



## THE RHETORIC OF INDIGENISATION IN ZIMBABWE: AN ELECTIONEERING PLOY OR AN APPEASEMENT OF AN EMBITTERED HISTORY?

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper analyses selected public addresses by two key figures behind the indigenization drive in Zimbabwe, Honourable Minister Saviour Kasukuwere and His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Robert Gabriel Mugabe. Minister Kasukuwere, head of the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenization and Empowerment, has lectured extensively on the ethos of the indigenization process, in like terms, President Robert Mugabe, as First Secretary of the revolutionary Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), has addressed both the Zimbabwean populace and the international community on the justification of the indigenization process at various fora. The research used content analysis of the selected speeches by Minister Kasukuwere and President Mugabe, respectively, alongside interview of attendees to the public addresses in question. The paper acknowledges that ZANU PF has vowed never to retrace its steps on the indigenisation drive, a position which the opposition Tsvangirai – led MDC decries. Equally, the paper establishes that ZANU PF holds that the indigenisation move is a quest to right a historical wrong, appeasing an embittered history. However, critics of ZANU PF view the whole process as a Machiavellan electioneering scheme, thus leaving Zimbabwe a polarised nation. Accordingly, uncertainty as to what is in store for the country rings alarming bells.*

**Key Words:** Chimurenga, Third chimurenga, Indigenization.

### INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses selected public addresses by two key figures behind the indigenization drive in Zimbabwe, Honourable Minister Saviour Kasukuwere and His Excellency, the President of the

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Republic of Zimbabwe, Robert Gabriel Mugabe. Minister Kasukuwere, head of the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenization and Empowerment, has lectured extensively on the ethos of the indigenization process. In like terms, President Robert Mugabe, as First Secretary of the revolutionary Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), has addressed both the Zimbabwean populace and the international community on the justification of the indigenization process at various fora. The paper examines how the indigenisation drive fits in the jig-saw puzzle of Zimbabwe's geopolitical terrain. Considering how the Third Chimurenga (Fast Track Land Reform) has been deemed controversial (Raftopolous, 2009), with some critics deriding it as a mere electioneering ploy ( Masunungure ,2009 ; Meredith , 2008 ) , the researchers want to assess the reason(s) behind ZANU PF's tenacious and obstinate drive, despite reservations by elements within the borders of Zimbabwe and the international community. The research analyses Minister Kasukuwere's Public Lecture at Great Zimbabwe University titled 'Indigenization Today, Empowerment for the Future' and President Mugabe's Key-Note address at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Heroes Day Anniversary on Monday 13 August 2012 at the National Heroes Acre (Zimbabwe).

## **BACKGROUND**

Following the inception of British colonial rule in Zimbabwe in 1890, various colonial governments which succeeded one another sought ways to strip the indigenous people of the valuable land resource. After the 1893-94 Anglo-Ndebele war, the Ndebele people were driven out of their land and pushed into the drought-stricken and tsetse fly –infested Gwai and Shangani reserves.

Both the Ndebele and the Shona then took up arms in 1896 in the First Chimurenga (Tindall, 1980; Beach, 1986). The key grievance was the land question, a riddle that still requires resolution to-date. Though defeated in the Chimurenga of the 1890s, the struggle inspired future nationalists who waged the 1970s second Chimurenga which culminated in the birth of Zimbabwe in 1980 (Gomo, 2010).

Independence of 1980 did not translate to economic empowerment of the indigenous people. Rather, it only entailed change of hands in the political office with economic power still wielded by the western powers through their agents running conglomerate corporations such as Anglo-American company. The indigenous people were still crowded in sandy areas which they continued to impoverish.

Looking back to the colonial era, one notable feature of governance was racial bigotry and expropriation of land through various Acts. The land segregation policies were based on the myth of white supremacy and a belief that the whites were intrinsically superior to the Africans (Farley, 1995). Thus, 1931 witnessed the Land Apportionment Act which pushed Africans into marginal areas (Moyana, 1989; Scoones, et al 1996). The influx of European immigrants during the post World War 2 epoch further pushed out Africans from European designated areas (Raflopoulous

and Mlambo, 2009). The consequent overcrowding in the ‘reserves’ forced the colonial regime of Southern Rhodesia (as the land was called then) to institute the 1951 Land Husbandry Act whose hidden agent, besides the overt need to conserve the land, was to totally destroy African peasantry farming and pastoral practices (Gakou, 1987). The Land Tenure Act of 1969 further “entrenched the division between European and African lands even more” (Mavuru and Nyanhanda – Ratsauka, 2008:146).

Deprived of their land, denied of various rights such as freedom of expression, disenfranchised and dehumanised, the African people of Zimbabwe started to protest in various ways. According to Bhebhe (1984), Solomon Mustvairo’s poem ‘Nehanda Nyakasikana’ was used by nationalist leader Simon Muzenda to harangue the callous colonial institutions. Musicians such as Oliver Mutukudzi and Thomas Mapfumo also used the song discourse to critique the colonial policies and to conscientize the African people of their oppressed condition. In due course, bitterness boiled into a violent confrontation of war, spearheaded by the two foremost revolutionary parties, Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in the late 1960s, stretching into the bloody 1970s.

1979 saw the attempt to peacefully resolve the struggle at the Lancaster House Conference in London whose result was that the new Government of Zimbabwe had to acquire land from European farmers on a willing seller – willing buyer premise (Scoones, et al, 1996). However, the ruling ZANU PF party soon lost patience with the slow pace of the legal clauses carried over from the Lancaster House Conference. Amid the growth of restlessness in the late 1990s to 2000, a breed of former fighters took the law into their own hands and invaded white owned farms. The wave soon gained a legitimate brand from the government coined as Fast Track Land redistribution or the Third Chimurenga. The banner of the new Chimurenga was: Our Land is our Prosperity.

To date, ZANU PF has embarked on an appendage to the Land Reform Programme: Indigenization. In principle, this new catch word has become the beacon of ZANU PF politics at rallies and even at international fora. Just like the Fast Track Land Redistribution phenomenon, Indigenization has raised alarm among both local and international critics of ZANU PF. Just as Meredith (2008) posits that the Third Chimurenga was an election gimmick in the face of growing opposition from Morgan Tsvangirai’s Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), many commentators of Zimbabwe’s indigenization drive also view the programme with suspicion, saying it is nothing but an electioneering ploy.

ZANU PF for their part, whose voice and ideological position is ramified in the veteran party’s stalwart, Robert Mugabe; indigenization is not only justified, but a legitimate righting of an age-old wrong. Mugabe (2001), in his published speeches, contends that his party’s land reform policy is an attempt to appease Zimbabwe’s embittered past. This ethos runs through every other speeches or addresses that the veteran statesman has delivered.

The position of the ZANU PF First Secretary and Party President, who is also Commander-in-Chief of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces, has been resoundingly echoed and blessed by former freedom fighters (war veterans) and the generals and Service Chiefs. Therefore, with this bivalent state of affairs, the speeches and public addresses by two key figures in the Indigenization calculus, Minister Saviour Kasukuwere and President Robert Mugabe, are critiqued.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Meaning can be conveyed verbally, through use of words, and nonverbally, where words are not used. This underpins the whole mark of public speaking per se. Accordingly, since signs and codes are involved in public speaking, the semiotics theory (Fiske, 1990) informs the study. As a theory, semiology studies how the sign, the message, the users and the cultures within which the sign is used interrelate, focus lying specifically on how receivers interpret signs or codes (Jansen and Steinberg, 1993).

Intertwined with semiology are the theoretical frameworks of pragmatics and hermeneutics in the study of the spoken and nonverbal behaviours in their contexts. According to Leech (1983), pragmatics uses situational evidence to heuristically establish the real meaning behind the sign or code used. Hermeneutics, on the other hand, explains that meanings are not fixed but are a result of negotiation between the text (message), its reader (audience or interpreter) and the context or situation at hand (Gadamer, in Jansen and Steinberg, 1993). In this regard, the lecture by Minister Kasukuwere at the Great Zimbabwe University on 10 May 2012, vis-a-vis President Mugabe's keynote address on the 32<sup>nd</sup> Heroes Day Anniversary on Monday 13 August 2012 at the Zimbabwe National Heroes Acre were analysed, attention being paid upon the meaning and implication of each address on indigenization.

As a sub niche of Communication Studies, the public address (speech or presentation) has its own salient features. Besides the categorization of informative and persuasive speeches (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, 1998), the impact of a speech hinges on how the message is conveyed. Ultimately, this brings in the attendant tone, pitch, volume and power of the voice (vocalics); appearance and dress of speaker (artefacts); body movements, gestures and facial expressions (kinesics), along other vital non verbal communication cues (Pearson, et al, 2003). Of importance to is the psychographic (mood or emotional climate of the speech delivery), and rhetorographic aspect (time of delivery), according to Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin (1998).

The overall interpretation of the speech follows yardsticks from the political theory of governance by Locke (1988), Kant (1964 and Rousseau (1968). While Locke (1988) is of the view that civil government's primary mandate is to protect individual rights (rights to life, liberty and private property), Kant (1964) curtly says there is no justification for authoritarianism. Rousseau (1968), for his part, reflects that sovereignty cannot be transferred from people to the state; rather, the state had to constitute the 'general will'.

## Rationale

Independent media both locally and internationally have never spared ZANU PF policies since 2000. The Daily News, up until its ban in the post 2002 election era, has been vitriolic in haranguing everything that ZANU PF stands for. Media houses in London and Washington have also been at the throat of ZANU PF's political guru, Robert Mugabe, to a point where the Western countries have leagued to impose 'smart' sanctions upon Robert Mugabe and a host of his lieutenants. Ironically, the said sanctions have hit hard upon the general populace. Key to the jigsaw puzzle is the land issue and the subsequent indigenization move.

ZANU PF, for their part, maintains that the sanctions are an imperialist ploy bent on reversing the gains of independence. As revolutionaries, the hard liners of the party have vowed never to retreat or apologise on the vanguard march to 'totally' empower the indigenous people through the policy of indigenization. To prove that there is no relenting on the indigenization ethos, a Ministry has been established to see to the realization of the dreams of Nehanda, Kaguvi, Chitepo, Tongogara, Nkomo and other fallen heroes, as the rhetoric at rallies and public political address pipes.

Given the impasse at hand, an analysis of selected speeches by Minister Kasukuwere, who heads the Indigenization Ministry and President Mugabe, could shed light on the far reaching implications of the drive to indigenize all key industries, banks, mines and other resources of Zimbabwe. The study thus seeks to probe the dynamics of Zimbabwean politics on land and indigenization.

Crucial questions under scrutiny are:

- (i) Who really stands to benefit or lose?
- (ii) Is the banner of sovereignty a smoke screen to petit bourgeoisie plot for personal aggrandizement?
- (iii) Given the impasse, is there an alternative approach?

## METHODOLOGY

The researchers used participant and non-participant observation where speeches were analysed both in the context of delivery and as independent verbal texts. The researchers were participants to the Public Lecture delivered by Minister Kasukuwere at Great Zimbabwe University. The researchers analysed the psychographic aspects of the presentation, alongside the reaction of the audience (lecturers and students). The researchers also observed the proceedings of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Heroes Day beamed live on the Zimbabwe Television (ZTV), Channel 121 of the DSTV on Monday 31 August 2012.

To try and balance the subjectivity of the observation, the researchers went on to interview five colleagues from Great Zimbabwe's Faculty of Arts who teach History; five students after Minister Kasukuwere's Lecture; five serving members of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces; five war veterans;

five church Pastors in Masvingo city of Zimbabwe. Convenience sampling was used for the sample of twenty five (25) interviewees.

### **Minister Kasukuwere's Public Lecture: 'Indigenization Today, Empowerment for the future generation.'**

On 10 May 2012, Minister Kasukuwere addressed Great Zimbabwe University staff and students on how Universities could benefit from the indigenization drive. Prior to the Public Lecture, the atmosphere was warmed up by recitals from the self-styled poet, Chenjerai, on the thesis of 'Kukatanura zvakatana', which translates to 'untangling and untwining what was tangled.' In his recital, Chenjerai pointed that Minister Kasukuwere had come to exorcise the minds plundered by 'Western imperialists' and to gird the exorcised mind to accept the fact that 'our resources, our land, our minds... are really ours to cherish'.

The Minister then took the podium, towering above all and sundry, gazing and sizing the audience while his deep voice echoed in all corners of the hall. Gesticulating now and again to emphasise his points, he reflected that his agenda and task in his ministry was simple: 'To chart a way to repossess the indigenous resources of Zimbabwe for the sole sustenance of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe.'

The Minister lamented that some Zimbabweans seem to side and empathise with those who are bent on destroying the country. Thus, he mourned:

*Why should an indigenous person  
get angry on behalf of a foreigner instead of  
getting angry on his or her own behalf?*

He added that the country should not rely on handouts when it was blessed by vast natural resources. He also remarked thus,

*Many people think that it is impossible  
to be masters of our own destiny but we  
have to prove them wrong.*

Finally, he remarked that the President was in the process of officially sealing the indigenization drive through community ownership trusts. The import of Minister Kasukuwere's speech is reflected in the discussion section alongside the Key-Note address of President Mugabe. Nonetheless, the Minister openly reflected that there was no going back on the indigenization ethos and that he was not ashamed at all to redress a 'great historical wrong' that had been allowed to go on by, first the Lancaster House Agreement and later by gimmicks of the 'imperialists' in the guise of Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP). Equally, the Minister stressed that the ideas of 'good governance' and 'human rights' are a mere smoke screen by the 'callous' imperialists to reverse both the Land Reform and the Indigenization process.

### **President Mugabe's Heroes Day Key-Note Address**

On Monday 13 August 2012, the people of Zimbabwe commemorated the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the fallen heroes of the Second Chimurenga. The President, in his capacity as Head of State and

Government, Commander-in-Chief of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces and First Secretary of the revolutionary ZANU PF, addressed the nation on the need by all Zimbabweans to cherish the heritage 'bestowed to us' by the fallen heroes.

Prior to the Key-Note Address, the atmosphere was warmed up by both gospel and Chimurenga music, to psyche and prepare the audience to the speech. Though the address was not associated with his usual vitriolic tone and attack against the West and its 'internal stooges', the theme was the same: Zimbabwe will never be a colony again and that ZANU PF had a mandate to fulfil the dreams of the departed (dead) and living Zimbabweans by empowering them.

President Mugabe indicated that as Head of State, he had the responsibility to ensure that all people of Zimbabwe enjoyed the fruits of their indigenous resources. To him, there was no going back at all on the indigenization thrust. In his address, President Mugabe entreated all people of Zimbabwe to unite and to cherish the gains of the struggle for total independence. He lamented that some individuals were working to derail the indigenization thrust.

The banners all over the shrine area manifested the key theme of the speaker. The vocal effects, gestures and facial expressions of President Mugabe all accentuated the uncompromising position over the indigenisation drive.

The discussion section analyzes the import of the Key-Note Address, vis-a-vis the psychographic and rhetorographic aspects at hand.

## DISCUSSION

Both Minister Kasukuwere and President Robert Mugabe took a hard line uncompromising stance on the indigenization process. To them, the process is not only a just cause, but a quest to 'appease an embittered past'. That is, they both view indigenization as a sovereign right of Zimbabwean people to fully own what is rightfully theirs and God given. Through an interplay of verbal and non-verbal communication, the two key figures reflected not only a 'forward ever, backwards never' disposition, but also a siege mentality. They both admit that there is stiff resistance to their drive both locally and internationally. Overall, since non-verbal communication is more believable (Pearson et al, 2003), the stress and pitch of voice, together with kinesics or body movements during actual delivery of either speech bear testimony to a rather blunt statement from the two protagonists: *indigenisation is a correction of a historical mistake which is long overdue!*

A host of students and staff who attended Minister Kasukuwere's Public Lecture at Great Zimbabwe University pointed that the drive was legitimate with many students indicating their wish to capitalise upon the opportunity availed to 'eat' also from the national cake. War veterans and two elderly Pastors interviewed after the Key-Note Address by President Mugabe also rallied behind the need to 'right a historical wrong' by indigenizing key resources of the nation.

However, another section of students, staff (from Great Zimbabwe University), alongside other interviewees had a sceptical view on the whole rhetoric of indigenization. To them, this is nothing but a ploy to gain political ground in the face of expected elections against the MDC. This group

stressed that 'all' the previous policies of ZANU PF were not sincere, but suspicious. They further highlighted that if ZANU PF took a hard line stance, then the 'country would be ruined forever'. Herein lies the root cause of the impasse between the 'patriots' of ZANU PF and the MDC group. In essence, MDC is lampooned as a group of 'traitors' and 'saboteurs' whose mission is to assist the imperialist agenda of the British and their American allies. As long as ZANU PF holds a hard line, uncompromising stance while MDC is backed by the Western powers morally and otherwise in condemning the move to indigenize, then the country is tempering with a 'landmine' that can explode.

At both address set ups, the emotional climate was very explosive. The banners at the Zimbabwe shrine (Heroes Acre) all tolled like a death knell, the emotionally charged songs sounding like a dirge while the regalia (dress) pointed towards the uncompromising stance. Amid this set up, Prime Minister Tsvangirai of the MDC was 'dwarfed' and 'submerged', maybe symbolising that he had no room to dislodge the baobab of ages, ZANU PF.

MDC is crying that ZANU PF is abusing 'human rights' through its indigenization and this is echoed by independent media such as the News Day and Daily News. Western media and diplomats, on their side, seem to empathise with MDC against ZANU PF's 'impudence, 'ruthlessness' and 'callous' nature. But, ZANU PF maintains that 'Chimurenga!' ('It is a revolution', hence no need to be soft, but to be aggressive).

## CONCLUSION

There is a sad reality that surrounds the Zimbabwean story: the people have been polarized all because of the land and its host of resources. The so-called moderates and 'schooled', who 'respect' ideals of 'human rights' and 'good governance' totally oppose ZANU PF's indigenization to a point of taking a very strong position at any given forum, be it locally or internationally. Pitted against this group is ZANU PF who believes in their invincibility.

Maybe what is called for is a total re-look over the whole matter. That Prime Minister Tsvangirai sat alongside President Mugabe at both the Heroes Day Commemoration and the Defence Forces Day (Tuesday 14 August 2012) could be a promising signal to an ideal Zimbabwean character: Unity irrespective of political, religious and other backgrounds – the common denominator being that 'we' are all Zimbabweans

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