

ZIMBABWE'S POLITICAL THIRD WAY DEBATE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rationale of the Third Way initiative is that both the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), have proved inept at dealing with Zimbabwe's political quagmire, and therefore there is a need for a third option to effect change. This essential argument in Zimbabwean politics, is to triumphantly challenge the contestation between ZANU-PF and the MDC in the interest of sovereignty, democracy and economic development.²

According to J Mpofu³ there is no doubt that President Robert Mugabe's government and governance are a nightmare that Zimbabwe must urgently wake out of. The Mugabe regime has for the past 25 years worked overtime to turn all that was golden about Zimbabwe into coal and waste. In fact, constructive critics of the regime have been criminalized and scandalized, as the government employs violence and terror as instruments of governance and control. The regime has closed all the avenues of dialogue and constructive national debate. Mpofu argues that it is now every Zimbabwean's revolutionary responsibility to contribute a blow to the struggle against tyranny.

The Third Way option is a proposed new political alternative that, according to Njini,⁴ would bring together disgruntled members from both ZANU-PF and the MDC in one strong party. Professor Jonathan Moyo, once the chief apologist for Zimbabwean repression, has changed his tune by calling for the ouster of Mugabe and predicting chaos and ruin if he stays on.⁵ Currently, Moyo is portraying himself

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² T Zhangazha, **Moyo's third way is élitist hypocrisy** (<http://www.fingaz.co.zw/fingaz/2005/August/August12/9157.shtml>).

³ J Mpofu, **The Third Way: an idea whose time has come** (<http://www.zimonline.co.za/opinionread.asp?D=10399>).

⁴ F Njini, "Fierce rivals MDC, ZANU-PF, find rare common ground", **Financial Gazette**, Harare (<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200508250004.html>).

⁵ T Leonard, Zimbabwe's Moyo changes his tune on Mugabe (<http://news.findlaw.com/scripts/printerfriendly.p?page=/ap/i/625/08-22-2005/696a002...>).

as a reformer and champion of democracy. He is the main architect in promoting the Third Way ideology to fellow Zimbabweans.

This article undertakes to have a critical look at the Third Way movement in Zimbabwe, to investigate its historical roots and objectively analyse the pros and cons of this initiative. The study will also highlight the fact that the birth of the "Third Way" is a reaction to Zimbabwe's deepening economic and political crisis. Moyo⁶ says that this Third Way solution is imminent through the emergence of a United People's Movement (UPM) which is set to fight the "The Last Chimurenga" to foster sovereignty, democracy, economic growth and development. Besides the positive aspects of the Third Way, one also needs to be aware of the criticism regarding the Third Way option for Zimbabwe. Although Moyo is promoting the Third Way to break the logjam between the ruling party and its main opposition, little is known about it and if it is a credible movement at all, it can only succeed when reputable people take charge.⁷

2. HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE THIRD WAY DEBATE

The Third Way, as proposed by Professor Jonathan Moyo, is the "Last Chimurenga" and therefore a revolution. According to him Zimbabwe is today ready for a revolution of which the triple effect would be to:

- defend and protect Zimbabwe's national sovereignty which is now at risk of major compromise;
- uphold and respect democracy and human rights while discharging capable governance; and
- pursue economic growth and development to make all communities and the nation prosperous.

Moyo is of the opinion that a **Third Way** must be found to save the country from irretrievable collapse. It is now on offer as a political and economic **synthesis**, where ZANU-PF is the failed **thesis** and the MDC the unsuccessful **antithesis**.

$$\boxed{\text{Thesis} = \text{ZANU-PF}} \quad + \quad \boxed{\text{Antithesis} = \text{MDC}}$$

$$= \boxed{\text{Third Way} = \text{Synthesis}}$$

⁶ J Moyo, The Third Way: Zimbabwe's last Chimurenga (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/thirdforce7.12895.html>).

⁷ IRIN, Zimbabwe: "Third Way" runs into criticism.

Both ZANU-PF and the MDC cannot individually or together provide the necessary political solution in Zimbabwe. Both parties have very serious problems within their own ranks. According to Moyo, where there is a powerful **"thesis"**, especially such a bad one as that of ZANU-PF, facing an equally ineffectual **"antithesis"** such as that of the MDC, it surely must result in a good and effective **"synthesis"**. That is what the Third Way is: **a practical synthesis of ZANU-PF and MDC.**

In today's scheme of things in Zimbabwe, the ruling ZANU-PF is the political **"thesis"** and the opposition MDC is the political **"antithesis"**. These two political formations, which have been dominant and have represented the main political stance since 2000, have become so entrenched in their self-understanding as to eschew internal democratic reform and they have become so diametrically opposed to one another as to suffer from an incurable disease of "Mutually Assured Demonization" (MAD). There is no democracy and good governance inside each of these two parties and also in the way they relate to one another.

Moyo elaborates further by pointing out that the government in Zimbabwe has collapsed and its failure has become ubiquitous because the country is ruled by a rotten political party that has squandered every opportunity to reform, especially over the last five years. A dynamic and capable government that is alive to its performance responsibilities can only come from a responsive and dynamic political party that embraces internal reform and can form a capable government. It is clear that Robert Mugabe and his party want to cling onto power, no matter what. But because of sheer incompetence they have squandered their mandates to a point where they now do not have any moral or political legitimacy to rule.

On the other hand, the MDC is a failure and therefore not relevant at the grassroots level. While the MDC has significantly contributed to the opening of democratic space in Zimbabwe, it has nevertheless failed to develop a nationalistic outlook. Part of the reason for this failure, is that the MDC has been unable to distinguish between its "strategic partners" and its "political allies". The MDC has allowed some of its foreign donors to become its political allies. When an opposition is claimed by foreign interests, it necessarily fails at home.

Trevor Ncube and Jonathan Moyo are the proponents who started the debate on the Third Way. The underlying idea is to shape the future of Zimbabwe. However, lessons learned from the past are that Zimbabweans should not be emotional but strategic when it comes to issues of national governance. N Mabhena⁸ argues that

⁸ N Mabhena, Zimbabwe needs to debate "Third Way" (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/thirdforce10.12922.html>).

Zimbabweans need to take personal audit on what went wrong since 1980. In building the Third Way the people of Zimbabwe must be concerned about politicians that are going to jump ship from ZANU-PF and MDC and offer themselves to serve the new order. Nepotism, tribalism and patronage should be discouraged in the strongest terms. For the Third Way to be successful, the people's participation is very important. According to Mabhena all Zimbabwean intellectuals, academics, proper politicians and artists must respond to Moyo's stand regarding the Third Way alternative.

In the same vein, T Munakiri⁹ says the Third Way needs to be publicized to people in villages and every Zimbabwean so that they can embrace the concept. If it continues only to be discussed on web pages, it will lose relevance, especially in villages in Murombedzi or Tsholotsho. Those who have espoused this concept, should not just leave the concept on paper but take the initiative to disseminate it to every Zimbabwean. The Third Way is worth considering given the current state of affairs in the country. According to Munakiri Mugabe is the only roadblock to Zimbabwe's salvation and the sooner Zimbabweans execute the Third Way, the better it is for all, abroad and at home. The people need to put their faith in the Third Way. He says that now is the time for action. It is now a chance to salvage the country from Mugabe's dictatorship.

B Mhlanga¹⁰ is of the opinion that the Third Way is a new form of social contract. There is now a need for a new ideation process. A better Zimbabwe is possible through the Third Way movement. Although the Third Way is likely to face serious problems with the civil society movement, the call for it is legitimate. The Third Way is one way in which people can chant in a coalition, that will defend the peoples' rights and freedoms and become a collective force of all the people.

The idea of the Third Way was created by Zimbabweans who noticed that their country is in fact a de facto one-party state controlled by a narrow group of ZANU-PF and military officials who have used its resources and institutions for personal enrichment. Jonathan Moyo states further that the Third Way cannot be "a one person issue" because it is fundamentally an expression of the Zimbabwean history and all its contradictions. The assumption that the Third Way is an attempt at forming a third party is totally misplaced and not true, writes Moyo. As a United People's Movement (UPM), the Third Way has the potential to unleash the national genius by tapping on the best skills, best practices, best efforts and the pragmatic

⁹ T Munakiri, Third Way offers better option for Mugabe's exit (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/thirdforce19.13033.html>).

¹⁰ B Mhlanga, Third Way: a new form of social contract (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/thirdforce1213012.html>).

support from the overwhelming majority of Zimbabweans across the political divide at home and in the diaspora. He says what is needed for this great potential to materialize and blossom into a collective good, is a critical core of principled, courageous and committed nationalist leadership capable of transcending the blinding limits of ZANU-PF and the MDC, without fear of favour. To Moyo the situation in Zimbabwe demands a total revolution: the "Last Chimurenga".

3. THE PROS AND CONS OF THE THIRD WAY

M Mathuthu¹¹ argues that the debate on the "Third Force" has proved that Zimbabweans are still hostages to a hollow cause that they embarked on since 1980. He is concerned that some Zimbabweans are bludgeoning the idea instead of discussing it. NM Nyikadzino¹² is afraid that the Third Way might become a "Third Loss". To him the idea is still fresh and immature, an idea for which the time has not come, regardless of who is behind it. He says lessons should be learnt from Kenya about the effects of a third force or a third way. It is a good initiative for removing despots but a very difficult form of government which is very unsustainable. Third forces are often formed out of compromise. They are referred to as coalitions, but these coalitions are mostly loose. Put differently, they are formed to serve a purpose but are not structured to stand the test of the future. He points to the Kibaki rainbow-coalition in Kenya. It is today a laughing stock, a replica of the Moi corrupt government. It echoes the effects of a Third Way option.

According to Nyikadzino, Zimbabwe's political landscape does not need a third force approach. If the Third Way were to be in place, it would be useless because it would be a third force that would remain an opposition forever. What Professor Jonathan Moyo proffered is a good idea, but needs time to mature. There is a lot of ground work to be done before this idea can become a reality. The idea is to mobilize all Zimbabweans against a tyrannical regime, in the first place. It is an idea that should push for a new constitution and focus on building a critical mass before a third force is waged.

Takura Zhangazha is against the idea of a Third Way proposed by Moyo and his friends. He says the Third Way is a practice in hypocrisy. To him the Third Way becomes false and misleading as a political option because its claims are in no way grounded in the history of the struggle for democracy in Zimbabwe. Its claims to see failure in both ZANU-PF and the MDC smirk of simplistic opportunism that is without political depth with the masses of the country. Zhangazha is concerned

¹¹ M Mathuthu, Bludgeoning an idea (<http://www.Newzimbabwe.com/pages/mthuli15.13037.html>).
¹² NM Nyikadzino, Third Way must not become Third Loss (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/thirdforce15.13002.html>).

about how the protagonists would apply their revolutionary thoughts of the Third Way. What method would they use to achieve their objectives? According to Zhangazha revolutions are about methodology and are based on popular support or the coercive tendencies by certain individuals. The excessively expensive lifestyles of Moyo and company do not have the makings of revolutionary leaders.

All sorts of Zimbabweans must contribute as much as they must own the idea and the option, says Mpofu. He says Takura Zhangaza, a respected student of political science, finds the Third Way political option for Zimbabwe false and hypocritical because "it has found expression in individuals that are both disgruntled or out of favour with the main opposition party, or the ruling ZANU-PF". Zhangazha is deliberately smuggling the ethnic issue into the debate on the Third Way, knowing how easily and how well this will divide people. Zimbabweans will argue along ethnic lines and permanently collapse the project. It seems that Zhangazha is negative about the Third Way debate because he is a "good student of Mugabeism", according to Mpofu.¹³

O Nkala says that instead of debating the Third Way and seeing beyond personalities, many so-called eminent political scientists, vendetta-driven activities and unknown persons from consultancies with no history in the long struggle for Zimbabwe, have taken the "PHD" (Pull Him Down)-syndrome so far that they would rather character-assassinate Professor Moyo to a point that the debate itself ceases to be audible. It is unfortunate that the Third Way debate has been reduced to a summer slam of personalities, being battered by people who cannot even offer a way out for Zimbabwe. "If the Third Way is not a way of the Zimbabwe debacle, then what is?" asks Oscar Nkala, a Zimbabwe journalist based in South Africa, asks all the critics of the Third Way.¹⁴

Ncube¹⁵ criticizes the Third Way for being rootless, trunkless and headless. He says the Third Way is poised to be one of the worst political blunders of all time. It carries inherent seeds of its own destruction. This ambiguous call for unity amongst pro-democracy forces is as hollow as it is insincere. He emphasizes that the weakness of the Third Way is that it misleads to position itself as the synthesis of the alleged failed thesis and perceived unsuccessful antithesis.

¹³ Mpofu, 18 August 2005.

¹⁴ O Nkala, Third Way or no way, out of misery (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/thirdforce1813024.html>).

¹⁵ IB Ncube, The Third Way is rootless, trunkless and headless (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/opinion56.12408.html>).

Musonza¹⁶ also criticizes the two veteran journalists, Trevor Ncube and Geoff Nyarota, who called for the Third Way, as messengers of the neo-liberals who thrive on chaos and prolonged crises. He calls the two journalists "confusionist bourgeoisie". He assumes they are only pushing for an agenda, backed by élite businessmen based in foreign lands.

According to G Nyarota¹⁷ the proposed third way or third force would, first and foremost, seek to overcome the deep-seated fear of ZANU-PF. Secondly, for any third force to take root, the privileged citizens living in the leafier sections of suburbia, need to emerge from their cocoon of political complacency. They need to be engaged in the political discourse. But perhaps the greatest challenge that such a new movement would confront, is that of ethnic polarization, which the majority of citizens pretend does not exist while an abundance of evidence exists. Before any new revolution can take off (e.g. the Third Way), it is essential that all citizens recognize that they are Zimbabweans primarily and Ndebele or Shona lastly.

Any future leadership cannot take over until they accept that Zimbabwe is a country for all its citizens. This is where ZANU-PF has failed. According to Nyarota it is essential that Zimbabweans need to spearhead any process of change before any third force takes root - not the South Africans, Nigerians the British or the Americans. The role of the white community must also be addressed, because like true patriots, they could contribute to the new programme of national development. They must sincerely join hands with their compatriots.

4. THIRD WAY: ITS REVOLUTIONARY AND EMANCIPATORY CLAIMS

Lucas Nkomo,¹⁸ an advocate, argues that the phrase "Third Way" has been used at different times in the history of political ideas to mean different political ideologies or philosophies in different countries. Those who have used the phrase "Third Way" to describe their political philosophy or ideology, range from former US President Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder on the one hand, to the fascist villain, Benito Mussolini, on the other.

¹⁶ B Musonza, Trevor and Geoff are confusionist bourgeoisie (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/thirdforce2.12446.html>).

¹⁷ G Nyarota, Time may be ripe for a third force (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/opinion57.12434.html>).

¹⁸ L Nkomo, Interrogating "Third Way" concept (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/thirdforce.3.12981.html>).

The immediate challenge in Zimbabwe is to emancipate the people from the tyranny of the Mugabe regime by any means necessary and effect change to a democratic dispensation. In that light, Mugabe has at his disposal the state's institutionalized monopoly of force and violence: the police, armed forces and repressive legislation. The success of any revolution in Zimbabwe will therefore depend on the strategy it adopts against the repressive state apparatus that Mugabe has at his disposal. The fundamental question, therefore, is by what "informal" and "extra-legal" means is the "Third Way" going to seize state power from ZANU-PF?

According to Nkomo the very essence of a revolutionary strategy is the idea that there is an inextricable link between the means used and the ends proposed. A revolution as an act of destruction of the oppressive system, is simultaneously an act of creation of the new order in such a way that the means used eventually determine what political structure will emerge on the rubble of the old. He says Zimbabweans cannot afford to stake the destiny of Zimbabwe on another vanguardist political movement which is likely to supplant ZANU-PF instead of bringing about change. Professor Moyo says that Zimbabwe should never endure a tyranny again. It is anticipated that the ZANU-PF regime will maintain the offensive against any movement, seeking to dislodge it from power: it will not act against its own interests by failing to fully deploy the repressive state apparatus at its disposal. The task, thus, of revolutionaries, is not to take up the guns but to engage in the long, hard work of conscientising the masses, especially the rural folk, on the need for revolutionary change. The ramparts of defence against tyranny and oppression ultimately lie in the hearts of the people.

Zimbabweans who opt for the Third Way option should remember that a plethora of repressive legislation and the politicization of state security organs, might block the revolution.

5. THE JONATHAN MOYO-FACTOR

WD Masola¹⁹ says Jonathan Moyo, from arid, poor, neglected, socially ravaged, politically naïve and desolate Tsholotsho, is trying hard to present himself as the people's saviour who does not call for war but for a "Third Way". Until the beginning of 2005, Moyo was the brain behind ZANU-PF's propaganda machinery. Single-handedly, he had managed to save ZANU-PF from electoral defeat. He even thought of himself as virtually indispensable within the ZANU-PF. Moyo wants Zimbabweans to take him as a true image of Joshua Nkomo. He feels that he can

¹⁹ WD Masola., A hero today a villain tomorrow and surprise, surprise; a hero again (<http://www.Newzimbabwe.com/pages/masola23.13001.html>).

now do what Nkomo had failed to do. That is why Moyo calls the Third Way option the "Last Chimurenga".

According to Ncube, Professor Jonathan Moyo is a brilliant scholar, a great mind which Zimbabwe needs. But he states that the problem comes in Moyo's inconsistency as a political merchant. Integrity, reliability and consistency are values which make a good leader. Moyo is nowhere near these. Moyo joined ZANU-PF in 2000 knowing fully well that they are a murderous party, that they do not subscribe to democracy and that they will brook no outside interference (Mafikizolos). If now Moyo says he did not know all this, then his political science education and experience is not worth any salt.

In the same vein, Nyarota²⁰ is of the opinion that the mercurial former information minister, whose credentials and qualities would contribute to the national development if properly utilized or harnessed, serves as a perfect example. Moyo recently invoked the ethnic spectre of Gukurahundi in his haste to launch himself as an independent politician. After he had spent five years building and lining his own nest through his proximity to Mugabe, once ejected from ZANU-PF, Moyo suddenly remembered that his own father had been massacred by the 5-Brigade. Many Zimbabweans believe Moyo to be the successor to the late Dr Joshua Nkomo.

Moyo said his belief in the Third Way is not a personal wish or whim, but an objective understanding he has gathered from his five years' instructive experience at the echelons of ZANU-PF and its government. His interactive work with ordinary people at the grassroots level and with critical elements of the intelligentsia, churches, NGO's and professionals in various fields, necessitated the idea of the Third Way debate. Moyo stressed that the Third Way is not his creation and initiative alone, it is fundamentally an expression of their history and all its contradictions.²¹

Analysts suggest that Moyo may be positioning himself as a kingmaker in the struggle to succeed Mugabe, who is due to step down in 2008. He may also be motivated by bitterness at the manner of his departure from parliament.²²

²⁰ Nyarota, 24 March 2005.

²¹ Moyo, 25 July 2005.

²² Staff Reporter, Moyo says Mugabe engaged in "sunset politics" (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/sky88.12767.html>).

6. MUGABE'S DICTATORIAL RULE

For the last 25 years, Zimbabweans tried everything to give Mugabe a decent exit without success. They embarked on stay aways, boycotts, mass actions, demonstrations and petitions but left Mugabe strong and determined to fight the "perceived enemies" of the state. Even the MDC tried to impeach Mugabe, but with no success. Instead poverty, misery, disease and death have become part and parcel of Zimbabweans daily lifestyle.²³

The international community has been urging tourists to boycott Zimbabwe to protest against Mugabe's political leadership. Bilateral and multilateral agreements with Zimbabwe were either suspended or cancelled and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank turned off the tap for balance of payments. Targeted sanctions for Mugabe and his government officials have been enforced, but all this has not stopped Mugabe. Mugabe just does not listen to anybody except himself. Against this background of all the persistent failures to bring Mugabe to book, every right-thinking Zimbabwean will agree that all democratic and civilized channels have been exhausted. This leaves Zimbabweans with the Third Way option worth implementing.²⁴

Mpofu²⁵ argues that the regime has for the past 25 years worked overtime to turn all that was golden about Zimbabwe into coal and waste. Constructive critics of the regime have been criminalized and scandalized. The government employs violence and terror as instruments of governance and control. The regime has closed all the avenues of dialogue and constructive national debate. Fuel shortages, food shortages, electrical power cuts, the declining value of the currency, a decaying education delivery system and water shortage are now a permanent presence on the Zimbabwean economic and political landscape. Mpofu states that a credible solution to the Zimbabwean crisis will not come from ZANU-PF, the MDC, the NGO's and the army. The Third Way is thus an idea of which the time has come.

From all discernable indications, Mugabe has lost influence and is now viewed with suspicion or cynicism by the Southern African Developing Community (SADC), the African Union and across the developing world where he used to enjoy considerable authority. According to Moyo²⁶ Mugabe now lacks the vision, stature and energy to effectively run the country, let alone his party.

²³ Munakiri, 24 August 2005.

²⁴ **Ibid.**

²⁵ Mpofu, 18 August 2005.

²⁶ Moyo, 19 July 2005.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the present moment Zimbabwe desperately needs people who are willing to serve more than they need power. It is now time for people with the knowledge and experience in the area they choose to lead and serve because the country needs reconstruction and modification of development institutions.²⁷ Political and civic leaders, who believe in the Third Way initiative, should make themselves ready to serve rather than to dictate political issues in Zimbabwe. Albert Einstein once said, "the highest destiny of the individual should be to serve rather than to rule". Ncube argues, therefore, that Zimbabwe needs a "third way" solution. The possibility of a third way is something worth contemplating, but time and effort required to put this together could make it a long-term project. If applied correctly, the Third Way option could lay the foundation for a stable political dispensation that would deliver economic development and growth.²⁸

Zimbabweans can successfully implement programmes of meaningful change through the Third Way option. Besides that, they can also take the country to great heights of developments, peace and prosperity. It is a fact that Mugabe cannot rule forever.

According to Nkala,²⁹ the debates around the Third Way have given a new impetus to the national situation and therefore renewed interest as to where Zimbabwe is going. The Third Way will evolve into a better idea than ZANU-PF and the MDC. Anyone can lead Zimbabwe as long as they are collective enough and put the country first.

The Third Way option has the potential to find accountable and people-driven leadership. The Third Way is a political process aimed at uniting people across the established, bitter political divide for the cause of freeing Zimbabwe. The success of the Third Way debate means that Zimbabweans need to debate the idea, not personalities or the tribal origins of the proponents.

It is therefore clear that anyone who is interested in the long-term stability of Zimbabwe, including the Third Way debate, needs to help to plant the seed of true participatory and open democracy, writes Katerere (2005).³⁰ He continues to state that the only way of doing this and of bringing Zimbabwe back into the fold of

²⁷ M Makwanya, The Zimbabwe we seek (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/opinion85.12913htm/>).

²⁸ Ncube, 31 March 2005.

²⁹ Nkala, 23 August 2005.

³⁰ DR Katerere, Zimbabwe: debunking the myths (<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/opinion88.13013.html>).

nations, and fostering democratic governance and practice is not to force the protagonists to talk, but rather to explore ways of initiating a proper constitutional overhaul and ushering in a new republic. Since independence, 18 April 1980, Zimbabweans have never actually enjoyed the freedoms that democracy entails.

Although the Third Way initiative has stirred discussion in a country suffering triple-digit inflation, the debate remains coloured by the image of Moyo himself - first a staunch former critic of the government, then one of its most ardent ministers, and now a new party leader. It is clear that the Third Way debate is tainted by association with Moyo. His political past might be the Third Way movement's downfall, because Moyo, as it seems, has no credibility with the people, who justifiably dismiss him as a disillusioned former ZANU-PF die-hard.

However, Moyo attracted audiences when he spoke publically about the Third Way, winning applause, especially from college students. His willingness to stand up to ZANU-PF after being sacked in 2005, has, however, earned him the admiration of some Zimbabweans.³¹

³¹ Irin, 31 August 2005.