



## ZIMBABWE'S GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY: HARVEST OF THORNS?

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### ABSTRACT

*National governments have sovereign mandates to provide basic goods and services to the citizenry. This study seeks to find out the citizenry's opinion regarding the general performance of the Government of National Unity (GNU). Study findings suggest that while the GNU has made commendable socio-economic progress from 2009 to 2011, from thereon, there was serious socio-economic deceleration characterised by low business and investor confidence, continued de-industrialisation, little growth and employment generation, policy inconsistencies and uncertainties, the 'stop-go' constitution-making process, and apparent stalling of the national healing and reconciliation process. Scenarios aground strongly suggest that the GNU has been dogged by deep-seated structural and situational challenges. It appears to be reaping more thorns than benefits. Against this backdrop, the paper recommends that policy makers should have sound knowledge in the principles of good governance and economic management in order to strengthen the capacity of the various institutions of governance and improve industrial competitiveness. This is particularly needed to address the 'haemorrhage' in the manufacturing sector and macro-economic instability. There is also need for the training of legislators in areas of policy formulation, budget analysis and communication skills.*

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**Keywords:** GNU, GPA, Parliament, Good governance, Constitution, Political violence.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapidly deteriorating socio-economic and political situation in the first decade into the millennium resulted in the political parties signing an Inter-party Political Agreement, facilitated by former South African President Thabo Mbeki under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), between President Robert Mugabe of the Zimbabwe African

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National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), Morgan Tsvangirai of the main Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) and Arthur Mutambara of the splinter MDC-M formation, which is formally known as the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in September 2008. Article 3.1 (a) of the GPA states:

*The Parties agree to give priority to the restoration of economic stability and growth in Zimbabwe. The Government will lead the process of developing and implementing an economic recovery strategy and plan. To that end, the Parties are committed to working on a full and comprehensive economic programme to resuscitate Zimbabwe's economy, which will urgently address the issue of production, food security, poverty and unemployment and the challenges of high inflation, interest rates and the exchange rate".*

The GPA framework was for the three partners to work together to resolve the country's multi-layered crisis. This paper sketches out the performance of the GNU to ascertain the achievement of the GPA objectives or lack of it. The paper makes reflections, explanations and documentation so as to pencil in lessons from the GNU in order to understand and manage the present as well as to project the future. While successes in areas such as education, health, inflation, reduction of violence and the constitution-making process are highlighted, the shortcomings, inconsistencies and constraints as well as lessons learnt are pointed out. The writers are of the view that the GNU has made commendable development strides, for instance, the production of the new constitution.

## **2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

The nature of the socio-economic problems in Zimbabwe is such that there are several views and ideas about them, to the extent that there is no shortage of literature on this subject. Some of the works so far published on the subject have been undertaken by scholars of various disciplines and by journalists of a diversity of persuasions. This study, therefore, takes into account this multiplicity and diversity of views, interpretations and opinions in synthesising the literature selected for this review. Both print and electronic media have done a remarkable job of reporting some of the performances and challenges the GNU encountered during its tenure. The study undertook documentary search and made use of the data collected. Both state controlled and independent media publications were searched for appropriate data for this study. Such documents were studied and analysed as part of the data for this study. Content analysis was utilised in order to give the collected data scholarly interpretation. The underlying political science concepts and principles were highlighted in the process. The study also identified and interviewed selected key informants from such groups as the academia, House of Assembly, Ministries, civic society organisations, captains of industries, churches, workers organisations and youth organisations. Deliberate sampling of these possible respondents was utilised to focus primarily on those that had significant roles in different sectors of the economy. Care was taken to ensure that the selection of key informants would be adequately inclusive of the various political as well as ideological groupings within the Zimbabwean body politic.

### 3. PRE-GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY ERA

The Minister of Finance, presenting the 2013 Budget, on 15 November 2012, in paragraph 21 outlined the pre-2009 socio-economic milieu and the attendant challenges as follows:

- Cumulative economic contraction over 2000-2008, exceeding 40%;
- Resultant drastic fall in per capita GDP, from US\$700 in 1997 to about US\$290 by 2008;
- Hyper-inflationary environment, with record rates of over 231 million per cent;
- Wiping out of savings in financial instruments, including pension and insurance products;
- Resultant wide-spread rejection of the domestic currency by the public;
- An industry which collapsed under a massive business regulatory regime of controls, lack of re-investment, obsolete equipment, shortages of raw materials-all reducing capacity utilisation to below 10%;
- High formal unemployment levels estimated in excess of 80%;
- Disappearance of basic consumer goods and services, amid price controls and other distortions unrelated to cost of production and replacement;
- Absence of domestic savings and revenue in support of the budget, resulting in a corresponding collapse of public infrastructure and delivery of basic social services;
- Accumulation of external payment arrears to US\$3.07 billion as at December 2008; and
- Depletion of external reserves, leading to a total absence of import cover. Minimum levels of over 3 months import cover are deemed the norm<sup>1</sup>.

The near total collapse of the national economy was manifested in the following aspects:

- A chronic shortage of foreign exchange;
- A 50% reduction in agricultural productivity (Ministry of Finance, 2012);
- An approximately 45% decline in the manufacturing sector;
- Unemployment levels in excess of 80%; the world's highest rate of inflation that has gone as high as 1593.6% in January 2007;
- An estimated food deficit of 30% for the three years since 2001; and Poverty levels exceeding 85% and rising (Makumbe, 2009).
- Informalisation of the economy (Tarisayi, 2009)
- Hyperinflation. According to Steve Hanke, "Zimbabwe is in the late stages of a classic hyperinflation<sup>2</sup>". Table 1 below illustrates the world's highest hyperinflationary countries.

**Table-1.** Highest Monthly Inflation Rates in History

| Country    | Month with Highest Inflation rate | Highest Monthly Inflation Rate | Equivalent Daily Inflation Rate | Time Required for Prices to Double |
|------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Hungary    | July 1946                         | 1.30 x10 <sup>16</sup> %       | 195%                            | 15.6 hours                         |
| Zimbabwe   | Mid-November 2008                 | 79,600,000,000%                | 98.0%                           | 24.7 hours                         |
| Yugoslavia | January 1994                      | 313,000,000%                   | 64.6%                           | 1.4 days                           |
| Germany    | October 1923                      | 29,500%                        | 20.9%                           | 3.7 days                           |
| Greece     | November 1944                     | 11,300%                        | 17.1%                           | 4.5 days                           |
| China      | May 1949                          | 4.210%                         | 13.4%                           | 5.6 days                           |

Source: Prof. Steve H. Hanke, 5 February 2009.

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) failed to release official figures for February, March, April, and May, only to release the July figure that stood at 231 million per cent ([www.cato.org/zimbabwe](http://www.cato.org/zimbabwe)). However, unofficial figures by independent economists are as follows; February 165 000 per cent; March 355 000 percent; April 732 604 per cent; May 1 694 000 per cent; in June it was over 2 000 000 per cent, the highest outside a war zone (*The Financial Gazette*).

Most of the companies in the private sector in Zimbabwe were operating well below capacity due to lack of foreign currency, electricity load shedding and malfunctioning machinery, among other problems. Less than 5% of the industry was operating at full capacity, while a few were operating at 30% and others literally closed their shops (*ibid*). Shortages of fuel, foreign currency, maize meal, wheat and several other basic essentials were the order of the day.

In light of these scenarios, the Government of National Unity was mandated by Article 3(1) (a) of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) “to give priority to the restoration of economic stability and growth in Zimbabwe”. To achieve this noble virtue, the following programmes were formulated: Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme (STERP) launched and prefaced by His Excellency the President of Zimbabwe in March 2009 under the Theme “Getting Zimbabwe Moving Again”; STERP was followed by the Three Year Macro-Economic Policy and Budget Framework 2010-2012 (STERP II) which was focusing on “Reconstruction with Equitable Growth and Stability” launched in December 2009; and lastly the Medium Term Plan (2012-2015) which was launched on 7 July 2011 and outlining the projects, investment opportunities and programmes guiding the nation and setting the national priorities to 2015 with the objective of “Promoting Sustainable Inclusive Growth, Human Centred Development, Transformation and Poverty Reduction”.

These policy measures brought about impressive progress in the following areas:

- Attainment of single digit inflation;
- Increase in industrial capacity utilisation, from below 10% to averages of around 50%;
- Modest growth in overall investment, from 2% of GDP in 2008 to 9% of GDP;
- Increase in aggregate demand, 18.6%, domestic absorption 32.2%, and external absorption 48.5%; increase in agriculture growth rates from -5.8% in 2008 to 37.6% during 2009; and
- The restoration of social services, in particular health and education (2013 Budget, Paragraph 33<sup>3</sup>).

#### **4. GNU ERA: A HARVEST OF THORNS?**

The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) administration presented the budget to Parliament on 29 January, just before the formation of the GNU in February 2009. The estimates were presented in Zimbabwean dollars, United States dollars and South African rand. The budget recognized that the economy was in immeasurable predicament, which it blamed principally on internal politics. It, however, made reference to exogenous factors such as drought and illegal economic sanctions.

For the first time in Zimbabwean history, the budget statement broke ranks with the “populist” approach that had resulted in the implementation of half-hearted and wrong-headed interventions

including price controls that undermined viability and resulted in widespread shortages of basic commodities and the collapse of industry and the economy.

*Excessive money supply growth rates, emanating from unbudgeted expenditures made through the Reserve Bank, as well as low supply of goods and services remains the major sources of inflation (Government of Zimbabwe, 2009).*

One of the key policy proposals in the budget was the liberalisation of the foreign-exchange market. Paragraph 139 of the January 2009 Budget Statement states that “ In line with the prevailing practices by the general public, government is, therefore, allowing the use of multiple foreign currencies for business transactions, alongside the Zimbabwean dollar”.

Upon the formation of the GNU, the new Minister of Finance presented a National Budget Review Statement to Parliament on 18 March 2009. This was followed by the Short-Term Emergency Recovery Programme (STERP), launched by President Robert Mugabe on 19 March 2009. The budget review statement, was necessitated by the need to achieve the alignment of tax and other economic variables to STERP, downward revision of the overall 2009 budget framework in line with actual developments and reconfigurations of the estimates of expenditure to incorporate additional ministries in line with the formation of the GNU (Paragraph 1.1.8 of the Budget Presented by Finance Minister Tendai Biti).

The focus of the budget review was on the following:

- *Adoption of a cash budgeting system;*
- *Use of multiple currencies as legal tender and adoption of the rand as a reference currency;*
- *Revised estimated revenue and expenditures of US\$ 1billion;*
- *Dismantling of foreign-currency controls;*
- *Upward review of the tax-free threshold from US\$125 to US\$150;*
- *Payment of US\$100 allowance to civil servants;*
- *Rehabilitation and development of irrigation systems; and*
- *Resuscitation of the social contract.*

The budget as a fiscal policy instrument had sound intentions. The question which begs an answer is: *did the GNU policy initiatives/measures manage to achieve the set objectives and targets?* Some of the policies or plans are discussed below in order to respond to the foregoing question.

#### **4.1. Short-Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP)**

STERP was launched by President Robert Mugabe on 19 March 2009. The programme was designed to address the socio-economic crisis and paralysis. Furthermore, it was meant to stabilise the macro and micro economy, recovery levels of savings, investment and growth, laying the basis for a more transformative mid-term to long-term economic programme that will turn into a progressive developmental state (STERP, 2009:Paragraph 6). STERP, among others, had the following policy areas:

- Social protection to mitigate poverty and resuscitating public services delivery;
- Revival of productive sectors; and
- Finalising the national employment policy.

The STERP document did not achieve the expected results. It is the writers' contention that it was too ambitious. Other constraints included the overextended, bloated and oversized nature of the GNU, which was terribly consumption-oriented, comprising altogether 71 ministers, deputy ministers and governors. This figure is far high-ceilinged and is unsustainable for an economy and population the size of Zimbabwe. The economy was still in distress; and the treasury was insolvent and broke.

However, the STERP intervention must be commended for its relative stabilisation trajectory since the formation of the GNU in February 2009. It is important to note that the recovery was constrained by a highly volatile and unstable political milieu. Would-be regional and international investors were displaying a high degree of scepticism and risk-aversion mode through a wait-and-see attitude. This stance has been exacerbated by economic uncertainties prompted by the implementation of the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment regulations which were gazetted with minimal stakeholder involvement and participation. This paper argues that policy incoherence and inconsistency was the major challenge facing the GNU's performance. For example, on 29 January 2010, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment regulations were gazetted, stipulating that any business, with an asset value of US\$500 000 should 'cede' 51% of ownership to indigenous Zimbabweans. Following the regulations' gazettement, stock market capitalisation fell from US\$3, 97 billion in January 2010 to US\$3.19 billion by June 2010 ([The Financial Gazette](#)).

Just like the land redistribution programme, there is little argument about indigenisation as a justifiable imperative. The country's economic transformation requires restructuring and democratising of ownership and control of the economy by empowering the historically oppressed to play a leading role in the mainstream economy. The Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment policy's major weakness is its central focus, the requirement that all companies with a share capital above US\$500 000 should arrange for 51% of their shares or interests to be owned by indigenous Zimbabweans. In this regard, the policy is fixated and engrossed on the redistribution of the past; this offers little incentive on creating new jobs to address the high levels of unemployment. In addition, the policy is a serious threat to foreign direct investments. The indigenisation programme fails to create jobs and has been a catastrophic 'success' in deterring foreign direct investment (FDI) which is crucial to stabilising the current account deficits. One respondent informed this study that:

*It's a zero sum game, foreign shareholders and the private sector have been bullied and marched into submission with the rest of us to unquestionably believe in the sincerity of State paternalism as a redistributive force with the capacity to deliver people from inequality or spur economic growth<sup>2</sup>.*

The policy has led to serious destabilising effects on the economy. For instance, the policy has contributed significantly to a polarised business environment, poor investor confidence and weak

FDI flows. Since the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment programme was enacted, net FDI figures (as a % of GDP) have recorded an all time low, with negative inflows at -25, 9 in 2009 and -21, 1 in 2011(<http://www.zimtreasury.org/downloads/198.pdf>). Zimbabwe's Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment was described by various respondents as "destructive"<sup>3</sup>, "inimical to property rights"<sup>4</sup>, "devoid of justice"<sup>5</sup>, "unconstitutional"<sup>6</sup>, "tantamount to theft"<sup>7</sup>, "certain to bring about the imminent and total demise of the Zimbabwe economy"<sup>8</sup>. The uncertainty and inconsistency around the application of the policy has affected investment decisions particularly for new investments across the productive sectors. Laws seem to be changed and reversed at impulse.

This makes planning very difficult for business in an erratic policy environment. Thus, the GNU was caught up in policy discord and dissension among the partners.

#### 4.2. Multi-Currency Regime

The loss of confidence by economic agents in the domestic currency due to chronic high inflation, currency crisis and the absence of policy credibility led to the adoption of the dollarization in Zimbabwe. The dollarization option ensured that the exchange-rate risk and volatility, currency speculation and rent-seeking economic behaviour disappeared. It also eliminated hyperinflation, resulting in an improvement in the business climate and economic stability. Annual inflation declined from the official 231 million per cent in July 2008 to 7, 7 % in 2009 and 3.6 % in August 2010. Product availability in retail and wholesale outlets, with capacity utilisation improved from 10% to around 30-50% (Mid-Term Fiscal Policy Review Statement, 14 July 2010: 16).

This paper observes that dollarization has led to the loss of seigniorage in the nation. Seigniorage is "the profit that accrues to the central bank from printing money and minting coins" (Kanyenze *et al.*, 2011). There is also loss of the 'lender of the last resort' function of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. The study observes that dollarization has pernicious effects on marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as the poor in the countryside, small and medium enterprises, the disabled and the elderly. The question is: *Is dollarization the right socio-economic dose for Zimbabwe?* This study is of the view that dollarization is not the long-term and permanent solution. It is just a makeshift solution. Zimbabwe needs to formulate and implement sound structural, institutional and political reforms necessary to create a stable political and macro-economic environment.

#### 4.3. Unemployment

In order to address the paradox of low salaries leading to an unacceptably high wage bill due to a bloated public sector, the Mid-Term Fiscal Review policy argued that "government's capacity to accommodate higher remuneration packages would also be enhanced by payroll audits intended to remove ghost workers" (Government of Zimbabwe, 2009). The payroll audit was expected to verify the payroll establishment, assess personnel capacities and competencies and produce the following outputs or outcomes:

- A payroll aligned to the establishment;
- Rectification of all irregularities on the civil-service payroll;

- Strengthening of the systems and mechanism of enhancing the validity of the payroll;
- A detailed profile of the civil service; and
- Recommendations on attraction and retention measures (Comptroller and Auditor-General, 2009: paragraph 303)<sup>9</sup>.

The decision to undertake the Public Service Payroll and Skills Audit was taken by Cabinet on 21 April 2009.

The process of developing a National Employment Policy Framework started in 2007, gained momentum when the draft document was validated by key stakeholders in January 2009.

Thereafter, it was formally adopted by the Tripartite Negotiating Forum in June 2009 before it was approved by Cabinet in 2010. The framework seeks to mainstream employment creation as cross-cutting issues in all macro and sectoral policies. In fulfilment of its obligations as agreed in Ouagadougou in 2004 and in line with its Country Decent Work Agenda, Zimbabwe drafted its National Employment Policy Framework, which was validated by the general partners at a stakeholders' workshop held on 9-10 January 2009 and at a workshop organised by the Tripartite Negotiating Forum held on 27 July 2009.

#### 4.4. Manufacturing Sector

This section is much related to unemployment because it mirrors and defines the nature and extent of the unemployment in Zimbabwe. Capacity utilisation in Zimbabwe's troubled manufacturing sector has plummeted by 13 percentage points to 44, 2%, highlighting the haemorrhage in the sector, a 2012 Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) Manufacturing Sector Survey has revealed. Table 2 below shows the average capacity utilisation by sector.

Table 2 demonstrates that most companies are in a precarious situation. The CZI Manufacturing Sector Survey has warned of hard-hitting times ahead indicating that growth registered in the past three years of the GNU had fizzled out as negative macroeconomic fundamentals overshadowed ongoing efforts to rebuild the economy. The Manufacturing Sector Survey outlines the following as the reasons for fizzling out: availability and cost of funding, infrastructure in particular power shortages and cost, economic policy instability, high labour cost and rigid labour laws had the greatest negative impact on capacity utilisation and doing business (Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries, 2012). One respondent argued that:

“the drift back into a fresh crisis is propelled largely by a deteriorating liquidity crisis, a weak banking sector, policy inconsistencies and uncertainties undermining investor confidence, policy inconsistencies in Zimbabwe's power-sharing administration and a fall in foreign direct investment, exorbitant interest rates<sup>10</sup>”.

This explicitly shows that unemployment is still incommensurable and vexing the unemployed youth in Zimbabwe. The GNU has really failed to contain this fiend and monster ravaging the youth.



**Table-2.** Average Capacity Utilisation by Sector

| <b>Manufacturing Subsector</b>      | <b>Average Capacity Utilisation (%)</b> |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Bakers                              | 40.0                                    |
| Building (Construction and related) | 59.5                                    |
| Battery                             | 76.5                                    |
| Car Assemblers                      | 30.3                                    |
| Electric Appliances Manufacturers   | 43.8                                    |
| Engineering Iron and Steel          | 36.7                                    |
| Food, dairy and beverages           | 58.2                                    |
| Grain Millers                       | 30.0                                    |
| Chemical                            | 41.6                                    |
| Leather and allied                  | 27.5                                    |
| Paints and inks                     | 30.5                                    |
| Plastic, Packaging and Rubber       | 46.1                                    |
| Pharmaceuticals                     | 58.0                                    |
| Plastic, Packaging and Rubber       | 46.1                                    |
| Paper, Printing and Publication     | 58.3                                    |
| Textile and Clothing                | 34.4                                    |
| Timber processors                   | 53.8                                    |

Source: (Shame Makoshori)

#### 4.5. Constitution-Making Process

This was the greatest achievement of the GNU. The constitutional referendum to decide on the acceptance of the draft constitution was held on 16 March 2013. It was approved by 94.5% of voters as shown below.

##### Zimbabwe Constitutional Referendum, 2013

| <b>Choice</b>          | <b>Voters</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Yes                    | 3 079 966     | 94.49%                |
| No                     | 179 489       | 5.51%                 |
| Valid votes            | 3 259 455     | 98.29%                |
| Invalid or blank votes | 56 627        | 1.71%                 |
| Total Votes            | 3 316 082     | 100.00%               |

The adoption of the new constitution led to the holding of elections on 31 July 2013. Robert Mugabe of ZANU PF garnered a 61 % of the registered voters to lead the nation for the next five years.

However, the constitution making process was blemished by copious problems. At one point, the Principals wanted to commandeer the process. Neither the Principals nor the political parties had any veto power over the constitution. Article 6 of the Global Political Agreement was clear that the constitution-making process should be driven by Parliament. The people of Zimbabwe must in a referendum be the final arbiters, not three individuals. "If we have a draft which is agreed, Executives will take over and call a referendum, not to rewrite a parliamentary process. It is Mugabe's personal view, which is not shared by some of us"<sup>11</sup>, one respondent succinctly explained the roles of the parliament and executives in the constitution-making process. The respondent was responding to what President Mugabe had said when he officially opened the Fifth Session of the Seventh Parliament, on 14 November 2012, he said principals had literally taken

over the constitution-making process. A week before the opening of the Fifth Session of the Seventh Parliament, also he told delegates at the Second All-Stakeholders' Conference that principals had veto power and Parliament would merely rubber-stamp their decisions. "There is now the need for government to assume the management of the process leading to the referendum"<sup>12</sup>.

The major crisis that the GNU faced was that the legislators had not been doing what the people put them into office to do. One of the MDC-T senators is on record as saying women should not bath in order to discontinue the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is incredible. As not to be outdone, another MDC-T legislator went to indescribable lengths to have prostitution legalised. Referring to commercial sex workers as "pleasure managers", the MDC-T legislator argued that Parliament should pass a law legalising the peddling of flesh, a not so honourable suggestion in a predominantly Christian society battling the HIV and AIDS scourge. Another female legislator had the nation in stitches when she proposed that wives should deny their husbands their conjugal rights for a full month in protest against domestic violence.

These errors of judgment expose the poor calibre of politicians the electorate had catapulted into the August House. At the time of writing this article, outgoing ministers were demanding exit packages. In January 2012, the government was forced to pay a flat fee of US\$15 000 to each of the 244 serving legislators, meaning about US\$3.6 million was shelled out to the MPs in sitting allowances. In September 2012, the legislators demanded about US\$8 million from an equally cash-strapped Constitution Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) which they claimed was owed to them for the 90 days they undertook the constitution outreach process. In light of all these demands, was the GNU a listed blue-chip company? This is greediness at its worst. MPs under the GNU were characterised by avariciousness and materialism. They have demanded vehicles, per diem of about US\$75, demanded up-market housing stands and now exit packages (pension). This behaviour is despicable. It is not surprising why the majority of the MPs siphoned the Constituency Development Funds that were meant for developing their constituencies. The proclivity for avarice is deplorable. There seems to be something wrong with the Zimbabwean political system. Indeed, Zimbabweans have harvested thorns from the outgoing crop of legislators.

## 5. POLITICAL VIOLENCE

One of the objectives of the GPA was to create a culture of political tolerance. President Mugabe proclaimed July 24, 25 and 26 of 2009 as peace days to allow the country to celebrate its newfound peace and unity; and promote the ideals of national healing, reconciliation and integration. In an Extraordinary Government Gazette, President Mugabe urged political parties, traditional leaders, faith based institutions and civic society organisations to promote reconciliation and help destroy the culture of violence and intolerance.

*In the spirit of the Inter-party Political Agreement, I do hereby declare , set out and dedicate the 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of July as a period during which the nation may dedicate the Inclusive Government, our new peace, our freedom, our new spirit of nation-building, national healing, reconciliation and integration to inspire the country going ahead<sup>17</sup>.*

The Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration that had the mandate to spearhead foregoing dignified virtues was both technically and effectively moribund and dysfunctional. For instance, violence and intimidation marred the constitution outreach programme. The MDC-T's own gatherings including major conferences in Bulawayo have been marred by violent clashes (Maziwisa, 2012).

However, the political season was very tolerant and serene. It showed that Zimbabwe has politically matured. In honour of the late Vice-President John Landah Nkomo's clarion call for peace, the political mood during the 31 July 2013 harmonised general elections was exceptionally peaceful. The clarion call for peace is "Peace begins with me, peace begins with you and peace begins with all of us" (late VP John Nkomo).

## 6. SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS

Politicians in the GNU seemed to have been more preoccupied with buying votes and attacking the personalities of political opponents than articulating their economic policies. The quality of debate in parliament had left a lot to be desired. Participation by MPs in debates on economic issues, such as the budget, has been very poor. One respondent stated that "the quality of Zimbabwe's members of parliament in analysing legislation and the budget, which is their primary responsibility, is extremely poor<sup>18</sup>". The report titled Baseline Survey on Sector Specific Capacity Building Requirements for Committees of Parliament, commissioned by Parliament of Zimbabwe with the assistance of the European Commission (EC) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), states that "65% of the country's current MPs still require intensive training in legislation and budget analysis". The report notes that parliamentary committees and MPs merely fast track the passing of legislation because they lack basic understanding of the issues.

"The baseline survey revealed a 70% skills gap in the committees' capacity to analyse legislation" reads part of the report. One respondent seconded this by saying "While committees received basic training on budget analysis, they still require more training in this area. Regarding budget review, committees are not given adequate time to analyse the budget in a meaningful way<sup>19</sup>". The study discovered that the majority of the committees have limited knowledge and understanding of legislation and policies of the ministries they shadow. There is also very limited understanding of the international conventions in the various sectors. Consequently, this has had a bearing on the committees' capacity in crafting focussed work plans, which can assist them to effectively perform their legislative and overseer roles. This indeed is betrayal to the electorate.

There is a general perception that the reason most people in Zimbabwe venture into politics is not because they want to serve the public, but because they see politics as a lucrative income-generating activity. That is why consultations with the electorate on economic issues are only a very negligible exercise. Furthermore, these consultations have largely been seen as being purely cosmetic.

Although the GNU has made progress on the development of various institutions critical for socio-economic development in the country, more work needs to be done. For example, the Anti-Corruption Commission is yet to win the confidence of most Zimbabweans in handling high profile corruption cases. Mired in the depths of a debilitating political and socio-economic crisis,

Zimbabwe is currently experiencing fraud and corruption at endemic levels. Practically all sectors of the Zimbabwean economy are suffering from a grave form of fraud and corruption. Makumbe (2009) observes that “Zimbabwe is facing the real danger of becoming a culturally corrupt and fraudulent nation”. Fraud and corruption have become powerful survival tactics for the majority of Zimbabweans (ibid: 86).

Similarly, it is widely perceived that the courts have generally been biased towards the government in handling political cases. Furthermore, although there is freedom of the press, in practice, there is still a sense of fear amongst journalists because of instances where some have been victimised for being too critical of the government, for example, the arrest of the publisher and editor of the Weekly Mirror, Dennis Kagonge; and the Standard Editor, Nevanji Madanhire and reporter Nqaba Matshazi ([www.newsday.co.zw/2012/11/07](http://www.newsday.co.zw/2012/11/07)).

This was against Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that: “*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*” (United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, 2007).

There is need for people to appreciate and embrace the notion that politics is supposed to be a sustainable win-win situation where one ventures into it to serve the public and not for personal gain.

Over the life span of the GNU, the situation remained bleak for most Zimbabweans. Doubt remains about the true extent and likely beneficiary of political reform, because the GNU projected as the panacea to Zimbabwe’s woes has tended to be confined to competition among political elites to the exclusion of the disaffected masses. The majority’s role seemed to be reduced to being called upon to defend the inordinate ambitions of politicians in governance, who, like chameleons keep changing colours for political survival (Englund, 2002).

This has created disillusionment and cynicism in ordinary people, as evidenced by one illiterate man in Harare’s Hatcliffe suburb, who likened politicians, old (ZANU-PF) and new (MDC formations), to “birds without feathers. We the electorate give a candidate his feathers-each vote being another feather. When he has enough feathers off s/he flies and we never see him/her again<sup>20</sup>”. Another respondent described the GNU as “alien and remote, uncaring and oppressive<sup>21</sup>”. One may be prompted to glean that the majority of political leaders are apt to use political power for private ends, guided by a sort of “mercenary ethos” (Eyoh, 1995) or “kleptocratic instincts” (Bayart *et al.*, 1999; Russell, 1999). This study concludes that the general concern of the MDC-T in particular appears to be limited to getting into the shoes of the existing corrupt ZANU-PF leadership rather than ensuring redistribution of the national cake. The consequences of this inertia or underachievement would be a profound disillusionment and a growing problem of diminishing popular participation in the political process. Bratton (1998) postulates that while you can have elections without democracy, you cannot have democracy without elections.

Bratton says elections are necessary but not sufficient. This study agrees. What is important is not the quantity but the quality and meaning of elections; and this is essentially about credible, free and fair elections.

The performance of the GNU in Zimbabwe was summarised by Ayittey in reference to Africa's post independent leadership, when he said "Criticising them became sacrilegious and, very quickly, freedom and development promised by Nkrumah and other African nationalists transmogrified into a melodramatic nightmare. In many countries, these nationalist leaders soon turned out to be crocodile liberators, Swiss bank socialists, quack revolutionaries and grasping kleptocrats" (Ayittey, 1999). The majority of Zimbabweans would agree unequivocally with Ayittey (1999) that "For Many Africans, the 'paradise' promised them turned out to be a starvation diet, unemployment and a gun to the head. Disaffection and alienation set in".

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1. Conclusions

Although the Government of National Unity has made progress in some areas of socio-economic development since 2009, the overall picture suggests stagnation. While there is no doubt that efforts have been made to introduce economic policies aimed at improving Zimbabwe's economic situation, these have not borne noticeable fruits for the majority of Zimbabweans. It is argued here that Zimbabweans have actually had a 'harvest of thorns'.

The 2009-2011 economic rebound clearly decelerated in 2012, plunging the economy into what was described by the Mid Term Fiscal Review as a "*long winter of despair, characterised by low business and investor confidence, some disequilibrium in the economy, little growth and employment, declining social indicators and generally a lackadaisical business-as-usual mentality*"<sup>22</sup>.

The short-lived positive economic progress has been weighed down by erratic electricity supply, tight liquidity, fiscal revenue underperformance, drought and continued de-industrialisation. The 2012 GDP growth rate was revised downwards from 9.4% to 5.6% in July 2012. Deplorably, there are "clear output indications on the ground that necessitate a further downward revision to 4.4%"<sup>23</sup> at the time of writing this paper. This has crucial implications for Zimbabwe's democratisation process.

As the electorate becomes disillusioned, they may lose interest in the whole political process, which could therefore have an adverse impact on the survival of democracy. The study did not get recent data on trends on inequality in Zimbabwe. In the writers' opinion there is, however, no doubt that it is increasing. While the economy has stagnated, a new rich class has blossomed in Zimbabwe as witnessed by the sumptuous mansions that have sprouted like mushrooms in major cities. In a stagnating economy, the zero-sum game rules. The gains of a few can only be at the expense of the many.

## 7.2. Recommendations

Politicians at all levels should gain knowledge in the principles of good governance in general and sound economic management in particular, so that their energies are directed towards finding solutions to Zimbabwe's socio-economic problems.

Current efforts in strengthening the various institutions of governance should be doubled, for example, more should be done in ensuring the independence of the central bank, the courts and other watchdog institutions.

The study appeals to GNU leaders to be more sensitive to the socio-economic realities on the ground. Instead of MPs concentrating on legalising prostitution, demanding exit packages, luxury vehicles, money throughout their term of office, they must focus and deliberate on issues that affect the ordinary person in the 'ghetto' and countryside.

Training and education: the dearth of policy formulation and budget analysis skills and competencies in the Zimbabwean legislators can only be ameliorated through training and education. The majority of legislators are Ordinary Level holders and some do not have basic education. It is suggested here that communication skills which include written and oral self-presentation skills should be part of the training.

Industrial competitiveness: the government must lay the basis of the country's industrialisation agenda through support to the programmes of spatial development initiatives, raw materials beneficiation and job creation through support of anchor productive sectors of the economy.

Macro-economic stability: the consolidation of the gains of the past three years by guaranteeing a stable macro-economic environment. As Zimbabwe gears up for harmonised elections in 2013, peace and national building must be supported through peaceful referendum electoral processes. Policy consistencies and certainties are imperative for macro-economic stability and these must be clearly articulated and communicated to the electorate.

## End Note

1. Minister of Finance, Tendai Biti, the 2013 National Budget, "Beyond the Enclave: Unleashing Zimbabwe's Economic Growth Potential", presented to the Parliament of Zimbabwe, 15 November 2012.
2. Steve Hanke is professor of Applied Economics at Johns Hopkins University and a fellow at the Cato Institute. He developed a hyperinflation index for Zimbabwe beginning 5 January 2007, a month before Zimbabwe entered the hyperinflation zone.
3. Minister of Finance, Tendai Biti, The 2013 National Budget, "Beyond the Enclave: Unleashing Zimbabwe's Economic Growth Potential", presented to the Parliament of Zimbabwe, 15 November 2012.
4. Interview with an academic
5. Interview with an industrialist
6. Interview with businessperson
7. Interview with an academic
8. Interview with a civic leader
9. Interview with a youth leader

10. Interview with a Member of Parliament
11. In her 2009 Report, the Comptroller and auditor-General revealed that 10 277 youths were irregularly employed by the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment
12. Interview with Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries
13. Interview with the MDC-N President, Professor Welshman Ncube.
14. President Mugabe, Officially opening the Constitution Parliamentary Committee (COPAC)'s The Second All Stakeholders Constitutional Conference held at the Harare international Conference Centre (HICC), Harare: 21-23 October 2012.
15. Interview with Member of Parliament
16. Wikileaks
17. Speech by President Robert Mugabe
18. Interview with a Cabinet Minister
19. Interview with a Member of Parliament
20. Interview with a Resident who runs a tuck-shop in Hatclife suburb
21. Interview with Harare Residents Trust official
22. Tendai Biti, Mid Term Fiscal Review Policy Statement
23. Minister of Finance, Tendai Biti, The 2013 National Budget, "Beyond the Enclave: Unleashing Zimbabwe's Economic Growth Potential", presented to the Parliament of Zimbabwe, 15 November 2012, Paragraph 36.

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