

Statement by Ambassador (ret) Charles Ray
To the Africa Subcommittee of the
House Foreign Affairs Committee

THE FUTURE OF ZIMBABWE AFTER MUGABE

Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am honored to be able to appear before you today to discuss the path forward in US-Zimbabwe relations. I served as U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe from 2009 to 2012, during the period of the ZANU-PF/MDC coalition government, a time of relative peace and economic stability, but, unfortunately, also a time of lost opportunities to put Zimbabwe on the path of truly representative government and a prosperous economy.

Most American today know very little about Zimbabwe, but for a brief time in November 2017, it was again prominent in the American mass media.

After several weeks of increasing political turmoil, primarily within Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party, the first vice president, Emmerson D. Mnangagwa was accused of disloyalty and sacked. He then fled to South Africa, claiming that his life was in danger. Around this same time, Mugabe's wife, Grace, began to appear more and more in public, making statements that she should be the one to succeed the aging leader, pronouncements that Mugabe did nothing to deny. In an unprecedented—for Zimbabwe—move, Constantine Chiwenga, chief of the Zimbabwe Defense Staff, made a public statement that the military would not stand idly by and allow liberation figures to be removed from government or the party.

Shortly thereafter the military made its move. It took control of key installations in Harare, and placed Mugabe and his family under effective house arrest—although, it was quick to publicly announce that what it was doing was not a coup. As one opposition figure said, though, if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck. It was a palace coup, with the army moving against elements of its own party, but make no mistake about it, it was a coup d'état. Relatively nonviolent, and done in a most unusual way; Mugabe was allowed to meet the press, to phone the South African president, to meet with the coup leader in what on the surface appeared a cordial encounter, and even to call a cabinet meeting; it was still a change of government initiated by force of arms rather than the ballot box.

How the military's actions will be dealt with is something for Zimbabweans to decide. For the rest of the world, and the United States in particular, the key questions are; where does Zimbabwe go from here, and what role should we play in that journey?

We should start with a bit of background on Zimbabwe's new ruler, Emmerson Mnangagwa. The question on many minds is, will he be any different from Mugabe? He is, after all, someone who worked closely with Mugabe for more than 37 years after the country's independence, who

served as an intelligence officer during the war for independence, and who, because of his actions in support the crackdown on Ndebele political opposition in the 1980s, and MDC supporters in the 1990s, has earned the nickname, 'Crocodile.' Prior to being appointed to the first vice president position, Mnangagwa served as defense minister and justice minister. Though he lacks Mugabe's charisma, he enjoys the support of most senior military officials.

Moving forward, his first priority will be to reassert control over ZANU-PF, a party that has fractured along generational lines, with many of those in their 40s and 50s, known as the G-40, supporting Grace Mugabe against the older liberation-era party members. A united ZANU-PF is essential if the party is to retain power. This won't be an easy task for Mnangagwa, as the rift between the two demographics was worsened by some of the actions and rhetoric during September-November of last year. The issue is further complicated by the presence of former ZANU-PF number two, Joice Mujuru's Zimbabwe People First (ZIM-PF) Party. Mujuru, until Grace Mugabe engineered her ouster, was first vice president, and at the time was in competition with Mnangagwa, a successor to Mugabe. A veteran of the liberation struggle, as a fighter with a fierce reputation, she also enjoys some military support, although probably not as much as Mnangagwa.

Mnangagwa's second priority, I believe, will be to ensure ZANU-PF's continued control of the reins of power in the country. If he can somehow pull all the ZANU factions together, and overcome the possible threat from Mujuru, he will have to decide whether or not to proceed with elections in July 2018. He has indicated that he will do so. While violence and chicanery are still possibilities that can't be cavalierly dismissed, a united ZANU-PF is likely to be able to do well against the current opposition party lineup. The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is still split between the faction led by Morgan Tsvangirai and the one led by Welshman Ncube. As the parties that pose the greatest challenge to ZANU-PF in the urban areas, if they were united, they might do well, but it is unlikely that they will merge. The remainder of the opposition parties, with the exception of ZIM-PF, will only take votes away from MDC, which is to ZANU-PF's advantage. In the rural areas, ZANU-PF has, in the past at least, had an advantage, and Mnangagwa is sure to capitalize on this.

So, while it's too early to predict that the 2018 elections will be free, fair and nonviolent, let us assume, for the moment that they will be.

Where do *we* go from that point?

During my time as US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, one of the most frequent topics of conversation was US sanctions. Put in place in response to the violent land seizures and electoral violence of the late 1990s, the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act was enacted in December 2001, and a presidential executive order, targeting individuals and entities involved in the violence and antidemocratic acts was issued in March 2003. Both actions were intended to encourage a return to democracy, something that had not happened by the time of my arrival in 2009. After the MDC won the 2008 elections, although without the necessary 51% majority, there was more violence, but under South African pressure, a coalition government was formed. That government, with the MDC in a subordinate position to ZANU-PF, lasted until the 2014

elections, in which ZANU-PF got the required majority and subsequently formed a government without MDC.

The sanctions, in my view, were clearly not having the desired effect, and Mugabe's party hardliners were using their existence as an excuse for all of the country's ills.

My response to the many queries of, 'when will sanctions be lifted?', was, 'when there is a return to nonviolent elections and democracy. In fact, during one of my final media interviews before my departure in 2012, at the end of my tour, I said, "Sanctions were a response to a violent electoral process. A credible electoral process, free of violence, would make our current policies irrelevant."

If this year's elections are held, they are determined to be credible, and there is no violence, the ball will be in our court.

If we truly want to see Zimbabwe develop to its potential, we must be prepared to work with the winner of a credible, nonviolent election, regardless of the political party. Even if the election is credible and nonviolent, any new government is almost certain to contain officials who bring a lot of historical baggage with them to the positions they occupy. I firmly believe, however, that we should, in such a situation, put the past behind us and focus on the policy statement in the introduction of the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001; 'it is the policy of the United States to support the people of Zimbabwe in their struggle to effect peaceful, democratic change, achieve broad-based and equitable economic growth, and restore the rule of law.'

I leave development of the precise modalities of our actions to the policy makers and the professionals in the Foreign and Civil services of our foreign affairs agencies, primarily State and USAID, but I would offer a few suggestions on the way forward.

First, we should instruct our embassy in Harare to establish contact with Mnangagwa and his current government to reiterate our policy regarding sanctions, and to inform him that, if upcoming elections are credible and nonviolent, we are prepared to recognize and work with the new government. While we should continue to monitor the human rights situation, our initial focus should be on actions to reinvigorate the country's economy and empower the private sector to revitalize the agricultural sector, and rebuild stagnant industries, with a view to creating meaningful employment and broad economic security. We should encourage the new government to develop an investor-friendly climate, and take steps to curb corruption, while at the same time, encouraging American business to explore opportunities to increase two-way trade and investment.

During my time as ambassador, we experimented with a local economic development program modeled on an Asian village financing scheme. Women in a few poor rural villages were taught to organize local savings clubs, in which deposits were loaned out to members at low interest rates for income-producing ventures. These programs, though known to the government, were outside government control, and within months of establishment, totally self-reliant. Consideration should be given to implementing such a program in rural and suburban

communities country-wide. People who are economically self-sufficient are less vulnerable to political exploitation.

The elephant in the room, which can't be entirely ignored, is the Zimbabwean military. Existing laws and regulations will limit what we can do with the military, but for the long term, peaceful development of Zimbabwe, at some point we will have to figure out a way to work with this institution. Initially, I believe the primary focus should be on inculcating in the military establishment an ethos of service to the nation as a whole rather than identification with a specific political party. In my limited contact with senior military officials when I was ambassador, I was convinced that there exists within the military establishment a cadre of people who would like to professionalize and depoliticize the institution. The challenge will be to identify those individuals, and develop effective ways of working with them. One possibility might be to establish a working relationship with the SADC Peacekeeping Academy, which is located in Harare, and allowing Zimbabwean military participation in courses of instruction on military professionalism. I leave it to State and Defense, working with the congress, to determine just how such a program would be implemented.

While I have, in making these recommendations, assumed that elections will be held in July 2018, and that they will be credible and nonviolent, I must make clear at this point that I am not making a prediction. I do believe that if everyone approaches the coming months with an earnest desire to see Zimbabwe pull itself out of the doldrums and take its rightful place in the region and the world, it *can* happen. If it *does* happen, if everyone then puts the past behind them and focuses on the future, a new and more vibrant Zimbabwe can arise Phoenix-like from the ashes.