

"Zimbabwe's Future – the State of Governance after Military Intervention."

Statement by *Peter Godwin*.

JUST before dawn on November 14th, General Sibusiso Moyo of the Zimbabwe National Army went onto state television to announce that Robert Mugabe, was under house arrest. His 37-year reign, Zimbabwe's only leader since independence in 1980, was over. Zimbabweans soon poured out into the streets to celebrate.

Mugabe had been unseated by internal faction fighting within his ruling ZanuPF party. It wasn't primarily ideological or ethnic, it was a family feud on steroids, it pitted old against young. His wife Grace made a bid to succeed him. Forty-one years his junior - she was too young to have fought in the liberation war, hitherto a *sine qua non* for leadership of southern African liberation parties. Her attempt to create a dynastic succession, a la Evita Peron, Imelda Marcos (with whom she shared a penchant for shoes, favoring Ferragamo because her feet were "too narrow for anything else"), or Madam Mao, proved premature, and it triggered her husband's political demise.

Over those years Mugabe had hollowed out ZanuPF, reducing it to a personality cult by getting rid of anyone who challenged his authority, until he was attended only by fawning party punkah wallahs, fanning his ego, prancing around in ludicrous regalia bearing his image, as though he were a religion.

Ultimately Grace over-reached when she persuaded her increasingly enfeebled husband to fire vice president Emmerson Mnangagwa, her main rival. This was too much for the military leadership who had close ties to Mnangagwa, as he held defense and intelligence portfolios for much of his ministerial career.

I think you can expect Mnangagwa to be strongly in hock to the military who, after all, elevated him to the presidency. In the end, this was a 'continuity coup', to protect the power of the party's old guard.

General Sibusiso Moyo, who announced the coup, is the new foreign minister, the country's official interlocutor with the world. Air Marshal Perrance Shiri is elevated to the cabinet too. He was the officer commanding 5th Brigade at the time of the

Matabeleland massacres, in the early 1980s. And it's speculated that General Constantino Chiwenga, head of the Zimbabwe National Army, and architect of the coup, may be named vice president. Even if not, he will continue to be the power behind the throne, the king-maker.

The veterans of the Liberation war for independence are once again ascendant too. Their leader, Chris Mutsvangwa, has been named as special advisor to the new president. Last time the war vets made their weight felt, Mugabe had to buy them off with ex gratia payments. Unbudgeted for, these payments cascaded through the economy resulting in the highest hyper-inflation the world has ever seen. By the end the Zimbabwe dollar was almost halving in value every 24 hours.

What are we to make of the new President? You should expect Mnangagwa to entice his own people and the world with a 'reformist stance'. He will try to rebrand the party, presenting it as ZanuPF 2.0, ZanuPF-lite, non-ideological, technocratic, managerial, open for business, safe once more for foreign investors. He has already mentioned a partial return of land to some white commercial farmers, he has embraced the rhetoric of anti-corruption, offering a three-month amnesty window to return ill-gotten gains.

But these promises don't stand up to scrutiny.

What, for example, of his own corruption, and that of many of his new cabinet – 8 of the 22 are on US sanctions list - joined by bonds of massively corrupt self-enrichment, and repressive political violence? For them to put distance between who they now purport to be, and their nearly four-decade record in office, is preposterous. And for Zimbabweans both within the country and in the diaspora, as well as the international community, to believe this, is to fall for a ZanuPF confidence trick, a survival bait-and-switch.

ZanuPF has long been a vampiric entity, sucking the blood from the nation. Mnangagawa is 75 years-old. He is most unlikely undergo a benign metamorphosis. He has been at the very center of ZanuPF's repressive security web, until recently Mugabe's trusted consiglieri. He headed the feared Central Intelligence Organization,

the CIO, at the time of the Matabeleland massacre, during which upwards of 20,000 civilians were killed. And he rolled out the terrible reprisal campaign during the post-election violence of 2008, when thousands of opposition supporters were badly tortured and more than 200 killed. All of these and more besides, were carried out by this same political party, kleptocratic, violent, repressive.

What are the alternatives for Zimbabweans in the 2018 elections? You have before you today a senior member of the main opposition party, the MDC, so I will defer to him to summarize his own party's current status. However, in general, Zimbabwe's opposition is more divided than ever before. There are currently more than twenty separate parties, ten of them significant. And within the MDC, there are some tensions as its founding leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, has been seriously ill, and there is some pressure on him to stand down.

This opposition fragmentation is enormously beneficial to ZanuPF, allowing them a real possibility of winning at the polls even if opposition parties attract more votes between themselves. For the opposition it is, therefore, imperative to unify or at least broker alliances or electoral pacts. It's also crucial that the elections are free and fair, and perceived as such by the electorate. ZanuPF has a long precedent of electoral foul play.

If this is to be avoided in 2018, external monitoring will be essential. It is quite inadequate for observers to parachute into Zimbabwe shortly before the poll (recent approval of the Kenya elections tell a cautionary tale in this regard.) There needs to be a persistent presence on the ground long, long before that, as registration procedures need to be scrutinized.

In conclusion, if we reward Mnangagwa's 'same as it ever was' ZanuPF for its internal coup, for example, by prematurely dropping individual sanctions, we would help cement the culture of impunity that already infects Zimbabwe, where the perpetrators never face the consequences of their actions, and where real freedom and reform remain elusive.

ENDS.