LEADERSHIP
KEY TO UNLOCKING ZIMBABWE’S POTENTIAL BEYOND THE 2018 ELECTIONS

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WHAT SHOULD ZIMBABWE PRIORITISE FOR NOW?
Thirty-eight years after independence and counting to 40, the narrative of Zimbabwe’s socio-economic and political ills, has largely remained the same.

Save for the early years of independence where significant progress was noted in the education and health sectors, the latter years were signified by regression and stagnation.

Suffice to say the script has largely remained the same as Zanu PF under then President Robert Mugabe, continued to dominate the political space, culminating in the hyper-inflationary 2007 – 2008 period.

The nation remained hopeful though as the economy started showing signs of recovery following the inception of the Government of National Unity in 2009 in the aftermath of the hotly disputed 2008 elections. The GNU comprising Zanu PF and the two formations of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), somewhat assisted in stabilising the socio-economic environment up to the 2013 elections.

The reprieve was, however, shortlived as the tell-tell signs of the previous hardships and knocks on the fragile economy began to show in the intervening years leading to Mugabe’s ouster in November 2017.

Mugabe was accused of mismanaging the economy hence the euphoria and ecstatic jubilations that engulfed the country following his removal in a coup in the hope that the post-2018 election period would open a new era for Zimbabwe.

Central to the country’s socio-economic ills was the bane of Zimbabwe’s disputed elections dating back to as far back as the 2000 elections as retention of power by whatever means became the major pre-occupation.

And as if Zimbabwe’s is jinxed, the 2018 elections produced yet another disputed outcome with the country showing all the signs of the pre-GNU hyperinflationary period. The country is yet again and painfully so, experiencing acute fuel and foreign currency shortages, erosion of incomes, shortages and increases in the prices of basic commodities in an economy with 90 percent unemployment.

In the mix of these economic problems, is the issue of outstanding reforms, respect for human rights and freedoms, critical to unlocking international financial support and investments to kick-start the ailing economy.

This situation imposes immense responsibilities on President Emmerson Mnangagwa as it demands his urgent attention of which demonstration of leadership skills and qualities should be the key driver to the rebranding of Zimbabwe.

Our theme for this edition of Thinking Beyond: Leadership Key to Unlocking Zimbabwe’s Potential Beyond the 2018 Elections, thus proffers possible solutions and ideas that will generate debate towards rescuing the country from this seemingly jinxed socio-economic and political quagmire.
New power, new leadership and contemporary forms of ‘Unhu’/‘Ubuntu’

Introduction: An African Revolution

To take part in the African revolution it is not enough to write a revolutionary song; you must fashion the revolution with the people - Sekou Toure

Africa is not short of great orators, mischief makers, merchants of violence, conspiracy theorists and downright nasty individuals. They sing a song, say a slogan, throw a stone, duck a bullet, hurl insults, recite revolutionary text and claim revolutionary credentials.

What is most surprising though is that the majority of Africans are not like this at all. Africans are honest, hardworking, sober-minded, highly productive, peace loving, fun-loving, joyful, resilient, hopeful and affable people. Whether Bantu or not, most Africans reflect the spirit of “Ubuntu/Unhu”.

Closer to home, Zimbabwe is as Busisa Moyo once said “broken and not broke”. None of us can dispute that a confluence of several historical and contemporary factors have led to this condition that Nomfundo Mogapi characterised as one of “a wounded leadership, a wounded people and wounded nation”. This “woundedness” has arisen out of, amongst others:

- The racialisation, regionalization and ethnicization of politics and dispossession which accounts for deep anti-state and anti-national sentiments amongst some communities in Zimbabwe.

- A narrow ethno-nationalistic agenda in the battle for the State often camouflaged as factionalism. This has made violence an important mediation tool for manufacturing consent and consensus.

- A siege mentality within a discredited political (party) that has appropriated an anti-imperial and anti-colonial pseudo radical rhetoric of self-preservation.

- An even narrower regime change agenda propagated and financed by international actors under the guise of rule of law, human rights and democracy.

- A debilitating ‘Slum or Ghetto phobia’ as well as increased radicalisation of the urban poor in places like Makokoba, Mkoba, Mbare, Sakubva, Epworth. The growth of ‘slum phobia’ amongst Zimbabwe’s ruling elites that informed the tragic ‘operation Murambatsvina’ is an irrational response to growing urban poverty.

- The conflation of the state, securocracy, the ruling party and the economy has created what some Zanu PF supporters are now calling ‘economic saboteurs. The Zimbabwean State- in the absence of a functioning economy and market- has become the sole site of primitive accumulation, privilege and pillage for the bureaucratic, military, political and religious bourgeoisie. This in turn has led to the politicisation and capture of critical State institutions and processes.

- Politicisation of the justice delivery system, for example, has resulted in the unwitting institutionalisation and monetisation of justice leading (President Emmerson) Mnangagwa, to threaten action against ‘corrupt judges’ in the highest courts of the land.

- Be it in industry, public tenders or distribution of State agricultural inputs, the pervasive influence of political party activists-cum-entrepreneurs-cum-criminals is frightening. This in turn has led to a deep rot in society, an erosion of public sector ethics and failure of public service delivery in some critical sectors.

- Thus across Zimbabwean society two things seem to work at all in order to obtain any results from public institutions, namely ‘political connection’ and the bribe. It is ridiculous that citizens have to bribe public officers in order to obtain passports, birth certificates and ID cards.

- A combination of these factors has led to a definition in practice of leadership that accommodates personalisation of organisations and State institutions (de-institutionalisation), State capture, and a form of vindictive patriotism.

- These, have in turn, elevated mediocrity to spiritual and sacrosanct status. A party card, relationship to a minister, permanent secretary, director or some such notable, becomes licence and access to immeasurable control of benefits of the public sector financed by tax payers and donors?

The nation is thus in search for a new meaning of leadership, a new ethos and practice. A truly revolutionary leadership practice that does not conflate domineering, offensive and violent behaviour with revolutionariness. Beyond the public sector, the other sectors are not immune from the malaise described above.

One senses across Zimbabwe, a cognitive dissonance amongst the political, bureaucratic and economic elite in Africa. They cannot fathom or appreciate the extent of ethical decadence of political parties, faith-based organisations nor the integrity, destitution of both donors and non-governmental organisations-NGOs.

Despite the rhetoric of fighting corruption, there is a genuine concern that the triple malaise of bad governance, poor economic performance and weak ideation may have made permanent the problems described above. Allow me to reflect on the implications of ‘Ubuntu/Unhu’, as a framework for fashioning truly revolutionary or transformational African leadership. Ubuntu/Unhu has historical roots, but possesses contemporary possibilities that can embrace modernity, technology and the millennial generation.

New Power and new influencers

Henry Timms and Jeremy Heimans in their book: New Power: How it’s changing the 21st century-and why we need to know, argue that:

“Today, we have the capacity to make films, friends, or money; to spread hope or spread our ideas; to build community or build up movements, to spread misinformation or propagate violence—all on a vastly greater scale and with greater potential impact than we did even a few years ago. Yes this is because
technology has changed. But the deeper truth is that we are changing. Our behaviours and expectations are changing."

It is clear therefore in the age of fake news, social media and artificial intelligence, the ‘new power’ lies in the ability to harness the new appetites and possibilities created by these changes.

The inability of our public administrations, churches, political parties, local authorities and traditional leaders to thrive in this new world, threatens not only their power, but their very existence and relevance. It creates a gulf between them and the majority of the national population of young people under the age of 30 years. But the ‘new power’ comes bearing no ideological depth, clarity or claim.

Following Henry Timms and Jeremy Heimans argument, therefore, traditional political, social and economic power in Zimbabwe has and continues to work like the United States dollar (a currency). It is ‘allegedly’ used by everybody, but is in reality controlled by a few elderly men and their younger surrogates. Once gained, it is hoarded by any and all means necessary.

The powerful have reserves of it to spend on all sorts of trinkets and luxuries, including a fleet of cars, expensive alcohol and obscenely luxurious holidays. The poor can only admire from afar and they constantly watch their salaries, pensions and hard labour, illicitly converted to the bond notes. So this old power is closed, inaccessible, elite, political and leader-driven. It downloads and it captures. When it ends, it is pitiful, just look at (former president Robert) Mugabe after the coup.

In contrast, the ‘new power’ born out of the disruption birthed by technological advances, social media and the generation of millennials operates differently, like the current of the mighty Zambezi river. It is co-created by many tributaries. It is open, participatory, and peer-driven (sometimes grievance and ignorance driven too).

This new power uploads and it distributes. Like water or electricity, it is most forceful when it surges. The goal with New Power is not to hoard or monopolise it, but to channel it. Such new power is by nature optimally dialogic. It is the singular most constructive or potential destructive force of our time. So how then do we infuse this new power with values of an Ubuntu-driven leadership?

What is Ubuntu/Unhu?

There are many different, and not always compatible, definitions of what ubuntu is. In Shona the saying, ‘munhu munhu nekuda kweguru’, captures a whole world of meaning. Professor Stanlake J.W.T. Samkange (1980), framed the three maxims of Hunhuism or Ubuntuism that shape this philosophy, namely that:

• To be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them.
• If and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life.
• Leaders or ‘the king owes his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him’.

Ubuntu asserts that society as a collective, its mores and consciousness, gives human beings their humanity. When someone behaves according to custom or in a humane way, a Shona-speaking person would say, “Uyu munhu. A Ndebele person will say, “Lo ngumuntu owayo sbili,” which means “he/she is a human”. This means that in order to be a good leader one must behave with ‘Ubuntu/Unhu’.

This is an affirmation of one’s humanity through recognition of the ‘other’ in his or her uniqueness and difference. Such ‘other’ is a mirror (but only a mirror) for one’s own subjective humanity. Taken to its logical conclusion, my humanity is derivative, it is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me.

This, therefore, means that humanity is a quality held in mutuality and a right we owe to each other. Michael Onyebuchi Eze, argues that the core of Ubuntu, can best be summarised as follows:

“We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our mutual co-creations: we are because you are, and since you are, I definitely am. The ‘I am’ is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance”.

This conception of life, of being, becoming or belonging, determines how leaders treat both strangers and members of the community, subordinates, peers and superiors alike. It follows then that nothing can be as potent as Ubuntu in shaping empathetic and compassionate servant-leadership.

Nothing too can surpass the empathy that Ubuntu demands and inescapably the importance of networking, relating, sharing and hosting. This overt display of warmth is not merely aesthetic, but enables formation of spontaneous communities.

This is not merely an esoteric ‘feel good’ or touchy-feely idealism. Ubuntu/Unhu transcends the aesthetic and gives functional significance to the value of networking and relating.

In the past, neighbours could easily borrow essential materials from each other (e.g. a hoe, salt, mealie meal, a plough and etcetera) as well as offer unsolicited solidarity in the event of a tragedy or celebration.

In traditional communities, Ubuntu/Unhu was the basis of the traditional social welfare system, the social support structures and humanitarian response or what we now term civic duty. There were no NGOs charged with these and each person was an institution and was expected to avail their labour, expertise, resources and time free of charge.

Ubuntu thus functioned largely as a means of self-offering or volunteerism. While sharing is a central part of "ubuntu/unhu", it is only one of several virtues within "unhu". In IsiNdebele, there is a saying to the effect that: “Isisu sombambi asinganani singango phonjwana lwe mbuzi.” In other words, visitors do not need to burden themselves with carrying provisions. All visitors are provided for and protected in every home they pass through without payment being expected.

In fact, every individual who is aware of the presence of any visitor is expected to make every effort to make such a visitor comfortable. I am not sure what this might mean in the age of Air b’n’ b, Uber, taxiify and share-my-ride. With limited incomes in urban areas as well as the difficulties of accessing food and other essentials, this culture of sharing is in danger of extinction. But what might be its modern and more economically viable alternative or incarnation?

Abused solidarity, empathy and compassion

The empathetic and compassionate nature of Ubuntu is not the sine qua non of community formation, but guards against the sort of purely transactional relationships of modern society. Because Ubuntu as a value system is not embraced by everyone in modern society, it is highly likely that empathy, compassion and solidarity may leave one vulnerable to those with ulterior motives.

Its very philosophical basis made Ubuntu a
medium of distribution and redistribution within agrarian societies. It presupposes a community population’s vested interests, collective welfare, wellbeing and prosperity.

Today’s youth live in urban areas and inhabit virtual spaces. They record every minute of their lives, share these with strangers and also record everything that happens around them. Millennials are not as private as the generations before them.

They have many relationships with online friends. In urban areas the bonds of communal living have significantly weakened and though present in virtual spaces these are largely tenuous. The nature of Zimbabwe’s urban development and the aggregation of people into an abstract and bureaucratic state undermines several tenets of Ubuntu described above, especially the ideal of "collective responsibility".

But even under traditional society, 'collective responsibility' was not an absolute in which the community's good was always prior to the individual's good.

**Limits of Ubuntu and the Quest for Modern Adaptation and Application**

In traditional society it is taboo to call elderly people by their given names; instead they are called by their surnames. It is also improper to rebuke or correct an elder in public. This was intended to create social guard rails and limit the familiarity of individualism and replacing it with a representative role, in which the individual effectively stands for the people among whom he comes from at all times.

The individual identity is replaced with the larger societal identity within the individual. Thus, families are portrayed or reflected in the individual and this phenomenon is extended to villages, districts, provinces and regions being portrayed in the individual.

This places high demands on the individual to behave in the highest standards and to portray the highest possible virtues that society strives for. When a person has children they are called by the names of their children 'Baba Tanaka’ or ‘Amai Tanaka’ or ‘Seka S’khumbuso’ or ‘Naka S’Khumbuso’.

**Social roles, social cohesion and harmony**

"Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted, the indifference of those who should have known better, the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most, that has made it possible for evil to triumph." - Emperor Haile Selassie

Ubuntu/Unhu, embodies universal African virtues necessary to achieve social cohesion, build social capital and maintain harmony based on the spirit of mutuality, reciprocity and sharing.

Most African nations, tribes and clans believed that there was enough to meet needs, but never enough to meet greed. Ubuntu created many guard rails about how human beings behave and interact in various social roles, e.g., between in-laws, children and parents, youth and elders.

These guard rails were meant to serve as a sign of respect as well as to maintain the highest standards of behaviour and decency. The son or daughter-in-law is expected to serve as ambassador of his family, clan and laws at all times. Each family, clan and tribe put in place certain standards of behaviour expected of its members.

These define Unhu/Ubuntu, for the concerned group. There are concerns about the patriarchal nature of some of the expectations and how they placed a disproportionate burden on women to comply.

On the positive side, Unhu/Ubuntu, served as an effective and sustainable social welfare system. Under this system children are never orphans since the roles of mothers and fathers are by definition not vested in a single individual with respect to any child. It takes a village to raise a child.

Furthermore, a man or a woman with Ubuntu/Unhu, will never allow any child around them to be an orphan. The township and urban life generally has seriously corroded this fiduciary duty bestowed on adults. In more instances than not, child sexual abuse and exploitation is done by responsible adults.

Under Ubuntu/Unhu, a crime or civil wrong committed by one individual extends beyond the offender and has far-reaching implications to the people from among whom the person that commits the crime comes.

Equally so, the penalties or remedies under Ubuntu/Unhu, were meant to be restorative and to guard social cohesion, harmony and collective responsibility. Its worst application was in instances of murder where a young virgin from the offenders family was handed over to the victims family thus creating a forced bond of marriage between the victim's family and the accused's family in addition to the perpetrator being punished both inside and outside his social circles.

The offender's criminal act was extended to the family and the society where the offender hails from. However, the punishment of the offender was a huge fine and social stigma, which they must shake off after many years of demonstrating unhu or ubuntu.

**Implications of Ubuntu/Unhu for leadership**

In the final analysis, Ubuntu has several tenets including the following five cardinal ones:

• Social recognition of the other, representation of the widest spectrum of social opinion and redistribution of common assets and personal goods to ensure social equilibrium. This implies a life lived in solidarity, sharing with those who lack and helping to empower by giving back or investing in your community.

• Collective accountability for any crime or misdemeanor.

• Collective responsibility to provide solutions to any challenges facing society, including raising children and providing social welfare.

• Social guard rails and decency in different levels of social, professional and familial relationships.

• Governance and decision-making by consultation, consent and consensus, that is, participatory and inclusive processes that recognise and include diverse views.

Based on these principles, a leader who has Ubuntu/Unhu, is – amongst other things:

• Selfless and consults widely and listens to subjects.

• Such a person does not adopt a lifestyle that is outrageously opulent, extravagant and far-removed from the rest of society.

• A leader who has "unhu" does not seek to dominate, but allows the people to lead themselves and cannot impose his will on his people, which is incompatible with "unhu". Such a leader empowers others, delegates, listens, acknowledges with gratitude and represents with humility.

• Such a leader has the courage to listen, hear and understand honest feedback about their performance and are able to change in order to improve and grow.

• In order to change a nation, change situations, things or institutions, requires knowledge, understanding, skill and preparation. The lesson we take from 30 years of pro-democracy and human rights work is that the biggest constraint to
growth is not funding, technology, the operational environment, the content of work or even competition from other service providers or political parties, but the ability to get, nurture, grow and retain the right people. Most of our leading institutions lose over 60% of their value over a period of a decade through their failure to connect with people.

- Such a leader both connects and communicates.
- Outstanding Ubuntu/Unhu-inspired leaders care about people (they are compassionate), they treat their subordinates with respect and dignity and seek advice from them, and they listen well.
- Narcissistic leaders are pre-occupied with their own image, security and greed. Poor leaders show a thorough disdain for critical opinion and they have abiding distrust of subordinates, colleagues and peers. Such leaders rarely seek advice, they avoid two-way communication and rely almost exclusively on constitutions, company manuals and barking instructions.
- Average leaders are often transactional and pre-occupied with completing tasks. These focus on their own status and are most reluctant to hear the advice of those under them. The most dangerous average leaders listen only to superiors (partial or full sycophancy).
- Ubuntu/Unhu teaches each leader to connect beyond hollow words. It enables leaders to always seek common ground to celebrate the greatness of others and demonstrate purposefulness in their public presentation.
- Ubuntu/Unhu, therefore, tests the following aspects of leadership:

**Authenticity** - Who am I? Am I confident, comfortable and sincere? Do I reflect and adequately represent the values of my organisation in everything I say and do? People often hear a leader’s words and even quote them (i.e. retweet, like, etc.), but they do not meaningfully feel his or her attitude.

**Integrity** - Is what I say and what I do the same? If you do not live it, it will sound true, entertaining, but hollow and unconvincing. What a leader is, sometimes is louder than what they say.

**Expectation** - Did I disappointment because of breaking a promise, being tardy and ill-prepared or simply not being up to the mark? Personal preparation is as important as people preparation (i.e. knowing the people you work with, are going to address or you are fighting with)

**Relevance** - Did I listen to, hear, understand and respond with ability to the questions and challenges before me?

**Value-Added** - Did I assist my subordinates, peers, or superiors, to become a better version of themselves and to get closer to achieving their goals and aspirations? What value did I add to them?

**Clarity** - Did I give my subordinates, peers, and/or superiors a coherent strategy, plan or set of tactics to address the issue at hand?

**Deliberateness** - Ubuntu/Unhu is about outcome or results-oriented leadership. So it is important for leaders to speak, act, think and demonstrate purposefulness in their public presentation.

**Transformative Value** - Did my input, words or actions contribute to transforming the situation, institution, policy or person for the better?

**Selflessness and Perseverance** - Ubuntu/Unhu leadership is not a quick fix. It is about giving up components of self in order to connect with the other. People take time to warm up to new ideas or even people, there is never need to force, coerce, bribe or hurry people towards a position or outcome.

In this age, where almost every minute, a lot of people consume a lot of money and time on social media, watching television, live events or observing other people, visual messaging is very important.

In this age of pop-Idol type narcissistic and self-absorbed leaders, Ubuntu/Unhu leadership principles remind us that people often follow out of curiosity, peer pressure, entertainment value or value-added. The credibility of any leader is either stolen, borrowed, bought or earned.

Who we associate with often determines who else takes us seriously. But Ubuntu/Unhu, has taught us reciprocal relationship is the bedrock of people buy-in into any leadership.

This is then cemented by amongst others:

- **Knowledge, Expertise and Experience** - we live in an age where ideas run the world and there is fascination with knowledge and self-actualisation. When a speaker or leader can communicate well thought out ideas, many people will listen. In this age, no leader is worth their salt if they are not an avid reader or intellectually curious.

- **Personal Achievement and Success** - Often fools are feted because they have achieved something tangible. There are many leadership theorists, but the most effective leadership teachers are likely to be those who can point to some personal success no matter how small it might be relatively speaking. Leaders without credentials or any form of legacy often over simplify fairly complex phenomenon and lack the humility to learn by doing or even doing and learning.

- **Capability, Capacity and Talent** - An accomplished actor, author, sportsperson, singer, businessperson, preacher, engineer, doctor, or teacher, is likely to be listened to by folk who come from professions different from theirs. Talent that has been applied with results often buys credibility.

Ubuntu/Unhu requires that leaders have something to show for their talk. Leadership without accomplishments is often insecure and given to ad hoc decision-making.

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This contribution offers to dissect the development problematique in Africa and Zimbabwe using the lens of leadership. It suggests that the leadership variable is a cardinal, but by no means the sole factor in unlocking the continent’s and, by extension, Zimbabwe’s potential for development and prosperity.

Leadership: The Ancient and Resilient Problem

Ever since humankind started living in politically organised societies, leadership has been recognised as an important if not the decisive determinant for the welfare of the community.

More than 2,500 years ago, in both the West and East, philosophers were fixated with the leadership question and in both cases, there was a consistent convergence that a supreme mark of good leadership was virtue. Virtuous leadership was the key to achieving what the ancient Greeks called ‘good political life’.

For instance, Plato, the celebrated classical Greek philosopher and Father of Western Social Science, posited that a just and happy society is that ruled by a virtuous Philosopher King. By this he meant one where philosophy (knowledge or wisdom) is conjoined to rulership (power) i.e. rule informed by knowledge.

In the East was ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius, who like Plato, also stressed the supremacy of virtue. He sagely averred:

Virtue is more to man than either water or fire. I have seen men die from treading on water and fire, but I have never seen a man die from treading the course of virtue.

Confucius passionately argues that acting ethically in all transactions is paramount, more important than striving to make money. Have African and Zimbabwe leaders read this?

But what is leadership? As we understand it, leadership is not synonymous with a leader as many commentators routinely suggest especially in attributing badly governed African countries to the iron rule of one ‘Big Man.’ Leadership is broader and can therefore not be reduced to the proclivities of a particular individual who occupies the office of chief political executive.

In short, leadership is not a solo performance. As Michael Bratton and Eldred V. Masunungure (2011) said several years ago, leadership “is a collective political process of mobilising people and resource in pursuit of shared goals”. Elaborating, the two argued:

Ideally, an effective leader starts by articulating a vision that inspires others. … Since unanimity of policy preferences can never be attained, a key leadership skill is forging compromise political settlements with rivals including, if necessary, sharing power with them.

Once in official positions, wise developmental political leaders further recognise that they cannot govern alone, which leads them to reach out to organised allies in the business, labour and civic communities. By drawing together the resources - human and material - of broad-based coalitions, effective leaders seek to build lasting institutions that outlive the time span of any single individual.

The last sentence raised the debate - akin to the chicken and egg causality dilemma - about agency (in this case, leaders) and structure (institutional arrangements); which determines what. Is structure more important than agency/leadership. The standpoint of this contribution is that both matter.

Further, that either could be more important than the other depending on the contextual contingencies. In Africa though, agency tends to loom larger than structure in that leaders after creating structures, proceed to ‘refuse’ to be governed by them and often mutilate them at will if they stand in their way.

Thus, the late Kamuzu Banda, former long-ruling Malawi President, declared: “My word is law as it is uttered!”. Many of his peers, before and after him, might not have had the audacity to say so boldly but Banda captured their thoughts and actions.

Having recognised the importance and even supremacy of leadership as collective enterprise, it is imperative to understand and appreciate the fact that leadership has two sides, the brighter side and the
darker side. The former can be labelled developmental leadership which is public-oriented in pursuit of the common good while the latter takes the form of predatory leadership which is self-serving and even ruthless.

Most of Africa, including Zimbabwe, has been cursed with a deficit of the former and a surfeit of the latter form leadership.

Leadership and Africa’s development

The enduring and unresolved puzzle in Africa’s post-colonial development is why the leaders who valiantly, selflessly and triumphantly fought for and delivered their countries’ independence have proven woefully inadequate to the task of delivering national development. Indeed, some of them have since turned into villains when yesteryear they were heroes. The puzzlement was aptly expressed in 2007 by the great Kenyan political scientist, Ali Mazrui when he lamented:

We know that the twentieth century produced very effective leaders of liberation. Nationalists like Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Sekou Toure fought against great odds to gain us independence. There were many other brilliant liberation fighters all over the continent who helped Africa end its colonial bondage.

But leaders of liberation were not necessarily leaders of development. One African leader after another let Africa down in the struggle to improve the material well-being of the African people. Only a few African leaders since independence have demonstrated skills of development on the ground (Ali Mazrui, 2007).

He concluded: “We know that Africa has been served well by leaders of liberation. We are concerned that we have not produced enough leaders of development” (Ali Mazrui, 2007, my emphasis).

Why is Africa where it is today? Africa and Asia were decolonised at about the same time and, more importantly for our purposes, both were at roughly the same level of development.

Indeed, in some cases, African countries (e.g. Ghana) were ahead of Asian countries at the time of their independence. Five or so decades later, many Asian countries have not only taken off; they have surged ahead and consolidated their growth and development.

The Asian ‘tiger economies’ of Malaysia, The Republic of Korea (South Korea), Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, have surged far ahead of any African country. Indeed, in some cases, these ‘Asian Tigers’ have rivalled and even surpassed their former colonisers.

For instance, by 2013, Singapore’s GDP per head was 104 percent of that of the United States and yet its GDP was merely one sixth of the US at Singapore’s independence in 1965. What happened? It’s leadership, stupid!

Why has the cradle of mankind been turned into a graveyard of many a development programme? Why is a continent so rich and so blessed with all kinds of resources - in fact the most well-endowed continent - wallowing in abject poverty and an object of global pity and charity?

For instance, why is it that natural resources poor Japan and the Asian Tigers are so rich and getting richer while natural resources rich Africa is so poor and lagging further behind other continents? What is the missing link? Is leadership not the missing link?

To be fair, some post-independence leaders, like Mugabe in the first decade, actually delivered significant developmental goods and independence when they assumed power. But, soon after, turned into self-regarding predators, siphoning the scarce resources of the countries they had done so much to liberate.

How did developmental leadership metastasise into predatory leadership with devastating consequences for their citizens? Why is the DRC, with virtually all mineral in the world at the bottom of the global development rung while Botswana, blessed with only one worthwhile mineral, diamonds, one of the richest in Africa?

Why did Zimbabwe come to resemble the DRC rather than Botswana? The answer squarely lies in leadership.
Zimbabwe’s Leadership Deficit

In an often-quoted admonition, Tanzania’s founder father Julius Mwalimu Nyerere told newly installed Zimbabwe Prime-Minister Robert Mugabe in 1980: “You have inherited a jewel: Keep it that way.” Did Mugabe heed the sage advice? Twenty-four years after Nyerere’s warning, his former war comrades organised under the Zimbabwe Liberator’s Platform lamented in 2004: “In Zimbabwe today, virtually everything that could go wrong has gone wrong. There is political chaos, and anarchy. Economic meltdown is nearly complete. The ‘Jewel of Africa’ is in the intensive care unit”.

In 2008, Nelson Mandela, founding President of democratic South Africa and global icon, attributed Zimbabwe’s syndrome of crises to “tragic leadership in our neighbouring Zimbabwe”.

What had happened in the previous 24 years to turn what was the breadbasket of Africa into a basket case? How was it that a country that was the second most industrialised in Africa (after South Africa) had become an industrial laggard, importing virtually everything, including toothpicks?

The Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company (Ziscosteel), once the largest steel manufacturing company in Africa, employing some 5,500 workers and indirectly employing around 50,000 people is now a mere shell.

Bemoaning Ziscosteel’s sad story, Butler Tambo (2017) wrote: “By 2010, what was once one of Africa’s largest integrated steelworks was a mass of antiquated machinery and could hardly pay its depleted workforce (now) largely consisting of manual staff, after sustained losses and gross abuse of resources.”

Zimbabwe’s parastatals, which used to contribute at least 40% to the country’s GDP, now contribute less than 12% prompting former president Robert Mugabe to suggest a radical solution: “These (parastatals) are non-performers; what we must do is to find coffins for them and bury them with the words Rest in Peace” (see, https://www.herald.co.zw/non-performing-parastatals-must-go-president/).

Mugabe apparently was oblivious of his authorship of the tragic situation. Now Zimbabwe’s unemployment is a whopping 75-90% in a formal economy that is being devoured by a raging informal economy, which is now the second highest in the world, second to Bolivia.

In an unusually candid editorial by a state-controlled newspaper, the Sunday Mail (25 November 2018 described how Zimbabwe came to be where it is today, heaping all blame on bad governance in Mugabe’s ‘First Republic’:

The reasons why the First Republic ultimately imploded are clear. A stark disregard for economic fundamentals; the entrenchment of unproductive self-entitlement that itself bred an unwieldy, unresponsive and corrupt bureaucracy; the emergence of a toxic political clique that acted with impunity and crass arrogance; and a culture of indolence were among the most apparent viruses that felled the First Republic.

The Sunday Mail was referring to Mugabe’s predatory leadership. In November 2017, intra-regime leadership change saw the exit of Mugabe and the entry of his erstwhile confidante Emmerson Dambudzo (ED) Mnangagwa.

There was no regime change in the sense of change in the rules of the game for exercising power and thus no rupture with the previous socio-economic and political order, notwithstanding the re-christening of the post-Mugabe era as the ‘Second Republic’.

And yet, many Zimbabweans say they are worse off than they were before ED took over. In February 2017 during Mugabe’s time, survey evidence showed that 60% of Zimbabweans felt the country was going in the wrong direction.

Fast track to July 2018 under ED, the proportion who felt this way had increased to 64%. Regarding the state of the economy, in February 2017, 63% of adult citizens described the state of the national economy as “very bad/fairly bad”, a statistic that jumped to 74% in April 2018. Moreover, fewer Zimbabweans are optimistic now than under Gushungo (Mugabe’s totem).

Today, more than half expect the country’s economic conditions to be ‘worse/much worse’ in 12 months’ time compared to a third that felt this way in February 2017.

And yet ED aspires to an upper middle-income economy in 12 years’ time under Vision 2030, disregarding the tragic reality that the national economy is just about half the size it was in AD 2000.

It is the contention of this contribution that until the leadership question in Zimbabwe is addressed, to deal with predation in the form of endemic and monumental corruption, nepotism, ethno-regional and partisan exclusion, it is difficult to be optimistic.

That is, until the missing link in Africa’s development trajectory is found i.e. developmental leadership, it is hard to be sanguine. Zimbabwe’s development problematic is not because of bad luck; it is because of bad leadership. A biblically-inspired injunction ends this contribution: ‘Seek ye first good leadership, and all other things will follow’.

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Four pillars of good leadership

When the Duke of Y e asked the meaning of good government, the Master replied: “The near are happy and the distant attracted”, The Analects, Confucius.

From the dawn of civilisation, the leader and the art of leadership, has been discussed and yet, often it seems we are no nearer understanding leadership today than we were when the first tribal chiefs emerged from the Nile delta.

Today, Zimbabwe is in a state of economic emergency, a state in which it has become all-too-familiar with over the last few decades. Sudden and unpredictable events emerge with stunning regularity. Threats to economic security mount and the future seems radically uncertain and menacing. Markets transgress the will of the state and the political classes seem like a blind man running a sprint across a firing range.

Bold and extraordinary actions are needed to combat a situation that imperils the livelihoods of millions. Leadership is called for; leadership that is creative, competent, great, transcending, visionary and hopeful. The Greek king, Alexander the Great, was once heard to remark that: “I am not afraid of an army of lions led by sheep, I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.”

History has shown that in times of crisis, the success of the state relies upon the greatness of its leadership. In crisis, leadership is everything. The presence of sterling leadership is indispensable. The leader is the head, the embodiment of the nation. It was not the British Empire that marshalled to battle the English language against the Nazi horde, but Sir Winston Churchill.

It was not the People’s Action Party that across decades articulated a strategic vision that raised the island city-state of Singapore from the very bowels of poverty to the heights of wealth, but Lee Kuan Yew. It was not the ANC that was the symbol of compassionate leadership transcending across racial divides, but Nelson Mandela.

It was not to the Chinese Communist Party that reformists looked to for guidance in the aftermath of Chairman Mao’s death, but Deng Xiaoping.

In crisis, the role of the leader rises to levels that place upon one person, the leader, an immeasurable importance. In times of normalcy, the strength of institutions allows for even the least inspiring of leaders, but in crisis, the leader is everything and bad leadership is ruinous.

Only the leader can rally people, symbolise its best qualities, inspire, articulate hopes, communicate visions, organise through his good judgment and insight, provide unique answers to unique threats and boldly execute the challenging task of defeating those threats. In crisis, a nation is nothing without great leadership.

A few years ago, the Wall Street Journal, ran a cartoon that featured two men discussing leadership. Eventually, one of the disputants exclaimed: “Yes, we need leadership, but we also need someone to tell us what to do.” Leadership often confuses. Nelson Mandela was a leader, but so too was Ian Smith.

In the fictional world, Sherlock Holmes' arch-nemesis, Professor Moriarty, is referred to by Holmes as, “the Napoleon of crime”, “the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city”, which seems quite a compliment.

Adding to the conceptual difficulties of leadership is that often, the traits that define a “good leader” are present across the moral spectrum: whether leading a crime syndicate, or a football team or a nation, the same core essential traits are necessary.

We must then untie our knotted understanding, to borrow a phrase of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s, and arrive at a set of traits that are fit-for-purpose, essential to tackling the crisis we today find ourselves in, in a way that is good for Zimbabweans.

I propose then (the) three pillars of good leadership.

Govern with Moral Excellence

Corruption is one of the greatest developmental challenges facing Zimbabwe. Corruption and legalised self-serving behaviour such as extravagant perks for government officials that seem completely divorced from performance and rely wholly on partisanship.

The problem extends beyond government, infecting the opposition and other spheres of our life. Advancement on the backs of ordinary Zimbabweans is both widely loathed and widely prevalent.
Virtue has been thrown out of political discourse and replaced by a cynical self-interest that pays lip service to service for the people.

Rampant greed and the search for more and more has left Zimbabwe with a leadership whose rewards beggar belief. There is a lack of balance between the pursuit of wealth and moral excellence, moral probity has been ignored by a parasitical leadership. We need a leadership that acts virtuously.

Servant Leadership

“Ji Kangzi asked: ‘How would it be to use persuasion to make the people respectful and loyal?’ The Master said: ‘If you approach them with solemnity they will be respectful; if you are filial and caring they will be loyal; if you raise up the good and instruct those who lack ability they will be persuaded.’” The Analects, Confucius.

The Chinese philosopher, Confucius, often lamented that leaders all-too-often served their own ends at the expense of those beneath them. The means of the state were still often are put at the service of pursuit of wealth and fame for a few and in times of crisis, rather than being good shepherds. Leaders descend into war, fighting each other for self-preservation and in competition for diminishing wealth. Survival at all costs trumps service of the people. We need leaders whose first and last thought is for the people. Leaders who understand that service often demands sacrifice, leaders who give everything to those they lead. In an era in which inflationary pressures, falling wages, retrenchments and uncertainty will grow with each passing month.

We need leaders who will respect human rights, enact meritocracy in government so that advancement depends wholly on talent, and implement policies that benefit the plurality of Zimbabweans.

Exercise Good Judgment

The economic crisis we are in has a social and moral dimension, hurting not only the pockets of the average Zimbabwean, but threatening to enflame the populace against its leaders in ways that have been seen across the world in the last few years.

Psychologically, it threatens the basic well-being and happiness of many. It is not an easy time to be a leader and every decision taken has deep and potentially decisive repercussions in many dimensions.

This is the era of tough calls when the fate of the nation hinges on the decisions of a few. In their book, Judgment, Noel M. Tichy and Warren G Bennis argue that judgment, far from being an inborn trait, is one that is teachable and trainable. We need leaders thirsty to improve the analytical frameworks that guide their decision-making.

Leadership is not cut-and-paste, good judgment is essential because crises are crises because they pose unique threats and demands unique solutions.

Personal Independence

John W. Gardner puts it well: All too often, on the long road up, young leaders become ‘servants of what is rather than shapers of what might be’. In the long process of learning how the system works, they are rewarded for playing within the intricate structure of existing rules. By the time they reach the top, they are very likely to be trained prisoners of the structure. This is not all bad; every vital system reaffirms itself. But no system can stay vital for long unless some of its leaders remain sufficiently independent to help it to change and grow.

Prisoners of the structure that has ruled over Zimbabwe for 38 years, many, even those outside of and in opposition to government, remain trapped by old ways of thinking and doing things. One merely has to go back to 2008 to realise that the solutions proposed today by way of exchange controls and clamping down on the black market are the same solutions the old regime attempted as it tried to rein in hyperinflation.

Little has emerged by way of novel ideas and consequently, whatever the intentions of our leaders, the vitality of the system is waning.

We have then, what one believes is a core of traits that are essential for the development of policies that will create a Zimbabwe whose citizens are happy and whose neighbours and fellow-nations are attracted to: virtuousness, servant-leadership, good judgment and personal independence.

Joseph Noko is a data scientist and a published economist.
Why leadership is key to unlocking Zimbabwe’s potential

Many Zimbabweans went into the 30 July 2018 national elections hopeful and with great expectations of an outcome that would catapult Zimbabwe into socio-economic growth and a more decisive political environment.

That the country would sink into further stagnation was something many chose not to think of. But here we are, a few months down the line and questions of the calibre of leadership we have plagues Zimbabweans on a daily basis.

Anyone can lead, but to be an effective leader who makes a difference takes a lot more than the occasional bombastic slogans and false promises. Zimbabwe is at a crossroads and needs a leader who not only listens to those close to him or those who regurgitate what he wants to hear, but also those who want Zimbabwe to prosper.

The country requires a leader rooted in reality, who understands and accepts that it will take more than words to unlock the country’s potential.

There is a lack of trust that President Emmerson Mnangagwa needs to deal with. He has to show more goodwill than former president Robert Mugabe. He has been handed a chance to change the discourse through truthful and effective communication.

Leadership is about taking responsibility, accepting that things can go wrong and that solutions can come from those we do not always agree with. Communication is a major ingredient and this must be informed by actions and real change. Mnangagwa or any leader who will come after him, must take advantage of social media to gauge the people’s true sentiment and to tap into new ways of doing things.

He must be guided by true commitment to seeing Zimbabwe thrive. Emotions of being rejected by one section of the nation must never stand in the way of unlocking a country’s potential. Smart leadership taps into self-regulation that guides it into how to respond to negative emotions.

This might be too much for a leader facing opposition at every turn, but this is where emotional intelligence comes in handy. Sifting through negative energy and focusing on those qualities that help reshape and re-energise Zimbabwe will require well deployed emotional intelligence.

Author and science journalist, Daniel Goleman says: “Self-regulation is a star leader’s secret weapon. It allows us to choose how we will respond to emotions. It’s the engine that drives our ability to express emotional intelligence in interactions with others.”

While the leader must be at the forefront of change, he must also be a person who recognises potential in people around him irrespective of religious or political affiliation. He must be willing to bring in people not beholden to politics, people skilled in their chosen trade to help rebuild the country. Mnangagwa can be that leader if he has the political will to succeed.

As pointed out so many times by the leader of the Alliance for the People’s Agenda (APA), Nkosana Moyo, no one person can rebuild the country. He rightly points out that a good leader would delegate or appoint officials on merit, people who have the capacity to show results. A sure-footed leader will value meritocracy and make it the hallmark of his leadership.

Human potential surrounding a leader is another vital ingredient that could be used to unlock the country’s potential. Zimbabwe is replete with this both at home and abroad.

Former CEO of Hewlett-Packard, Carly Fiorina, says every organisation or individual has potential but it needs to be unlocked and channelled properly for it to make a difference.

“Everyone has potential and human potential is the only limitless resource in the world but sometimes it’s never fully realised. The highest call of leadership is to unlock that potential,” noted Fiorina.

Mnangagwa says Zimbabwe is ready for outside investment, but the refrain is sounding weaker every time people listen to it and judge it against the reality on the ground. People want evidence of real economic resurgence. He set 100-day action plans for his ministers but they still seem to be all mere talk.
Media reforms and remaining electoral reforms are low-hanging fruits that he can use to get the international committee onside. Trade-related reforms will also get foreign investors ready to put their money in Zimbabwe.

Opening the country to the world and getting rid of local monopolies is another key ingredient that will show that he means business. Zimbabweans who live abroad but want to invest at home, should have the confidence that their political colour does not matter and that their money will be safe.

Capital loves security and coming out clearly on that will unlock a lot of potential. And with more capital flowing into the country, more jobs will be created and infrastructure development will be realised.

The issue of the local currency is one that needs to be resolved. Does it make sense to continue using the US dollar or is it possible to turn to the South African Rand? Currency stability and getting the government to speak with one voice and going in the same direction would give investors confidence.

If Mnangagwa is to succeed in unlocking the country’s potential, he must not just listen, but hear the people. Get reforms out of the way. Appoint people who are committed to getting the country going. Speak sense into the issues of local currency. Deal decisively with corruption. Act on promises made.

Be truthful about deals struck — what they will mean for Zimbabweans, when they will bear fruit. Invest in local healthcare and cut down on government expenditure.

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If one closely looks at the challenges facing Zimbabwe, challenges which the southern African country has been grappling with since the turn of the century, one would discover none of them are justified at all.

Talk of minerals; you discover that Zimbabwe has an abundance of them. The country is rich in gold, platinum, diamonds and several others.

Turning to agriculture, Zimbabwe has one of the best climatic conditions in Southern Africa; no wonder the country was the bread basket of the Southern African Development Community during the heydays of independence.

In tourism, very few countries in Africa can match what Zimbabwe offers in terms of attractions. The majestic Victoria Falls, for instance is one of the seven wonders of the world. Attractions such as Nyanga, Matopos, Hwange National Park and many others, are equally attractive to international tourists.

As if that is not enough, Zimbabwe boasts the highest literacy rate in Africa and has produced a multitude of academics and professionals of international repute such as doctors, engineers, nurses, teachers and university professors most of whom are scattered across the globe having fled economic hardships back home.

But with all these resources, why would Zimbabwe find herself in such a precarious condition when some neighbouring countries such as Botswana whose economy is heavily dependent on diamonds is able to take care of its people and develop further?

If all these resources that Zimbabwe has were being fully exploited, there would not be any reason whatsoever to justify the fleeing of Zimbabweans to other countries. Instead the opposite would be true, but alas!

One would then ask, where is our problem as Zimbabwe and why has it taken so long for us to come out of this current economic crisis? When will lasting solutions to our problems be found?

The important thing to understand is that Zimbabwe has for a long time been
a victim of failed leadership. Remember everything rises and falls on leadership, according to John Maxwell.

Without good leadership that listens and has people at heart, Zimbabwe can never come out of its problems which now appear perennial if not almost permanent.

The current fuel shortages, increases in the prices of basic commodities such as bread and several others including the queues, are not new to Zimbabweans. Zimbabweans once went through that from 2002 to 2008 prior to the formation of the coalition government between Zanu PF and the two formations of the MDC in February 2009.

The inclusive government did not help that much as some of its gains were eroded in 2013 when Zanu PF controversially won the elections and the economy began to sink again.

Former president Robert Mugabe’s leadership, which was characterised by dictatorship, failed this country for nearly four decades.

The former head of state completely failed to transform the economy of Zimbabwe for it to sustain its people. Instead, under his leadership, Zimbabweans fled the country.

Corruption, nepotism and all other social vices have thrived under Mugabe’s rule with nothing being done, further impoverishing and costing the country dearly.

Failed leadership has not been a preserve of the ruling party but has permeated in all other political parties, civic society, public service and other spheres.

This country has had leaders who have remained leaders by name, greedy leaders who do not care about the plight of the people, leaders after self-aggrandisement and enrichment, hence Zimbabwe finds herself in perpetual suffering.

It, however, remains to be seen if President Emmerson Mnangagwa and his “new republic” will change the face of leadership in Zimbabwe for the better. Having controversially won the July 30 polls, Mnangagwa seems somehow determined not to walk in the footsteps of his predecessor, who was toppled in a soft coup in November 2017.

Mnangagwa’s new cabinet, which incorporates technocrats like Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube and Kirsty Coventry, has somehow inspired hope in Zimbabweans as opposed to past cabinets which were just a recycling of dead wood.

It is sad, however, to note that the country’s problems seem to have intensified after Mnangagwa’s controversial win of the July elections.

The Mnangagwa administration is therefore challenged to ensure that good leadership, which is a cornerstone of any democratic society, is reinstituted in Zimbabwe to enable the country to harness its resources and come out of this economic and political quagmire.

Zimbabweans have suffered for too long and therefore good, sound and accountable leadership could be the lasting solutions to our problems as this country forges ahead with its developmental agenda after the July 30 plebiscite.

Mandla Tshuma is a Bulawayo-based freelance journalist reporting mainly on business and political news.
His idea was, under this vision, no one should be left behind, people must be at the centre of development both as actors and generators of that growth. To his followers, Mnangagwa was investing in the capacity of the people, which every leader should do.

Hailed as the leader of the ‘second republic,’ Mnangagwa spoke of a “new destiny” for Zimbabwe and appealed for all to “let bygones be bygones.”

But some had not forgotten his hand in the decline of the country, where for decades, he served as former president Robert Mugabe’s henchman. Due to that, Mnangagwa was not excused from (alleged) human rights abuses and corruption. In turn, he accepted that action had to complement his rhetoric and urged people to trust him.

Now, Mnangagwa finds that being president is not easy. Leading a country is not the same as running one’s personal affairs and his murky background has not helped. After four months in office, the country has faced an economic downturn caused by the introduction of a new two percent transfer tax that saw the bond note weaken against the US dollar, leading to price hikes, panic buying and shortage of commodities.

Factionalism is once again dominating the main agenda instead of urgent economic issues emanating from the alleged power struggles between him and his deputy, retired General Constantino Chiwenga, which have exploded into the public domain. This has not helped in running the country, but rather paralysed Zimbabwe.

The challenge of foreign currency remains unanswered, nor is there a well thought out position on how to handle the parallel market. Not to mention the fuel shortages and the rising cost of living. Mnangagwa has told people to brace for painful but corrective measures. These measures are necessary, he said, adding “we are not here to please the taxpayer but to please the economy.”

But the Zimbabwean people have had enough of this self-flagellation and have begun questioning Mnangagwa’s leadership style.

Bitter sentiments on the streets prove the people expect better from the ‘Second Republic’ and are fast losing hope in him to steer the process of renewal. Is he as president, performing in a way a leader is supposed to in face of such a situation? Will Mnangagwa rise to the occasion after his government’s disastrous showing in these past weeks?

Others have suggested, he should either enter into a government of national unity with the opposition, or worse still, offer to step down.

Mnangagwa is aware of this. As a “listening president,” he knows the hardest hit in Zimbabwe “are the sick, the unemployed, the poor and the vulnerable, including the hard-pressed workforce.”

In his weekly column in the Sunday Mail, titled Stabilising the Economy, he confirmed that not everyone in his team is playing to the rules. Mnangagwa said he has reports and submissions of illicit currency dealings that point to an intricate network of currency speculators mostly in high places and in places of trust.

He knows the country’s economy has been disturbed by the black market, which has suffered “massive market failures, manifesting in complete collapse of the pricing framework for virtually all commodities, regardless of import component. There has been a run on the bond note.”

The question that follows is: Can Mnangagwa then put his foot down and deal with these economic saboteurs? Zimbabweans are expecting him to proceed in a pragmatic fashion and deal with these saboteurs. If he does, this may be sufficient to show he is sincere about reviving the economy.

Will his leadership enable him to do that? For the country to progress it needs leadership that is not easily corruptible, leadership that is ethical and capable of articulating a vision for Zimbabwe. That vision should be a unifying force for economic agents to rally behind it.

Academics say one of the most crucial jobs as a leader is to set the standards for those you intend to lead, whether as head of a household… or the president of a country. The hard part of it all is that Mnangagwa himself needs to live up to those standards.

Research indicates that best leaders master several styles so that they have flexibility with any leadership situation and become successful.

Six styles of leadership were suggested: Coercive leaders who demand immediate compliance. Authoritative leaders mobilise
people toward a vision. Affiliative leaders create harmony and build emotional bonds. Democratic leaders create consensus through participation. Pacesetting leaders set high standards for performance and coaching leaders develop people for the future.

Leaders can learn and adopt any leadership style they want to. Like other best leaders, Mnangagwa too, can master several styles so that he has flexibility with any leadership situation.

As a leader, Mnangagwa must also mobilise a team that complements his leadership style, especially in a country such as Zimbabwe that needs quick results. It is helpful to boost one’s leadership style with help from others.

But what does Zimbabwe need now? The country needs selfless and patriotic leadership, patriotic to the idea of Zimbabwe as a people. That is a leadership that is full of love for the people and not for a (political) party.

Servant leadership is not enough. Zimbabwe also needs a transformational leadership to mobilise people, motivate them to transform their values and work ethic, considering the high level of corruption that has hit every sector.

Leadership is central to Zimbabwe finding its way out of the crisis because it should provide the light the country needs to negotiate its way out of the dark tunnel.

At a time when people have lost hope, don’t know what is happening and don’t know what to do; leadership must provide those answers.

At this time, Zimbabwe needs strong leadership to answer that classic question, posed by Lenin: What needs to be done?

Lulu Brenda Harris is a Bulawayo-based freelance journalist.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa won the elections but he has major challenges ahead of him that require an honest and fresh look at how Zimbabwe is perceived by the outside world.

Right at the top of his list should be making good on promises to implement reforms and proving that he is the face of a sound economic turnaround.

Rebranding a country demands a certain level of believability. It also needs evidence-based results—something people can point at as an outcome of work towards rebranding. Zimbabwe is coming out of years of political and economic neglect and decades of human rights abuses.

The portrait that the world has of Zimbabwe is ugly. New brushes, paint and a leader with the spirit of renewal is needed to salvage the tattered and torn picture that is Zimbabwe.

Issues of rebranding should be part of matters that speak to what a leader wants his legacy to be.

Establishing investment timelines

While Mnangagwa has to find ways of dealing with the fact that opposition leader Nelson Chamisa accuses him of stealing an election, what is on most people’s minds right now is not just hearing that he has some irons in the fire, but actually seeing evidence of him or his government putting those irons to use—proof that deals we read about in the state media actually exist and that there is a sensible timeline to those deals.

Action has to be seen. The president meeting investors is good political optics but it is no longer a story people want to hear or read. The timeline of those deals should also speak to a sense of urgency. Investments need to start showing some footprint on the ground.

Challenges: Engagement

Rebranding means changing the tone of our politics, the economic soundbites, the colour we paint those who express different opinions. Embracing and exploiting our diversity and a deliberate acceptance of the fact that every Zimbabwean holds a brick that will rebuild the country and a brushstroke that will repaint a Zimbabwe that both nationals and foreigners can fall in love with again.

It will require inspirational activity on the ground. It will need more than talk shows.
Part of the rebranding exercise should include doing things that will inspire both foreign and local investors. Top business people such as Strive Masiyiwa who have come out in support of the government, should be talked up and encouraged to invest more in the country. He needs to do things that engage the populace locally and in the diaspora.

At the end of the day, Mnangagwa will also need to engage not just Chamisa but other political voices and civil society. The human factor plays a major role in rebranding a country. People can only love a country that loves them back. It is easier to talk up a country when propaganda stops being the go to mode every time Zimbabwe comes up.

Opportunities: Ideas and breaking monopolies

There are many opportunities to get the country moving and this is about engaging the right people. The policies on the ground are devoid of listening. The actions by some of his ministers show a lack of interest in change.

They are more interested in protecting their territory and access to patronage than in opening up the country for others to take an economic role. The fact that there are still monopolies in the country is a huge problem.

Rebranding requires a willing spirit and positive energy that embraces all the healthy elements of who we are as Zimbabweans. It has to be eloquently nuanced and should be saleable to both nationals and foreign investors.

A properly rebranded Zimbabwe will encourage ideas and investment from all Zimbabweans. Getting rid of nepotism and patronage will help restore the country’s image.

The country’s resources must benefit all and business prospects must not be the preserve of the ruling elite and their cronies alone.

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After the November transfer of power from former President Robert Mugabe to Emmerson Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe made swift moves to rebrand itself.

Current President Mnangagwa moved with a new mantra: Zimbabwe is open for business. Western delegates who had stopped visiting the southern African country a long time ago visited the country for new deals.

However, the rebranding of Zimbabwe has faced challenges after the 2018 elections. What could have happened to Zimbabwe’s rebranding? Are there any opportunities for the country? This article looks at the opportunities and challenges in Zimbabwe after the July 2018 elections.

Before venturing to the opportunities and challenges, there is a need to understand Zimbabwe’s current situation to see if rebranding has worked.

Currently, unemployment remains high in Zimbabwe, investors that the country witnessed before elections seem to have gone quiet and the United States remains with its stance of keeping the African landlocked country under economic sanctions.

All this points to is that the rebranding of Zimbabwe that seemed to have worked before the July 2018 elections could be in trouble.
The rebranding of Zimbabwe has been tarnished by the 1 August 2018 shootings which led to the death of at least six people in Harare. Before (the presidential) election results had (officially) been announced, opposition leader Nelson Chamisa announced that he had won the elections.

With rumours of vote rigging already circulating, opposition supporters went onto the streets and started demonstrating (demanding release of the results in question).

What followed after that was the army’s intervention resulting in the death of at least six people. It is the 1 August violence that has tarnished or at least destroyed the brand Zimbabwe. Election observer missions and embassies castigated the shootings while the world was alarmed by media reports  of the violence.

Trust on Zimbabwe’s reforms into a better place was lost or reduced resulting in the destruction of brand Zimbabwe.

One other challenge that Zimbabwe faces is the European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) findings on the Harmonised Elections 2018.

The report says: “The right to an effective legal remedy was not adequately provided for, there is no equal suffrage and shortcomings in the registration of voters somewhat compromised universal and equal suffrage.

By stating that the “right to an effective legal remedy was not adequately provided for”, the EU seems to question the authenticity of Zimbabwe’s justice system. This tarnishes the branding of Zimbabwe especially for investors who need a fair and justice system. Investors who doubted the changes that had happened in Zimbabwe, were relying on the 2018 elections as a measure of the country’s claimed reforms.

The rebranding of Zimbabwe is also being pulled down by opposition leader Nelson Chamisa’s denial that the 2018 elections were free and fair. Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC-A), led by Chamisa, is the largest opposition party in Zimbabwe hence the party’s voice is very influential.

Chamisa has not accepted Mnangagwa as the leader of Zimbabwe as he claims elections were rigged. If Chamisa had accepted defeat, the picture of Zimbabwe would have changed and the rebranding of Zimbabwe would have been a success.

Leaving the challenges that have been caused by the 2018 elections, Zimbabwe’s economy poses a threat to the country’s rebranding project.

The mantra, Zimbabwe is open for business, is pulled down by the fact that the country’s investments are threatened by economic challenges. The question is how many investors are ready to invest in a country that faces challenges in foreign currency.

The question of repatriation of funds comes out here. If a country is having challenges in getting foreign currency for the industrial sector to fully function, where will it get the money to repatriate to those who would have invested their money.

How can investment be safe in a country where business is let down by lack of foreign currency to access raw materials.

Another challenge is on policy shifting and Zimbabwe’s inconsistency over the USDollar-bond issue. For years Zimbabweans were told that the US Dollar is equivalent to the Bond note, only for the current Finance Minister to announce that there is need to create two accounts, one for foreign currency and one for local RTGS and bond notes.

This gives an impression that the bond is not equal to the US Dollar. Members of the business society have already complained that they were lied to that the Bond is equivalent to the US Dollar. Zimbabwe’s policies in general, are not consistent, anytime policies can be changed or amended sometimes sending business off grid.

Such inconsistences paint a bad impression on Zimbabwe and obviously paints mud on the brand Zimbabwe.

Opportunities to rebrand Zimbabwe

Although there are many challenges in the rebranding of Zimbabwe, the country has an opportunity to rebrand through reforms. If the country speedily shifts towards its Constitution, politically and...
Media reforms necessary for the ‘New Republic’

By Mandla Tshuma

Media pluralism and diversity are some of the key attributes of a democratic society.

With President Emmerson Mnangagwa having pledged to ensure that Zimbabwe becomes a democratic state during his tenure as head of state, it then goes without saying that the new administration has no choice but to reform the country’s media landscape.

The government has in the past maintained a diabolic grip on the airwaves, which explains why nearly 40 years after independence, Zimbabwe still only has one television station whose programming is of poor quality.

Just one television station, which after all does not serve the interests of all citizens, is not only self-defeating but does not also augur well with the so-called “new republic” being preached by Zanu PF.

While Zimbabwe attempted to licence independent radio stations during the coalition government era, the exercise only benefitted those with close links to Zanu PF and therefore completely failed to bring about diversity, which many Zimbabweans are eagerly awaiting.

Turning to the print media sector, the industry remains polarised leaving readers misinformed and short-changed.

The public print media dominated by titles such as the Herald, Chronicle, Sunday News, Sunday Mail and others, have since independence been captured mouthpieces of the government of the day.

Private newspapers on the other hand, have been accused of pushing the opposition agenda.

For Zimbabwe to break away from its past and move forward, massive media reforms, must be implemented forthwith. Media have always had the capacity to both build and destroy depending in whose hands they have been.

Problems within the media are so blatant that even non-media scholars can clearly articulate them. It is a fact that Zimbabweans watch ZBC not because they like it but simply because there is no other television station in the country.

Presenting the EUEOM’s preliminary report in Harare, the head of delegation Elmar Brook said state-owned media was biased towards Zanu PF.

“Based on EUEOM monitoring, the state broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), failed to abide by its

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Economically, it may prove to the world that there is real change there by rebranding Zimbabwe. The United States wants democratic and media reforms to remove sanctions that also haunt brand Zimbabwe.

The country has to work in bringing consistence to its policies and address the property rights issue so as to create a position. The property rights issue is a challenge as investors would like to know if they are renting or acquiring the land for their investments.

What government has done so far in rebranding Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has been engaging the international community as a way of rebranding. Mnangagwa has been using the mantra “open for business” as the new brand for Zimbabwe. Office of the President and Cabinet borrowed the national brand strategy from the Ministry of Tourism to make sure all the sectors benefit from the branding. The nation also used adverts during the FIFA World Cup to rebrand the country.

The country has also conducted a commission of inquiry into the 1 August violence.

Although Zimbabwe has been doing something to rebrand itself, the 1 August violence painted mud on the whole brand and the country has to institute reforms, including media reforms, to rebrand itself.

Challenges exist in rebranding Zimbabwe but opportunities also exist.

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The country has to work in bringing consistence to its policies and address the property rights issue so as to create a position. The property rights issue is a challenge as investors would like to know if they are renting or acquiring the land for their investments.
WHEN international election observers delivered their findings on Zimbabwe’s electoral environment, they expressed concern on how biased the public media was in its coverage of political parties and that its reportage of issues was irresponsible.

Observers said the ruling Zanu PF received more favours from public media while other contesting opposition parties received unfair coverage whose views were ignored, either buried or given a negative spin resulting in a misinformed electorate.

The African Union, European Union (EU), COMESA, SADC Parliamentary Forum, to name a few, concurred that coverage of political parties and their campaigns by mainstream media was imbalanced. These comments from election observer missions on the public media’s coverage are not new and are a welcome acknowledgment because lack of credibility in the media is a disturbing trend.

To understand why this is disturbing, audiences just have to peruse through state-controlled newspapers, browse websites or watch the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC).

The ZBC for instance, has been plagued by a number of challenges that have negatively affected its brand and image.

Poor programming and ruling party propaganda have resulted in low viewership over the years.

Producers sleep on the job while shows are poorly edited and there are glitches during the main news broadcast.

Zimbabwean audiences prefer South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) TV channels broadcast via satellite dishes, DSTV, Personal Video Recorders, Digital Video Recorders and other online alternatives.

As for government controlled newspapers, the EU, which carried out its own monitoring said coverage in The Herald, The Chronicle and The Sunday Mail overtly favoured Zanu PF while MDC Alliance was portrayed in a negative tone.

Many in the media would undoubtedly lay much of the blame on editorial policies but concern here is no longer just the violation of journalistic ethics but the real danger is that millions of Zimbabweans no longer view the news media as a credible source of news but instead as a-not-yet declared political movement.

According to a study by the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI), who conducted a nationally representative pre-election survey between June 25 and July 6, 2018, friends, neighbours and co-workers
emerged as one of the main sources of election information for people in urban areas.

This development outstripped government newspapers, private newspapers, the Internet and even social media, whose journalism role is to give public information that is verified and accurate. Such an observation confirms that we are at a dangerous spot in how Zimbabweans receive and digest information and, ultimately, form opinions.

If the MPOI study is anything to go by, it means people are relying on information that their friends or neighbours select to share or what they want their relatives to believe as well.

This is an important point to note as it takes audiences to a space of hyper-fake news, which should make the credibility of mainstream media more necessary than ever.

Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) Programmes Officer, Faith Ndlovu, noted that trust in the media is at an all-time low as people believe the media is biased and serving other agendas other than public trust.

“There is also an issue of trust with the internet again, apart from issues of affordability and accessibility there is also the matter of fake news and disinformation which may cause people to question the veracity of information from these sources,” she said.

Both observations made by election observers and the MPOI study, should worry the media because audiences may now regard the industry as partisan institutions with an agenda to bring down others.

Can the media survive and continue on this path?

Success of the media lies on the quality of the content as it builds credibility, grows circulation figures, increases the organisation’s societal influence and results in profitability.

This is what is described in academia as the Influence Model, meaning quality news, largely defined by audiences because of value and utility, increases societal and commercial influence; where both of these drive higher circulations.

The election observer missions are right to point out that all political parties including Zanu PF, deserve close scrutiny through media that has strong editorial independence.

To reverse this damning observation, the country’s media houses would require a significant overhaul where journalists must have the freedom to gather news content and report it freely without undue influence from competing forces such as media owners, government or any other forms of pressure.

Editors must also independently, be able, to make editorial decisions that are good for quality news production. In so doing, this could help the media regain lost credibility and restore the majority of Zimbabweans’ faith in them as unbiased arbiters of truth and even-handed watchdogs of government.

As for ZBC, it is a public institution with a public mandate and needs recapitalisation with clear objectives to facilitate better quality programming and have a sustainable business model.

It should revamp its equipment in line with its digitisation programme, which is good for ZBC. The national broadcaster must also conduct a skills audit to find out what skills the organisation actually has.

A skill audit assists in knowing how the station compares with its competitors. It can also unravel what essential skills are lacking or are in short supply and know how best to equip the organisation.

The skills audit also plays a crucial role in strengthening the broadcaster’s vision in the sense that if the ZBC heads in a different direction, to what extent will the current skills base be a limiting factor.

State-controlled or privately-owned newspapers and the national broadcaster have to reduce censorship and be more open to ideas, be more interactive with audiences and allowing them to participate in the comment sections or talk shows freely.

Editorial policies should also be reviewed, as serving propaganda has destroyed the media’s reputation. General news reporting should not be twisted while oppositional and all diverse groups should be covered.

Editorial management should be firm and refuse to be used by politicians. If threats are made against journalists, the media houses should publicise them.

Strong media leadership is also required to articulate and implement a business vision that would guide a company’s growth in a competitive, regulatory environment.

It is important to highlight that nothing will change in a media organisation until people within it change as well.

Lulu Brenda Harris is a freelance journalist based in Bulawayo
When I was doing my journalism degree, I undertook a shadow internship week at the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) as part of my course requirements.

I vividly remember the explicit lesson that was articulated to me by my internship supervisor. He said: “Ruth, here at ZBC we believe that freedom of speech does not exist. You only do what the one in power wants you to do.”

This is how the ZBC has positioned itself institutionally. And, that ideological positioning evidently manifested as partial, propagandic and self-serving journalism.

It is evident that this institutional ideology is at odds with constitutional articulations on how state-controlled media should operate. The Constitution of Zimbabwe makes provision for freedom of expression and speech. It explicitly gives state-controlled media the freedom of editorial independence.

Additionally, there must be fair opportunity to express ‘divergent views and dissenting opinions’. A final and pertinent specification is that state-controlled media must be impartial.

Comparing the brief institutional lesson I got from my supervisor and the clear specifications made by the Constitution, it is evident that there is an ideological breach between practice and theory. It is clear that ZBC has positioned itself to be the mouthpiece of one political party as evidenced by its impartial coverage of the 2018 harmonised election period.

This positioning is at odds with the Constitution of Zimbabwe and the UN Charter on Human Rights which specifies that everyone has the right to freedom of expression and are free to impart their ideas through any media. Any state media institution loses credibility if it is evident it is subject to political and economic influences that trivialise its constitutional imperative. It loses the trust of the public it seeks to serve.

The theory of journalism as a practice is nuanced and complex, but one underlining theme that runs through media theories is that journalism has an important role to play in any democracy.

In an ideal world, the ZBC should be positioned as an impartial media institution that gives diversity of voice and works in the public interest. As the ZBC is the only television broadcaster in the country, the need for it to air plurality of views and opinions is greater than if it operated in a competitive broadcasting environment.

The content produced by the broadcaster should make a contribution to democratic and civic life, by giving divergent views to an informed citizenry who have the power to hold public servants to account.

The content produced by the ZBC should seek to inform, represent, campaign and interrogate. These are the four roles that journalism should play if it serves in the public interest. Citizens should always be informed about matters of national interest.

Currently, the foreign debt that Zimbabwe has amounts to over US$15 billion. However, there is no informative disclosure over how that debt was acquired. All that is articulated in state media is that the country has debt and the citizens must ‘take the pain’.

State-owned media must also play a representational role, by conveying citizens’ (free) expressions (as they should according to the Constitution) to those who hold economic and political power. Citizen participation should be encouraged and the ZBC should set up platforms that allow for it.

Currently, there is a dearth of effective participation in journalism, with outlaws fighting out their political battles on keyboards and settling scores on smartphones. At a time like this, this institution should be at the helm of representing the views of citizens, no matter how divergent or different.

Rather than being a brazen mouthpiece for a specific political party, the ZBC should play a campaigning role. They should be instigators of campaigns that are in the public interest. Instead of parroting liberation struggle rhetoric at every chance; the state broadcaster should also identify causes from which they can take an institutional position on and campaign for. There are many social, economic, political, educational, legal, environment and cultural issues that are in need of airtime. However, the silence from the lack of such coverage is deafening.

It is as if the broadcaster has been bound and gagged by its own untenable institutional position of ‘freedom of speech does not exist’. They dug a deep hole, and now they must lie in it.
At a press conference in October, the Zimbabwe Minister of Information said: “This ministry…will treat all players as relevant Fourth Estate…” This means the media must play a watchdog or interrogative role. It means investigation. It means questions, critique and scrutiny. It means questioning government decisions; investigating allegations of corrupt government officials; uncovering corporate scandals and rampant human rights violations.

However, the watchdog role seems to be non-existent or unfulfilled in state media, as any seed of scandal that springs up is stamped down with spin and propaganda.

It is evident that the ZBC’s institutional positioning has disempowered it to become no more than a state information (or misinformation) centre.

To assert that it is a media institution feels like a blatant falsehood as it is clear that it partially fulfils aforementioned the four roles of journalism.

If there is any meaningful transformation that must happen at ZBC, a starting point would be revising the institutional positioning of the broadcaster from producing content in the interest of its political masters to producing content in the public interest.

I wish my internship supervisor had said: “Ruth, here at the ZBC we believe that free and diverse media are a healthy addition to any democracy. We try our best to ensure that our content reflects the plurality of views of our audience and is in the public interest.”

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It is an open secret that Zimbabwe is in debt distress, its public and publicly guaranteed debt which stands at 121% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is indeed unsustainable.

External debt alone now stands at 75% of GDP. The causal relationship between budget deficit and national debt has kept the country in a debt trap.

The persistent government deficit has caused exponential increase in both domestic and external debt which further increases government spending as it attempts to meet the current spending whilst paying interests on the debt.

Without external lines of credit, domestic borrowing is neither an option as its implications on the economy are the same. It is not by misfortune that the country is faced by infrastructure deficiencies, weak social service delivery, foreign currency and cash shortages, an unsustainable budget and current account deficits and emerging inflationary pressures.

Despite the severity of debt and its impacts on social and economic rights in the country for a long time, the debt management framework for Zimbabwe has not been robust until 2015 when the Debt Management Act [Chapter 22:21] was promulgated.

The Act came into place five years after establishment of the Zimbabwe Aid and Debt Management Office (ZADMO) in 2010. Prior to the enactment of the Debt Management Act, government borrowing was guided by the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act of 2013, the Public Finance Management (PFM) Act (Chapter 22:19) of 2009 and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Act (Chapter 22:15) of 2010 as amended.

What is perhaps disheartening is the continuous violation of these statutes specifically Section 300 (1) of the Constitution and Section 11 of the Public Debt Management Act. This poses a lot of questions with regards to the country’s governance, rule of law and legitimacy of both domestic and external debt.

The proposed debt management strategy should take this into consideration and benchmark debt sustainability to government revenue.

The government has already transferred part of its Special Drawing Rights (SDR) holdings kept by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to clear the 107.9 million debt arrears which were owed to the IMF dating back to 2001.

The government has failed to look at the opportunity cost of offsetting debt with SDR and has not put it into cognisance that diversion of national resources to clear the arrears does not address the debt question.

The country still has an obligation to repay other debts and finance public service delivery. SDR and other national resources should instead be used to transform the
lives of Zimbabweans whose social and economic rights have been undermined for nearly two decades if not more.

Among several options being put on the table to clear African Development Bank (AFDB) arrears is the use of a bridging loan. At a time when the country is considered a high risk and rendered ineligible to access funding from IFIs (International Financial Institutions), the option for bridging finance only signifies a shift from one creditor, AFDB, to another African Export-Import Bank (Afrexim bank), at higher interest rates while escaping the penalties (speak of borrowing from Peter to pay Paul).

Apart from opening other lines of credit, the strategy does not give any safeguards to ensure government will be able to repay the Afrexim bank loan.

The deteriorating macro-economic environment, current account and fiscal deficits and the surging external debt, triggered the government to come up with strategies for clearing external debt arrears and the supportive economic reform agenda which was presented to and adopted by the country’s creditors on the side lines of the 2015 International Monetary Fund/World Bank Annual Meetings in Lima.

The Lima Strategy which was premised on a non-Highly Indebted Poor Country debt resolution strategy was designed to clear external debt arrears amounting to US$1.8 billion owed to the IMF, WB and the AfDB as a first step towards seeking a debt treatment by the Paris Club.

No proper engagement has been done with regards to the Lima strategy. An honest citizenry engagement will help address the current debt and set the pace for future borrowings which should ensure that it is in the public interest to do so and ensure that it is consistent with Government economic and financial policies and the Medium Term Debt Management Strategy as provided for in Section 13 of the Debt Management Act.

The debt crisis in Zimbabwe will be resolved through a step-by-step approach. A comprehensive debt audit should be the forerunner to the debt clearance strategy and management framework.

The mortgaging of state resources and bridging finances with conditions are not viable options for Zimbabwe. The two will affect inter-generational equity and simply shift the burden to medium and long term options respectively without clearing the debt.

A debt audit is critical for addressing the legitimacy and moral question in Zimbabwe’s debt while strengthening a social contract between the government and citizens. This will be followed by cancellation of illegitimate and odious debts.

Clarity Sibanda is a social & economic justice activist with a leading civil society organisation which is taking action in redressing the debt burden and socio-economic injustices through formulation and promotion of alternative policies to the neo-liberal agenda. You can get in touch with her at: claritysibanda@yahoo.com.
The accumulation of an additional $5 billion on an already perilous $4.3 billion domestic debt by Government in less than 10 months since November last year, has not only weakened local financial market stability but demands serious soul-searching from fiscal authorities on which course and with what consequences they are determined to steer the economic ship.

It would be interesting to note that barely five years ago, government’s domestic debt portfolio was literally benign at just less than $1 billion.

Red flags started flashing as early as 2015, when the Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZIPARU) 2015 Economic Barometer report, warned of government domestic borrowing growing by more than 15 percent from the previous year to $1.4 billion.

Since then, a series of budgetary shortfalls continued, compounded by additional expenses initially unbudgeted for such as running of a series of by-elections in several constituencies with less than 24 months to the general elections. Importation of grain in 2016, civil servants bonuses and salary increases and wanton foreign trips by the Executive particularly by former president Robert Mugabe, all suffocating Treasury.

Government has had to meet these budgetary overruns through domestic borrowing from local banks.

Government’s internal borrowing in the last 12 months has seen domestic debt souring up to $9.3 billion, pilling pressure on the already existing $7.5 billion external debt. Summed up, government cumulative debt has reached $17 billion.

Divide the cumulative debt by Zimbabwe’s 14 million citizens, each person’s share of the government debt stands at $1,214, in a country where unemployment is over 90 percent, production levels are so low and over 60 percent of its population live on less than US$1 a day.

Economically, the implications of this cumulative debt are ravaging twice-fold, internally and externally.

Internally, the high presence of government footprint on the domestic credit market has crowded-out private sector access to capital, with local financiers more inclined to lend government at the expense of private sector to minimise risks in this moribund economy.

The Central Bank for instance reflected that in 2016 emerging businesses received only 3.75 percent ($139.7 million) of all banking sector loans ($3.7 billion) at a time it is known that small and medium businesses are the largest chunk of business operators in the country.

The largest chunk of loan disbursements went to government and a few big corporates.

Consequences of this are summed up by macro-economic analyst Pepukai Chivore, who was cautious of government’s continuous borrowing.

“What government has basically done is that by heavily borrowing without capacity to repay, it has flooded the market with Treasury Bills, which is not real money.

“So this has seen an increase in RTGs balances further widening the mismatch between RTGs and actual money on the market. This is risky as it creates imbalances in money supply which is eroding value of RTGs against the US dollar,” he said.

Externally, the debt trap diminishes confidence in a market.

Whilst there is a general understanding that debt on its own is not necessarily an evil to governments, experts say there is, however, need for a steady balance between level of debt and national output or in other words, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

For a country in dire need of capital injection, the debt-to-GDP ratio for Zimbabwe is uninspiring as it is now estimated beyond 90 percent against World Bank’s recommended capping point of 70 percent.

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This makes Zimbabwe a high risk credit destination.

According to a global economic indicators provider, TradingEconomic.com, Zimbabwe’s GDP is now at $17.9 billion. Juxtapose $17.9 billion with the $17 billion cumulative debt, the country’s debt-to-GDP ratio is not palatable.

International financial lenders measure the level of risk in a market by comparing debt to a country’s total output thus its debt-to-GDP ratio which informs them of the likelihood of a country’s ability to pay off its debt.

Politics aside, this is the major reason why Zimbabwe has failed to access concessionary borrowing from major international lenders such as those from the Paris Club and Bretton Woods institutions for a while.

Going forward, the perennial failures to restrict government expenditure has been the biggest undoing so far. This has been worsened by lack of congruence between the monetary policy and fiscal policy statements.

This can easily be illustrated in this way. While the recent monetary policy statements have mainly dealt with balancing money supply in the economy to avoid the current impasse of a wide mismatch between RTGs balances and hard cash on one hand, the fiscal policy on the other hand has been doing the opposite, creating fiscal deficits which were being financed through issuance of Treasury Bills, which have inflated RTGs balances not supported by any real cash.

This has had a deepening effect on government bond note parity with the USD policy, as all forms of electronic money have been devalued.

Newly appointed Minister Mthuli Ncube has already come up with a “stabilisation” programme which aims at trimming government expenditure while augmenting revenue receipts.

The two percent tax per every dollar on electronic transaction starting at $10 has already been applauded by prominent economists like Professor Ashok Chakravarti who claims the policy is capable of diminishing the domestic debt base if it is to raise funds to run a credit-free budget and also earn excess resources to pay off its debts.

Owing to the shrinking formal sector, revenue flows has taken a nosedive over the years. This has been worsened by tax non-compliance and weak monitoring systems by the revenue collector, ZIMRA (Zimbabwe Revenue Authority).

Early this year, ZIMRA warned of massive tax dodging tendencies within the economy citing that private sector alone owed the authority $4.2 billion.

Government urgently needs to take tough decisions to narrow its costs structure while it also comes up with pragmatic but selfless means to raise revenue receipts without necessarily hurting the already fragile businesses and an economically struggling citizenry.

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As part of the top-down prescriptions that have visited adverse effects on the economic situation of ordinary Zimbabweans, newly appointed Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube, recently promulgated a 2% tax on all electronic transactions.

We may well forget about the pre-election promises for a new dispensation. This imposition of yet another tax package on an already heavily taxed citizenry points to the endurance of an exploitative economic system inherited from the colonial era.

As they entered what is now Zimbabwe, members of the Pioneer Column, the group that took the formative steps in Britain’s colonial encroachment into Zimbabwe, believed that the land between the Zambezi and the Limpopo was endowed with vast deposits of gold.

Realising that the gold was not as abundant as expected, the colonists immediately turned to other economic activities such as agriculture.

Apart from the massive expropriation of land belonging to the natives, taxation became a key part of the colonial economy that ensued. Those schooled in Zimbabwean history may be aware of the hut tax, the land tax, head tax and other taxes that subjected the African majority to penury and economic servitude.

With the payment of taxes being demanded in cash, Africans were forced to seek cheap labour at emerging colonial farms and mines. Herein lay the almost enduring culture in which Africans sought education for the purpose of being employed as opposed to creating employment.

This also became the foundation for a taxation regime in which ordinary poor people, became the most heavily taxed while the colonial businesses and political elites were pampered in luxury. This is mirrored in the post-independence economic system in which corporate tax is less burdensome compared to the numerous taxes to which ordinary citizens are subjected.

Where business elites have tax obligations, they simply pass the burden of these to ordinary citizens through skewed pricing structures.

There is the case of value added tax that ordinary citizens have to contend with upon paying other mandatory obligations that include Pay As You Earn, the Aids levy, National Social Security Authority pension obligations, the Chinamasa-introduced airtime tax and other levies.

It is to this long list of tax obligations that government has added the two per cent tax on all electronic transactions.

While electronic transactions have been touted as a new frontier for promoting financial inclusion, the two per cent tax on all electronic transactions is a case in contrast. It is akin to the hut tax and other tax regimes of the colonial era that exposed those of the African race to the perils of financial exclusion.

The situation is worsened by the dearth of a culture of accountability among Zimbabwean politicians. With a weak, opaque system of checks and balances that does not exert accountability, it is highly conceivable that proceeds from this two per cent tax will largely go towards sustaining luxurious lifestyles of politicians.

Where politicians promised to address the economic plight of ordinary Zimbabweans during the election campaign period, politicians have moved on to have their unquenchable appetite for luxury being addressed by ordinary citizens who have to dig deeper into their pockets to meet
demands of a burdensome tax system.

In proving beyond doubt that we are still under an economic system rooted in our colonial past, the two per cent tax regime has come as part of the so-called transitional economic stabilisation programme that is raking havoc in the economy, with prices of basic commodities skyrocketing beyond the reach of ordinary people.

This programme has also come with another act of robbery in which the ordinary citizenry’s hard-earned cash has been metamorphosed into valueless RTGS dollars. Under former Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor, Gideon Gono, our money was burnt into bearer cheques and we were left with nothing.

Is this the new economic dispensation that was promised? Is this the Zimbabwe that is open for business? Is this what the politicians promised when they campaigned?

The answer is certainly no.

Seems as though our case is a lethargic one of promises and lies. I fondly remember Ian Smith (former Rhodesian Prime Minister), saying my Africans are the happiest in Africa. He certainly must have inspired today’s lot of politicians who continue to thrive on hurtful economic policies without due consideration to citizens’ concerns and plights.

As was the case with colonial Rhodesia, we are in a sorry state of taxation without representation in which economic policy formulation is for subjects, not citizens.

In other countries, such heavy taxation comes with benefits such as free education, free health care and state of the art infrastructure.

Here, it is a case of being certified without being educated, more shortfalls, shortages and potholes.

We have yearned and continue to yearn for an economic system that frees us from segregationist, dictatorial and repressive colonial prescriptions.

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Zimbabwe needs US backing to unlock IMF/World Bank support

BY IAN MAPIRA

Zimbabwe is under economic challenges and needs financial assistance to pull out of the crisis at hand.

However, getting financial assistance from the funders has taken long and seems to be delayed. Credit lines have remained unlocked for a country which needs urgent financial assistance. So the question here is, how can Zimbabwe unlock those lines of credit to support the economy which is in crisis.

A University of Zimbabwe Professor Tony Hawkins, in a paper, says Zimbabwe needs United States (US) backing to create a deal with international financial institutions (IFI) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB).

The Professor says after negotiations with the IFIs, the programmes to help Zimbabwe must be agreed to by the Executive Board, dominated by the US.

“Under ZiDERA (Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act), the US representative on the Board must vote against any support for Zimbabwe,” Hawkins says.

“It may be possible to find sufficient votes to override a negative US vote. This is unlikely because very few US allies such as the EU, Australia, Canada, India, etc, would seek to pick a fight with Washington over a small country which does not matter to them.”

The US has not changed its position against Zimbabwe and has maintained ZiDERA after the July 2018 elections.

The current US Ambassador, Brian A. Nichols, said Zimbabwe has to implement reforms to resolve the sanctions issue.

“If Zimbabwe as a nation fully implements the 2013 Constitution, that will resolve the sanctions issues,” Nichols said. “That’s the short answer.”

ZIDERA, which offers sanctions was passed in 2001, with the US accusing Zimbabwe of not being democratic.

Although Zimbabwe, without US backing, risks losing in the negotiations, IMF spokesperson Gerry Rice, said his institution is working with Zimbabwean authorities to provide policy advice and technical assistance.

“What I would say is we see the new administration of President Mnangagwa has expressed commitment to strong economic reforms and supporting reforms will require a comprehensive stabilisation and structural reform programme from
the authorities and financial support from the international community to provide space for these reforms,” Rice said.

“Where the IMF is, we stand ready to help the authorities design a reform package that can help facilitate the clearance of external payment arrears to international development banks and bilateral official creditors and that then would open the way for fresh financing from the international community including potentially the IMF.”

“But, again, just to stress as we said before, potential financial support from the Fund is conditional on the clearance of those arrears to the World Bank, the AfDB (African Development Bank) and financing assurances from bilateral official creditors.”

The Zimbabwean government has been working on engaging the global village including Western countries such as the US in a bid to pull out of the current economic hardships.

President Mnangagwa has called for the immediate removal of “illegal” sanctions against Zimbabwe while addressing the United Nations General Assembly.

Finance Minister, Mthuli Ncube, who was appointed after the 2018 elections, said the country’s Treasury is in dialogue with international financial institutions to clear US$2.5 billion owed to African Development Bank, World Bank and the European Investment Bank and engaging Paris Club on restructuring the US$2.8 billion credit during the announcement of the Monetary Policy.

The Minister also went to Bali for the negotiations with IMF to clear the debt that also stands between Zimbabwe and the unlocking of credit lines.

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Prior to the 2018 elections many citizens were optimistic that after the plebiscite and whatever the poll outcome, the country’s economy was going to cruise.

However, the aftermath has seen an ugly path manifesting in the wake of the August 1 killings following a ‘peaceful’ protest against the delay by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to announce presidential votes was quelled with brute force by armed soldiers.

The final announcement of the presidential poll saw the MDC Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa vehemently refusing to accept ‘the sham results’ and later challenging President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s victory at the Constitutional Court where the verdict went against the youthful leader.

But, the former student leader still insists that the election was brazenly stolen from him by former President Robert Mugabe’s long time aide.

Mnangagwa has been singing the chorus of unity to build the tattered economy and the tone was set in his inauguration speech.

“Now is the time for us all to unite as a nation and grow our economy. Let us courageously and diligently embark on a shared journey towards the realisation of our national Vision to transform Zimbabwe into a middle income economy, with increased investment, decent jobs, broad based empowerment, free from poverty and corruption by 2030,” President Mnangagwa said during his inauguration.

His Cabinet appointments were hailed largely as progressive especially the appointment of Professor Mthuli Ncube as the finance minister with some MDC Alliance supporters claiming that even the late Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai spoke glowingly of the technocrat.

However, under the new finance minister’s cocktail of measures in the Transitional Stabilisation Programme, it is the Intermediated Monetary Transfer Tax that has sent tongues wagging across the political divide as it has been cited as one of the major effects to the price increases that has engulfed the country.

President Mnangagwa has defended the move saying people should ‘take the pain’ as his government works towards attaining the middle income status by year 2030.

But is the economic growth what Zimbabweans yearn for now?

Revered economist Prosper Chitambara of the Labour and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRIZ), is of a different view with regards to the ‘fixation on economic growth’.
“What is worrying right now in Zimbabwe is that the government is mainly concerned with economic growth which does not translate into development. “The country requires employment creation and poverty alleviation projects which can be catapulted by capacitating the informal industry,” proffered Chitambara.

According to Chitambara, encouraging Foreign Direct Investments should not be over-emphasised as it will not bring the much needed employment.

“World over it has been established that foreign companies do not employ much people and if you look at the Asian Tigers their economies were spurred by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs),” he added.

Another economist, Bensen Banga, weighed in saying there should be deliberate effort by government to cut tax regimes to enable small businesses to formalise.

“If the government wants to do away with informalisation, there is the inherent need to scrap some taxis and the bureaucracy synonymous with government departments so that the informal sector can formalise,” Banga said.

Chitambara says the pursuit of ‘neo-classical policies’ by the Zanu PF government will not yield much in the short term and emphasised the need for social dialogue.

“The neo-classical policies the government is pushing have no impetus. “There is the need for government to meet with key stakeholders like business, workers, civil society, citizens and the media to promote transparency and accountability,” argued Chitambara. This is the same clarion call being made by a cluster of churches and civic organisations called Civic Society and Churches Joint Forum.

They have made efforts to bring President Mnangagwa and the MDC leader Nelson Chamisa to a pact, but it is the issue of ‘egos’ that the two leaders seem to reel from.

While Chamisa is still adamant that the elections were rigged in favour of the incumbent, there is need for him to now sober up and dialogue with the Zanu PF leader who is also guilty of posturing that he is eager to foster ties with the opposition leader.

Right now the country’s CEO must now act on uniting with the youthful leader because with the majority of young people presumably having voted for him (Chamisa) , there is an imminent danger of restlessness if the two fail to find each other.

With such a divided country, it is incumbent for President Mnangagwa and the MDC Alliance leader to avert the deepening socio and economic crisis.

Another short term remedy is for civic organisations to ratchet pressure on regional and continental bodies such as SADC and AU to intervene. It may seem like a futile process but it may work for the good of this nation.

I applaud the Crisis in Zimbabwe coalition for the stern effort they made in meeting Namibian President Gabe Geingob, who is the chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

It is now important for other civic organisations to also rally behind that call for regional and continental bodies to intervene while not ignoring the need to start the dialogue back home.

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By Mandla Tshuma

Zimbabweans, especially those from Matabeleland still await the long-overdue implementation of devolution of power from Harare to respective provinces five years down the line since the adoption of the new constitution in 2013.

Section 264 of the Supreme Law, which provides for devolution of power, is meant to give more powers to the provincial authorities to enhance the participation of their people in their governance.

According to the charter, devolution seeks to recognise the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their own development.

The Constitution therefore provides for eight provincial councils with 10 councillors each, elected through proportional representation. There are also two metropolitan provincial councils - Harare and Bulawayo - that will spearhead development in these respective cities.

Mayors of Harare and Bulawayo will chair the Harare and Bulawayo metropolitan provinces respectively, according to the Constitution.

The provincial councils were established to accommodate growing calls from Zimbabweans for a devolved state since the 2000 constitutional review exercise.

A watered-down version of devolution was finally incorporated into the supreme law, but the financing and enactment of an enabling law was left to the first Parliament elected under the new Constitution.

It is interesting to note that during the constitution-making process, former president Robert Mugabe’s Zanu PF, had opposed devolution, saying it was divisive.

Mugabe after the 2013 polls went on to appoint 10 State ministers responsible for provincial affairs whose roles usurp the powers intended for provincial chairpersons when elected, something, which (President Emmerson) Mnangagwa has also done.

Zimbabwe’s current local governance is administered through two Acts - the Rural District Councils Act and the Urban Councils Act - both of which do not speak to the new provincial councils.

There is no clarity again on how the sittings of provincial councils would be synchronised with the National Assembly and Senate. National Assembly members and senators are also members of provincial councils in their respective provinces.

The Provincial Councils Bill is, among other things, expected to specify where and when the provincial councils would sit and how their administrative staff would be recruited.

While Mugabe was totally opposed to devolution, Mnangagwa, whose home province of the Midlands has also suffered the effects of a heavily centralised government structure warmed up to this concept during the election campaign period.

He has assured that his government would speedily implement the concept and pave way for the creation of provincial economies that would take Zimbabwe forward.

Devolution of power will ensure that citizens are the primary beneficiaries of resources found in their areas and have a say on how they ought to benefit from them.

The only thing Zimbabweans have to do now is to wait and hope that this five-year-old concept of devolution will one day start rolling.

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Zimbabwe has the potential to develop economically considering the immense natural resources in this southern African country which can be used to save the crippling economy if the nation can work together as a unified front.

The match winner for our current situation is truthfully rebranding Zimbabwe into a country that is in communion with the global village as isolation has quite a number of drawbacks especially to the economy which is mainly sustained by exports.

As a nation we need to move away from politics of personalities and shift to politics of fulfilling policies. We need to have political parties that have manifestos that are in sync with generations to come rather than campaigning for the fixed five-year terms.

A political party should have policies in place and from which successors will be able to continue with the legacy rather than having to start all over again. Since independence in 1980, we have had several economic blue prints which include: the Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP), the First Five Year National Development Plan (FFYNDP) and the Second Five Year National Development Plan (SFYNDP). We also had the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST), the Zimbabwe Millennium Economic Recovery Programme, Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET).

And only recently, the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP). As a country we need to identify ourselves with an efficient way of doing business to lure investors as the continuous shifting of goal posts scares away investors.

More so, Zimbabweans should adopt a culture of accepting criticism be it positive or negative. At least with the “soft coup” in November 2017, polarisation of the political arena was dealt with as witnessed by the surfacing of several political parties with a record breaking 23 candidates contesting for the presidency since independence.

We hope the words of the ‘Second Republic” government will be fulfilled as we uplift the rule of law, rather than the scenarios observed in the ’First Republic’ where the citizenry lived in fear of the government.

Zimbabwe needs to deal with its antiquity by changing its perceptions on local entrepreneurs. Notably, local entrepreneurs have gone through torrid phases in attaining different licenses to operate within the borders of Zimbabwe as evidenced by countless court cases that businessperson, Strive Masiyiwa, went through to have Econet and Kwese TV licensed.

Therefore laws should be amended so that entrepreneurs are actually supported by the state rather than being pulled down. Recently, Trevor Ncube, publisher of AMH, was confronted by Honourable Energy Mutodi Deputy Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, for trying to stay afloat business wise, by hiking prices of Alpha Media
Holdings publications (AMH). Fortunately Hon Mutodi publicly (on social media) buried the hatchet with Ncube and insisted that they looked forward to doing business together in the ‘Second Republic’.

Nevertheless, we need to address key issues such as law reforms in line with the current Zimbabwe Constitution as some laws such as AIPPA (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act) and POSA (Public Order and Security Act), can be amended to allow criticism of public office bearers without fear of victimisation and persecution.

Currently, ideas do exist among the young generation, but fear from the ear of the ‘first republic’ of Zimbabwe, still haunts them to fully take part in the political and economic dialogues for nation building.

Reforms are slowly being seen following the recent ruling by the High Court on Section 27 of POSA being ruled as unconstitutional. Under this section, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) had the power to ban demonstrations as organisers needed to get clearance from the police.

In addition to the crisis Zimbabwe is in, the country suffers from ageism as seen by the number of people in influential positions, be it in government and different boards, as they are in their sixties and seventies.

These people have been there since the inception of the ‘First Republic of Zimbabwe’ and they have failed to embrace Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), which encompasses the ease of doing business by accessing government services online rather than queuing in person for a service.

Thus, as Zimbabwe, it is everyone’s duty to start rebranding the nation in all our activities, be it formal or informal, as we are the solution to the current economic meltdown which we are in right now. Commitment from all Zimbabweans is greatly needed. Finger pointing will not solve any crisis but rather draw us back. The citizenry has lost trust in the government as over the years leaders have just been paying lip service while not walking the talk.

More so, the government has a tendency of imposing policies and resolutions on the citizenry leaving no room for dialogue yet effective communication is two-way process that allows for feedback.

As stated by Honourable Monica Mutsvangwa, Minister of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services, that the ministry will not adopt an “Us versus Them” approach when dealing with the private media, this offers opportunity to rebrand Zimbabwe into a country that tolerates media as the fourth arm of the state.

Another opportunity would be by way of also offering mega deals to local entrepreneurs since we are a literate country which has suffered over the years from the brain drain. In any case, the country does have graduates in engineering, surveying and other trades of industry.

As the country faces foreign currency shortages, why not keep the billions to ourselves rather as opposed to having them being taken abroad to other countries such as South Africa, China or United States.

We can also utilise the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) which have been in place since the late 90s, by funding the private sector on agreed Memorandums of Understanding for the recovery of our beloved Zimbabwe. These PPPs vary from management contracts, leases, concessions, de-monopolisation and full divestiture of enterprises.

These PPPs can assist in resuscitating industries and manufacturing to create employment and earn the country foreign currency which is at the epicenter of doing business in the ever-complex global village.

Manufacturing needs to be supported by devolution of operations to an extent that allows for local production of value added goods thereby maximising on retains from the country’s vast natural resources.

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HAVING won the 2018 elections the weight of expectation on the Zanu PF led government is mammoth.

Granted, the economy naturally falls at the top of the priority list among ordinary citizens’ concerns. It is common knowledge that the damage caused by decades of divisive rule by former President Robert Mugabe is apparent and needs redress in one way or another.

Economy

Nearly 90 percent of the country’s adult population is out of formal employment. Of those who are employed, their wages still remain way too low for them to lead decent lives. More so, their wages have severely been eroded by recent price increases.

But the frightening part is that the (employed) 10 percent is burdened with paying tax that is supposed to cater for the needs of an entire nation.

Until Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube’s recent introduction of a 2 percent tax on all electronic transfers, the unemployed remained outside the taxman’s radar.

Because of Zanu PF’s past acts of commission and omission, citizens’ mistrust towards the ruling elite is evident. The urban populace, which bears the brunt of an ailing economy, continues to make a statement by voting against Zanu PF in successive elections.

Besides being saddled with a giant debt whose origins they have no knowledge of, ordinary citizens also have the unfair burden of fending for the country’s giant bureaucracy that comprises ministers, their deputies, permanent secretaries and department heads.

Pegged at 80 percent of the national purse, the government wage bill remains unacceptably too high for a country with a small economy. The need to mend the economy should be top of the agenda, as it is the source of the massive suffering among locals.

Ncube has started his tenure with the introduction of his unpopular 2 percent levy. Apart from the resentment it has elicited among poor locals, it may be the correct tonic in the meanwhile, for a country that is struggling to galvanise enough resources to finance its fiscal deficit.

If used responsibly, the tax will help ease the country’s debt worries and spur the nation forward but the government needs to find more ways of raising capital as opposed to overburdening the tax payer.

It needs to stop the haemorrhage of national resources through massive pilferage.

Parastatals have been identified as some of the main conduits of ill-gotten wealth and financial haemorrhage through mismanagement. The government has set the right tone by earmarking a handful for privatisation.

The task of job creation to cater for the entire nation is mammoth and
almost impossible. To remedy the crisis, the government can be advised to prop up the Small to Medium Enterprises sector that has carried the nation on its back for more than a decade as jobs remained scarce.

While poverty has seen many drop out of basic schooling to take up menial jobs locally and across the borders, government needs to place education among its priorities as massive ignorance has a rebound effect.

The burden of disease, crime, prostitution and unwanted pregnancies can be traced directly to people’s failure to use education to appreciate the hazards associated with their decisions.

Government also needs to cull its oversized workforce to a manageable few.

The positives are that the majority of all these are already on Minister Ncube’s agenda as enunciated during his 2019 budget and transitional stabilisation plan.

**Corruption**

Public confidence in the system erodes fast when citizens see nothing being done about high level corruption. The recent arrests on former ministers and high spenders is a welcome development but it smacks of a plot by the incumbent (president), to settle old scores with rivals.

Despite Zimbabwe’s well documented corruption history, arrests are still few, spaced and look more of harassment than a genuine attempt to bring culprits to account.

Local courts of law and the anti-corruption commission must be allowed to do their job free of any undue political pressures. This will slow down corruption in the country and restore public confidence in systems.

**Patriotism**

The incumbent needs to take leadership and built a country for all. Reports of continued food discrimination along party lines are unfortunate. For the economy to thrive, everyone must feel a sense of belonging.

National decision making must not be for a single political party or for central government alone. National consensus building should be the in-thing.

This is where devolution comes in handy. Citizens from the country’s different regions must feel and not just hear about devolution. This will also stop migration to cities and stop the overburdening of urban infrastructure.

Devolution must be both in terms of resources and culture. That creates a sense of belonging and nourishes the national spirit that was seen in 1980 and to some extent in November 2017 when citizens united to celebrate then President Robert Mugabe’s fall.

Political labelling must stop and everyone must wear a national badge.

**Security sector reform**

Military hegemony has created a sense of siege among citizens. Right from the 2008 presidential run-off election violence, to Mugabe’s removal and lately, the killing of civilians during post-election violence.

With a meddlesome and overbearing military, confidence in national systems wears off. Investors tend to shy away.

Apart from these, the country is unable to break from its destructive past.

*Nkosana Dlamini is a senior Zimbabwean journalist.*
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AIPPA & BSA MUST FALL

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