



Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor

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TO A PROSPEROUS ZIMBABWE”
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The build-up towards the burial of the former leader of the Republic of Zimbabwe, the late President Robert Mugabe, demonstrated how difficult it is to rebuild a country that carried so much shattered hope; not only for its own people, but for the entire continent.

While the focus on the side of the mainstream commentariat has been on the relations that Zimbabwe has and must rebuild with the West, our focus should be broader than that.

Ours should be a Pan-African approach that is informed by the needs of the people of Zimbabwe, regional integration, and the wider interests of the continent.

Such a noble goal as rebuilding Zimbabwe must, of necessity, be anchored on uniting the people and rallying them around one common goal. This we say because any talk about rebuilding Zimbabwe is often fraught with contestation, with hardened attitudes on both sides of the debate.

In contributing to today's lecture, I wish to look back at the Zimbabwe that was and what became of it. It is such a recast back that may assist us to pave the way forward.

The modern history of Zimbabwe can be divided into four main epochs, which can be divided into multiple episodes. I will thereafter look at some of the lessons that we can take from these epochs.

The Second Chimurenga, 1964 – 1979

The state of panic suffered by the cabinet of the then Rhodesia, resulting from the crumbling of colonial rule on the continent, led to the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in November 1965 under Ian Smith. That fateful act in turn led directly to the start of the Second Chimurenga, or the national war of liberation.

Inspired by the First Chimurenga of 1896 to 1897 and its figure heads, Mbuya Nehanda, Mlimo, Sekuru Kaguvi and many others, the Second Chimurenga brought both ZANU (the Zimbabwe African National Union) and ZAPU (the Zimbabwe African People's Union) and the respective guerrilla armies, ZANLA and ZIPRA, into the frontline of a war of liberation.

Whereas scholarly opinion will always remain divided on whether these people's armies did manage to force the oppressive regimes of yesteryears to surrender, what cannot be disputed is the deep inspiration that we in South Africa gained from the determination of the Zimbabwean freedom fighters. The rest, as they say, is history.

Through the efforts of ZANLA and ZIPRA fighters, the political work done by their mother bodies, the struggles of workers and people on the ground, and international solidarity, the Rhodesian regime and Britain finally agreed to the negotiations that led to the birth of the Republic of Zimbabwe in 1980.

That was the first epoch.

Nation-building, Development, and Turmoil, 1980 – 2000

The second epoch, starting from independence in 1980 until 2000, can be said to have been characterised by at least three features. The first was the determined nation-building efforts which the post-colonial government embarked on.

Coming from a brutal past, which also promoted tribalism, free Zimbabwe found itself trying to develop an identity out of the chaos created by colonialism. The pain of the liberation struggle did not spare the country either.

In his 2009 reflection Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni examines whether Zimbabwe managed to develop as a nation.¹ Thus, the question that arises is whether the state in post-colonial Zimbabwe was able to found a nation. He writes:

(Zimbabwe) is a complex mosaic of contending histories and memories, making it as much a reality as it is an idea – a construction not only moulded out of precolonial, colonial and nationalist pasts, but also out of global values of sovereignty, self-determination and territorial integrity. It is an idea born out of continuing synthesis of multilayered, overlapping and cross-

¹ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo (2009) *Do 'Zimbabweans' Exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity and Crisis in a Postcolonial State*. Benn, Peter Lang AG

pollinating historical genealogies, and contending nationalisms, as well as suppressed local and regional sovereignties.²

For Alois Mlambo, the challenges that post-independence Zimbabwe has had to contend with, including but not limited to its multi-ethnic character, race, the nature of the state, and the interface between politics and the economy, render Zimbabwe a nation that is yet to become.³ So, for Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mlambo, Zimbabwe must still rise as a nation.

Attempts to build a nation were, on the hand, frustrated by episodes of internal ethnic violence, whose origins and nature remain a source of contestation to this day.

It is not my intention, nor does the scope of my brief contribution allow to examine the tensions between ZANU and ZAPU after the 1980 settlement, leading in part to the loss of lives in Matebeleland North between 1983 and 1987.

On the other hand, Zimbabwe became the envy of many African countries for its developmental trajectory, especially in the area of education.

² Ibid, pg. 46

³ Mlambo, Alois. S (2013) Becoming Zimbabwe or Becoming Zimbabweans: Identity, Nationalism and State-building, *Africa Spectrum*, Volume 48, Number 1, pp. 49 - 70

Whereas there might be debates around the exact figures, an aggregation of various sources indicates that Zimbabwe has one of the highest adult literacy rates on the continent. In 2014 the World Bank placed the figure at 89%.⁴

This impressive figure is attributable to the massive investment in education made after the 1980 settlement. Surely, this is what we can learn from as a country. But I will come back to this later.

Related to the improvements in literacy rate, which remain to date, the country established a vibrant higher education and research sector. The University of Zimbabwe rose within the ranks to the prestige held by other African universities such as Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and Makerere in Uganda. Not so much in endowments and beautiful buildings, but in terms of progressive programmes that were offered. Complementing that was a number of independent research organisations and publishing houses.⁵

Again, the picture was not all that 'rosy'. The land question remained a challenge for the post-colonial government. Inability to resolve the

⁴ BBC (2018) Zimbabwe in 10 numbers, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42013720>. Accessed on 15 November 2019

⁵ Some of these include the prestigious African Institute for Agrarian Studies, led by the respected Prof Sam Moyo; The Southern Africa Political Economy Series (SAPES), led by equally respected Ibbo Mandaza; Zimbabwe Publishing House; Mambo Press; and many others

land question in a manner that addressed historical conquest, reduced inequality and poverty; enhanced national unity, and secured food security, led to the major breakdown that set in 2000.

This brings us to the third epoch.

The Land Question, International Isolation and the Decline, 2000 – 2017

In their book titled *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice*, Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya argue that the problems that arose in 2000 could directly be traced to the introduction of the World Bank and IMF's Structural Adjustment Programmes in 1991.⁶

Indeed, that eminent Zimbabwe scholar, Sam Moyo, had already argued authoritatively that the core challenge of the land reform programme since 1980 has always been its implementation through the prism of structural adjustment programmes.⁷

What these scholars, and many others have provided us over the years is a nuanced understanding of the Zimbabwean Question; different

⁶ Bond, Patrick and Manyanya (2003) *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the search for Social Justice*. Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press

⁷ Moyo, Sam (2000) *Land Reform under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe: land Use Change in the Mashonaland Province*. Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet

from the received narratives of the mainstream commentariat, which reduce the problems of Zimbabwe to the shortcomings of the political leadership of the late President Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

Despite these helpful analyses we must acknowledge that the post-2000 period became quite a challenge for Zimbabwe. Sanctions by North America and Europe led to the near-total collapse of the economy of the country. This has led to a considerable number of Zimbabweans emigrating to other countries in search of livelihood opportunities.

Official figures indicate that by 2013 there were 571, 970 Zimbabweans living in South Africa, United Kingdom, Malawi, Australia, and Botswana, in that order in terms of numbers.⁸

The three major reasons for emigration are: employment opportunities; study purposes; and, seeking asylum. This shows the dire economic situation as a result mainly of sanctions. Also, it indicates that the education system that we have just referred to and was one of the best, is under strain.

⁸ UN Migration and ZimStat (2018) *Migration in Zimbabwe: A Country Profile, 2010 – 2016*, http://www.zimstat.co.zw/sites/default/files/img/publications/Prices/MP_Zimbabwe_2018.pdf. Accessed on 15 November 2019

These challenges led to the epoch that we are faced with now, which followed the resignation of former President Mugabe, and later his passing away. The fourth epoch.

Post-Mugabe: Qua Vadis Zimbabwe?

The tensions resulting from the difficulties faced by the country led to the resignation of former President Mugabe in November 2017. This, and his passing away a few months later, led to a transitional period, not so much of the party in government but of the ruling group.

It may be early for us at an academic level to proffer educated opinions on the post-Mugabe epoch and the prospects that may lie ahead for the country. What we may do, however, is to suggest some of the challenges that the government under President Emmerson Mnangagwa will have to consider. I am, however, reticent to do so because that is what our Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Minister Naledi Pandor, is here to share with us. So, I would rather submit what I consider to be the lessons for us emanating out of Zimbabwe, from the Second Chimurenga to date.

Some Lessons learnt

There are at least five lessons that I submit can be learnt from the struggle for Zimbabwe.

First, the unity in purpose between ZANU and ZAPU through the years of the Second Chimurenga ensured that the Rhodesian government and Britain would finally agree to the negotiation table. I am not suggesting that the two parties had always seen eye-to-eye.

What I am suggesting is that ability to focus on the task at hand, which was the prosecution of the struggle, including armed struggle, was important. The formation of Patriotic Front up to the negotiations at Lancaster House was also important.⁹ It led to the negotiated settlement that gave rise to the Republic of Zimbabwe. The sad thing was the disunity that was to later follow, which I will return to in a minute.

The second lesson learnt was around the benefits that accrue when a government is intent on improving the lives of its citizens. The impressive investment in education, which was not just about money (in fact it was less about money) but was about well-thought strategies, led to the still-standing high adult literacy rate that Zimbabwe enjoys.

⁹ ZANU, led by Robert Mugabe, and ZAPU, led by Joshua Nkomo, formed the Patriotic Front during the prosecution of the struggle and up to the negotiations at Lancaster House, London. The Lancaster House Agreement was reached in December 1979. ZAPU contested the 1980 general elections as Patriotic Front, whereas ZANU contested them as ZANU-Patriotic Front. After years of tensions ZANU absorbed ZAPU and became ZANU-PF. Joshua Nkomo died in 1999

The lesson for us therefore is to develop resilient strategies for the improvement of the quality of lives of our people.

The third lesson that we can learn from Zimbabwe is around the negative repercussions that result from inability or failure to address or be responsive to the grievances from and by the citizens, particularly the poor and working class. The slowness of the Zimbabwean government to address the land question before 2000 led to the negative explosion that was led by the war veterans.

This is not an easy challenge that I am posing for government. It affects us also as the leadership of higher education. Our slowness to respond to the calls for the transformation of our universities partly led to the *#RhodesMustFall* movement which we could not adequately respond to. That is why, for our part, I have been adamant that we fast-track the institutionalisation of the Department of Leadership and Transformation within my Office. The aim there is to try and be responsive and relevant to the overall grievance and need to transform this institution.

The fourth lesson that we get from the Zimbabwean history is specifically around the land question itself. We learn here that the land question is quite complex. It requires careful handling that seeks to balance competing yet strongly expressed interests.

It is not my aim to use this platform to lecture (no pun intended) the government on how to go about addressing this question, which is now on our table as a nation. What I wish to submit nonetheless is that the government must, throughout all stages, take the nation into confidence and be open about the opportunities and challenges that go with trying to resolve this matter.

The fifth and last lesson that we learn from Zimbabwe is around the pain brought to bear by the breakdown in national unity. The disunity between ZAPU and ZAPU for a long period of time, and at times along ethnic lines, until they merged to form ZANU-PF, remains a blight in the history of the great country of Zimbabwe.

There can be no doubt that part of the healing that must take place in Zimbabwe will be to consolidate the merger between the two parties, with the resolve that another episode of the Matabeleland North killings does not recur.

These, Programme Director, are the epochs and lessons related thereto that have shaped Zimbabwe as it is today.

We are honoured by the presence today of Dr Naledi Pandor, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation.

Minister Pandor will share with us her views and the government's views on how Zimbabwe might recover from the nineteen years of deep challenges.

It is our hope that her talk, which is held under the theme "*The Best Path to a Prosperous Zimbabwe*", will assist us to understand South Africa's foreign policy towards and in relation to Zimbabwe.

More than being the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Pandor is a great friend of the University of South Africa. Many of you will remember the wonderful journey that we travelled with her, and the support and collegiality that we received from her when she was the Minister of Higher Education and Training. Therefore, Dr Pandor is not a stranger to this university. She is a friend. Let me also remind you that our university named the main facility that hosts our graduations as the ZK Mathews Hall. Professor ZK Mathews was our Minister's grandfather.

Minister, on behalf of the Council, Senate, Management, Staff and Students of the University of South Africa, I welcome and now invite you to address us.