

# Zimbabwe: Nation in limbo

With President Robert Mugabe winning the July 2013 election he will rule for yet another five-year term, which he will complete at 94 years of age. **Blessing Vava** looks at how Zimbabwe should start thinking of a new leadership to take the country forward instead of ZANU PF's 'team old'.

**T**he political litmus test to a democracy has always been defined with how a nation or unit is able to change leadership in an orderly fashion successively. When Zimbabweans sacrificed their lives during the liberation struggle the main political objective was the right of citizens to vote.

It was the thinking of the time that no man is infallible and leaders need to be changed periodically: national and people's interests came first. Never did those who took part in the struggle think of the creation and self-enrichment of a demi-God. The idea was certainly not about creating a permanent seat for a personality. Unlike Iran the liberation charter never sought to create a supreme leader.

That Mugabe has become a central figure in our country's political landscape for more than three decades calls for serious introspection and national evaluation against the core values of the liberation struggle. Egotism and unparalleled dogma have provided a fertile ground and bred an unparalleled thirst for power.

Being fully aware of the neo-liberal machinations of the concept of democracy it is the main reason that mobilised our people to engage in the liberation

struggle against white domination. That Mugabe believes no one else can do it better on the political scale is an indictment on our generation. By failing to demand and safeguarding an accountable political system which was the benchmark of our liberation struggle we bred the monster in him.

President Mugabe has become shrewd in dealing with the Zimbabwean opposition and each time after every election he seems to emerge with a new level of astuteness and certainly fine art of extending his grip on power skilfully and sometimes brutally. Outwitting his opponents in most instances.

After losing the first round of elections in March 2008, he went on a rampage brutalising political opponents. That intimidated his main opponent Morgan Tsvangirai to withdraw resulting in Mugabe conducting a one-man election in June 2008. After the sham election, Mugabe had to be part of an inclusive government which legitimised his presidency and resurrected his career from the dead. It saved him until its final collapse after the 31 July 2013 poll. As expected that poll was the end of an era for his erstwhile contenders in the Tsvangirai-led MDC-T. During the

GNU the president remained an active player, more energised and witty that even his age couldn't corroborate with his actions.

It was all about the president's powers than anything else. In fact the MDC spent most of the time concentrating on social service delivery and the economy and forgot they were in a political marriage awaiting a divorce. They fell to Mugabe's witty tactics and neglected political reforms which will forever haunt them. By neglecting constitutional and electoral reforms the MDCs are guilty of resurrecting a political ghost which was buried in 2008.

A series of political blunders spelt below indicate that the MDC is guilty of committing political suicide and aiding the resurrection of Mugabe. The year 2013's first major highlight was when the coalition government of ZANU PF and the two MDCs frog-marched Zimbabweans to vote for a constitution that they had never set their eyes on under the guise that it contained their views. This was not only a national fraud but a setback to the democratic values of national foundations.

We were tricked by Mugabe, who in his maverick style used Prime Minister Tsvangirai and Professor Ncube to further his interests. He outclassed them, and

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to suggest we were in a transition as the opposition parties used to say is nothing but wishful thinking. A political transition, is a significant movement towards mass democracy. Ours was an unequal society less likely to consolidate democracy and ended up oscillating between a brutal regime and a population that suffered substantial fiscal volatility!

The highlight of the 31 July elections is somewhat missed which in the history of Zimbabwe surpassed all by being one of the most peaceful political events with less incidences of physical political violence. The elections saw ZANU PF getting a two-thirds majority and above all fielding an 89-year-old candidate, who eventually won the elections.

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Every ZANU PF official who appeared on television addressing a rally would speak more about the president than for himself. Whether it was a party directive, this was Mugabe's campaign. The 31 July election was therefore pinned on idolising and safeguarding the political life and legacy of Mugabe. Promoting indigenisation and empowerment were nothing but tired political

slogans that were less appealing to the people. The question that immediately begs an answer is what went wrong? Mugabe simply branded himself and manipulated the electoral process.

Elections came and went and the task of nation building lies to a clueless regime that destroyed the very fabric of economic being and political progress. The appointment of the cabinet proved to be a painstaking exercise for the Harare regime, which took more time than expected. It was not about competency but choosing from a clique of bootlickers. Such is the patronage system which has characterised his leadership from the party down to parastatals and councils.

Mugabe is known to richly reward those who earn his trust and support his endeavours. Of course not forgetting the balancing act on widespread factionalism in ZANU PF. The delays somehow affected the government business as the executive and the judiciary remained the only functioning organs of the state. It left a leadership vacuum, and dealt a blow to the economy as business continued on a speculative path. Needless to say service delivery becomes a neglected stepchild.

Most are privy to the talk about recycling old wine in new bottles or rather portfolios. The role of cabinet in a presidential system has been to advise the president on policy direction as well as administer executive branch government agencies. The system owes its being to the English Privy

Council from the 16th century and has been a means by which the executive can effectively discharge development on the political, social and economic sphere. The appointment of a cabinet would require individuals with capacity and zeal to assist the president effectively govern a nation.

These individuals should not sing praises all the time on the president but provide a balanced view on how to take the nation forward. A striking difference can be drawn with how mafias operate – the Don surrounds himself with hero worshipping beneficiaries of an illicit system. These are henchmen. In Zimbabwe, the appointment of key ministers namely Ignatious Chombo, Patrick Chinamasa, Jonathan Moyo, Saviour Kasukuwere, Francis Nhema, and Dzikamai Mavhaire leave a lot to be desired.

I still hear wild cries because of the composition of the ministers chosen by President Mugabe. He chose his close old friends who have been there before and have a record of failure. Ministers who cannot interpret their own policies; they can only read out statements at press conferences but are not in the loop of what they are talking about. The current cabinet, like their leader, has characters who are way too old and cannot respond to the needs of the younger generation who occupy more than 60% of the country's population. Certainly motherland deserves better. <sup>18</sup>

*Blessing Vava is with the Committee of the People Charter in Chipinge.*