infighting within the state and party that seems without end, going on since 2013. It is now common cause that the state and party has completely lost the consensus and confidence of the citizenry, and is incapable of either political or economic reform. We now have the *hard* landing that the PCC tried to avoid in 2016 by calling for a *soft* landing and a National Transitional Authority (NTA).

## Why the NTA?

This state of affairs is the reason for the calls for a national dialogue and a NTA. Accordingly, the NTA is urgent because of the following factors:

- A dysfunctional Party/State Conflation: this is incapable of reform (except at the risk of involuntary abdication), neither politically nor economically.

- The burden of an incurable Illegitimacy : this is exacerbated not only by the absence

of a constitutional order, but also a heavily disputed presidential election. There is consequently continuing political and social unrest in which, since 1 August 2018 to the present, at least 23 citizens killed, scores injured, many abducted, a number of women raped, and the apparent sense of permanent siege against the opposition and civic society.

- The compelling evidence, therefore, that there is a Party/State Conflation that has lost the people, with little or no hope of recovery in the foreseeable future.

- The compelling and urgent need for an agency (the NTA): This will provide the basis through which constitutional rule and the requisite separation of powers restored, characterized by an accountable executive, a vibrant legislature and a fiercely independent judiciary. Thus, confidence, at home and in the Diaspora, will be restored and re-engagement with the global community can take place, without which the Economic Recovery Programme cannot succeed

It seems obvious in all the discussion about a national dialogue that there must be an end goal. In the current crisis, a national dialogue cannot be merely a talk shop. All who are talking about the national dialogue clearly are thinking about a process that resolves the legitimacy crisis, initiates a substantial process of reforms, and takes the country through to an undisputed election.

There are two important points to bear in mind here.

Firstly, neither of the political parties wants to give up political power. ZANU-PF

claims political power by virtue of the disputed 2018 elections. The MDC-Alliance claims political power by virtue of being the majority party in reality.

Secondly, the Zimbabwean NTA does not have to produce a constitution as part of its work. Zimbabwe has a highly operable constitution, a sitting parliament, and a functioning judicial system. Since all these are in place, there will be no need for complex negotiations about a constitution and the nature of the state.

## Constitutional arrangements:

Since the Constitution remains in force, and, remembering the GPA, the constitutional basis for the NTA is relatively simple. The legal basis for the NTA will require the suspension of Chapter 5 (Parts 1 & 2) and its replacement by a Schedule outlining the powers of a Transitional Executive Council (TEC). This TEC would be time-limited, but, given the depth of the problems facing Zimbabwe, would probably need at least two years in order to implement the reforms, and a “rescue package” to take effect.

There will undoubtedly be those that will object, as they have done in the past, to any suggestion of amending the constitution, but the point here is that the only amendment envisaged will be to the clauses on the Executive. This will be temporary, for the duration of the NTA, and will be necessary. We can all remember the problems of the GPA and the manner in which the Executive was able to block all reforms.

## Legislative arrangements:

Parliament remains in place as currently constituted, since their role of oversight



and legislative powers will be critical for the implementing of the Constitution, amending past laws and instituting new law, and authorising policies. Parliament will have such an important role during the transition in its general oversight function, most particularly if it can demonstrate to the citizenry that parliamentarians can work together in the national interest. This is another reason to replace the Executive by a more inclusive body, the TEC.

**Composition of the TEC:**

The Schedule to the Constitution will define TEC’s structure and competence. Since this body will be the *de jure* political power, it is very important that it will have protection from narrow political party interests, and the current distribution of political party power within parliament. Hence, the suggestion is that the TEC operates according to “consensus”, and be inclusive of all national interests.

A possible structure for the TEC would involve 18 members drawn from Zimbabweans, from both home and abroad, with familiarity of the Zimbabwean political and economic process. More particularly, they should be persons about whom there is wide consensus across the political spectrum about their competence and suitability for the difficult task they will face.

The TEC (and parliament) will be responsible for the designing the policies and reforms that are so necessary to move

the country forward. Here it will be critical to ensure separation of powers. The TEC, as the Executive, will be accountable to parliament, and the legislature will have the very important role of holding the Executive to account.

Additionally, there should be support from an advisory body. This should have a chair from the UN, and have members drawn from the AU, SADC, the EU, the Commonwealth and BRICS. This will provide the crucial “scaffolding” that all transitions need, and Zimbabwe especially needs with the recent history of international incoherence about how to deal with the country.

**Administrative arrangements:**

The administrative arrangements will be very important, need streamlining in order to efficiently and effectively undertake the many needed reforms. These reforms will be guided by an overall “reform and rescue” policy.

In order to overcome the present cumbersome and conflicting arrangements, we need to reduce the number of ministries: many countries have far fewer ministries and are able efficiently to run the affairs of the state.

All ministers should be “technocrats”, with no political party affiliation, and assigned to a Ministry because of proven competence in the area with which the ministry is concerned. One TEC member assigned as liaison for each ministry, and

there should be monitoring bodies, one per ministry, with members each chosen from civil society and the churches.

The aim behind monitoring is to ensure that there is the greatest possible confidence in the NTA from a citizenry that is both deeply divided as well as distrustful of government.

A critical step for building confidence will be the disbanding of JOC, and its replacement by the National Security Council (NSC), as already required by the Constitution. The two TEC leaders, with church, business and civil society representation, should chair the NSC.

Finally, there needs to be the setting up of a policy unit under the TEC.

**Guiding principles for policy:**

We have stated the guiding principles many times before in the past three years, and most are currently included in the *Common demands by civil society to 2019 crisis*. They are relatively straightforward:

**Political Principles:**

- Adherence to the constitution and institutionalising the principles of constitutionalism;
- Reform of key institutions that impede the above;
- Reform of the electoral process, to create conditions for genuinely free and fair, elections, and devoid of all controversy;

**Economic Principles:**

- Stabilising of the economy and the setting in place of an Economic Reform Agenda aimed at the following:
- Debt management, and recovery of misappropriated assets, nationally and internationally;
- Comprehensive macro-economic fundamentals;

- Policy consistency;
- Land policy and property rights;
- Revival of productive sectors;
- Mobilizing the diaspora into the economic life of the country.

### International “Scaffolding”:

Few transitions are successful in the absence of strong international support, what we term “scaffolding”. We use this term in order to point out that Zimbabweans do have the capacity to resolve our own problems, if the international community unites as a whole to support this, and avoids any sectarian interest.

The crisis over the past two decades has seen differences between the West, SADC and the AU, and these differences must be put aside for the betterment of the citizenry.

As an incentive for reform, the international community needs to create a substantial “rescue fund”. This should aim to provide an international (and integrated) monitoring group; emergency assistance for the many problems currently faced by Zimbabwean citizens; and provide re-structuring cost support (the “rescue package”).

This “rescue package”, raised internationally, can be allied to the development of a US\$5 billion Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF), in particular repaid and replenished by receipts from mineral exports. This will provide security for the national currency and guarantee a stable national economy.

Of course, these ideas of the small group under the PCC cannot be definitive - much more discussion is needed - but the discussion needs to begin in earnest if dialogue is to have any purpose.

*Ibbo Mandaza and Tony Reeler are co-convenors of the PCC. This article first appeared in the weekly Zimbabwe Independent.*

# Setting the agenda: what are the key issues?

Zimbabwe has been descending into a social, political and economic crisis for nearly two decades now.

The end of Robert Mugabe’s reign who ruled with a heavy fist for a record of 37 years did not put a lid on these ills. His successor, Emmerson Mnangagwa is feeding from his predecessor’s political script.

The November 2017 power transition brought with it hopeful political undertones with Mnangagwa pledging to uphold people’s rights in letter and spirit. But all has become pie in the sky as Zimbabwe quickly returned to its default settings. Political contestation post-2018 elections, has left a trail of bloodshed and property destruction on the back of disputed presidential election results. The standoff between the major political players; President Mnangagwa and opposition MDC leader Nelson Chamisa, has resulted in economic and political stagnation as the two protagonists continue to pull in different directions.

In consideration of the foregoing, Zimbabweans have pressured the two leaders to find common ground for the good of the country.

So the intended dialogue must at all costs oscillate around constitutionalism to rescue Zimbabwe’s constitution from total obliteration. In short, the country is trapped in a constitutional crisis on which the national dialogue must be anchored. This article unpacks these pricking issues in a simpler form.

### Legitimacy question

Following the dispute around the 2018 presidential election outcome that saw the Constitutional Court upholding President Mnangagwa’s victory, civil unrest has threatened to tear the country apart.

To date, the opposition MDC president still maintains elections were rigged in favour of President Mnangagwa. As it



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stands, Zimbabwe remains unstable because there is a general shared feeling among the public, in particular, the urban folk where the opposition commands numbers, that the government in power is illegitimate.

According to international election observer mission reports, the electoral ground was not level. Although the African Union and SADC as per their tradition, saw nothing wrong in the manner in which the elections were run, the legitimacy question needs to be discussed.

### Military must stay off politics

When Mugabe first came out lashing at the security service chiefs for meddling in Zanu PF politics in 2015, those who read ahead of time saw the light. The old man had lost the securocrats’ confidence. Because this is the constituency that shielded Mugabe, the latter’s fall was therefore evidently imminent two years later. Following the military inspired power transition in November 2017, there was hope Mugabeism had come to an end, but his predecessor adopted the same political style of over reliance on the military.

The military has since been involved in civil matters, a case in point is on how the military has become a central player in quashing civil protests. The involvement of the military in civil matters is against the Constitution. Hence, it is important that the intended dialogue puts an end to the abuse of the military.

## Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

Looking at what has been obtaining in Zimbabwe since 2000, ZEC as an institution has lost credibility and has become a breeding ground for political disturbances which in turn impacts negatively on the economy. The dialogue must discuss on how this institution can be rebranded to regain its lost reputation.

Allegations that the institution is run by military personnel is not health for democracy. It always raises eyebrows. There must be an agreement among political players; the church, business and the ordinary men, on what should be done for this country to hold a clean election with less controversy.

The 2018 election has given increased public mistrust on ZEC. Those who will find themselves at the dialogue table need to push for solid frameworks that guarantee the autonomy of the Commission including appointment of reputable and dignified people. The issue of elections and ZEC must be fully exhausted in line with constitutionally stipulated guidelines.

### Traditional leaders

This factor flies in the face of President Mnangagwa whose support is anchored on the rural folk with traditional chiefs employed as Zanu PF commissariats, a practice which is wholly against the Constitution. The failure by Mnangagwa to rebuke Chiefs Council President, Fortune Charumbira, who declared his support for the ruling party on the eve of the 2018 elections, and repeatedly at the Zanu PF Annual People's Conference last December, point to a deliberate disrespect of the Constitution. As if it was not enough, Charumbira defied the court order which ordered him to withdraw his statement of allegiance to the ruling party. This is one example which the dialogue must discuss.

### The media

As a fourth estate, the ideal role of media can then be traced to Edmund Burke's saying that there were "three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all."

To that end, the media is ideally supposed

to discharge four normative roles, namely; the monitorial, participatory, facilitative and radical functions (Christians et al, 2009).

So for media to meet the above obligations, its autonomy must be respected. Post July 2018 elections, universally, observer mission reports established that the state media failed to abide by the middle of the road approach in discharging its duties.

The state media, constitutionally, should be able to give fair coverage to all political players in a democratic society as Zimbabwe claims to be one. The lampooning and caricaturing that the opposition political groups and Civil Society Organisations have been subjected to, points to the desperate need for media policy reforms.

It would be a fundamental error for any dialogue to circumvent a discussion around this important institution.

### Social contract

This is a key aspect the dialogue should never omit. For policy programmes to succeed; both political and economic, there should at least be restoration of trust between the governed and the governing. The antagonism that exists between the state and its people in Zimbabwe at the moment is not healthy for any development the country may need to embark on.

Government policy programmes are received with cynicism. Reports and allegations of corruption levelled against senior government officials further widen the gap of trust between the governed and the governing.

Zimbabwe's judiciary system has lately lost public confidence too for many reasons. Recently, lawyers took to the streets in protest against deterioration of justice delivery. These are the issues that should be discussed. The government needs the confidence of its people.

### The economy

A hungry man is an angry man. The country's economy is in bad shape. Shortages have become the source of chaos. Because people are struggling to make ends meet, they are vulnerable to political

manipulation. Those who will be at the dialogue forum need to extensively discuss on how best to improve the economy.

Once legitimate dialogue takes place, there is no doubt the economy will start performing. International relations can be mended and genuine re-engagement begins. Foreign direct investment will be guaranteed to flock in. Industry will reopen, a move that would see the unemployment rate being reduced.

### Who should be entrusted with mediation and why?

A worldwide scholarly view ascertains that mediation means intervention in a dispute with a view to resolving it. To that effect, any interventions to resolve Zimbabwe's political and economic crisis needs an impartial mediator who understands the historical part of this crisis. This article submits three key players that could be entrusted with the mediation role to help Zimbabwe rediscover itself. These are: Southern African Development Community (SADC), South Africa, African Union and the United Nations.

Before delving into the question of who can be entrusted with leading dialogue in Zimbabwe, it would be a good starting point to give the church an opportunity to convene all key relevant players for negotiations. The church is a neutral body where frameworks and points of references can be made before finding a mediator.

Using geopolitical lenses, it will be most appropriate to burden SADC with dialogue facilitation in Zimbabwe, as has been the case in the past. It is, however, wise to take a breather and comprehend first if Zimbabwean people have confidence in SADC.

In the wake of the January 2019 disturbances that rocked the country including the 2018 August 1 shooting of civilians in the streets of Harare, the country's closest four neighbors as represented by Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, Botswana's Mokgweetsi Masisi, Edgar Lungu and Filipe Nyusi of Zambia and Mozambique, respectively, reserved their voices.

In turn, the people of Zimbabwe have spoken badly about SADC due to its failure

to rein the country's crisis. This means that Zimbabweans have little faith in the regional body as far as solving this country's political crisis is concerned. Would it not be a political blooper to therefore burden these personalities with the broker's job?

Accordingly, Professor Jonathan Moyo attempted to answer this question when he wrote on his micro blog *twitter* late in January 2019. He maintains: "In SADC there is solidarity within solidarity among and between former Liberation Movements. ANC, CHAMACHAMAPINDUZA, FRELIMO, MPLA, SWAPO, and ZANU PF."

This being the case, SADC becomes unfit to leading dialogue in Zimbabwe because there is presumption that the regional body is not impartial. There cannot therefore be a legitimate outcome from the intended dialogue.

While South Africa stands out in the region as being the preferred broker and reliable longstanding trading partner with Zimbabwe, the question of impartiality remains the same.

Do Zimbabweans have faith in Cyril Ramaphosa and his ANC? Recently, South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC), had its high powered delegation visiting Zimbabwe and met with their counterparts in Zanu PF. The ANC delegation was led by SA's ruling party Secretary General Ace Magashule. The crew spoke less on the deaths of civilians.

On the contrary, SA opposition political party leaders did not shy from condemning the military crackdown on civilians. The Economic Freedom Fighter (EFF) President Julius Malema and his counterpart, Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Mmamusi Maimane, condemned the human rights violations that characterised the mid-January shutdown protests called by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU). In light of this view, literally, it is not possible to have the above-mentioned leaders as brokers in the intended dialogue. Ideally, South Africa is out.

However, if SADC and South Africa in particular cannot be entrusted to lead in the dialogue facilitation process, they still have to be at the negotiation table. These



Southern African states, must be made to agree that there is a crisis in Zimbabwe. They must acknowledge that for the sake of trust and confidence restoration with the people of Zimbabwe, they need to accept that they are compromised. Because the outcome of the dialogue must be legitimate, a legitimate institution with little or no controversy must take the lead.

The AU (African Union), as the apex continental body, stands a better chance of leading dialogue in Zimbabwe. One of the objectives of the AU is to promote peace, security, and stability on the continent. Its Peace and Security Council (PSC) and Pan-African Parliament, are effective organs the AU can employ to help Zimbabwe dialogue a way out of the crisis.

While AU leads dialogue, the key players at the dialogue table must adopt a resolution where both AU, SADC and United Nations become underwriters of the resolutions the dialogue will arrive at. The UN, by virtue of being the global overseer is an empowered institution that can ensure agreements reached are guaranteed and secured.

UN has been assisting in alleviating Zimbabwe's humanitarian crisis for a very long time. Some of these problems emanate from political instability and economic mismanagement.

Under these circumstances, this article concludes that Zimbabwe's crisis can only be exhaustively dealt with if a legitimate mediator takes charge of the negotiation process. The leading institution must be reputable and dignified to ensure the outcome of the very dialogue is internationally accepted.

### Key players/stakeholders and why?

The key stakeholders to Zimbabwe's much anticipated dialogue are the people of Zimbabwe in their diversified values and beliefs. Thus, it is perfidious to set the framework and agenda for a dialogue without their input. Wide consultations should therefore be carried with the ordinary men and women on the streets as well as in the village with a view to giving them an opportunity to define the nature of the dialogue they want.

There are institutions from which representatives of these people can be drawn from. The key institutions are political, business, academia, young people, civil society, the church, traditional leaders, and people with disabilities.

The first institution appearing in the above list is politics. Once politics becomes flummoxed, chaos reigns supreme in any state and this cuts across other institutions. Politics is poisoned the moment the state views dissenting voices as an enemy. In the Zimbabwean case, this is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Constitution. Available political literature shows that from 2000, Zimbabwe went through various political stages of abrogation of constitutionally enshrined human rights (and) at most by the state.

As a result, the country suffered an international blackout with United States of America (US) instituting an economic and political embargo in the name of the Zimbabwe Development Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA). The Europeans also imposed sanctions on the Zimbabwean government, albeit, the state describing the move as a farcical.

## Political players

In 2008, Zimbabwe again fell into a dark political and economic period in which the opposition members, in particular those from the late Morgan Tsvangirai-led Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), were killed, maimed and tortured. The violence that rocked the country emanated from the controversial election outcome in which Tsvangirai won the first round of the 2008 presidential elections.

Robert Mugabe, the then president and his government, disputed Tsvangirai's win arguing the late opposition leader had failed to cross the constitutionally stipulated line thereby calling for a presidential runoff election. The violence only ended with the Global Political Agreement in September 2008. The GPA led to the Government of National Unity (GNU) with former South African President Thabo Mbeki as a mediator.

Fast forward to 2018, after the fall of Robert Mugabe in November 2017, hope for democracy in Zimbabwe was largely revived. President Emmerson Mnangagwa whose new dispensation gospel, anchored on a smokescreen of fustian and abstract *Zimbabwe is Open for Business*, tricked some locals and the international community to believe that Zimbabwe had parted ways with its past.

Allowing international election observer missions to observe the elections was not enough. Instead, this exposed the new administration. Universally, all election observer mission reports including SADC and AU, exposed the state media's shortfalls in its coverage of the election season.

Considering the foregoing, political players become significant thespians in this negotiation and must be guided by sincerity. Both President Mnangagwa and MDC president, Nelson Chamisa, and other opposition groupings must commit to political and electoral reforms which have become the bedrock for disputes in this country. They have become sources of antagonism in this country oftentimes allowing their tensions to spill into violence. It is, thus, important to persuade these political representatives to meet and establish common ground.

## Youths

The dialogue also and most importantly should not be restricted to political leaders alone. Central to it should be the young people. This is the most affected constituency. Young people have become victims of political violence. Some have lost their lives, some maimed, some raped and some were left with lifetime scars. Any state that fails to safeguard the lives of its young people, to ensure the advancement of its youths in its wide endeavors, is in actual fact an enemy of its future.

South African President Nelson Mandela, speaking at the Bastille Anniversary in Paris on 14 July 1996, said: "Young people are capable, when aroused, of bringing down the towers of oppression and raising the banners of freedom."

Unemployment, to them, is oppression and a new form of colonialism which must be fought. So when awakened, because they are a frustrated constituency, they thus engage in violent protests. Their lives are at stake.

## Academia

The academia having strength in research, has an important role to play in this dialogue. Their research often influences policy formulation. The academia most importantly produces human capital for the development of the economy. There should be rapport between the government and the academia in light of the human capital development.

## Captains of industry

In a free market economy, which President Mnangagwa advertised in January 2018 in Davos, Switzerland, business institutions have freedom to set their prices in line with market forces. Mnangagwa's dialect of *laissez-faire* gave hope to investors locally and internationally. In contrast, there have been discord in the business sector on the back of value loss of the bond note. Added to this, has been government policy inconsistency.

Price distortions have been bearing a negative effect in the business sector. Shortages became the order of the day as foreign currency ran out forcing companies to close while others downsized. It is thus noble to have captains of industry,

economists and analysts on the negotiation table. They must be given an opportunity to proffer their minds on the economy.

## The church

The church's role in peace keeping and unifying society dates as far back as it was founded. The church is a vital institution that stands ready in providing healing to socio-political and economic victims. Its hand cuts across political lines.

The church, in the Zimbabwean case, has been a pillar of hope, harmony and unity. Zimbabwe found her independence in 1980 with the church having played an important role during the liberation struggle. Therefore, any national event cannot go without the blessings of the clergymen.

When people are hopeless, they (church) provide hope. When people are in disarray, the church provides a platform for unity. The church's position in our society, must therefore be understood and honored in this dialogue discourse.

## Traditional leaders

Traditional leaders and people with disabilities have a stake to guard in this dialogue. Traditional leaders are key players in that they are the ambassadors of our cultural, beliefs, values and norms. In a democratic society they help people to unite and abide by societal values and norms.

Also, more importantly, traditional leaders have lately been used as political agents by the ruling government. They have been employed to carry intimidation campaigns among the rural folk. This is a clear violation of the constitution which instructs traditional chiefs to be apolitical. Their meddling in politics needs to be discussed and a resolution must be made to that effect.

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# Setting the framework for national dialogue

B Y G E O R G E M A K O N I

Calls for national dialogue to solve the deep-rooted socio-economic and political crisis currently rocking Zimbabwe have intensified from all circles in Zimbabwe including the main protagonists Zanu PF and MDC-Alliance.

The crisis has seen the generality of Zimbabweans sinking into the murky waters of poverty.

This has resulted in violent protests by the citizenry across the country, while the state has responded with heavy-handedness in suppressing these protests. Other stakeholders including civil society, industry/business, faith based organisations, political parties, diaspora and trade unions, are in agreement that dialogue is the panacea to the challenges facing Zimbabwe.

The church through Heads of Denominations comprising Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) and Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC), went a step further by inviting all the stakeholders to a “National Dialogue” prayer breakfast in Harare to deliberate on the framework for non-violent engagement in finding the lasting solution to the crisis being faced by Zimbabwe.

While the initiative by the church is a good start, from the tone of speaker

after speaker at the breakfast meeting, one could easily realise that the chief protagonists, Zanu PF and MDC Alliance, are the main actors. Case-studies on what was done by the likes of Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai in line with bringing peace to Zimbabwe, dominated most of the speeches and less was said about other stakeholders.

Stakeholders such as civic society, trade unions, youths, women and other downtrodden groups, were just mentioned in passing. The role of civic society and other players was not prominently stated in the national dialogue process as opposed to that of political parties.

The calls for meaningful inclusion should start from the initial stages. It's high time civic society comes up with a framework which involves them in the mentioned process. Once the politicians start moving the train, it will be very difficult for other players to jump in.

Dialogues have higher chances of succeeding if they factor in the following conditions: inclusion - far-reaching agenda - transparency - a credible convener - public participation - appropriate and clear rules of procedure and an implementation plan. Contrary to what should be the scenario, the history of the pacts concluded in Zimbabwe thus far, have

generally been inked by the powerful politicians of the day. This precedence seems to be continuing given the above background.

These include the Lancaster House Agreement (1979) which featured Patriotic Front (ZAPU and ZANU), Zimbabwe Rhodesia government and the British Government. The Unity Accord (1987) signed between Zanu PF and PF ZAPU, Agreement on Amendment 18 and reforms on the Electoral Act (2007), signed between Zanu PF and two MDC formations. The Global Political Agreement (2009), signed by Zanu PF and two MDC formations. The precedence presented here cannot be easily thrown into the dustbins of history.

Against the above background, it is key to state that none of the mentioned agreements was effective and sustainable in bringing a lasting solution to the political and socio-economic crisis rocking Zimbabwe at given times. In fact the majority of these agreements have created even more problems in the areas they sought to create solutions.

For instance, the Lancaster House Agreement did not adequately address the issue of land in the post-Rhodesia era and many other socio-political and economic issues in Zimbabwe. Equally, the Unity Accord did not address issues of healing and justice to the wounds of Gukurahundi.

The Global Political Agreement (GPA) also failed to end an electoral dispute which ensued between Zanu PF and MDC-T in the 2008 harmonised elections and the ultimate presidential run-off election.

In fact, the decline of the GPA brought even more misery to Zimbabweans, with the temporary economic boom experienced during the Government of National Unity coming to an end. Political polarisation and hurt/hate speech resurfaced with more vigour and intensity after the 2018 Harmonised Election.

It is therefore the contention of this writer that as envisaged by Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (CiZC) in their statement on National Dialogue: *The problems confronting the country are much bigger than politics. It is our conviction that the national dialogue process must involve all stakeholders and a national visioning process that has civil society, government, political parties, business, religious groups and labour unions.*

This was echoed by Zimbabwe Peace Project which added that the diaspora and victims be included as key stakeholders to the process. In support of meaningful inclusion of diverse groups in the dialogue process, it is important to state and elaborate ways of making sure all citizens are on board.

To secure the participation of a wide variety of stakeholder groups and to avoid perceptions of bias, a credible convener is of the utmost importance. This convener may take the form of a single person, a group of people, an organisation, or a coalition of organisations.

The aim is to unite opposing factions around the ideal of achieving long-term peace, unity, justice, and prosperity for all Zimbabweans. In this case, it seems the church is acceptable to both parties since it has thus far managed to bring everyone on the table through the mentioned meeting held in Harare.

Dialogue processes in Tunisia and Senegal owe much of their success to the credibility of the conveners. In Tunisia's 2013-2014 national dialogue, four civil society organisations - general workers union (UGTT - employers union (UTICA) - Tunisian Bar Association and the Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH), served as the convening entities.

With long-standing moral authority and broad constituents bases, this coalition of organisations was seen as credible by a significant proportion of the Tunisian population. In Senegal, former UNESCO director general and respected Senegalese citizen Amadou-

Mahtar M'Bow chaired the 2008-2009 Assises Nationales.

This broad participation can be achieved by linking local dialogue processes to the national dialogue as well as through public consultations, regular outreach and coverage in the media. Delegates can be mandated to hold consultations with the groups that they represent as was the case during Kenya's 2004 Bomas conference on constitutional reform.

During Senegal's 2008-2009 Assises Nationales (national dialogue), outreach teams conducted consultations in each of Senegal's governorates and also engaged the diaspora in France, United States, and Canada. For public consultations, it is also important that the members of the national dialogue (or the secretariat that supports them), have the capacity to analyse the resulting information.

In conclusion, it is key not to ensure politicians do not solely take an active role in deciding critical national issues. It's high time everyone gets an important stake in determining the future of the country so that there can be collective responsibility on the implications of the results of the pact that would have been achieved.

This will even enhance the participation of all and sundry in ensuring that the best decisions are taken to take the nation forward.

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The conflict has manifested mostly through a spiraling economy that has seen many jobs being lost on a daily basis while the economy continues to spiral. Investors have also stayed away. Zimbabwe's conflict has also seen mistrust between citizens and their government with national developmental programmes being often denied citizen buy-in.

The country's conflict has seen incomes being eroded by price increases. National consensus is broken as each citizen tries to do whatever they think shall help them put food on the table at the end of the day, however detrimental to the national good.

Because of this mistrust, each government programme, however noble, is often quickly shot down by citizens who no longer take time to examine its merits and demerits.

Due to the constant fear of its people, government also takes a default stance. Suffice to say the degree of its fear is exhibited in the force often used in dealing with citizen unrest as each action is viewed as an attempt to overthrow the sitting administration.

In this conflict, just as any other, there is no clear winner.

With that obtaining, it is almost a cliché to say that national dialogue is as imperative as it is urgent. Zimbabwe cannot afford to bleed further than this.

## Goals

Any resolution to the country's conflict must not leave anyone feeling victorious or defeated. It must be a resolution that must not injure egos too.

The goal should be to do away with

political boundaries. The election results dispute that has caused the current logjam must be buried on the promise that the country shall begin again on a path to solving the problems that brought the conflict.

While President Emmerson Mnangagwa feels the opposition needs to recognise him as duly elected leader of the country, he must also know that he needs to take the compromise of removing the very same things that have created conflict.

It would be naïve, however, to believe the current differences are just limited to Zanu PF and MDC. The ghost of Gukurahundi still haunts the country up to now with people in the western parts of the country still feeling cheated. There has been no attempt to appease them in anyway.

This could be resolved by the Zanu PF led government owning up to the transgressions. This would even be more significant in that most of the alleged perpetrators of mass murder are still alive.

While lives lost can no longer be restored, a deliberate attempt to bring development to the affected places which have lagged behind in terms of national programmes can be a good ice-breaker.

Goal should be to unite the nation under one flag. They should be to psych the nation towards building and not destruction. They should be to win hearts and not lose them; to redefine patriotism and not to attach it to a certain political persuasion to the exclusion of the rest.

Goal should also be to build trust in state institutions such as police and army, to end inherent mistrust between government and NGOs, to bring

predictability within the economy so that investors can come in freely and indeed to restore political sincerity and policy consistency.

## Outcomes

The outcome should be restoration on a path to development. Although remote, a truth and reconciliation commission could be considered. The army and police must come clean on that they are non-partisan as they are seen as enemies of the people.

The outcome should be a society that feels wanted and that knows that crime is punishable by the law despite one's political status and affiliation, the ditching of impunity.

Although also remote, a national transitional authority that involves eminent personalities representing the various interest groups in the country can be formed. The ruling party needs to acknowledge that much as it has control of the levers of power. It does not have monopoly over wisdom and the task of bringing development to the nation needs to be shared and this entails bringing in brains like those of prominent opposition politicians such as ex-Ministers Tendai Biti and Nkosana Moyo, among others.

Political prisoners need to be released unconditionally to ease tensions in the country and prepare the ground for sincere talks.

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# Who defines and sets the agenda



Dumisani Ndlovu

Lest we forget, nothing becomes a trend and trends unless concerted efforts are being made day in day out to make a topic an issue.

Public policy studies would tell you the most important issue for public policy makers is agenda setting. An item that goes onto the agenda is the item that will be discussed. So the battle in the public space will always be on what item goes on the agenda.

It's important to look at the author, the originator and the beneficiaries and who needs what. Remember we are operating in a political space when we are trying to dissect this issue of National Dialogue. As defined by Lasswell, politics is about who gets what, when and how. We should therefore look at who needs dialogue more than the other for them to get their what, when and how.

If I may ask, who coined the words National Dialogue and made them trending? Is it individuals or the nation through participatory methodology? I wonder? There is nothing national without 'nationals' engagement. Consultation from the grassroots to the

top branches of the national baobab tree could be the beginning of the end and the end of the beginning.

Let's go to the period between August 1, 2018 to 31 January 2019. The term National Dialogue can be attributed or linked with members of the opposition or local and international media that is critical to either the ruling party and government.

Someone starts it and propels it. If it's a phrase that was coined by the opposition, who (then), do they need the dialogue with?

If it's the ruling party and government that coined it, who again do they want the dialogue with given that during its conference in Esigodini, Zanu PF said it would not engage in any dialogue as it does not negotiate with losers?

In Zimbabwe's political circles the (suggested or proposed) position of (Nelson Chamisa) being Leader of the Opposition in Parliament was widely misunderstood. The common misconception was that this was just a way to incorporate the opposition leader into parliament thereby limiting and silencing his political influence.

The lack of formal recognition and respect the leader of the MDC-Alliance experienced at the recent state funeral of the late Dr Oliver Mtshu shows that the ruling party and government indicates left while turning right.

In the British parliamentary system, the Leader of Opposition is given the honours to speak after the Prime

Minister's (PM) address on all policy debates in parliament. The roles involve responding to the definitions and setup of policy set forth by the PM, presenting the case and position of the opposition.

The opposition could have considered advocating on increasing the frequency of appearances and accountability to parliament of the President for by creating the Leader of Opposition in parliament requires direct and consistent communications of the two roles. This is so because this new opposition role would in turn be expected to respond, rebuff and provide an alternative argument to the President or Prime Minister in that same parliament.

If the MDC Alliance had carefully considered the creation of the Leader of Opposition in Parliament, higher levels of accountability would have been achieved and other governance changes would have emerged.

On this matter the main opposition has only focused on one strategy which involved replacing Zanu PF in the current governance setup as opposed to creating systems that promote efficient, effective and accountable governance. A strategy for dialogue aimed at changing these governance rules would in turn then help the party influence and change issues they currently contest.

Following the collapse of the dialogue window, several church organisations like the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Catholic Commission for



President Mnangagwa at State House with 21 political party leaders

Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) and other civic organisations, have been attempting to bring these main political parties to dialogue.

In my view the major problem with all these organisations seeking to facilitate this process is the lack of unity among themselves in demanding for this process. These organisations have approached the two political parties as individual organisations hence are not speaking in tune with one powerful voice.

Extensive research has it that the other major problem for churches to mediate the process alone is the inability they have in dealing with many of the political grievances that exist between the MDC-Alliance and Zanu PF. One analyst has previously suggested to them that an independent non-partisan political actor who is well informed and vested in these political conflict issues needs to assist them in the process.

I believe that at this stage all our political actors desiring progress and national healing must act more responsibly. All our leaders must refrain from (making) public utterances in the media as these only create more pre-recognition issues and conditions that might hinder the goal of uniting and healing the nation.

Twenty one (21) political parties embraced the path of dialogue created by ED (Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa), under the political parties' dialogue banner to find lasting solutions to the country's challenges in various sectors.

In attendance were NCA leader Professor Lovemore Madhuku, Noah Manyika, Dr Thokozani Khupe, Daniel Shumba, Ambrose Mutinhiri, Brian Mteki, Dr Nkosana Moyo, Elton Mangoma, Lucia Matibenga, among other party leaders.

Absentees to the dialogue were Nelson Chamisa of the MDC-Alliance and Dr Joice Mujuru of the National people's Party (NPP). In this respect the MDC believes that genuine dialogue can only take place if regionally facilitated and mediated by SADC and guaranteed by the AU and the UIN.

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# Dialogue: goal and outcomes



By Ian Mapira

The government is in the process of rebuilding Zimbabwe into a great nation.

Such a mission requires turning around the country's economy which is in a crisis. In order to turn around Zimbabwe's economy, the Minister of Finance (Mthuli Ncube), introduced austerity measures which are "painful" to the ordinary citizens. Austerity measures are government actions to widening the tax base and cutting government expenditure at the same time.

As the government moves on with its austerity measures, fissures among citizens either widen or are created with some believing that the economy is going down. The results of this are violent protests, high price increases, shops looting producing millions of losses as well as the death of civilians.

This shows division among the people of Zimbabwe and there is need for dialogue with the goal of uniting the people. Unity brings with it progress, peace, development, trust and ends violence as outcomes. The argument here is that Zimbabwe needs a national dialogue with a goal of bringing peace among the people.

Venturing into the root cause of the current division one discovers that the July 2018 elections process played a part in dividing the people. When the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) announced Emmerson Mnangagwa as the winner, Nelson Chamisa could not accept the defeat. The opposition leader claimed that elections were rigged and would not recognise Mnangagwa as the legitimate President of Zimbabwe.

Using ZEC results as the statistics of followers, it is possible that the more than two million voters that follow Chamisa do not recognise Mnangagwa as a legitimate leader. This has therefore divided the people of Zimbabwe with some accepting Mnangagwa (over two million voters), while others believe that the government of the day is illegitimate.

In uniting the people, progress becomes one of the key outcomes. With divisions among the people, it becomes almost impossible for Zimbabwe as a nation to achieve the progress needed economically and even in policies.

Zimbabwe's progress in re-joining the Commonwealth league is already at stake with the United Kingdom saying it will not support the southern African country following riots against fuel hikes that took place in urban areas.

Progress in Mnangagwa's participation was also stalled as the President postponed a trip to Davos, Switzerland, where he was expected to sell investment opportunities in the country to investors. Finance Minister Ncube had to spend some time at the World Economic Forum meeting trying to justify why a country that is facing violent protests is perfect for investment.

Zimbabwe's bid in the removal of sanctions is also at risk as the latest violent protests opened issues to do with human rights. One of the conditions for the removal of sanctions against Zimbabwe is the country's respect for human rights.

Britain, which seemed to be making

progress in its relations with Zimbabwe, is now reviewing its position on the African nation. All this shows progress that has been lost as protests broke out in January. Zimbabwe seems to be losing its progress and getting back to international isolation again.

Peace in Zimbabwe is now questionable. "Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, of order -in short, of government," Albeit Einstein said. Basing on Einstein's quote, classification of Zimbabwe as a peaceful country becomes problematic.

The country's legal practitioners have also protested against the justice system calling it compromised. This raises the question whether there is justice in Zimbabwe's judiciary system.

The Zanu PF government has been blaming MDC-Alliance for sponsoring the recent violent protests. In response, the largest opposition party on the land has denied the allegations and blames this on government policies. Protests in Zimbabwe caused the death of at least six people last year and more than 12 civilians in January this year.

If Zimbabweans are to be united such loss of lives can be avoided and peace can be restored again.

Economic development is being stalled by a number of things that point to divisions in Zimbabwe. An English man once said: "Divided we fall and united we stand." Zimbabwe's economy is likely to nose dive if the country remains divided.

It becomes hard to speak with one voice against sanctions when some believe that the restrictions are not to blame for Zimbabwe's economic woes but government mismanagement. Government policies for economic development are being received with protests showing division within the people.

Unity may also build trust among

Zimbabweans themselves. Currently there is no trust between the two largest political parties Zanu PF and MDC-Alliance. Zanu PF believes MDC-Alliance is up to sabotage government policies to effect regime change.

MDC-Alliance has always been accused by the ruling party of going to Western countries to beg for economic sanctions. MDC-Alliance, on the other hand, blames the ruling party for rigging elections as well as capturing state institutions including the judiciary and the security services.

Such mistrust is unhealthy for the nation as political violence victims fail to report their cases for due process of law to take action. Since January, the media has been reporting of women who were raped and failed to report their cases to the police. Through dialogue, Zimbabweans can address their differences to unite and build trust.

Unity in Zimbabwe reduces violence that rocks the country. Elections in the country have been filled with violence with people losing lives and property and some having permanent injuries. It is only unity and tolerance that can reduce such violence in Zimbabwe.

In the July 2018 elections, the political parties met and signed a non-violence treaty. This helped reduce cases of violence before and during elections although there was violence after the elections.

It is important to dialogue, unite and reduce violence which may lead to loss of precious lives in Zimbabwe.

In a nutshell, the Christian Bible says: "A kingdom that divides itself is dead." Dialogue must unite the people for peace, prosperity and development.

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# Gender and national dialogue: the issues

Eight months after the disputed July 2018 national elections, Zimbabwe finds itself constipated economically and politically.

At every turn national dialogue is being touted as the panacea to the political stillbirth.

How that national dialogue should be constituted and held in a manner that will satisfy all parties is a major bone of contention. Both the ruling Zanu PF and the main opposition, MDC - Alliance, believe they should have an over-riding say on who sits at the dialogue table and what issues should be discussed.

That there is a general agreement that national dialogue is necessary is in no doubt, but the possibility of that happening is hamstrung by conflicting political agendas. But it's getting clearer and clearer by the day that both the MDC-Alliance and Zanu PF need each other to survive.

The Emmerson Mnangagwa led government is battling a legitimacy issue which requires it to treat discourse not just as a matter of political expediency, but as something that the country desperately needs. While Nelson Chamisa is still sore from a stolen election, it should be clear to him that there will be no reversal of the Constitutional Court decision on the elections and that his leadership is of essence in ensuring his party is represented in any talks.



By Grace Mutandwa

The political parties see this as their responsibility, but more voices are calling for civil society and churches to be involved too.

In all the calls for a national conversation, what has been lacking is a voice demanding that there be gender balance if and when the chinwag (chat) eventually takes place. In both Zanu PF and the MDC-Alliance, women have been relegated to the back benches and yet in all sustainable peace talks the voice of women is vital.

Women and female youths make the biggest block of voters and by their sheer numbers they deserve not just a seat at the table but a major voice. In the aftermath of the elections there were disturbances that saw soldiers shoot and kill civilians.

Recently a Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions national strike ended with more bloodshed and several women (allegedly) raped by men they

described as soldiers. Whenever there is a political argument of the magnitude that Zimbabwe is currently experiencing, minority and women's rights are trampled on. In national issues the voice of the women is lost.

The recent invitation by Mnangagwa for leaders of political parties to meet him and try and set the tone for a national discourse seemed half-hearted and not genuinely interested in resolving the problems bedeviling the country. Most of the party leaders are male and there should have been a deliberate move to invite as many women as possible. These should not have necessarily been politicians but those in business, human rights and other sectors. Zimbabwe has women who have done well in keeping rights issues under focus while other women have kept the economy going as titans of industry. They too have a voice to add to the dialogue. People with disabilities have been completely ignored too.

## The issues

When looking at issues around national dialogue, it is not always the what that matters, but also the who? Women who are important and fundamental to the dialogue are being excluded even in the initial discussions of how the national talks should be carried out and what the issues on the table should be as well as who should participate.



The main question is who decides who has earned the stripes to be invited to the talks? Who runs the show? Should the president who is an interested party be the one leading the interchange?

While matters of political positions will be uppermost on most politicians' minds, the issues on the table should seek to find lasting solutions to the country's political and economic problems. Protection of institutions of democracy and governance should be at the top of the agenda.

There should be genuine desire by all parties to fix the economy, to see to it that the country commits to reforms and honest engagement of the international community. The beatings, killings and rampant rape of women by security forces must be addressed fully.

A gender-balanced and strong civil society keeps both the government and opposition in check and deserves a seat at that table. Under normal circumstances churches speak to peace

and moral issues. Those churches that have stood by the people in times of political strife and hardships should have a say, but they too must ensure that this is not just another opportunity for the men in church to be heard.

Women in the church should not just accompany men, their voices must be heard. The young, the unemployed and those with disabilities, all need to be represented.

Safety of women in independent Zimbabwe continues to be elusive. During the 1970s war of liberation, several women were (reportedly) raped not just by Rhodesian security forces but also by some liberation combatants. Today women still feel under threat. Their level of self-actualisation is in danger because the political environment does not provide a safe space for women.

Any national dialogue that seeks long-lasting solutions should never be restricted to political parties only. While this will be a discussion, given the political disagreements that stand

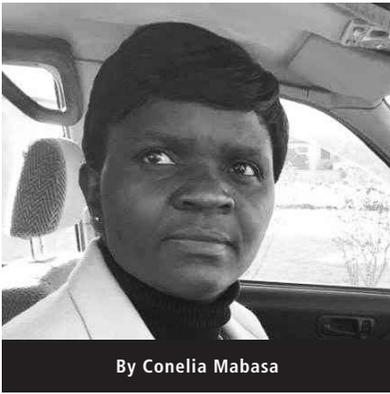
in the way of decent talks, there is need for an impartial moderator who ensures that the conversation does not lose focus and that it remains within the confines of nation building and restoration of peace, rule of law and upholding of human rights.

All parties to the dialogue must be honest and open to discussing national problems as candidly as possible. There must be a mutual agreement that while political beliefs might differ, the needs of the people are more important than political egos. There must be an acceptance that there can be no national talks without women.

As aptly captured in a recent Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition statement: "We hold the firm view that national dialogue process must never be restricted to political parties but should bring on board a cross-section of stakeholders that include civic society, labour, women, youth, persons living with disabilities, media, farmers, religious groups, business, students and Zimbabweans living abroad."

Zimbabwe requires a national dialogue that is as painfully honest as possible and one that embraces the needs and aspirations of all nationals. Democracy can only thrive if all parties to the national discourse put country and people first.

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By Conelia Mabasa

# Women's voices matter

In the aftermath of the stayaway of January 14 called by the ZCTU and the army and police crackdown that followed soon after mostly in high-density suburbs of Harare, 17 women were reportedly raped by "security forces".

Most of the women gave their accounts of rape to reporters from a safe house in Harare. Ambushed in the dead of the night, perpetrators forced themselves on them without any form of protection and disappeared into the night.

But how did we get to the stayaway, the protests and general restlessness? Ever since the coup, sanitised as "operation restore legacy" of November 2017 that toppled former president Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe has been slowly sliding into a military state. And the fact that the presidium comprises former military men does not help matters.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa, vice-presidents Kembo Mohadi and Constantino Chiwenga are former freedom fighters. From the time they were assisted into power by the army, they rely on the repressive state apparatus as a back-up each time they are caught unawares by citizens trying to voice their concerns as evidenced by the events of August 1, 2018 where six people lost their lives and several were injured when youths went into the streets to protest delays in the

announcement of presidential election results.

They relied on the same in the week of the stayaway when citizens were brutalised to crush the protests against hardship and a failing economy.

In a wounded society where poverty, frustration, anger, conflict and unresolved crises are rampant, women come out worse off and rape is often used as a "weapon of war". The victims suffer a double bind because reporting brings unwanted attention and stigma, but to keep quiet is to allow perpetrators to go unpunished yet the wounds remain raw inside of victims.

For a country to be described as peaceful, women and children must feel secure. It is against this background that calls for national dialogue are most welcome and women must claim a seat as nobody can articulate their issues

better than women themselves.

National dialogue is described loosely as when a nation converses with itself to resolve sticking issues with a view to find lasting solutions to foster peace and prosperity.

According to a report, *Beyond the number: Women's participation in the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation*, women inclusion will add credence to the peace processes. Meredith Preston McGhie and E. Njoki Wamai argue that:

"Research shows that broader inclusivity in formal peace process, of civil society as well as women, increases the credibility of the process and contributes to the sustainability of the agreement reached. Peace processes characterised by heavy involvement of women have been found to be more legitimate and sustainable compared



to those with little or no women's involvement . . . women serve as important counterweights to what are often political or military interests."

The Gender Commission, Women's Action Group, Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association, Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, Women and Land Rights Zimbabwe, Msasa Project, Katswe Sistahood, among others, must bring women's issues to the fore during national dialogue.

If women take a back seat, chances are the national dialogue will be political judging by how President Mnangagwa invited presidential candidates in the last election to initiate dialogue on February 6 2019. That created the impression that the solution to our myriad of problems is political, yet there are many stakeholders and politicians are only a single entity.

National dialogue is not a political agenda, but all encompassing.

However, it is also important to note that women are not a homogeneous group and their views in a given conflict are not the same and this calls for wider consultation from the grassroots. In South Africa, women's organisations mobilised three million women in the consultative process to build on to the women's agenda for the national dialogue.

In that same breath, it is not enough to just have women representation, but it is critical to bring in expert knowledge, direction and substance. It is not the number of participants that matters, but the quality they bring to the discussions and experience in peaceful resolution is a prerequisite.

In Kenya, the women were assisted by Graca Machel as one of the mediators together with other conflict resolution experts from the United Nations. It is important that we study how other



countries were able to navigate national dialogue to minimise resistance and avoid false starts, since that has a bearing on budgets and set timeframes.

The consultative process brings in a new dimension about funding for the huge process of national dialogue. When Burundi engaged in national dialogue in 1994, after an attempted coup resulted in 50,000 casualties, they went looking for funding which they got from the Nordic countries. The grant was administered by an outsider to guard against misappropriation of resources or diversion of funds, which Zimbabwe has a reputation for.

Before various groups are invited for national dialogue, the state must make funding available and give the timeframes for the complex process, which involves changing national attitudes and training of minds to work for national good rather than selfish ends.

The process of national dialogue and conflict resolution cannot be chaired by one of the participants as is threatening to happen in Zimbabwe. The president cannot lead the dialogue or call on parties to bring the concerns of their supporters. The process is fragile and could suffer legitimacy, objectivity and credibility issues. Government cannot take the lead, they must use the same modus operandi

they used following the August 1 shootings, find neutrals to lead.

National dialogue cannot be haphazard or exclude certain key populations, otherwise it will be an exercise in vain. Key populations include academics, women, experts in rights, democracy, security, churches, civic society, media, business and ambassadors, among others.

According to the Platform for Concerned Citizens, (co-convened by Ibbo Mandaza and Tony Reeler), the national dialogue must address: economic and social rights; restoration of the rule of law and absolute adherence to the Constitution; compliance with natural justice, safety and security, withdrawal of the military from civilian space as well as complete opening of the media space and an inclusive national dialogue.

The task at hand cannot be a public relations exercise, it is the dividing line between national demise and resurgence.

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# Inclusive dialogue panacea to Zimbabwe's crisis

A hungry man is an angry man.

This adage best explains the dilemma that Zimbabwe faces if it fails to address the current political, economic and social crisis.

Elections have been held before and once they are done people of Zimbabwe have always resorted to endurance and moving on awaiting the next harmonised elections hoping to vote democratically again.

These are people who are caught in between political parties and are left with no choice except to call for national dialogue which they believe might come to their rescue in their hope to build a better Zimbabwe for the future of their nation.

They are hoping to once again have a revived Zimbabwe where after tertiary education one is able to apply for a job, get a weekly wage or a monthly salary and at least be able to buy groceries for their elderly at home which has become a dream among other daily expectations.

People might continue pointing a finger at each other as to who did what, but what Zimbabweans need right now is mapping the way forward on how to build their country for the sake of their future as a nation.

The statistics of the 2018 Harmonised Election results are self-explanatory and one would not dispute the need for a national dialogue. It's like the country is split into two halves. We are talking about people's lives (here) and their future.



By Pauline F. Chateuka

Political parties, communities, traditional leaders, districts, regions, faith-based organisations (FBOs), civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, youth organisations, women organisations and those representing children's rights, must take part in the national dialogue as evidence of everyone's participation.

A national dialogue is a process and therefore no one should be left out for the sake of mapping an inclusive way forward and reaching consensus.

Taking into account the events of August 1, 2018, everybody should be hurt by the loss of lives of innocent people to what people might want to call some "power hungry" politicians.

The same happened during the so called "stay away demonstration" that again also took the lives of innocent people with some losing their properties.

Yes, people are hungry but the looting and destruction of property worsened things and reduced the credibility of what was supposed to be a mere peaceful demonstration. But the question is: *Since when have Zimbabweans become so heartless*

*to the extent of killing one another?*

The expected national dialogue should table issues that affect the whole nation; especially issues regarding the environment around campaign activities when heading for an election. This is where political violence begins when people take advantage of the dominance of their political parties, affiliation and positions they hold in the respective parties.

The national dialogue should come up with fair mechanisms that will provide security against political violence. This should include, provision of security to the media fraternity to enable them to conduct their duties as expected of them without fear of victimisation.

Security is the major mechanism to what we might want to call a free country, without security the nation will always live in fear.

Every Zimbabwean has a role to play in this national dialogue even though at different levels such as the community level, organisations representing different groups of people (women, youths or children), different political parties or different faith based organisations, just to mention but a few. All these people are the ones that make a nation and in this case the nation called Zimbabwe and they must be the stakeholders of the national dialogue.

Consultations with the people of Zimbabwe starting from the communities, would help in the initial stages of the national dialogue because players such as the political parties, faith

based organisation, women organisations and NGOs, are there because of communities. Therefore each player should have representation at the negotiation table to make sure no one is left out.

There can never be a political party without involvement of the community and the same applies to all the other organisations hence the vitality of the communities which must be the first port of call if Zimbabwe is going to have a meaningful and fruitful national dialogue.

At this juncture the national dialogue is a very important process to the people of Zimbabwe and must be spear-headed by Zimbabweans. It's high time Zimbabweans learn to trust themselves as a nation.

The truth is Zimbabweans know where their problems are emanating from. Therefore, if the political parties are the cause, why not then leave the mediation process in the hands of FBOs who are sort of neutral even though there are active politicians in the church.

What is needed right now is to give them the benefit of doubt and leave them to lead the process. Zimbabwe is a member of SADC, AU, UN and other international communities that can come in to monitor the situation.

Zimbabwe has been through a Government of National Unity (GNU) before and it's not surprising to walk along the same path for the second time. In the end, it is ordinary Zimbabweans that must be the winners and not politicians.

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# Who gets invited to the table?

There is a popular quote that reads: *if you are not at the table, you are in the menu.*

Zimbabwe is not short of the best minds, the best negotiators who have the potential to push parties to reach the zone of potential agreement, but the rhetorical question would be:

In the previous discourse has the government been inclusive enough to invite different stakeholders to the table or the table has always been reserved for those who think they have monopoly over democratic powers?

The recent social and political upheavals in the country are too hard to fathom and dialogue is urgently needed to restore harmony in this once jewel of Africa.

As am writing this article am reflecting on the book by Elisabeth Lindenmayer and Josie Lianna Kaye published in 2009 and titled: *A choice for Peace? The Story of Forty-One Days of Mediation in Kenya.* The former United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan (May his soul rest in peace) who was the chief mediator made sure that the process was inclusive by ensuring that all groups were continuously engaged in the process.

It is an uncontested fact that Zimbabwe is in a state of disharmony with the recent security forces brutal crackdown still fresh in the minds of many. The country has not survived the economic implosion either and the economic indicators have gone in the wrong direction. The crisis in the country cannot be solved by great speeches delivered with great oratory skills.

What is needed is a settlement ideally meant to provide an immediate solution



By Clarity Sibanda

to the country's problems. Our leaders must stop the ostrich mentality of hiding their heads in the sand especially when things go wrong. Dialogue is needed to resolve the impasse. The discussion must be inclusive, and this is the only way to ensure that a broader set of interests is represented.

In the quest of ensuring that everyone is represented, dialogue must involve stakeholders drawn from faith-based organisations, civil society and the media. It is true that no government can be secure without a formidable opposition. Therefore, opposition political parties must be invited to the table.

The warring political parties must come on board, discuss and proffer solutions to the crisis. The government of the day predominantly consisting of Zanu PF compatriots, has refused to yield to opposition demands calling for the restoration of democratic rule of law while the leading opposition MDC-Alliance party is alleged to have been the brains behind the periodic protests.

Finger pointing has become the order of the day among the two parties hence the deafening calls by concerned citizens for the two to dialogue. Dialogue can help

assist in the restoration of the rule of law. Kenya is a good example of how mediation as a result of effective dialogue managed to resolve the deadly post-election dispute. The post election violence that erupted in the East African country in December 2007 is said to have resulted in the death of over a thousand people. The events that ensued are not quite different from what transpired in Zimbabwe as we reflect on the post-2018 elections where protests against election fraud turned bloody with soldiers firing live ammunition and allegedly killing six people.

We can write about our troubles until the cows come home, but recent developments just show the urgent need to hold a national dialogue which might be the answer to the crisis. In Kenya, for the warring parties to reach consensus, mediators were invited.

The violence was too dire to ignore and to restore peace, reaching an agreement was the only solution. After days of intense negotiations between President Mwai Kibaki and Mr. Raila Odinga, an agreement was reached. The process led to the two signing an Agreement on the Principles of Partnership of the Coalition Government.

These are critical lessons to be learnt and perhaps Zimbabwe can pluck a leaf from Kenya especially on the significance of inviting political parties to the table.

Secondly, the religious leaders must be part of the dialogue process. Those who followed the 2017 events in the country will remember how the Catholic cleric, Father Fidelis Mukonori, participated in the negotiations between former President Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe Defence Forces led by General Constantino Chiwenga.

The military seized power but did not remove President Robert Mugabe. Instead, the Jesuit helped in convincing the former leader to resign. One could argue that the mutual trust Mugabe had with the cleric leader helped in resolving the leadership impasse. The church,



because of its ability to develop processes within the framework of peace, justice, respect and acceptance, to improve long-term relations and attitudes between the conflicting parties, will definitely have to be part of the dialogue.

Thirdly, civil society organisations that comprise women/men-led groups, the disability sector, trade unions, students and youths, among others, must be involved in the dialogue process. For quite some time, civic groups and the State have had acrimonious relationships. The latter has labeled the groupings 'enemies of the state' while those CSOs that signed Memorandum of Understandings with the Government, have received their fair share of criticism from the ordinary citizens who allege they have been conscripted and demobilised by the system.

It is thus important to have non-partisan CSOs that will be able to advocate and represent the voice of the voiceless as has always been their mandate since inception. Partisanship must be thrown out of the window while a culture of tolerance must reign during the dialogue.

Last but not least, the media must be at the table. The adage, the pen is mightier than the sword has shown the effective role played by the media in informing and educating. The recent internet shutdown led to the country's citizenry losing vital information. The fourth estate was not spared either especially online media houses who solely rely on the internet to disseminate information.

Therefore, it is pivotal for the sector to be invited to the table so that they can be able to express their concerns and defend their mandate.

The list of those to participate in the dialogue process might be non-exhaustive, but what really matters is having everyone represented. People must understand that dialogue can sometimes be a process, rather than an event. Understanding that the process is owned by the parties themselves is integral to a holistic approach to peacemaking.

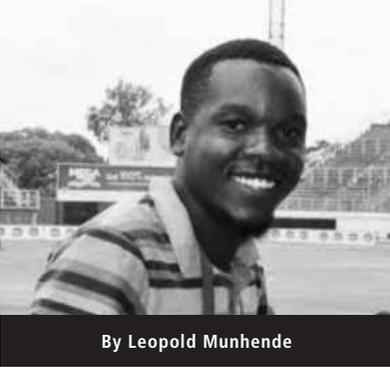
Just like Malala Yousafzai aptly put it and I quote: "The best way to solve problems and to fight against war is through dialogue." If we do not engage in dialogue, we will be irrational as a people for we cannot continue losing lives. Neither can we withstand the economic pressure exacerbated by periodic violence.

The social, political and economic situation in the country is a ticking bomb waiting to explode and many will surely be left scathed if something is not done.

After all, a stitch in time saves nine.

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# Dialogue should be between Mnangagwa and Chamisa



By Leopold Munhende

Zimbabwe's economic and political outlook is not as rosy as was forecast by optimistic analysts following the 2017 coup which toppled Robert Mugabe after 37 years at the helm of the state and government.

Talk of dialogue between 'stakeholders' to find common ground and reset the Southern African state to a development paradigm has been common in the past weeks as the economic turmoil starts to claw at those who thought they were beyond the reach of the ever-encroaching crisis.

It is no secret that some members of society (especially the subaltern) favoured a transitional government after the army-led coup mainly because Zanu PF had depleted the little trust they had for it and its leadership which they accused of gross mismanagement of the economy, unprecedented levels of corruption and disregard for basic human rights.

The late MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai and his cadres had shown their capabilities in the 2009-2013 coalition government and there was hope that a similar setup after Mugabe would counter the negatives which threatened to take the country back to 2008.

With the route the country is taking being

questioned locally and internationally, President Emmerson Mnangagwa called all losing presidential candidates to a national dialogue (at State House). This was snubbed by MDC president Nelson Chamisa who got just about as much as Mnangagwa and has refused to acknowledge the Zanu PF stalwart's presidency.

Chamisa has been castigated for snubbing the talks by some sections of society and the media. But to be honest, what can Chamisa discuss with Bryn Mteki, Daniel Shumba, Violet Mariyacha, Melbah Dzepasi, Blessing Kasiyamhuru and Peter Wilson who all got 0.1 percent in last year's presidential election. The closest loser to Chamisa, his nemesis Thokozani Khupe of the MDC-T, got 0.9 percent.

No wonder Nkululeko Sibanda (Chamisa's presidential spokesperson), dismissed the gathering as a 'tea party' and Joice Mujuru (who got 0.3 percent), described it as a photo opportunity.

It is of paramount importance that it be established by whoever is responsible, the constituents being represented by these losing presidential candidates who attended the State House event.

In 1978, then (Rhodesian) Prime Minister Ian Douglas Smith, invited all opposition political parties to dialogue. The likes of Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole made their way to Smith's offices like what happened recently.

Robert Mugabe snubbed the talks and argued: "Legitimacy is not sought through some kitchen dialogue but from all the people of Zimbabwe, black or white. Release all political prisoners so that we can talk."

I am sure this sounds familiar to those

who have been following recent developments.

This dialogue should be between Zanu PF and the Chamisa-led MDC. Any other politician seeking to add a voice (to the dialogue) is merely looking for unwarranted publicity and a shot at any office in a possible GPA (Global Political Agreement), if the dialogue goes the way the ordinary man on the street hopes it will.

"A group of electoral losers whose mandate is hallucinatory will attend a meeting called by the disputed leader of Zimbabwe. Meanwhile, the one with the legitimate claim to the throne Nelson Chamisa calls for restoration of law and order before dialogue. Forward!" said academic Pedzisai Ruhanya on microblogging platform Twitter.

It is those with a considerable constituency of followers who have to discuss the future of this country. That president Mnangagwa said he does not have autonomy over good ideas does not mean the course Zimbabwe is going to take should be determined by Timothy Chiguvare of the People's Progressive Party (0.0 percent). Those without numbers should sit back and let those with numbers dialogue.

The challenge with involving the church is that some clerics are getting tainted by the day. The number of cases reported against (some of) these religious leaders is appalling especially when one considers that the hopeless continue to flock to these peoples' 'sanctuaries' where the little they would have saved is conned out of their torn pockets.

Zimbabwe does not have spiritual problems. Ours are political issues which have resulted in economic failure. If they were spiritual, I am sure they would

have been solved by now since we are a prayerful lot.

Traditional leaders, except may be for Chief Vezi Maduna of Filabusi, cannot be trusted as they have not made it a secret that their allegiance lies with Zanu PF. It will be folly for us to think that they would suddenly go against the wishes and demands of the revolutionary party during whatever dialogue.

This dialogue should just be facilitated by an individual without any direct interests in Zimbabwe. South Africa has done enough and should be commended for that. However, they have vested interests in this poor country.

A seemingly defeated Zanu PF sets a bad precedence (for South Africa) as it would be inspirational to the militant Julius Malema-led EFF and the ambitious DA. We need the United Nations to mediate issues between Zanu PF and MDC, the only worthy stakeholders to whatever talks might follow. Healing and restoration after conflict are not issues to be taken so lightly.

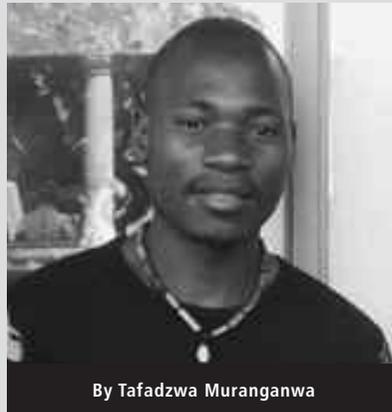
Just recently members of the media grilled Khupe after she invited political players to a national dialogue. In what capacity? Was she going to get recognition seeing as she only has 0.9 percent of the electorate? Who was she representing? How was she going to interact with Chamisa whom she accused of being a power grabber?

Zimbabwe cannot run away from these questions.

Ideas may differ, but whatever the case might be, honestly, what can Chamisa discuss with Bryn Mteki?

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# All parties have a stake



By Tafadzwa Muranganwa

Zimbabwe is suffering from a worsening economic decay that is reminiscent of the economic meltdown in 2008 amid calls for national dialogue to prevent the country from falling into quagmire.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa and opposition MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa, have been warming up to national talks though with conditions for the dialogue. It is in this regard that even the media has focused much on the two big political outfits, Zanu PF and MDC-Alliance in the national dialogue that is now the main hope for most citizens to extricate this country from this economic and political malaise.

However, this article serves to remind that for a successful national dialogue to happen there is the need to ensure there is inclusivity targeting all political parties, business, civil society, church, traditional leaders, women and youths groups.

All political parties have a role to play in the mulled national dialogue as some of the main issues equally affect them. It was indeed prudent for 'progressive development parties' comprising Thokozani Khupe's MDC-T, Trust Chihora's Coalition of Democrats and Lucia Matibenga's People's Development Party,

to also add their voices in calling for a national dialogue.

More political parties should now accede to this call and desist from demands that are self-centred and which may derail a fruitful outcome.

It is not a secret that any business would operate viably in an environment that is peaceful and profitable so there is need to invite the business sector. And, many a times in this country, the informal sector is not given its due consideration despite that it is one of the key drivers of this economy.

Organisations that represent the informal sector like the Small-to-Medium Enterprises of Zimbabwe (SMEZ), Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET) and the Cross-Border Association of Zimbabwe just to mention a few should be invited for the dialogue rather than only focusing on formal businesses.

We have witnessed how the government in its quest to formalise the country has been coming hard on vendors who don't have any other alternatives to sustain themselves because of unemployment so there is need for this sector to also participate in the national dialogue.

Civic society is a vital cog in promoting democracy, transparency and accountability in any country by encouraging political participation among citizens. It will be worthwhile for various organisations within this sector to converge and participate in the national dialogue.

Zimbabwe has witnessed human rights abuses and there is need for a serious national healing and transitional processes that can only be fostered by some

non-governmental organisations that have been pushing for this and should be the key stakeholders in the national dialogue.

It is undeniable that the church is important in nation-building which makes it undoubtedly a key player in the national dialogue. Organisations like the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, among many others, can be credited for starting the conversation around national dialogue and as such, should come in as facilitators or mediators.

The fact that traditional leaders have been accused of being partisan in their roles means that there cannot be any dialogue without involving them.

The Zimbabwe Peace Project, led by veteran journalist Jestina Mukoko, has documented how traditional leaders have in many elections been used to intimidate the rural electorate. It will be a futile dialogue when such a fundamental issue is discussed or not discussed without inviting the traditional leadership especially (through) its representative Zimbabwe Council of Chiefs.

In a statement on the need for national dialogue, Heal Zimbabwe aptly captures some of the key stakeholders for a fruitful dialogue.

“Zimbabweans from across the political divide including women, youths, children,

people living with disabilities and other key stakeholders must collectively table their concerns, ” asserts Heal Zimbabwe.

Women continue to bear the brunt of political contestations in Zimbabwe. According to the Research Advocacy Unit (RAU), the spectre of politically motivated violence against women in Zimbabwe is appalling as cited in some of their researches such as the 2010 *Preying on the “Weaker” Sex: Political Violence against Women in Zimbabwe and Politically Motivated Rape in Zimbabwe* (2011).

During the three-day stay away in January (this year), scores of women are reportedly said to have been raped by suspected soldiers. Against this background, there is the inherent need for full women representation and participation in the national dialogue.

Another borne of contention among women is how they have shied away from politics in this country because of its violent nature, observed even in political parties’ primary elections. Subsequently, only a few women have stood up for council, legislative and presidential elections.

Youths in Zimbabwe tend to share the same predicaments that women face. For example most young people are targeted as perpetrators of violence or as victims. In a paper titled, *African Experiences of Youth in Political Violence - Reflections on*

*Zimbabwe* (2013), Paul Bradfield says:

“The prevailing theme in the commentary on youth and violence is that exclusion and lack of opportunities faced by young people leads to disillusionment and, in some cases, their participation in violence.

“Unemployment, insufficient educational opportunities, poor governance and social marginalisation can lead to the deep disaffection of youth in society, increasing the likelihood of them resorting to anti-social activity and engagement in violence.”

From the assertion above, it becomes apparently clear that the young folks have a stake in the national dialogue and especially in the current scenario where most of them had been angling for a young leadership during the 2018 elections campaign. It becomes a must to recognise their role.

So various youth organisations will now have a mandate to table their concerns and should also consider their counterparts in rural areas for a holistic strategy to alleviate their grievances.

People with disabilities who have been alienated from most economic and political processes, need to be factored in so that inclusivity is obtained during the national dialogue.

Those with disabilities are the most affected when there is economic and political strife hence organisations that advocate for their rights ought to be included in the national dialogue.

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By Nkosana Dlamini

# Broader representation key to national dialogue

WITH calls for a national dialogue reaching a crescendo, Zimbabweans are still agonising on who should be part of the envisaged national process widely thought to be the panacea to the country's deepening multi-faceted crisis.

Speaking during the inception of a dialogue initiative by churches in February this year, MDC-Alliance leader, Nelson Chamisa, said the current national gridlock that has manifested in massive suffering and citizen unrest must never be located outside the 2018 electoral dispute between his party and President Emmerson Mnangagwa's Zanu PF.

However, a general reflection on the country's successive past conflicts would reveal that even before the July 30 2018 elections, there were already pockets of restlessness among different communities, interest groups and individuals.

These include sections of the population that feel excluded from national processes, sections that feel they have been wronged before and have further been ignored.

Because of that, the importance of having broader representation on the negotiating table cannot be over-emphasised.

Stakeholders who should indeed input

in the national discourse process include central government, parliament, politicians, the church, youths and women organisations, business, civil society and traditional leaders.

## Parliament and Government

Parliament and government are the only stakeholders who can exercise constitutional authority to leverage processes. The two arms of the state also control the coercive instruments of the state to enforce decisions.

They enjoy mandates that have been granted directly from the much representative electoral process. They are the implementing arms of the state and exercise the responsibility to attend to public matters.

Unlike some of the stakeholders within the dialogue matrix, they have control over material public resources and are the main stakeholders in the process.

In the Zimbabwean case, the two arms of the state hail from political institutions - Zanu PF and MDC - that have been blamed for the current economic and political problems. They are protagonists and for those reasons, they cannot be found missing from the negotiating table.

## Church

The Zimbabwean church, in its diversity, is also a key sector within the national discourse. It brings in conscience and the moral dimension to the negotiating table.

It is one unique institution that is non-partisan and is anchored on Christian

values which are shared across the political divide. The church introduces the sobering component into a setting with simmering tensions.

The church also has the advantage of numbers as Zimbabwe is largely a Christian country with values anchored on the popular religion. It is one institution that has the rare capabilities of drawing membership from a diverse setting.

In all the country's past conflicts, the church has played a role in bringing feuding parties together. It is, however, encouraging that the current dialogue process is also being spearheaded by men of the cloth.

## Business

Business has remained an elite force within a national system that has seen prices soar and jobs lost. It has the national economy in the palm of its hand. Coincidentally, the economy is another primary area of intense conflict in the country.

Business plays the unenviable role of being the buffer between governing authorities and citizens if it comes to economic matters. However, the two ends (government and citizens) have also taken time to single it out for the country's pricing chaos.

Business has indeed been the problem in as much as it remains the solution.

In the current economic anarchy, business ethics have been tossed through the window to the detriment of the economy with the most visible acts being the role business has taken in

fuelling the illegal foreign currency black market.

The rancour between business and the population has often been seen in massive looting during civil unrest situations.

In a period of economic stress, business often bears the brunt of citizen anger because of its close interaction with ordinary citizens who cannot understand pricing models beyond the gluttonous desires of the commercial entities.

For those reasons, a national dialogue process cannot afford to exclude this important stakeholder as buy-in is needed from all these constituencies. Business has the financial muscle to influence the direction of matters.

### Civil society

Civil society consists of grassroots based organisations that closely interact with people on a daily business. They know the people's needs, they live the people's troubles. They have been fingered as one of the main problems as they have also been handy in offering assistance to the suffering masses.

Because of their philanthropic nature and advocacy role within society, they have earned the trust of citizens and their messages tend to be welcomed by their different constituencies.

Pressure groups, another appendage of civil society, have kept the demands of different interest groups alive through the various platforms they use to push through messages.

Quick examples are groups that have demanded compensation for survivors of violence by government, compensation for those who have been dispossessed of their land and ancestral wealth by big corporates.

### Women and youths

Women and youths, likewise, feel the architecture of the country's politics and economic slant have not been designed to meet their specific needs. The two groups have been used as pawns in the complex game of politics and yet they remain on the peripheries of government leadership.

Women are the majority among voters. Youths are prominent during election campaigns.

Women bear the brunt of political conflict and economic crises. While men suffer the ordeal of torture and related abuses, women suffer the extra misfortune of rape, a violation which lives in one's memories for life.

They are closest to the children, they are often the last of the two parents, to evacuate when adversity strikes because their first concern is their children's safety. Women's involvement in the dialogue process can never be over-emphasised.

### Traditional leaders

Traditional leaders have been accused of being pawns in Zanu PF's power retention strategies. They live among communities that bear the brunt of political violence and poverty.

They are custodians of land and the country's natural wealth, itself a great source of conflict in the country. Traditional leaders live within communities and command great respect among their subjects.

For that reason, their input cannot be ignored in the entire dialogue process.

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# The essence and skills of negotiations



By Grace Mutandwa

“Negotiation is often described as the art of letting the other side have your way. You have to give the other side a chance to put stuff on the table voluntarily,” Christopher Voss.

This is what Zimbabweans are going to have to learn to do. The increasing calls for national dialogue will most likely mutate into a negotiation of sorts. But negotiations are tricky and could fail because of intransigence on the part of one or more parties involved.

Following the disputed 30 July 2017 general elections, Zimbabwe is increasingly faced with a possibility of a negotiated political settlement. The current political stalemate has affected any potential resuscitation of the economy and re-engagement with the international community.

Zimbabwe has lurched from one flawed election to the next and there has not been a negotiation that looked beyond the desires of the political elites. Even support given by some Zimbabweans and the main opposition towards the November 2017 coup, was guided by an immediate need to see the back of then president Robert Mugabe.



It was myopic and sadly was not used to negotiate a way out of the system of patronage that sustained Mugabe. There has been a lack of informed negotiating skills in Zimbabwe which explains why in 2019 the country is still mired in political controversy.

The ruling party is content and happy to continue calling the shots, but the reality on the ground is that at some point it will need to strike a deal of sorts with the MDC-Alliance. While Zanu PF has over the years perfected the art of extracting as much as possible out of rivals, it might be time now for the opposition to ensure that, if there is any deal to be made, it is one that leaves the country in a better space in terms of good governance and democracy.

As Lamman Rucker says: “Everything is a negotiation. Everything is a little bit of give and take.” The opposition and other players will have to accept that while some gains will be made something will be lost but whatever is lost must not have a higher value than the desired goal.

Effective negotiators are savants at creating and claiming value. They know what the bigger picture is, they research on possible outcomes and find ways of

protecting the real value they seek. While one might be a good political leader they might not be the best negotiator and if that is the case, a good leader will always identify and push forward best deal makers.

Even when there are ructions between negotiating parties, a skilled negotiator will seek to build mutual understanding with their rival. Creating rapport sometimes makes the other person more willing to drop one or more demands.

Sometimes negotiations by their nature are emotive and often marred by anger. The ability to listen carefully and restating your rival’s arguments and acknowledging their fears and frustrations will show your opponent that while you might not agree, you care enough to listen with understanding.

Your counter arguments must leave room for further discussions or for both of you to be able to change your stance on something.

These are some of the skills the opposition parties in Zimbabwe will have to employ if there is ever a negotiation with President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s government. In such a

scenario it is most likely MDC-Alliance will be a major player as the biggest opposition party.

Its leader Nelson Chamisa will have to appreciate the importance of accepting that in any political deal, there should always be room for smart trade-offs. But, Mnangagwa will also need to genuinely listen to Chamisa’s grievances and understand that these are important to the opposition leader. Negotiations are not about belittling each other, but finding each other even under the most difficult circumstances.

The nature of Zimbabwean politics requires that any negotiation is underwritten by the people and recognises the importance of putting country and people ahead of political leaders’ needs. It must be one that seeks to overhaul the country’s political system so that no government ever has to rewind back and run the country the Robert Mugabe way again.

The success of any negotiation in Zimbabwe will lie in ensuring that institutions that promote and protect democracy, the judiciary and governance, are strengthened and valued. Unless there is negotiation that commits to a thorough cleansing of the system of government, Zimbabwe will remain stuck in a cycle of tyranny and patronage.

It is time for a political settlement that not only promises reforms but delivers and immerses itself into rebuilding the country. Zimbabwe needs a political negotiation that values each and every Zimbabwean irrespective of gender, race, colour, creed or political persuasion.

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# Is Zimbabwe headed for second GPA?



By Mandla Tshuma

Zimbabwe has not enjoyed any meaningful peace since the military ouster of former president Robert Mugabe in November 2017 despite the act having been viewed by many as a positive step towards democratic governance in the Southern African country.

This, compounded by the disputed presidential polls last year in which President Emmerson Mnangagwa, was declared winner by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, a position also upheld by the Constitutional Court, indisputably heralded more problems for the country.

It appears, Zimbabwe's challenges are more political than anything, meaning that if the country is to move forward, it must fix its

dirty politics which is to blame for the current suffering of the masses.

When Zimbabwe's crisis reached fever-pitch in 2008 after the disputed polls, the regional bloc - Southern African Development Community (SADC) - had no choice but to intervene and broker a Global Political Agreement between Zanu PF and the then two formations of the MDC, which gave birth to a coalition government.

Under the inclusive government, successfully mediated by then South African president, Thabo Mbeki, Mugabe remained head of state, while the late MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai became prime minister.

It was under the three-legged government that Zimbabwe fully-adopted a multi-currency regime anchored by the United States dollar, and the economy started recovering from the doldrums. Basic commodities which had since vanished from the shelves of many shops started resurfacing with inflation remaining under control.

Zimbabweans had to somehow forget their yester-years problems during the unity government era, but that did not last forever.

In July 2013, the coalition government tenure came to an end, with the holding of harmonised elections in which Zanu PF was controversially declared winner. The economy started to take a further nose dive resulting in the cash crisis compounded by the disappearance of the US Dollar notes from the market.

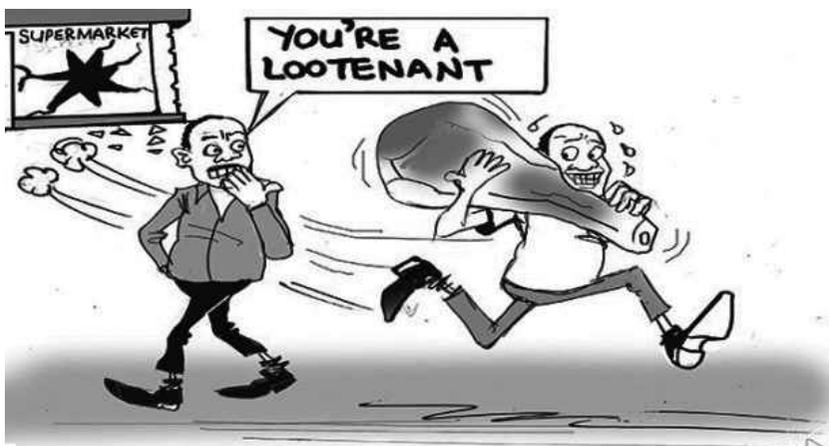
All measures by the Mugabe-led administration, which also had large fissures, failed to address the economy with life becoming harder for the ordinary citizen every day.

To address the cash crisis, the Zanu PF government had to introduce bond coins and bond notes indexed at par with the United States dollar in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Bond notes and coins appeared to have temporarily solved the challenge of cash until September last year when the surrogate currency fell on its knees, almost crashing.

Now with the calls for a national dialogue becoming louder and louder with the passing of each day, Zimbabweans are wondering if Zimbabwe could be headed for a second GPA. The ordinary citizen in the streets does not necessarily care who is on the throne. All they need is an enabling environment to pursue their dreams and be able to meet their basics.

Earlier, on Zanu PF had ruled out the possibility of a GNU, with party stalwarts such as Christopher Mutsvangwa and President Emmerson Mnangagwa himself, having said the party had more than two-thirds parliamentary majority to go it alone.

However, the civil and political unrests that have rocked the country since the July 2018 polls to date, point to the fact that the Zanu PF government alone is far from addressing economic challenges bedeviling this country.



The 40-day strike by junior doctors, which almost crippled the health services sector and the January national shutdown by Zimbabweans across the country, are clear signs that not all is well in Zimbabwe and a national dialogue is inevitable.

Government had all along been meeting with civil servants' representatives in order to iron out their differences, but most of these meetings have ended up in deadlock with both parties failing to agree.

Political observers have since said it is high time President Mnangagwa engages MDC-Alliance leader, Nelson Chamisa, for the good of the country. The February 6 political parties' indaba, convened by President Mnangagwa at State House, was boycotted by the MDC-Alliance, citing a litany of reasons.

One of the reasons is the need for the dialogue to be facilitated by an independent mediator.

"In view of this, the MDC's position is that the dialogue process must be convened by an independent mediator and not one of the disputants," said the party in a statement.

"In this respect the MDC believes that genuine dialogue can only take place if regionally facilitated and mediated by SADC and guaranteed by the AU and the UN. It is also our view and position that genuine dialogue can only take place when a conducive environment has been created for the same."

Despite the boycott by the MDC-Alliance, 21 other political parties which had fielded presidential candidates in last year's polls attended the meeting in which they agreed that there should be no precondition for the dialogue and that there should be no sacred issues during the discussions. It was further agreed that both political and economic reforms should be implemented while politically motivated violence should be shunned.

Four committees were set up with the first one focusing on the institutional framework of the dialogue while the second would deal with the agenda items for the dialogue. The third is going to determine the convenor of the dialogue while the fourth

one would be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the agreed issues.

It is, however, not clear if the national dialogue could lead to another coalition government.

Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, one of the organisations that have been calling for the indaba, has said the objective has not necessarily been to create another GPA.

"We further clarify that in our view the national dialogue that we continue to call for is not predicated on creating another version of GPA or an elite power sharing deal," said the organisation in a statement.

"We reiterate that our envisaged national dialogue should be a reform process that seeks to safeguard the interest of citizens by restoring the Social Contract between the citizens and those that govern." Political analyst, Thomas Sithole, said a coalition government could not be ruled out ultimately considering the legitimacy crisis Mnangagwa faces following last year's disputed polls.

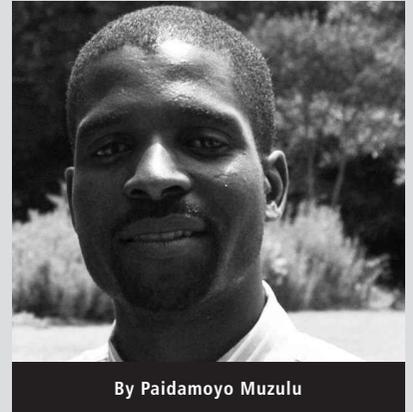
"I think the Zanu-PF-led government is seeking legitimacy it has suffered since we went to the polls," said Sithole.

"The outcome that has been contested has obviously dealt Zanu PF a heavy blow. By these talks, they are trying to get other political parties especially the MDC-Alliance to accept that the results that were upheld by the Constitutional Court are final."

He added should that fail, then Zanu PF would be forced to get into a coalition government with the opposition.

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# No wind in the sails for another GNU



By Paidamoyo Muzulu

ZIMBABWE started the year 2019 in familiar environment of deteriorating economic conditions, collapsed social services, political polarisation and a looming drought.

As in the decade ago, the political gladiators are looking to political dialogue as the panacea to the nation's ills. However, times have changed and a politically negotiated settlement is not possible this time around.

A political settlement would not be easily reached in the current scenario for a variety of reasons, but mainly because of four major reasons:

- the opposition has no bargaining leverage having less than a third of the seats in the National Assembly.
- the overt military takeover after the November 2017 coup,
- weak and fragmented opposition and
- SADC's non-interest in intervening in the Zimbabwean crisis despite its potential contagion effect in the region.

For coherence and systematic way of substantiating the afore-mentioned

position, it is important to take the points one by one and sequentially.

### **No parliamentary bargaining power**

In 2008, the combined MDC formations had an 11-MP majority in the National Assembly and just below 50% of the membership of the Senate. This reality was that it was untenable for former president Robert Mugabe to lead a minority government through his five-year tenure.

The MDC, without a political settlement had the power to stop the passage of any budget tabled in Parliament, thus Mugabe would not have had the power to effectively govern.

In other words, Mugabe was a lame-duck president and his only alternative, constitutionally, in such a scenario, was to call a fresh election, a position which he was not ready for. This ultimately softened him to negotiate. Any fresh elections would have not only sealed his political career, but also drowned the factitious Zanu PF.

However, the current scenario is different. Zanu PF enjoys a two-thirds majority in Parliament and thus can lead without consulting the opposition.

### **November 2017 coup**

The coup that swept Mugabe out of power changed Zimbabwe's political terrain for the short to medium term. The military openly showed their cards. In fact, it nailed its flag to the mast that it was Zanu PF.

The opposition has no wherewithal to negotiate with the military. In its past attempts, the MDC was left bruised. In the current scenario, the opposition rarely enjoys the support from the international community that it used to have, so it does not have any bargaining chips to open talks.

### **Weak and fragmented opposition**

The death of Morgan Tsvangirai in February 2018, left the opposition clutching at straws. Nelson Chamisa maybe popular, but he does not have a mandate from the party's congress as its uncontested leader.

In essence, Chamisa before opening any negotiations has to have the buy-in from most of the party's top leaders. The less than one-third of seats they hold in Parliament would not guarantee them enough portfolios in Cabinet even in the remote case that dialogue happens.

There would be bloodbath among the opposition political honchos on who would be their negotiators, who would get the coveted Cabinet posts they may get and more importantly, would recent returnees like Tendai Biti or Welshman Ncube, be allowed to take any positions post the negotiations?

It remains a moot case whether the MDC in its current makeup can drive a hard bargain with President Emmerson Mnangagwa and the military better than what Tsvangirai did in 2008. Even with a parliamentary majority, Tsvangirai and team came out junior partners in the GNU enacted in February 2009. Many party supporters were disappointed by the outcome.

This time around, it's unfathomable that the party supporters would want a GNU that does not change things on the ground besides merely shouting they should have some of their own at the top table.

### **Sadc non-interest in the crisis**

SADC has not shown an appetite to intervene in the Zimbabwean crisis, even when it seemed the country could be plunged into civil war in November 2017 when the military unconstitutionally took-over power. This could be read in two ways; SADC was tired of Mugabe and could not wait to see him gone or the member states of the bloc had their own immediate issues to grapple with.

Botswana no longer has vocal and candid Ian Khama neither does Zambia still have the no-nonsense Michael Sata. South Africa, the only country with both the military and economic muscle to nudge Zimbabwe in the right direction seems disinterested. President Cyril Ramaphosa is not a Thabo Mbeki.

He is preoccupied in retaining the African National Congress' power in the May general elections where his scandal ridden party battles it out with Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Fighters and the Democratic Alliance.

More importantly, many countries in the region have learnt very fast from United States President Donald Trump on the resurgence of nationalism. It has become fashionable for many countries to look at how they can survive the emerging trend of unilateralism presented by Trump who thinks of his country first.

Far afield, the United Kingdom while making some noises is deeply troubled in bringing to heel its restless citizens about Brexit. In that sense, Zimbabwe becomes another item on the any other business (AOB) sections of many nations.

### **Conclusion**

While having dialogue and a possible government of national unity may be desirable, it however remains a pipe-dream taking into consideration the afore-mentioned points.

Mnangagwa is not ready to deal. The military is not interested. The opposition is in disarray and the world is preoccupied with its own problems.

In that sense, the dialogue sails maybe adjusted but there is not enough wind in the sails to drive the ship for GNU 2.

*Paidamoyo Muzulu is a senior journalist with Alpha Media Holdings.*

# Considerations for responsible media practice

If one wants to read 'positive' news about a certain political party, there is a designated newspaper full of lurid news that they can snap up.

That is how polarised the media landscape in Zimbabwe is.

Each media institution works to sustain a particular regime of truth; even if it is insensitive and inhumane. At the expense of factual and unbiased news, spin is used to further political ends; leaving one wondering whether we still have our sense of humanity intact as a nation; or we are becoming brute beasts.

Admittedly, any media text seeks to make a certain representation to the reader. This brings up the issue of objectivity and whether it is a utopian ideal. That, perhaps, can be written on in the future. A media practitioner will pursue a certain angle on a story, thus representing a particular truth. The conundrum comes when deciding which angle to take.

A photographer covering protests might choose to shoot from the perspective of the protesters. A journalist might choose to write from the perspective of the officers of law. Although both are at the same event, their stories might come out vastly different. Their representation of the specific parties; the law, the protestors, the health workers, the by-passers and the onlookers; will create a certain perception in the minds of readers of what really took place.



By Ruth Chatukuta

Thus it becomes imperative to have some sort of responsible media approach, so as to counter the (un)intended subjectivity. There are two considerations that media practitioners can use to strike a balance between being humane and being objective. These factors would also help to diminish the rapid fires of fake news that blast their way on digital platforms, particularly *Whatsapp*.

## Representation

Media practitioners should understand what representation means and its consequences. The intended message in a text is not necessarily how the audience will perceive it. A case in point are some of the daily newspapers in Zimbabwe. They may make particular deliberate negative representations of prominent opposition leaders.

However, the interpretation that is

garnered by audiences who consume those stories is that it is spin and propaganda. It might lead to such institutions losing the trust of their readers; that when they do write an accurate story, perhaps about corruption, no-one will believe them. That is why it is important to practice ethical reporting all the time, but moreso in times of socio-political upheaval.

Fair, factual, reliable, unbiased, impartial and accurate representations allow readers to retain their trust in media institutions. That way, they will not go looking for bootleg sources of news who have since thrown the basics of good media practice out of the window and thrive on sensationalism and clickbait.

## Civic mapping

Media practitioners should realise that the truth is not always with the elites. Stories don't always come from the top, but sometimes from the bottom. To better report on issues, media institutions should map the citizenry into layers. There are five layers that can be explored when constructing media texts.

There is the official layer which is the most frequently used by numerous media institutions. It is concerned with what the government is doing and what it is saying about a specific event. The next layer is the quasi-official layer. This layer focuses on civic organisations and municipalities.

It is noted that different media institutions in Zimbabwe utilise this layer in a glaringly polarised manner. Some regard civic organisations as the enemy and don't even bother to get their side of the story. Some politicise protests in their reporting that even citizens' reactions to government policies become the fault of a specific political party.

The third layer is the community layer. Some media institutions report on an event that has happened in a certain space, without actually going to that community. However, BustopTV has done a tremendous job on this layer. They go into the community, engage with people and ask searching questions. They have started to establish themselves as a reliable news source.

The next layer is the incidental layer which is concerned with encounters on sidewalks and markets. ZBCtv uses this layer. However, the views that are given are always structured to further a certain narrative which then trivialises the actual use of that layer.

The last layer is the private layer. Media practitioners can get stories in the private spaces of citizens'

homes. There is need for human interest stories that speak to the specific struggles Zimbabweans will be going through.

Protests turned violent? Why not show the consequences of that event by making it personal and relatable? What audiences do get though are dubious commentaries from political and economic 'analysts' who always seem to be out of touch with reality and 'sources' who choose to remain anonymous.

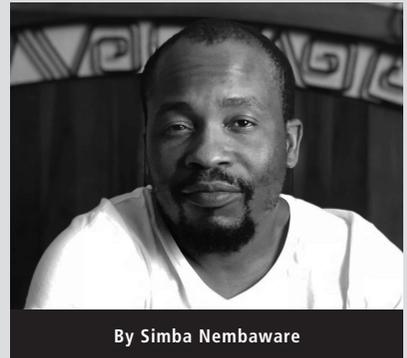
Therefore, responsible media practice is not so much about new converts gained from the gospel of propaganda. It is about asking the questions that are not being asked (and) from people who are not being noticed.

That will allow for accurate representations that speak truth to power and allow citizens to make informed choices about their nation in an environment that is currently full of digital and social media noise.

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# Role of the media in lowering political temperatures



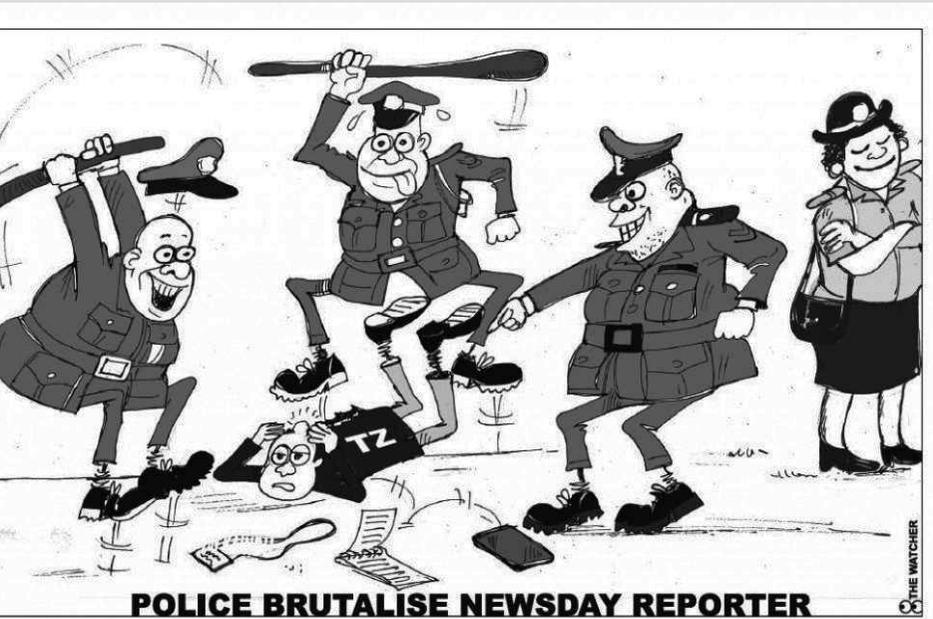
By Simba Nembaware

The role of media in conflict resolution has not been as explicit as it is in fomenting conflict and violence. What happened in Rwanda, Bosnia and the Danish cartoon controversy shows that the media can cause violent conflict.

Cees Jan Hamlink in his 2010 paper: *Media and Conflict: Escalating Evil*, notes that there is significant research looking at the power of the media as a driver of violence and conflict rather than of peace.

As the discourse about Zimbabwe's national dialogue gathers momentum, the media finds itself as part of the narrative. Can local media be a tool used for lowering political temperatures and create an enabling environment for dialogue and national healing.

This comes at a time when conventional media is now competing



for space and relevance with social media. This is an era where #FakeNews is flourishing. Fake news militates against peace building and social cohesion.

Gift Phiri, news editor at the *Daily News*, believes the media can be used in lowering political temperatures in the country. He says the shared identity of being Zimbabwean should guide the media towards publishing content that binds the nation.

Instead of focusing on differences that ultimately separates the nation, Phiri says the media should reinforce shared identities.

“The media should stop propagating information that is inaccurate, one sided, inflammatory and untrustworthy, and allow a diversity of voices - including the most marginalised - to be heard from the onset,” says Phiri.

The power that the media has in fomenting conflict is equally the same power it has in peace building and conflict resolution. Phiri says there is

also need to harness the power of the media in conflict resolution and peace building as opposed to deploying its destructive influence such as propaganda, cover-ups, and inflammatory reportage.

**When there is nothing lies rule the roost.**

Veteran journalist and broadcaster John Masuku, who was the spokesperson of the Kgalema Motlanthe Commission, concurs with Phiri. Masuku says there is need for authorities to communicate timeously and effectively with their constituents.

“Also, newsmakers like government, personalities (and) corporates should avoid being slow in releasing correct information to the extent of giving space to fake news manufacturers,” advises Masuku.

Because people still rely on mainstream media for factual and balanced stories, Masuku says when credible media fails to give correct narratives, social media operatives with fake news step in and fill the

gap. And fake news only serves to fuel negativity which in turn feeds disharmony and conflict.

“Many people still believe in known mainstream media that always shows balance and truthfulness in reporting. The media should be known for telling the truth and giving all sides an opportunity to be heard, while shunning hate language,” says Masuku.

But can Zimbabwe media speak in unison, starve fake news merchants and end conflict ?

Bulawayo based journalist and entrepreneur, Zenzele Ndebele, says it is difficult to imagine a Zimbabwean media that speaks in one voice; a media that pushes a common national agenda all for the good of Zimbabwe.

“If we had a media that is objective and not partisan then it can be a mediator in times of conflict, but the problem is that our media is polarised,” says Ndebele.

Zimbabwean media has been polarised since the turn of the millennium following the emergence of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) that shook the *status quo* and threatened to usurp power from the ruling party, Zanu PF.

Repressive laws such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Broadcasting Services Act (BSA), and Public Order and Security Act (POSA), among others have fuelled only polarisation within the media. These laws have several journalists, especially from the private press being arrested. Journalists from the private media have been assaulted and intimidated by ruling supporters

who view their media organisations as anti-establishment.

Naturally, the “it’s us and them” mentality grew in minds of both public and private media practitioners. This has created a situation where the private media’s reportage and coverage tends to be biased towards the opposition parties with Zanu PF getting negative coverage.

On the other hand the public broadcaster, ZBC gives live coverage to Zanu PF functions and only mentions the opposition in the negative.

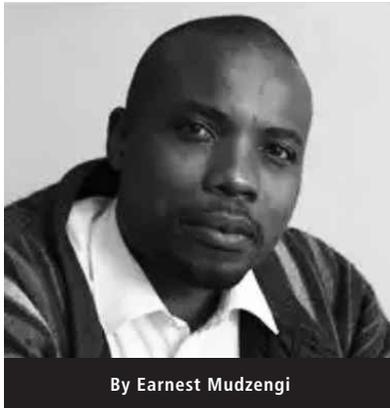
Last year, Simon Khaya Moyo in his role as acting Minister of Information, said media polarisation has no room in President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s administration. Fast forward to 2019 in the “new dispensation” there are still no signs of change.

It can only be hoped that the new Minister, Monica Mutsvangwa, works with both private press and public media; ruling party and opposition parties, in creating a media environment that promotes the Zimbabwe first ideology.

Repealing unfavourable media laws is a step in the right direction. The role of Zimbabwe’s media in peace building is handicapped by draconian laws and unfair application of the law.

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# Justification for transitional authority



By Ernest Mudzengi

A disputed election. More taxes. Unyielding, pernicious fuel hikes. Replacement of people’s hard earned United States dollars with strange RTGS dollars.

This is the sad story that has characterised Zimbabwe’s economic situation as from November 2018 to the present. Indeed, a story of a crisis of expectation. A case of a pleasant dream that suddenly metamorphosed into a nightmare.

Taking over the reins of power on the back of the coup that the military staged on his behalf in November 2017, President Mnangagwa could only gain international

acceptance upon promising far reaching democratic reforms that would mark a break with the Mugabe era of half-baked, window-dressing political and economic reforms.

At the time President Emmerson Mnangagwa assumed power, Zimbabwe had a largely unimplemented new constitution enacted in 2013. Free expression, right of access to information, freedom of the media, free association and other rights and liberties provided for in the constitution were only being enjoyed on a token basis.

The economy was in intensive care, with unprecedented unemployment levels, collapsing social services and decaying infrastructure, among other negative indicators.

When Mnangagwa came to power, there were promises to fully implement democratic constitutional provisions. There was an undertaking for a free, fair and credible election. The Zimbabwe is open for business mantra was embraced as the new president announced commitment to a new dispensation in which economic growth imperatives would override political power considerations.



From what he undertook, one would as well be forgiven for taking Mnangagwa as an emerging statesman who was even prepared to have the Zanu PF hegemony collapsing for the sake of democracy and the economy.

However, with the manner in which he handled the longstanding issue of the need for electoral reforms in the run up to Zimbabwe's July 31 2018 harmonised elections, Mnangagwa commenced on a course in which many are now considering him to be a posturing reformer.

As if to prove sceptics right, Mnangagwa waylaid Zimbabwe into the 2018 harmonised elections against the background of an opaque voters' register, an unreformed, captured Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), a broadcasting sector that continues to be a preserve of Zanu PF, repressive legislation and a host of other factors that militated against the promised free, fair and credible elections.

It, therefore, did not come as a shock that the elections yielded a disputed outcome, with the American government, the European Union and the Commonwealth, not endorsing the poll as a legitimate reflection of the electorate's preferences. On its part, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) only endorsed the result of the elections with significant reservations that include lack of media freedom and a ZEC that does not inspire confidence.

With Mnangagwa's ultra slim presidential victory only being affirmed by the Constitutional Court and as the MDC Alliance candidate, Nelson Chamisa sticks to the position that he was robbed of victory; the legitimacy question is looming large.

Post-election violence in which Zimbabwe National Army soldiers shot and killed six civilians as ZEC delayed the announcement of presidential election results did not help matters. Indeed, disproportionate state violence against unarmed civilians continued to be perpetrated in ways that surpass cases of brutality during the Mugabe era.

As independent civic groups have reported, up to 14 lives were lost when armed

soldiers again shot at civilians in the wake of protests against the 151% hike in fuel prices that Mnangagwa personally announced in January. Reports of these killings were coupled by further reports of rape and torture, akin to those of the Gukurahundi atrocities of the eighties during which scores of civilians were maimed and killed.

In the wake of these developments, international actors that initially backed Mnangagwa have had a change of mindset. The United Kingdom has called for the intensification of sanctions against the president and his inner circle.

The European Union has maintained existing sanctions while at the same time undertaking to swiftly widen them should the reform situation not improve. So has the United States of America whose Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) continues to point to a tragedy of partial economic reforms.

As if to prove that sticking to partial reforms does not pay, the economic results are telling, with indications that Zimbabweans are worse off economically.

Coming against a backdrop of a unilateral tax rise that the business sector unanimously condemned, the January fuel price hike flushed ordinary Zimbabweans down the drain of penury.

Exchange rate movements and differentials, most recently marked by the introduction of the RTGS dollar as the country's new currency, have not helped matters. Where Zimbabweans may have continued to entertain the thought that they had bank balances in United States dollars, they woke up to a February monetary policy announcement in which their monetary value was washed away at the stroke of a pen.

As has been reported by the *Zimbabwe Independent*, a privately controlled weekly, the country's annual inflation almost doubled from 31,01 % in November 2017 to 56,9 % in January 2019. Winding fuel queues have resurfaced. Purchasing power has been eroded as salaries and wages have gone down four times in actual terms.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) that was much hyped when Mnangagwa took over

has not been materialising as the economy's confidence levels continue to wane.

Among key factors contributing to the erosion of confidence is the country's bad politics that is lethargic to comprehensive reforms. For the sake of holding onto power, the ruling Zanu PF finds it extremely difficult to expose itself to genuinely free, fair and credible elections that are managed by a credible and independent electoral commission. For fear that its incompetence, corruption and other hegemony racking vices will be exposed, Zanu PF cannot unconditionally open up the airwaves.

The party cannot reform the country's economic system in ways that usher transparency and prevalence of an actual free market economy as this may help do away with the rent-seeking behaviour that sustains expensive lifestyles and key patronage lines.

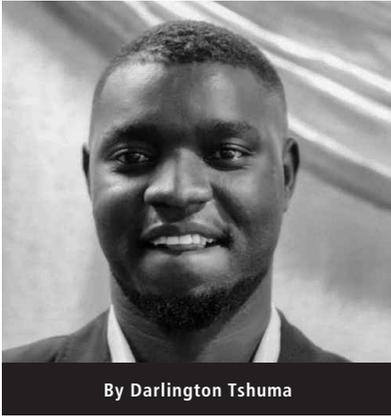
This is to say that, for political survival's sake, Zanu PF is incapable of reforming the country's political economy. Professor Jonathan Moyo, then a Zanu PF functionary pointed to this sad reality in 2016 when he declared that "Zanu PF will not reform itself out of power."

Coming at a time when the radical militaristic element within Zanu PF was positioning itself to take over power by whatever means, the declaration prophetically pointed to the contemporary times in which the resolve to thrive on partial political economy reforms has been strengthened.

This is an unfortunate scenario of a revolution avoided rather than a revolution executed. And Zimbabwe desperately needs a transitional authority that will help set the stage for comprehensive, democratic reforms that set the stage economic recovery and genuinely free and fair elections.

An all-stakeholder national dialogue that leads to the establishment of such a transitional authority needs to commence as a matter of urgency.

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By Darlington Tshuma

# Let's tackle the root cause

Although not necessarily a new trend in political practice, Governments of National Unity (GNUs) seem to have gained popularity in the recent past, consequently becoming a preferred method of resolving electoral and political disputes in Africa.

African diplomats, regional bodies and in some instances international actors like the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN), have been instrumental in establishing or encouraging the formation of GNUs or similar mechanisms in countries like Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, South Africa and Zanzibar to mention a few.

However; the efficacy of these arrangements have not been a subject of debate and research, hence very little theoretical and empirical evidence seems to suggest that GNUs are effective and sustainable.

Perhaps we should be asking the question: can a GNU transform Zimbabwe's crisis?

I attempt to unpack this important question in two parts. First; I provide a context of GNUs and the various circumstances that led or lead to their formation. This is important because it enables us to critically engage the efficacy of GNUs by asking important questions relating to the crisis in Zimbabwe.

Second, I argue that while national dialogue is important, it must not coalesce around the idea of a GNU. I support this position by arguing that a GNU will not be a panacea to our crisis and as such,

those calling for it probably misunderstand our crisis or simply want a 'quick fix' to a complex problem.

There is no denying that Zimbabwe is in a deep socio-economic and political crisis that makes national dialogue both urgent and desirable. However, what remains contentious are silent questions around the proposed solution. For example; do we attempt another GNU and if so at what cost?

With the exception of South Africa's interim government that ushered a new democracy in the country, most GNUs emerged following electoral disputes between political contenders. This was the case in Kenya involving a disputed election between:

Mwai Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU) and Raila Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) in 2007 and in 2008.

Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (Zanu PF) and the two Movement for Democratic Change formations (MDCs), led by the late Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara.

From a pragmatic perspective, GNUs are temporary 'compromise governments' formed between opposing parties following an electoral dispute. From a conflict transformation angle; GNUs are power-sharing mechanisms created to end hostilities between disputants and to pave way for unity and stability in the hope of achieving positive peace.

However, the reality is that they achieve none of this. In this regard, the experiences of both Zimbabwe and Kenya

is poignant.

However, this is not to suggest that GNUs are of no significance. There are positives that the GNU in Zimbabwe brought and to dismiss these would be dishonest. For example, it stopped the mass killing of opposition supporters although incidents of sporadic political violence, land grabbing and intimidation of opposition supporters continued even during the GNU. It also stabilised the economy and arrested a runaway inflation.

However, political tensions carried over from the pre-2008 period continued to threaten and have a negative impact on the economy. Accusations of deliberate sabotage were constantly raised in public meetings and parliamentary debates by political parties attempting to build strong support bases ahead of a crunch election in 2013.

The GNU was criticized for failing to resolve power imbalances. For example, there are claims that power was not evenly distributed; with Zanu PF retaining all important security portfolios while the MDC was given less important and less influential ministries. This arrangement frustrated security sector reforms that were key to GNU negotiations.

The GNU also retained Mugabe as president despite losing the election. This gave Mugabe the leeway to make unilateral decisions, sometimes without consulting his principal in complete violation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

Having highlighted some contentious issues involving GNUs, I now turn to the question I posed earlier; can a GNU transform Zimbabwe's crisis? The answer

is a big NO. To create a context for my argument, I draw on few but key lessons from history.

While Zimbabwe's crisis is multifaceted, there is no denying that the crisis is first and foremost political. The nature of our crisis makes political reform a priority and any arrangement that fails to address this aspect is tantamount to rearranging decks in a sinking ship.

In both Kenya and Zimbabwe, GNU negotiations failed to adequately address the power and leadership questions (political question). In a classic case of 'change without change', the negotiations in Zimbabwe retained an election loser as president. There is no reason to believe Nelson Chamisa's claims of having won the election in July 2018 would alter this trend even if a GNU were called for.

Related to the first point is the criticism that GNUs have a tendency to reconcile political elites while leaving the masses divided. The point here is that Zimbabwe does not need a GNU but a complete overhaul and restructuring of a system that breeds violence, intolerance, corruption and mismanagement.

Chances that a GNU can undo these vices are close to none. There is also no evidence to the effect that the GNU in

Zimbabwe tackled corruption and governance malpractice. Instead it morphed into a power contestation where focus was on sharing political spoils and not political and social transformation of the state structure that bred the crisis.

By way of conclusion, I share some reasons why a GNU will be a hard sell even to the most sympathetic and moderate interlocutors. First, the circumstances that led to the GNU in 2008 are at variance with the situation obtaining in the country today. First, the June 2008 election in which Mugabe controversially declared himself winner contravened regional and international best practice on elections and governance.

Tsvangirai's pullout (from the presidential runoff election), solidified this claim. However, in the just ended election pitting (President) Emmerson Mnangagwa against Chamisa, the latter did not only participate, but various international and regional election observer teams applauded both parties for holding what they deemed to have been a 'peaceful election campaign in decades'.

This was of course in comparison to past election campaigns enveloped in fear and uncertainty. In addition, Mnangagwa

accredited election observer teams from over 40 countries including those previously banned by Mugabe. Whether this was a PR stunt or not, bottom line is it worked to his advantage.

The international goodwill that carried Mnangagwa through the elections saw him receive less condemnation for the post-election violence that claimed six lives and injured dozens. Although Chamisa contested the election result citing electoral irregularities and rigging claims, he had a few sympathisers; more so after regional election observers rubber stamped and endorsed the election as 'free and fair'.

Lastly, the political climate leading to the elections in July 2018 was relatively stable. Opposition parties were for the first time 'allowed' to campaign even in known Zanu PF strongholds. This was the opposite in 2008 when scores of opposition supporters were either maimed, raped, abducted or simply murdered in broad daylight.

Human rights abuses attracted international condemnation forcing Mugabe to negotiate with the opposition to save both his reputation and that of his party. In contrast, SADC and AU's deafening silence over human rights abuses in recent weeks seem to have convinced Mnangagwa and Zanu PF that they can get away with human rights abuses and face no consequences for their actions.

In the meantime, ongoing human rights abuses continue to invoke sad memories of past human rights abuses like Gukurahundi, Murambatsvina and the bloody elections of 2002/8.

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