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The Dilemma of the Patriotic Front and the Influence of the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Government on the Final 1979 Lancaster House Constitution

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Abstract:

The Lancaster House Conference was a landmark achievement in the decolonization process of Rhodesia. The Patriotic Front made up of ZAPU and ZANU attended the conference alongside the Smith-Muzorewa delegation (Zimbabwe-Rhodesia) government. Hopes that the values and cause for which their parties stood, and for which so many young men and women had sacrificed their lives in the revolutionary struggle would be addressed fully were sky high. This paper takes us through the negotiation process at Lancaster in 1979. It interrogates the politics of compromise at work and concludes by asserting that the outcome was pre-meditated and that the Patriotic Front was diplomatically out-classed and lost. The article also analyses the constitutional conference and critiques British mediation endeavours. It highlights the challenges that confronted the Patriotic Front in articulating their concerns and proceeds to suggest that although Britain is to be credited for breaking the deadlock over Rhodesia, the hasty decisions made at the conference were the precursor of the socioeconomic and political challenges that continue to bedevil Zimbabwe to date. It concludes by recommending strategies that give credence to any transitional process.

Keywords: Constitution, Patriotic Front, Lancaster Conference, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, negotiation

1. Introduction

Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 internationalised the Rhodesian political crisis. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) consequently launched its pilot economic sanctions project (Galtung, 1967) with the express desire to enforce compliance on the international renegade for the first time in twenty one years (content.time.com/). These sanctions were piecemeal and that provided Rhodesia with enough breathing space during which to adapt economically and psychologically to its new circumstances (Galtung, 1967). In any case, these sanctions did not bite adequately enough because the sympathetic United States of America (USA) often allowed Smith entry despite travel bans as if to give legitimacy to the breach (Murphy, No date).

African nationalism spearheaded by the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) radicalized to the point of armed confrontation with the colonial regime. After the incarceration of the nationalist leaders, the United African National Council (UANC) led by Bishop Muzorewa mobilized popular support for the 1970 'No' vote campaign to the Pearce Commission that was sent by Britain to gather Africans' views on the proposed constitution. It was at that time that Muzorewa became an outstanding critic of the political status quo that was so terribly skewed in favour of a handful white community that enjoyed exclusive ownership of the principal means of production amongst which was land.

The revolutionary struggle resumed in earnest after the period of détente that was initiated by President Vorster of South Africa and President Kaunda of Zambia. Central to the détente exercise was the release of African political prisoners to facilitate dialogue and ease black-white tensions in Rhodesia. The move accorded ZANU and ZAPU the opportunity to undertake vital guerilla offensives against all symbols of colonialism using their military bases in neighbouring Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana. The watchwords were 'victory is certain,' *aluta continua* or 'death.' It was hoped that the moral and material support they received locally especially from the rural peasantry and from communist China and the Soviet Union among others would help to inflict a humiliating outright military victory over the Rhodesian forces that had a substantial number of white mercenaries. On the other hand, the stubborn resistance by the white minority regime to hang on to power despite both international sanctions and the telling effects of the intensifying armed struggle was aided by the military equipment it had harnessed after the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1963, and by the moral and material support from Portugal, apartheid South Africa, United States of America (USA) and, to some extent, Zambia (Murphy, No date).

By 1978, most parts of the country were liberated or semi-liberated zones and so were no-go areas for the Rhodesian armies. Europeans withdrew into their 'laggars' in urban areas and the surrounding farms and were hysterically intent on protecting their

economic interests. Smith had to bow down to international pressure to recognize the inevitability of majority rule and the necessity of working preferably with moderate African leaders resident inside the country in order to terminate the war and have economic sanctions lifted. The Internal Settlement of 1978 therefore, gave birth to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia which nonetheless failed to meet the international standards for recognition or legitimacy. It was argued that the Settlement had deliberately ostracized ZAPU and ZANU, the two political parties that were responsible for executing the armed struggle through their military wings Zimbabwe People's Liberation Army (ZIPRA) and Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) respectively. The Lusaka Agreement on the Rhodesian political impasse affirmed the position of the Commonwealth that the United Kingdom (UK) had to take direct responsibility for the proper decolonization of Rhodesia by extending invitations to all parties to the constitutional crisis for a conference hosted in Lancaster House, London.

This article, therefore, identifies and describes some critical areas of concern that overshadowed the Lancaster House Conference in 1979. It takes the position that the PF delegation, viewed as Marxist-Leninist, emerged from the negotiations empty-handed, it having been ordered to forget about the land issue and smile, since a rather contentious clause on the defence of property rights was incorporated in the British draft proposal in line with modern democratic constitutions. It further seeks to assess the influence of the Smith-Muzorewa delegation comprising a substantial white representation with landed interests, on the final outcome of the Lancaster Constitution. Given a scenario where the PF military wings had almost liberated the whole country save the urban peripheries, perhaps a little more effort was needed for them to register a knock-out victory. An analysis is made, in this context, to determine whether the military strategy was, right from the beginning, adopted as a pressure tactic to secure a negotiated settlement that would terminate the Rhodesian menace. An analysis of the huge constraints that confronted the PF delegation is made, as well as the sufficient democratic conditions for crafting a constitution with a 'human face.' The continuing land discourses and the consequent western-imposed economic sanctions on Zimbabwe today are situated within the paradigm of a constitution that was so inherently flawed and historically specific in terms of which pertinent clauses on land (vaguely expressed under property) and minority rights were given timeframes for amendment thereafter.

2. Theoretical Framework

Numerous contemporary historians have theorized about developments that took place at Lancaster in 1979. Catch phrases such as 'Lancaster House Talks', 'Lancaster House Negotiations,' 'Lancaster House Settlement' and 'Lancaster House Agreement' have frequently been applied interchangeably to describe negotiations that took place in London at Lancaster between the Smith-Muzorewa delegation and the PF delegation led by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, with Lord Carrington, representing Britain and the Commonwealth, as mediator (arbitrator is more appropriate in his case). In mediation, warring parties are given the opportunity to identify and openly admit their mistakes, take mutually agreeable positions to eliminate the source of conflict and genuinely resolve to collectively work together towards peace and progress for the common good. Most popular is the phrase 'Lancaster House Conference' which denotes a composition of concerned party delegates who sat to deliberate on a new constitution for a post-colonial Rhodesia through British mediation. However, so many names to the same event suggest lack of clarity on what precisely the conference hoped to achieve. Implicit in the name Lancaster House Constitution is the centrality of a constitution-making process which could have overshadowed all other fundamental political and historical considerations. It becomes self-evident that Carrington, on behalf of both Britain and the Commonwealth, conceived of the idea of a process of negotiations that would culminate in a new constitution. The pressure exerted to expedite the process and reach finality within three months fell far too short of what one would describe as a process. Rather, it assumed the character of an event, with unrealistic deadlines imposed on the parties in order to concoct a quick fix to the crisis.

Thus proper analytical tools are required for any understanding of the complexities that, more often than not, accompany and characterize most negotiation processes. Zartman (1994) defines negotiation as a process (not an event) of combining conflicting positions into a common position under a decision rule of unanimity, a phenomenon in which the outcome is determined by the process. Put differently, the means to bring an end to the crisis (British authoritative power) would justify the end (a dictated peace, an imposed settlement and a Westminster Constitution). The definition appears quite sound and plausible, but the undemocratic nature of 'imposed unanimity', contrary to constitution-making norms, was viewed by the British as a necessary aberrant without which negotiations were more likely to fail than succeed. He further develops the coalition theory, decision theory, the game theory and the leadership theory as key theories pertinent to negotiations (ibid). Structural, strategic, integrative and procesual analyses are identified as tools that help to inform our understanding of human phenomena, especially in the case of the Lancaster House Conference, where irreconcilable competing interests and divergent attitudes reigned supreme. This study adopts the integrative analysis approach which views the negotiation process as undergoing stages such as pre-negotiation [talks about talks], talks, stalemate and settlement (Watkins, 2001).

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative review study of the Lancaster House Conference. As such, it makes some content analyses of available literature on the historic conference, and attempts a re-assessment of the conclusions made on some of the most contentious issues from a different perspective. Primary documents, particularly the British draft proposal, the Smith-Muzorewa and PF presentations were part of the wide array of internet sources that informed the reinterpretation of the deliberations at Lancaster. Secondary sources in the form of textbooks were reviewed and these assisted in approaching the subject matter from an informed position. Discussions with colleagues, especially in the wake of the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe, proved very useful in making deliberate attempts at rationalizing government action as fulfillment of a promise that got broken at Lancaster.

4. Discussion and Analysis

4.1. Background

The declaration of UDI on 11 November 1965 made the Smith regime internationally illegal. The act itself made Rhodesia become the theatre of the ongoing ideological struggle between the capitalist/ democratic west and the socialist/communist east during the Cold War between the United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union (USSR). It was at that time that the armed revolutionary struggle, which had begun tragically in 1966 with the Chinhoyi battle, was escalating at alarming levels. What is important to note is the fact that ZANU and ZAPU got their military and moral support from the communist countries of the east in their guerilla war against the capitalist establishment in Rhodesia. Marxism, from where communism/ socialism derives, views conflicts in society from a materialist perspective, and argues that factual inequalities can at best be eliminated when those economically marginalised by the existing mode of production fight to gain or regain control of the principal means of production such as land among others. That necessarily means trampling on the rights of those propertied already. From the foregoing, the liberation war in Rhodesia was viewed as such. ZAPU and ZANU were viewed as Marxist-Leninist parties fighting against capitalist progress. There was reason for concern because in 1977, ZANU had adopted socialism based on Marxist-Leninist principles as its guiding philosophy for the transformation of society (Cornwell, 1993). This western capitalist perception about the Patriotic Front carried the day when finally the Lancaster negotiations began and ended in 1979.

It would only be fair to posit that super-power indirect interference in Rhodesia was motivated not so much by moral considerations nor selfless interests, than by the insatiable quest for an economic satellite ideologically oriented or disposed towards either the USA or USSR. Despite his arrogance which thrived on the half-hearted nature of the economic sanctions, Smith, nonetheless, remained a British 'child.' Britain or USA could not sacrifice him to the 'communists' whose economic philosophy was the very antithesis of laissez faire principles espoused by the capitalist economic system. The two super powers during the Cold War era made frantic efforts to fill in the void created by the failure by Britain to decolonize Rhodesia, hoping too, that it was an opportunity for them to exploit the crisis in the furtherance of their national economic interests.

Colonial legislations in Rhodesia circumscribed Africans' rights and made their lives so unbearable. Nationalist parties transformed themselves into revolutionary parties to militarily challenge Smith's intransigence. Against that background, Smith vowed to remain in power despite international condemnation to his regime, and even went further to conduct raids into neighbouring states such as Zambia and Mozambique that were sympathetic to the armed cause, and that had given ZAPU and ZANU rear bases from where to launch their guerilla attacks.** The Internal Settlement reached in 1978 between Muzorewa and Smith was meant to give the outward trappings of a democratic transition to majority rule, which Smith earlier on had vehemently denied. The effect intended was the unconditional removal of sanctions and the official recognition of the government of the newly created Zimbabwe-Rhodesia that Muzorewa regarded as being non-racial (*Constitutional Conference, 1979*).

The Smith-Muzorewa scheme did not work out so neatly as originally envisaged. Sanctions were not lifted and the coalition government did not qualify for recognition either. Through pressure from the Commonwealth Heads of State and the Frontline states such as Zambia, Botswana and Tanzania, the British Conservative government of Margret Thatcher was under the circumstances compelled to renege on its earlier promise to recognize the winner of the Internal Settlement of 1978 (blogspot.com) ** to which both ZAPU and ZANU were not part, and now wanted all parties to get involved. It must here be noted that the longer the crisis continued unresolved, the more unpopular Britain would become on the ground that the return to normalcy in Rhodesia depended so much on its genuine and demonstrable commitment to granting majority rule to Rhodesia as it had successfully done in almost all its former colonies in Africa and elsewhere. Therefore, it was not surprising that Britain, after the failed Internal Settlement, vowed to take direct responsibility for the drawing up of an independence constitution.

4.2. The Lusaka Agreement

The Lusaka Agreement was a dress rehearsal to the Lancaster House Conference. It was here that very important resolutions were made and these helped to inform the kind of constitution that the delegates at the Lancaster Conference would adopt later on in the same year. Present at the conference were representatives from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Commonwealth and the Frontline States. They proposed the adoption of a democratic constitution that included proper safeguards for minorities and that, according to Carrington, an agreement could only be reached if there was a willingness from either side to compromise (*Constitutional Conference, 1979*). Clearly articulated at the Lusaka Conference was Britain's obligation to recognize the importance of encouraging the European minority to remain [in the country] as an integral part of the community (Ibid).

Given that the Lusaka Conference actually laid the basis for the Lancaster House Talks, the deliberate exclusion of the warring parties at that stage casts doubts about the democratic nature of the constitutional dispensation. It was a case of misplaced emphasis because first and foremost, the armed struggle was not being fought over the constitution, nor over democracy. All that Africans wanted was majority rule in order to eliminate possible manifestations of colonial injustice. 'Democracy,' to the Patriotic Front at Lancaster, was a surprise package. It can therefore be intimated that the Lusaka Conference, with its emphasis on democracy and constitution-making as essential ingredients to politically transform Rhodesia, was a complete denial of what the war was all about in the first place. It heralded a long period of 'forgetting' about the land question years after political independence in 1980. As if ignoring the land question was not enough, groundwork overtures towards the legal protection of white property had been laid. It can be argued that the Lancaster Conference differed slightly from the Lusaka Conference that preceded it in that the warring parties alone this time

participated only to rubber-stamp authoritative resolutions reached at the former conference, and that for the PF delegation, negotiations at Lancaster were a mere exercise in wasting time.

After the successful conclusion of the Lusaka Agreement, Britain took no time at all to invite the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government and the PF delegation to London for a tripartite negotiation conference at Lancaster House. Noteworthy is the fact that Carrington, the mediator, represented the British delegation at two important levels; as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on one hand, and as the mouthpiece of the collective voice of the Commonwealth on the other (Mupanduki, 2007). He too, had mining interests in Rhodesia (Ibid) and so could therefore not be entirely relied upon for sincerity and impartiality in the Rhodesian dispute. In terms of the Commonwealth mandate to Britain, Carrington arrogated to himself a wide range of freedom and powers to bully the two sides into an agreement whether they wanted it or not, and the Patriotic Front in particular, had the latitude to denounce Britain, not the Commonwealth (Watkins, 2001). The British could not be put to shame for the political impasse in Rhodesia. Negotiations unfolded dramatically and dragged on from 10 September to 15 December, 1979, with Carrington as chief actor capable of conciliating and threatening when the need arose. Secondary parties to the conference were the Frontline States, Britain, USA, Nigeria, the Commonwealth and the OAU (Mupanduki, 2007).

During the negotiations process, Carrington made it categorically clear to all and sundry that the British had put to the Smith-Muzorewa and PF delegations an outline of the kind of constitution on the basis of which they would be prepared to grant independence (*Constitutional Conference*, 1979). What can be discerned from the stated British position is that they would be negotiating from a position of strength. The proposals were a straightjacket. Firstly, convening a conference in London counted so much in their favour in that they emerged from the conference with a British 'diktat'. Secondly, the mandate given to Britain to preside over the Rhodesian crisis enabled it to extort incredible concessions from the PF delegation. Thirdly, Britain already had a draft constitutional proposal in place which, apart from being characterized by serious omissions and therefore unacceptable to the Patriotic Front, had to be implemented with very inconsequential modifications throughout the 47 plenary sessions. Fourthly, the British were accorded the rare opportunity to align their economic interests in Rhodesia with those of the Muzorewa-Smith delegation that was predominantly white in composition. Fifthly, both the British and the Muzorewa delegations represented their governments (although Muzorewa's was wrestling for *de jure* acceptance) whereas the Patriotic Front stood for 'terrorists' who, according to Rhodesian propaganda, had total disregard and disrespect for rights commonly enjoyed by civilized people. It was so easy for Carrington to threaten the Patriotic Front, but very difficult for him to conciliate. A bleak future was forecasted to whichever party withdrew from the conference first (blogspot). According to Charlton, Carrington aptly applied the 'Prisoners Dilemma' where each player must succeed in striking a balance between the need for establishing a credible threat to punish future defections from democracy (ibid).

4.2.1. Smith-Muzorewa Influence and the PF Position

The Smith-Muzorewa delegation had twenty-two delegates of whom nine were whites. It outnumbered the PF Delegation by two. With time, four Africans were replaced by whites and this increased the number of white representatives to thirteen. At the conference, the delegation worked against everything the Commonwealth was working for (*Constitutional Conference*, 1979). It sought among other things, to water down the PF arguments, persuade the British delegation to legitimize the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government and have sanctions imposed on Rhodesia removed on the basis that there was majority rule in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.

In his opening speech as spokesman for the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia delegation, Muzorewa gave his presentation which was calculated for effect. He made an appeal to the British government that:

We require to know clearly and categorically what more your government requires from us before you remove sanctions and grant recognition to our government...we are not prepared to see any negation of what has so far been achieved in our country... no one will have power of veto over the stated scope and focus of this conference and that the same will apply to any decisions that may be agreed (*Constitutional Conference*, 1979)

It is almost self-evident from the above that the Smith-Muzorewa delegation participated in the negotiations from a position of relative strength. It was a clear message to the Patriotic Front that any matters outside those tabled by the British for the conference would not be entertained. By implication, the root causes of the continuing armed struggle had to be reduced to a constitution-making process, which was the primary focus of the talks, leaving nothing to change. The moratorium on land redistribution was camouflaged by the clause on property rights which was not negotiable from the point of view of both the British and the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia delegations. From the proceedings of the Conference, it would appear as if the British government actually represented the Muzorewa delegation as evidenced by their similar material interests that they both wanted to see entrenched in the new constitution. The Muzorewa-Smith delegation was the *de facto* government and commanded authority and a modicum of respectability. Above all, Smith's voice resonated quite vividly throughout Muzorewa's speech in terms of what values it sought to uphold and defend. What the Internal Settlement had achieved could not be reversed. For example, the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia parliament had 100 legislators of whom 28 were white. The Senate had twenty blacks and ten whites. The Cabinet had nineteen ministers; fourteen blacks and five whites. This government had a very brief lifespan of about five months, but Muzorewa had the audacity to conclude that there was no longer oppression of the majority by the minority, or vice-versa (*Constitutional Conference*, 1979). The irreversibility of resolutions that would consensually be made by the three parties at the conference was emphasized. Arguably, it was hardly coincidental that guarantees against subsequent retrogressive amendments to the constitution would fit into the schemes of the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and British delegations alike.

The Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government was a lop-sided affair in terms of whom between Muzorewa and Smith wielded actual power in the power-sharing deal. Smith retained the reins of power and was in control of the most critical areas such as the army and police which he used both inside the country and in neighbouring Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique even as negotiations at Lancaster were in progress (Chung, 2007). These bombardments were used as a demonstration of their aerial superiority and as a form of coercion during the Lancaster Conference (ibid. p.243). From these developments, it was clear that the Smith-Muzorewa delegation was not negotiating in good faith. The British were equally silent about them and that in itself is enough ground to build a conspiracy theory (plot management).

The Frontline States played a pivotal role in convincing the Patriotic Front to attend the Lancaster Conference under duress. President Machel of Mozambique met the newly elected Conservative woman Prime Minister, Margret Thatcher, after which encounter he made it clear that he would no longer permit ZANU to continue its military offensives from Mozambique (Chung, 2007). Such a decision was prompted by the fact that since independence in 1975, Mozambique had never tasted peace, nor known what it meant to be politically independent as a result of continued raids by the Rhodesian Selous Scouts and the Mozambique National Resistance Movement's (MNR) internal counter-revolutionary insurgency against the Frelimo government. It had been set up by Smith's Ken Flower to cause havoc in Mozambique in order to limit the capacity of the government to render military support to ZANU and to carry out indiscriminate acts of sabotage and destabilization with South African tutelage (Hanlon, p.219). The Internal Settlement's positive effect was to make possible the decision taken by both the Frontline States and Britain to seek a political-not military-solution to the ensuing crisis.

The sudden U-turn by the Frontline States effectively weakened the Patriotic Front's bargaining power at Lancaster. Suspicion was still too high for both ZAPU and ZANU to participate in a negotiated settlement out there in the shining city of London. It had been made explicitly clear at the Lusaka Agreement that the Frontline States wanted nothing short of peace (Mupanduki, 2007). These Frontline States operated within the broader framework of the Commonwealth and so this put the Patriotic Front in an invidious position because a settlement had to be reached even under deplorable terms that did not comprehensively articulate their demands. The guerilla war in Rhodesia had serious debilitating effects on the economies of the neighbouring states of Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi. To them, the war had to stop on moral considerations. It was under these conditions that the Patriotic Front had expected a favourable settlement at Lancaster on behalf of the people they represented back home.

The only test of valid strength the Patriotic Front had at the Conference were the liberated zones it had created and was still in the process of creating even as negotiations progressed. Its greatest weakness, however, was its characterization as a terrorist delegation not attuned enough in the art of diplomatic engagements and the skilled game of politics. To some, many agonizing years of hide-and-seek bush life in the countryside, and a long period of absence from home technically made them easily out-classed in intricate constitutional matters at Lancaster. It was inconceivable that revolutionary parties such as ZAPU and ZANU would be called upon to participate in the drawing up of a constitution unless they had first transformed themselves into political parties. That transformation was not given time happen, the revolutionary fervour had not subsided to any reasonable proportions and there was heightened emotionality among the Patriotic Front delegates. Interesting to note also was the fact that both ZAPU and ZANU had had a long history of squabbles and sporadic skirmishes inside and outside the country between themselves. Particularly worrying was when about 50 ZIPRA guerillas were massacred by ZANLA guerillas in Tanzania at Mgagao and Morogoro in August 1976 (Chung, 2007). There can be little doubt that only circumstances compelled ZAPU and ZANU to speak with one voice at the conference. They participated in the deliberations as a very fragile alliance backdated to the guerilla war (Cornwell et al, 1993) or, more precisely, to the ZAPU-ZANU split of the mid 1960s. Evidence to this was the split that occurred after the conference when ZANU became ZANU (PF) and campaigned separately prior to the first ever democratic and all-inclusive elections held under the auspices of the United Nations in 1980. All this overwhelmingly testify to a PF coalition at Lancaster that was inherently weak, blatantly uneasy and prone to disintegrate at the slightest shock. Such were the loopholes that Carrington, and even the Muzorewa delegation, capitalized upon to dwarf the revolutionaries at every occasion during the talks.

In the initial stages of the Conference when each party presented its position, Joshua Nkomo, on behalf of the Patriotic Front, was the last to present. Quite surprisingly, and in a spirit of self-denial, at the bottom of the nine questions he presented for further discussion as key to a satisfactory outcome was the land issue. One would possibly assume that the questions were ranked in order of importance. He boldly voiced how the Patriotic Front was dismayed at realizing that the British proposals were too vague for them to be able to judge whether they were adequate to their comprehensive task (*Constitutional Conference*, 1979). He used the practical existence of liberated zones as a key bargaining point (Ibid). In response to Carrington's constitutional draft proposal, the Patriotic Front remarked that "...the present outline states no more than some of the elements of any constitution, but contains also certain [objectionable] aspects which are very different from the normal British pattern" (ibid). This was in reference to other decolonization constitutions the British had drawn earlier on for its former colonies, when, in point of fact, it did not have one itself to serve as a model.

The Commonwealth Secretary and advisor to the PF delegation stated that the frightening statistic where 80% of the Rhodesian arable land was owned and occupied by 5% of the population coloured the process that led to the Lancaster House Conference (Ramphal, 1979). He thus views the land issue as the stumbling block in the negotiation process because whilst the Patriotic Front stressed the centrality of the land issue, the draft constitution contained the standard convention clause on property which categorically articulated tenets of international governance (ibid.). The negotiations stalemated when the PF delegation walked out of the conference protesting that they did not subscribe to a constitution which meant there could not be land redistribution (Ibid). Carrington made it clear to the protesting delegation that if it did not agree to the provisions of the draft constitution but other delegates did, the conference would proceed without it (ibid). The Frontline States rescued the situation that had gone out of hand and blocked the decision by Carrington to proceed without the Patriotic Front. The other important issue to note is that during the talks the PF emphasized on the need for

majority rule as one important step in trying to solve the Rhodesian crisis. What is also crucial to note is that to them majority rule did not have many other related facets which would ensure a smooth transition of power from the minority to the majority. It would be a serious miscalculation to hope that under the prevailing political and economic environment at the time, the shift of power would flow smoothly. The presence of more Africans in parliament or even the civil service would not translate into a democracy in the practical sense. As long as the few Europeans controlled the major stake in the economy and the means of production then it would give problems to the whole process.

It might have been very interesting to see how negotiations would have proceeded as an affair between the British government and Muzorewa's delegation. The Patriotic Front and the Rhodesian delegations were prohibited from engaging in free debate but they would at times meet with the British separately in less formal groups at different levels (*Constitutional Conference*, 1979). The use of 'shuttle diplomacy' where actors sat in separate apartments bargaining with Carrington rather than with each other enabled him to exploit the arrangement to suit his schemes by negotiating with Smith and Peter Walls (Ibid.). The 'blood is thicker than water' adage was deeply embedded in the constitutional discourse to the extent that the Patriotic Front delegates were treated as outsiders whose presence could not be counted upon where it mattered to the British most. The advisor hinted that it would be unreasonable for the Patriotic Front to break-up because a clause protecting private property in the Constitution was requisite in every modern constitution. The deadlock was broken when the USA and Britain gave assurances of funding land acquisition through the willing-seller willing-buyer basis. Such solid assurances were recorded in documents of the conference and notified to all Commonwealth countries (Ibid) but caused further tension in Zimbabwe when the assurance got broken. It was for that reason that the bulk of the states in the African Union (AU) rendered massive support to the forceful land redistribution programme around 2000 that started as a spontaneous reawakening by the Svosve people but snowballed into a government programme thenceforth. According to Davidow in (Mupanduki, 2007) Carter's commitment to compensation was convoluted and cautious, just offering the PF a face-saving way out of the impasse. The democratic strategy was rationalized. The conference became centred on crafting a democratic constitution. Yet such a constitution was inconceivable under a process that in itself was far from democratic. It was a wrong prescription to a fatal ailment. Amidst the mounting pressure, the PF got the main concession of the creation of democracy and compromised on the land (Mupanduki, 2007).

5. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated the dilemma that confronted the Patriotic Front during the tripartite Lancaster House Constitutional negotiations in 1979. ZAPU and ZAPU had taken the decision to fight for majority rule and to repossess stolen land. Their decision to undertake the armed struggle, apart from other concomitant colonial injustices, centred on the issue of land. Yet the British made it clear in its draft proposal to the Patriotic Front that the land issue that they were so vociferous about was subordinated to constitutional matters. It has also demonstrated the hypocrisy, high-handedness and impartiality of the British towards the Patriotic Front throughout the negotiations process, and how the Patriotic Front delegates were threatened into accepting proposals that apparently lacked moral validity right from the beginning.

The piling pressure from the Frontline States and the Commonwealth for cessation of hostilities is suggested as having left the Patriotic Front with no choice but to participate at the conference involuntarily since it could no longer use Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania and Mozambique for further guerilla training. Furthermore, it has revealed that the resolutions finally adopted at Lancaster were a victory for western democracy, for the British, for Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and above all, for the capitalist status quo operative in Rhodesia. The Patriotic Front lost the game on mere technicalities by signing for democracy instead. The outcome of the Conference hardly justified the huge number of people who lost their lives at the hands of the colonial regime, as if to say all those Africans who perished in pursuit of majority rule did so in vain. A political approach instead of a historical approach was used and that tended to trivialize the PF argument that was strongly historical and political.

It is recommended in this paper that high-level negotiations require an honest broker and at Lancaster House 1979, Britain was not. Deliberations seeking a roadmap towards a credible political transition and a durable settlement must of necessity be conducted in utmost good faith so as to comprehensively address the source of conflict. Conflict resolution strategies ought to be tailor-made in such a way that warring parties are accorded time for emotions to cool so that they listen to each other and respect each other's views.

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