

Challenges of branding the Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe Between 2008 and 2009

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Abstract: The post 2008 election in Zimbabwe brought a Government of National Unity. This was a rare arrangement in the country and as such brought an opportunity for academics and researchers to study the bottlenecks faced by such a government from many different perspectives. This paper focuses on the challenges and compromises communicators or information officers faced in branding the Inclusive Government in Zimbabwe. The three political parties, (ZANU PF, MDC T, MDC M) who formed this government did not make it any easier as the other two parties brought their own communication specialists to handle their own affairs. While the populace had a sigh of economic relief when this government assumed power, communicators had headaches as many a times they were forced by circumstances to be partisan. Whilst it is undisputed that the SADC facilitated government was viewed by the citizenry as the better arrangement for the country then, the politicians in the inclusive government could not stop bickering and pursuing their partisan hegemonic interests whilst in Government thus making this enquiry worthwhile and key to future arrangements of this nature. This paper thus strove to ascertain the challenges and compromises that professionals within the civil service in general faced given the contestations between the warring parties that were in government. Several traditional theories such as the theory of hegemony, ideology, propaganda and agenda setting informed this study. Archival research and observations were the two main research methods used in this paper. The study found out that there was a number of challenges and compromises the communicators faced from both internal and external stakeholders.

Keywords: GNU, branding, Zimbabwe, communication strategies and outstanding issue

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

One of the unresolved outstanding issues of the Government of National Unity (GNU) was whether the Ministry of Media, Information and Broadcasting Services' Permanent Secretary George Charamba should have remained in his post while also doubling as spokesperson for the President during the existence of this Government. The lack of faith and goodwill shown by the two Movements for Democratic Change formations who joined the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front ZANU (PF) in government to the impartiality and professionalism of civil servants makes the study worthwhile as in democracies only the political leadership should change not career professionals. The fact that the two political parties who joined the Inclusive Government in 2008 viewed a civil servant as an issue to be settled by political discussion highlights the scepticism and bad faith the leaders had on the role of the Ministry to brand the government both within and outside Zimbabwe's borders. This situation was not helped by incoming political parties who brought with them their communication specialists who often barred civil servants employed by the Ministry of Media,

Information and Broadcasting Services from handling their affairs.

The study drew from conflicts that were reported by the press between the Minister (ZANU PF) and Deputy Ministers (MDC-T) to ascertain the challenges of managing communication in such a delicate political arrangement.

Branding and Communication Strategies

The theory of branding is borrowed from commerce and according to Phillip Kotler[1], a brand easily identifies a product or service, and is a sellers promise to deliver consistently a specific set of features, benefits and services to buyers. A brand is a multi-dimensional construct involving the blending of functional and emotional values to match consumers' performance and psychological needs. In politics, a brand is a construct which should match the voters' expectations and psychological needs as such the Government of National Unity (GNU) was expected to deliver results in tandem with the expectations of Zimbabweans, such as fostering unity, a culture of tolerance, peace and harmony, over and above the

resuscitation of the economy which had fallen into a quagmire.

A successful brand of the Government of National Unity would have been one where the government would appear “natural and likeable” by the majority of the Zimbabwean populace. If the Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity communicated effectively with the Zimbabwean populace and all stakeholders, this mammoth task could be attained. The concept of branding in this study was applied in evaluating the success of communicating the policies of the inclusive government to the Zimbabwean populace as well as the international community.

Communication Strategies Employed by the Ministry

The Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity used an array of communication strategies to brand the Government of National Unity so that it would appear “natural and value based”[2]. The media and communication strategies used by the ministry are similar to the techniques utilised before and after independence. Informants within the ministry raised various strategies that the Ministry embarked on and these are: Engagement of all Media Houses, Stakeholders’ Consultation, Coverage Facilitation, Distribution of Publications, Media Kit Distribution, Lobbying and Advocacy Steering Committees, Exhibitions and Participation at Workshops.

Engagement of all Media-Stakeholders

The Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity has in 2009 resolved to engage all media regardless of where they come from unlike previously when reporters from *BBC*, *CNN*, *Sky News* and other Western countries found it difficult to cover events that occurred in the country [3]. Engagement of all media regardless of where it comes from eases tension and hostility that had become the norm of the day in previous years. For instance, when an E-TV crew was detained by immigration authorities, the Ministry facilitated for their clearance ahead of South African President Jacob Zuma's visit in August of the same year. The Ministry also facilitates for interviews between the media and the President, as well as between the media and government ministers as well as other important people in Government.

The Ministry has embarked on a deliberate policy to engage both local and foreign news organisations since this is vital as these are vehicles of transmitting the achievements, values and indeed the desired image of the Inclusive Government.

It was seen as prudent to befriend all media, print and electronic regardless of their previous editorial slant. At an Editor’s Workshop on October 6, 2009, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Media,

Information and Publicity emphasized the need to work together as the ministry needs the editors in as much as the editors need the ministry. This engagement is meant to ease tension, suspicion and to influence the media to report favourably about the Inclusive Government.

It is the Ministry’s sincere hope that the strategy to engage all players in the media would resultantly lead to more rationale reports, instead of deeply engrained and consistent political polarised positions that have been the order of the day in recent years.

All Stakeholders Consultation

This is a strategy that is meant to come up with media friendly policies as the ministry reckons that without such, the relations between the ministry and the stakeholders will remain sour. The ministry convened the “Kariba All Stakeholders Conference” between May 6 and 8 2009 as a platform to bridge the deliberate gaps, that is the negative perception attached to the Minister. This is another form of engagement of stakeholders that the ministry wants to make use of as a platform to influence practitioners to perceive the Inclusive Government as a progressive organisation, willing to change, reform and adjust for the country’s good and create a friendly media environment for all.

Coverage Facilitations

The Ministry has as one of its media strategies attached Information Officers in all line ministries so that they can facilitate media coverage for government programs. The attachés are there to guide and provide technical expertise in media related concerns. This is meant to ensure that coverage is given objectively and extensively as possible as this sends a clear picture that the Inclusive Government is working for the good of all Zimbabweans. The Information Officers attached in line ministries are apolitical and they are not allowed to divulge their opinions and ideological convictions thereby maintaining professionalism within the Government of National Unity.

Lobbying and Advocacy Steering Committees

The Ministry came up with lobbying and advocacy steering committees so as to effectively brand the Inclusive Government. These committees are chaired by the Ministry but consist of members from different sectors of the economy so as for them to provide technical expertise. The ministry chairs the Sport, Tourism and Image Communication (STIC) taskforce. STIC is vital in the branding initiatives as it uses sport which has the ability to unify all people regardless of their political convictions and ideological inclinations. It is the Ministry's strategy to use the lobbying and advocacy STIC all-stakeholders committee to brand the country as peaceful, stable, a safe haven and the worlds’ first choice destination for tourist venture. We will highlight the significance of

this communication strategy beginning with Sport Communication and then Tourism communication.

Sport Communication

The ministry sort to brand the country through sport since it unifies all the people regardless of their political affiliation and ideological inclinations. The ministry thus used sport communication to reinforce the concept of unity, cohesion, reconciliation, inclusivity and working as a team for one goal. The Sport communication was further bolstered with the Zimbabwe's hosting of the COSAFA cup where the ministry played a leading role in publicizing the event whilst at the same time taking that opportunity to market the Inclusive Government as a responsible, ambitious and progressive unit. The sport communication transcends soccer as the ministry seeks to communicate the image of the inclusive government through all sports activities. In this regard the Ministry undertook to do a publication whenever the country is hosting or participating in any popular sport, these booklets will go a long way in selling the Ministry's impartiality on the inclusive government activities within and outside the country.

Tourism Communication

The ministry seeks to brand the all-inclusive Government through tourism as it gives all people an opportunity to move freely around the country and witness events on the ground. It is the sincere hope and wish of the Inclusive Government that the tourists who visit the country would in turn spread word about the 'goodness' of the Inclusive Government and the country at large.

The ministry issues press releases, diaries and distributes speeches as a strategy to brand the Inclusive Government. More so the Ministry distributes free publications that give information about the Inclusive Government's ambitions and progress. The ministry provides media information kits on important occasions such as COMESA, hosted in June 2009 and COSAFA that was hosted in November 2009.

Exhibition

The ministry exhibits at different shows such as the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair, Harare Agricultural Show, and Sanganayi Travel Expo. In this study we used the advantage of the Harare Agricultural Show and the Sanganayi Travel Expo to gather the views of the people.

The ministry was exhibiting under the theme "Restoring Our Vibrancy" where it displayed content on the history of working together, working as a team to achieve one goal (economy) or on Inclusivity. This history going by the presentation started with the liberation struggle when combined ZANLA and ZIPRA forces became ZIPA and worked together under the

joint high command and the Patriotic Front. The second phase was at Lancaster House where people from different political affiliations negotiated for the Lancaster House Agreement under the same roof. This resulted in an all Inclusive Cabinet of 1980, with ZANU PF commanding a majority while ZAPU and Rhodesian Front representatives constituted the minority. The third stage was the 1987 Unity Accord where warring parties ended the dreaded Gukurahundi massacres and ZANU and ZAPU joined hands to become a single formidable force for over a decade. Of coarse scepticisms call "the swallowing of ZAPU by ZANU". The last part highlighted the current Inclusive Government of ZANU and two MDC formations.

The Exhibition was also done in Pictorial Format, PowerPoint Presentation and had Video presentations highlighting the Galas, Speeches by the current three principals, President Mugabe, Prime Minister Tsvangirai and Deputy Prime Minister Mutambara, speeches by the late Vice President Dr Joshua Nkomo of the Unity Accord and speeches by veteran and revered ZANLA commander Cde Josiah Magama Tongogara.

The ministry thus used a fourfold presentation to produce videos aimed at promoting and publicizing the activities of the Inclusive Government. The production unit has produced a video on the Inauguration of the Inclusive Government and the launch of STERP. More so the ministry in its branding initiatives makes use of promotional materials such as T-shirts, rulers, ball points and bags thereby marketing the Inclusive Government.

The promotional materials are mostly used at important functions such as, the Independence Day, Heroes Day, Defence Forces Day, Unity Day and at the burial of national heroes.

Other communication techniques

The Ministry produces in-house publications such as the heroes guide booklet that is updated annually, pamphlets, cabinet charts, heroes' charts and portraits of officials. The ministry is imperative in assisting researchers who will be researching on government projects. The Ministry participates at public lectures, workshops and public debate sessions where it gets vital feedback from different and diverse stakeholders. The ministry also distributes flags and produces Bill boards, banners and Corex messages for all important occurrences.

Challenges in Branding the Inclusive Government

The Ministry faced both internal and external challenges in its endeavour to brand the Inclusive Government. The challenges the Ministry faced ranges from incoherence in information disseminated to outright contradictions, disputes and refutations with the

leadership battling it out in the media instead of solving differences internally. We also found out that the other challenges the Ministry is faced are competition from political party publications and communiqués that directly challenge the ideals enunciated by the Inclusive Government, the outstanding GPA issues, Non Governmental Organisations Publications, blogs and cyber public sphere, Social media, Diaspora media as well as challenges that persist to bedevil the economy.

Internal Challenges

The major challenge is that the information conveyed by the Minister as the Official voice was directly opposed and challenged by the Deputy Minister who argues that “most of the time he was not consulted”. The fact that the top leadership lacked coordination when they sit in the same cabinet was the main hindrance to branding the Inclusive Government. The differences could have emanated from the fact that Minister Shamhu and Deputy Minister Timba came from two polarized and ideologically different parties ZANU PF and MDC-T respectively. Their political parties are continuously engaged in contestations for ultimate authority, power and control of the state machinery, thus it’s unlikely that they will perceive and conceive issues from the same point of view. The efforts thus exerted by officers were rendered irrelevant, thereby, furthering the rift between the members of different political parties in Government.

The confrontation and contestations of information disseminated led to the Ministry's voice to lose credibility as civic organisations such as the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) issued communiqués openly encouraging their membership to defy the Ministry's directives. The other challenge is that the Deputy Minister who was nominated by the MDC-T claimed to be sidelined when the Minister and Permanent Secretary made crucial and fundamental appointment decisions. The Permanent Secretary provides technical guidance to the political leadership in the ministry. A case in point is when Minister Shamu allegedly appointed the ZBH, Zimpapers and Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ) Board members without notifying or consulting his deputy. The role of the Permanent Secretary is to seek suitable candidates whom he recommends to the minister for appointment thus the assertion by Timba the deputy minister implicating the Permanent Secretary for usurping his authority does not hold water. These assertions do not help the branding initiatives of the Ministry as they expose the discord obtaining within the Ministry. The internal squabbles led to an array of challenges that will be articulated below.

THE MEDIA AND THE MINISTRY

The Ministry and the Public Media

The Ministry enjoys good relations with the state-owned and publicly owned media in the country

but the challenge that arose during the short life span of the Inclusive Government is that some “parties” to the GPA accused especially *The Herald* and ZTV of hate speech which is generally being perceived as the hand of the Ministry. The ministry's efforts to exonerate itself by insisting that both *The Herald* and the national broadcaster maintain and enjoy some autonomy are doubted by certain sections of the society. The ministry's propagandistic hand in attempting to influence and shape public opinion is taken with contempt and gross distrust.

In a comment during the Harare Agricultural Show, a respondent asserted, “...I feel that the coverage on all political parties should be equal because I see that there is an imbalance especially on electronic media”. By the electronic media this was a clear reference to ZTV and ZBC's four radio stations, thus the Ministry still face a challenge of portraying or (re)presenting the political parties objectively and impartially. The accusations that the Ministry promotes ZANU PF agendas more than the MDC ones poses a challenge to the GPA that some members of the public will lose faith in the national broadcaster and the Ministry as the parent of ZBH. Though the Ministry does not issue directive for the coverage of certain personalities, the public is not aware and many times they have lambasted the Ministry for influencing decisions at ZBH.

According to a report by the Civil Society Monitoring Mechanism (CISOMM), in their daily analysis of articles that appeared in *The Herald* and on ZTV, they found out that ZANU PF was allocated a greater voice than the other two political parties in Government. The report seems to implicate the ministry since it appoints board members to the parastatals as a way to maintain control over them.

The Ministry and the private Media

The challenges that the Ministry faces from the private media is that, the private media sympathised with the MDC-T thereby persisting the polarization that has characterized the media industry for the past decade in the country. For instance, during the partial disengagement the private media interpreted it as “long overdue” thus directly challenging the restoring our vibrancy appeal by the Ministry. The privately owned media like the public media is contributing in furthering the rift between the parties in government.

Political Party Publications and Communiqués

The study established that the two main political parties in Government issued statements in their personal capacities and these have greatly affected the way the Ministry communicates with the different and diverse stakeholders. ZANU PF through their Deputy Secretary for Information Cde Ephraim Masawi issued a communiqué to the effect that MDC T should lead calls for the removal of unwarranted sanctions and

for external radio stations broadcasting into the country to stop such unscrupulous and treasonous activities. The problem with the communication made by Masawi is that Minister Shamhu hails from the same political party and ideology and as a member he should be seen showing support for his party's position and ideological stances. The statement thus presented the Ministry with a challenge as the Minister he should be seen by his party to be serving and protecting its interest but yet at the same time he should reflect the policies of the new pragmatic reality, the Inclusive Government by going beyond serving party interest but rather the national interest. This leads us to the state and nation debate for another day.

The communiqué was instrumental in influencing the Ministry to emphasise on these points as evidenced by the T-shirt designed for that year's annual Harare Agricultural Show convened between August 24 and 29. The T-shirt carries the Ministry logo in front but at the back it's inscribed, "Remove illegal sanctions", "Stop external interference" and "Empower Zimbabweans" among other themes reflected. The three points emphasised are clearly ZANU PF positions and not the inclusive government ones and is a clear indication that a major challenge is the persistent influence of the party on communications articulated by the Ministry. Though both the Minister and Permanent Secretary are on sanctions list¹, this is clearly an agenda for ZANU PF that was being furthered by the arm of the Inclusive Government.

The communication issued by MDC-T on their party website and on mainstream media such as the disengagement first mooted on by Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khupe on 30 June 2009 also posed a great challenge to the ministry as it influenced their supporters and left the daunting task of branding the Inclusive Government an almost impossible task. The MDC-T insists on outstanding issues such as the appointment of the Attorney General (AG), Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) Governor and Provincial Governors. These issues were consistently asserted in the media to the extent that it led to the October 16 "Partial Disengagement" of the MDC-T from ZANU PF which it claimed was treating it as "a junior partner" to the GPA. This has led to a complete crisis as the Ministry instead of branding the Inclusive Government is back to furthering the agenda of ZANU PF and to the discourse of lambasting the west who are using purported "puppets". The messages utilised at the burial of national hero Misheck Chando on 31 October 2009 bears testimony of the concerns for the Ministry. Some messages were inscribed "No to disengagement".

¹ The sanctions are targeted at President Mugabe and everyone deemed loyal to him be it individuals or political parties. The ZIDERA is targeted at the country as it forbids American entrepreneurs from investing in Zimbabwe.

The political party publications such as *The Voice* and the Prime Minister's newsletter² further compounded the unenviable task of the Ministry which is that of branding the Inclusive Government as more people³ follow the freely distributed newsletter more than the mainstream media which the Ministry easily influences. The political party publications can hardly claim to be neutral and more often are at liberty to contradict the Official position of the Government as articulated by the Ministry.

Blogs and Cyber Public Sphere

We discovered that the advent of blogs and discussion fora which enable people to be both producers and consumers of information has made the job of branding the Inclusive Government quite a challenge in the sense that people engage and comment on issues in a nonchalant manner that glorifies and gratifies them.

Zimbabweans from across the political divide intimate in the cyber space's provided and a glance shows that polarisation is still rampant. Notable examples, of such forums are the Zimgossip and the Zimdaily opinion poll where questions such as "Does Mugabe suffer dementia?" The respondents in these platforms are passionate, emotional and partisan. One can easily deduce their political party affiliations or where their loyalty belongs. These platforms have led to further division of the people thus rendering the job of branding the Inclusive Government even more difficult. The blogs provide a space where hate speech and old wounds are regurgitated as people remind each other of nasty experiences such as Gukurahundi era, where more than twenty thousands Ndebele speakers were massacred on suspicion of being dissidents that gripped independent Zimbabwe from 1982 to 1987 which brought in the 1987 Unity Accord. The confidentiality and assurance of participants in the cyber spaces of having their names and identities not revealed makes branding a sheer waste of time as we found out that people who believe in certain ideologies are difficult to convert and convince to serve the national interest of the inclusive government.

The idea that the political parties in Government are set to compete each other when elections come makes rationality in the cyber space difficult as the issue is about competitive positioning since the political parties are set to compete each other in the coming July 31 elections. The desire for competitive positioning in future elections are the major challenge as all in the inclusive-government are striving

² The newsletter reflects partisan stance of the MDC-T which is presided over by the Prime Minister.

³ About 400 000 are distributed weekly which far exceeds the highest selling newspaper which has an estimated circulation of 60 000.

to maximise their popularity during the short stint expected of the Inclusive Government.

Influence of Diaspora Media and Alternative Media

We noted that the other challenge the ministry faced in its branding initiatives is the influence of diaspora and regional media that is being accessed in the country through the Internet, satellite and in some cases hard copies of newspapers are being imported duty free into the country as alternate media. The Ministry finds it difficult to influence these because of the antagonistic relations that are inherent between their owners and the Ministry given that it's headed by a Minister from ZANU PF.

Diaspora media include cyber publishers such as *Newzimbabwe.com*, *Zim-Daily* and *The Zimbabwean*. These pose a challenge for the Ministry as they reflect the views that are in tandem with the foreign governments that host them. The challenge the Ministry faces is that these are run by people who are well known for resisting and detesting anything that is associated with ZANU PF and President Mugabe. Some of the popular critics include Wilf Mbanga of *The Zimbabwean*, Geoff Nyarota of *The Zimbabwe Times* and Gilbert Muponda of *Zim Daily*. These are people who have had grudges with ZANU PF for various reasons⁴. The challenge is further compounded by the fact that the scribes at some of these media are also in bad books with ZANU PF and would do everything within their power to ensure that it loses its entire share in government.

The foreign funded radio stations such as *Voice of America (VOA)*, *SW Radio Africa* and *Studio 7* also work hand in glove with the foreign governments that hosts them and as such the Ministry's aim of utilising them to promote the Inclusive Government agenda will fall on deaf ears as long as the relations between the Government and their host countries remain hostile. The fact that these radio stations' employees are former Disk Jockeys who have been unceremoniously kicked out of the local system has thrown a challenge of influencing the "impossibles" to the Ministry of Media, Information and Publicity because they have a grudge to settle with the powers at home.

CONCLUSION

The ministry in its branding initiatives of the Inclusive Government emphasised on the following themes: Restoration of Economic Stability and Growth, Promotion of National Healing and Unity, Re-engagement of Western Relations, Stopping of External

⁴ Geoff Nyarota is former editor of *The Chronicle*, he was elevated to a redundant position after breaking the Willowgate car scandal, as such he is bitter about the Mugabe government. He was also the editor of the Daily News which shut down in 2004. Muponda is bitter for having been arrested for defrauding creditors.

Interference, Enhancement of Democracy and Empowerment of Zimbabweans across the political divide. It also impressed upon the revival of tourism and restoration of national pride and integrity through sport.

Restoration of Economic Stability and Growth

The ministry identified the key to the popularity of the Inclusive Government as the restoration of economic stability and growth. In this we ascertained that in line with popular will; the theme for the Independence Day, Heroes Day was "Restoring our Economic Vibrancy @ 29". 29 is reflective of the number of years the country had been independent from England.

The emphasis on restoring economic vibrancy is a call for the end of the problems that bedevilled the country during the previous year such as, run away inflation, high unemployment rate, the collapse of the local currency and rampant food shortages. The Ministry in an endeavour to address these, emphasised on the restoration of economic stability as a catch phrase for getting the universal of the Zimbabwean populace to accept the Inclusive Government. The economy is arguably the leading factor that forces' the people to support the Inclusive Government as it affects everyone. Amilcar Cabral's immortal phrase that the ordinary people do not need political ideas, brains but need material (potatoes) economy (sic). The Ministry probably decided to focus on the economy because the reports from both the Rural and Urban populace show that most people were tired of the hardships and were anticipating a return to the days when they could meet their basic needs.

In a ministry publication entitled "Zimbabwe hosts COMESA", it comprehensively looked at all sectors of the economy such as mining, tourism, manufacturing, agriculture and trade. The Ministry by dwelling on the economic sectors could be said to have been relying on the common denominator as there is consensual support for the restoration of economic vibrancy regardless of the people's political affiliation. The economy is a unifying force and, therefore, a rallying point for support for the Global Political Agreement and indeed the Inclusive Government.

The tone set by pledges for donations and grants for the country by regional and international countries bears testimony of the significance of the economic impulse. Contestations over the donations from the Chinese Government and the money donated by the International Monetary Fund presented the Ministry with a challenge of informing the nation as a success of the Inclusive Government as all parties wanted to claim sole victory and beneficent merits associated with the Money. The Ministry in an untypical fashion on Saturday 4 July 2009 in *The*

Saturday Herald, hailed the Chinese loan as a victory for the Look East Policy against imperial western countries. This discourse of looking east is strongly associated with ZANU PF which had strained relations with western countries and thus looked in Asia for friends and allies. Minister Biti as a man in charge of finance took it as his victory and wanted to position his party as a better negotiator for the nation. The Prime Minister on his return from abroad asserted that during his absence the Finance Minister had successfully negotiated for a loan, he said, “while I was away, government through Finance Minister Tendai Biti also secured lines of credit from China totalling \$US950 million[4].”

The economy while central poses a challenge as a key sector in branding the Inclusive Government in the sense that all political parties to the Government want to gain mileage at the expense of the others, it will be easier for the Ministry when the politicians learn to attribute success to the Government instead of their individual political parties.

Whilst the Ministry’s theme emphasised on the restoration of economic vibrancy, the exhibition display 2009’s Harare Agricultural Show was lambasted by the people for reflecting more on political unity whilst underscoring economic successes of the Inclusive Government.

Promotion of National Healing and Unity

The Ministry through exhibition and its outreach programmes made an effort to promote national healing and Unity. This followed the operative part which mandated the Inclusive Government to “Give due consideration of mechanism to properly advise on what measures might be necessary and practicable to achieve national healing, cohesion and unity in respect of victims of pre and post independent conflict” [5]. The Ministry is central to promoting national healing and unity since it is only through these that polarisation, intolerance, conflict, fear and insecurity among Zimbabweans belonging to different political parties might be eradicated.

The efforts of the Ministry to brand the Inclusive Government as a champion for unity just like at Independence in 1980 and during the 1987 Unity Accord came under fire as it was perceived as “imbalanced information” by the people who visited the Ministry’s exhibition stand. Most respondents felt that highlighting the unity from the struggle for independence when ZIPRA and ZANLA combined forces to become ZIPA was stretching the history of unity a bit too far as this positioned ZANU PF as a champion of unity yet it had a hand in the post March 29 rampant violence across the country which killed and maimed a lot of people.

It is worthwhile to highlight and critically look at the perceptions of the principals of the GPA during the launch of the three days for national prayer for national healing that occurred from July 24 to 27, 2009. The days ran under the theme, “Peace begins with me, Peace begins with you and Peace begins with us” was marred with controversy as politicians attempted to outwit each other and to position themselves as the champions of national healing and unity. President Mugabe took the process as something that they began from “the end of the liberation struggle in 1980” [6]. He asserted in his speech,

we then set out our collective policy as one to let bygones be bygones; to let peace and tolerance be our motivation and to grow a new society driven by new values”. In a nutshell he said, “...there is an option between consolidation of our real identity or exposing ourselves as a disintegrated nation. As a country we should make clear and unambiguous choices between peace and violence; harmony and disharmony; stability and instability; development and destructive conflict. We should realise that the desire for peace, harmony and stability is a desire for progress, national identity, prosperity and *hunhu, ubuntu*⁵”.

The Prime Minister was not to be outdone as he emphasised on the need for justice before national healing, “There can be no healing without justice”, he said. He called on for culprits of both the Gukurahundi disturbances and the Post March 2008 violence to be brought to book before the wounds can start healing. The discourse by the two leaders showed differences in the sense that President Mugabe was for unconditional healing while Prime Minister Tsvangirai was for justice and compensation of the victims by perpetrators which ironically is ZANU PF on both occasions. A close analysis thus leads one to conclude that the perpetrators of violence, (as personified by Mugabe in the international imagination) clamour for unconditional national healing, while victims (as personified by Tsvangirai), and seek justice. In light of the foregoing analysis, it is clear that the national stage is taken as a platform to position the leaders’ respective ideological and political parties instead of the national cause. This dilemma has also extended to the Ministry where the guiding concept is now the national interest or public interest instead of ideological positioning. Whilst to a neutral observer the concept might be unique in the Zimbabwean context where there is a negotiated settlement (GNU), the concept of national and public interest is ambiguous and prone to many interpretations.

The calls for national healing while loud from the politicians, the situation is not obtaining on the ground as people still begrudge each other over violations of

⁵ Extracted from speech delivered by President Mugabe on 24 July 2009 Pages 3-4.

yesteryear. In interviews conducted with officers in Murehwa and Bindura, they concurred that people in their areas of jurisdiction hardly attend national events such as the Heroes Day together as they are wary about the implications of such associations. The polarisation and divisions are still rampant with people on the ground mistrusting each other. A respondent in Murehwa claimed that whenever they switch to *Studio 7* they do so after ensuring that there are no spies, meaning that people are still living in fear in their sovereignty.

The ministry attempts to encourage unity by participating at District and Provincial field days showing the unity between the leadership but the challenge they face is that a high ranking official or politician is almost bound to immediately contradict the information disseminated. For instance, it is not unusual for Deputy Prime Minister Mutambara to directly challenge communications made by the Ministry's Permanent Secretary[7].

Re-engagement of Western Diplomatic Relations

The re-engagement of western countries was seen as a key strategy to brand the Inclusive Government. The reasons are mainly economical as the western countries are a host to major investors. The Ministry as such attempted to brand the Inclusive Government through lobbying for the enhancement of relations between the country and the west. The coverage of the Prime Ministers' visit to the United States of America and European countries left some people questioning why the publicly owned and state media underscored the significance of such a trip. The findings are that as usual the politicians are in a battle to position and market their own political parties instead of government of national unity. The reaction by the Prime Ministers' office to introduce a Newsletter also supports the assessment that political players in Government are fighting for a better position of their political parties.

The reasons for re-engaging the west varies, from a ZANU PF perspective, the main reason is the removal of "illegal sanctions" while for MDC-T the reason is for the country to receive substantial financial aid. The Ministry has been advocating and lobbying for the enhancement of relations with the western countries. In a move seen as a change of heart, the Permanent Secretary invited the BBC and CNN to come and cover events unfolding in the country. On the 17th of May, Charamba said,

we would want to remind CNN that they are not banned from this country. Nothing was given either orally or in writing stating that they had been banned. It is just that they took a solidarity boycott with the BBC after we had said the latter was representing political interests... We have taken the decision that they must be engaged. Overtures have been made to both media organisations and the BBC have said they'll be coming over while CNN's coverage would be from South Africa[3].

In line with supporting the restoration of relations with most countries, the Ministry is set to position attachés' in the United States of America and Britain. The other areas set for attaché's are South Africa, Malaysia and China. The attaches would be responsible for branding and marketing the Inclusive Government and the country at large as a safe haven for investment and tourist destination.

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