

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Historical memory traces the process of reconciliation in Zimbabwe to 1980 when the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe extended a hand of reconciliation to the main rival political party, the Rhodesia Front that was involved in the war of liberation. As such, it can be argued that the notion of reconciliation is not new to most Zimbabweans, as the process began in 1979 with the Lancaster dialogue between all conflicting parties. Having won the elections in April 1980, Robert Mugabe extended a hand of reconciliation to the white settlers in exchange for positive peace and the promise of external foreign aid to rebuild the war-ravaged country.

Since then, the process has gone forward through many contested political 'nationalist encounters' at critical turning points, most notably the signing of the historic Unity Agreement between Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union into the ZANU-PF in December 1987, and now the Global Power-Sharing Agreement between the ZANU-PF, the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and Movement for Democratic Change-Mutambara (MDC-M). These negotiated peace processes were couched in reconciliatory amnesty measures.

On 15 September 2008, the Global Political Agreement (GPA) was signed by Mr Robert Mugabe, as President of the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF), and Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai and Mr. Arthur Mutambara, the Presidents of the two Formations of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Pursuant to Article II of the GPA, the parties agreed “to work together to create a genuine, viable, permanent, Sustainable and nationally acceptable solution to the Zimbabwe situation” (GPA 2008; 6) Article XII of The Agreement reaffirms the principle of freedom of assembly and association.

Pursuant to the GPA, Constitutional Amendment No. 19 was passed by the Parliament of Zimbabwe on 5 February 2009, creating the constitutional context within that an Inclusive government could be established in accordance with the GPA. Under the GPA, Mr Mugabe remained as President of Zimbabwe and cabinet chair. On 11 February 2009, Mr. Tsvangirai was sworn in as Prime Minister of Zimbabwe and on 13 February 2009, a Council of Ministers Was sworn in, including ministers from the ZANU-PF, the MDC-T and the MDC-M Parties

Many Zimbabweans considered the formation, in February 2009, of the Organ on National Healing, reconciliation and Integration by the Inclusive Government “ formed by elements of the ruling Zimbabwe African National union (ZANU PF\) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) to be a watershed opportunity for stemming the national historically entrenched culture of state-sanctioned violence and impunity” (Mashingaidze 2010;19) Zimbabwe had never before comprehensively attempted to prosecute or compel perpetrators of politically motivated violence to acknowledge their transgressions, because the national leadership regularly exploited constitutional prerogatives to pardon perpetrators.

Political expedience has always outweighed the imperatives of victim-sensitive national healing after all the major political crises of the post-independence years. These included the liberation war of the 1970s, the Gukurahundi inferno of the 1980s, recurring election-related violence in the post-colonial era, the land reclamation exercise, and anti-MDC violence after 2000. As asserted by Mashingaidze “the major deficiency in the contemporary conciliatory politics is the lack of clear and binding instruments for achieving national healing and reconciliation. There is also no symmetry in the power relations among the constituent political players in the Inclusive Government” *ibid.* Individuals and interests that fomented violence in the past remain powerful and still arbitrarily

control some levers of the state, and this forecloses meaningful national healing.

Another shortcoming is that national healing is also conceptualised in selective racial terms, with the white community not factored into the ongoing healing exercise Machakanja (2010; 16). In short, the current national healing process does not promise a new future without impunity for Zimbabweans. The ensuing narrative explores the intersecting politics of post-colonial violence, retribution and impunity in three parts. The first part analyses the key determinants of the source of conflict that necessitated calls for national healing and reconciliation. In the second, I contextualise violence in Zimbabwe by exploring the inadequacies of the country post-colonial attempts at national healing. The third section is my critique of challenges faced at stemming the culture of impunity, and of establishing sustainable peace unity and reconciliation in Zimbabwe and the fourth section is a look at prospects for and the future.

Huyse identifies four elements necessary for reconciliation to take place. The first element is that of healing the wounds of the survivors. The purpose of opening the wounds is for the victims to understand the truth, to accept the apology, seek justice and be reconciled with the perpetrator. Justice that is the second element makes perpetrators come to account for their actions and this contributes towards the rebuilding of relationships based on equity and respect. It also addresses issues of retribution and/or mercy (ibid). The element of Truth telling gives a historical account of what happened. It also seeks to establish accuracy out of the past. Perpetrators take responsibility of their actions and victims are given an opportunity to tell their stories. Reparation looks into activities and programmes aimed at compensating the victims for the damage inflicted on them. Psycho-social approaches are used to achieve this.

It can be observed that the above elements of reconciliation are interconnected. One element builds onto the other. What it implies is that meaningful healing and reconciliation should seriously take into consideration all the four elements. Any approaches to reconciliation that do not encompass these four elements would be partially beneficial to the affected societies. The above can form the basis of reconciliation issues that communities want addressed. However, in Zimbabwe, communities were not involved and the issues that they want addressed remains obscure. Reconciliation issues need to be taken into consideration as well if Zimbabwe is to achieve national healing and reconciliation. Article VII of the GPA outlines some of the issues like equal and fair development of all regions, tolerance, respect, cohesion etc. While these are very important the lack of public voice in these issues can be drawback in their implementation.

The call for reconciliation at national level is not a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe. History has shown that Zimbabwe has experienced violent conflicts in various stages of its history. This paper cites examples of the war of liberation, the Gukurahundi atrocities in Matabeleland of the early 1980s and a spate of the pre and post-election violence that characterises post-independence Zimbabwe. Some kind of reconciliation has been attempted after each of the above violent conflicts. This includes the call to reconcile with the Rhodesian colonialists made by the new Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe on the eve of the Independence Day in April 1980. A General Amnesty Ordinance of 1980 was issued and it pardoned both sides of the liberation war. In 1988 a Clemency Order pardoned all violations committed by both parties between 1982 and 1987. This period marked the period of the Gukurahundi. A presidential amnesty was given to the ZANU (PF) perpetrators of politically motivated violence during the 1995 elections. In October 2000 the president issued an amnesty to pardon politically motivated crimes committed during the election campaign (Machakanja, 1995; 88)

In all these efforts a top-down approach to reconciliation was used as the general public was not consulted for specific and general issues to be addressed in the process. In 1980 for example the need to forgive and forget was imposed on the general masses and it was not made clear to them how this was going to take place. Some action was taken by the Government with regard to the Gukurahundi atrocities. It set up the Chihambakwe Commission to look into the atrocities committed. It, however, proved to be a futile exercise as the report was not published. The government did not acknowledge its guilt and no formal apology was given to the affected communities and families.

Generally, the reconciliation efforts made by the government proved to be rhetoric given their failure to address the fundamental issues of healing and reconciliation. In the case of politically motivated election violence the amnesties served to maintain the status quo where the perpetrators continued to enjoy impunity at the expense of the victims. These efforts also indicate that victims were not part of the reconciliation agenda as they seek to exonerate the perpetrators of their crimes. The fundamental elements of healing, truth telling, justice and reparations were not taken into consideration. Huyse commented that reconciliation in Zimbabwe has remained hollow and unfinished precisely because one side of a previous divide refused, consciously or unintentionally to acknowledge the need for putting in place and reconsidering the essential codes of democracy like a climate conducive to human rights, economic justice and a willingness to accept responsibility for the past and the future.

In light of the past reconciliation experiences the major question to be asked is whether there is any point of departure in the approaches to national healing and reconciliation used previously or is it a case of history of failure repeating itself. Article VII of the GPA overlooks some of the important aspects of reconciliation just like the previous Ordinances. This Article does not make any reference to perpetrators of

violence in terms of truth telling and justice. Though call for forgiveness can be heard on the state television, the Article does not articulate how the reconciliation process is to be implemented.

Examples of post conflict peace building in other African countries like Rwanda and South Africa have become useful points of reference as to how the Zimbabwean healing and reconciliation should be conducted. The time frame for achieving national healing, cohesion and unity is not specified. This aspect raises questions about the tenure of a ministry formed within the frameworks of the GNU. It is not guaranteed that the Ministry would be recognized or not after the GNU period.

The creation of an Organ on National Healing and Reconciliation can be regarded as a new development in the reconciliation process in Zimbabwe. The Organ was received with relief and great expectations of addressing injustices of political conflicts. The development is commendable as it assigns a ministry to attend to an issue that needs to be addressed as early as yesterday. The country carries a burden of unfinished and half-hearted reconciliation processes of events that date back to the colonial era. At face value, the fact that three ministers were appointed to this ministry gave one a sense of the great need to address the long standing issue of reconciliation in this country once and for all. A closer look at the appointment reveals a gloomy picture of what the appointment really aims to achieve. The composition of ministerial office brings to question the government's commitment to healing and reconciliation and the ministers' ability to withstand political party biases and pressures since they were drawn from the three parties making up the GNU.

The major question is why despite the attempts at peace unity and reconciliation in Zimbabwe has there been unprecedented violence each time there are calls for elections and even after

The concepts under discussion are the effectiveness of the organ on national healing and reconciliation in fulfilling its mandate. Before proceeding it is essential to explain what is national healing. Reconciliation means "dealing with pain and resentment, hurt and anger so that broken relationships can be restored and healed." Reconciliation simply means finding ways to live alongside former enemies to necessarily love them or forget the past but to co-exist with them. As asserted by Badza (2002) "for acknowledgement to be effective it must be complete and detailed instead of being assumed". Therefore, reconciliation to be effective it must be owned by the people taking all societal levels from higher ranking politicians and officials to grassroots levels. Reconciliation has become more like a buzzword around the world in places where conflict resolution is in progress. This is perhaps natural in the sense that "before any serious nation building can be undertaken people need to come to terms with their past." (Badza 2002:13). Getting along together as friends when yesterday they were fighting is no mean task. However, if future conflict is to be avoided and the wounds and grievances of the past are to be healed it appears imperative that the ugly stories of the past are told. We have already noted that victims of past injustices often go to their graves with the feeling that their suffering must not be forgotten. What is therefore important is that such acts of recollection be a basis for reconstruction and the healing process, and not a basis for revenge. Reconciliation as a process tries to create an environment conducive to that reconstruction and healing.

Reconciliation can be regarded as a process that re-establishes love and understanding between two or more estranged parties. As asserted by Wiredu (1996:181-2), "what is central to the process of reconciliation is the re-appraisal of the importance and significance of the initial bones of contention". In this regard it may be said that, instead of trying to avoid the causes of the conflict; reconciliation requires that all the parties to the

conflict must present their demands and that any proposed settlement should take into account these various demands.

Reconciliation presupposes estrangement, enmity or conflict. Its objective is to overcome this conflict so that there can be harmony. Because it entails that the bones of contention be re-appraised, reconciliation cannot be unilateral. As Wink (1998:14) points out, "reconciliation is always mutual". It requires that I and the other person from whom I have been estranged by enmity mutually forgive each other and walk together into a common future.

The search for reconciliation must therefore always try to understand the reasons for the conflict. In other words it must ask why the antagonists were fighting. If this view is accepted it becomes clear that the Zimbabwe's prime-minister elect's call to simply forgive and forget past wrongs could not really have been a solid ground for genuine reconciliation. This is because it did not address the bones of contention between blacks and whites.

The act of recollection by the victims of injustice has become a portent source of conflict. Wink (1998:13) aptly warns about this when he observes that "...unresolved hatreds can lead to acts of revenge by those newly empowered". This is due to the fact that under such circumstances the act of recollection tends to open old wounds. As such the unresolved hatreds can easily seep into society like a poison and cause turmoil. What is peculiar about Zimbabwe's policy of reconciliation is that it was a gesture made by the newly empowered to those who had just lost their place of dominance. This reality, combined with the piecemeal resolution of the land question brings the whole reconciliation policy into question. Is it possible or even meaningful to forgive someone who has neither admitted that they benefited from colonial injustice nor asked for forgiveness? The crucial point that must

be appreciated is that unless there is an acknowledgement of wrongdoing forgiveness makes no sense.

Far from requiring that past wrongs be forgotten, “reconciliation and even forgiveness requires that we actually face these wrongs” (Wink 1998:13). Facing them in this case creates the possibility of redress and the symbolic handshake that says we can now put the past behind us. In the world over, such gestures have been hailed as avenues for mending broken bridges. Examples often quoted in this regard include the German acknowledgement of its Nazi past and its payment of reparations to Jews; Japan’s admission of wrongdoing in its treatment of its Asians during World War II, and America’s admission of maltreating its citizens of Japanese descent in World War II. In the Zimbabwean case no apologies were made and neither have symbolic handshakes been exchanged. The story that the Shona were massacred by the Ndebele and their resources looted, the whites stole African land and the Ndebele were butchered by the whites continues to be told showing that people have neither forgotten nor forgiven.

Two issues that merit close attentions in this case are the need to redress past injustices. This at once brings out the fact that unless the underlying causes of the war of conflicts are brought to the fore and squarely faced in the process of creating a new future, reconciliation cannot take place. To the extent that Zimbabwe’s reconciliation policy did not seek to redress past injustices and to bring the causes of conflict into the open, it falls short of genuine reconciliation.

One very important reason why the past must not simply be forgotten is that going back to the past is not just an act of memory. We have made the point that the feeling of having been unjustly treated forms an integral part of the identity of those who suffer it. What also needs to be realized is such acts of recollection are never innocent. This means that what is remembered and for what purpose is always significant to

understanding who we are. We form ideas of who we are in the light of what we think we were in the past, but also in terms of what we want to become.

When people recollect their common past of injustice, both the transgressors and the victims should have an opportunity to construct a shared view of that past. This is what the idea of dialogue seems to entail. For that reason remembering the past together will help us to learn from the past mistakes that were made. Reflecting on the importance of confronting past injustices Waldron asks the salient question, "What is the practical importance now of a judgment that an injustice occurred in the past?" (Waldron, 1992:4). The fundamental point is that remembering the past ought to have practical relevance now and for the future. Precisely because who we are and how we perceive ourselves and how we relate to others is partly shaped by events in the past, the past in that sense is part of the present.

The objectives of the research are to;

- examine Zimbabwe's quest for peace, unity and reconciliation.
- explain the challenges to peace, unity and reconciliation in Zimbabwe
- forecast the future of peace, unity and reconciliation in Zimbabwe

The research seeks to answer the following questions

1. What are peace, unity and reconciliation?
2. What is the nature of reconciliation in Zimbabwe?
3. Why did peace agreements in Zimbabwe fail to foster reconciliation in Zimbabwe
4. What are the obstacles to peace, unity and reconciliation in Zimbabwe?

Many people assume that speaking at public gatherings, sign agreements between former enemies and creating an organ tasked with

healing and reconciliation will translate into relationship transformation which would turn former antagonists into friends.

The research is relevant in that it gives detailed insight into the activities of the ministry whether it is able to meet its mandate. It assesses the usefulness of the ministry in light of the ongoing hostilities and violence in various parts of the country which has showing that the 'peace' prevailing in some parts of the country is real 'peace' or imaginary peace in the country.

The research is also useful in that it provides a detailed case study of communities to understand whether the ministry has been useful and is visible on the ground or not. It gives firsthand information on the experiences of the ordinary people who suffered during the 2008 violence and whether justice was attained and whether they are able to forgive without compensation.

The study was therefore born out of the need to influence policy makers and help research to carry out corrective action that will improve reconciliation in Zimbabwe.