

EMMERSON DAMBUDZO MNANGAGWA AND THE SECOND REPUBLIC

**Leadership, Transformation, Vision 2030 and the Legacy of
a New Zimbabwe**

By

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First Edition

2026

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This book is a work of political, historical and academic analysis. It examines the leadership, policies, programmes, challenges, achievements and legacy associated with Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa and Zimbabwe's Second Republic. The interpretations and opinions expressed in this publication belong to the author.

Every effort has been made to present historical and political information accurately and responsibly. Where interpretations of events differ, the book seeks to recognise the complexity of Zimbabwe's political, economic and social development.

The author does not claim that every interpretation presented in this work represents the official position of the Government of Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF, or any other political organisation or institution discussed in the book.

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Title: *Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa and the Second Republic: Leadership, Transformation, Vision 2030 and the Legacy of a New Zimbabwe*

Edition: First Edition

Year of Publication: 2026

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Book Theme

This book chronicles the life, political philosophy, liberation credentials, and national leadership of President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, examining how his experiences during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle shaped his governance philosophy and his vision for the Second Republic.

The book will explore the transformation of Zimbabwe from the post-independence era into the Second Republic, highlighting major national development programmes, economic reforms, infrastructure modernization, diplomacy, agricultural transformation and the pursuit of Vision 2030, while situating these developments within Zimbabwe's broader political and historical context.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the people of Zimbabwe—the citizens whose resilience, hopes, sacrifices and aspirations continue to shape the nation's history.

It is dedicated to generations of Zimbabweans who have contributed to the liberation, development and preservation of the country, and to those who continue to believe in the possibility of a peaceful, prosperous, united and sovereign Zimbabwe.

It is further dedicated to the young people of Zimbabwe, whose energy, creativity, education and determination will ultimately determine the character of the nation that future generations inherit.

May this work contribute to a deeper understanding of Zimbabwe's contemporary political journey and encourage thoughtful reflection on leadership, national development, sovereignty, economic transformation and the responsibilities of building a better future.

Professor Talent Rusere

Acknowledgements

The completion of this book has been made possible by the intellectual, historical and social environment within which Zimbabwe's contemporary political story continues to unfold. I therefore acknowledge all those whose contributions, experiences, scholarship, public service and commitment to Zimbabwe have helped make a serious examination of the Second Republic possible.

I acknowledge the people of Zimbabwe, whose lived experiences provide the foundation upon which any meaningful discussion of national leadership and development must be constructed. The history of a nation is not written only in government offices, parliamentary chambers or political institutions; it is also written in the experiences of ordinary citizens, workers, farmers, entrepreneurs, students, teachers, health professionals, communities and families.

I acknowledge scholars, historians, economists, political scientists, development practitioners, journalists and researchers whose work has contributed to the broader understanding of Zimbabwe's political economy, constitutional development, governance and socio-economic transformation. Their scholarship provides an important foundation for examining the opportunities and challenges confronting the country.

I acknowledge the public institutions, civil servants, development agencies, academic institutions and professional communities whose work has contributed to the implementation and evaluation of national programmes discussed throughout this book. Whether viewed from a supportive,

critical or analytical perspective, their contributions form part of the historical record of the Second Republic.

I also acknowledge the many Zimbabweans in the diaspora whose perspectives, experiences and continued engagement with developments at home remain an important part of the country's national conversation. Zimbabwe's story extends beyond its geographical borders, and the aspirations of its citizens abroad remain connected to the country's future.

My appreciation also goes to the readers, students, researchers and members of the public who continue to ask difficult questions about Zimbabwe's political and economic direction. Critical inquiry is essential to the development of a mature society because it enables citizens to examine achievements, acknowledge shortcomings and consider alternative possibilities.

I am grateful to everyone who has encouraged the preparation of this work and to those who have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the intellectual process behind it. Their encouragement has strengthened my conviction that Zimbabwe's contemporary political history deserves careful documentation, serious analysis and informed public discussion.

Above all, I acknowledge the enduring importance of Zimbabwe itself. This book is ultimately an attempt to contribute to the national conversation about where the country has come from, where it stands today and where it may be going. It is written in the belief that understanding the present requires an honest engagement with history and that building the future requires both vision and responsibility.

Professor Talent Rusere

Foreword

Zimbabwe's political history has entered another important chapter with the emergence of what has come to be described as the Second Republic. Since the political transition of November 2017 and the assumption of the presidency by Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, the country has witnessed a significant period of political, economic and institutional change. Understanding this period requires more than a description of political events. It requires an examination of the ideas, policies, aspirations, achievements, difficulties and competing interpretations that have shaped Zimbabwe's contemporary national trajectory.

This book, *Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa and the Second Republic: Leadership, Transformation, Vision 2030 and the Legacy of a New Zimbabwe*, by Professor Talent Rusere, seeks to undertake that examination. It approaches the subject as a contemporary study of leadership and national development, while placing the Second Republic within the broader historical experience of Zimbabwe.

The significance of such a study cannot be underestimated. Zimbabwe's political development has always been closely connected to questions of sovereignty, liberation, national identity, economic independence, social justice and development. The Second Republic therefore did not emerge in isolation. It inherited a complex historical, economic and institutional environment and subsequently articulated a development agenda centred on modernisation, economic transformation, infrastructure development, investment attraction, agricultural productivity, industrialisation and the aspiration to achieve an upper-middle-income economy by 2030.

At the centre of this period has been President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. His leadership has attracted considerable public attention, both within Zimbabwe and internationally. Supporters have emphasised infrastructure development, agricultural transformation, mining expansion, investment initiatives, international re-engagement and the government's Vision 2030 agenda. Critics, meanwhile, have raised important questions concerning governance, electoral processes, economic pressures, currency instability, institutional effectiveness, human rights and the broader political environment. A serious study must therefore be capable of engaging with both achievements and controversies.

One of the strengths of this book is its attempt to place political leadership within the wider framework of national development. Leadership cannot be assessed solely through political speeches or electoral outcomes. It must also be examined through the condition of institutions, the performance of the economy, the development of infrastructure, the quality of public services, the opportunities available to citizens and the ability of a government to translate national aspirations into practical outcomes.

The concept of Vision 2030 is particularly important in understanding the Second Republic. The aspiration to transform Zimbabwe into an upper-middle-income economy represents more than an economic target. It expresses a broader vision of structural transformation in which industrialisation, modern infrastructure, technological advancement, agricultural productivity, investment and human-capital development are expected to reinforce one another.

The book also considers the country's agricultural transformation. Agriculture remains fundamental to Zimbabwe's economy and society, particularly in relation to food security, rural livelihoods and national resilience. Programmes associated with agricultural mechanisation, irrigation, climate adaptation and smallholder production have therefore become significant elements of the Second Republic's development narrative. Whether these interventions ultimately produce sustainable transformation is a question that requires continued evidence-based assessment.

Infrastructure is another major dimension of the period examined in this book. Roads, bridges, airports, dams, energy projects, border facilities, water infrastructure and urban development have increasingly featured in the government's development agenda. Infrastructure is not merely physical construction; it is an essential foundation for commerce, investment, mobility, public services and national integration.

The transformation of Zimbabwe's mining sector also deserves careful attention. The country's mineral wealth, including lithium, gold, platinum-group metals, diamonds and other strategic resources, has created opportunities for economic growth. At the same time, mineral development raises important questions concerning beneficiation, value addition, environmental sustainability, employment creation, investment policy and the distribution of national wealth.

Education and health are equally central to the question of national transformation. No country can achieve sustainable development without investing in its people. Universities, technical institutions, innovation hubs, schools, hospitals and rural health facilities therefore form part of the broader story of national development. Human capital is ultimately the foundation upon which technological, industrial and social transformation must rest.

The Second Republic's foreign-policy approach also forms an important part of this analysis. The policy of engagement and re-engagement sought to reposition Zimbabwe within the international community and attract investment, strengthen diplomatic relations and expand economic partnerships. Zimbabwe's relationships with African institutions, SADC, the African Union, China, Russia, the European Union and other international partners must therefore be understood within the country's broader search for economic opportunity and diplomatic space.

Yet development must always be considered alongside governance. Economic progress and infrastructure development cannot completely answer questions concerning constitutionalism, accountability, electoral credibility, institutional independence and citizen participation. These questions remain essential to any serious assessment of the Second Republic. A mature political analysis should neither ignore achievements nor dismiss legitimate concerns.

This is why the present work is particularly valuable as a contribution to Zimbabwe's contemporary political literature. It invites readers to examine the Second Republic as a historical period still in formation. Unlike studies of earlier political eras, this is a history being constructed in real time. Its final consequences cannot yet be known with certainty, and many of its policies and programmes remain subject to continuing implementation and evaluation.

Professor Talent Rusere approaches the subject from the perspective of an academic and political observer concerned with leadership, governance, human rights and national development. His analysis provides readers with an opportunity to consider the broader meaning of the Second Republic and the legacy that it may ultimately leave behind.

The importance of this book extends beyond Zimbabwe. Across Africa, questions of leadership, economic sovereignty, industrialisation, natural-resource management, constitutional governance and development remain central to the continent's future. Zimbabwe's experience can therefore provide lessons—not necessarily simple prescriptions, but useful evidence—for other African societies confronting similar challenges.

The ultimate test of any political era is the legacy it leaves for future generations. Roads and buildings may provide visible evidence of development, but lasting national transformation depends upon stronger institutions, productive citizens, sustainable economic systems, social cohesion, educational advancement and confidence in the future.

This book should consequently be read not merely as an account of one presidency, but as an examination of a country attempting to redefine its developmental trajectory under changing domestic, regional and international circumstances.

It is my hope that readers will engage with this work critically and constructively. Those who support the Second Republic should find in it an opportunity to reflect upon the achievements and unfinished work of the period. Those who disagree with its policies should equally find an opportunity for informed debate based upon evidence rather than political assumption. Scholars should see it as a contribution to the growing literature on contemporary Zimbabwe, while citizens should regard it as part of the continuing national conversation about their country's future.

The story of the Second Republic is still being written. Its ultimate historical judgement will depend not only upon the intentions of its leaders, but upon the measurable outcomes experienced by Zimbabwean citizens and the institutions that future generations inherit.

It is within this context that I commend Professor Talent Rusere for undertaking this important work. May it stimulate scholarship, encourage informed debate and contribute to a deeper understanding of Zimbabwe's political and developmental journey.

INTRODUCTION

Reconsidering Zimbabwe's Political Journey Through the Legacy of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa

The history of Zimbabwe cannot be adequately understood without reference to the country's liberation struggle, the political institutions that emerged from independence, the aspirations of the post-colonial state, and the continuing search for a national development model capable of transforming political independence into meaningful social and economic emancipation. Since independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has travelled through a complex political and socioeconomic trajectory characterised by moments of remarkable national achievement, profound economic difficulties, political contestation, institutional transformation, international isolation, diplomatic engagement, and persistent debates over the meaning of sovereignty and development. At the centre of the most recent chapter of this history stands Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, whose rise to the presidency in 2017 marked a significant transition in Zimbabwe's political history and inaugurated what his administration termed the **Second Republic**.

This book, *Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa: Zimbabwe's Legacy of the Liberation Struggle*, with the subtitle *From Liberation Fighter to Architect of Zimbabwe's Second Republic (2017–2030)*, seeks to examine that historical transition within a broader intellectual framework. It does not treat the presidency of Mnangagwa merely as an episode of contemporary political administration. Rather, it approaches his leadership as part of a much longer historical continuum linking the liberation struggle, the attainment of national independence, the construction of the post-colonial state, the challenges of economic sovereignty, and the continuing quest to realise the developmental aspirations that accompanied Zimbabwe's liberation.

The significance of Mnangagwa's political career therefore extends beyond the conventional boundaries of presidential biography. His political life intersects with some of the most consequential phases of Zimbabwe's modern history. From the liberation struggle and the emergence of an independent Zimbabwe to decades of political participation and eventually the presidency of the Second Republic, Mnangagwa's trajectory provides an important lens through which to examine the evolution of Zimbabwean nationalism, state power, political leadership, economic policy and national development. His story is consequently inseparable from the wider history of the country itself.

The concept of the **Second Republic** occupies a central position in this book. It represents more than a political slogan or administrative designation. It is presented by its proponents as a new phase in Zimbabwe's national development, one intended to distinguish the period after 2017 from the preceding political era and to establish a renewed emphasis on economic transformation, infrastructure development, investment attraction, international re-engagement, agricultural productivity, industrialisation, technological advancement and the achievement of an upper-middle-income economy by 2030. Understanding the Second Republic therefore requires an examination of both its stated objectives and the practical policies through which those objectives have been pursued.

At the same time, serious scholarship requires that political history not be reduced to official narratives. The intellectual purpose of this book is consequently not simply to celebrate a presidency, nor is it to dismiss it through predetermined political judgements. It is to examine a historical period, its ideas, its policies, its achievements, its contradictions, its challenges and its aspirations. The record of any government must ultimately be assessed through evidence, institutions, measurable outcomes and the lived experiences of citizens. Political leadership acquires historical significance not merely through declarations of intent, but through the extent to which intentions are translated into durable institutions, sustainable economic growth, improved public services, expanded opportunity and a stronger foundation for future generations.

This distinction is particularly important when examining Zimbabwe. The country possesses enormous natural resources, considerable agricultural potential, a highly educated population, a strategic geographical position within Southern Africa and a rich history of political mobilisation. Yet these strengths have repeatedly existed alongside economic instability, unemployment, infrastructure deficits, currency challenges, public-sector constraints, international sanctions and contested political processes. The central development question has therefore never been simply whether Zimbabwe possesses resources or human capacity. It has been whether the country's political and economic institutions can convert those resources and capacities into sustainable national prosperity.

The Mnangagwa presidency emerged within this difficult historical environment. The transition of 2017 occurred after decades of political and economic developments that had profoundly shaped Zimbabwean society. The new administration inherited a state confronting significant structural challenges while simultaneously carrying enormous public expectations. It was expected to restore economic confidence, attract investment, rebuild infrastructure, strengthen international relations, improve agricultural productivity, modernise public institutions and create employment opportunities. At the same time, it inherited unresolved debates concerning democracy, governance, electoral legitimacy, constitutionalism, human rights, political participation and the relationship between the state and citizens.

The historical importance of the period beginning in 2017 therefore lies partly in the tension between **continuity and change**. The Second Republic emerged from the institutions, political traditions and liberation history of the First Republic, yet it sought to present itself as a new phase characterised by different priorities and approaches. This creates an important intellectual question: to what extent does the Second Republic represent a continuation of Zimbabwe's liberation-state tradition, and to what extent does it constitute an attempt to redefine that tradition for the twenty-first century?

This book approaches that question through the concept of **liberation legacy**. Liberation movements in Africa were originally concerned with achieving political sovereignty and dismantling colonial systems of domination. Independence consequently represented an enormous historical achievement. Yet political independence was never intended to be the final destination. The deeper aspiration was to create societies in which sovereignty would be accompanied by economic empowerment, social justice, education, healthcare, employment, industrialisation, land reform, technological advancement and human dignity.

This distinction between political liberation and socioeconomic transformation remains one of the most important questions confronting post-colonial Africa. A nation may possess a sovereign flag, national institutions and political independence while large sections of its population remain economically vulnerable. Consequently, the meaning of liberation must continually be reconsidered. The challenge for contemporary African governments is to transform the political achievements of earlier generations into tangible developmental outcomes for present and future generations.

Within this context, Mnangagwa's political philosophy has frequently been associated with the principle that Zimbabwe must become economically self-sustaining and capable of using its own resources to finance and accelerate development. The emphasis on agriculture, mining, manufacturing, infrastructure, energy, technological innovation and investment reflects an understanding that national sovereignty in the twenty-first century is inseparable from economic capacity. Political independence without productive capacity can leave countries vulnerable to external economic pressures, while economic development without institutional stability can produce unsustainable outcomes. The relationship between sovereignty, development and governance is therefore central to the intellectual framework of this book.

The economic transformation agenda of the Second Republic forms one of the major themes examined throughout these pages. Fiscal reforms, investment promotion, industrial development, mining expansion, special economic zones, export growth and financial-sector reforms are considered within the broader objective of restructuring Zimbabwe's economy. Particular attention is given to the effort to move beyond dependence on the export of unprocessed commodities by promoting value addition and beneficiation. The emergence of new mining opportunities, including lithium, alongside developments in steel production and industrial infrastructure, illustrates the broader question of whether Zimbabwe can transform its natural-resource wealth into domestic industrial capacity.

Agriculture represents another crucial dimension of this transformation. Zimbabwe's historical identity as an agricultural economy has made food security an important component of national sovereignty. Programmes associated with agricultural production, irrigation development, mechanisation, wheat production, Pfumvudza/Intwasa, livestock development and rural modernisation therefore deserve examination not merely as agricultural policies but as elements of a larger national strategy. Food security reduces vulnerability to external shocks, while agricultural productivity can stimulate rural incomes, industrial demand and domestic markets.

Infrastructure development similarly occupies a central position in the story of the Second Republic. Roads, bridges, dams, airports, border posts, electricity-generation projects, water infrastructure and urban development are not merely physical constructions. Infrastructure constitutes the physical foundation upon which modern economies operate. Efficient transportation reduces the cost of production and trade; reliable electricity supports industry; modern border facilities facilitate regional commerce; water infrastructure strengthens agricultural production and urban resilience; and digital infrastructure increasingly determines participation in the contemporary knowledge economy.

The book consequently examines infrastructure as an expression of state capacity. A government demonstrates its developmental priorities not only through policy documents but through the physical transformation of the spaces in which citizens live and work. Roads connect communities to markets. Dams support agriculture and electricity generation. Airports connect national economies to international networks. Border posts influence regional trade. Digital infrastructure connects citizens to information, commerce and public services. Infrastructure is therefore both a development instrument and a visible manifestation of national policy.

The transformation of education and human capital is equally significant. No development strategy can succeed indefinitely without a population equipped with relevant knowledge and skills. The Second Republic's emphasis on heritage-based education, innovation hubs, universities, technical education, skills development and digital learning reflects the growing recognition that Zimbabwe's most valuable resource may ultimately be its people. Human capital determines whether a country can innovate, industrialise, manage complex institutions and compete within a global economy increasingly defined by technology and knowledge.

Healthcare constitutes another fundamental measure of national development. Hospitals, rural health facilities, medical equipment, disease-control programmes and universal access to healthcare are not simply social-sector concerns; they are components of human security and national productivity. A society cannot sustain economic transformation when large sections of its population lack access to quality healthcare. The modernisation of the health sector must therefore be understood within the broader question of what kind of society the post-colonial state seeks to construct.

The emergence of **Digital Zimbabwe** adds another dimension to this transformation. The digital revolution has fundamentally altered the relationship between citizens, governments, businesses and information. E-government, ICT infrastructure, artificial intelligence, innovation, smart cities and the digital economy are increasingly becoming essential elements of national competitiveness. Zimbabwe's ability to participate meaningfully in this transformation will depend upon infrastructure, education, regulation, entrepreneurship, research capacity and access to technology. The digital agenda is therefore not simply about computers or telecommunications; it concerns the restructuring of economic and social life.

The book also examines the foreign-policy dimension of the Second Republic. Zimbabwe's international relations have historically been shaped by the legacy of the liberation struggle, sovereignty concerns, regional solidarity and relations with global powers. The policy of **engagement and re-engagement** sought to reposition Zimbabwe within the international system while maintaining the country's commitment to sovereignty and national interests. Relations with the Southern African Development Community, the African Union, China, Russia, the European Union and other international partners therefore form part of a wider debate about how a developing African state should navigate an increasingly multipolar world.

This foreign-policy transformation must also be understood in the context of Zimbabwe's long-standing relationship with international sanctions and economic restrictions. The question of sanctions is deeply contested, with different political actors assigning different degrees of responsibility for Zimbabwe's economic difficulties to external restrictions and domestic policy

choices. A serious historical examination must therefore avoid simplistic explanations. Economic outcomes are usually produced by multiple interacting factors, including domestic policy, global commodity prices, investor confidence, monetary conditions, institutional capacity, international relations and external economic restrictions. Understanding Zimbabwe's experience requires attention to that complexity.

The pursuit of **Vision 2030** provides the temporal and strategic framework through which many of these policies can be understood. National Development Strategy I and National Development Strategy II were positioned within a longer-term ambition of transforming Zimbabwe into an upper-middle-income economy by 2030. Vision 2030 consequently represents more than a government planning document. It constitutes an attempt to articulate a national future and to establish measurable developmental priorities over an extended period.

The intellectual significance of Vision 2030 lies in its attempt to shift political discussion from immediate crisis management toward long-term national planning. Governments frequently operate under short political cycles, while development requires continuity over decades. Roads, universities, hospitals, industrial facilities, energy systems and technological ecosystems cannot be constructed meaningfully through short-term thinking alone. The success or failure of Vision 2030 must therefore ultimately be evaluated according to whether its programmes establish institutions and productive capacities capable of surviving changes in political leadership.

Yet development cannot be evaluated solely through macroeconomic indicators or infrastructure statistics. The ultimate subject of development is the human being. The question that should remain at the centre of every national development strategy is whether ordinary citizens experience improvements in their material conditions, opportunities and dignity. Economic growth that does not translate into employment, productive livelihoods, accessible healthcare, quality education, affordable housing, food security and social mobility raises fundamental questions about the distribution and sustainability of development.

This is why the book approaches the Second Republic through both **state-level transformation and citizen-level experience**. Government policy represents one side of the development equation; social outcomes represent the other. The historical record must therefore consider not only what the government intended to achieve but also how citizens, businesses, farmers, workers, young people, women, rural communities and other social groups experienced the transformation.

The role of young people is particularly important. Zimbabwe's future will ultimately be determined by generations who did not participate in the liberation struggle but inherited its political, economic and constitutional legacy. The younger generation therefore provides a crucial test of whether liberation history has been successfully translated into contemporary opportunity. Education, entrepreneurship, technology, employment, political participation and access to economic resources are central to determining whether young Zimbabweans perceive the national project as one in which they have a meaningful stake.

Women likewise occupy an important place in the development narrative. National transformation cannot be sustainable when half of the population remains structurally excluded

from economic and political opportunity. Women's empowerment must therefore be understood not merely as a question of representation but as an economic, social and institutional imperative involving education, entrepreneurship, employment, property rights, political participation and access to resources.

The rural dimension of development is equally important. Zimbabwe's national transformation cannot be measured exclusively through developments in Harare and other major urban centres. Rural communities constitute a substantial part of the country's population and remain central to agriculture, natural-resource production and national social life. Rural roads, irrigation, schools, clinics, electricity, telecommunications, markets and water infrastructure therefore have profound implications for inclusive development.

At the governance level, the Second Republic raises equally important questions. Development requires effective public institutions, predictable laws, accountable administration and citizen confidence. Constitutional governance provides the framework through which political authority is exercised and limited. Electoral processes, public administration, institutional accountability and citizen participation therefore remain important components of the national development debate.

A comprehensive assessment of Mnangagwa's legacy must consequently acknowledge both **achievements and unresolved challenges**. Economic headwinds, inflation, currency reforms, governance debates, electoral controversies, international relations, public-administration difficulties and social pressures form part of the historical record. These issues cannot simply be excluded because they complicate a positive narrative. On the contrary, they make the examination of the Second Republic more intellectually meaningful.

History is strongest when it accommodates complexity. Political leaders are neither entirely defined by achievements nor exclusively by failures. Governments operate within constraints, inherit problems from previous periods, make policy choices, respond to crises and produce consequences that may differ from their original intentions. A serious historical work must therefore examine the interaction between leadership, institutions, circumstances and outcomes.

This book is consequently intended to contribute to the broader intellectual debate about **African leadership in the post-liberation era**. Across the continent, a generation of leaders who participated directly or indirectly in liberation struggles has confronted a difficult question: how should the ideals of liberation be translated into governance in an era dominated by globalisation, technological transformation, climate change, demographic pressure, geopolitical competition and economic interdependence?

Mnangagwa's presidency provides one case study within this broader African question. His leadership emerged from a liberation movement whose political identity was formed during the struggle against colonial rule. His administration has therefore had to reconcile historical commitments to sovereignty, nationalism and liberation with the demands of contemporary economic competitiveness, international investment, technological transformation and global diplomacy.

The idea of **African leadership** must consequently evolve beyond the politics of independence. The central challenge of the contemporary African state is no longer simply to remove colonial political authority. It is to build institutions capable of delivering prosperity, justice, security and dignity. The contemporary meaning of liberation must therefore include economic independence, technological sovereignty, food security, human-capital development, industrialisation and institutional strength.

This broader interpretation of liberation legacy forms one of the central arguments of this book. The legacy of the liberation struggle should not be understood only as a historical memory. It should also be understood as an unfinished developmental project. Political independence established the foundation; subsequent generations must determine how that foundation is developed.

From this perspective, Mnangagwa's historical significance will ultimately be judged not simply by the political circumstances through which he assumed office, but by the durability of the institutions, economic systems, infrastructure and developmental capacities established during his presidency. A legacy is not created by political declarations alone. It is created by what remains after a leader's tenure has ended.

This raises a fundamental question that runs throughout this book: **What will remain of the Second Republic when the political circumstances of the period have passed?** Will Zimbabwe possess stronger institutions? Will its economy be more diversified? Will agricultural productivity be more resilient? Will infrastructure support sustained industrialisation? Will young people have greater economic opportunities? Will healthcare and education have improved? Will the country possess stronger international partnerships? Will the principles of constitutional governance become more deeply institutionalised? And, perhaps most importantly, will future generations regard the period as a decisive stage in Zimbabwe's long journey from political liberation toward comprehensive national development?

These questions require a historical perspective that extends beyond the immediate political moment. The period from 2017 to 2030 should therefore be considered as part of a longer national trajectory. The decisions made during this period may influence Zimbabwe's economic and political direction for decades. Infrastructure constructed today may serve generations. Universities and innovation centres may create knowledge long after current political debates have disappeared. Industrial investments may determine future employment patterns. Agricultural reforms may influence national food security for decades. Diplomatic partnerships may reshape Zimbabwe's position within the global economy.

The book therefore moves from history to policy, from policy to implementation, and from implementation to legacy. It examines the historical foundations of Mnangagwa's political identity; the transition toward the Second Republic; economic transformation; agricultural development; infrastructure; education and human capital; healthcare; industrialisation and mining; foreign policy and re-engagement; digital transformation; leadership and governance; Vision 2030; the achievements of the Second Republic; its challenges; and finally the question of legacy.

The purpose is not merely to document events. It is to interpret them.

At its deepest level, this book asks what Zimbabwe's political history means for the country's future. It asks whether the aspirations of the liberation generation can be reconciled with the demands of a new technological and economic age. It asks whether sovereignty can be strengthened through productive economic capacity. It asks whether infrastructure and industrialisation can create a more inclusive economy. It asks whether national development can proceed alongside institutional accountability and constitutional governance. It asks whether the Second Republic can successfully transform a historical liberation inheritance into a modern developmental state.

The answers to these questions will not be determined by political rhetoric alone. They will ultimately be determined by history itself—by measurable outcomes, institutional durability, economic resilience, citizen experience and the judgement of future generations.

The period from 2017 to 2030 is therefore more than a chapter in the biography of one political leader. It is a chapter in the continuing biography of Zimbabwe.

Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa stands within that history as a liberation-era political figure who became the central architect and political leader of the Second Republic. His presidency represents an attempt to reinterpret the liberation inheritance within the realities of contemporary Zimbabwe. Whether that attempt ultimately constitutes a decisive transformation, an extension of earlier traditions, or a complex combination of both will remain a subject of historical and scholarly debate.

What is beyond dispute is that the Second Republic has placed questions of sovereignty, development, economic transformation, infrastructure, industrialisation, agricultural productivity, digital modernisation, international re-engagement and Vision 2030 firmly at the centre of Zimbabwe's national conversation.

This book therefore invites the reader to examine that conversation critically, historically and intellectually.

It is ultimately a study of **leadership, liberation, development and national destiny**.

It is an examination of how the ideals of yesterday confront the realities of today.

And it is an inquiry into whether Zimbabwe can transform the inheritance of its liberation struggle into a sustainable foundation for the generations yet to come.

ABSTRACT

This book provides a comprehensive examination of the political leadership, governance philosophy, economic transformation agenda, and evolving national legacy of **Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa**, with particular attention to Zimbabwe's Second Republic and its development trajectory from 2017 towards the national aspiration of achieving an upper-middle-income economy by 2030. It situates Mnangagwa's presidency within the broader historical context of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, African nationalism, post-independence state-building, and the continuing search for sustainable economic and political development. The study examines how the Second Republic sought to distinguish itself through institutional reform, economic recovery, infrastructure development, agricultural transformation, industrialisation, international re-engagement, digitalisation, and investment promotion.

Particular attention is given to the government's development philosophy encapsulated in the principle that "**Zimbabwe is Open for Business**", alongside the broader objectives of Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy frameworks. The book analyses economic reforms, mining expansion, manufacturing revival, agricultural mechanisation, irrigation development, energy projects, road rehabilitation, airport modernisation, border infrastructure, urban development, health-sector transformation, education and human-capital development, and the expansion of digital technologies. It further considers initiatives directed towards rural development, youth empowerment, women's empowerment, climate resilience, innovation, and the modernisation of public infrastructure. These areas are examined not merely as individual government programmes but as interconnected components of a broader attempt to restructure Zimbabwe's economy and reposition the country within regional and international markets.

The study also explores Mnangagwa's foreign-policy approach, particularly the policy of engagement and re-engagement with the international community. It examines Zimbabwe's relations with the Southern African Development Community, the African Union, China, Russia, the European Union, and emerging international economic partnerships, including BRICS-related opportunities. Within this context, the book considers the relationship between diplomacy, international investment, sanctions, economic sovereignty, regional integration, and Zimbabwe's efforts to improve its international standing. It argues that foreign policy under the Second Republic cannot be understood separately from the country's economic-development ambitions, because international relations, investment attraction, trade, technological cooperation, and access to global markets have increasingly become central to national development.

At the same time, the book does not present the Second Republic exclusively through the lens of achievement. It critically examines the economic and political challenges that have accompanied the administration, including inflationary pressures, currency instability, economic inequality, unemployment, public-sector capacity constraints, governance debates, electoral controversies, sanctions, institutional challenges, and continuing questions concerning constitutionalism and democratic accountability. By acknowledging these difficulties, the study seeks to provide a

balanced assessment of the opportunities and limitations associated with Zimbabwe's post-2017 development trajectory. It recognises that national transformation is neither linear nor automatic and that the sustainability of development depends upon strong institutions, effective public administration, policy consistency, social inclusion, citizen participation, and confidence in the rule of law.

The book further investigates the concept of leadership legacy. It asks how Mnangagwa's presidency may ultimately be evaluated within Zimbabwe's political history and how his administration's policies could influence future generations. The analysis considers liberation heritage, national unity, patriotism, constitutional governance, peace, economic sovereignty, infrastructure development, human-capital investment, industrialisation, technological advancement, and the long-term implications of Vision 2030. It therefore moves beyond a simple assessment of political personalities and considers the broader institutional, economic, and developmental consequences of the Second Republic.

Ultimately, this work presents the Mnangagwa era as an important period in Zimbabwe's continuing national transformation. It argues that the significance of the Second Republic will depend not only upon the projects initiated or policies announced during the period, but also upon whether those initiatives produce durable institutions, sustainable economic growth, improved living standards, expanded opportunities, and a stronger foundation for future generations. The book consequently contributes to the study of contemporary Zimbabwean politics and development by bringing together questions of leadership, governance, economics, diplomacy, infrastructure, human development, and national identity. It offers scholars, policymakers, students, researchers, political practitioners, and general readers a structured framework through which to understand the aspirations, achievements, contradictions, challenges, and potential legacy of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa and the Second Republic.

Chapter One

The Foundations of a Revolutionary

The Making of Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa

Introduction

The history of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle is inseparable from the stories of men and women whose lives became intertwined with the destiny of their nation. Among these figures stands Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, a statesman whose political journey spans the colonial period, the armed struggle for independence, the formative years of nation-building, and the modernization agenda of the Second Republic. His life reflects the evolution of Zimbabwe itself—from colonial domination and armed resistance to independence, governance, economic reform, and regional diplomacy.

Understanding Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa requires more than examining his years in government or his leadership of the Second Republic. It requires tracing the roots of his political consciousness to his earliest years, when family values, traditional leadership, African identity, and the harsh realities of colonial rule shaped a young boy who would later become one of Zimbabwe's most enduring political figures.

Like many leaders who emerged from Africa's liberation movements, Mnangagwa's formative years were deeply influenced by the social, political, and economic conditions of colonial Southern Rhodesia. His upbringing exposed him to inequality, racial discrimination, and the aspirations of African communities yearning for dignity and self-rule. These experiences cultivated resilience, discipline, and a profound commitment to national liberation.

This chapter explores the historical environment into which Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa was born, the influence of his family, his childhood experiences, his early education, the awakening of his political consciousness, and the impact of African nationalism on his worldview. Together, these elements reveal the foundations upon which his revolutionary character was built.

Family Background

Every national leader is, to some extent, a product of the family and society that nurtured them. Before Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa became a freedom fighter, government minister, Vice President, and eventually President of Zimbabwe, he was a son raised within a traditional African family whose values emphasized discipline, respect, resilience, and communal

responsibility. These foundational principles would remain evident throughout his political career.

Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa was born on **15 September 1942** in Shabani (now Zvishavane), Southern Rhodesia. His birth occurred during a period when the British colonial administration exercised extensive political and economic control over the territory. African communities were largely excluded from meaningful participation in governance, while access to education, land ownership, and economic opportunities was severely constrained by racially discriminatory policies.

His parents belonged to the Karanga people, one of the principal groups within the broader Shona nation. The Karanga possess a rich cultural heritage characterized by strong communal bonds, respect for elders, reverence for traditional leadership, and a deep sense of responsibility toward family and community. These cultural traditions instilled values of perseverance, courage, humility, and loyalty—qualities that would later become closely associated with Mnangagwa's public life.

Like many African families of the era, the Mnangagwa household faced the challenges of colonial dispossession. Land policies implemented by the colonial government displaced numerous indigenous families from fertile agricultural areas into overcrowded reserves. These measures disrupted traditional livelihoods and reinforced economic inequalities that became a significant source of African political grievances throughout the twentieth century.

Within the household, education was regarded not merely as a means of personal advancement but as an instrument of collective empowerment. Parents encouraged diligence, discipline, and moral integrity, believing that knowledge could equip future generations to confront the injustices of colonial society. Such attitudes reflected broader aspirations among African families, who increasingly recognized education as a pathway to liberation and self-determination.

Religious influences also contributed to the moral formation of young Emerson. Christianity, which had become widespread through missionary activity, coexisted with enduring African cultural traditions. Respect for honesty, service, compassion, and accountability was reinforced alongside traditional values emphasizing communal solidarity and reverence for ancestral heritage. This dual influence produced a balanced moral framework that shaped his understanding of leadership and public responsibility.

The broader family environment exposed Mnangagwa to discussions about colonial governance and the hardships experienced by African communities. Conversations among elders frequently revolved around land dispossession, racial discrimination, labor exploitation, and the limited opportunities available to Africans. Although he was still a child, these discussions nurtured an early awareness that political power determined the welfare of ordinary citizens.

Economic hardship also played an important role in shaping the family's outlook. Like many African households under colonial administration, resources were limited, and opportunities for advancement were constrained by institutional inequalities. Such circumstances encouraged self-

reliance, perseverance, and disciplined work—qualities that became central to Mnangagwa's personal character.

Family elders emphasized respect for authority while simultaneously teaching the importance of defending justice and dignity. This balance between discipline and courage became a defining feature of his later leadership style. Throughout his political career, he frequently demonstrated an appreciation for structured institutions while advocating national sovereignty and political independence.

The experiences of the Mnangagwa family reflected those of countless African households living under colonial rule. Their story was not unique in terms of hardship, but it was distinctive in the manner in which these experiences cultivated a future revolutionary leader. The intersection of cultural heritage, economic struggle, moral education, and political awareness created fertile ground for the emergence of a young man who would eventually dedicate his life to Zimbabwe's liberation.

As historians have often observed, revolutions rarely begin on battlefields; they begin in homes where children learn to question injustice, value dignity, and believe that change is possible. For Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, the family served as the first institution of leadership, discipline, and patriotism. It laid the intellectual and moral foundations upon which his later political convictions would be built.

The values inherited from his family remained visible throughout the various stages of his public life. Whether serving as a liberation fighter, cabinet minister, vice president, or president, Mnangagwa consistently emphasized patriotism, national unity, hard work, and the importance of safeguarding Zimbabwe's sovereignty. While these principles evolved in response to changing political realities, their roots can be traced to the formative environment of his childhood.

The family background of Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa therefore represents more than a biographical detail; it provides essential insight into the development of one of Zimbabwe's most influential political figures. Understanding these origins enables readers to appreciate how personal history and national history often converge in shaping transformative leaders.

Political Awakening

The political awakening of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa cannot be understood without appreciating the broader historical context in which he came of age. Born in 1942, his formative years coincided with one of the most turbulent periods in Zimbabwean history. Then known as Southern Rhodesia, the country was firmly under British colonial rule, characterized by racial segregation, political exclusion, and the systematic marginalization of the African majority. Land ownership, education, employment opportunities, and political participation were reserved largely for the white minority, while Africans were subjected to discriminatory laws that limited their economic advancement and human dignity. Growing up within this environment exposed the young Mnangagwa to the harsh realities of colonial domination and planted the earliest seeds of political consciousness.

Like many young Africans of his generation, Mnangagwa witnessed firsthand the daily inequalities that defined colonial society. African families endured restrictions on movement, unequal access to education, and limited opportunities for social mobility. The colonial administration maintained its authority through legislation, policing, and economic control, creating widespread frustration among indigenous communities. These experiences cultivated in many young Zimbabweans a deep sense of injustice and a determination to challenge the colonial order. For Mnangagwa, politics was not initially an abstract academic discipline but a lived reality that directly affected the lives of ordinary people around him.

The influence of family also played an important role in shaping his political outlook. His parents, like many African parents of the era, emphasized the importance of dignity, resilience, and education despite the structural barriers imposed by colonial rule. Conversations within the family and the community frequently revolved around land dispossession, racial discrimination, and the aspirations of African self-rule. These discussions introduced Mnangagwa to the growing nationalist discourse that was spreading across Southern Africa during the 1950s and early 1960s.

His relocation to Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia) during his youth proved to be a defining chapter in his political development. Zambia was itself experiencing an intense struggle for independence under the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda and the United National Independence Party (UNIP). The atmosphere was charged with political activism, public rallies, and widespread calls for African liberation. Living in this environment broadened Mnangagwa's political horizons, exposing him to organized nationalist movements that were challenging colonial governments throughout the region.

Northern Rhodesia became a political classroom where young Africans debated questions of freedom, justice, self-government, and national identity. Mnangagwa encountered students, activists, trade unionists, and community leaders who were actively involved in liberation politics. These interactions deepened his appreciation of political organization and collective action. They also reinforced the conviction that colonial rule was neither permanent nor invincible.

Education itself became an avenue for political consciousness. Schools and colleges across Southern Africa increasingly served as incubators for nationalist thought. Young intellectuals discussed the writings of African leaders, anti-colonial philosophers, and liberation theorists who argued that Africans possessed the inherent right to govern themselves. Students challenged colonial narratives that portrayed African societies as incapable of self-rule. Mnangagwa absorbed these ideas during a period when political education and activism often went hand in hand.

The influence of Pan-African thought was equally significant. Throughout Africa, independence movements were gathering momentum. Ghana had gained independence under Kwame Nkrumah in 1957, inspiring liberation movements across the continent. Similar struggles unfolded in Algeria, Kenya, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, and elsewhere. The message was unmistakable: colonialism could be defeated through determined political mobilization. These

continental developments strengthened the resolve of young Zimbabwean nationalists, including Mnangagwa.

As nationalist organizations emerged in Southern Rhodesia, many young activists sought ways to contribute to the liberation struggle. Political organizations such as the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC), the National Democratic Party (NDP), and later the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) mobilized Africans against colonial rule. Although colonial authorities frequently banned these organizations, each prohibition only intensified nationalist determination. The persistence of African political movements demonstrated that the struggle for majority rule had become irreversible.

Mnangagwa's growing political awareness eventually translated into active participation. As a young man, he became associated with nationalist networks committed to ending colonial rule. His activism reflected the aspirations of an entire generation that believed political independence was essential for restoring African dignity and sovereignty. Like many of his contemporaries, he concluded that constitutional appeals alone were unlikely to persuade the colonial regime to relinquish power.

The escalating repression by the Rhodesian government further radicalized many nationalist youths. Political leaders were arrested, organizations banned, demonstrations violently dispersed, and emergency regulations imposed. Peaceful avenues for political participation became increasingly restricted. These developments convinced many liberation activists that more decisive methods of resistance would ultimately become necessary. Mnangagwa's political thinking evolved within this climate of mounting confrontation between African nationalism and colonial authority.

His association with fellow nationalist youth also proved influential. Across schools, communities, and political gatherings, young activists inspired one another through discussions about liberation, sacrifice, and national service. These networks fostered strong bonds of solidarity and collective purpose. Many of those who would later become prominent figures in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle first met during this period of political mobilization.

Another defining aspect of Mnangagwa's political awakening was his appreciation of discipline and organization. Liberation movements required secrecy, coordination, and strategic planning to survive under colonial surveillance. Activists learned the importance of commitment, loyalty, and resilience. These principles would later characterize Mnangagwa's reputation as a disciplined cadre within the liberation movement.

The ideological foundations of his political beliefs also became clearer during this period. Nationalism for Mnangagwa was closely linked to the restoration of African political authority, economic justice, and national sovereignty. The liberation struggle was viewed not simply as a campaign for constitutional reform but as a broader effort to reclaim land, dignity, and self-determination for the Zimbabwean people.

Regional solidarity further reinforced these convictions. Liberation movements throughout Southern Africa increasingly cooperated across borders. Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and

other independent African states became important centers for political organization and military training. The regional nature of the struggle strengthened the belief that the liberation of Zimbabwe formed part of a wider African project to dismantle colonialism and racial domination across the continent.

By the early 1960s, Mnangagwa had firmly embraced nationalist politics. His political awakening had progressed from youthful awareness of injustice to active commitment to Zimbabwe's liberation movement. The combination of personal experience, regional developments, educational influence, Pan-African ideology, and colonial repression transformed him into one of many young Africans prepared to dedicate their lives to the struggle for independence.

This period laid the foundation for Mnangagwa's subsequent role in Zimbabwe's liberation movement. The ideals forged during his political awakening—national sovereignty, disciplined organization, resilience, and commitment to majority rule—would continue to shape his contributions throughout the liberation struggle and, later, his career in independent Zimbabwe. Regardless of differing historical interpretations regarding individual actors or later political developments, scholars generally agree that the political awakening of Zimbabwe's nationalist generation represented a pivotal chapter in the country's journey from colonial rule to independence.

Influence of African Nationalism

The history of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle cannot be fully understood without appreciating the powerful intellectual and political currents of African nationalism that swept across the continent during the twentieth century. African nationalism was more than a political movement seeking the end of colonial rule; it represented a profound awakening of African consciousness, dignity, and self-determination. It challenged the legitimacy of colonial domination while inspiring millions of Africans to reclaim sovereignty over their lands, resources, cultures, and political destinies. Like many young African revolutionaries of his generation, Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa emerged within this environment of continental political awakening. His revolutionary ideology developed alongside the rise of Pan-African thought, the victories of African liberation movements, and the determined leadership of African nationalist pioneers whose ideas transformed the political landscape of the continent.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Africa experienced one of the greatest waves of political transformation in modern history. Colonial empires that had dominated the continent for generations began to collapse as nationalist movements mobilized ordinary Africans against foreign rule. Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African nation to attain independence in 1957 under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, an event that reverberated across the continent. Ghana's independence demonstrated that colonial domination was neither permanent nor invincible. For young Zimbabwean nationalists, including Mnangagwa, Ghana represented tangible proof that African liberation could be achieved through disciplined political organization, ideological commitment, and popular mobilization.

Kwame Nkrumah's philosophy of Pan-Africanism profoundly influenced liberation movements throughout Southern Africa. Nkrumah believed that the independence of one African nation was incomplete unless all African peoples were liberated from colonial domination. His famous declaration that "the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked to the total liberation of Africa" became a rallying call for anti-colonial activists across the continent. This philosophy encouraged Zimbabwean liberation movements to view their struggle not as an isolated national campaign but as part of a broader continental revolution aimed at ending colonialism, racism, and imperialism throughout Africa. Mnangagwa's political worldview increasingly reflected this Pan-African perspective, recognizing Zimbabwe's liberation as inseparable from the liberation of Southern Africa as a whole.

Nkrumah also advocated the political and economic unity of Africa, warning that fragmented African states would remain vulnerable to external domination even after achieving political independence. Although the vision of a United States of Africa remained unrealized, its underlying principles significantly influenced the strategic thinking of many liberation leaders. Mnangagwa belonged to a generation that viewed regional solidarity as essential to defeating colonial regimes. Cooperation between liberation movements in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia became both a military necessity and an ideological expression of Pan-African unity.

Another influential figure whose philosophy resonated throughout Southern Africa was Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania. Nyerere's commitment to African liberation extended far beyond his own country's independence. Tanzania became one of the principal bases for Southern African liberation movements, providing military training facilities, diplomatic support, and political sanctuary for freedom fighters from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique. Young Zimbabwean revolutionaries, including Mnangagwa and many of his contemporaries, benefited directly or indirectly from Tanzania's unwavering commitment to continental liberation.

Nyerere's philosophy of *Ujamaa*, grounded in African communal values, emphasized self-reliance, collective responsibility, social justice, and national unity. Although Zimbabwe would later adopt its own distinct economic and political trajectory, Nyerere's emphasis on discipline, patriotism, and national cohesion influenced many liberation leaders. His insistence that independence required both political sovereignty and economic transformation reinforced the belief that the struggle extended beyond military victory to encompass nation-building and socioeconomic development.

Equally significant was the influence of Kenneth Kaunda, the founding President of Zambia. Zambia occupied a strategic geographical position bordering Rhodesia, making it an indispensable rear base for Zimbabwean liberation forces. Kaunda consistently supported Zimbabwe's nationalist movements despite repeated military incursions by the Rhodesian regime into Zambian territory. His government's willingness to bear enormous economic and security costs demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to African solidarity.

Kaunda's philosophy of "Zambian Humanism" emphasized human dignity, social justice, moral leadership, and peaceful coexistence. While Zimbabwe's liberation struggle necessarily involved

armed resistance, Kaunda's moral vision reinforced the principle that the ultimate objective of liberation was the restoration of human dignity rather than vengeance. Mnangagwa and other liberation leaders operated within a regional environment where political leadership was increasingly defined by service to national liberation rather than personal ambition.

The martyrdom of Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of the independent Congo, profoundly shaped African political consciousness. Lumumba became an enduring symbol of resistance against imperial intervention and foreign exploitation of African resources. His assassination in 1961 shocked liberation movements across the continent and reinforced the belief that external powers would resist genuine African sovereignty through both overt and covert means. For many young revolutionaries, Lumumba's fate illustrated the necessity of vigilance, political unity, and strong national institutions capable of defending newly independent states.

Lumumba's uncompromising nationalism encouraged liberation movements to remain cautious of external political interference. His commitment to preserving the sovereignty of the Congo inspired many African revolutionaries to prioritize national independence over external political influence. Mnangagwa's later emphasis on sovereignty, national ownership of resources, and resistance to external political pressure reflected themes that had become deeply embedded within African nationalist discourse during the liberation era.

The influence of Amílcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau also extended beyond Lusophone Africa. Cabral argued that liberation required not only military victory but also the recovery of African culture and historical identity. He believed colonialism sought to dominate both territory and consciousness, making cultural liberation an essential component of political freedom. This understanding resonated strongly with Zimbabwean nationalists, who viewed the liberation struggle as a process of restoring African identity after decades of racial domination under colonial rule.

Cabral's emphasis on political education became an important feature of liberation movements throughout Southern Africa. Guerrilla fighters were expected to become political educators as well as military combatants. The liberation struggle therefore became a school of political consciousness, where recruits studied African history, colonialism, revolutionary ideology, and national identity. Mnangagwa's own political development occurred within this educational tradition, where military discipline and ideological formation were regarded as inseparable.

The revolutionary example of Ahmed Ben Bella and the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) provided another important source of inspiration. Algeria's successful war against French colonial rule demonstrated that determined guerrilla warfare could overcome even one of Europe's most powerful military forces. The Algerian Revolution became a strategic model studied by liberation movements across Africa, including those operating in Southern Rhodesia. Zimbabwean nationalists carefully examined Algeria's combination of military organization, political mobilization, diplomatic engagement, and international solidarity.

Similarly, the armed struggles in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau illustrated the growing momentum of African liberation. The victories of the Popular Movement for the

Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), and other nationalist organizations convinced Zimbabwean revolutionaries that colonialism was entering its final stages. Each liberation victory strengthened morale among Zimbabwean fighters and demonstrated that sustained resistance could ultimately achieve national independence.

Among Southern African revolutionaries, Samora Machel of Mozambique exercised particularly significant influence. Following Mozambique's independence in 1975, FRELIMO permitted Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) forces to establish operational bases inside Mozambique. This dramatically altered the military balance in Zimbabwe's liberation war by providing secure rear bases for guerrilla operations. Although Mnangagwa was associated primarily with the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) during certain stages of the struggle before later assuming broader political responsibilities within ZANU, Mozambique's liberation fundamentally transformed the strategic environment for Zimbabwe's nationalist movements and intensified pressure on the Rhodesian government.

The Frontline States—including Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana, and later Angola—collectively demonstrated the practical application of Pan-African solidarity. These countries accepted enormous military, economic, and diplomatic risks by hosting liberation movements despite repeated attacks from colonial regimes. Their cooperation reflected a shared conviction that the freedom of one African nation depended upon the liberation of all. Mnangagwa's generation therefore developed within a regional political culture where solidarity was regarded as both a moral obligation and a strategic necessity.

The establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 institutionalized continental support for liberation struggles. Through its Liberation Committee, the OAU coordinated diplomatic backing, military assistance, financial support, and international advocacy for nationalist movements fighting colonialism and minority rule. Zimbabwe's liberation organizations benefited significantly from this continental framework, which legitimized their struggle within international diplomacy while strengthening their military capabilities.

African nationalism also emphasized the recovery of African historical agency. Colonial ideology had portrayed Africans as incapable of governing themselves, while nationalist leaders challenged these assumptions by asserting Africa's rich civilizations, intellectual traditions, and political institutions. This restoration of historical confidence shaped the identity of liberation movements, encouraging leaders like Mnangagwa to view Zimbabwe's struggle not merely as resistance to oppression but as the restoration of legitimate African sovereignty.

The influence of Pan-African intellectuals such as George Padmore, Frantz Fanon, and W.E.B. Du Bois further enriched the ideological foundations of African nationalism. Fanon's analysis of colonial violence, national consciousness, and revolutionary transformation became particularly influential among liberation movements engaged in armed struggle. His argument that colonial domination could not always be dismantled through peaceful means resonated with many Zimbabwean nationalists confronting an increasingly repressive Rhodesian state. These writings contributed to a broader intellectual environment in which armed resistance was viewed by many

liberation movements as a response to entrenched systems that denied peaceful avenues for political change.

African nationalism ultimately provided Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa with a continental framework through which Zimbabwe's liberation struggle could be understood. It instilled principles of sovereignty, self-determination, anti-colonial resistance, Pan-African solidarity, and national unity that would continue to influence his political outlook long after independence. The philosophies of Nkrumah, Nyerere, Kaunda, Lumumba, Cabral, Machel, and numerous other African nationalists formed an intellectual inheritance that shaped an entire generation of liberation leaders. Their collective vision transformed the struggle for Zimbabwe's independence into part of Africa's broader quest for freedom, dignity, and self-government.

As the liberation struggle intensified during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, these ideological foundations would increasingly translate into practical military organization, diplomatic engagement, and political leadership. For Mnangagwa, African nationalism was not simply an academic doctrine but a guiding philosophy that informed his participation in one of the most consequential chapters of Zimbabwe's modern history.

The Road to Armed Struggle: Joining the Liberation Movement (1963–1965)

The period between 1963 and 1965 marked one of the most decisive turning points in the life of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. It was during these formative years that a politically conscious young activist transformed into a committed revolutionary prepared to sacrifice his freedom—and even his life—for the liberation of Zimbabwe. His transition from student activism to armed resistance was neither accidental nor impulsive. Rather, it was the culmination of years of political awakening, exposure to African nationalism, and direct experience of colonial repression. For Mnangagwa, the decision to join the liberation struggle represented a conscious rejection of injustice and a deliberate embrace of revolutionary responsibility. It reflected the convictions of a generation that had concluded that constitutional appeals, petitions, and peaceful demonstrations alone could not dismantle Rhodesia's entrenched system of racial domination.

By the early 1960s, the political climate throughout Southern Africa had become increasingly volatile. Across the continent, colonial rule was collapsing as African nationalist movements achieved remarkable victories. Ghana had attained independence under Kwame Nkrumah in 1957, Tanganyika under Julius Nyerere in 1961, Zambia under Kenneth Kaunda in 1964, and Malawi under Hastings Banda the same year. These victories inspired young nationalists throughout the region, demonstrating that colonial domination was not permanent but could be defeated through determined political organisation and popular mobilisation. For Zimbabwean nationalists living under Ian Smith's white minority government, however, the situation remained particularly oppressive. Constitutional negotiations repeatedly failed to produce meaningful political reform, convincing many that armed resistance had become an unavoidable necessity.

Mnangagwa belonged to a generation profoundly influenced by this continental wave of liberation. The victories achieved elsewhere in Africa reinforced his conviction that Zimbabwe's freedom could not be postponed indefinitely. Every newly independent African nation

strengthened the belief that colonial rule represented an historical anomaly rather than an irreversible political reality. African nationalism had ceased to be merely an intellectual movement; it had become a practical programme of revolutionary action. Young activists increasingly believed that Zimbabwe's destiny lay not in appealing to colonial authorities but in overthrowing colonial domination through organised struggle.

His political involvement deepened considerably following the fragmentation of Zimbabwe's nationalist movement. Internal disagreements within the nationalist leadership culminated in the formation of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in August 1963. While both ZAPU and the newly established ZANU sought majority rule and national independence, ZANU adopted a more militant orientation that increasingly embraced armed resistance as an indispensable strategy for liberation. The emergence of ZANU represented more than an organisational split; it reflected competing visions concerning the pace, methods, and leadership of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle.

Mnangagwa identified strongly with ZANU's revolutionary philosophy. The organisation appealed particularly to younger nationalists who believed that prolonged constitutional negotiations had achieved little against an uncompromising colonial regime. ZANU's commitment to mass mobilisation, political education, and military preparedness resonated with Mnangagwa's growing conviction that meaningful political change demanded revolutionary commitment rather than cautious reform. His decision to join ZANU therefore reflected both ideological agreement and strategic calculation.

The young revolutionary quickly immersed himself in the demanding work of political organisation. Recruitment, mobilisation, and political education became central components of his early responsibilities. Like many emerging nationalist leaders, Mnangagwa understood that successful liberation movements depended not only upon military operations but also upon cultivating political consciousness among ordinary Africans. Rural communities, workers, students, and traditional leaders all had to appreciate the objectives of the liberation struggle if the movement was to secure enduring popular support.

Political education occupied a central place within ZANU's revolutionary strategy. Inspired by liberation movements elsewhere in Africa, the organisation sought to produce disciplined cadres capable of combining ideological conviction with organisational effectiveness. Young recruits studied African history, anti-colonial theory, Pan-African philosophy, and revolutionary experiences from Algeria, China, Cuba, and Vietnam. These educational programmes aimed to cultivate disciplined revolutionaries rather than merely armed combatants. Mnangagwa absorbed these lessons enthusiastically, developing a reputation for intellectual discipline, organisational efficiency, and unwavering commitment to the nationalist cause.

Equally important was the cultivation of personal discipline. Revolutionary training demanded secrecy, endurance, patience, and absolute commitment. Recruits were taught to withstand hardship, maintain operational security, and subordinate personal interests to collective objectives. These principles would later become defining characteristics of Mnangagwa's political style. Even during his youth, colleagues observed qualities of restraint, determination, and careful calculation that distinguished him from many of his contemporaries.

As political repression intensified, ZANU increasingly recognised that military preparation could no longer be delayed. Selected young nationalists were identified for specialised training outside Rhodesia. The liberation struggle increasingly depended upon establishing military cadres capable of confronting one of Africa's best-equipped colonial security establishments. Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Algeria, China, Egypt, and other sympathetic states became important centres for political and military instruction. Although the large-scale deployment of trained guerrillas would occur later, the foundations of Zimbabwe's armed struggle were already being laid during this period.

Mnangagwa emerged as one of the young nationalists entrusted with expanding the movement's underground organisational capacity. His reliability, discretion, and commitment earned him increasing responsibilities despite his youth. Senior leaders recognised that successful revolutionary movements required disciplined organisers capable of operating under conditions of intense surveillance and constant danger. Every meeting, every journey, and every communication carried considerable personal risk as Rhodesian security forces intensified their campaign against nationalist organisations.

One of the most significant developments associated with this period was the formation of the group that became widely known as the **Crocodile Gang**. Emerging in the mid-1960s, the group represented one of the earliest organised armed units associated with ZANU's military strategy inside Rhodesia. Its members viewed themselves as pioneers of armed resistance, determined to demonstrate that the colonial regime was neither invincible nor immune from revolutionary action. The choice of the crocodile as a symbol reflected qualities admired within revolutionary culture: patience, resilience, stealth, adaptability, and decisive action when opportunities emerged.

Although historical accounts differ regarding the precise organisational structure and operational responsibilities of every member, the Crocodile Gang occupies an important place in Zimbabwe's liberation history as one of the earliest manifestations of organised armed resistance. The group's activities symbolised the transition from political protest to armed struggle. Rather than waiting indefinitely for constitutional reform, these young revolutionaries sought to establish the principle that colonial authority could be actively challenged through organised resistance.

Participation in underground revolutionary activity demanded extraordinary courage. Members faced constant surveillance, infiltration, arrest, torture, and execution. The Rhodesian security apparatus possessed extensive intelligence capabilities and devoted substantial resources to dismantling nationalist networks. Operating under such conditions required exceptional discipline and secrecy. Every operational decision carried potentially fatal consequences, both for individual cadres and for the broader liberation movement.

For Mnangagwa, involvement in underground revolutionary structures reinforced lessons that would remain central throughout his political career. Successful revolutionary organisation required careful planning, patience, strategic thinking, and collective discipline. Impulsive action could jeopardise entire networks. Consequently, revolutionaries learned to value intelligence gathering, operational security, and calculated decision-making over emotional responses. These

experiences contributed significantly to Mnangagwa's reputation for strategic patience and meticulous planning in later decades.

The escalation of revolutionary activity inevitably provoked increasingly severe responses from the Rhodesian government. Nationalist leaders, organisers, students, trade unionists, and suspected sympathisers became targets of widespread arrests. Emergency legislation granted extensive powers to colonial security forces, enabling detention without trial, restrictions on movement, censorship, and prolonged imprisonment. The colonial administration believed that crushing nationalist leadership would eliminate resistance before it developed into a sustained armed insurgency.

Mnangagwa soon experienced the full force of colonial repression. His revolutionary activities attracted the attention of Rhodesian authorities, leading to his arrest during this critical phase of the liberation struggle. Like many nationalist activists of his generation, imprisonment became an unavoidable consequence of political commitment. Far from extinguishing revolutionary conviction, however, detention often strengthened the determination of imprisoned nationalists by exposing them directly to the coercive foundations of colonial rule.

The conditions endured by nationalist prisoners were harsh and deliberately punitive. Political detainees faced prolonged confinement, restricted communication, psychological pressure, and uncertain legal futures. Colonial authorities hoped imprisonment would discourage further political activism and isolate revolutionary leaders from their supporters. Yet prisons frequently became unexpected centres of political education where experienced nationalists exchanged ideas, analysed international developments, and refined revolutionary strategies. Imprisonment became, paradoxically, another classroom in the making of future leaders.

For the young Mnangagwa, incarceration represented a profound personal and political education. Confronting the realities of colonial justice reinforced his understanding that the Rhodesian state existed fundamentally to preserve minority rule rather than administer equal justice. Every experience within the prison system deepened his conviction that national liberation required structural transformation rather than superficial political concessions. Personal suffering became inseparable from broader national aspirations.

Historical accounts also record that because of his youth, his death sentence was commuted, sparing him execution and leading instead to imprisonment before his eventual release and deportation from Rhodesia. This episode proved to be one of the defining moments of his early revolutionary life. Confronting the possibility of death at such a young age demanded extraordinary psychological resilience. Rather than discouraging him, the experience strengthened his resolve to continue the struggle for Zimbabwe's independence.

These years also fostered enduring relationships among nationalist cadres who would later become central figures within independent Zimbabwe. Shared experiences of underground organisation, imprisonment, exile, and revolutionary sacrifice created bonds of trust that transcended ordinary political association. Such relationships would influence the leadership structures of both the liberation movement and the post-independence state for decades to come.

The liberation struggle was not only a military campaign but also the crucible within which a new political generation was forged.

The period between 1963 and 1965 therefore occupies a pivotal place in understanding Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa's political development. During these years he evolved from an idealistic nationalist into a disciplined revolutionary prepared to endure imprisonment, hardship, and personal sacrifice in pursuit of national liberation. His recruitment into ZANU, exposure to revolutionary political education, participation in underground resistance, association with the Crocodile Gang, and imprisonment under the Rhodesian regime collectively shaped the qualities that would later define his leadership: resilience, strategic calculation, organisational discipline, and unwavering commitment to Zimbabwe's sovereignty.

The road to armed struggle transformed not only Mnangagwa's individual destiny but also his historical role within Zimbabwe's liberation movement. The experiences of recruitment, clandestine organisation, military preparation, imprisonment, and revolutionary sacrifice forged a leader whose political identity became inseparable from the liberation struggle itself. These formative years laid the foundation for his subsequent military training abroad, his rise within the liberation movement, and eventually his emergence as one of the principal architects of independent Zimbabwe. The next stage of his journey would take him beyond Rhodesia's borders into the military training camps of Africa, where revolutionary conviction would be refined into the practical skills required to wage a protracted war for national liberation.

Military Training, Exile and the Liberation War (1965–1979)

The imprisonment of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa by the Rhodesian colonial administration did not diminish his revolutionary convictions. Instead, incarceration strengthened his commitment to the liberation of Zimbabwe and deepened his political consciousness. By the time he emerged from prison and subsequently left Rhodesia, he had become convinced that constitutional appeals alone could not dismantle a racial settler state sustained by military force and entrenched colonial legislation. Like many of his contemporaries within the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), Mnangagwa viewed armed struggle not as an end in itself but as an unavoidable instrument of national emancipation. His departure into exile marked the beginning of a new phase of his revolutionary life, transforming him from an underground nationalist activist into a professionally trained guerrilla cadre and eventually a member of the senior liberation leadership.

Exile became the principal theatre from which Zimbabwe's liberation struggle was organised. Following the banning of nationalist movements and the imprisonment of many political activists, neighbouring African countries increasingly became strategic rear bases for military preparation, diplomatic mobilisation, and political organisation. Tanzania under President Julius Nyerere, Zambia under President Kenneth Kaunda, and later Mozambique after its independence in 1975, provided indispensable support for Zimbabwean liberation movements. These countries offered sanctuary to thousands of young Zimbabweans who crossed borders to join the liberation struggle. For Mnangagwa, exile represented both sacrifice and opportunity: separation from

family and homeland on the one hand, and access to advanced military education, ideological development, and international revolutionary networks on the other.

Unlike many liberation fighters who received limited military orientation before deployment, Mnangagwa was selected for extensive specialised training. His political discipline, intellectual ability, organisational skills, and demonstrated courage had already distinguished him among fellow cadres. Liberation leaders recognised his potential not merely as a battlefield commander but also as a strategist capable of contributing to the long-term organisational development of the armed struggle. Consequently, he became one of several promising cadres dispatched abroad for advanced military education under the sponsorship of friendly governments supporting African liberation movements.

Military Training in Egypt

One of the earliest destinations in Mnangagwa's military education was Egypt. During the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt emerged as one of the foremost supporters of African liberation movements. Cairo had positioned itself as a centre of Pan-African solidarity, anti-colonial diplomacy, and revolutionary military assistance. Through its military academies and intelligence institutions, Egypt trained liberation fighters from Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and several other territories still under colonial domination.

Within Egypt, Mnangagwa was introduced to formal military science rather than improvised guerrilla tactics alone. His training encompassed infantry operations, military intelligence, battlefield communications, logistics, reconnaissance, weapons handling, explosives, and command structures. Egyptian instructors emphasised discipline, secrecy, planning, and the importance of integrating military campaigns with political objectives. Cadres were taught that successful revolutions depended not only upon courage but also upon superior organisation, intelligence gathering, and the ability to win the confidence of civilian populations.

Equally important was the ideological environment in which this military instruction occurred. Nasser's philosophy of Arab nationalism and anti-imperialism reinforced broader Pan-African ideals already familiar to Zimbabwean nationalists. Trainees were encouraged to understand colonialism as part of an international system of domination rather than merely a local political problem. This perspective strengthened Mnangagwa's appreciation of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle as one component of a wider continental movement seeking political sovereignty, economic independence, and the restoration of African dignity.

Egyptian military training also exposed Mnangagwa to structured command systems that later influenced organisational practices within ZANLA. The emphasis on intelligence coordination, disciplined hierarchy, operational secrecy, and careful logistical planning became characteristics frequently associated with his subsequent responsibilities during and after the liberation struggle.

Military Training in the People's Republic of China

Following his training in Egypt, Mnangagwa was among liberation cadres who benefited from military and political instruction in the People's Republic of China. During the 1960s and 1970s, China actively supported liberation movements across Africa as part of its broader international revolutionary policy. Chinese assistance extended beyond military equipment to include ideological education, political organisation, agricultural self-reliance, and guerrilla warfare doctrine.

Chinese military academies placed considerable emphasis upon the revolutionary philosophy developed during Mao Zedong's struggle against both Japanese occupation and the Chinese Nationalists. Central to this doctrine was the concept of people's war—a strategy whereby guerrilla fighters depended upon close cooperation with rural communities rather than conventional military superiority. Liberation fighters were taught that political mobilisation constituted the foundation upon which military success rested.

For Mnangagwa, this training broadened his understanding of revolutionary warfare. Instruction covered small-unit tactics, ambush techniques, sabotage operations, intelligence collection, survival skills, political education, and psychological warfare. Cadres learned how to organise clandestine networks inside occupied territories while simultaneously maintaining popular support among local populations. They were taught that every combat operation should reinforce political legitimacy rather than merely inflict military casualties upon the enemy.

Chinese instructors also stressed self-discipline, modest leadership, and collective responsibility. Liberation commanders were expected to live under conditions similar to those experienced by ordinary fighters and civilians. Such principles resonated strongly with many African liberation movements seeking to distinguish themselves morally from colonial regimes characterised by racial privilege and authoritarian rule.

The influence of Chinese revolutionary doctrine became evident in the operational philosophy later adopted by many ZANLA units operating inside Rhodesia. Guerrilla warfare increasingly focused upon integrating political education with military action, establishing liberated zones, cultivating local support, and gradually extending revolutionary influence across rural districts.

Military Training in Tanzania

Tanzania represented another critical stage in Mnangagwa's revolutionary development. Under the leadership of President Julius Nyerere, Tanzania became perhaps the most important sanctuary for Southern African liberation movements. Dar es Salaam hosted numerous liberation headquarters, military camps, diplomatic missions, and political training institutions serving organisations from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia, and Angola.

Within Tanzania, military preparation occurred alongside extensive political education. Cadres were expected not merely to become soldiers but also political organisers capable of explaining the objectives of the liberation struggle to rural communities. Courses examined African history, colonial exploitation, revolutionary organisation, leadership ethics, Pan-African cooperation, and socialist development strategies.

Training camps brought together recruits from different regions of Zimbabwe, creating national unity that transcended ethnic, linguistic, and regional identities. Shared hardship, military discipline, and common purpose fostered solidarity among cadres destined to become commanders, administrators, intelligence officers, and political commissars within the liberation movement.

Mnangagwa emerged from Tanzania with enhanced organisational capabilities and growing recognition among senior leadership. His combination of political maturity, military competence, and intellectual discipline increasingly positioned him for responsibilities extending beyond ordinary combat operations.

His Role within ZANLA and the Liberation Command Structure

Upon completion of his military education, Mnangagwa assumed increasingly significant responsibilities within the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the military wing of ZANU. Rather than serving solely as a field combatant, he became involved in organisational planning, intelligence coordination, cadre development, and command administration.

The liberation struggle required a sophisticated command structure capable of coordinating operations across multiple fronts while maintaining communication with external headquarters located in neighbouring countries. ZANLA developed departments responsible for military operations, intelligence, logistics, recruitment, political education, diplomacy, and international liaison. Success depended upon effective coordination among these various components despite constant pressure from Rhodesian security forces.

Mnangagwa's responsibilities frequently reflected his aptitude for organisation and intelligence. His legal background, analytical thinking, and disciplined approach proved valuable in planning operations, assessing security risks, maintaining internal discipline, and protecting sensitive organisational information. Within liberation movements, intelligence represented one of the most decisive factors determining operational success or failure, making such responsibilities particularly significant.

As the liberation war intensified during the 1970s, ZANLA expanded rapidly from relatively small guerrilla detachments into a much larger revolutionary army operating throughout extensive areas of rural Rhodesia. This expansion required competent administrators capable of

managing recruitment, training, logistics, communications, and strategic coordination. Mnangagwa contributed to this institutional development while continuing to support the broader military objectives of the liberation movement.

Relations with Robert Mugabe, Josiah Tongogara, Herbert Chitepo and Other Liberation Leaders

Throughout the liberation struggle, Mnangagwa worked alongside several individuals who would profoundly influence Zimbabwe's political future. Among these were Robert Gabriel Mugabe, Josiah Magama Tongogara, Herbert Wiltshire Chitepo, Leopold Takawira, Simon Muzenda, Edgar Tekere, and numerous other nationalist leaders whose collective efforts shaped both the military campaign and the diplomatic strategy leading to independence.

Robert Mugabe emerged during the liberation struggle as one of ZANU's principal political leaders. Following his release from detention and eventual assumption of party leadership, Mugabe increasingly became the international political face of ZANU. His emphasis upon political organisation, diplomatic engagement, and ideological coherence complemented the military operations being undertaken by ZANLA commanders in the field. Mnangagwa developed a close working relationship with Mugabe, characterised by mutual confidence and long-term political association that continued after independence.

Josiah Tongogara served as Commander of ZANLA and remains widely regarded as one of the foremost military strategists of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. Under his leadership, ZANLA expanded its operational capacity, improved military professionalism, and intensified guerrilla operations inside Rhodesia. Tongogara emphasised disciplined command, national unity, and strategic coordination between military and political structures. Mnangagwa's association with Tongogara exposed him to high-level military planning and reinforced the importance of integrating battlefield operations with broader political objectives.

Herbert Chitepo, ZANU's National Chairman, played a crucial role in international diplomacy, fundraising, legal advocacy, and organisational development before his assassination in Lusaka in 1975. Chitepo's death represented one of the liberation movement's greatest tragedies and generated profound internal reflection concerning organisational security and leadership cohesion. His legacy nevertheless continued to inspire cadres committed to the liberation cause.

The liberation movement was not without internal disagreements, ideological debates, and leadership tensions. Questions concerning military strategy, political authority, organisational discipline, and external alliances occasionally produced divisions among senior figures. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, the overriding objective of ending minority rule generally remained the unifying principle guiding the movement.

The Major Phases of the Second Chimurenga

The Second Chimurenga evolved through several distinct phases rather than a single continuous military campaign. During its initial stage in the mid-1960s, guerrilla operations remained relatively limited in scale, focusing primarily upon infiltration, reconnaissance, political mobilisation, and isolated engagements with Rhodesian security forces. Early military setbacks demonstrated the need for improved training, stronger logistics, and broader popular support.

The second phase witnessed significant organisational consolidation following enhanced international training and increased external assistance. Liberation movements expanded recruitment, improved military coordination, and established stronger operational links with neighbouring frontline states. Political education among rural populations intensified, laying the social foundation necessary for sustained guerrilla warfare.

A decisive turning point occurred after Mozambique achieved independence in 1975. The establishment of an independent Mozambican government dramatically altered the strategic balance by providing ZANLA with an extensive eastern operational corridor into Rhodesia. Guerrilla infiltration increased substantially, while liberated zones expanded throughout several rural districts. The Rhodesian government found itself increasingly unable to maintain effective control over large sections of the countryside.

During the late 1970s, the conflict entered its most intensive phase. Thousands of guerrilla fighters operated across multiple provinces while Rhodesian security forces conducted large-scale counterinsurgency operations supported by air power, special forces, and cross-border raids. Simultaneously, diplomatic pressure mounted internationally as Britain, the United States, the Organisation of African Unity, the United Nations, and Commonwealth nations sought a negotiated settlement to an increasingly costly and unwinnable conflict.

Throughout these phases, the liberation struggle extended beyond military confrontation. It encompassed political mobilisation, international diplomacy, economic pressure, ideological education, and regional cooperation. Victory depended not solely upon battlefield engagements but upon sustaining popular legitimacy while isolating the Rhodesian regime diplomatically and economically.

The Lancaster House Negotiations and the Road to Independence

By 1979, prolonged warfare, growing international isolation, and mounting economic costs convinced all principal parties that a negotiated settlement had become increasingly necessary. Britain convened constitutional negotiations at Lancaster House in London involving representatives of the Patriotic Front, the Rhodesian government, and the British government under the chairmanship of Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington.

The Lancaster House Conference addressed several contentious issues, including constitutional arrangements, ceasefire mechanisms, land ownership, electoral procedures, security guarantees,

and the transition to majority rule. Negotiations proved difficult, reflecting profound mistrust accumulated over years of armed conflict. Nevertheless, sustained diplomatic engagement eventually produced a comprehensive settlement that established the framework for internationally supervised elections.

While political leaders conducted negotiations in London, liberation forces remained vigilant in the field until ceasefire arrangements became operational. ZANLA and ZIPRA combatants assembled at designated points under international supervision while preparations commenced for democratic elections. The discipline demonstrated during this sensitive transition proved critical in preventing a return to widespread hostilities.

The elections of February 1980 produced a decisive victory for ZANU (PF), with Robert Mugabe becoming the first Prime Minister of an independent Zimbabwe. On 18 April 1980, the Union Jack was lowered, and the Zimbabwean national flag was raised before an international audience witnessing the birth of Africa's newest independent state.

For Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, independence represented not the conclusion of public service but the beginning of a new national responsibility. Having participated in political mobilisation, imprisonment, exile, military training, organisational leadership, and the liberation struggle itself, he now entered the post-independence era as one of the generation entrusted with transforming the ideals of liberation into the practical realities of governance, state-building, national reconciliation, and economic development.

Transition to Independence and Entry into Government (1980–1988)

The attainment of Zimbabwe's independence on **18 April 1980** marked not only the conclusion of the liberation struggle but also the beginning of an entirely new phase in the country's political history. For the leaders who had spent years in exile, military camps, prisons, and diplomatic missions, independence represented the transition from revolutionary politics to constitutional governance. The challenge confronting the new leadership was unprecedented. Having defeated colonial rule, they were now required to construct a functioning democratic state, establish national institutions, rebuild an economy scarred by years of conflict, reconcile formerly hostile communities, and create a unified national identity. Among the generation of liberation leaders entrusted with these responsibilities was **Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa**, whose wartime experience, organizational discipline, and administrative capabilities positioned him among the principal architects of the new republic.

Unlike many liberation commanders whose experience had been almost exclusively military, Mnangagwa entered independence with an unusual combination of revolutionary credentials, legal education, intelligence experience, and organizational leadership. His years in prison, military training abroad, legal studies in Zambia, and service within the external structures of ZANU had equipped him with skills extending beyond the battlefield. These experiences

convinced the new political leadership that national independence required not merely military victory but also the establishment of strong institutions capable of safeguarding sovereignty. Consequently, when Prime Minister Robert Mugabe announced Zimbabwe's first Cabinet in March 1980, Mnangagwa was entrusted with one of the most strategically significant portfolios in the new government—the office responsible for national security.

Appointment to the First Independent Government

The formation of Zimbabwe's inaugural Cabinet reflected both political realities and strategic calculations. Cabinet appointments sought to balance liberation experience, administrative competence, regional representation, and the need to reassure both domestic and international audiences that the new state would be governed responsibly. While some appointments focused primarily on economic reconstruction, education, health, or agriculture, others carried profound implications for national stability. Security occupied a particularly sensitive position because the country had only recently emerged from a prolonged armed conflict, and thousands of heavily armed combatants remained stationed throughout the country.

Within this context, Mnangagwa was appointed **Minister of State for National Security** in the Office of the Prime Minister. The appointment demonstrated the confidence placed in his judgment, discretion, and organizational abilities. His ministry assumed responsibility for coordinating national intelligence, safeguarding the constitutional order, and helping manage the country's transition from wartime mobilization to peacetime governance. It also brought oversight of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), making the portfolio one of the most influential in the new administration.

The significance of this appointment extended beyond administrative responsibility. It symbolized the transformation of liberation fighters into custodians of a sovereign constitutional state. The security structures that had once operated against the colonial regime now had to be reorganized to serve all Zimbabweans. This transition required careful balancing of revolutionary ideals with the practical demands of state administration, legality, and national stability.

Building Institutions of the New Republic

Political independence alone could not guarantee national sovereignty. Every newly independent nation requires institutions capable of implementing constitutional authority, enforcing the rule of law, protecting territorial integrity, managing public administration, and coordinating national development. Zimbabwe inherited certain administrative structures from Rhodesia, yet these institutions required extensive transformation to reflect the aspirations of majority rule.

Mnangagwa became one of the officials responsible for overseeing this transformation within the security sector. Rather than dismantling every inherited institution, the new government pursued a policy of restructuring many existing administrative systems while incorporating liberation movement personnel into state service. This approach sought to preserve administrative continuity while replacing the racial and political foundations upon which the colonial state had operated.

The task was exceptionally complex. Government ministries required new legislation, revised administrative procedures, and the recruitment of personnel loyal to the constitutional order rather than the former settler regime. Security institutions similarly required professionalization, modernization, and integration into democratic government structures. These reforms demanded administrative discipline, confidentiality, and coordination across multiple ministries.

For Mnangagwa, institution-building was understood as an extension of the liberation struggle. Political independence would remain incomplete if state institutions lacked the capacity to defend national sovereignty or maintain public order. Consequently, emphasis was placed upon strengthening national intelligence, improving coordination among security agencies, and ensuring that governmental authority functioned effectively throughout the country.

Integrating Former Liberation Forces

Among the greatest challenges confronting independent Zimbabwe was the creation of a unified national military. Before independence, three principal armed formations existed: the **Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA)**, aligned with ZANU; the **Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA)**, aligned with PF-ZAPU; and the former **Rhodesian Security Forces**, which had fought to preserve minority rule. Each possessed different command structures, military doctrines, political loyalties, and training traditions.

The continued existence of separate armed formations posed a serious threat to national unity. Lasting peace required the establishment of a single professional military serving the Republic of Zimbabwe rather than competing political organizations.

As Minister responsible for national security and later Chairman of the Joint Operations Command, Mnangagwa played an important role in overseeing coordination during the integration process. The objective was to merge former adversaries into one national force—the **Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA)**—under constitutional authority.

This integration represented one of the most ambitious military restructuring projects undertaken by any newly independent African state. Former guerrillas accustomed to decentralized revolutionary warfare had to adapt to conventional military organization alongside officers from the former Rhodesian Army. Professional training, unified command systems, standardized military doctrine, and common operational procedures became essential components of national defense policy.

Although tensions periodically emerged during the integration process, the establishment of a unified military remained central to preserving Zimbabwe's sovereignty and preventing the fragmentation experienced by several other post-colonial African states.

National Reconciliation and State Consolidation

Parallel to military integration was the broader political objective of national reconciliation. Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's policy of reconciliation sought to reassure all communities—

including former political opponents—that they had a place within the new Zimbabwe. This policy aimed to minimize fears of political retaliation while encouraging national reconstruction.

Security institutions played a crucial role in supporting this policy by maintaining public order during a period of significant political transition. The government faced the challenge of ensuring that reconciliation did not compromise national security while simultaneously avoiding policies that might deepen social divisions.

For Mnangagwa, national security increasingly encompassed political stability, institutional effectiveness, and protection of constitutional government. The concept extended beyond military defense to include the safeguarding of national unity during a fragile period of state formation.

Early Ministerial Responsibilities

The responsibilities assigned to Mnangagwa demanded constant engagement with multiple dimensions of state administration. His ministry coordinated intelligence gathering, advised government leadership on security developments, assessed potential internal and external threats, and worked closely with military and police authorities.

Regional geopolitics further complicated these responsibilities. Zimbabwe achieved independence while southern Africa remained deeply affected by colonialism and apartheid. South Africa continued under apartheid, Namibia had not yet achieved independence, and conflicts persisted in neighboring Mozambique and Angola. These regional conditions required Zimbabwe to maintain vigilant security policies while supporting broader African liberation objectives.

Consequently, the national security portfolio involved both domestic administration and regional strategic planning. Zimbabwe became an important participant in regional cooperation against apartheid and in supporting neighboring liberation movements, while simultaneously strengthening its own security institutions to protect national sovereignty.

Political Challenges Facing the New Republic

The optimism accompanying independence did not eliminate the substantial political challenges confronting Zimbabwe. Economic inequalities inherited from colonialism remained significant. Land ownership patterns continued to reflect decades of racial dispossession. Infrastructure required expansion to underserved rural communities. Public expectations for rapid socioeconomic transformation were exceptionally high.

Political tensions also persisted between ZANU and PF-ZAPU despite their shared participation in the liberation struggle. Historical rivalries, differing military structures, and contrasting political traditions occasionally produced friction during the early years of independence. Managing these relationships required careful political leadership and effective institutional coordination.

The government also faced the broader challenge of transforming a liberation movement into a constitutional administration. Revolutionary organizations are designed primarily to wage political struggle, whereas governments must administer budgets, deliver services, implement laws, negotiate internationally, and govern diverse populations. The transition demanded new administrative skills, institutional professionalism, and constitutional discipline.

Mnangagwa belonged to the generation of liberation leaders required to make this transition. His responsibilities increasingly shifted from organizing revolutionary operations toward strengthening governmental institutions capable of sustaining long-term national development.

The Emergence of a State Administrator

The years between 1980 and 1988 marked an important stage in Mnangagwa's political evolution. During the liberation struggle he had developed a reputation as a disciplined revolutionary strategist and intelligence operative. Independence required different qualities: administrative leadership, policy coordination, institutional management, and constitutional governance.

His service during this period demonstrated the gradual transformation from liberation commander to senior statesman. Rather than operating within clandestine revolutionary structures, he now worked within formal governmental institutions accountable to the constitutional framework of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Supporters of his career often regard this period as foundational to his later leadership, arguing that it provided extensive experience in national administration, intergovernmental coordination, and strategic statecraft. Critics, meanwhile, have scrutinized aspects of the security policies of the era, particularly in relation to the government's handling of political unrest in the 1980s. Any comprehensive historical treatment should acknowledge that this period remains the subject of differing interpretations among historians and political commentators.

The period from **1980 to 1988** represented one of the most consequential chapters in Zimbabwe's post-independence history. The revolutionary struggle had achieved its primary objective—the attainment of national sovereignty—but preserving that sovereignty required the construction of durable institutions, the integration of former combatants into a unified national army, the maintenance of internal security, and the establishment of constitutional governance.

For Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, these years marked the beginning of a long career in executive government. His appointment as **Minister of State for National Security** placed him at the center of the difficult process of state formation and institutional consolidation during Zimbabwe's formative years. Whether viewed through the lens of governance, national security, or post-colonial state-building, this period profoundly shaped both his political career and the institutional development of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

National Unity, Security, and the Challenges of the 1980s

The achievement of Zimbabwean independence in April 1980 represented the culmination of a prolonged liberation struggle, but independence did not immediately resolve the political, military and social divisions inherited from the colonial era. The new Republic confronted the difficult task of transforming competing liberation movements into a functioning national political order while simultaneously integrating former combatants from ZANLA and ZIPRA with personnel from the former Rhodesian security forces. The challenge was therefore not simply to transfer political power from minority rule to majority rule, but to construct a coherent national state out of institutions, armed forces and political constituencies that had emerged from a violent and deeply contested war. In this environment, questions of security became inseparable from questions of national identity, political loyalty and the legitimacy of the new state.

One of the most important figures positioned at the centre of these early security and state-building processes was Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. In March 1980, shortly before independence, Robert Mugabe appointed Mnangagwa Minister of State for National Security in the President's Office. His responsibilities included oversight of the Central Intelligence Organisation, while his subsequent involvement in the Joint Operations Command placed him within the broader architecture through which the new government attempted to coordinate national security. Accounts of his early post-independence career consequently place him at an important institutional intersection between political authority, intelligence and the integration of former combatants.

The Difficult Birth of a Unified Security State

The integration of ZANLA and ZIPRA was one of the defining challenges of the early independence period. ZANLA, associated primarily with ZANU, and ZIPRA, associated with ZAPU, had fought the Rhodesian state through different military and political structures. Their commanders had developed distinct organisational cultures, chains of command and political loyalties during the liberation war. Independence therefore required former adversaries within the liberation movement itself to accept a common national command structure. At the same time, the new Zimbabwe National Army incorporated personnel from the former Rhodesian security forces. The resulting institution was unprecedented: former enemies were expected to become colleagues and defenders of one sovereign state.

Mnangagwa's position gave him an important role in this transformation. Following the departure of General Peter Walls as commander of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces in September 1980, Mnangagwa became Chairman of the Joint Operations Command, according to biographical accounts of the period. In that capacity, he was associated with the process of integrating former ZANLA and ZIPRA combatants with personnel from the former Rhodesian security establishment. The significance of this responsibility should not be underestimated. Successful military integration was essential to preventing the newly independent country from becoming divided into rival armed camps.

The process, however, was fragile. The former liberation armies had not merely been military organisations; they were also political institutions carrying memories of sacrifice, imprisonment, exile, comradeship and ideological struggle. Former ZANLA and ZIPRA combatants entered the

new army with different wartime experiences and political allegiances. Some former fighters struggled to accept officers from rival formations, while others remained suspicious of former Rhodesian soldiers. The new government therefore faced the difficult task of creating a national military identity while simultaneously managing unresolved political rivalries.

The disturbances at Entumbane in Bulawayo and Connemara in the Midlands demonstrated how dangerous these unresolved tensions could become. Fighting between former ZANLA and ZIPRA elements exposed the vulnerability of the integration process and showed that the liberation war had left behind divisions that could not simply be eliminated through the declaration of independence. Scholarship on Zimbabwe's nation-building process has consequently identified the integration of the armed forces as one of the central crises confronting the new state.

The Matabeleland and Midlands Disturbances

The security crisis became increasingly severe between 1982 and 1987. Armed dissidents, many of them former ZIPRA combatants, operated in parts of Matabeleland and the Midlands, attacking government personnel, infrastructure and civilians. The government responded with extensive security operations. What followed became one of the most painful and contested chapters in Zimbabwe's post-independence history.

The campaign commonly referred to as **Gukurahundi** involved widespread killings, torture, disappearances, detention and other abuses, particularly in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands. The Fifth Brigade of the Zimbabwe National Army, trained with North Korean assistance, became particularly associated with the government's counter-insurgency campaign. Estimates of the number of people killed vary considerably, although scholarly and human-rights literature frequently cites approximately 20,000 deaths.

A historically responsible account must distinguish between the existence of armed dissidence and the conduct of state security forces. Dissident violence was real and resulted in the deaths of civilians and government personnel. At the same time, the scale and nature of state violence against civilians cannot be explained simply as a conventional counter-insurgency operation. Communities in the affected provinces experienced collective punishment, arbitrary detention, intimidation and killings. Consequently, Gukurahundi has become a major subject of historical, political and human-rights debate.

The geographical dimension of the conflict was also significant. Matabeleland had historically been strongly associated with ZAPU and ZIPRA, while the Midlands contained communities with diverse political and ethnic affiliations. Consequently, political conflict between ZANU and ZAPU became intertwined with perceptions of ethnic exclusion. Academic literature has argued that the violence contributed to the strengthening of Ndebele political and cultural consciousness and left a legacy of mistrust between affected communities and the central government.

Mnangagwa and the National Security Portfolio

Mnangagwa's position as Minister of State for National Security makes his role during this period particularly significant. He was not the Minister of Defence, nor was he the commander of the Fifth Brigade. Nevertheless, his portfolio placed him within the national intelligence and security establishment during years in which state security policy was central to the government's response to dissidence.

This distinction is essential for a serious historical biography. Mnangagwa's exact responsibility for Gukurahundi remains contested. Critics have argued that, as national security minister, he occupied a position from which the intelligence apparatus could have contributed to the suppression of ZAPU and dissident activity. Other interpretations emphasise the separate constitutional and institutional responsibilities of the President, Defence Ministry, army command and security agencies. Mnangagwa himself has repeatedly rejected claims that he was the principal architect or executor of Gukurahundi and has pointed to the fact that he was neither Defence Minister nor army commander.

A balanced historical assessment therefore requires more than attributing collective responsibility to one individual. It requires examination of the institutional structure of the state, the chain of command, intelligence reporting, military orders, political decisions and the relationship between the ruling party and the security apparatus. Mnangagwa's biography cannot be separated from these structures, but neither should historical analysis automatically equate possession of a security portfolio with direct operational command of every security action.

For Mnangagwa, these years nevertheless helped establish a political identity strongly associated with state security, intelligence and institutional control. His early career demonstrated the importance attached by the new government to individuals who possessed liberation-war experience, political loyalty and an understanding of security structures. The national-security portfolio became one of the foundations upon which Mnangagwa subsequently built his long political career.

From Conflict to Negotiation

By the middle of the 1980s, it had become increasingly apparent that military measures alone could not provide a sustainable solution to Zimbabwe's political crisis. The continuation of violence threatened national cohesion and undermined the promise of independence. ZANU and ZAPU therefore entered negotiations aimed at resolving their political differences and ending the conflict.

The negotiations eventually produced the **Unity Accord of 22 December 1987**, signed by Robert Mugabe on behalf of ZANU-PF and Joshua Nkomo on behalf of PF-ZAPU. The agreement provided for the merging of the two political organisations under the name Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front), or ZANU-PF. It also provided for the merger of their structures and sought to end the violence and insecurity in Matabeleland.

Mnangagwa has subsequently described himself as one of the ZANU representatives involved in the negotiations. In later interviews, he characterised the agreement as a negotiated settlement that brought the disturbances to an end and created a political framework for national unity. His

participation is therefore important in understanding the evolution of his political career from security official to senior political negotiator and, eventually, one of the principal figures in the united ZANU-PF establishment.

The Accord was more than an ordinary political agreement. It represented an attempt to transform two rival liberation traditions into a single political organisation. ZANU and ZAPU had been united in the broader struggle against colonial rule, but they had maintained separate political identities and military structures. Their formal merger therefore symbolised the effort to transform liberation nationalism into a common national political identity.

The Meaning of the Unity Accord

The historical significance of the Unity Accord is interpreted differently by different sections of Zimbabwean society. The official nationalist interpretation presents it as a landmark achievement that ended political violence, reconciled former liberation rivals and laid the foundation for national stability. In this interpretation, Mugabe and Nkomo demonstrated political maturity by placing national unity above partisan interests. Contemporary ZANU-PF commemorations continue to present the Accord as one of the foundational pillars of Zimbabwean national cohesion.

A second interpretation is more critical. Some scholars argue that the agreement ended the conflict but did not adequately address the experiences of victims or provide a comprehensive process of transitional justice. From this perspective, the Accord was primarily an elite political settlement negotiated between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU, while communities directly affected by the violence had limited participation in determining its terms. ACCORD scholarship has specifically criticised the limited involvement of affected communities and civil society in the process.

A third interpretation emphasises the political asymmetry of the settlement. ZANU-PF had emerged as the dominant political force after the 1980 and 1985 elections, while PF-ZAPU entered the agreement after years of political and military pressure. From this perspective, the merger can be interpreted not merely as reconciliation but also as the absorption of a rival political organisation into the dominant party. Some scholars have consequently described the Accord as a form of political incorporation rather than a completely symmetrical partnership.

These interpretations do not necessarily have to be treated as mutually exclusive. The Unity Accord can simultaneously be understood as an important achievement in ending armed conflict and as an incomplete process of reconciliation. It brought political and military confrontation to an end, but ending violence is not identical to resolving the historical grievances that produced it.

Unity, Reconciliation and the Question of Memory

The legacy of the 1980s demonstrates that nation-building involves more than constructing institutions. It also involves constructing a shared national memory. Zimbabweans from different political and regional backgrounds have remembered the post-independence conflicts differently. For some, the Unity Accord represents the triumph of national reconciliation. For others, it

represents an unresolved historical compromise because the suffering of victims was not sufficiently acknowledged.

This tension remains important because national unity cannot be sustained indefinitely through political agreements alone. A durable national identity requires citizens to believe that their experiences are recognised within the national story. The continuing sensitivity surrounding Gukurahundi demonstrates how unresolved historical memory can influence political relationships decades after the original conflict.

For Mnangagwa, this history has remained an important component of his political identity. His later public statements have consistently presented the Unity Accord as a foundational achievement and a source of national unity. In commemorating the Accord, he has described it as a political legacy that should continue to guide Zimbabweans towards peace, cohesion and development. His political interpretation therefore places considerable emphasis on the unifying outcome of the agreement.

Yet the historical record also requires recognition of the painful experiences that preceded that outcome. A mature national narrative should neither romanticise the 1987 settlement nor ignore its contribution to peace. Instead, it should recognise that Zimbabwe's nation-building process contained both extraordinary achievements and profound tragedies.

The Unity Accord as a Turning Point

The December 1987 settlement fundamentally changed Zimbabwe's political architecture. ZANU and PF-ZAPU became one political organisation, Joshua Nkomo entered government as Vice-President, and the country moved towards a more centralised political system. The Accord also coincided with constitutional changes that transformed the country's executive structure and strengthened the presidency.

The political significance of the agreement extended beyond the immediate termination of hostilities. It created a framework through which former political rivals could operate within one ruling party and contributed to the consolidation of the Zimbabwean state. Within the security services, the logic of integration that had begun after independence was increasingly reflected in the broader political project of national unity. Mnangagwa later emphasised that former ZANLA and ZIPRA personnel had become members of common national security institutions rather than separate liberation armies.

In this sense, the Unity Accord became a defining moment in Mnangagwa's political development. The young liberation activist who had participated in the armed struggle had become a senior state-security official and then a participant in negotiations designed to reconcile former liberation adversaries. The experience reinforced themes that would recur throughout his subsequent political career: national security, political organisation, state authority, institutional continuity and national unity.

From Security Strategist to Senior Statesman: Mnangagwa's Rise in the 1990s

The transition from the liberation struggle to the responsibilities of governing a newly independent state required a different kind of political leadership. The skills that had been valuable during clandestine resistance, military organisation and national security had to be adapted to the demands of constitutional government, economic management, parliamentary politics and institution-building. For Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, the 1990s represented precisely such a period of transformation. Having emerged from the first decade of independence with a reputation as a senior security and political figure, he increasingly moved into portfolios that placed him at the centre of Zimbabwe's legal, parliamentary, economic and administrative affairs. His political career during this period therefore cannot be understood simply as a continuation of his earlier security role. It was a process through which a liberation-era strategist developed into one of the most durable senior figures within the post-independence state.

By the beginning of the 1990s, Mnangagwa had already accumulated considerable political experience. His involvement in national security during the early years of independence had placed him close to the most sensitive affairs of the new government, while his subsequent responsibilities after the 1987 Unity Accord brought him into the centre of legislative and constitutional administration. The official presidential biography records that after the Unity Accord he became Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House in 1988, a position he retained until 2000. This was a significant transition. The Ministry of Justice was not merely another government department; it occupied a strategic position at the intersection of law, Parliament, constitutional development and the functioning of the state. Mnangagwa's movement into this sphere demonstrated that his political importance was no longer confined to security matters.

The 1990s were consequently a decade in which the boundaries between revolutionary legitimacy, party authority and state administration became increasingly important. Zimbabwe's governing political system was dominated by ZANU-PF, particularly following the 1987 Unity Accord, and the party's senior figures occupied influential positions throughout government. Mnangagwa was one of those figures who had successfully moved from the liberation movement into the institutional architecture of the independent republic. His experience gave him an unusual combination of revolutionary credentials, governmental experience and legal-political knowledge. In later years, these attributes would become important elements of his political identity.

The Justice and Legal Portfolio

Mnangagwa's responsibilities as Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs placed him at the heart of the legal machinery of the Zimbabwean state. The portfolio required an understanding not only of legislation but also of the relationship between government, Parliament and the judiciary. It was therefore an important arena in which he could demonstrate his ability to operate beyond the security structures that had characterised his earlier career.

The significance of this role becomes clearer when the broader political environment of the 1990s is considered. Zimbabwe was attempting to consolidate a political order that had emerged from a prolonged liberation struggle while simultaneously dealing with the demands of constitutional government. The state had inherited many institutions from the colonial period, but

independence required those institutions to be transformed so that they served a sovereign African government. Ministers such as Mnangagwa were therefore involved in the continuing process of redefining the relationship between inherited institutions and the political objectives of the liberation movement.

His legal responsibilities also placed him in a position where political decisions increasingly had to be translated into legislation and administrative structures. This was a different form of political work from the clandestine operations of the liberation era. It required negotiation, parliamentary management, interpretation of statutes and engagement with competing institutional interests. The transformation was important because it illustrated one of the central themes of Mnangagwa's political career: his ability to move between different centres of power without abandoning his connection to the ruling political establishment.

The importance of Parliament within this system should not be underestimated. Although ZANU-PF remained overwhelmingly dominant during much of the decade, parliamentary institutions were nevertheless essential to the formal functioning of the state. In the 1995 general election, for example, ZANU-PF won 118 of the 120 directly elected parliamentary seats, illustrating the extraordinary electoral dominance of the ruling party at the time. Mnangagwa's role in managing the relationship between government and Parliament therefore placed him within one of the principal mechanisms through which the ruling party translated political authority into legislation.

A Political Figure Beyond the Security Apparatus

Mnangagwa's emergence as a senior political figure during the 1990s is particularly significant because it demonstrated that his influence was broader than his earlier reputation as a security strategist. Security remained an important element of his political identity, but he was increasingly becoming a statesman whose responsibilities extended across multiple dimensions of government.

This transformation also reflected the changing requirements of Zimbabwe's post-independence political leadership. The liberation generation could no longer rely exclusively on military or revolutionary credentials. The challenges of governing required competence in economics, law, diplomacy, public administration and parliamentary politics. Leaders who had survived the liberation struggle were required to translate revolutionary ideals into functioning institutions. Mnangagwa's career trajectory during the decade placed him among those leaders attempting to make that transition.

His political style also became increasingly associated with patience and institutional longevity. Unlike some political figures whose influence depended upon occupying one particular ministry or maintaining one specific factional position, Mnangagwa developed influence through a succession of responsibilities. His career demonstrated an ability to remain relevant while political circumstances changed around him. This characteristic would become particularly important in the succession struggles that emerged within ZANU-PF in later decades.

The Expansion of Governmental Responsibilities

During the middle of the decade, Mnangagwa's responsibilities expanded beyond justice and parliamentary affairs. According to the official presidential biography, he served as Acting Minister of Finance from 1995 to 1996 and briefly served as Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. These assignments were significant because they exposed him to areas of government that required knowledge extending beyond law and political administration.

Finance was particularly important. Zimbabwe in the 1990s was confronting difficult questions concerning economic reform, public expenditure, structural adjustment and the management of a changing national economy. Assuming responsibility for the Finance portfolio, even in an acting capacity, placed Mnangagwa within the economic policy-making machinery of the state. It also reinforced the perception that he was regarded by the political leadership as a dependable senior official capable of handling sensitive national responsibilities.

His brief involvement with foreign affairs similarly demonstrated the breadth of his governmental experience. Foreign policy was increasingly important as Zimbabwe established itself as an independent African state with responsibilities within the Southern African region and the wider international community. The country was deeply connected to regional political developments, including the transformation of South Africa, the continuing consolidation of independence in Namibia and the broader process of regional integration. A senior minister with experience in security, law, finance and foreign affairs possessed a particularly broad understanding of the strategic interests of the state.

The ZANU-PF Political Network

While government office was important, Mnangagwa's political development cannot be separated from the structures of ZANU-PF. Zimbabwe's post-independence politics were strongly shaped by the relationship between the state and the governing party. Senior political figures acquired influence not simply through ministerial portfolios but also through party positions, personal relationships, liberation credentials and connections within the political establishment.

Mnangagwa gradually became part of the senior political network surrounding President Robert Mugabe. His proximity to the leadership was strengthened by his long experience within the liberation movement and by his record of service after independence. This did not mean that his political position was permanently secure. ZANU-PF was itself a complex political organisation containing different generations, regional interests, ideological tendencies and personalities. Advancement within the party was therefore never simply a matter of seniority.

The 1990s were an important period in the development of these internal political networks. The Unity Accord had altered the structure of Zimbabwean politics, but the process of managing relationships between different political constituencies remained an ongoing challenge. At the same time, younger political leaders were beginning to emerge within the ruling party and government. Mnangagwa's ability to maintain his position across changing political circumstances became one of the defining characteristics of his career.

His political network was consequently not based on one single institution. It developed across the security establishment, the cabinet, Parliament, the legal system and the ruling party. This institutional breadth would later prove significant. When political competition intensified in the 2000s and 2010s, Mnangagwa possessed relationships and experience extending across several important centres of political power.

The Importance of Institutional Loyalty

One interpretation of Mnangagwa's rise emphasises his reputation for institutional loyalty. Supporters and political allies have frequently presented him as a politician who remained committed to ZANU-PF and to the liberation movement despite periods when his own political advancement appeared uncertain. Contemporary accounts of his later political career particularly emphasised his response to the 2004 succession contest, when Joice Mujuru became vice-president instead of Mnangagwa. The *Herald*, reflecting accounts from political allies, described his response as one of patience and continued loyalty to the party.

Although this episode occurred at the beginning of the following decade, its roots can be understood through the political habits that developed during the 1990s. Mnangagwa's career was increasingly characterised by long-term political calculation rather than rapid personal advancement. His approach appeared to emphasise remaining within the institutional structures of the liberation movement, maintaining political relationships and waiting for opportunities created by changes within the party.

This characteristic would later contribute to the popular image of Mnangagwa as the "Crocodile"—a political metaphor associated with patience, strategic calculation and survival. Yet such descriptions should be treated carefully. Political biographies can easily transform complex historical processes into personality myths. Mnangagwa's longevity was not simply the product of personal cunning; it also reflected his deep integration into the institutions created by Zimbabwe's liberation movement and post-independence state.

Parliamentary Leadership and the Road Ahead

The culmination of this institutional development came in 2000, when Mnangagwa left the Ministry of Justice and entered a new phase of his political career as Speaker of Parliament. The Inter-Parliamentary Union records that after the June 2000 parliamentary elections, members elected Mnangagwa as Speaker on 18 July 2000. His election marked a major transition from executive minister to presiding officer of the legislature.

The significance of this appointment becomes clearer when viewed against the political circumstances of 2000. The parliamentary elections produced one of the most competitive contests since independence, with ZANU-PF winning 62 directly elected seats and the newly formed Movement for Democratic Change winning 57. Parliament was consequently entering a much more contested political environment than it had experienced during the overwhelming ZANU-PF dominance of the previous decade.

As Speaker, Mnangagwa occupied a constitutionally significant position. The Speaker presides over parliamentary proceedings, maintains order, interprets parliamentary rules and protects the privileges of members and the institution. His appointment therefore represented another evolution in his political career: from revolutionary activist, to security strategist, to cabinet minister, and now to senior parliamentary statesman.

The transition also demonstrated the breadth of institutional experience he had accumulated. By the end of the 1990s, Mnangagwa had worked within the security establishment, the executive branch, the justice system, the economic administration of government and the ruling party. Few political figures of his generation possessed such a broad institutional biography. This breadth would become one of the foundations upon which his later political ambitions rested.

The 1990s as a Bridge to the Future

The importance of the 1990s in Mnangagwa's political biography therefore lies not in one particular appointment or political event, but in the cumulative construction of political experience. The decade transformed him from a liberation-era security figure into a senior statesman with an understanding of the machinery of government. His involvement in justice, Parliament, finance and foreign affairs exposed him to the multiple dimensions of national governance.

It was also during this period that the foundations of his later political network became increasingly visible. His relationships within ZANU-PF, government and the state security establishment provided him with institutional connections that would remain important throughout his political life. The network was not necessarily a formal organisation or faction in the modern sense; rather, it consisted of relationships developed through decades of political struggle, government service and participation in the structures of the liberation movement.

The decade also reinforced an important feature of Zimbabwe's post-independence political culture: the continuing influence of liberation credentials. Political legitimacy within ZANU-PF was deeply connected to the history of the liberation struggle. Leaders who had participated in the struggle could claim a particular historical authority, while younger politicians had to negotiate their positions within an organisation whose identity remained rooted in that history. Mnangagwa belonged firmly to the liberation generation and was therefore able to draw upon this historical legitimacy.

At the same time, his career illustrates the tensions inherent in the transformation of a liberation movement into a governing party. Revolutionary movements are often organised around discipline, secrecy, loyalty and collective struggle. Government institutions, by contrast, require transparency, legal procedures, parliamentary accountability and administrative professionalism. Mnangagwa's career crossed both worlds. His political identity was shaped by the revolutionary movement, but his responsibilities increasingly involved the formal institutions of the republic.

Preparing for the Succession Struggles

By the close of the 1990s, Mnangagwa had become one of the most experienced figures in Zimbabwe's political establishment. Yet experience did not automatically translate into succession. The next stage of his career would demonstrate that political survival and political advancement were two different processes.

The emergence of a younger and increasingly competitive political environment after 2000 would challenge the established hierarchy within ZANU-PF. The opposition MDC had transformed the political landscape, while economic difficulties and growing political contestation placed greater pressure on the ruling party. Mnangagwa's position as Speaker gave him an important vantage point from which to observe these changes.

His subsequent political trajectory would involve periods of advancement, disappointment, reassignment and renewed influence. The most important of these developments would come during the 2000s, when questions concerning succession to Robert Mugabe became increasingly central to Zimbabwean politics. Mnangagwa would eventually become one of the principal contenders within the ruling party's internal succession politics, but his journey to the vice-presidency would not be straightforward.

The 1990s should therefore be understood as the decade in which the foundations of that later journey were constructed. The security strategist had become a minister. The minister had become a legal and parliamentary administrator. The administrator had acquired experience in finance and foreign affairs. The senior government official had developed a substantial network within ZANU-PF. And by 2000, the former minister was moving into the speakership of Parliament.

From this perspective, Mnangagwa's rise was not an abrupt phenomenon created by the events of 2017. It was the product of a political career developed over several decades. His eventual emergence as Zimbabwe's president was rooted in a much longer history of participation in the liberation movement, service in government, engagement with the ruling party and survival through successive periods of political change.

Chapter Two

Journey to National Leadership: The Road to the Presidency

Years in Government

The political career of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa is inseparable from the institutional history of post-independence Zimbabwe. From the attainment of independence in 1980, he occupied a succession of influential positions within the state, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), and the broader architecture of national security and

governance. His journey through government was not characterized by a single uninterrupted ministerial trajectory; rather, it involved movement between different portfolios, political responsibilities, parliamentary positions, and periods in which his influence was exercised through both formal office and party structures. Over several decades, this experience gave him an unusually extensive understanding of the workings of the Zimbabwean state. By the time he became vice-president, he was one of the country's longest-serving political figures.

Mnangagwa entered independent Zimbabwe's government at a moment when the country was attempting to transform itself from a colonial and minority-rule state into a sovereign African republic. The new government faced enormous responsibilities. It had to construct legitimate institutions, integrate former liberation fighters into national structures, expand education and healthcare, address racial and economic inequalities, maintain national security, and reconcile competing political constituencies created by the liberation struggle. These challenges required political leaders who possessed not only ideological commitment but also administrative experience. Mnangagwa's subsequent career developed within this environment.

His early responsibilities after independence placed him close to some of the most sensitive areas of state administration. National security was particularly important because the newly independent state inherited security institutions shaped by the Rhodesian system while simultaneously incorporating former liberation movements and combatants into the new national order. The creation of a unified state therefore involved both institutional transformation and political negotiation. Mnangagwa's experience in intelligence and security matters became an important component of his governmental identity.

During the 1980s, he served in senior government positions while Zimbabwe confronted serious internal political tensions. The most consequential of these involved relations between ZANU and PF-ZAPU, the two major liberation movements that had emerged from different political and military traditions. The tensions eventually contributed to the violence associated with the Gukurahundi period in Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands. Mnangagwa's position as Minister of State Security during part of this period has made his political record the subject of intense historical debate. Supporters and critics have interpreted his role differently, making this one of the most contested dimensions of his political biography.

The signing of the 1987 Unity Accord between ZANU and PF-ZAPU represented a major transformation in Zimbabwe's political landscape. The agreement brought the two major liberation movements into a formal political alliance and created the basis for a more unified ruling party. Mnangagwa's subsequent political career unfolded within this consolidated ZANU-PF structure. The Unity Accord also demonstrated the importance of political negotiation in resolving conflicts that threatened the stability of the young republic.

Throughout the 1990s, Mnangagwa continued to occupy important positions within government and Parliament. His career reflected the growing institutionalization of the post-independence political establishment. He served in different ministerial capacities and developed a reputation as a politician familiar with complex government portfolios. His experience extended beyond security into economic, legal, parliamentary, and administrative affairs. This diversification was

significant because it enabled him to develop a broader understanding of government than that associated solely with his earlier intelligence responsibilities.

The 1990s were also a period of significant economic and political transformation in Zimbabwe. The government introduced the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, while unemployment, inequality, industrial restructuring, and social pressures became increasingly important political questions. Zimbabwe's relationship with international financial institutions and external economic actors also changed. For political leaders such as Mnangagwa, these developments required an understanding of how domestic political decisions interacted with international economic forces.

His political career also developed alongside the increasing prominence of ZANU-PF as the dominant political organization in Zimbabwe. Political survival within the ruling party required an ability to navigate ideological debates, factional competition, regional considerations, and relationships with influential figures. Mnangagwa demonstrated considerable longevity in this environment. His survival across successive political periods became one of the defining characteristics of his career.

The beginning of the twenty-first century introduced new challenges. Zimbabwe entered a period marked by profound economic difficulties, controversial land reform, intensified political competition, international sanctions and diplomatic tensions, and growing opposition to ZANU-PF rule. The emergence of the Movement for Democratic Change fundamentally altered the country's political environment. Government officials were increasingly required to respond not only to administrative challenges but also to a highly contested political landscape.

Mnangagwa's continued presence within government during this period reinforced his reputation as a political survivor. He served in significant portfolios and remained closely associated with the central structures of ZANU-PF. His political career demonstrated an ability to adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining his position within the governing establishment. This longevity would later become one of the principal arguments advanced by both his supporters and his critics when assessing his eventual rise to the presidency.

His experience was particularly important because Zimbabwe's political system placed considerable emphasis on relationships between the presidency, the ruling party, Parliament, security institutions, and senior government officials. A politician who remained active across these institutions for decades accumulated knowledge of how they interacted. Mnangagwa's later ascent cannot therefore be understood simply as the result of events in 2017. It was the culmination of a political career that had developed over several decades.

The 2000s and early 2010s also brought renewed constitutional debates. The Government of National Unity established after the disputed 2008 elections created another important chapter in Zimbabwe's political history. ZANU-PF, the MDC-T, and other political actors were required to share governmental responsibilities. The experience demonstrated the difficulty of governing under conditions of intense political competition while simultaneously attempting to stabilize an economy and reform state institutions.

The adoption of the 2013 Constitution subsequently altered the formal constitutional framework of the country. It strengthened the institutional definition of the presidency, established term limits, expanded the bill of rights, and provided a new constitutional foundation for the state. Mnangagwa's later presidency would therefore operate within a constitutional order substantially different from that of the first decades after independence.

In 2014, Mnangagwa's appointment as Vice-President marked an important milestone in his political trajectory. He became one of the senior figures in the ZANU-PF leadership and was widely regarded as a possible successor to President Robert Mugabe. His appointment also brought him closer to the center of presidential succession politics. From this point forward, the question of who would eventually succeed Mugabe became increasingly important to Zimbabwe's political future.

Mnangagwa's government career therefore provides essential context for understanding his eventual presidency. He was not a political newcomer who suddenly appeared during the events of 2017. Rather, he was a veteran of the liberation movement, a long-serving parliamentarian, former minister, senior ZANU-PF official, and vice-president. His political identity had been constructed over more than three decades.

This long institutional experience became both a source of legitimacy and a subject of criticism. Supporters argued that his decades of government service gave him the experience required to manage the complexities of the Zimbabwean state. Critics, by contrast, argued that his longevity associated him with many of the political and institutional shortcomings of the post-independence period. These competing interpretations remain central to understanding his political legacy.

Ultimately, the years Mnangagwa spent in government created the foundation upon which his presidential ambitions could develop. His experience provided him with knowledge of state institutions, political networks, party structures, security affairs, parliamentary politics, and regional diplomacy. Yet experience alone could not guarantee succession. Zimbabwe's political system remained deeply shaped by President Mugabe's personal authority, and the question of succession became increasingly contentious as Mugabe advanced in age.

The transition from senior government official to national leader therefore required more than administrative experience. It required political timing, alliances, institutional relationships, and the ability to respond to a rapidly changing political environment. By 2017, these factors converged in an extraordinary sequence of events that transformed Mnangagwa from vice-president and potential successor into the president of Zimbabwe.

Vice Presidency

Mnangagwa's appointment as Vice-President in December 2014 represented a major advancement in his political career. It placed him directly within the highest level of executive authority and made his relationship with President Robert Mugabe particularly significant. At the same time, the appointment occurred within an increasingly complicated struggle over

succession in ZANU-PF. Different political factions had begun positioning themselves around competing visions of who should succeed Mugabe.

His elevation occurred during a period when Grace Mugabe had become increasingly active in national politics. Through the Women's League of ZANU-PF and public political rallies, she emerged as an influential political figure. The rise of the G40 faction, a group of younger ZANU-PF politicians associated with her political ascendancy, intensified competition with politicians identified with the older liberation-war generation.

Mnangagwa gradually became associated with a political constituency that emphasized liberation-war credentials, institutional continuity, and his experience within the state. His supporters often portrayed him as a natural successor because of his long service to ZANU-PF and the government. His opponents, however, viewed his political network as part of an older establishment seeking to preserve its influence.

The struggle between these political currents became increasingly visible during 2016 and 2017. Public disagreements within ZANU-PF became more pronounced, while accusations of factionalism and succession politics dominated political discussion. Mnangagwa himself became increasingly prominent as a possible successor to Mugabe.

His position as vice-president was therefore both powerful and precarious. He occupied one of the highest offices in the state but remained politically dependent upon the confidence of the president and the structures of the ruling party. The vice-presidency placed him at the center of national politics while simultaneously making him one of the principal targets of succession competition.

The events of November 2017 demonstrated how quickly this political tension could transform the country's political order.

Political Transition of 2017

The dismissal of Mnangagwa from the vice-presidency on 6 November 2017 represented a dramatic turning point. President Mugabe's government stated that Mnangagwa had demonstrated disloyalty and engaged in conduct incompatible with his position. Mnangagwa rejected the accusations and subsequently left Zimbabwe. His dismissal intensified the already serious conflict within ZANU-PF.

What followed was one of the most extraordinary political transitions in Zimbabwe's post-independence history. Elements of the military became publicly involved in the political crisis. On 15 November 2017, the Zimbabwe Defence Forces announced that it had taken action to target what it described as criminals surrounding the president, while insisting that the operation was not a coup against Mugabe.

The military intervention produced widespread political debate about the constitutional nature of the transition. Some observers described the events as a military-assisted transfer of power or a coup, while those involved rejected the characterization and presented the operation as a

constitutional intervention designed to restore political order. The distinction remains significant because it affects interpretations of Zimbabwe's political history and the legitimacy of the transition.

President Mugabe initially resisted calls for resignation. However, following intense political pressure, including a massive public demonstration on 18 November, the political situation changed rapidly. On 21 November 2017, Mugabe resigned from the presidency.

Mnangagwa returned to Zimbabwe shortly afterwards. ZANU-PF selected him as its new leader and nominated him to assume the presidency. On 24 November 2017, he was sworn in as the third President of Zimbabwe.

Swearing-in as President

The inauguration of Mnangagwa at the National Sports Stadium in Harare marked the beginning of a new political era. Large crowds attended the ceremony, reflecting the widespread anticipation surrounding the end of Mugabe's 37-year rule. The occasion generated enormous expectations both inside Zimbabwe and internationally.

In his inaugural address, Mnangagwa presented himself as a president committed to national renewal. He emphasized economic recovery, employment creation, investment, institutional reform, and reconciliation. His message sought to distinguish the emerging administration from the political and economic difficulties that had characterized the later years of Mugabe's rule.

The new president inherited a country facing profound economic challenges. Zimbabwe had experienced prolonged unemployment, liquidity shortages, declining industrial capacity, infrastructure weaknesses, and widespread public frustration. The government therefore faced pressure to demonstrate quickly that political transition would produce tangible improvements in citizens' lives.

Mnangagwa also sought to reposition Zimbabwe internationally. His administration adopted the language of engagement and re-engagement, seeking improved relations with neighboring states, international institutions, investors, and Western governments. The idea was that Zimbabwe needed to overcome diplomatic isolation and attract foreign investment if economic recovery was to be achieved.

However, the new administration also inherited unresolved political and institutional problems. Questions concerning electoral credibility, human rights, the role of security institutions, land reform, corruption, and the relationship between the ruling party and the state remained significant.

National Expectations

The transition of 2017 generated extraordinary expectations among Zimbabweans. For some citizens, the departure of Mugabe represented the possibility of political renewal after decades of continuous rule. For others, Mnangagwa's long association with the previous government created

uncertainty about whether the transition represented genuine political transformation or merely a change in leadership within the same political establishment.

This tension became one of the defining questions of Mnangagwa's presidency: **was the new administration a continuation of the past, or the beginning of a new political chapter?**

The answer would ultimately depend not simply upon presidential speeches but upon measurable changes in governance, economic performance, political freedoms, institutional accountability, and the relationship between government and citizens.

The national expectations surrounding Mnangagwa were therefore exceptionally high. Zimbabweans wanted employment, stable currency and prices, improved public services, infrastructure development, greater political tolerance, and an end to corruption. The international community similarly watched to determine whether Zimbabwe's new leadership would undertake meaningful political and economic reforms.

Mnangagwa's presidency consequently began with both an opportunity and a burden. He had the opportunity to redefine Zimbabwe's relationship with the world and to rebuild confidence in the country's institutions. At the same time, his decades within the political establishment meant that he could not easily separate himself from the history of the system he had helped administer.

The road to the presidency had taken Mnangagwa more than three decades. His elevation in 2017 was therefore not simply the conclusion of a personal political ambition. It represented the culmination of Zimbabwe's own complicated post-independence political history—its liberation legacy, institutional development, factional struggles, economic crises, constitutional debates, and unresolved questions about succession.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SECOND REPUBLIC

The emergence of what the Zimbabwean Government describes as the **Second Republic** represented one of the most consequential political transitions in the country's post-independence history. Following the political transition of November 2017 and the assumption of the presidency by Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, the new administration sought to distinguish itself from the preceding political era through a language of renewal, reconstruction, economic transformation and institutional change. The concept of the Second Republic was therefore presented not simply as a change of political leadership, but as an attempt to redefine the relationship between the state, the economy, citizens, investors and the international community. Its central message was that Zimbabwe could enter a new phase in which political stability, economic development and international engagement would become mutually reinforcing objectives.

The idea was particularly significant because Zimbabwe entered the Second Republic carrying a complicated historical inheritance. The country had experienced economic difficulties, international isolation, political contestation, declining public confidence in state institutions and a prolonged struggle to restore sustainable economic growth. Consequently, the new administration confronted expectations that went beyond the replacement of one political leader by another. Zimbabweans expected improvements in living standards, employment, infrastructure, public services and governance. Internationally, there was an expectation that the new administration would demonstrate a willingness to reform institutions and re-engage with the international community. The Second Republic therefore emerged within a highly demanding political environment in which rhetoric had to be translated into measurable national outcomes.

Vision of the Second Republic

At the intellectual and political centre of the Second Republic was the idea of creating a new national development trajectory. The Government's Vision 2030 describes the objective as the achievement of a **prosperous and empowered upper-middle-income society by 2030**, with broad-based transformation, wealth creation and expanding economic opportunities. The official framework identifies governance, macroeconomic stability and financial re-engagement, inclusive growth, infrastructure and utilities, and social development among its strategic pillars.

This vision attempted to move Zimbabwean political discourse beyond the language of political survival towards the language of development. The central question became not merely who governed Zimbabwe, but what kind of Zimbabwe the state intended to construct. Development was presented as a national project requiring cooperation between government, the private sector, communities, civil society and international partners. Vision 2030 consequently became the long-term framework within which the Second Republic sought to organise its economic and social priorities.

Yet the significance of Vision 2030 cannot be understood solely through government policy documents. A national vision becomes meaningful only when ordinary citizens experience its consequences in their daily lives. Economic growth must translate into employment; infrastructure must improve mobility and productivity; education must create opportunities; healthcare must become accessible; and institutional reforms must strengthen public confidence. The ultimate test of the Second Republic therefore lies in the distance between policy aspiration and lived reality.

“Zimbabwe Is Open for Business”

One of the most recognisable slogans associated with the Second Republic was **“Zimbabwe is Open for Business.”** The phrase represented a deliberate attempt to reposition Zimbabwe as an investment destination following years in which international perceptions of the country had been dominated by political controversy, economic instability and uncertainty.

The slogan carried both economic and diplomatic significance. Economically, it communicated an invitation to domestic and international investors to participate in Zimbabwe's development. Politically, it represented an attempt to demonstrate that the new administration was prepared to engage with international economic actors. The language of openness was therefore linked to the broader objective of economic recovery and international re-engagement.

The investment message was particularly important because Zimbabwe possesses substantial natural resources, agricultural potential, human capital and strategic geographical advantages within Southern Africa. Mining, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, infrastructure, energy and financial services all possess the potential to contribute to national development. The challenge for the Second Republic was therefore not simply to attract investment, but to create the institutional and economic environment in which investment could generate sustainable employment, technology transfer, industrialisation and broader national prosperity.

The concept of an open economy also raised an important philosophical question: **open to whom and for what purpose?** Investment must ultimately serve national development. Foreign capital can provide resources, expertise and technology, but sustainable development also requires strong domestic enterprise, local ownership, skills development and the capacity of Zimbabwean companies to compete. Consequently, the “Open for Business” philosophy can be interpreted most constructively as a framework for partnership between international investment and domestic economic empowerment.

The Second Republic therefore sought to present Zimbabwe as a country moving from economic isolation towards economic engagement. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to identify trade and investment promotion as part of Zimbabwe's international economic diplomacy, while government development frameworks place investment and enterprise development within the broader national transformation agenda.

National Unity

National unity constituted another important dimension of the Second Republic's political narrative. Zimbabwe's history has been characterised by periods of intense political polarisation, ideological confrontation and unresolved historical grievances. The Second Republic consequently placed emphasis on national cohesion, peace, reconciliation and the idea that Zimbabwe's future should not be permanently imprisoned by the conflicts of its past.

The language of unity was particularly significant because nation-building is not merely an institutional exercise. It involves the creation of a shared sense of belonging among citizens who may hold different political opinions, ethnic identities, regional experiences and historical memories. A stable republic requires citizens to believe that they belong to the same political community even when they disagree over how that community should be governed.

The official Vision 2030 framework connects national development with peace, reconciliation, tolerance, freedom of association and decentralisation. It also identifies the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission as an institutional mechanism intended to contribute to healing and reconciliation.

National unity, however, must be understood as more than political consensus. Genuine unity does not require citizens to think alike. Democratic unity allows disagreement while preserving the common constitutional framework within which disagreement occurs. Opposition parties, civil society organisations, journalists, academics, churches, traditional leaders and ordinary citizens must all be able to participate in national life. In this sense, the deeper challenge for the Second Republic has been to reconcile political stability with democratic pluralism.

The idea of unity also has an economic dimension. A divided society finds it difficult to mobilise collective resources for development. Investors require predictability; communities require trust; institutions require cooperation; and citizens require confidence that national development benefits are not reserved for particular groups. National cohesion therefore becomes an economic asset as well as a political objective.

Economic Recovery

Economic recovery became one of the defining priorities of the Second Republic. Zimbabwe inherited an economy affected by inflationary pressures, currency instability, limited access to international finance, infrastructure deficiencies and weaknesses in productive capacity. The new administration therefore sought to place macroeconomic stabilisation and production at the centre of its national programme.

The National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), covering 2021–2025, was designed as the first five-year medium-term development strategy for realising Vision 2030. Its objectives included strengthening macroeconomic stability, promoting inclusive economic growth, encouraging

enterprise development and employment, improving social protection, strengthening governance and modernising the economy through information and communications technology.

Economic recovery was consequently conceived as a multidimensional process. It was not simply about increasing gross domestic product. A meaningful recovery had to address employment, industrial production, agricultural productivity, infrastructure, energy, financial stability and household purchasing power. The success of economic policy therefore had to be judged by whether ordinary Zimbabweans could experience an improvement in their economic security.

Agriculture remained central to this strategy because of its importance to food security, rural livelihoods, employment and industrial supply chains. Mining represented another major pillar because Zimbabwe possesses significant mineral resources. At the same time, manufacturing and value addition became increasingly important because a resource-based economy cannot achieve broad-based prosperity if it exports raw materials while importing finished products.

The recovery agenda also required infrastructure investment. Roads, electricity, water systems, telecommunications, housing and transport infrastructure constitute the physical foundations upon which economic activity depends. The Government's development frameworks consequently incorporated infrastructure and utilities among the strategic pillars supporting Vision 2030.

Institutional Reform

The Second Republic's promise of renewal also incorporated institutional reform. Institutions are the mechanisms through which political commitments become enforceable realities. A country may possess ambitious development plans, but if public institutions are inefficient, corrupt, inaccessible or unpredictable, those plans will struggle to achieve their objectives.

Institutional reform therefore involved questions of public administration, justice, accountability, decentralisation, transparency and service delivery. The official Vision 2030 framework explicitly associates the Second Republic with reconstructing the state and developing systems of governance that are community-based and people-centred. It also identifies decentralisation as an important component of the new governance dispensation.

Decentralisation is particularly significant in a country as geographically diverse as Zimbabwe. National government cannot effectively address every local problem from Harare. Provincial and local institutions require appropriate authority, resources and administrative capacity to respond to community priorities. Effective decentralisation can therefore bring government closer to citizens and strengthen accountability.

Institutional reform also requires an independent and accessible justice system. The Ministry of Justice identifies access to justice, effective justice delivery and the rule of law as central components of its institutional mandate.

For the Second Republic, institutional reform therefore represented a test of whether the political language of renewal could become embedded within the everyday operation of the state. Reform becomes meaningful when citizens can obtain documents without unnecessary delays, access justice without discrimination, receive public services efficiently, register businesses predictably and interact with government institutions without fear or undue bureaucratic obstacles.

Vision 2030

Vision 2030 became the long-term organising framework for the Second Republic's development ambitions. Its central objective is the transformation of Zimbabwe into a prosperous and empowered upper-middle-income society by 2030. The framework explicitly recognises that this long-term objective must be pursued through successive short- and medium-term development strategies.

This approach is important because national transformation cannot normally be achieved through one political programme or one budget cycle. Development requires continuity. Roads may take years to construct; industrial capacity requires sustained investment; education reforms require generations to produce their full effects; and institutional change requires consistency.

Vision 2030 therefore provides the Second Republic with a destination against which successive development programmes can theoretically be measured. NDS1 served as the 2021–2025 medium-term strategy, while the Government's official portal now identifies **National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2), covering 2026–2030**, as the successor national development strategy.

The importance of Vision 2030 lies not only in its economic target but also in its attempt to create a comprehensive national framework. Governance, infrastructure, social development, macroeconomic stability and inclusive growth are interconnected. A prosperous society cannot be constructed through economic policy alone if institutions remain weak or social inequalities deepen.

National Development Strategy

The National Development Strategy translated the broad ambitions of Vision 2030 into more specific policy priorities. NDS1 was structured around objectives that included economic growth and stability, food security and nutrition, governance, value-chain development, human capital development, environmental protection, climate resilience, housing, ICT and the digital economy, health, transport and infrastructure, international engagement, social protection, and youth, sport, culture and devolution.

This represented an attempt to create a development framework covering both productive sectors and social welfare. Economic development was not treated as separate from human development. The strategy recognised that national prosperity requires educated citizens, functioning healthcare systems, adequate housing, infrastructure, environmental sustainability and social protection.

The strategy also demonstrated the importance of planning continuity. Vision 2030 provides the long-term destination, while medium-term development strategies provide the mechanisms through which that destination is pursued. In this framework, NDS1 was not intended to stand alone; it formed part of a succession of development strategies leading towards 2030. The Government's current development architecture identifies NDS2 as the 2026–2030 successor to NDS1.

For the Second Republic, this planning architecture represented an effort to move away from fragmented policymaking towards a more integrated national development model. Its ultimate effectiveness, however, depends upon implementation, monitoring, financing and institutional capacity. Development strategies are valuable only when programmes are properly funded, projects are completed, institutions are accountable and citizens can measure improvements in their lives.

The Second Republic as a Development Project

The Second Republic should therefore be understood as both a political transition and a development project. Its central narrative brought together political renewal, national unity, economic recovery, institutional reform and international re-engagement. The phrase “**Zimbabwe is Open for Business**” captured the economic and diplomatic dimension, while **Vision 2030** provided the long-term national destination. NDS1 and NDS2 supplied the medium-term planning instruments through which that destination was to be pursued.

At the same time, a serious academic assessment must distinguish between **policy intention, implementation and outcome**. The existence of a policy does not automatically demonstrate its success. A government may establish ambitious objectives while encountering financial constraints, political resistance, institutional limitations, external economic pressures or unforeseen circumstances. Equally, measurable achievements in infrastructure or investment do not necessarily resolve deeper questions concerning governance, inequality, accountability and political inclusion.

The historical significance of the Second Republic will ultimately depend upon whether its promises survive beyond political rhetoric. If the transformation succeeds in creating a more productive economy, stronger institutions, greater social inclusion, improved infrastructure and broader opportunities for citizens, it will constitute a significant chapter in Zimbabwe's post-independence development. If the gap between promises and outcomes remains substantial, historians will instead interpret the Second Republic as an ambitious but incomplete attempt at national renewal.

The concept of the Second Republic is consequently inseparable from the presidency of Emmerson Mnangagwa. His political journey—from liberation struggle and state security responsibilities to senior ministerial office, the vice-presidency and ultimately the presidency—provides the personal and political context within which this new national project emerged. The next section of this chapter can therefore examine **“The Presidency of Emmerson Mnangagwa: Leadership, Governance and the Architecture of the Second Republic,”** before moving into the administration's economic programme, political reforms, international re-engagement and the challenges encountered in implementing Vision 2030.

Economic Transformation

Economic transformation became one of the central pillars of the Second Republic's development agenda. Following the political transition of 2017, the government sought to reposition Zimbabwe from an economy characterised by macroeconomic instability, declining industrial capacity, constrained investment and limited access to international capital towards what it described as an **“open for business” economy**. This economic programme was subsequently connected to **Vision 2030** and the National Development Strategy framework, with the broader objective of creating an empowered and prosperous upper-middle-income society. NDS1 placed particular emphasis on macroeconomic stability, private-sector development, infrastructure, employment creation, value addition and beneficiation.

The economic transformation agenda, however, has not been a simple or linear process. It has involved attempts to balance fiscal discipline with social expenditure, attract foreign and domestic investment while protecting national interests, expand mineral production while encouraging beneficiation, and promote industrialisation in an environment characterised by currency instability, infrastructure constraints, debt challenges and limited access to long-term finance. Consequently, the economic record of the Second Republic requires an assessment that recognises both the reforms undertaken and the continuing structural challenges.

Fiscal Reforms

Fiscal reform was among the most important components of the Second Republic's economic programme. The government inherited an economy in which persistent fiscal pressures, high public expenditure and limited fiscal space had contributed to macroeconomic instability. The reform agenda therefore sought to strengthen revenue mobilisation, improve expenditure management, control the growth of the public wage bill and move public finances towards greater sustainability.

The National Development Strategy established fiscal discipline as a fundamental requirement for economic recovery. Its macroeconomic objectives included keeping fiscal deficits within the SADC benchmark of 3 percent of GDP, reducing debt vulnerabilities and strengthening domestic revenue mobilisation. The underlying philosophy was that government could not sustainably

finance development by continuously expanding expenditure without corresponding growth in productive capacity and revenue.

Fiscal reform was therefore linked to the broader principle of **“living within our means.”** This represented an important change in policy emphasis because economic recovery required the government to restore confidence in public finances while simultaneously financing infrastructure, health, education and other public services. The challenge was to achieve fiscal consolidation without imposing excessive costs on vulnerable households or undermining economic growth.

The government also pursued measures intended to improve tax administration and broaden the revenue base. Increasing formal economic activity, improving compliance and strengthening mechanisms for collecting revenue became increasingly important as Zimbabwe attempted to reduce dependence on monetary financing and other forms of unsustainable fiscal support.

Nevertheless, fiscal reform remained constrained by the country's debt position and limited access to international concessional financing. The World Bank has continued to identify debt distress, arrears and fiscal risks as important constraints on Zimbabwe's economic transformation. Its 2025 assessment nevertheless acknowledged progress in macroeconomic stabilisation while emphasising the need for continued fiscal consolidation and improved domestic revenue mobilisation.

Fiscal reform under the Second Republic can therefore be understood not simply as an exercise in reducing expenditure, but as an attempt to establish the financial foundation necessary for long-term development. Without sustainable public finances, investment in infrastructure, industrialisation and social development becomes increasingly difficult.

Investment Promotion

The declaration that **“Zimbabwe is Open for Business”** became one of the most recognisable economic messages associated with the Second Republic. The slogan represented an attempt to communicate a new approach to domestic and international investment, particularly after years in which Zimbabwe's political and economic environment had discouraged significant external capital inflows.

Investment promotion was subsequently institutionalised through the work of the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency and related government departments responsible for investment facilitation, export development and economic empowerment. The objective was to reduce bureaucratic barriers, improve the business environment and make Zimbabwe more attractive to investors.

The government increasingly presented Zimbabwe as an investment destination based on its mineral resources, agricultural potential, strategic geographical position, educated workforce and infrastructure. Investment opportunities were promoted in mining, manufacturing, energy, agriculture, tourism, infrastructure and other sectors.

Investment promotion also became connected to the **Ease of Doing Business** programme. The intention was to simplify procedures, reduce unnecessary administrative requirements and make interactions between investors and government institutions more predictable. The World Bank has recognised progress in regulatory reforms while also noting that regulatory complexity, fragmented service delivery and para-fiscal charges continue to increase costs for businesses.

The investment strategy therefore reflected a fundamental shift from an economy primarily dependent upon state direction towards one in which the private sector was expected to become a major engine of growth. This did not mean abandoning the state. Rather, government increasingly sought to position itself as a facilitator, regulator and strategic partner in economic development.

At the same time, investment promotion generated debates about the appropriate balance between foreign capital, domestic ownership and economic empowerment. Zimbabwe's evolving investment framework has continued to reserve certain sectors for citizens or impose participation thresholds in particular areas, demonstrating that the “**open for business**” philosophy exists alongside policies intended to promote domestic participation.

Industrial Development

Industrial development became another major component of the economic transformation programme. Zimbabwe historically possessed a relatively sophisticated manufacturing sector, but years of economic difficulties resulted in the closure or deterioration of numerous companies, declining industrial capacity and increased dependence on imported manufactured goods.

The Second Republic therefore sought to revive domestic production and restore Zimbabwe's industrial base. Government policy emphasised industrial competitiveness, import substitution, local production, value addition and the resuscitation of companies considered strategically important to the economy.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce identifies industrial development responsibilities that include supporting industrial growth, facilitating the resuscitation of closed and distressed companies, promoting value addition and import substitution, and strengthening the competitiveness of Zimbabwean industry.

A particularly important development was the renewed emphasis on **value chains**. Instead of exporting raw agricultural and mineral commodities and importing finished products, the policy objective increasingly became one of processing Zimbabwean resources domestically. In theory, such an approach could create employment, strengthen domestic enterprises, increase exports and retain a larger proportion of the value generated from Zimbabwe's natural resources.

The revival of the iron and steel industry became especially significant in this regard. Steel production has strategic implications for construction, engineering, manufacturing and infrastructure development. Its revival was therefore viewed as part of a wider attempt to reconstruct Zimbabwe's industrial ecosystem rather than simply as the recovery of an individual company.

By 2024–2025, official NDS2 assessments reported an increase in manufacturing capacity utilisation, while acknowledging that manufacturing exports remained concentrated in a limited number of subsectors, particularly food processing, beverages and metals.

In 2026, the government also established a **ZiG100 million Industrial Development Fund** intended to provide financing to manufacturers and enterprises engaged in manufacturing and value addition. This illustrates the continuing policy emphasis on industrial revival during the Second Republic.

Mining Expansion

Mining occupies a particularly important position within Zimbabwe's economic transformation strategy. The country possesses substantial deposits of gold, platinum-group metals, chrome, diamonds, lithium and other minerals. Consequently, the Second Republic increasingly presented mining as a major source of investment, foreign-exchange earnings, employment and economic growth.

Mining expansion involved encouraging new exploration, increasing production and attracting capital into mineral extraction. The government also increasingly emphasised **beneficiation and value addition**, seeking to move Zimbabwe beyond the simple extraction and export of raw minerals.

The National Development Strategy specifically identified mining exploration, beneficiation and value addition as important mechanisms for creating employment and increasing foreign-currency earnings.

The expansion of lithium mining became particularly significant during the global growth of demand for battery minerals. Zimbabwe's mineral endowment positioned the country to participate in emerging global supply chains associated with electric vehicles, renewable energy storage and advanced manufacturing.

Yet mining-led transformation also presents difficult policy questions. An economy can record substantial mineral-export growth without necessarily achieving broad-based industrialisation if minerals are exported with limited domestic processing. For that reason, beneficiation has increasingly become a central part of the government's mining philosophy.

There are also questions surrounding environmental protection, community participation, taxation, transparency and the distribution of mineral wealth. The long-term success of mining expansion will therefore depend not simply upon increasing production but upon ensuring that mineral resources contribute to infrastructure, employment, technological development and wider national prosperity.

Special Economic Zones

Special Economic Zones, or SEZs, were introduced as another mechanism for accelerating industrialisation and investment. The concept is based on establishing designated geographical

areas where investors can benefit from specialised infrastructure, streamlined procedures and selected fiscal or regulatory incentives.

For Zimbabwe, SEZs were intended to attract investment into manufacturing, export-oriented production, agro-processing and other productive sectors. Their broader purpose was to create industrial clusters in which companies could benefit from proximity to suppliers, infrastructure, markets and other businesses.

The approach was consistent with the Second Republic's attempt to integrate investment promotion with industrial development. Rather than treating investment as an isolated activity, SEZs could potentially provide an institutional environment in which investment, production, employment and exports reinforce one another.

However, infrastructure has remained a major constraint. The government's own assessment of NDS1 acknowledged that the development of roads, utilities, water, sewerage and communications infrastructure within SEZs and industrial parks remained below potential. This limited the ability of such zones to generate industrial clustering and attract large-scale investment.

This illustrates a broader reality of Zimbabwe's economic transformation: policy incentives alone cannot produce industrialisation. Investors require reliable electricity, water, transport infrastructure, telecommunications, access to finance and predictable regulations. SEZs can become engines of growth only when these supporting conditions exist.

Export Growth

Export growth became an important objective because Zimbabwe requires foreign currency to finance imports of machinery, fuel, medicines, industrial inputs and other essential products. Increasing exports therefore has implications far beyond trade statistics; it is directly connected to macroeconomic stability.

The Second Republic sought to increase exports through mining expansion, agricultural production, manufacturing, tourism and value-added products. Government institutions have also sought to improve Zimbabwean companies' participation in regional and international markets through trade agreements, exhibitions and export-development programmes.

Zimbabwe's participation in **SADC, COMESA and the African Continental Free Trade Area** provides opportunities to expand markets beyond the domestic economy. The country's relatively small population means that long-term industrial growth requires access to larger regional and international markets.

Export diversification remains particularly important. Zimbabwe's export earnings have historically been heavily concentrated in minerals and tobacco. The World Bank has noted that greater export diversification and participation in global value chains could improve productivity and contribute to higher-quality employment.

The challenge, therefore, is not merely to export more, but to **export a wider range of higher-value products**. An economy that exports raw minerals while importing finished manufactured goods remains vulnerable to international commodity-price movements. A transformed economy would increasingly export processed minerals, manufactured goods, processed agricultural products, technology-enabled services and other products with greater domestic value addition.

Export growth consequently became one of the principal tests of whether the Second Republic's economic reforms could translate natural-resource abundance and productive capacity into sustainable international competitiveness.

Financial Sector Reforms

Financial-sector reform represented another essential component of economic transformation. A functioning financial system is necessary for mobilising savings, financing businesses, supporting investment and maintaining confidence in the national currency.

Zimbabwe's financial system has historically been affected by currency instability, inflation, liquidity constraints and limited access to long-term finance. These problems have made it difficult for businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to obtain affordable capital for expansion and modernisation.

The Second Republic therefore sought to strengthen monetary and financial stability alongside broader fiscal reforms. The establishment of a new currency framework, monetary-policy adjustments and measures aimed at stabilising the foreign-exchange market became part of the wider attempt to restore confidence.

The introduction of the **Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG)** currency in 2024 represented another major stage in this process. Subsequent monetary tightening contributed to improved inflation dynamics and a reduction in exchange-rate pressures, although the World Bank continues to describe Zimbabwe's economic recovery as vulnerable and emphasises the importance of sustained structural reform.

Financial-sector reform also involves expanding access to credit. Small and medium-sized enterprises require affordable financing to purchase equipment, employ workers and enter domestic and international markets. Without such financing, industrialisation can remain concentrated among a small number of large companies.

The financial sector therefore has to perform two complementary functions: **maintaining macroeconomic stability and financing economic transformation**. Excessive monetary expansion can undermine currency stability, while excessively expensive or inaccessible credit can suppress productive investment. The challenge for policymakers is to establish a financial environment in which stability and economic expansion reinforce each other.

Economic Transformation and the Second Republic

Taken together, fiscal reforms, investment promotion, industrial development, mining expansion, Special Economic Zones, export growth and financial-sector reforms demonstrate the breadth of the Second Republic's economic agenda. The objective was not simply to achieve short-term economic growth, but to restructure the foundations of Zimbabwe's economy.

The underlying philosophy was that Zimbabwe needed to move from **stabilisation towards structural transformation**. This meant increasing productive capacity, attracting investment, rebuilding industry, exploiting mineral resources, expanding exports and improving the financial environment in which businesses operate.

There have been measurable areas of progress, but the transformation remains incomplete. The country's continuing debt challenges, infrastructure deficits, currency pressures, limited access to long-term capital and concentration of exports demonstrate that economic transformation is a long-term undertaking rather than a single policy intervention. The World Bank's recent assessments similarly point to both stronger economic activity and continuing structural vulnerabilities.

The economic legacy of the Second Republic will depend on whether growth can be converted into **productive employment, industrial competitiveness, higher household incomes and broadly distributed economic opportunity**. Economic transformation cannot be measured only by GDP growth or the value of mineral exports. Its deeper measure is whether Zimbabwe develops an economy capable of creating wealth sustainably, adding value to its resources, supporting entrepreneurship and improving the quality of life of its citizens.

In this sense, the economic transformation programme became one of the most consequential dimensions of the Second Republic. It represented an attempt to redefine Zimbabwe's relationship with investment, production, international markets and its own natural resources—and to place economic recovery at the centre of the country's journey towards **Vision 2030**.

Agricultural Revolution

Agriculture occupies a central position in Zimbabwe's economic and social transformation because it connects food security, rural livelihoods, industrial development, employment, exports and national sovereignty. Under the Second Republic, agricultural policy has increasingly been framed around the transition from vulnerable, predominantly rain-fed production towards a more productive, climate-smart and commercially oriented agricultural economy. The Government's stated agricultural vision is to build a prosperous, inclusive, diverse, sustainable and competitive sector by 2030, with food and nutrition security placed alongside economic development as major objectives.

The agricultural transformation agenda has therefore sought to address several longstanding structural constraints simultaneously: dependence on rainfall, inadequate irrigation, shortages of modern equipment, declining soil fertility, limited access to finance and inputs, livestock diseases, weak value chains and insufficient rural infrastructure. Rather than viewing agriculture merely as subsistence activity, the Second Republic has increasingly presented it as a foundation for industrialisation and rural economic development.

Food Security

Food security has been one of the most important pillars of Zimbabwe's agricultural agenda. The underlying policy objective is to ensure that the country can produce sufficient quantities of staple foods while building reserves capable of protecting the population against droughts, floods, international price shocks and disruptions in global food markets. This objective became particularly significant following the severe 2023/24 El Niño-induced drought, which demonstrated the vulnerability of agricultural systems dependent heavily upon seasonal rainfall.

The response has increasingly emphasised climate resilience, early warning systems, strategic grain reserves, irrigation, drought-tolerant crops and improved agricultural extension. By 2025, improved production conditions had contributed to a substantial recovery in national cereal supplies. FAO estimated that wheat production reached approximately 640,000 tonnes in 2025, while improved cereal production reduced maize import requirements compared with the drought-affected 2024/25 marketing year.

Food security, however, extends beyond maize production. A sustainable food system must provide adequate quantities of cereals, legumes, livestock products, horticultural crops and other nutritious foods. The agricultural revolution therefore has implications for national health, household incomes and human development. A productive agricultural sector also reduces the foreign currency required for food imports and creates opportunities for domestic agro-processing.

The strategic importance of food security is particularly visible in the relationship between agriculture and national sovereignty. A country that is unable to feed its population remains vulnerable to external supply disruptions and international commodity-price movements. Zimbabwe's agricultural transformation has consequently been presented not simply as an economic programme but as an important component of national resilience.

Irrigation Development

Irrigation has emerged as one of the most important instruments for reducing Zimbabwe's vulnerability to climate variability. Rain-fed agriculture remains exposed to delayed rainfall, prolonged dry spells and droughts, making irrigation essential for stabilising production and allowing farmers to produce beyond the traditional rainy season.

Government irrigation programmes have included rehabilitation of existing schemes, construction of new irrigation infrastructure, installation of centre pivots and adoption of water-efficient technologies. The National Accelerated Irrigation Rehabilitation and Development Programme has targeted functional irrigation capacity across districts, while other programmes have sought to expand smallholder irrigation.

The scale of irrigation development illustrates the strategic shift taking place. Official figures indicate that developed irrigation area increased from approximately 171,000 hectares in 2017 to 203,000 hectares in 2022, with numerous irrigation projects completed during the period. More recent agricultural assessments indicate further expansion, reaching approximately 256,598

hectares, although substantial additional development is still required to meet the country's 2030 ambitions.

Irrigation also creates opportunities for crop diversification. Farmers can produce wheat during winter, horticultural products throughout the year and other high-value crops that can supply domestic and export markets. In this respect, irrigation is not merely agricultural infrastructure; it is an investment in rural industrialisation and commercial agriculture.

Wheat Self-Sufficiency

One of the most visible achievements associated with Zimbabwe's agricultural transformation has been the expansion of domestic wheat production. Wheat is strategically important because it is a major component of the national diet and because Zimbabwe historically depended significantly on imports to meet domestic demand.

The expansion of winter wheat production has been supported by irrigation, improved seed, access to finance, mechanisation, technical assistance and collaboration among government institutions, farmers and development partners. FAO reported that thousands of farmers benefited from initiatives supporting wheat production during the 2025 winter season, with irrigation schemes providing an important platform for smallholder participation.

The 2025 wheat harvest represented a major improvement, with FAO estimating production at about 640,000 tonnes—approximately twice the five-year average. Stable electricity availability also helped support irrigation during the winter production cycle.

Wheat self-sufficiency illustrates the broader principle behind the agricultural revolution: strategic commodities can become instruments of economic sovereignty when production capacity, infrastructure, finance and technology are brought together. Nevertheless, maintaining self-sufficiency requires continued investment because wheat production is highly dependent on irrigation, electricity, fertiliser, seed quality and efficient harvesting and storage systems.

Pfumvudza/Intwasa

Pfumvudza/Intwasa has become one of the defining programmes of Zimbabwe's agricultural transformation. It is built around intensive production on relatively small plots, conservation agriculture techniques, efficient use of inputs and moisture conservation. Its central objective is to enable smallholder households to produce meaningful quantities of food even when rainfall is unreliable.

The programme represents an important departure from the assumption that agricultural productivity must depend primarily upon expanding cultivated land. Instead, it emphasises improving yields through better agronomic practices, soil management, timely planting, input support and efficient use of available moisture.

Government policy documents identify Pfumvudza/Intwasa as a cornerstone of climate-smart agriculture, particularly for household food security and the creation of marketable surpluses.

Official agricultural information has also reported substantial increases in maize and sorghum yields under the programme compared with conventional smallholder production.

The significance of Pfumvudza/Intwasa extends beyond crop production. It has introduced millions of rural households to more intensive production methods and has strengthened the idea that smallholder farmers can be active participants in national food systems. At the same time, the programme faces challenges relating to input financing, timely distribution, extension support, market access and the sustainability of heavy dependence on government-supported inputs. These issues will be important as Zimbabwe moves from emergency-oriented food production towards commercially sustainable agriculture.

Rural Modernisation

The agricultural revolution is closely connected to the broader programme of rural modernisation. Zimbabwe's rural communities cannot achieve sustainable agricultural transformation without roads, electricity, irrigation, telecommunications, storage facilities, schools, health services, financial institutions and reliable markets.

Rural modernisation therefore seeks to transform agricultural communities from isolated production zones into integrated economic centres. Improved roads reduce the cost of transporting fertiliser and seed to farms while making it easier for farmers to move produce to markets. Government agricultural policy explicitly recognises farm roads as important infrastructure for connecting farmers to services, inputs and markets.

The transformation of rural areas also creates opportunities for agro-processing. Instead of selling raw maize, milk, meat, fruits, vegetables or other products immediately after harvest, rural communities can increasingly participate in processing, packaging and value addition. This can retain a larger proportion of agricultural income within rural economies.

Rural modernisation consequently changes the social meaning of agriculture. The modern rural economy is expected to contain farmers, agro-processors, transport operators, mechanics, irrigation technicians, retailers, financial-service providers and other entrepreneurs. Agriculture becomes the anchor around which a wider rural economy develops.

Agricultural Mechanisation

Mechanisation represents another major dimension of the agricultural revolution. Traditional dependence upon manual labour and limited animal traction restricts the speed, scale and efficiency of agricultural operations. Modern tractors, planters, harvesters, threshers, irrigation equipment and other machinery can increase productivity while reducing the physical burden on farmers.

Government mechanisation programmes have sought to expand access to tractors and other equipment. Official information indicates that the national tractor fleet increased substantially between 2020 and 2023, supported in part by government bilateral arrangements.

Mechanisation is also being adapted to smallholder agriculture rather than being limited to large commercial farms. The Government has prioritised mechanising Pfumvudza through smaller-scale equipment, including two-wheel tractors, direct planters, multi-crop threshers and trailers.

The long-term importance of mechanisation lies in creating an agricultural sector capable of operating according to commercial rather than subsistence rhythms. Timely land preparation, planting and harvesting can significantly influence yields. Mechanisation can also stimulate rural employment through equipment hire services, maintenance, spare-parts businesses and agricultural engineering.

Yet mechanisation must be accompanied by technical training, affordable financing, fuel availability, spare parts and maintenance infrastructure. Machinery without an effective support ecosystem can quickly become underutilised. The agricultural revolution therefore requires not merely the acquisition of equipment but the development of an entire agricultural engineering economy.

Livestock Development

Livestock development forms an equally important component of Zimbabwe's agricultural transformation. Cattle, goats, sheep, poultry, pigs and other livestock provide food, income, draught power, manure and financial security for rural households. For many farmers, livestock functions as a form of household wealth that can be converted into cash during periods of financial difficulty.

The Government's livestock agenda has included improving genetics, animal nutrition, disease control, extension services, markets and investment. Vision 2030 specifically identifies livestock development, including dairy production and the revival of beef exports, as an important component of agricultural development.

Disease control is particularly important because outbreaks can destroy household wealth and restrict access to domestic and international markets. Strengthening veterinary services, vaccination programmes, biosecurity and livestock identification systems is therefore essential to the development of a competitive livestock industry.

The recovery and expansion of the livestock sector can also contribute to industrialisation. Meat processing, leather production, dairy processing, animal-feed manufacturing, hides and skins, veterinary pharmaceuticals and livestock transport all create opportunities beyond the farm itself.

Agriculture as the Foundation of Vision 2030

Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate that the agricultural revolution is intended to be much broader than increasing annual crop yields. It represents an attempt to reconstruct Zimbabwe's agricultural system around **food sovereignty, climate resilience, irrigation, mechanisation, commercialisation, rural modernisation and value addition.**

The transformation is also closely connected to the wider objectives of the Second Republic. Agriculture supplies raw materials to industry, creates employment, supports exports and provides a foundation for rural development. The Ministry of Agriculture itself identifies food security, economic growth and export development among the core objectives of agricultural policy.

The major challenge moving forward is therefore to transform individual successes into a durable agricultural system. Wheat production must remain competitive, irrigation must continue expanding, Pfumvudza/Intwasa must become increasingly sustainable, mechanisation must reach more farmers, livestock herds must recover and rural infrastructure must keep pace with agricultural production.

Ultimately, the agricultural revolution represents an effort to make Zimbabwe's countryside a central engine of national economic transformation. If sustained through investment, technological innovation, climate resilience, private-sector participation and effective markets, agriculture can move beyond its traditional role as a source of subsistence and become one of the principal foundations of Zimbabwe's journey towards Vision 2030.

Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development has been presented as one of the central pillars of Zimbabwe's broader economic transformation agenda under the Second Republic. Roads, bridges, dams, airports, border facilities, electricity-generation projects, urban infrastructure and water systems constitute the physical foundation upon which economic activity, investment, trade and social development depend. In Zimbabwe's case, infrastructure development has also been framed as a response to decades of inadequate maintenance, limited public investment, economic instability and the deterioration of critical infrastructure. The emphasis on rehabilitation and modernization therefore represents not merely an attempt to construct new facilities, but also an effort to restore the productive capacity of infrastructure inherited from previous administrations and adapt it to contemporary economic requirements.

The infrastructure agenda has been closely connected to the government's broader development vision, particularly the objective of transforming Zimbabwe into an upper-middle-income economy by 2030. Infrastructure is regarded as an enabling sector because improvements in transport, energy, water and urban services can reduce the cost of doing business, improve connectivity between rural and urban communities, facilitate domestic and international trade and encourage investment. The development of infrastructure has consequently been presented as an important component of economic recovery and national modernization.

At the same time, infrastructure development must be evaluated not only in terms of projects announced or physically constructed, but also according to their sustainability, financing arrangements, quality, accessibility and long-term economic impact. A road that is rehabilitated but poorly maintained, a dam that lacks adequate distribution infrastructure, or an airport that cannot generate sufficient traffic illustrates the difference between physical construction and sustainable development. The infrastructure programme therefore raises important questions

concerning public expenditure, procurement, institutional capacity, debt, private-sector participation and equitable geographical distribution.

Road Rehabilitation

Road rehabilitation has occupied a particularly important position within Zimbabwe's infrastructure-development programme. Zimbabwe's road network is strategically significant because it connects agricultural areas with markets, mining districts with processing and export centres, urban populations with rural communities, and the country with neighbouring states. The deterioration of major roads over previous decades increased transportation costs, damaged vehicles, lengthened travel times and constrained the movement of goods and people. Consequently, road rehabilitation has been regarded as a prerequisite for restoring economic connectivity.

Major highway rehabilitation programmes have sought to improve strategic transport corridors connecting Zimbabwe's major cities and economic centres. Roads such as the Harare–Beitbridge highway are particularly significant because they form part of the broader regional trade network linking Zimbabwe to South Africa and other countries in Southern Africa. Improved road infrastructure can facilitate the movement of commercial freight, agricultural commodities, mining products and manufactured goods while strengthening Zimbabwe's position as a regional transit country.

Road development also has an important agricultural dimension. Zimbabwe's agricultural economy depends heavily on the ability of farmers to move inputs and produce between rural areas, collection centres, markets and processing facilities. Poor roads can result in post-harvest losses, increased transport costs and reduced farm-gate prices. Rehabilitation of rural roads therefore has the potential to connect smallholder farmers more effectively with national markets and contribute to rural economic development.

The road programme has also created opportunities for local contractors, construction workers, engineers and suppliers. Large infrastructure projects generate demand for materials such as cement, steel, aggregates, fuel and construction equipment. If procurement and financing are appropriately structured, infrastructure investment can therefore stimulate domestic economic activity beyond the immediate construction site.

However, road rehabilitation requires a long-term maintenance strategy. Infrastructure can deteriorate rapidly if drainage systems are inadequate, traffic loads exceed design capacity or routine maintenance is neglected. Sustainable infrastructure policy must therefore move beyond periodic reconstruction toward preventative maintenance, appropriate road standards and reliable funding mechanisms.

Bridge Construction

Bridge construction has been another important component of Zimbabwe's infrastructure programme. Bridges are critical elements of the national transport network because they enable

roads to cross rivers, valleys and other physical barriers. Their strategic importance becomes particularly visible during periods of heavy rainfall and flooding, when damaged bridges can isolate communities and disrupt commercial transportation.

New bridge construction and the rehabilitation of existing bridges have therefore been associated with improving national connectivity and strengthening disaster resilience. In rural communities, reliable bridges can provide access to schools, hospitals, markets and government services. Their social importance consequently extends beyond transportation.

Bridge infrastructure is also essential to commercial logistics. Freight vehicles transporting goods across Zimbabwe require reliable crossings capable of supporting heavy loads. Weak or damaged bridges can create bottlenecks along major transport corridors, increasing the time and cost associated with moving goods.

From a development perspective, bridge construction should therefore be understood as part of an integrated transport system rather than as isolated engineering projects. The effectiveness of a bridge depends on the condition of the roads leading to it, the availability of drainage systems and the capacity of surrounding transport infrastructure.

Dam Projects

Dam construction and rehabilitation have become increasingly important within Zimbabwe's development strategy because water security is closely connected to agriculture, electricity generation, urban development and climate resilience. Zimbabwe's vulnerability to droughts and variable rainfall makes water-storage infrastructure strategically important for national development.

Large and medium-scale dam projects can provide water for irrigation, livestock production and domestic consumption while also creating opportunities for hydropower generation. Expanding water-storage capacity can reduce Zimbabwe's dependence on seasonal rainfall and allow agricultural production to become more predictable.

Dam projects therefore have implications for food security. Irrigation allows farmers to produce crops beyond the traditional rainy season and can support commercial agriculture as well as smallholder farming. In a country seeking to increase agricultural productivity, reliable water infrastructure is an essential component of modernization.

Dams can also contribute to regional development. New water infrastructure can stimulate agricultural settlements, commercial activities and industrial development around areas previously constrained by water shortages. However, such projects require careful environmental assessment, community consultation and sustainable management of water resources.

The success of dam infrastructure should ultimately be measured by the economic and social activities it enables. Constructing a dam without adequate irrigation networks, electricity infrastructure or water-distribution systems can limit its developmental impact. Integrated planning is therefore essential.

Airport Modernisation

Airport modernization represents another dimension of Zimbabwe's infrastructure transformation. Airports serve as gateways for international tourism, investment, business travel, diplomatic engagement and the movement of high-value goods. Modern airport infrastructure can consequently contribute to Zimbabwe's integration into regional and international economic networks.

The modernization of major airports has sought to improve passenger handling capacity, aviation facilities and overall standards. Improved airport infrastructure can enhance the country's ability to attract tourists and facilitate international business activity.

Tourism is particularly dependent on accessible and efficient aviation infrastructure. Zimbabwe's attractions, including Victoria Falls and its national parks, depend partly on international and regional connectivity. Modern airports can therefore strengthen the tourism value chain by improving access for visitors and reducing logistical barriers.

Airport modernization also has symbolic significance. Modern gateways can influence perceptions of a country's investment environment and administrative capacity. However, infrastructure modernization must be accompanied by efficient airport management, competitive air connectivity, reliable utilities and policies that encourage tourism and aviation growth.

Border Post Upgrades

Border posts occupy a strategic position within Zimbabwe's infrastructure network because the country is landlocked and relies heavily on regional transport corridors. Efficient borders are therefore essential for trade, tourism, freight transportation and the movement of people.

Upgrading border facilities has sought to address congestion, improve customs procedures and strengthen the efficiency of commercial transportation. Modern border infrastructure can reduce the time trucks spend waiting to cross borders, thereby lowering logistics costs and improving regional trade.

The modernization of border posts also supports the broader objectives of regional economic integration. Zimbabwe's position within SADC means that its border infrastructure affects not only domestic commerce but also regional supply chains connecting Southern Africa.

The Beitbridge border post is particularly significant because of its strategic position along the Zimbabwe–South Africa corridor. Improvements at major border crossings can increase the efficiency of freight movement while strengthening Zimbabwe's role as a regional transportation hub.

Nevertheless, infrastructure alone cannot eliminate border congestion. Efficient customs procedures, digital systems, coordinated agencies, adequate staffing and predictable regulatory

requirements are equally important. Physical modernization therefore needs to be accompanied by institutional reform.

Power Generation

Reliable electricity is fundamental to economic transformation. Manufacturing plants, mines, farms, hospitals, schools, businesses and households all depend on dependable power supplies. Zimbabwe's historical electricity shortages have therefore represented a major constraint on economic activity.

Investment in power-generation infrastructure has consequently been treated as a strategic national priority. Expansion and rehabilitation of generation capacity can reduce electricity shortages, support industrial production and improve investor confidence.

Hydropower remains an important component of Zimbabwe's electricity system, while thermal generation and renewable energy have increasingly featured in discussions about diversification. Solar power in particular offers opportunities for expanding decentralized electricity generation, especially in rural areas and institutions that are distant from the national grid.

Power-generation projects also have wider industrial implications. Mining operations require substantial electricity, while manufacturing depends on stable energy supplies for continuous production. Increased electricity availability can therefore contribute to industrial expansion and reduce dependence on expensive alternative power sources.

However, generation capacity must be accompanied by investment in transmission and distribution networks. Electricity produced at a power station cannot contribute fully to economic development if transmission infrastructure is inadequate. Energy-sector transformation therefore requires an integrated approach encompassing generation, transmission, distribution and efficient consumption.

Urban Development

Urban development has become increasingly important as Zimbabwe's population continues to urbanize. Cities such as Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Gweru and Masvingo require adequate housing, roads, drainage, public transportation, waste-management systems, water infrastructure and social services.

Urban infrastructure investment can stimulate economic activity by creating construction jobs, supporting property development and improving the environment for businesses. Well-planned cities can also attract investment and increase productivity by bringing businesses, workers and services closer together.

The modernization of urban infrastructure has nevertheless been complicated by rapid population growth, informal settlements and inadequate municipal capacity. In some urban areas, infrastructure inherited from previous decades has struggled to meet contemporary demand.

Effective urban development therefore requires coordinated planning between central government, local authorities, private developers and communities. Housing development must be connected to water, sanitation, electricity, roads and public services rather than being treated as an isolated construction activity.

Urban modernization also provides an opportunity to rethink Zimbabwe's cities as centres of innovation and economic production. Digital infrastructure, industrial parks, modern public transport and efficient municipal services can help create more productive urban economies.

Water Supply Projects

Water infrastructure represents one of the most fundamental dimensions of national development. Reliable access to clean water is essential for households, agriculture, industry, health institutions and businesses. Zimbabwe's recurring water challenges have therefore made investment in water-supply infrastructure a major development priority.

Water projects seek to expand storage capacity, improve treatment facilities, rehabilitate distribution networks and increase the reliability of urban and rural water supplies. Such investments are particularly important in rapidly growing cities where existing systems may no longer have sufficient capacity.

Water infrastructure also has direct public-health implications. Reliable access to safe water reduces dependence on unsafe sources and supports improved sanitation and hygiene. Consequently, water investment should be understood as both an economic-development intervention and a social-development responsibility.

In rural areas, water infrastructure can support agricultural production, livestock development and community resilience. Boreholes, irrigation systems, dams and water-distribution schemes can reduce the vulnerability of rural communities to drought and improve livelihoods.

The long-term sustainability of water projects, however, depends on maintenance, institutional coordination and responsible resource management. Climate change, population growth and increasing demand place additional pressure on water resources. Zimbabwe's future infrastructure strategy therefore requires not only the construction of new facilities but also effective management of existing water systems.

Infrastructure as a Foundation for Vision 2030

Infrastructure development ultimately represents more than the construction of roads, bridges, airports, dams and power stations. It constitutes the physical foundation upon which Zimbabwe's broader economic transformation agenda depends. Manufacturing cannot expand without reliable electricity and transport; agriculture cannot modernize without irrigation and rural roads; tourism cannot grow without airports and hospitality infrastructure; and regional trade cannot flourish without efficient highways and border facilities.

The infrastructure programme therefore reflects an attempt to address several interconnected development constraints simultaneously. Its potential contribution to Vision 2030 lies in creating an environment in which productive sectors can operate more efficiently, investors can access markets more easily and citizens can access essential services.

Yet the durability of this transformation will depend on the quality of implementation. Infrastructure must be economically productive, financially sustainable, environmentally responsible and accessible to ordinary citizens. Transparency in procurement, effective project management, maintenance programmes and institutional accountability are therefore as important as physical construction.

Infrastructure development can become one of the defining legacies of Zimbabwe's economic transformation if it succeeds in creating durable productive capacity rather than merely visible physical structures. The measure of success will be whether roads reduce transport costs, dams increase agricultural production, airports expand tourism, border posts facilitate trade, electricity supports industry, cities provide efficient services and water projects improve the quality of life of citizens. In this sense, infrastructure is not an end in itself; it is an instrument through which national economic transformation and social development can be pursued.

Education and Human Capital Development

Education occupies a central position in the development philosophy of the Second Republic. In the context of Zimbabwe's broader national transformation agenda, education is not merely understood as the transmission of academic knowledge, but as a strategic instrument for developing human capabilities, strengthening national identity, preparing young people for employment and entrepreneurship, and positioning the country to participate meaningfully in the global knowledge economy. The emphasis on human capital development therefore reflects the recognition that sustainable economic transformation requires citizens who possess not only formal qualifications, but also practical competencies, technological literacy, creativity, problem-solving abilities and an understanding of Zimbabwe's cultural and historical heritage.

The education agenda pursued during the Second Republic has increasingly been connected to the country's wider development objectives, particularly Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy framework. This approach places greater emphasis on linking education to economic productivity, industrialisation, technological advancement and national development. Schools, universities, polytechnics, vocational institutions and innovation centres are consequently viewed as interconnected components of a national human-capital ecosystem. Within this framework, education becomes part of the infrastructure of development itself: roads and dams may provide physical foundations for economic growth, but educated, skilled and innovative citizens provide the intellectual and technical capacity required to design, operate and sustain those systems.

Heritage-Based Education

One of the significant dimensions of Zimbabwe's contemporary educational transformation has been the increased emphasis on **heritage-based education**. The concept seeks to place Zimbabwe's history, culture, traditions, indigenous knowledge systems and national identity more firmly within the educational experience. Rather than treating education as an exclusively imported intellectual tradition, heritage-based education encourages learners to understand their society through the experiences, knowledge and cultural achievements of their own communities.

This approach is particularly important in a country whose modern history has been profoundly shaped by colonialism, the liberation struggle and the subsequent process of nation-building. Education can contribute to national cohesion when learners acquire a balanced understanding of the historical processes that shaped Zimbabwe. Heritage-based education therefore provides an opportunity to connect classroom learning with the country's archaeological, cultural, political and historical inheritance.

The approach also seeks to elevate indigenous knowledge. Zimbabwean communities possess extensive traditional knowledge relating to agriculture, environmental management, medicine, architecture, craftsmanship, conflict resolution and social organisation. Bringing appropriate elements of this knowledge into formal education can create a stronger relationship between modern scientific learning and locally developed knowledge systems.

At its best, heritage-based education should not mean abandoning universal scientific standards or replacing modern knowledge with traditional knowledge. Rather, it can provide a framework in which Zimbabwean learners appreciate their cultural inheritance while acquiring the scientific, technological and analytical competencies required in a modern economy. Such an approach can contribute to the development of confident citizens who understand both where they come from and the demands of the contemporary world.

Heritage-based education also has implications for national identity. A generation that understands its history is better positioned to engage critically with questions of citizenship, responsibility, sovereignty and national development. In this sense, education becomes an important instrument for intergenerational transmission of historical memory.

The challenge, however, is to ensure that heritage-based education remains academically rigorous, inclusive and historically responsible. Zimbabwe's history contains achievements, conflicts, successes, failures and competing interpretations. A mature educational system must therefore encourage learners to study history critically rather than simply memorising predetermined political narratives. The ultimate objective should be the development of informed citizens capable of appreciating national achievements while also engaging constructively with historical complexity.

Innovation Hubs

The development of **innovation hubs** represents another important component of the human-capital agenda. Innovation hubs provide spaces where students, academics, entrepreneurs,

researchers and technology developers can experiment with ideas and transform knowledge into practical products and services.

Zimbabwe's economic transformation requires precisely this type of environment. Universities and colleges cannot remain institutions concerned only with examinations and academic qualifications. They must increasingly become centres of research, invention, entrepreneurship and technological problem-solving. Innovation hubs provide a bridge between education and productive economic activity.

Young people can use such facilities to develop technological solutions in areas such as agriculture, mining, manufacturing, energy, health, information technology and financial services. This is particularly relevant to Zimbabwe because many national development challenges require locally appropriate solutions. Innovation generated within Zimbabwe can respond to local conditions in ways that imported technologies may not always accomplish effectively.

Innovation hubs can also encourage entrepreneurship. Instead of viewing graduation solely as a pathway into formal employment, students can be encouraged to consider themselves potential creators of enterprises and employment opportunities. This represents an important shift in the relationship between education and the labour market.

The development of innovation ecosystems further strengthens cooperation between universities, government institutions, private companies and communities. When research institutions collaborate with industry, academic knowledge can be translated into commercial and developmental applications. Such partnerships can also help ensure that university curricula respond to changing technological and economic requirements.

The success of innovation hubs ultimately depends on more than buildings and equipment. They require mentorship, research funding, intellectual-property protection, access to markets, reliable digital infrastructure and opportunities for innovators to commercialise their ideas. Innovation policy must therefore extend beyond establishing physical centres to creating an ecosystem capable of sustaining creativity.

Universities

Universities remain among the most important institutions in Zimbabwe's human-capital development strategy. They produce teachers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, economists, administrators, researchers and other professionals who sustain the country's institutions and economy.

The expansion and strengthening of university education during the Second Republic can therefore be understood within the broader objective of increasing access to higher education while aligning academic programmes with national development priorities. Universities are increasingly expected to contribute not only graduates but also research, innovation and solutions to national challenges.

A modern university must perform several functions simultaneously. It must preserve knowledge, generate new knowledge, train professionals, support innovation and contribute to society. Zimbabwe's universities therefore have a potentially important role in addressing national priorities such as food security, energy, water management, climate resilience, mining technology, public administration and industrial development.

The relationship between universities and national development is particularly important because Zimbabwe possesses a highly educated population but continues to face challenges relating to the utilisation and retention of skilled professionals. Human-capital development must consequently be accompanied by an economic environment capable of providing opportunities for skilled citizens to apply their knowledge.

University education must also become increasingly research-oriented. Research is the foundation of technological progress and evidence-based policymaking. Universities that produce knowledge relevant to Zimbabwean conditions can make significant contributions to national planning.

At the same time, higher education should maintain academic freedom, intellectual independence and rigorous scholarly standards. The strength of a university is ultimately measured not simply by the number of graduates it produces, but by the quality of its teaching, research, innovation and contribution to society.

Technical Education

Technical and vocational education represents one of the most practical dimensions of human-capital development. Zimbabwe's economic transformation requires artisans, technicians, mechanics, electricians, builders, machinists, agricultural specialists, information-technology professionals and many other technically skilled workers.

Technical education helps bridge the gap between academic qualifications and practical competencies. A development programme involving infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture, mining and energy requires a workforce capable of constructing, maintaining and operating sophisticated systems.

The strengthening of technical and vocational institutions can therefore contribute directly to industrialisation. Instead of regarding vocational education as a secondary alternative to university education, society can increasingly recognise technical competence as an essential component of national development.

This is particularly important for young people entering the labour market. Technical education can provide skills that are directly applicable to employment, entrepreneurship and self-employment. It can also create pathways through which learners can progress from vocational qualifications into higher levels of technical and academic education.

The development of technical education must nevertheless remain responsive to technological change. Modern technicians increasingly require digital literacy, computer-aided design,

automation, data analysis and knowledge of emerging technologies. Vocational education must therefore evolve alongside the industries it serves.

Skills Development

Skills development extends beyond formal academic education. A modern economy requires continuous learning because technologies, industries and occupational requirements change rapidly. Human-capital development must consequently be understood as a lifelong process.

For Zimbabwe, skills development has particular importance in addressing youth unemployment and increasing economic participation. Programmes that equip young people with practical skills can create opportunities in construction, agriculture, manufacturing, ICT, transport, tourism, services and entrepreneurship.

Skills development can also support informal-sector workers by enabling them to improve productivity, quality standards and business management. Small enterprises often represent an important source of employment, and strengthening their technical and managerial capabilities can contribute to broader economic development.

The integration of skills development with industrial policy is therefore essential. Training institutions should maintain close relationships with employers so that graduates acquire competencies that correspond with actual labour-market requirements. Apprenticeships, internships and workplace-based learning can help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

A successful human-capital strategy must also address the challenge of retaining skilled people. When citizens acquire valuable qualifications but cannot find meaningful opportunities to use them, the country risks losing human capital through migration. Consequently, skills development should be accompanied by strategies for employment creation, enterprise development, research opportunities and professional advancement.

Digital Learning

Digital learning has emerged as one of the most consequential transformations in contemporary education. The expansion of information and communication technologies has created opportunities to extend educational resources beyond the traditional classroom and connect learners with knowledge from across Zimbabwe and the wider world.

For Zimbabwe, digital learning can potentially reduce geographical barriers to education. Learners in rural and underserved communities can gain access to educational materials, digital libraries, online courses and interactive learning platforms where adequate infrastructure exists.

Digital education also changes the role of teachers. Rather than serving exclusively as transmitters of information, teachers increasingly become facilitators of learning, mentors and guides who help students evaluate, interpret and apply information.

The digital transformation of education, however, requires substantial investment in infrastructure. Reliable electricity, affordable internet connectivity, devices, digital platforms and teacher training are essential. Without these foundations, digital learning risks reproducing existing inequalities rather than reducing them.

Digital literacy itself has therefore become a fundamental component of human capital. Students must learn not only how to use computers and mobile devices but also how to evaluate information, protect personal data, communicate responsibly online and use technology productively.

The long-term objective is to create an education system capable of preparing Zimbabwean citizens for an increasingly digital economy. From artificial intelligence and software development to digital finance, e-commerce, engineering and modern agriculture, technological literacy will increasingly determine the ability of individuals and institutions to participate effectively in economic life.

Education as an Instrument of National Transformation

The broader significance of education and human-capital development under the Second Republic lies in the attempt to connect knowledge with national transformation. Heritage-based education seeks to strengthen cultural identity; universities generate advanced knowledge; innovation hubs encourage invention; technical institutions produce practical competencies; skills-development programmes improve employability; and digital learning expands access to information and technology.

Together, these initiatives represent an understanding that Zimbabwe's greatest long-term resource is not merely its minerals, land or physical infrastructure, but its people. A country capable of educating, training and empowering its population possesses the intellectual capacity to sustain development beyond individual political administrations and economic cycles.

The ultimate test of the education agenda, therefore, will be its ability to produce a generation that is academically capable, technologically literate, economically productive, historically conscious and prepared to solve Zimbabwe's problems with creativity and confidence. Education becomes transformative when knowledge acquired in classrooms is translated into innovation in laboratories, productivity in factories, efficiency in government, entrepreneurship in communities and solutions to everyday national challenges.

In this respect, human-capital development represents one of the foundational pillars of Zimbabwe's long-term development ambitions. The physical transformation of a nation requires roads, dams, airports, power stations and modern cities, but the intellectual transformation of that nation requires teachers, engineers, scientists, entrepreneurs, researchers, artisans and digitally skilled citizens. The educational agenda of the Second Republic must therefore ultimately be assessed not only by the expansion of institutions, but by the quality, relevance and developmental impact of the citizens those institutions produce.

Health Sector Transformation

Health sector transformation has emerged as an important dimension of Zimbabwe's broader development agenda under the Second Republic. The transformation of healthcare is not simply a question of constructing hospitals or purchasing medical equipment; it involves rebuilding the health system around accessibility, quality, prevention, resilience, technology, professional capacity and financial protection. Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy identified health as fundamental to improving quality of life and linked health-sector reform to the country's ambition of becoming an upper-middle-income economy. The strategy also placed emphasis on increasing domestic health financing and strengthening coordination across the health system.

The significance of this agenda becomes clearer when viewed against Zimbabwe's historical health trajectory. At independence in 1980, healthcare provision was characterised by substantial racial and geographic inequalities. The post-independence government expanded primary healthcare, rehabilitated damaged facilities and constructed new health centres, particularly in previously underserved communities. This created a foundation for a more universal public-health system. The contemporary transformation agenda therefore represents both a continuation of Zimbabwe's historical commitment to widening access and an attempt to modernise infrastructure and services for the demands of a twenty-first-century population.

Hospital Modernisation

Hospital modernisation represents one of the most visible components of health-sector transformation. Zimbabwe's hospitals have historically carried the burden of serving large populations while operating under constraints involving infrastructure, equipment, staffing, medicines and maintenance. Modernisation therefore requires more than cosmetic renovation. It involves upgrading operating theatres, intensive-care units, maternity wards, diagnostic departments, laboratories, pharmacies, emergency units, water and sanitation systems, power supplies, information systems and patient-management processes.

The government's development vision has also placed emphasis on decentralising specialist services. Vision 2030 envisages strengthening district hospitals so that services traditionally concentrated at provincial and central hospitals can increasingly be provided closer to communities. The strategy includes investment in diagnostic capacity such as imaging, X-ray services and medical laboratories, as well as the development of oncology and dialysis services at provincial hospitals. Such decentralisation has the potential to reduce the distance patients must travel for specialised treatment.

Hospital modernisation is consequently connected to the principle of equitable healthcare. A patient living in a remote district should not necessarily have to travel to Harare or Bulawayo for every complex medical procedure. Strengthening provincial and district institutions can create a more balanced referral system in which primary-care facilities, district hospitals, provincial hospitals and central referral institutions operate as interconnected levels of care.

The modern hospital must also be technologically capable. Electronic records, digital appointment systems, telemedicine, electronic laboratory reporting and integrated health-

information systems can reduce administrative delays and improve continuity of care. Zimbabwe's emerging Impilo platform is designed to connect health services, records, diagnostics, telemedicine, public-health functions and other components of the national health system within a unified digital environment.

Modernisation must therefore be understood as institutional transformation. A newly renovated building will not automatically produce better healthcare if medicines are unavailable, equipment remains unused, health workers are insufficient or maintenance systems are weak. Sustainable modernisation requires the simultaneous strengthening of infrastructure, human resources, financing, governance, procurement and accountability.

Rural Health

Rural healthcare remains central to the objective of inclusive national development. Zimbabwe has a geographically dispersed population, and many communities depend heavily on rural health centres, district hospitals, community health workers and outreach programmes. The transformation of rural healthcare therefore means bringing essential services closer to households rather than expecting rural populations to travel long distances to urban centres.

The rural health agenda includes maternal and child healthcare, immunisation, infectious-disease prevention, nutrition, reproductive health, emergency care, treatment of chronic diseases and health education. It also requires reliable electricity, clean water, sanitation, communications infrastructure, medicines and suitable accommodation for health personnel. Without these supporting systems, even a physically impressive rural clinic may struggle to provide continuous services.

Community-based healthcare is particularly important because prevention begins before a patient enters a hospital. Village health workers can provide health education, identify symptoms early, support treatment adherence and connect households with formal health facilities. Recent programmes in Zimbabwe have included extensive training of village health workers in integrated community case management and interpersonal communication, demonstrating the importance of community-level capacity in strengthening the health system.

Rural healthcare transformation must also address the distribution and retention of health professionals. It is insufficient to build facilities if nurses, doctors, laboratory scientists, pharmacists and other specialists are concentrated in major cities. Incentives, accommodation, professional development, appropriate working conditions and career progression are therefore essential components of rural health policy.

The emerging emphasis on specialist training outside major centres is significant in this regard. In 2026, WHO reported continued efforts to strengthen Zimbabwe's health workforce, including training on integrated care for women's cancers involving health professionals working in rural settings. Such initiatives demonstrate how specialist knowledge can increasingly be transferred into communities that historically had limited access to specialised services.

Medical Equipment

Medical equipment is another critical pillar of health-sector transformation. Hospitals require functioning diagnostic machines, laboratory equipment, surgical instruments, intensive-care technology, ambulances, oxygen systems, imaging equipment, dialysis machines and other specialised technologies. Without appropriate equipment, trained medical professionals may be unable to provide the standard of care expected in a modern health system.

Zimbabwe's own development reviews have recognised the deterioration and breakdown of essential medical equipment as a significant challenge. The NDS1 mid-term review identified the servicing and repair of essential equipment and machinery as a priority, highlighting the importance of maintaining existing assets alongside purchasing new ones.

This is an important distinction. Equipment modernisation should not become a cycle in which governments and partners repeatedly purchase expensive machines without creating adequate maintenance systems. Every major investment should therefore include training for operators, spare-parts arrangements, maintenance contracts, technical support and replacement planning.

Medical-equipment distribution must also become more geographically equitable. Concentrating advanced equipment in Harare and Bulawayo creates a system in which rural and provincial patients continue to travel long distances for diagnosis and treatment. The government's stated intention to expand diagnostic and specialised services at district and provincial level reflects an attempt to address precisely this imbalance.

The future of medical equipment is increasingly connected to digital technology. Telemedicine, electronic diagnostics, remote specialist consultation and integrated laboratory systems can allow a doctor in a rural district to consult specialists elsewhere without necessarily transferring the patient. Digital health should therefore complement—not replace—the physical expansion of healthcare infrastructure.

Disease Control

Disease control represents the preventive foundation of health-sector transformation. A modern health system cannot focus exclusively on treating patients after they become seriously ill. It must also detect disease early, prevent outbreaks, vaccinate populations, strengthen surveillance and address the environmental and social conditions that contribute to illness.

Zimbabwe has extensive experience in responding to infectious diseases, including HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and epidemic-prone diseases. Contemporary health planning continues to emphasise epidemic preparedness, vaccination, malaria control, tuberculosis prevention and treatment, HIV services and responses to emerging health threats. WHO's current country framework for Zimbabwe specifically identifies epidemic prevention, rapid detection of health emergencies and improved access to vaccines, medicines and diagnostics as key areas of health-system strengthening.

Disease control must nevertheless evolve alongside Zimbabwe's changing disease profile. Non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and hypertension

increasingly require attention alongside communicable diseases. This means strengthening screening, early diagnosis, chronic-disease management and public education.

Cancer care illustrates the changing nature of Zimbabwe's health priorities. The country's development vision has identified the expansion of oncology services at provincial hospitals as a means of reducing dependence on central referral hospitals. Similar decentralisation is envisaged for renal services, including dialysis.

Public health also depends heavily on water, sanitation, nutrition and environmental management. A healthcare system cannot sustainably control disease when communities lack safe water, sanitation or adequate nutrition. Consequently, health-sector transformation must operate across government rather than being treated as the responsibility of the Ministry of Health alone.

Health Infrastructure

Health infrastructure extends beyond hospitals and clinics. It encompasses roads that allow ambulances to reach patients, electricity systems that keep medical equipment functioning, water supplies that protect patients from infection, telecommunications infrastructure that supports digital health and housing that enables health professionals to work in underserved communities.

This broader understanding of infrastructure is essential in rural Zimbabwe. A clinic without reliable water cannot provide safe maternity services. A hospital without dependable electricity cannot consistently operate critical equipment. A health centre that cannot be reached by an ambulance during the rainy season cannot provide an effective emergency service. Health infrastructure is therefore inseparable from national infrastructure development.

Recent facility-upgrade programmes have demonstrated the importance of these basic systems. UNICEF has reported upgrades to water, sanitation and hygiene services across numerous Zimbabwean health facilities, including facilities in Harare, Chitungwiza and Mutare. Such interventions illustrate how apparently basic infrastructure can have direct consequences for the quality and safety of healthcare.

Infrastructure development should consequently follow a lifecycle approach. Planning should consider construction, operation, maintenance, rehabilitation and eventual replacement. A health facility constructed today must remain functional for decades. This requires maintenance budgets, asset-management systems and clear institutional responsibility.

The development of health infrastructure also provides an opportunity to integrate climate resilience. Hospitals and clinics must increasingly be prepared for heat, drought, floods, disease outbreaks and disruptions to water and electricity supplies. Solar power, water-storage systems, resilient construction and emergency preparedness can help ensure that essential health services continue during crises.

Universal Health Access

Universal health access is ultimately the central objective of health-sector transformation. The measure of a transformed health system is not simply the number of hospitals constructed or medical machines purchased; it is whether ordinary citizens can obtain appropriate, affordable and quality healthcare when they need it.

Universal access requires geographical accessibility, financial affordability, adequate staffing, available medicines, functioning equipment and respect for patients' dignity. It also requires that people with disabilities, older people, women, children and vulnerable communities are not excluded from services.

Zimbabwe's NDS1 explicitly recognised health as a fundamental human right and established objectives around improving quality of life and life expectancy. It also proposed increasing public health expenditure per capita and strengthening health financing mechanisms.

Financial protection is particularly important. A healthcare system may be geographically accessible but still effectively inaccessible if patients cannot afford medicines, diagnostic tests, transport or specialist treatment. Universal health coverage therefore requires attention to how healthcare is financed and how financial risks are distributed across society.

The international understanding of universal health coverage similarly emphasises access to quality essential services while protecting people from financial hardship. WHO's work with Zimbabwe places these objectives within a broader framework encompassing essential medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, health emergencies, data, innovation, governance and health financing.

The transformation of Zimbabwe's health sector should therefore be understood as a long-term nation-building project. Hospital modernisation, rural health expansion, medical equipment, disease control, infrastructure development and universal access are not isolated programmes. They are interconnected elements of one health system.

A modern hospital depends on reliable infrastructure. Rural healthcare depends on trained personnel and functioning referral systems. Medical equipment depends on electricity, maintenance and technical expertise. Disease control depends on laboratories, surveillance, community participation and public education. Universal access depends on all these elements being available together.

The broader significance is that a healthy population is itself a productive national asset. Citizens who can access preventive care, maternal services, emergency treatment, medicines, diagnostics and specialist services are better positioned to participate in education, employment, entrepreneurship and community development. Health-sector transformation therefore contributes not only to human welfare but also to economic productivity and the realisation of Vision 2030.

The Second Republic's health agenda can consequently be interpreted as an attempt to move Zimbabwe from a system primarily concerned with responding to illness toward a more integrated model combining **prevention, primary healthcare, specialised treatment, digital**

innovation, community participation and universal access. The success of this transformation, however, will ultimately depend on sustained financing, professional retention, transparent procurement, infrastructure maintenance and the ability to ensure that improvements reach citizens in both urban and rural communities.

In this sense, health-sector transformation becomes one of the most important measures of whether national development is genuinely inclusive. Economic growth, infrastructure and industrialisation acquire their full meaning only when they improve the quality and dignity of human life. A transformed health sector therefore stands not merely as a government programme, but as a fundamental component of Zimbabwe's broader project of building a modern, resilient and inclusive society.

Industrialisation and Mining

Industrialisation and mining occupy a central position in Zimbabwe's broader programme of economic transformation. For decades, the country has possessed significant mineral resources, a relatively diversified industrial base, substantial agricultural potential, and a skilled workforce. Yet the benefits of these resources have often been constrained by limited investment, infrastructure bottlenecks, outdated machinery, restricted access to capital, policy uncertainty, and the export of raw materials without sufficient processing. The industrialisation agenda of the Second Republic has therefore been framed around rebuilding productive capacity, attracting investment, expanding manufacturing, promoting mineral beneficiation, developing industrial parks, and creating employment opportunities. Within this framework, mining is viewed not simply as a source of foreign currency and government revenue, but as a foundation upon which a wider industrial economy can be constructed.

Lithium Industry

Lithium has emerged as one of the most strategically important minerals in Zimbabwe's contemporary economic development agenda. The global transition towards electric mobility, renewable energy storage and advanced battery technologies has increased international demand for lithium and other critical minerals. Zimbabwe possesses significant lithium-bearing mineral deposits, placing the country within an increasingly competitive global critical-minerals market. The development of the lithium industry has therefore created an opportunity to attract foreign investment, expand mining operations and increase mineral exports.

However, the strategic importance of lithium extends beyond extraction. A central question for Zimbabwe is whether the country can transform itself from an exporter of lithium-bearing ore into a producer of higher-value lithium products and, ultimately, participate in broader battery and energy-storage value chains. This is the principle behind the government's emphasis on mineral beneficiation and restrictions on the export of certain unprocessed lithium ores. The objective is to retain a greater proportion of the mineral's economic value within Zimbabwe.

The development of lithium processing facilities represents an important step towards this objective. Processing requires infrastructure, engineering expertise, energy, transport systems, laboratories, technical services and skilled workers. Consequently, the expansion of the lithium

sector has the potential to stimulate economic activity well beyond the mining sites themselves. Suppliers of machinery, transport companies, construction firms, engineering businesses, financial institutions and professional-service providers can all become part of the emerging mineral value chain.

At the same time, lithium development presents challenges that require careful management. Mining communities must benefit from economic activity, environmental impacts must be controlled, water resources must be responsibly managed, and workers must be protected. The long-term success of the industry will ultimately depend on whether lithium revenues are converted into productive national assets rather than simply consumed as short-term export earnings.

Steel Production

Steel production represents another important component of Zimbabwe's industrialisation ambitions. A country seeking to modernise its infrastructure, expand manufacturing and develop construction industries requires reliable access to steel. Roads, bridges, railways, buildings, machinery, agricultural equipment, power infrastructure and industrial facilities all depend heavily on steel and related products.

Zimbabwe possesses iron-ore resources that provide a foundation for an integrated steel industry. The revival and expansion of large-scale steel production has therefore been associated with the wider objective of restoring Zimbabwe's heavy-industrial capacity. An integrated steel industry can create substantial economic linkages because steel serves as an input into numerous other industries.

The significance of steel production goes beyond the direct employment generated at a steel plant. A functioning steel industry can stimulate downstream manufacturing, including the production of construction materials, engineering components, agricultural implements, vehicle parts and industrial equipment. This creates the possibility of establishing an industrial ecosystem rather than a single isolated mining operation.

Steel production can also contribute to import substitution. Zimbabwe has historically relied heavily on imported industrial products and manufactured goods. Increasing domestic steel production could reduce the need to import certain steel products while creating opportunities for local companies to manufacture goods that were previously sourced externally.

The development of a competitive steel sector will nevertheless require dependable electricity, railway infrastructure, water, skilled personnel, modern technology and access to international markets. Steelmaking is capital-intensive and energy-intensive. Consequently, the success of the sector must be connected to Zimbabwe's broader infrastructure and energy strategies.

Manufacturing Revival

Manufacturing occupies a particularly important place in the industrialisation programme because it provides the bridge between natural resources and finished products. Zimbabwe once

possessed a comparatively diversified manufacturing sector, producing textiles, clothing, food products, chemicals, machinery, metal products and other industrial goods. Economic difficulties, infrastructure constraints, competition from imports and shortages of investment contributed to the decline of portions of this industrial base.

The revival of manufacturing therefore represents an attempt to rebuild productive capacity. Rather than depending predominantly on the export of agricultural and mineral commodities, industrial policy seeks to encourage domestic production and establish stronger connections between agriculture, mining and manufacturing.

A manufacturing revival can have significant multiplier effects. A factory employing hundreds of workers also generates demand for transport, packaging, maintenance, banking, insurance, telecommunications, food services and other supporting businesses. Industrial production therefore creates economic activity throughout the wider economy.

The revival agenda also requires technological modernisation. Many industrial facilities cannot compete effectively if they depend upon obsolete machinery, inefficient production systems and unreliable infrastructure. Modern manufacturing increasingly depends upon automation, digital systems, quality-control technologies, data management and sophisticated logistics.

Consequently, Zimbabwe's industrialisation strategy requires not merely the reopening of old factories but the creation of a more competitive industrial economy. The objective should be to establish industries capable of producing goods that meet international standards and compete both domestically and in export markets.

Value Addition

Value addition is perhaps one of the most important principles underlying Zimbabwe's industrialisation and mining strategy. For a resource-rich country, the central economic challenge is not simply how much mineral wealth is extracted but how much economic value remains within the country after extraction.

When raw minerals are exported without substantial processing, much of the potential economic activity associated with refining, manufacturing and technology development occurs elsewhere. Value addition seeks to reverse this pattern by encouraging processing and manufacturing within Zimbabwe.

In mining, this can involve moving from raw ore to concentrates, refined metals, specialised mineral products and ultimately manufactured goods. In agriculture, the same principle involves transforming crops and livestock products into processed foods, textiles, leather goods and other finished products.

Value addition creates opportunities for skilled employment. Mining a mineral may require geological and engineering expertise, but processing that mineral creates additional demand for chemical engineers, metallurgists, technicians, laboratory specialists, equipment manufacturers and other professionals.

It can also increase export earnings. Finished or semi-finished products generally contain more economic value than unprocessed commodities. If Zimbabwe can successfully develop domestic processing capacity, it can potentially increase the value of its exports without necessarily increasing the volume of raw materials extracted.

The deeper objective is therefore structural transformation: moving Zimbabwe from a predominantly commodity-exporting economy towards a diversified production economy in which natural resources become inputs into domestic industrial development.

Industrial Parks

Industrial parks provide an institutional and physical framework for bringing industrial activity together. They can provide businesses with access to infrastructure such as electricity, water, roads, telecommunications, waste-management systems and other shared services.

For Zimbabwe, industrial parks can be particularly important in encouraging decentralised industrialisation. Instead of concentrating industrial activity exclusively in Harare and a few major urban centres, industrial parks can be developed in different provinces and communities according to local economic strengths.

A mining-oriented industrial park, for example, could host companies involved in mineral processing, engineering, equipment maintenance and mineral-related manufacturing. An agricultural industrial park could support food processing, packaging, cold storage, milling and agricultural machinery.

The development of industrial parks can also reduce the barriers faced by smaller businesses. A new manufacturer may find it prohibitively expensive to establish its own electricity, water, transport and waste-management infrastructure. Shared facilities can reduce these costs and make investment more attractive.

Industrial parks can therefore become centres of innovation and enterprise. When companies operate close to one another, they can develop supplier relationships, exchange technical knowledge and create specialised labour markets.

For industrial parks to succeed, however, they must be more than designated pieces of land. They require reliable infrastructure, transparent investment procedures, efficient administration, access to finance and strong connections to domestic and international markets.

Job Creation

Job creation is ultimately one of the most important social objectives of industrialisation and mining. Economic growth becomes meaningful to ordinary citizens when it creates opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, skills development and improved household incomes.

Mining can create direct employment through exploration, extraction, engineering, transportation, processing and site management. However, its wider employment potential comes

from the industries that emerge around mining operations. Local suppliers can provide equipment, food, accommodation, transport, construction services, security, maintenance and professional services.

Manufacturing can generate even broader employment opportunities. Factories require production workers, technicians, engineers, managers, accountants, logistics specialists, marketing professionals and maintenance personnel. Small and medium-sized enterprises can also develop around major industrial companies, creating additional employment.

Industrialisation therefore has the potential to address the structural problem of an economy in which many young people struggle to find formal employment. By expanding productive sectors, Zimbabwe can create pathways from education and vocational training into meaningful economic participation.

Job creation must nevertheless be accompanied by skills development. Modern mines, factories and processing facilities increasingly require technically competent workers. Universities, polytechnics, vocational colleges and industrial training institutions therefore have a critical role to play in preparing Zimbabweans for emerging industrial occupations.

The ultimate measure of the industrialisation programme should consequently not be the number of factories, mines or investment projects announced, but the extent to which these activities generate **productive employment, domestic value, technological capacity, exports and sustainable improvements in living standards**.

Industrialisation as a Foundation for Economic Transformation

The industrialisation and mining agenda represents an attempt to reconnect Zimbabwe's natural-resource wealth with domestic economic development. Lithium, iron ore, steel, manufacturing, mineral beneficiation and industrial parks can become interconnected components of a broader production system.

The challenge is to ensure that mineral wealth does not remain isolated from the rest of the economy. Mining should stimulate manufacturing; manufacturing should create demand for local suppliers; industrial parks should support entrepreneurs; skills institutions should provide the required workforce; and infrastructure should connect production centres to domestic and international markets.

In this sense, industrialisation is not simply about building factories or expanding mines. It is about **changing the structure of the Zimbabwean economy**—from one heavily dependent on the export of primary commodities towards one increasingly capable of processing resources, manufacturing goods, developing technology, creating employment and competing in regional and global markets.

The vision is ultimately one of a Zimbabwe in which its mineral wealth becomes a catalyst for broader national development: **resources feeding industry, industry creating employment,**

innovation increasing productivity, and productive capacity strengthening economic sovereignty.

Foreign Policy and Re-engagement

The foreign policy of Zimbabwe under President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa has been presented as a central component of the broader transformation agenda of the Second Republic. After years of diplomatic isolation, economic sanctions, strained relations with several Western governments, and a difficult international image, the administration sought to reposition Zimbabwe within the regional, continental and global community. The guiding philosophy was encapsulated in the policy of **“Engagement and Re-engagement,”** which sought to expand diplomatic relations, attract investment, strengthen economic partnerships and restore Zimbabwe's participation in international affairs.

The policy emerged within the context of the government's broader **“Zimbabwe is Open for Business”** message. Foreign policy was therefore increasingly linked to economic diplomacy. Embassies and diplomatic missions were expected not only to represent Zimbabwe politically, but also to promote trade, tourism, investment, technology transfer and international cooperation. The government sought to move away from a foreign-policy approach centred primarily on political confrontation and towards one that emphasised dialogue, economic partnerships and national development.

At the same time, Zimbabwe's foreign policy continued to emphasise sovereignty, independence and the principle that national interests should remain at the centre of international relations. The government argued that Zimbabwe should maintain relationships with different geopolitical centres rather than becoming dependent upon a single bloc. This approach encouraged simultaneous engagement with African institutions, China, Russia, the European Union, BRICS-associated economies and other international partners.

Engagement and Re-engagement Policy

The **Engagement and Re-engagement Policy** became one of the defining diplomatic concepts of the Second Republic. Its fundamental objective was to reopen channels of communication with countries and institutions with which Zimbabwe had experienced strained relations. The government presented this approach as a diplomatic reset designed to overcome historical disagreements while creating opportunities for investment, trade and development cooperation.

The policy represented an attempt to separate political disagreements from the practical requirements of national development. Zimbabwe needed foreign investment, access to international markets, development finance, technological partnerships and stronger diplomatic relationships. Consequently, engagement became closely associated with the country's economic recovery strategy.

The re-engagement programme also sought to rebuild Zimbabwe's international reputation. Diplomatic missions were encouraged to communicate the country's investment opportunities, natural resources, agricultural potential, tourism attractions and industrial capabilities. The objective was to create a more favourable international environment in which Zimbabwe could attract capital and strengthen its participation in the global economy.

The approach did not mean that all disagreements disappeared. Questions concerning governance, human rights, elections, sanctions and the rule of law continued to influence Zimbabwe's relations with Western governments and international organisations. Nevertheless, the government maintained that dialogue was preferable to diplomatic isolation and that engagement provided a platform through which disagreements could be addressed.

SADC Relations

The **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** remained one of the most important pillars of Zimbabwe's foreign policy. Zimbabwe's geographical position, economic relationships and historical links with neighbouring states make regional cooperation fundamental to its national interests.

Zimbabwe has traditionally played an important role in SADC institutions and regional political processes. Under the Second Republic, regional diplomacy remained important in addressing issues involving economic integration, security, infrastructure, energy, trade and political stability.

SADC also provides Zimbabwe with access to regional markets and transportation corridors connecting the country to ports in neighbouring states. Cooperation with countries such as South Africa, Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana is therefore not merely diplomatic; it has direct implications for Zimbabwean businesses, farmers, manufacturers and exporters.

Regional cooperation has also been significant in relation to electricity shortages, food security, transportation infrastructure and cross-border commerce. The regional framework allows Zimbabwe to pursue national development while participating in broader efforts to strengthen Southern Africa's economic integration.

The relationship with SADC has also been politically significant. Zimbabwe has frequently emphasised the principle of regional solidarity and the importance of African institutions in resolving African political challenges. This perspective has shaped Harare's approach to questions of sovereignty, elections, sanctions and regional security.

African Union

The **African Union (AU)** occupies another important position within Zimbabwe's foreign-policy architecture. Zimbabwe has consistently regarded continental institutions as essential mechanisms for defending African sovereignty, promoting development and strengthening collective bargaining power in international affairs.

The Second Republic has continued to participate in AU programmes concerning economic integration, peace and security, infrastructure, agriculture and development. Zimbabwe's foreign policy has consequently been connected to continental initiatives such as **Agenda 2063**, which seeks to promote a prosperous, integrated and peaceful Africa.

Zimbabwe's engagement with the AU also reflects its wider commitment to Pan-African diplomacy. The government has argued that African countries should increasingly resolve continental problems through African institutions rather than depending exclusively upon external powers.

Continental cooperation is particularly important as African countries attempt to increase intra-African trade and reduce dependence upon the export of unprocessed commodities. Zimbabwe's mineral resources, agricultural production and manufacturing ambitions provide opportunities for deeper participation in African markets.

BRICS Partnerships

The growth of **BRICS** has provided Zimbabwe with another avenue for expanding its international economic relationships. Zimbabwe has sought stronger relations with emerging economic powers as part of its broader strategy of diversifying international partnerships.

BRICS represents an alternative centre of economic and diplomatic influence in the evolving international system. For Zimbabwe, closer relationships with BRICS countries can potentially provide access to investment, infrastructure financing, technology, markets and development cooperation.

Zimbabwe's interest in BRICS must also be understood within the broader transformation of the global economy. Emerging economies have become increasingly influential in international trade, finance, energy and technology. Zimbabwe therefore sees diversification towards these economies as an opportunity to reduce excessive dependence upon traditional Western markets and financial institutions.

The BRICS relationship also fits within Zimbabwe's broader policy of pursuing a **multi-aligned foreign policy**. Rather than defining itself exclusively through membership of one geopolitical camp, Zimbabwe seeks relationships with multiple centres of global power.

China

China has emerged as one of Zimbabwe's most significant international economic partners. Sino-Zimbabwean relations have deep historical roots, extending back to China's support for African liberation movements. Under the Second Republic, these relations have increasingly acquired an economic and developmental character.

Chinese companies have participated in infrastructure, mining, energy, telecommunications, agriculture and construction projects in Zimbabwe. Chinese investment has therefore become visible across several sectors of the national economy.

The relationship has also provided Zimbabwe with access to technology, capital and infrastructure-development expertise. Projects involving airports, power generation, telecommunications and mining have reinforced China's importance as an economic partner.

From Zimbabwe's perspective, China's development experience offers lessons concerning industrialisation, infrastructure development and economic transformation. The government has frequently presented China as an example of how long-term investment in productive capacity can contribute to national development.

However, the China relationship also requires careful management. Zimbabwe must ensure that foreign investment produces sustainable benefits, supports local employment, strengthens domestic industries and contributes to technological transfer. The challenge is therefore to transform investment relationships into broader national development partnerships.

Russia

Relations between Zimbabwe and Russia have also expanded under the Second Republic. Russia has historically maintained diplomatic relations with Zimbabwe, and the two countries have cooperated in areas including mining, agriculture, education, defence and energy.

Russia's role has become particularly relevant within Zimbabwe's strategy of maintaining diversified international relationships. Cooperation with Moscow provides another avenue through which Zimbabwe can pursue economic and technological partnerships outside traditional Western frameworks.

The relationship has also acquired significance because of Zimbabwe's broader emphasis on sovereignty and non-alignment. Harare has sought to maintain diplomatic relations with Russia while simultaneously engaging other international powers.

The practical value of the relationship, however, depends upon the extent to which diplomatic cooperation translates into investment, trade, technology and tangible development outcomes for Zimbabwe.

European Union

The relationship between Zimbabwe and the **European Union** has undergone gradual transformation as part of the re-engagement agenda. Historically, relations were affected by disputes concerning governance, elections, human rights and Zimbabwe's domestic political environment.

The Second Republic sought to reopen diplomatic and political dialogue with European institutions and individual European countries. This created opportunities for cooperation in areas such as agriculture, health, education, trade, climate change and development assistance.

The European Union remains economically important because European markets can provide opportunities for Zimbabwean agricultural products, minerals, manufactured goods and tourism.

Re-engagement with Europe has therefore involved both political dialogue and economic diplomacy. Zimbabwe has sought to communicate its investment opportunities while European partners have continued to raise questions concerning governance, democratic institutions and human rights.

The relationship illustrates the complexity of modern diplomacy: countries can disagree on political questions while simultaneously cooperating on development and economic matters.

International Investment

International investment represents one of the most important practical objectives of Zimbabwe's foreign-policy strategy. The government has increasingly treated diplomacy as an instrument for attracting capital into productive sectors of the economy.

Zimbabwe possesses significant mineral resources, agricultural potential, tourism assets and opportunities for infrastructure development. The country's foreign-policy institutions have therefore been expected to support investment promotion by presenting Zimbabwe as a viable destination for international capital.

The mining sector has been particularly important. Gold, platinum-group metals, lithium, diamonds and other minerals have attracted international interest. The government's challenge is to ensure that investment generates value beyond the extraction of raw resources.

This has encouraged greater emphasis on **beneficiation and value addition**. Instead of exporting minerals in their raw form, Zimbabwe seeks investment capable of establishing processing and manufacturing industries domestically.

International investment is similarly important in agriculture, energy, infrastructure, manufacturing and technology. Successful investment can generate employment, increase exports, improve productive capacity and expand government revenues.

Nevertheless, attracting investment requires more than diplomatic goodwill. Investors require predictable regulations, reliable infrastructure, access to foreign currency, energy security, transparent institutions and confidence in the protection of property and contractual rights. Consequently, foreign policy and domestic institutional reform are closely interconnected.

A Multi-Polar Foreign Policy

The foreign policy of the Second Republic can ultimately be understood as an attempt to establish Zimbabwe within an increasingly **multi-polar international system**. Instead of relying upon one geopolitical relationship, the government has sought to maintain connections with Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and emerging economic powers.

This strategy reflects Zimbabwe's belief that national development requires broad international partnerships. The country's future economic prospects depend upon its ability to trade, attract investment, access technology and participate in regional and global markets.

The central test of the Engagement and Re-engagement policy is therefore not simply the number of diplomatic meetings conducted or agreements signed. Its deeper measure is whether diplomatic relationships translate into tangible improvements in Zimbabwe's economy and society.

If foreign policy successfully attracts investment, expands exports, develops infrastructure, creates employment, strengthens technology transfer and opens international markets, diplomacy becomes a direct instrument of national development. In this sense, the Second Republic has attempted to redefine foreign policy as an extension of economic transformation.

At the same time, Zimbabwe's international engagement remains part of a continuing national debate concerning sovereignty, democratic governance, human rights, sanctions, investment and the country's position within the changing global order. The lasting significance of the re-engagement strategy will therefore depend upon Zimbabwe's ability to balance sovereignty with openness, national interests with international cooperation, and diplomatic partnerships with measurable development outcomes.

Digital Zimbabwe

The emergence of **Digital Zimbabwe** represents one of the most consequential dimensions of Zimbabwe's broader transformation agenda under the Second Republic. In an increasingly interconnected global economy, digital technology is no longer merely an instrument for communication or administrative convenience; it has become a strategic component of national development, economic competitiveness, public-sector reform, education, healthcare, financial inclusion, industrialisation and national security. Zimbabwe's digital transformation agenda therefore reflects an attempt to position technology at the centre of the country's long-term development ambitions and to ensure that the benefits of technological advancement reach citizens, businesses, institutions and communities across the country.

The digital transformation agenda has developed alongside the government's wider objective of building a modern, efficient and knowledge-based economy. The concept of a digital Zimbabwe encompasses the expansion of information and communication technologies, electronic government services, innovation ecosystems, artificial intelligence, smart infrastructure and the development of a digital economy. These areas are interconnected. Effective e-government requires reliable ICT infrastructure; innovation depends upon connectivity and human capital; artificial intelligence requires data and computational capacity; smart cities require integrated digital infrastructure; while a digital economy requires citizens and businesses capable of participating meaningfully in technology-enabled markets.

E-Government

E-government represents one of the most visible applications of digital transformation in the relationship between the state and its citizens. Traditionally, interaction with government

institutions has often required physical visits to offices, extensive paperwork, manual verification processes and lengthy administrative procedures. Digital government seeks to change this model by allowing citizens and businesses to access public services through electronic platforms. The transformation is significant because it has the potential to make government more accessible, efficient, transparent and responsive.

The development of e-government can reduce the administrative burden placed upon citizens. Applications, registrations, payments, licensing procedures, documentation and other public services can increasingly be delivered electronically, reducing the need for repeated physical visits to government offices. For businesses, digital government can reduce transaction costs and improve the speed with which enterprises interact with regulatory institutions. For citizens living outside major urban centres, digital services can potentially narrow the geographical distance between communities and the state.

A digitally enabled government can also strengthen administrative coordination. Government departments traditionally operating through separate information systems can progressively move towards interoperable platforms in which information can be shared securely between authorised institutions. Such integration can reduce duplication, improve record management and create more reliable administrative databases. It can also strengthen the government's capacity to plan public services on the basis of more accurate and timely information.

However, e-government is not simply a matter of putting existing government forms online. Genuine digital transformation requires the redesign of public-sector processes. Inefficient procedures cannot automatically become efficient simply because they are digitised. The transformation therefore requires institutional reform, investment in cybersecurity, data protection, digital identity systems, interoperable databases, reliable connectivity and a public service workforce capable of operating within a modern digital environment.

E-government also raises important questions concerning inclusion. A digital service is only genuinely accessible if citizens have the connectivity, devices, skills and financial capacity necessary to use it. Rural communities, elderly citizens, persons with disabilities and economically disadvantaged households may face greater barriers to digital participation. Digital government must therefore be accompanied by digital inclusion policies so that technology does not unintentionally create a new form of inequality between citizens who are digitally connected and those who remain excluded.

ICT Infrastructure

The foundation of Digital Zimbabwe is its ICT infrastructure. Without reliable telecommunications networks, broadband connectivity, data centres, cloud infrastructure and electricity supplies, digital transformation cannot reach its full potential. ICT infrastructure is therefore not simply a technological sector; it is increasingly part of the country's basic economic infrastructure.

Zimbabwe's geographical position and regional connections provide opportunities for strengthening its digital connectivity with the wider Southern African region and international

markets. Expansion of broadband networks, mobile connectivity and fibre-optic infrastructure can support businesses, schools, hospitals, government departments and households. Improved connectivity can also facilitate remote work, online education, electronic commerce, digital financial services and access to global information.

Infrastructure development must nevertheless address the digital divide. Connectivity in major urban centres does not automatically translate into universal digital access. Rural and remote communities require deliberate investment if they are to participate fully in the digital economy. The objective should therefore be to move beyond connectivity concentrated around major cities towards a genuinely nationwide digital infrastructure network.

Electricity is equally important. Data centres, telecommunications towers, computers, mobile networks and digital services all depend upon reliable energy. Digital transformation and energy transformation are therefore closely connected. Investments in renewable energy, distributed power systems and reliable electricity infrastructure can contribute indirectly to the expansion of digital services.

Cybersecurity must also form part of ICT infrastructure planning. As more government and commercial activities move online, the risks associated with cybercrime, data breaches, identity theft and attacks on critical infrastructure increase. A modern digital state must therefore invest not only in connectivity but also in secure networks, cybersecurity expertise, institutional preparedness and public awareness.

Innovation

Innovation provides the creative engine of Digital Zimbabwe. A country's technological progress cannot depend exclusively on importing technologies developed elsewhere. Zimbabwe requires an environment in which universities, entrepreneurs, researchers, businesses and young innovators can develop solutions to local and regional challenges.

Innovation hubs, technology centres and entrepreneurship programmes can provide spaces where ideas are converted into practical products and services. Such institutions can bring together students, software developers, engineers, researchers, investors and entrepreneurs. Their importance extends beyond technology itself because they can create pathways through which knowledge becomes enterprise, enterprise becomes employment and innovation becomes economic value.

Zimbabwe's universities have a particularly important role to play in this process. Higher education institutions can become centres of research and development, supporting work in artificial intelligence, agriculture technology, biotechnology, engineering, renewable energy, fintech and other emerging fields. Stronger partnerships between universities and industry can ensure that academic research responds to practical economic challenges.

Innovation should also be connected to Zimbabwe's existing economic strengths. Digital technologies can transform agriculture through precision farming, remote sensing, weather information and digital markets. Mining can benefit from automation, geological data analysis

and digital monitoring. Manufacturing can adopt advanced production technologies, while tourism can utilise digital marketing and online booking systems. Technology therefore has the potential to become an enabling layer across virtually every sector of the economy.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is emerging as one of the defining technologies of the twenty-first century. For Zimbabwe, the challenge is to ensure that AI becomes an instrument for national development rather than a technology that simply widens the gap between advanced economies and developing countries.

AI has potential applications across public administration, healthcare, education, agriculture, finance, manufacturing and scientific research. Government institutions could potentially use AI-assisted systems to analyse large volumes of information, identify patterns, improve service delivery and support evidence-based policymaking. In healthcare, AI can assist with diagnostic support, medical research and health-system planning. In agriculture, intelligent systems can contribute to crop monitoring, weather analysis and agricultural decision-making.

Education represents another major opportunity. Artificial intelligence can support personalised learning, automated assessment, language technologies and access to educational resources. Zimbabwe's multilingual environment also creates opportunities for developing technologies capable of supporting local languages and improving access to digital information for communities that may not primarily use English.

Yet AI must be approached with responsibility. The development and deployment of artificial intelligence raises questions concerning privacy, misinformation, employment, algorithmic bias, intellectual property, cybersecurity and accountability. Zimbabwe's digital transformation must therefore ensure that technological innovation is accompanied by appropriate ethical and regulatory frameworks.

Artificial intelligence also presents a human-capital challenge. The country requires computer scientists, engineers, data scientists, software developers, cybersecurity specialists and researchers capable of developing and governing emerging technologies. Building such skills requires investment in mathematics, science, technology, engineering and digital education from primary school through university and professional training.

The strategic objective should not simply be to become a consumer of artificial intelligence created elsewhere. Zimbabwe can aspire to become a regional participant in AI development by cultivating local research, entrepreneurship and specialised applications addressing African challenges. African countries possess distinctive social, linguistic, economic and environmental contexts that require technological solutions adapted to their realities.

Smart Cities

The concept of smart cities introduces digital technology into the physical environment in which citizens live and work. A smart city integrates technology, data and infrastructure to improve urban management and public services. For Zimbabwe, this concept is particularly relevant as cities expand and face growing demands for housing, transportation, water, sanitation, energy, waste management and public safety.

Smart-city development can involve intelligent traffic management, digital public transport systems, smart electricity networks, automated waste-management systems, digital water monitoring, integrated emergency services and data-driven urban planning. Such technologies can help municipalities understand how infrastructure is being used and identify areas requiring investment.

The development of smart cities must nevertheless remain citizen-centred. Technology should not become an objective in itself. The ultimate purpose of a smart city is to create a safer, more efficient, sustainable and liveable urban environment. Digital systems should therefore be evaluated according to whether they improve the daily experience of citizens.

Zimbabwe's major urban centres provide potential platforms for this transformation. Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Gweru and other growing cities face complex infrastructure challenges that could increasingly be addressed through integrated digital planning. Smart-city initiatives could also support the emergence of new commercial districts, technology parks and digitally enabled industrial zones.

The smart-city concept must, however, avoid creating technologically advanced enclaves surrounded by communities that remain poorly serviced. Urban digital transformation should be accompanied by inclusive housing, transport, water, sanitation, energy and connectivity policies. Smart development must ultimately mean **inclusive development**.

Digital Economy

The development of a digital economy represents perhaps the broadest objective of Digital Zimbabwe. A digital economy is one in which technology influences how goods and services are produced, distributed, marketed, purchased and consumed. It encompasses e-commerce, digital financial services, online platforms, software development, telecommunications, digital content, fintech, remote work and technology-enabled entrepreneurship.

Zimbabwe has opportunities to expand its participation in this economy by supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs. Digital platforms can enable businesses to reach customers beyond their immediate geographical locations. A small enterprise in one part of the country can potentially market products nationally and internationally through online platforms, while digital payment systems can make transactions faster and more convenient.

The digital economy can also contribute to employment creation. Traditional employment models are increasingly being supplemented by freelancing, remote work, software development, digital marketing, online education, creative industries and technology-based entrepreneurship.

Zimbabwe's educated and youthful population could become an important source of digital labour if appropriate skills, connectivity and entrepreneurial support are available.

Diaspora participation provides another opportunity. Zimbabweans living abroad possess skills, networks and capital that can contribute to the country's digital transformation. Digital platforms can facilitate knowledge transfer, investment, remote professional services and collaboration between Zimbabwean professionals abroad and institutions at home.

For the digital economy to expand sustainably, however, Zimbabwe must create a supportive business environment. Entrepreneurs require access to finance, reliable connectivity, affordable devices, appropriate regulation, intellectual-property protection and markets. Small businesses must also be supported in developing digital literacy and cybersecurity awareness.

The growth of the digital economy should therefore be viewed as part of the wider economic transformation agenda. Digitalisation can increase productivity in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, financial services, tourism and logistics. It can make businesses more competitive, connect producers with markets and create new categories of employment.

Digital Inclusion and the Citizen

At the centre of Digital Zimbabwe must ultimately be the citizen. A technologically advanced country cannot be measured solely by the number of fibre-optic cables, smartphones, data centres or online platforms it possesses. The real measure of digital transformation is whether ordinary citizens experience meaningful improvements in their lives.

Digital inclusion requires affordability, accessibility, skills and confidence. Citizens need access not only to devices and connectivity but also to the knowledge required to use technology safely and productively. Digital literacy should therefore become an essential component of education and lifelong learning.

Women and young people deserve particular attention within this transformation. Digital technologies can create opportunities for entrepreneurship, education, employment and participation. At the same time, barriers to access can reproduce existing social and economic inequalities. Digital policy must therefore ensure that technological progress benefits communities broadly rather than concentrating opportunities among a small technologically privileged population.

Digital Zimbabwe and Vision 2030

Digital transformation is ultimately connected to the broader ambition of creating an upper-middle-income economy and a modern, knowledge-driven society. The digital agenda supports this objective by improving government efficiency, strengthening economic competitiveness, promoting innovation, developing human capital and opening new avenues for investment.

The transformation also has implications for Zimbabwe's position within Africa. As African economies become increasingly integrated through digital commerce, financial technology and regional connectivity, countries that develop strong digital ecosystems will possess significant advantages. Zimbabwe therefore has an opportunity to position itself as a regional centre for technology, innovation, digital services and knowledge production.

The future of Digital Zimbabwe will depend upon whether technological transformation becomes sufficiently broad, inclusive and sustainable. The country must combine infrastructure investment with education, innovation, cybersecurity, responsible regulation and entrepreneurship. It must ensure that rural communities participate alongside urban centres, that young people acquire relevant skills, and that businesses are able to convert digital opportunities into productive economic activity.

Digital Zimbabwe should consequently be understood not merely as a programme of computerisation, but as a broader transformation of the relationship between citizens, institutions, markets and technology. Its ultimate purpose is to create a Zimbabwe in which technology becomes an instrument of development, innovation becomes an engine of prosperity, government becomes more accessible, and citizens possess the skills and opportunities necessary to participate in the global knowledge economy.

The success of this agenda will ultimately be determined by implementation. Digital transformation requires sustained investment, institutional coordination, public-private partnerships and a willingness to continuously adapt to technological change. If these conditions are achieved, digitalisation can become one of the important pillars supporting Zimbabwe's transition towards a more productive, connected, innovative and globally competitive economy.

Chapter Four

Leadership and Governance

Leadership is one of the most consequential dimensions of political development because it determines how national institutions are directed, how public resources are prioritised, how citizens relate to the State, and how a country responds to moments of crisis and opportunity. In examining the leadership of President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, it is therefore necessary to move beyond personality and political rhetoric and consider the ideas, principles and governing priorities that have been associated with the Second Republic since 2017. The leadership philosophy presented by the administration has been closely connected to the concepts of national unity, peace, constitutionalism, economic transformation and inclusive development. Vision 2030, for example, places governance, inclusive growth, social development, infrastructure and macroeconomic stability among its principal pillars.

The question of leadership is particularly important in Zimbabwe because the country's political history has been shaped by liberation, conflict, constitutional transformation, economic difficulties, contested elections and debates about the relationship between political authority and democratic institutions. The Second Republic consequently inherited not only an economy requiring transformation but also a political system in which public confidence, institutional accountability and national cohesion remained significant concerns. Mnangagwa's leadership has sought to present itself as a departure toward a developmental and reform-oriented state. Whether that departure is fully realised remains a matter for historical assessment, but the stated philosophy provides an important framework for understanding the government's political and developmental programme.

Servant Leadership

The concept of servant leadership begins with the proposition that political authority exists fundamentally to serve society. A leader is not merely the holder of office but a custodian of national interests, public institutions and the welfare of citizens. Within the philosophy articulated by the Second Republic, development has frequently been presented as the principal measure of governmental responsibility. The emphasis on infrastructure, agriculture, health, education, industrialisation, digital transformation and social services reflects an understanding that leadership must ultimately translate political authority into tangible improvements in people's lives.

For Mnangagwa, this philosophy has been expressed through the language of a developmental State. Vision 2030 describes the objective as creating an empowered and prosperous upper-middle-income society by 2030, while emphasising broad-based transformation, employment, economic opportunity and improved quality of life. Such a vision places the citizen at the centre of development policy and presents government as an instrument through which national resources and institutions are mobilised for socioeconomic advancement.

Servant leadership also requires an appreciation of the distinction between authority and service. Political office gives leaders constitutional powers, but those powers are not intended to become personal possessions. The Constitution establishes public institutions within a framework of accountability and defines governance as a public responsibility. Parliament, for example, explicitly identifies its constitutional mandate as including representation of citizens and holding the Executive and public institutions to account.

In this sense, the philosophy of servant leadership should be judged not simply by speeches or policy declarations but by institutional performance. A government may describe itself as people-centred, but the ultimate test is whether citizens experience better public services, greater economic opportunity, stronger institutions and equal treatment before the law. Leadership becomes meaningful when policy objectives are converted into measurable outcomes.

The Second Republic's focus on national projects illustrates this developmental conception of leadership. Roads, dams, airports, hospitals, schools, irrigation systems, energy projects and digital infrastructure have been presented as components of a broader national modernisation programme. The philosophy behind such projects is that government must create the physical and institutional foundations upon which citizens and businesses can prosper.

Servant leadership also demands responsiveness. Zimbabwe is characterised by significant differences between urban and rural communities, between formal and informal economic sectors, and between established commercial centres and marginalised communities. A government committed to serving citizens therefore has to recognise these differences and design policies capable of reaching people beyond the traditional centres of economic and political power.

The emphasis on devolution provides another dimension to this philosophy. The Ministry of Local Government describes devolution as part of its mandate and identifies its vision as creating prosperous communities through devolved governance by 2030. Devolution, when effectively implemented, can bring decision-making closer to citizens and make public administration more responsive to local priorities.

Yet servant leadership also carries an important accountability principle. Service cannot be separated from transparency. Leaders entrusted with public resources must explain how those resources are used, why particular decisions are taken and what results are achieved. Consequently, the credibility of a servant-leadership philosophy depends upon the strength of oversight institutions, public participation, parliamentary scrutiny, auditing and judicial independence.

The philosophy therefore creates a demanding standard for political leadership. It asks whether the State is genuinely organised around the welfare of citizens rather than the convenience of political elites. It also requires political leaders to accept criticism as part of democratic governance rather than treating disagreement as disloyalty.

Mnangagwa's emphasis on development can consequently be understood as an attempt to redefine political legitimacy around performance. Economic growth, infrastructure construction,

agricultural productivity, industrialisation and investment are treated as evidence of governmental effectiveness. This approach places substantial responsibility upon the administration because developmental promises become measurable against actual economic and social outcomes.

A further characteristic of servant leadership is continuity. National development cannot depend exclusively upon individual personalities. A leader who genuinely serves the State should strengthen institutions capable of continuing national programmes beyond one administration. Public institutions, professional civil services, local authorities, universities and independent regulatory bodies must therefore become stronger rather than weaker under political leadership.

Zimbabwe's constitutional framework reinforces this institutional perspective. The Public Service Commission states that its mandate includes promoting constitutional values and principles throughout the public service, while its responsibilities include ensuring effective administration and addressing grievances within the public service.

Servant leadership also requires humility in the exercise of political power. The State is larger than the individual who temporarily occupies the highest office. Presidents eventually leave office, while constitutions, institutions and national communities remain. The enduring contribution of a political leader should therefore be measured by the institutions strengthened, opportunities created and national problems addressed.

In the Zimbabwean context, this philosophy has particular importance because the country's developmental challenges cannot be solved by government alone. Business, labour, civil society, traditional leaders, churches, universities, professional organisations, young people and communities all have roles to play. Leadership therefore involves creating conditions in which different sectors can contribute to national development.

The concept of servant leadership ultimately provides a moral framework for evaluating the Second Republic. Its strongest expression would be a State in which political power is understood as a responsibility, public resources are administered transparently, institutions serve citizens efficiently, and development reaches communities across the country. Its success or failure must consequently be evaluated through evidence rather than political slogans.

National Unity

National unity occupies a central place in Zimbabwe's political history. The country emerged from a prolonged liberation struggle and subsequently confronted difficult questions concerning political reconciliation, regional identity, historical grievances and competing political traditions. National unity therefore represents more than a ceremonial principle. It is a prerequisite for the stability required to pursue long-term development.

The Second Republic has repeatedly presented national unity as a foundation of its political programme. In official statements, Mnangagwa has associated national dialogue and political

cooperation with the broader objective of creating a stable environment for development. In a 2019 address concerning Zimbabwe-South Africa relations, he described the need for Zimbabweans to work together and linked political dialogue with the achievement of Vision 2030.

National unity, however, should not be confused with political uniformity. A united nation does not necessarily mean that citizens hold identical political opinions. Democratic unity allows disagreement while maintaining a shared commitment to the constitutional order and peaceful coexistence. Opposition parties, civil society organisations, journalists, academics and ordinary citizens may disagree with government while remaining equally Zimbabwean.

This distinction is important because a mature political system must create space for pluralism. Unity becomes sustainable when citizens believe that they can disagree without being excluded from national life. The challenge for leadership is therefore to build a political culture in which political competition does not automatically become national division.

Zimbabwe's constitutional framework provides the institutional foundation for this conception of unity. Constitutional governance recognises citizens as members of a common political community whose rights and responsibilities are protected by law. National unity therefore becomes a constitutional and civic project rather than merely a political slogan.

The history of the Unity Accord remains especially significant in understanding Zimbabwe's approach to reconciliation. The 1987 agreement between ZANU and PF-ZAPU represented an important attempt to end political conflict and establish a broader national political settlement. Its historical legacy continues to shape discussions about unity, reconciliation and the responsibilities of political leadership.

Mnangagwa's own political career is intertwined with this history, having served in senior government positions during periods of profound political transformation. His later emphasis on national unity can therefore be understood partly within the longer historical trajectory of Zimbabwean state-building.

National unity also has an economic dimension. Investors, businesses and communities require political stability to make long-term decisions. Infrastructure projects require continuity, while industrialisation requires confidence that policies will remain sufficiently predictable. Political instability can consequently impose economic costs on the entire population.

Unity similarly matters for national emergencies. Natural disasters, droughts, epidemics and economic shocks do not discriminate according to political affiliation. Effective responses require citizens and institutions to cooperate around common objectives. Leadership must therefore cultivate a sense of shared national responsibility.

The concept of unity also has a generational dimension. Younger Zimbabweans did not experience the liberation struggle directly, yet they inherit both its achievements and its unresolved questions. Leadership must therefore communicate national history in ways that educate rather than permanently divide generations.

National unity should also embrace Zimbabwe's ethnic, regional and cultural diversity. The country is composed of communities with distinct historical experiences, languages, traditions and identities. A modern national identity must therefore accommodate diversity rather than attempt to erase it.

Inclusive national unity further requires attention to people living outside the country's borders. Zimbabwe has a substantial diaspora whose economic, professional and social contributions remain important to national life. A modern conception of unity should recognise the diaspora as part of the wider Zimbabwean national community.

The greatest challenge is converting unity from political language into institutional practice. Citizens must see evidence that national institutions treat people fairly regardless of political affiliation, geographical location or social status. Equality before the law remains essential to the credibility of national reconciliation.

Political dialogue is consequently an important instrument of unity. Dialogue does not require political actors to surrender their convictions. Instead, it provides mechanisms for managing disagreement without violence. The long-term strength of a democracy can often be measured by its capacity to resolve conflict peacefully.

National unity therefore represents both an objective and a continuing process. It must be renewed through institutions, education, dialogue, economic opportunity and respect for constitutional rights. For the leadership philosophy of the Second Republic, unity is presented as a condition for development; for Zimbabwean society, its deeper significance lies in creating a country where political differences do not destroy the possibility of common citizenship.

Patriotism

Patriotism constitutes another important component of political leadership. In its constructive form, patriotism is a commitment to the welfare, sovereignty, dignity and future of one's country. It is not simply emotional attachment to national symbols; it involves accepting responsibilities toward fellow citizens and contributing to national development.

The political tradition from which Mnangagwa emerged places considerable importance on the liberation struggle and the defence of Zimbabwean sovereignty. Patriotism is consequently connected to the historical sacrifices associated with independence and the belief that political sovereignty must be protected and consolidated through national development.

The modern challenge is to translate liberation-era patriotism into a developmental patriotism appropriate to the twenty-first century. For younger generations, patriotism must encompass education, innovation, entrepreneurship, scientific research, environmental protection, public service and technological advancement.

A patriotic citizen is therefore not merely one who celebrates national achievements. Patriotism also involves confronting national problems honestly. Corruption, poverty, unemployment, poor service delivery and institutional weaknesses cannot be ignored in the name of patriotism. Genuine commitment to Zimbabwe requires the courage to identify problems and participate in solving them.

The same principle applies to political leadership. A government can demonstrate patriotism through policies that strengthen domestic productive capacity, promote local industries and encourage value addition. The emphasis placed by the Second Republic on industrialisation, mining beneficiation and agricultural transformation reflects this understanding of economic sovereignty.

Patriotism also has an international dimension. Zimbabwe cannot develop in isolation from the region and global economy. International investment, technology transfer, trade and diplomatic partnerships can contribute to national development when managed in accordance with national interests.

The philosophy of "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" can therefore be interpreted alongside economic patriotism. Opening the country to investment does not necessarily mean abandoning national interests. The objective is to attract capital, technology and markets while ensuring that Zimbabweans benefit through employment, skills development, taxation, infrastructure and value addition.

Patriotism also requires protection of national institutions. The Constitution, Parliament, courts, public service and local authorities are not merely administrative structures; they are components of national sovereignty. Strengthening them strengthens the country itself.

For the younger generation, patriotic leadership must therefore provide opportunities rather than merely patriotic rhetoric. Young people are more likely to develop a strong attachment to their country when they can access quality education, meaningful employment, entrepreneurship opportunities and avenues for civic participation.

Patriotism further requires national responsibility from citizens. Development cannot be the sole responsibility of government. Communities must protect infrastructure, businesses must operate responsibly, professionals must contribute their expertise, and citizens must participate constructively in public life.

The concept of patriotism can also coexist with criticism. A citizen who criticises government policy may do so precisely because they want the country to improve. Democratic patriotism therefore allows criticism while rejecting violence, hatred and the destruction of national institutions.

The leadership challenge is to create a national identity broad enough to include different political and social perspectives. Patriotism becomes stronger when citizens feel that Zimbabwe belongs to all of them rather than to a particular political constituency.

The developmental emphasis of Vision 2030 provides one institutional expression of this approach. The vision seeks a prosperous and empowered Zimbabwe by 2030 and identifies inclusive growth, infrastructure, social development and governance as central pillars.

Patriotism ultimately becomes meaningful when national pride is accompanied by national responsibility. The measure of love for country is therefore not simply what citizens say about Zimbabwe but what they contribute toward building it.

Peace

Peace is indispensable to development. Roads cannot be sustainably constructed in environments of permanent conflict; schools cannot function effectively where communities are destabilised; investors cannot make long-term commitments where political violence is normalised; and citizens cannot enjoy their rights where fear dominates public life.

The Second Republic has presented peace and stability as essential conditions for economic transformation. In official diplomatic remarks, Mnangagwa linked peace and stability with political openness, democratic development and the implementation of reform programmes.

Zimbabwe's historical experience makes this emphasis particularly significant. The liberation struggle, post-independence conflicts, political violence and economic crises have demonstrated the enormous human and institutional costs of instability. A responsible leadership philosophy must therefore regard peace not as an abstract ideal but as a practical national asset.

Peace, however, should not be defined merely as the absence of armed conflict. A society can be formally peaceful while experiencing political intimidation, social exclusion, economic injustice or institutional discrimination. Sustainable peace requires citizens to believe that disputes can be resolved through lawful and peaceful mechanisms.

Political dialogue is consequently one of the foundations of peace. Institutions must provide avenues through which competing political interests can negotiate, debate and seek compromise. Democratic elections, parliamentary debate, courts and independent commissions all contribute to the peaceful management of disagreement.

Peace also requires responsible political communication. Leaders influence the political temperature of society through their language. Statements that encourage tolerance and dialogue can reduce tensions, while inflammatory rhetoric can deepen divisions.

At the community level, peace depends upon social cohesion. Traditional leaders, churches, civil society organisations, schools and community organisations can play important roles in resolving disputes before they become larger conflicts.

Economic development is similarly connected to peace. Unemployment, inequality and exclusion can create social tensions. Inclusive development therefore serves not only economic purposes but also contributes to political stability.

Peace also has a regional dimension. Zimbabwe's stability affects its neighbours, particularly through migration, trade, transport corridors and shared natural resources. Regional cooperation within SADC therefore contributes to Zimbabwe's broader peace and security environment.

The defence and security institutions have constitutional responsibilities that must operate within the law. Professionalism, discipline and respect for constitutional rights are essential to ensuring that security contributes to national stability rather than becoming a source of political tension.

Peace also requires justice. Reconciliation without acknowledgement of suffering can remain incomplete. Historical grievances must be approached through responsible national conversations that seek truth, healing and coexistence.

The Second Republic's emphasis on dialogue can therefore be viewed as part of a wider attempt to establish mechanisms for managing political disagreement. The effectiveness of such mechanisms ultimately depends upon their inclusiveness, credibility and capacity to produce meaningful outcomes.

Peace also creates the conditions for investment. Businesses require predictable environments in which property, contracts and commercial activities can be protected. International investors similarly consider political and institutional stability when assessing opportunities.

At the citizen level, peace creates freedom to live, work, study and participate in society without fear. It enables communities to plan for the future and allows government to concentrate resources on development rather than crisis management.

Ultimately, the philosophy of peace requires political leaders to understand that power is temporary while the nation is permanent. Political victories achieved through division may provide short-term advantage but can impose long-term costs upon society.

For Zimbabwe, peace should therefore be understood as a national development strategy as much as a political principle. It is the environment within which constitutional democracy, economic transformation and social progress can flourish.

Constitutional Governance

Constitutional governance represents the institutional foundation upon which the other principles of leadership must rest. It means that political power is exercised according to a constitutional framework rather than according to the personal preferences of those holding office.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe, enacted in 2013, provides the country's principal legal framework for governance and establishes the responsibilities of State institutions. Its significance is therefore central to understanding any discussion of leadership under the Second Republic.

The administration has repeatedly presented constitutionalism as an important element of its governance philosophy. Vision 2030 identifies rule of law, human rights, freedoms, transparency, accountability, equity, inclusivity and public participation among the principles underpinning its governance pillar.

Constitutional governance requires institutions to operate within defined powers. The Executive, Parliament, judiciary, commissions, local authorities and public services each have distinct responsibilities. Strong governance therefore depends upon cooperation between institutions without eliminating their independence.

Parliament's role is especially important. Its stated mandate includes making laws for good governance, representing the people and holding the Executive and public institutions to account. Such oversight is not an obstacle to effective leadership; it is a fundamental component of democratic leadership.

Constitutional governance also requires respect for fundamental rights. Citizens must be able to participate in public life, express opinions, access justice and receive equal treatment under the law. The credibility of the State is closely connected to how these rights are protected in practice.

Accountability is equally important. Public officials exercise authority on behalf of citizens and must therefore be answerable for their decisions. Strong institutions create mechanisms through which mistakes can be identified and corrected.

Transparency strengthens accountability by allowing citizens to understand government decisions. Public procurement, expenditure, development projects and policy choices should therefore be subject to appropriate public and institutional scrutiny.

Constitutional governance also requires an effective professional public service. The Public Service Commission's mandate expressly includes promoting constitutional values and principles throughout the public service.

Local governance forms another important component. Devolution can bring decision-making closer to communities, enabling local authorities to respond to local development priorities. Zimbabwe's official local-government framework identifies devolved governance as part of its long-term development vision.

The concept of constitutional governance also places limits upon political power. A strong president does not necessarily mean an unrestricted president. Democratic strength is demonstrated when leaders operate effectively while remaining accountable to the Constitution.

This principle is particularly important during periods of national crisis. Emergencies, economic difficulties and political disputes can test the resilience of constitutional institutions. The temptation to concentrate power can increase during difficult periods, making institutional safeguards especially important.

Constitutionalism also provides continuity. Governments change, ministers change and political parties evolve, but constitutional institutions provide the stable framework within which these transitions occur.

For the Second Republic, therefore, constitutional governance is both a stated objective and an ongoing test. Its historical evaluation will depend upon the extent to which constitutional principles become embedded in everyday administration, political competition and public institutions.

A mature constitutional democracy does not eliminate political conflict. Instead, it provides lawful mechanisms through which conflict can be managed. This is ultimately the deeper significance of constitutional governance: it transforms political power from personal authority into institutionally regulated public responsibility.

Inclusive Development

Inclusive development represents the economic and social expression of the leadership philosophy of the Second Republic. Development is considered inclusive when its benefits extend beyond a narrow section of society and reach different regions, social groups, economic sectors and generations.

Vision 2030 explicitly describes its objective in terms of broad-based transformation, wealth creation and expanding economic opportunities, with the stated aspiration that no Zimbabwean should be left behind. This places inclusion at the centre of the country's long-term development narrative.

The idea of inclusion is particularly important for Zimbabwe because economic opportunity has historically been unevenly distributed. Urban centres, rural communities, mining regions and agricultural areas face different development challenges. National development therefore requires policies that recognise these differences.

Agriculture provides one important example. Rural development, irrigation, mechanisation, livestock production and agricultural value addition can create opportunities beyond major cities. Such programmes can simultaneously address food security, employment and rural incomes.

Infrastructure is another mechanism of inclusion. Roads, bridges, electricity, water systems, airports and digital networks connect communities to markets and public services. Infrastructure therefore has economic value but also social value.

Education is perhaps the most important long-term instrument of inclusive development. A country cannot achieve sustainable transformation if large sections of its population lack access to quality education and relevant skills.

Healthcare similarly determines whether citizens can participate productively in economic life. Modern hospitals, rural health facilities, medical equipment and disease-control systems contribute directly to human capital.

Youth inclusion is especially important. Zimbabwe has a large young population, making employment, entrepreneurship, technical skills and digital education central to the country's future. Development policies that fail to create opportunities for young people risk producing economic frustration and outward migration.

Women's participation is equally important. Inclusive development requires women to have meaningful access to education, finance, entrepreneurship, employment and political participation.

Digital transformation has created another opportunity for inclusion. ICT infrastructure can connect rural communities to education, financial services, government services and global markets. Zimbabwe's digital-development agenda is therefore increasingly linked to broader economic transformation.

Industrialisation provides an additional dimension. Manufacturing, mining value addition and industrial parks can create employment and reduce dependence on the export of unprocessed commodities. The policy objective is not simply to produce more but to capture greater value within Zimbabwe.

Mining is particularly significant because Zimbabwe possesses substantial mineral resources. Inclusive development requires that mining contribute to national development through investment, employment, taxation, skills development, infrastructure and domestic value addition.

Devolution can further support inclusion by allowing provinces and local authorities to identify and implement development priorities suited to their circumstances. The official local-government framework connects devolved governance with socioeconomic development at community level.

Inclusive development must also include persons and communities that are economically vulnerable. Social protection, affordable healthcare, access to education, housing and employment opportunities are essential components of a development model that seeks to improve quality of life.

The broader philosophy is therefore that economic growth should be accompanied by social transformation. GDP growth alone cannot adequately measure national progress if citizens continue to lack access to basic services and economic opportunities.

Ultimately, inclusive development provides perhaps the clearest test of the leadership philosophy of the Second Republic. Servant leadership asks whether government serves citizens; national unity asks whether citizens feel part of one nation; patriotism asks whether national interests are prioritised; peace creates the environment for progress; constitutional governance establishes the rules; and inclusive development determines whether the benefits of national progress actually reach the people.

Leadership as a National Responsibility

The six principles examined in this chapter—servant leadership, national unity, patriotism, peace, constitutional governance and inclusive development—can therefore be understood as interconnected elements of a broader leadership philosophy. None can exist effectively in isolation. Development without constitutional governance can weaken institutions; constitutional governance without inclusive development can produce formal democracy without socioeconomic transformation; patriotism without tolerance can become exclusionary; unity without pluralism can suppress legitimate disagreement; and peace without justice can become merely the absence of open conflict.

The leadership philosophy associated with the Second Republic is consequently best understood as a developmental and state-building project. Its stated ambition is to create a prosperous, empowered and modern Zimbabwe by 2030, supported by governance reform, economic transformation, infrastructure development, human-capital investment and social inclusion.

Yet history will ultimately judge leadership not by the language used to describe it but by the institutions it leaves behind and the lives it changes. The enduring question is whether the philosophy of leadership can become embedded within the everyday functioning of the State. If it does, the Second Republic's contribution will extend beyond individual political personalities and become part of Zimbabwe's longer institutional and developmental history.

This Chapter therefore establishes leadership as the bridge between political vision and national outcomes. The succeeding discussion can examine how this philosophy has been translated into the practical machinery of government, public administration, institutional reform, accountability and the delivery of development programmes.

Vision 2030

Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 represents the central long-term development ambition of the Second Republic: to transform the country into a **“Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle Income Society by 2030, with Job Opportunities and a High Quality of Life for its Citizens.”** The vision was launched in 2018 and was designed to move national planning away from short-term crisis management toward a coordinated programme of economic transformation, social development, infrastructure modernisation and institutional strengthening. Its architecture was built around successive five-year development strategies, beginning with the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) for 2021–2025 and followed by the National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2) for 2026–2030.

The significance of Vision 2030 lies not simply in its numerical economic target, but in its attempt to define what development should mean for ordinary Zimbabweans. The official vision links economic growth to employment, improved living standards, social services, infrastructure, innovation and empowerment. It therefore presents development as a multidimensional process in which national prosperity must ultimately be reflected in the quality of life experienced by citizens. This approach also places Zimbabwe's development agenda within the wider frameworks of **African Union Agenda 2063** and the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**, creating an explicit connection between national priorities and continental and global development commitments.

National Development Strategy I

National Development Strategy 1 was conceived as the first major five-year implementation instrument for Vision 2030. Covering 2021–2025, NDS1 followed the Transitional Stabilisation Programme and sought to establish the foundations required for sustained economic growth, wealth creation and social development. Its objectives included strengthening macroeconomic stability, promoting inclusive economic growth, supporting enterprise and employment creation, strengthening social infrastructure and safety nets, protecting the environment, promoting good governance and modernising the economy through information and communication technologies.

NDS1 was therefore broader than a conventional economic recovery programme. Its priorities included economic growth and stability, food security and nutrition, governance, value-chain development and structural transformation, human-capital development, environmental protection, climate resilience, housing, ICT and the digital economy, health, transport infrastructure and utilities, international engagement, social protection, youth development, sport, culture and devolution. This broad policy architecture reflected the understanding that economic transformation cannot be separated from investment in people, institutions and infrastructure.

The strategy also represented an attempt to place stakeholder participation at the centre of national planning. According to the Government's NDS1 documentation, the strategy was developed through structured consultations involving fourteen thematic working groups. This was important because national development requires more than government policy declarations; it requires coordination among government, business, labour, communities, civil society, development partners, academia and other stakeholders.

NDS1's historical importance can therefore be understood as the foundation phase of Vision 2030. It sought to stabilise and modernise the economy while laying the groundwork for more ambitious structural transformation. The strategy was expected to create the conditions under which investment, entrepreneurship, industrialisation, infrastructure development and human-capital formation could accelerate during the second half of the decade.

At the same time, assessing NDS1 requires distinguishing between **policy ambition and measurable outcomes**. Development strategies are ultimately judged not only by the programmes they announce but by whether they improve productivity, incomes, employment, public services and living standards. The transition from NDS1 to NDS2 therefore represents an

opportunity to consolidate successful interventions while addressing shortcomings revealed by implementation.

National Development Strategy II

National Development Strategy 2 constitutes the second five-year implementation phase of Vision 2030, covering **2026–2030**. It is intended to build upon the achievements and lessons of NDS1 while intensifying structural transformation and positioning Zimbabwe for the final stage of the Vision 2030 programme. The Government's NDS2 document identifies structural transformation through investment across value chains as an important mechanism for achieving sustainable and inclusive growth.

The transition from NDS1 to NDS2 is particularly significant because the second strategy begins with a different economic baseline from the one envisaged when Vision 2030 was initially formulated. Government's NDS2 documentation reports that Zimbabwe's GNI per capita was estimated at **US\$3,242 at the end of 2025**, following average real economic growth of approximately 5.6% over 2021–2025. The document attributes this performance to factors including agricultural recovery, mining performance and easing inflation under a more stable exchange-rate environment.

NDS2 consequently places greater emphasis on the transformation of economic structures rather than simply the expansion of aggregate output. The objective is to move Zimbabwe from dependence on the export of largely unprocessed commodities toward a more sophisticated economy in which agriculture, mining, manufacturing, technology and services generate greater domestic value.

This distinction is critical. A country can record economic growth without achieving broad-based development. Vision 2030 therefore requires growth that creates productive employment, expands domestic enterprise, improves household incomes, increases fiscal capacity and strengthens public services. NDS2 must consequently be understood as an instrument for converting economic growth into **structural and social transformation**.

Upper Middle Income Economy

At the heart of Vision 2030 is the ambition to transform Zimbabwe into an **upper-middle-income economy**. The original Vision 2030 framework expressed this aspiration through a target of substantially increasing income per capita, expanding employment, reducing poverty and improving access to electricity, water, education, healthcare and other essential services.

The phrase “upper middle income” should therefore not be interpreted merely as a statistical classification. It represents a broader aspiration for Zimbabwe to develop a diversified and productive economy capable of generating higher incomes and improved living standards. It implies stronger productive capacity, greater industrial sophistication, improved infrastructure, competitive enterprises and a growing middle class.

The challenge is that income growth alone does not guarantee equality or social wellbeing. An upper-middle-income Zimbabwe must also confront disparities between urban and rural communities, formal and informal workers, different provinces, young and older citizens, and households with different levels of access to education, healthcare, technology and finance.

Consequently, the credibility of Vision 2030 depends on whether national growth is sufficiently **inclusive**. Development must reach communities outside the major metropolitan centres and must provide opportunities for young people, women, entrepreneurs, farmers and workers. Economic transformation must be measured not only through GDP and national income but through employment, household welfare, productivity and access to essential services.

The World Bank's income classification provides an international benchmark, while Zimbabwe's own Vision 2030 establishes broader national objectives. NDS2 notes that the World Bank's upper-middle-income benchmark is based on GNI per capita and identifies a threshold of at least US\$4,516 in its planning framework. The same document indicates that Zimbabwe entered NDS2 substantially closer to that benchmark than it had been at the beginning of NDS1.

Industrialisation

Industrialisation is one of the most important mechanisms through which Vision 2030 can become a tangible economic reality. Zimbabwe possesses significant agricultural, mineral and human resources, but the long-term objective is to move beyond the export of raw materials toward **value addition, beneficiation, manufacturing and technologically sophisticated production**.

Industrialisation means creating an economy in which minerals are processed domestically, agricultural products enter modern value chains, manufactured goods are produced locally and Zimbabwean companies increasingly participate in regional and international markets. Such transformation can generate employment while increasing the value retained within the domestic economy.

The mining sector illustrates this principle particularly clearly. Zimbabwe's mineral resources provide substantial opportunities, but exporting raw minerals captures only part of their potential economic value. Beneficiation and downstream processing can create additional industries, technical skills, supply chains, tax revenues and employment.

Industrialisation also requires reliable electricity, efficient transport systems, water infrastructure, industrial parks, access to finance, skilled labour and predictable regulatory institutions. Consequently, industrial policy cannot operate in isolation from infrastructure, education, financial-sector reform and governance.

For Zimbabwe, the industrialisation agenda is therefore closely connected to the development of **domestic productive capacity**. A stronger manufacturing sector can reduce dependence on imported goods, increase exports, strengthen local supply chains and create opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Modern Infrastructure

Vision 2030 places infrastructure at the centre of national transformation because productive economic activity depends upon reliable physical and digital networks. Roads, bridges, airports, border facilities, electricity systems, water infrastructure, telecommunications and urban services constitute the foundation upon which modern economic activity is built.

Infrastructure development also has a direct social dimension. Improved roads can connect rural communities to markets and hospitals. Reliable electricity can support businesses, schools and healthcare institutions. Modern water systems can improve public health. Digital connectivity can expand access to education, financial services, government services and employment opportunities.

The original Vision 2030 framework included ambitious targets for household electricity and water access, including substantial improvements in rural electrification and universal access to improved water sources. These objectives demonstrate that infrastructure was conceived not merely as an economic input but as part of the broader quality-of-life agenda.

Modern infrastructure must also be resilient. Zimbabwe faces climate-related risks, including droughts, floods and changing agricultural conditions. Infrastructure planning therefore has to incorporate climate adaptation, disaster resilience, efficient water management and sustainable energy systems.

The infrastructure agenda also extends into the digital realm. Fibre networks, mobile connectivity, data infrastructure, digital government and emerging technologies are increasingly essential components of national infrastructure. The modern economy cannot be built solely through highways and bridges; it must also be supported by digital networks capable of connecting citizens, enterprises and government institutions.

Sustainable Development Goals

Vision 2030 is closely aligned with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**, which provide a global framework for addressing poverty, inequality, health, education, employment, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, peace and institutions. The United Nations in Zimbabwe explicitly identifies Vision 2030, NDS1 and NDS2 as national frameworks around which SDG implementation is being aligned.

This relationship is important because Zimbabwe's development challenges are multidimensional. Economic growth must occur alongside poverty reduction, improved healthcare, quality education, food security, environmental protection and accountable institutions. The SDGs provide a common framework through which these objectives can be considered together rather than as isolated policy areas.

SDG 8, for example, emphasises sustained and inclusive economic growth, productive employment and decent work. This directly complements Vision 2030's emphasis on employment and economic transformation. **SDG 7** focuses on affordable, reliable and

sustainable energy, while **SDG 11** addresses inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities.

Similarly, **SDG 16** emphasises peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. This demonstrates that development cannot be separated from governance. Economic transformation requires institutions capable of implementing policy, protecting rights, managing public resources and maintaining public confidence.

The environmental dimension is equally important. Sustainable development requires Zimbabwe to expand productive capacity without destroying the natural-resource base upon which future generations depend. Responsible mining, climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable water management, renewable energy, conservation and responsible consumption must therefore become integral elements of the Vision 2030 agenda. The UN's Zimbabwe framework identifies climate action, sustainable natural-resource management and disaster-risk reduction among its development priorities.

Ultimately, Vision 2030 represents a national attempt to connect **economic transformation with human development**. Its success will depend on whether the country can convert strategic plans into sustained investment, productive employment, institutional effectiveness and improvements in everyday life. NDS1 established much of the foundation; NDS2 now represents the final implementation phase leading toward 2030. The central test is therefore whether Zimbabwe can transform its considerable natural and human resources into a diversified, productive, inclusive and sustainable economy.

Vision 2030 is consequently more than a government slogan or economic target. It is a statement about the kind of society Zimbabwe seeks to become: prosperous, technologically capable, industrially productive, socially inclusive and increasingly integrated into regional and global markets. Its ultimate measure will not simply be whether Zimbabwe reaches a particular income classification, but whether the transformation produces **dignified livelihoods, quality public services, meaningful employment, modern infrastructure, accountable institutions and a higher quality of life for citizens**.

In this sense, Vision 2030 provides the bridge between the political philosophy of the Second Republic and the practical programmes of national development. It translates the broad aspiration of national renewal into measurable economic, social, infrastructural and institutional objectives, while connecting Zimbabwe's national development project to Agenda 2063 and the global Sustainable Development Goals.

CHAPTER FIVE

LEGACY

Achievements of the Second Republic, 2017–2030

Introduction

The question of political legacy is ultimately a question of historical consequence. Governments are rarely remembered only for the circumstances under which they came to power; they are remembered for the institutions they establish, the economic structures they transform, the infrastructure they construct, the opportunities they create and the social conditions they leave behind. In Zimbabwe, the emergence of the Second Republic in November 2017 represented a significant political transition that was accompanied by a new development narrative. Under the leadership of President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, the Government articulated a programme centred on economic reconstruction, institutional reform, investment attraction, international re-engagement and the achievement of an upper-middle-income society by 2030.

The Second Republic's development philosophy was subsequently anchored in **Vision 2030**, the Transitional Stabilisation Programme and, later, the **National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1)** for 2021–2025 and **National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2)** for 2026–2030. Vision 2030 seeks to transform Zimbabwe into a "Prosperous and Empowered Upper-Middle-Income Society by 2030," with economic opportunity, employment and improved quality of life at the centre of national development. The strategy identifies macroeconomic stability, inclusive growth, infrastructure, utilities, social development and international re-engagement as central pillars.

Consequently, the legacy of the Second Republic should not be assessed solely through political rhetoric. It should be examined through measurable changes in the economy, infrastructure, agriculture, mining, industry, energy, technology, health, education, rural development, gender empowerment, youth development and Zimbabwe's international relations. Such an assessment must also recognise that the period to 2030 remains incomplete. As of 2026, the country is still implementing NDS2, meaning that some elements of the Second Republic's legacy are already visible while others remain programmes, commitments and aspirations whose final outcomes will only become clearer after 2030.

This chapter therefore examines the emerging legacy of the Second Republic through a broad development lens. It recognises achievements while also acknowledging the continuing challenges of inflation, exchange-rate instability, unemployment, public-service pressures, inequality, climate vulnerability, infrastructure maintenance and the need to translate investment into broad-based prosperity. The historical significance of the Second Republic will ultimately depend not merely on the number of projects completed, but on whether those interventions produce durable improvements in the lives of Zimbabweans.

Economic Reforms

Economic reform became one of the defining features of the Second Republic. The Government inherited an economy characterised by fiscal pressures, monetary instability, infrastructure constraints, declining industrial capacity and limited access to international finance. The policy response involved attempts to restore fiscal discipline, reform public enterprises, improve the investment environment, strengthen revenue collection and rebuild confidence in the financial system.

The Transitional Stabilisation Programme introduced after 2018 represented an early attempt to stabilise the macroeconomic environment. It was followed by NDS1, which placed economic growth and stability among its principal priorities. The strategy also sought to promote enterprise development, employment creation, value addition, human-capital development and digitalisation.

Monetary reform became particularly significant. Zimbabwe introduced the Zimbabwe Gold currency, commonly known as ZiG, in April 2024 as part of a broader attempt to establish a more stable domestic monetary framework. The Reserve Bank subsequently pursued tighter monetary conditions, exchange-rate management and reserve accumulation. According to the RBZ's 2025 reporting, annual inflation closed 2025 at 15 percent, below the bank's 30 percent end-period target.

These developments represented an important shift from crisis management towards macroeconomic stabilisation. Yet economic reform cannot be measured only by inflation statistics. For ordinary citizens, economic reform must ultimately be reflected in purchasing power, employment, access to finance, affordable goods and services, business confidence and the capacity of households to plan for the future.

The broader legacy of economic reform will therefore depend on whether monetary stability can be sustained, whether fiscal discipline remains credible, whether productive investment expands and whether economic growth becomes sufficiently inclusive. The Second Republic's economic legacy is consequently still being constructed.

Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure became one of the most visible areas of the Second Republic's development programme. Roads, bridges, airports, dams, border posts, urban infrastructure and water systems were presented as foundations for economic recovery. The underlying philosophy was straightforward: an economy cannot become competitive if its transport, energy, water and communications infrastructure remain inadequate.

Among the most prominent projects has been the rehabilitation of the **Harare–Beitbridge highway**, strategically important because of Zimbabwe's position as a regional transit country.

Government infrastructure reporting indicated that by late 2025 more than 80 percent of the approximately 580-kilometre highway had been rehabilitated and opened to traffic. Other major projects included sections of the Harare–Mutare road dualisation and continued rehabilitation of the Harare–Bulawayo corridor.

Infrastructure development also extended beyond roads. The modernisation and expansion of Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport, Beitbridge Border Post and other transport facilities reflected an attempt to modernise Zimbabwe's gateways to the region and the wider world. Government monitoring structures identify airport modernisation, road rehabilitation and border infrastructure among major national development projects.

The infrastructure legacy is therefore potentially one of the most tangible contributions of the Second Republic. Roads and bridges are visible manifestations of state investment. They affect agricultural marketing, tourism, mining logistics, commuter movement, regional trade and access to health and education.

Nevertheless, the ultimate measure of infrastructure development will be maintenance and functionality. A road constructed today becomes an economic asset only when it is maintained tomorrow. The legacy of infrastructure will therefore depend on whether Zimbabwe develops the financial and institutional capacity to preserve these investments for future generations.

Agricultural Transformation

Agriculture occupies a special place in Zimbabwe's national development because it is simultaneously an economic sector, a source of employment, a food-security mechanism and a foundation of rural livelihoods. The Second Republic placed food security and agricultural productivity among its principal development priorities.

The **Pfumvudza/Intwasa** programme became one of the most prominent agricultural interventions of the period. Its emphasis on conservation agriculture, small plots, inputs and climate-conscious production was intended to improve productivity among smallholder farmers. Government has continued to promote the model as part of climate-resilient agriculture and food-security policy.

Irrigation development became equally important. Vision 2030 recognises that dependence on rainfall exposes agriculture to drought and climate variability. The Government's irrigation strategy therefore seeks to rehabilitate and establish smallholder irrigation infrastructure while encouraging investment in commercial irrigation.

Zimbabwe also achieved important progress in wheat production and food-security planning during the Second Republic. Agricultural transformation increasingly shifted from an emphasis on subsistence production towards mechanisation, irrigation, commercialisation, livestock development, horticulture and agro-processing.

The agricultural transformation agenda is particularly significant because it connects several areas of the Second Republic's development strategy. Irrigation requires dams and electricity; mechanisation requires industrial capacity; commercial farming requires financial services; agro-processing requires manufacturing; and agricultural exports require transport and international markets.

In 2025, agriculture was among the major contributors to Zimbabwe's economic performance. ZIMSTAT reported that real GDP increased by 8.29 percent in 2025, with agriculture recording the highest industry growth rate at 27.9 percent.

The long-term legacy of agricultural reform will therefore depend on whether Zimbabwe can move permanently from vulnerability to resilience, particularly in the face of droughts, changing rainfall patterns and global climate pressures.

Mining Growth

Mining became another central pillar of the Second Republic's economic strategy. Zimbabwe possesses substantial deposits of gold, platinum-group metals, lithium, chrome, diamonds, coal, nickel and other minerals. The Government sought to increase mining production while encouraging greater investment and value addition.

Lithium became particularly prominent as Zimbabwe emerged as an important African producer of the mineral required for modern battery technologies. The Government subsequently moved to restrict exports of unprocessed minerals and lithium concentrates as part of its beneficiation strategy. In 2026, the Ministry of Mines announced a suspension of exports of raw minerals and lithium concentrate, reflecting the continuing policy emphasis on domestic value addition.

The significance of this policy extends beyond lithium. It represents a broader attempt to change Zimbabwe's position within global commodity chains. Rather than exporting raw resources and importing finished products, the Second Republic has sought to encourage processing, refining, manufacturing and technological development within Zimbabwe.

Mining also became an important source of foreign-exchange earnings and investment. However, the sector presents a complex legacy. Mineral wealth can generate substantial national income, but it can also reproduce inequality when communities receive limited benefits from extraction or when environmental impacts are inadequately managed.

Consequently, the ultimate mining legacy of the Second Republic will be judged by the degree to which mineral wealth is converted into industrial capacity, employment, infrastructure, technology and sustainable national development.

International Re-engagement

One of the most distinctive pillars of the Second Republic's foreign policy has been the policy of **engagement and re-engagement**. The Government sought to improve relations with countries and international institutions while simultaneously strengthening Zimbabwe's traditional relations with African and Asian partners.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs explicitly identifies re-engagement with the Western world and international financial institutions, economic diplomacy, investment promotion and diaspora engagement as central elements of its post-2017 mandate.

The policy was also designed to reposition Zimbabwe internationally as a country seeking investment and economic partnerships. The phrase "**Zimbabwe is Open for Business**" became closely associated with this new diplomatic and economic orientation.

Zimbabwe continued to strengthen its relationships within SADC and the African Union while expanding economic and diplomatic engagement with countries such as China and Russia. The country's participation in broader South-South cooperation and its engagement with BRICS-related structures formed part of the wider strategy of diversifying international partnerships.

The legacy of re-engagement cannot be measured simply by the number of diplomatic meetings. Its ultimate purpose is economic and developmental: attracting capital, expanding markets, increasing tourism, accessing technology, improving trade and restoring Zimbabwe's participation in international economic systems.

The Second Republic therefore attempted to redefine foreign policy as an instrument of economic development. Whether this reorientation ultimately produces sustainable investment and improved international financial access remains one of the important questions that historians will examine after 2030.

Industrialisation

Industrialisation represents the bridge between natural resources and sustainable economic development. The Second Republic increasingly emphasised the need for Zimbabwe to manufacture more products domestically, process its minerals locally and strengthen domestic value chains.

The revival of industry became particularly visible through investment in steel production, manufacturing, industrial parks and local-content initiatives. The Dinson Iron and Steel Company project in Manhize emerged as one of the most important examples. NDS2 records an investment of approximately US\$1.5 billion and an installed capacity of 600,000 tonnes of carbon steel per year, with more than 2,000 direct jobs reported by the third quarter of 2025.

The significance of steel production goes beyond the steel industry itself. Steel supports construction, engineering, transport, machinery manufacturing and other industrial activities. If Zimbabwe succeeds in developing an integrated industrial ecosystem around steel, the project could become a major component of the country's industrial legacy.

The Government has also pursued local-content policies and strategies aimed at strengthening domestic production. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce lists industrial reconstruction, local content, engineering, iron and steel, motor industry development and other sectoral strategies among its policy instruments.

Industrialisation remains unfinished business. Zimbabwe must still overcome electricity shortages, high production costs, limited access to long-term finance, technology gaps and competition from imported goods.

Nevertheless, the Second Republic placed industrialisation more firmly at the centre of national development and linked it to beneficiation, employment and export growth.

Energy Projects

Energy security is fundamental to economic transformation. No country can industrialise sustainably without reliable electricity. The Second Republic therefore invested heavily in power generation and transmission.

The expansion of **Hwange Thermal Power Station Units 7 and 8**, adding approximately 600 MW, became one of the most significant energy projects of the period. The project was commissioned in August 2023. Government's Ministry of Energy identifies the project as a major Second Republic achievement intended to reduce the gap between electricity demand and supply.

Earlier, the Kariba South Extension added approximately 300 MW to Zimbabwe's electricity-generation capacity. Together, the Kariba and Hwange projects represented major additions to the national power system during the Second Republic.

The energy strategy has also increasingly incorporated renewable energy, solar projects, mini-hydro projects and other alternatives. This is particularly important because climate change, hydrological variability and rising electricity demand make dependence on individual generation sources increasingly risky.

Energy development therefore intersects with industrialisation, agriculture, mining and digital transformation. Mines need electricity, factories need electricity, irrigation systems need electricity, hospitals need electricity and digital infrastructure needs reliable power.

The long-term energy legacy will depend on whether these investments are accompanied by transmission upgrades, maintenance, renewable-energy expansion and effective demand management.

Digital Transformation

The digital transformation of Zimbabwe represents one of the newer dimensions of the Second Republic's legacy. The Government has increasingly recognised ICT not simply as a communications sector but as an economic infrastructure.

The National Broadband Plan 2023–2030, the National ICT Policy and the Government Enterprise Architecture framework are part of a broader attempt to create a connected, knowledge-based society. The Ministry of ICT describes its vision as a secure, connected knowledge-based society by 2030.

Digital transformation has included expansion of connectivity, e-government systems, ICT hubs, digital learning and innovation programmes. In 2026, the Ministry reported the commissioning of ICT hubs in schools and continued programmes involving robotics, digital skills and technology education.

Artificial intelligence is also beginning to enter Zimbabwe's national development discourse. AI has the potential to transform agriculture, healthcare, education, public administration, financial services and manufacturing.

The digital legacy of the Second Republic may therefore prove particularly important for younger generations. Roads and dams constitute physical infrastructure; fibre networks, data systems, digital platforms and AI capabilities constitute the infrastructure of the knowledge economy.

Yet digital transformation must remain inclusive. Connectivity without affordability, skills and digital literacy can deepen rather than reduce inequality. The challenge is therefore to ensure that technological progress reaches rural communities, schools, small businesses and ordinary citizens.

Rural Development

Rural development has been linked closely to the Second Republic's philosophy of inclusive development and devolution. The objective has been to reduce the developmental gap between urban and rural communities by expanding infrastructure, agricultural services, health facilities, education, water provision and economic opportunities.

The development of irrigation schemes, rural roads, clinics, schools, community projects and electrification has been part of this broader agenda. The underlying philosophy is that rural citizens should not be excluded from national development merely because they live outside major cities.

The devolution agenda also sought to give provinces and local communities a greater role in development planning and resource allocation. Vision 2030 and NDS1 explicitly identified social infrastructure, housing, devolution, youth development and community welfare as components of national development.

Rural development also became connected to agricultural commercialisation. The emergence of rural agro-processing, livestock projects, horticulture clusters and irrigation-based production creates the possibility of transforming rural communities from consumption centres into productive economic zones.

The challenge remains ensuring that rural development is sustainable and not dependent exclusively on central government intervention. Strong local institutions, private-sector participation, community ownership and transparent management are essential.

If successfully implemented, rural development could become one of the most socially significant elements of the Second Republic's legacy because it directly addresses spatial inequality and historical differences in access to economic opportunity.

Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment represents another important dimension of the Second Republic's development agenda. The Government established programmes addressing women's economic participation, gender equality, entrepreneurship, community development and access to finance.

The Ministry responsible for Women Affairs identifies its vision as socially and economically empowered women and resilient communities enjoying gender equality within an SME-driven economy by 2030. Its responsibilities include women's economic empowerment, gender mainstreaming, entrepreneurship, cooperatives, access to resources and support for women-owned enterprises.

Women's empowerment has increasingly been connected to the broader SME and informal-sector economy. This is significant because women constitute a substantial proportion of participants in small-scale trade, agriculture, services and community enterprises.

The empowerment of women is not merely a social policy objective. It is an economic development strategy. Increasing women's access to capital, markets, technology, property and entrepreneurship can expand household incomes and national productive capacity.

The challenge remains transforming programmes into sustained economic independence. Access to training alone is insufficient if women lack finance, markets, affordable workspace, infrastructure and legal protection.

The Second Republic's legacy in this area will therefore depend on whether women emerge not merely as beneficiaries of programmes but as owners, investors, entrepreneurs, professionals and decision-makers within Zimbabwe's economy.

Youth Empowerment

Zimbabwe's youth represent one of the most important determinants of the country's future. A young population can become a demographic dividend when supported by education, skills, employment and entrepreneurship, but can become a source of social frustration when opportunities remain limited.

The Second Republic increasingly institutionalised youth empowerment through vocational training, entrepreneurship programmes, youth funds, innovation hubs and youth participation initiatives. The Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Development and Vocational Training was established in 2023 with a mandate encompassing youth entrepreneurship, vocational skills, leadership and economic participation.

The National Youth Empowerment Strategy 2026–2030 further places youth within the implementation framework of NDS2 and Vision 2030. It identifies employment, sustainable livelihoods, skills and economic participation as central concerns.

Youth empowerment programmes have increasingly included agriculture, technology, vocational education, business incubation and entrepreneurship. The Government has also developed initiatives involving youth innovation hubs and practical skills.

Yet youth empowerment remains one of the most difficult tests of the Second Republic. Zimbabwe's young people require not simply programmes but an economy capable of creating large numbers of sustainable opportunities.

The ultimate legacy will therefore be measured by whether the generation that came of age during the Second Republic can say that the period expanded their horizons, skills, enterprises, employment opportunities and participation in national development.

Education Reforms

Education occupies a central position in the Vision 2030 agenda because no country can sustain industrialisation, digitalisation and technological development without a skilled population.

The Second Republic's education agenda increasingly emphasised heritage-based education, science, technology, innovation, vocational skills and digital learning. This represented an attempt to connect education more directly with Zimbabwe's national identity and economic development requirements.

The growing emphasis on innovation hubs, technical education and applied skills reflects a broader recognition that academic qualifications alone cannot meet the demands of a modern economy. Universities, polytechnics, vocational training centres and research institutions therefore have an important role in producing engineers, scientists, technicians, entrepreneurs and digital specialists.

Education also became increasingly connected to the digital economy. ICT infrastructure in schools and the development of digital learning platforms provide opportunities to expand access to knowledge beyond traditional classroom boundaries.

The challenge remains quality, affordability, infrastructure, teacher capacity and equitable access between urban and rural communities.

The educational legacy of the Second Republic will ultimately be determined by whether its reforms create a generation capable of solving Zimbabwe's development challenges rather than merely preparing young people to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Health Sector Reforms

Health-sector transformation formed another important element of the Second Republic's social-development agenda. The objective was to modernise health infrastructure, improve medical equipment, strengthen disease-control systems and move Zimbabwe closer to universal health coverage.

The Government and development partners invested in medical equipment, medicines and health-system strengthening. In one major intervention, more than US\$12 million worth of medical equipment was commissioned for distribution to health facilities around the country.

Other interventions included health commodities, maternal-health equipment, neonatal equipment, ICT systems and disease-surveillance capabilities. In 2024, the Health Resilience Fund provided more than US\$9.2 million in medical equipment and supplies, supporting health-system strengthening and maternal, newborn and child health.

Health reform also became increasingly connected to digitalisation and public-health resilience. Modern health systems require reliable information, disease surveillance, medicine supply chains and effective emergency responses.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of national health resilience. Zimbabwe's response also exposed the importance of international partnerships, local production and institutional preparedness.

The Second Republic's health legacy will ultimately be judged by whether Zimbabweans experience improved access to quality healthcare regardless of where they live or their economic circumstances.

Investment Attraction

Investment attraction became central to the economic philosophy of the Second Republic. The Government sought to reposition Zimbabwe as an investment destination through the "Open for Business" approach, investment facilitation, Special Economic Zones, public-private partnerships and economic diplomacy.

The Zimbabwe Investment Development Authority became an important institutional vehicle for investment promotion. The broader policy environment also introduced incentives for investors in areas such as industrial parks, manufacturing, tourism and special economic zones.

Investment attraction was particularly important in mining, infrastructure, manufacturing, energy and agriculture. Large projects such as the Dinson steel investment demonstrated the potential for foreign capital to contribute to domestic industrialisation.

However, investment attraction is not an end in itself. The quality of investment matters as much as the quantity. Zimbabwe requires investment that creates employment, transfers technology, develops local suppliers, expands exports and contributes to infrastructure.

The investment legacy of the Second Republic will therefore depend on whether Zimbabwe becomes not simply a destination for capital but a competitive production centre within Southern Africa.

Climate Resilience

Climate change has increasingly shaped Zimbabwe's development agenda. Droughts, changing rainfall patterns, water shortages and extreme weather events present major risks to agriculture, energy, health and rural livelihoods.

The Second Republic incorporated climate resilience into national development planning. NDS1 explicitly identified environmental protection, climate resilience and natural-resource management as national priorities.

Agricultural programmes such as Pfumvudza/Intwasa, irrigation development, water infrastructure, drought preparedness and climate-smart farming increasingly became part of the national response.

Climate resilience also requires diversification of energy sources. Renewable energy, efficient water management and sustainable land-use practices will become increasingly important as climate pressures intensify.

The agricultural sector illustrates the stakes particularly clearly. A drought can simultaneously reduce food production, increase prices, reduce rural incomes and increase pressure on government finances.

The climate legacy of the Second Republic will therefore depend on whether resilience becomes embedded within national planning rather than treated only as an emergency response after disasters occur.

National Unity Initiatives

National unity represents one of the most politically significant dimensions of the Second Republic's legacy. Zimbabwe's post-independence history has been marked by political divisions, regional grievances and historical wounds. The Government therefore promoted national unity as part of the broader development agenda.

The Second Republic's national-unity narrative has emphasised peace, national cohesion, inclusiveness and the recognition of Zimbabwe's diversity. The development agenda has also sought to bring historically marginalised communities into national infrastructure and economic programmes.

National unity, however, is ultimately more than a political slogan. It requires citizens to feel that the state belongs equally to them and that national development benefits people across provinces, political affiliations, ethnic communities, generations and social classes.

Infrastructure, devolution, rural development and inclusive economic opportunities can contribute to this process because development itself can become an instrument of national cohesion.

The historical assessment of national unity will therefore depend on whether Zimbabweans perceive the Second Republic as having strengthened a common national identity and reduced divisions rather than deepening them.

The Emerging Legacy of the Second Republic

The legacy of the Second Republic should ultimately be understood as a continuing historical process rather than a completed political verdict. From 2017 to 2026, Zimbabwe has witnessed substantial programmes in infrastructure, agriculture, energy, mining, industrialisation, digital transformation and international engagement. The country's 2025 economic performance, for example, recorded real GDP growth of 8.29 percent, with manufacturing, mining, agriculture, wholesale and retail among the largest contributors.

At the same time, the historical record must acknowledge that economic transformation has not eliminated all structural problems. Macroeconomic instability, unemployment, poverty, infrastructure maintenance, industrial competitiveness, public-service pressures and climate vulnerability remain significant challenges. The presence of major projects does not automatically mean that the benefits are evenly distributed.

This distinction is important for an academic treatment of legacy. Governments should not be judged exclusively by the projects they announce, nor should they be judged exclusively by their failures. A serious historical assessment examines both policy intention and measurable outcome.

The Second Republic's most important contribution may ultimately be the attempt to establish a development framework that links economic recovery with infrastructure, agriculture, industrialisation, digitalisation and human development. Vision 2030 and the NDS framework provide a long-term institutional narrative through which these programmes are connected.

The period from 2026 to 2030 will therefore be decisive. NDS2 represents the second major planning phase of Vision 2030 and provides the remaining policy framework through which the Government intends to consolidate earlier gains and address unresolved development challenges.

The legacy of the Second Republic will consequently not be determined in 2026 alone. It will be shaped by what happens between 2026 and 2030 and by whether the country's development institutions survive beyond the administration that created them.

Conclusion

The Second Republic entered Zimbabwe's history promising economic reconstruction, political renewal, institutional reform and a new development trajectory. Its legacy is increasingly visible through infrastructure projects, agricultural programmes, mining investments, industrial development, energy expansion, digital transformation, health interventions, youth programmes, women's empowerment initiatives and an outward-looking investment and foreign-policy strategy.

Among its most tangible achievements are the expansion of electricity generation through Kariba and Hwange, major road rehabilitation, airport and border infrastructure modernisation,

agricultural transformation programmes, industrial investment and increased emphasis on economic development .

Chapter Six

Challenges and Lessons

Introduction

The history of Zimbabwe's Second Republic cannot be fully understood through its achievements alone. The period beginning in 2017 represented an ambitious attempt to reshape the country's economic trajectory, rebuild infrastructure, attract investment, modernise public institutions and restore Zimbabwe's relationship with the international community. Yet these objectives unfolded within a complex environment characterised by inherited economic weaknesses, external financial constraints, currency instability, political contestation, institutional challenges, climate shocks and competing expectations among citizens, businesses, political actors and international partners. Consequently, the experience of the Second Republic presents not only a story of reforms and development initiatives, but also a valuable study of the difficulties involved in transforming a state whose economic and institutional foundations had been weakened over several decades.

The challenges encountered during this period should therefore not be interpreted in isolation. Zimbabwe entered the Second Republic carrying substantial public debt and arrears, limited access to international financing, a highly dollarised economy, infrastructure deficits and longstanding questions concerning governance and institutional confidence. The International Monetary Fund has noted that Zimbabwe spent many years outside international capital markets and official financing channels while experiencing repeated episodes of high inflation and economic contraction. By 2025–2026, there had nevertheless been measurable improvements in macroeconomic stability, although significant vulnerabilities remained.

The central lesson is consequently that national transformation is rarely linear. Economic recovery can coexist with inflationary pressures; infrastructure expansion can occur alongside institutional weaknesses; international re-engagement can progress while diplomatic disagreements remain; and electoral institutions can operate constitutionally while still attracting criticism from domestic and international stakeholders. A serious assessment of the Second Republic must therefore recognise both progress and unresolved challenges.

1. Economic Headwinds

One of the most persistent challenges confronting the Second Republic has been the difficulty of sustaining economic growth in an environment characterised by structural vulnerabilities. Zimbabwe's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, mining, manufacturing, services and external trade, making it particularly sensitive to commodity prices, climatic conditions, foreign-exchange availability and regional economic developments. Periods of drought have had

especially severe consequences because agricultural production influences food security, household incomes, electricity generation and broader economic activity. The 2024 drought, for example, contributed significantly to an economic slowdown, with IMF estimates indicating that real GDP growth fell from approximately 5 percent in 2023 to 1.7 percent in 2024.

The economic environment has also been affected by the legacy of low industrial capacity. Zimbabwe inherited an economy in which many manufacturing enterprises had experienced declining competitiveness, shortages of capital and difficulties accessing foreign currency. The Second Republic therefore pursued industrialisation, mining expansion, agricultural modernisation and investment promotion as mechanisms for rebuilding productive capacity. These initiatives have generated important opportunities, particularly in mining and agriculture, but transforming economic activity into broad-based employment and household prosperity remains a continuing challenge.

Another headwind has been the limited availability of affordable long-term financing. Zimbabwe's external debt position and arrears have restricted access to conventional concessional finance and international capital markets. The IMF has identified debt resolution and arrears clearance as important components of Zimbabwe's re-engagement process. The country's ability to attract investment and finance major development projects is therefore closely connected to its ability to strengthen financial credibility and resolve outstanding obligations.

The experience also demonstrates the danger of relying excessively on favourable commodity cycles. Mining has become one of Zimbabwe's major sources of export earnings, with gold, platinum and lithium receiving significant attention. Yet commodity prices can rise and fall rapidly, while mineral resources are finite. The long-term lesson is that mining growth must be accompanied by domestic value addition, manufacturing, technological development and human-capital investment if mineral wealth is to become a durable foundation for national development.

Agriculture presents a similar lesson. Zimbabwe has significant agricultural potential, but production remains vulnerable to drought, rainfall variability, irrigation constraints, input costs and access to finance. Agricultural reforms such as Pfumvudza/Intwasa, mechanisation and irrigation development have sought to increase productivity and strengthen food security. Nevertheless, the experience of drought demonstrates that agricultural transformation must increasingly incorporate climate-smart production, water management, insurance mechanisms, resilient seed systems and modern agricultural technology.

The broader lesson from these economic headwinds is that growth statistics alone cannot define economic transformation. Sustainable development requires productivity, employment creation, household purchasing power, industrial competitiveness and resilience against external shocks. The challenge for the Second Republic and its successors is therefore to move from episodic economic recovery toward a diversified productive economy capable of generating sustained prosperity.

2. International Sanctions and Re-engagement

International sanctions and Zimbabwe's difficult relationship with Western governments have been an important part of the country's post-2000 political and economic history. During the Second Republic, the government adopted an **Engagement and Re-engagement Policy**, seeking to rebuild diplomatic relations, attract foreign investment and restore Zimbabwe's participation within international economic and political institutions. This represented a strategic departure from prolonged diplomatic confrontation and emphasised dialogue, investment diplomacy and multilateral engagement.

However, the sanctions debate has remained politically contested. The Zimbabwean government has frequently argued that sanctions and related restrictions contributed to financial isolation and constrained economic development. Critics of the government, meanwhile, have argued that governance, corruption, human-rights concerns, institutional weaknesses and policy uncertainty also contributed significantly to Zimbabwe's economic difficulties. A balanced historical assessment must therefore distinguish between **sanctions, debt restrictions, investor-risk perceptions and domestic economic-policy weaknesses**, rather than treating them as a single phenomenon.

There was an important change in the United States' sanctions architecture in March 2024. The U.S. government terminated the Zimbabwe-specific sanctions programme and simultaneously designated certain individuals and entities under the Global Magnitsky framework. The United States explained that the new approach was intended to focus sanctions more specifically on individuals associated with corruption or serious human-rights abuses rather than maintaining a country-wide Zimbabwe sanctions programme.

The European Union also progressively adjusted its approach. In February 2026, the EU decided to maintain an arms embargo until February 2027 while lifting provisions relating to travel bans and asset freezes. The EU stated that it remained constructively engaged with Zimbabwe and expressed an intention to deepen relations in areas including trade and investment.

These developments demonstrate that re-engagement is not simply a diplomatic slogan. It requires sustained institutional reforms, credible economic policies, protection of property rights, predictable investment rules, debt resolution, transparent governance and confidence-building between Zimbabwe and international partners. The IMF's current engagement with Zimbabwe reflects this broader process. In April 2026, the IMF approved a ten-month Staff-Monitored Program intended to strengthen macroeconomic management and support Zimbabwe's re-engagement efforts.

The lesson is that international re-engagement must ultimately become mutually beneficial. Zimbabwe requires access to investment, finance, technology, markets and international cooperation, while international partners require confidence that agreements will be respected and reforms sustained. Re-engagement therefore represents an ongoing process rather than a single diplomatic event.

3. Inflation and Currency Reforms

Few economic issues have affected ordinary Zimbabweans as directly as inflation and currency instability. Zimbabwe's monetary history has been marked by repeated currency transitions, periods of severe inflation and extensive dollarisation. Consequently, currency reform became one of the most consequential challenges of the Second Republic.

The introduction of the **Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG)** currency in 2024 represented another attempt to establish a domestic monetary framework and reduce the instability associated with previous currency arrangements. However, the introduction of a currency is not sufficient by itself to create monetary confidence. Confidence depends upon disciplined monetary policy, adequate reserves, fiscal credibility, transparent foreign-exchange markets and public expectations about the future value of the currency.

The ZiG experienced significant pressure during its early period, including a sharp adjustment in September 2024. The IMF subsequently observed that tighter monetary policies, reduced monetary financing and greater exchange-rate stability contributed to a significant decline in inflation. By 2025 and 2026, macroeconomic conditions had improved considerably compared with the period of severe instability.

Yet the currency question illustrates an important policy lesson: monetary reform cannot be separated from fiscal reform. If government expenditure exceeds sustainable financing capacity and deficits are ultimately monetised, inflationary pressures can return. The IMF has repeatedly emphasised the importance of fiscal discipline, expenditure controls and avoiding a return to monetary financing.

The high degree of dollarisation also presents a structural challenge. Zimbabwean businesses and households have historically preferred foreign currencies when confidence in domestic money was weak. Restoring confidence in a national currency therefore requires more than legislation. It requires citizens and businesses to believe that the currency will retain purchasing power and that monetary policy will remain credible over time.

The lesson is consequently one of **policy consistency**. Currency reform must be supported by disciplined fiscal management, transparent monetary policy, efficient foreign-exchange markets and strong central-bank credibility. Recent stabilisation provides evidence that policy discipline can improve conditions, but the durability of those gains remains dependent upon maintaining credible institutions and avoiding policy reversals.

4. Governance Debates

Governance has remained one of the most important and contested dimensions of the Second Republic. The government's emphasis on institutional reform, investment promotion and national development has been accompanied by continuing debates concerning accountability,

transparency, corruption, human rights, political participation and the relationship between state institutions and political authority.

Supporters of the Second Republic have argued that the post-2017 period created greater political and economic openness and introduced a new emphasis on development-oriented governance. The **Zimbabwe is Open for Business** philosophy was designed partly to communicate a change in the country's relationship with investors and international partners.

Critics, however, have maintained that economic reform cannot be separated from questions of political governance. Concerns have included the independence and effectiveness of institutions, the political environment surrounding opposition parties, civil-society operating space, corruption and the enforcement of constitutional rights. These debates form part of the broader challenge of building public confidence in institutions.

The governance challenge is therefore not merely about creating institutions but ensuring that those institutions function predictably and independently. Parliament, the judiciary, electoral institutions, local authorities, public commissions and regulatory bodies must have sufficient capacity and credibility to perform their constitutional responsibilities.

Another lesson concerns the relationship between political stability and democratic accountability. Political stability can create an environment conducive to investment and development, but stability that is not accompanied by effective accountability can generate institutional complacency. Conversely, political competition without institutional safeguards can produce instability. The challenge is to achieve a democratic balance in which stability and accountability reinforce rather than undermine one another.

The Second Republic's governance experience therefore demonstrates that development legitimacy cannot rely exclusively on economic performance. Citizens also judge governments according to transparency, participation, fairness, access to justice and responsiveness. Long-term legitimacy ultimately depends upon the capacity of institutions to command public confidence.

5. Electoral Processes

Electoral politics has remained another central challenge. Zimbabwe's elections are constitutionally important because they provide the primary mechanism through which citizens exercise political choice and determine national leadership. Since 2017, electoral processes have therefore been closely watched domestically and internationally.

The **2023 Harmonised Elections** demonstrated both the importance and the controversy surrounding Zimbabwe's electoral system. International observation missions were deployed to examine the electoral environment, voting, counting and tabulation. The European Union Election Observation Mission, for example, deployed observers throughout the country and examined the electoral process before, during and after polling.

The electoral debate has involved questions concerning voter registration, delimitation, electoral administration, political campaigning, media access, electoral disputes, voter education, participation and the credibility of results. Different political actors have interpreted these issues differently, making electoral reform one of the most sensitive areas of Zimbabwean public life.

A major lesson is that an election's credibility depends not only on election day. Electoral legitimacy is constructed throughout the electoral cycle. Voters must have confidence in voter registration, constituency boundaries, campaign conditions, ballot administration, counting, results transmission and mechanisms for resolving disputes.

The independence and institutional capacity of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission therefore remain crucial. Electoral management bodies require adequate resources, professional personnel, transparent procedures and public confidence. Equally important is the willingness of political parties to accept constitutional rules and pursue electoral disputes through lawful mechanisms.

Electoral reform should consequently be understood as an ongoing process rather than an event occurring every five years. Improving voter education, strengthening electoral technology, increasing transparency, enhancing dispute-resolution mechanisms and building confidence among competing political actors could contribute to stronger democratic institutions.

6. Constitutional Reforms

Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution provides the fundamental legal framework governing the state, political institutions, rights and responsibilities of citizens. The Second Republic has therefore operated within a constitutional environment in which debates concerning constitutional amendment, institutional reform and implementation have remained significant.

Constitutional reform is inherently sensitive because constitutions establish the rules through which political power is acquired, exercised and transferred. Any amendment can therefore have consequences extending far beyond the immediate political circumstances in which it is introduced.

The experience of constitutional reform demonstrates that constitutional legitimacy depends not simply on whether amendments follow formal procedures, but also on whether citizens perceive the process as transparent, participatory and consistent with constitutional principles. Public consultation is therefore particularly important.

Constitutionalism also requires a distinction between the existence of constitutional rights and their practical enforcement. A constitution may guarantee fundamental freedoms, equality, political participation and institutional checks and balances, but these principles must be translated into functioning institutions.

The Second Republic consequently faces the broader challenge of ensuring that constitutional governance becomes embedded within everyday administration. Ministries, local authorities,

courts, Parliament, electoral institutions and security institutions must all operate within clearly defined constitutional boundaries.

The lesson is that constitutional reform should ultimately strengthen rather than weaken institutional trust. Zimbabwe's long-term democratic development will depend not only on what is written in the Constitution but on how consistently constitutional principles are implemented.

7. Public Administration Challenges

Public administration represents the practical machinery through which government policies become reality. Roads, hospitals, schools, agricultural programmes, social protection, taxation, licensing, local government and infrastructure development all depend upon an effective public service.

One of the major challenges facing the Second Republic has therefore been the capacity of public institutions to implement ambitious national development programmes. Development strategies can establish targets, but implementation requires competent personnel, adequate financing, effective procurement, accurate data and strong monitoring mechanisms.

Public financial management has been particularly important. The IMF has identified expenditure controls, budget execution, domestic arrears management and stronger public financial management as continuing priorities. The 2026 Staff-Monitored Program places considerable emphasis on budget discipline, cash management, commitment controls and institutional transparency.

Local government represents another dimension of the challenge. Zimbabwe's development objectives cannot be achieved solely through central government ministries. Cities, municipalities, district authorities and rural local authorities are responsible for essential services such as water, sanitation, waste management, roads and local development. Strengthening decentralisation and local institutional capacity is therefore essential.

Digital transformation provides an opportunity to improve administration. E-government, electronic payments, digital records, data systems and online public services can reduce administrative delays and increase transparency. However, digitalisation must be accompanied by cybersecurity, data protection, digital literacy and reliable infrastructure.

The broader lesson is that the quality of government is ultimately measured by the quality of services experienced by citizens. Effective public administration therefore requires not only ambitious policies but institutions capable of implementing them efficiently, transparently and consistently.

8. Future Opportunities

Despite the challenges, Zimbabwe enters the future with significant opportunities. The country's agricultural potential, mineral resources, strategic geographical position, educated population, entrepreneurial culture and renewable-energy possibilities provide a substantial foundation for future economic transformation.

Mining presents one of the clearest opportunities. Zimbabwe possesses significant deposits of lithium, platinum, gold, chrome and other minerals. The central challenge is to move beyond the export of raw materials toward processing, refining, manufacturing and technological value chains. Such a strategy could create employment, increase export earnings and develop domestic industrial capacity.

Agriculture represents another major opportunity. Irrigation expansion, mechanisation, climate-smart agriculture, digital farming, livestock development and agro-processing could transform rural economies. The objective should increasingly be to move from subsistence-oriented production toward commercially integrated agricultural value chains.

The energy sector also provides opportunities for structural transformation. Zimbabwe requires reliable electricity to support industry, mining, agriculture and households. Investment in solar power, hydroelectricity, transmission infrastructure, energy storage and regional electricity cooperation could contribute to greater energy security.

Digital transformation may become another major engine of development. E-government, artificial intelligence, fintech, telecommunications, software development, digital education and technology-based entrepreneurship can create opportunities beyond traditional resource-based industries. Zimbabwe's relatively strong human-capital base provides an important foundation for this transition.

The diaspora also represents a significant national asset. Zimbabweans living abroad contribute through remittances, investment, professional expertise and international networks. Creating mechanisms through which diaspora capital and skills can contribute more systematically to domestic development could strengthen the country's investment and innovation ecosystem.

Finally, Zimbabwe's future opportunity lies in integrating its various sectors rather than treating them as separate development programmes. Mining can support industrialisation; agriculture can support manufacturing; digital technology can modernise government and business; infrastructure can connect rural and urban economies; education can provide the skills required by emerging industries; and international re-engagement can expand access to markets, capital and technology.

The Lessons of the Second Republic

The principal lesson of the Second Republic is that **national transformation requires continuity, institutional discipline and public confidence**. Development programmes can produce visible results, but their sustainability depends on the institutions that maintain them.

The second lesson is that economic stability is inseparable from political and institutional credibility. The experience of inflation and currency instability demonstrates that monetary reforms cannot succeed permanently without fiscal discipline and confidence in economic institutions. Recent stabilisation, including lower inflation and improved exchange-rate conditions, illustrates the potential benefits of disciplined policy, while the IMF continues to identify fiscal and governance vulnerabilities that require attention.

The third lesson concerns the importance of diversification. Zimbabwe cannot depend indefinitely on a small number of commodities or favourable agricultural seasons. Industrialisation, manufacturing, technology, services, tourism, agro-processing and mineral beneficiation must increasingly complement traditional economic sectors.

The fourth lesson is that international relations matter to domestic development. Re-engagement can expand opportunities for investment, debt restructuring, technology transfer and trade. At the same time, international credibility depends upon domestic governance, institutional predictability and respect for agreed rules.

The fifth lesson is that development must be measured not only through infrastructure and macroeconomic indicators but also through the lived experiences of citizens. Employment, household incomes, access to healthcare, education, clean water, electricity, housing and social protection remain fundamental measures of development.

The final lesson is perhaps the most important: **Vision 2030 requires institutionalisation beyond any individual administration**. A sustainable national development project must survive political cycles and become embedded within national institutions, professional public administration, private-sector investment, community participation and constitutional governance.

The Second Republic's record should therefore be understood neither as an uncomplicated success story nor as an unqualified failure. It is a complex period of economic experimentation, infrastructure expansion, institutional reform, political contestation, international re-engagement and social transformation. Its enduring legacy will ultimately depend on whether the reforms and investments undertaken during this period can be consolidated into institutions and systems capable of delivering prosperity, stability, democratic legitimacy and inclusive development over the long term.

The challenges of the Second Republic reveal the distance between **policy ambition and national transformation**. Zimbabwe has demonstrated that economic stabilisation, infrastructure development, agricultural recovery, mining expansion and international re-engagement are possible even within a difficult environment. At the same time, the persistence of currency vulnerabilities, governance debates, electoral controversies, debt constraints, institutional weaknesses and inequality demonstrates that development remains unfinished.

As Zimbabwe approaches the broader objectives associated with **Vision 2030**, the central question is no longer simply whether reforms can be announced or projects can be launched. The more fundamental question is whether the country can institutionalise the gains already made, correct weaknesses exposed by experience and create a development model capable of surviving economic shocks, political transitions and changing international circumstances.

The future opportunity therefore lies in converting **recovery into resilience, infrastructure into productivity, mineral wealth into industrialisation, education into innovation, re-engagement into investment, and political stability into strong constitutional institutions**. That is perhaps the most important lesson that the experience of the Second Republic offers to Zimbabwe's future.

Chapter 7

The Legacy of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa

Introduction

The question of political legacy is ultimately a question of historical meaning. Leaders are remembered not only for the offices they occupied, but for the ideas they advanced, the institutions they strengthened, the national projects they initiated, the opportunities they created and the historical circumstances through which they guided their countries. In Zimbabwe, the legacy of President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa is inseparable from the country's liberation history, the political transition of 2017, the economic challenges inherited by the Second Republic and the national ambition embodied in Vision 2030.

Mnangagwa's political career spans several distinct periods of Zimbabwean history. His experience in the liberation struggle, his subsequent service in government, his years as a senior political figure and his presidency have placed him within a political tradition that extends from the anti-colonial struggle to the contemporary developmental state. His supporters therefore view his leadership as part of the continuing project of protecting national sovereignty and translating political independence into economic and social development. At the same time, an examination of his legacy requires recognition that Zimbabwe's political and economic trajectory remains contested, and that historical judgement will ultimately depend upon outcomes as well as intentions.

The Second Republic presented a different development narrative from the immediate political and economic environment that preceded it. The Government adopted the language of reconstruction, modernisation, investment attraction, infrastructure development, industrialisation and international re-engagement. The principle popularly associated with this new direction — "**Zimbabwe is Open for Business**" — sought to communicate a shift towards greater economic engagement with domestic and international investors. Vision 2030 subsequently provided the overarching national objective of building a prosperous and empowered upper-middle-income society. Zimbabwe's current development framework continues this ambition through NDS2, covering 2026–2030.

The legacy of Mnangagwa must therefore be understood as both an inheritance and a project. It is an inheritance because he emerged from a generation whose political identity was shaped by liberation, sovereignty and state-building. It is a project because his presidency has sought to translate those historical principles into contemporary economic development, infrastructure, technological transformation and national modernisation. Whether that project ultimately achieves all of its stated objectives will be determined by developments extending beyond the present.

Liberation Legacy

Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa belongs to the generation of Zimbabwean political leaders whose formative years were shaped by the liberation struggle. The liberation movement was fundamentally concerned with dismantling colonial political domination and establishing the principle that Zimbabweans should determine their own political destiny. For Mnangagwa and his generation, therefore, independence was not merely a change of government; it represented the restoration of sovereignty, political dignity and national ownership.

The liberation legacy remains an important component of Mnangagwa's political identity. It provides historical context for his emphasis on sovereignty, territorial integrity, national independence and Zimbabwe's right to determine its own development priorities. In this interpretation, economic independence becomes a continuation of political independence. A country may possess a sovereign flag and government while remaining economically vulnerable if it cannot generate sufficient productive capacity, industrial capability and domestic investment.

This understanding has influenced the Second Republic's emphasis on agriculture, mining, industrialisation, infrastructure and value addition. The development philosophy has increasingly connected Zimbabwe's natural-resource endowment with the objective of domestic economic transformation. The argument is straightforward: minerals should not simply leave the country as raw materials; agricultural production should contribute to industrial development; infrastructure should facilitate production; and investment should create productive capacity and employment.

Mnangagwa's liberation legacy is consequently expressed through a developmental interpretation of nationalism. Patriotism is presented not only as loyalty to the country but also as participation in its economic reconstruction. Farmers, entrepreneurs, engineers, teachers, scientists, miners, manufacturers and young innovators can all become participants in the broader national project.

This conception also places responsibility upon future generations. Liberation created the political space for Zimbabweans to govern themselves; subsequent generations must determine what they do with that political inheritance. The historical challenge is therefore to transform independence into prosperity, sovereignty into productive capacity and national freedom into meaningful economic opportunity.

Nation Building

Nation building constitutes one of the central themes through which Mnangagwa's presidency can be interpreted. Zimbabwe entered the Second Republic facing substantial economic, infrastructural and institutional difficulties. The Government consequently presented national

reconstruction as a broad programme extending beyond politics into roads, dams, airports, energy, agriculture, housing, education, health, digital technology and industrial development.

The nation-building concept is particularly important because modern states are sustained by institutions and infrastructure as much as by political authority. Roads connect communities and markets. Dams support agriculture and water security. Electricity enables industrialisation. Hospitals sustain human capital. Schools prepare future generations. Digital networks connect citizens to information and economic opportunities. Nation building is therefore ultimately a multidimensional process.

The development agenda of the Second Republic has sought to integrate these sectors rather than treating them as isolated projects. Vision 2030 identifies governance, macroeconomic stability and financial re-engagement, inclusive growth, infrastructure and utilities, and social development among its strategic pillars.

A significant element of this approach has been the attempt to modernise Zimbabwe's physical infrastructure. Road rehabilitation, bridge construction, airport modernisation, border-post development, energy projects, water infrastructure and urban development have been presented as components of national reconstruction. The importance of infrastructure extends beyond visible construction: it determines the efficiency with which people, goods, services and capital move throughout an economy.

Nation building also requires the development of human capabilities. No infrastructure programme can substitute permanently for educated citizens, skilled workers, competent public servants, scientists, entrepreneurs and professionals. Consequently, the long-term legacy of the Second Republic will depend not only upon what has been constructed but upon whether Zimbabwe's population has acquired the capabilities necessary to maintain and expand those achievements.

Economic Vision

Mnangagwa's economic vision has been built around the transformation of Zimbabwe from an economy heavily dependent on primary production into a more diversified, productive and competitive economy. The philosophy places emphasis on agriculture, mining, manufacturing, infrastructure, investment, exports, value addition and technological development.

The phrase "**Zimbabwe is Open for Business**" became one of the most recognisable expressions of this economic orientation. It represented an attempt to communicate openness to investment and international economic engagement while encouraging domestic businesses to participate in national reconstruction. Vision 2030 subsequently provided the longer-term destination for this economic programme.

Mining occupies a particularly important place in this vision. Zimbabwe possesses significant mineral resources, including lithium, platinum-group metals, gold, chrome, nickel and iron ore.

The strategic challenge is not merely to extract these resources but to develop greater domestic processing, beneficiation and industrial value chains. The development of lithium-related industries and the revival of iron and steel production illustrate the broader ambition of using natural resources as foundations for industrialisation.

Agriculture constitutes another pillar. Food security is both an economic and national-security concern. Programmes associated with agricultural mechanisation, irrigation development, climate-smart agriculture and Pfumvudza/Intwasa have sought to increase production and resilience. The wider objective is to move agriculture beyond subsistence towards a commercially integrated sector capable of supporting food security, employment, exports and agro-processing.

The economic vision also includes the development of infrastructure capable of supporting investment. Industrial parks, special economic zones, transport corridors, energy generation and digital infrastructure form part of the ecosystem required for productive economic activity. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce continues to identify industrial reconstruction, local content and value-chain development among its policy priorities.

Yet economic legacy must ultimately be judged by lived economic outcomes. Growth, investment announcements and infrastructure projects matter, but so do employment, purchasing power, price stability, access to finance, business confidence and household welfare. Zimbabwe's economic history demonstrates that macroeconomic instability can undermine otherwise ambitious development programmes. The enduring test of Mnangagwa's economic vision will therefore be whether structural transformation produces broad-based and sustainable prosperity.

African Leadership

Mnangagwa's leadership has also been framed within the wider tradition of African sovereignty and continental cooperation. Zimbabwe's foreign policy under the Second Republic has emphasised engagement with African institutions, regional organisations and international partners while maintaining the principle of national sovereignty.

Within Southern Africa, Zimbabwe's membership of SADC places its development and political trajectory within a regional framework. Economic integration, infrastructure corridors, food security, energy cooperation, migration and regional peace are issues that cannot be addressed entirely within national borders. African leadership in the twenty-first century therefore requires both national responsibility and regional cooperation.

The African Union similarly provides a continental platform through which African states address peace, security, development, trade and integration. The broader continental objective of African self-reliance increasingly intersects with questions of industrialisation, beneficiation, food security, technological capability and intra-African trade.

Mnangagwa's approach can therefore be examined as part of a wider African debate about the meaning of independence in the twenty-first century. The first generation of African leaders fought primarily for political independence. Contemporary leaders face the challenge of converting that independence into economic sovereignty, technological capability and social prosperity.

This makes African leadership increasingly developmental in character. Political authority alone does not constitute leadership. The capacity to mobilise national resources, negotiate international partnerships, attract investment, strengthen institutions and create opportunities for citizens has become equally important.

Vision 2030

Vision 2030 is perhaps the clearest expression of the long-term developmental ambition associated with Mnangagwa's presidency. Its stated objective is the creation of a **"Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle-Income Society by 2030"**, with employment opportunities and an improved quality of life.

The importance of Vision 2030 lies in its attempt to move national development beyond short-term political cycles. Rather than defining progress solely in terms of annual budgets or individual projects, the framework establishes a longer horizon against which policies can be assessed.

The first major medium-term instrument was the National Development Strategy 1, covering 2021–2025. It was followed by National Development Strategy 2 for 2026–2030. The Government describes NDS2 as the development strategy to be implemented during the final phase towards the 2030 objective. President Mnangagwa's foreword to NDS2 explicitly describes the strategy as the framework for moving Zimbabwe towards a prosperous and empowered upper-middle-income society by 2030.

Because the year 2030 has not yet arrived, Vision 2030 must be treated historically as an **ongoing national project rather than a completed legacy**. This distinction is essential for a serious biography. Achievements already delivered can be evaluated as historical facts, while targets and programmes extending to 2030 should be described as objectives whose final outcomes remain to be determined.

Vision 2030 also demonstrates the extent to which contemporary Zimbabwean development policy has moved towards a comprehensive conception of transformation. Economic growth is linked with infrastructure, social services, human capital, digitalisation, environmental resilience, governance and international engagement. The Government's continued implementation of NDS2 in 2026 demonstrates that the 2030 agenda remains active rather than concluded.

Future Generations

Ultimately, the most enduring measure of any political legacy is what remains for people who come after the leader. Roads deteriorate, buildings age and governments change, but institutions, skills, ideas and national capabilities can endure for generations.

For Zimbabwe's younger population, the most important question is whether the development programmes of the Second Republic can create an economy in which young people can acquire skills, establish businesses, find meaningful employment and participate in technological innovation. The country's digital agenda, universities, vocational training institutions, innovation hubs and expanding ICT infrastructure therefore have significance beyond the immediate political period.

The future also requires a transition from a resource-dependent economy towards knowledge-based production. Zimbabwe's mineral wealth can provide capital for development, but minerals alone cannot constitute a complete national development strategy. A sustainable future requires manufacturing, science, technology, agriculture, services, creative industries and digital enterprises.

Climate resilience will similarly become increasingly important. Agriculture, water security, energy production and urban development must be designed for a changing climate. The legacy of today's leadership will consequently be measured partly by whether development has been environmentally sustainable.

Future generations will also inherit the constitutional and institutional framework of the state. Political stability, accountable institutions, professional public administration and respect for the rule of law are essential components of durable nation building. Development cannot be sustained indefinitely without institutions capable of managing public resources effectively and responding to citizens' needs.

The greatest legacy, therefore, would not simply be a list of projects completed during a presidential term. It would be a Zimbabwe possessing stronger productive capacity, more capable institutions, better infrastructure, a skilled population, greater economic resilience and a generation prepared to carry national development forward.

The legacy of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa is still being written. His political journey connects Zimbabwe's liberation history with the contemporary challenge of economic transformation. His presidency has sought to interpret independence through the language of reconstruction, development, investment, industrialisation, infrastructure and national modernisation.

The liberation legacy provides the historical foundation; nation building provides the institutional and physical framework; economic vision provides the productive strategy; African

leadership provides the continental context; Vision 2030 provides the long-term destination; and future generations provide the ultimate measure of success.

A balanced historical assessment must therefore distinguish between **achievement, aspiration and unfinished work**. Some elements of the Second Republic's programme can already be assessed. Others remain under implementation, particularly under NDS2, which covers the period 2026–2030.

History will eventually provide a fuller verdict. For now, the legacy of Mnangagwa can be understood as an attempt to connect the political inheritance of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle with a developmental vision for the twenty-first century. Whether that vision achieves its full promise will depend not only upon the Government, but upon institutions, businesses, communities and the generations of Zimbabweans who inherit the country and determine its future.

The legacy, in the final analysis, is therefore not only what one generation builds. It is what the next generation is empowered to build upon.

Conclusion

The Legacy, Leadership and Future of Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa

The political life and national leadership of Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa constitute one of the most consequential chapters in the modern history of Zimbabwe. His journey from the liberation struggle to the highest office in the Republic reflects a political career shaped by the turbulent history of Zimbabwe, the aspirations of the liberation movement, the complexities of post-independence governance, and the continuing search for national development. His presidency, particularly through the period commonly described as the Second Republic, has been defined by an ambitious attempt to reposition Zimbabwe economically, politically and

internationally while pursuing the long-term objective of transforming the country into an upper-middle-income economy by 2030. Whether viewed from the perspective of his supporters, critics, historians, economists or political analysts, the Mnangagwa era deserves careful examination because it represents an important period in Zimbabwe's continuing national evolution.

At the centre of Mnangagwa's political philosophy has been the conviction that political independence must ultimately be complemented by economic independence and national development. The liberation of Zimbabwe in 1980 established sovereignty and majority rule, but independence did not automatically resolve the structural challenges inherited from colonialism. Poverty, unequal economic opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, limited industrial capacity, unemployment and dependence on external markets remained persistent challenges. The Second Republic therefore placed considerable emphasis on transforming political independence into tangible economic and social outcomes. The emphasis on production, infrastructure development, investment attraction, agricultural modernisation, industrialisation and value addition was intended to create a development model in which Zimbabwe's natural and human resources could be utilised more effectively for national benefit.

The philosophy expressed through the declaration that Zimbabwe is "open for business" represented an important shift in the country's international economic posture. The government sought to attract foreign investment, rebuild diplomatic relationships, encourage private-sector participation and restore Zimbabwe's position within the global economy. This process of international re-engagement was particularly significant because Zimbabwe had experienced years of strained relations with several Western governments and international institutions. The effort to rebuild relationships with the African Union, SADC, China, Russia, the European Union and other international partners demonstrated the recognition that national development cannot occur in isolation. In an increasingly interconnected world, Zimbabwe's prosperity depends upon its ability to participate competitively in regional and global economic systems while protecting its national interests.

Economic transformation became one of the defining themes of the Second Republic. Fiscal reforms, investment promotion, industrial development, mining expansion, special economic zones, financial-sector reforms and export promotion formed part of a broader strategy to stabilise and expand the economy. Agriculture received renewed attention through programmes such as Pfumvudza/Intwasa, irrigation development, mechanisation and support for commercial and communal farming. Zimbabwe's movement towards wheat self-sufficiency illustrated the potential of targeted agricultural policies, investment in irrigation and improved farming practices to strengthen national food security. At the same time, the country's vast mineral resources, particularly lithium and other strategic minerals, presented opportunities for Zimbabwe to move beyond the export of raw materials towards beneficiation and value addition.

Infrastructure development similarly became an important symbol of the Second Republic. Road rehabilitation, bridge construction, dam development, airport modernisation, border-post upgrades, power-generation projects, urban development and water infrastructure were presented as essential foundations for economic growth. Infrastructure is not merely about physical construction; it is about creating the conditions under which citizens can travel, businesses can

operate, farmers can reach markets, industries can produce efficiently and communities can access essential services. The rehabilitation and expansion of national infrastructure therefore formed part of a broader effort to reconnect Zimbabwe's economy and strengthen the country's capacity for sustainable development.

The transformation agenda also extended into education and human-capital development. Zimbabwe has historically possessed a highly educated population relative to many countries in the region, and the Second Republic sought to build upon this foundation through heritage-based education, innovation hubs, universities, technical and vocational education, skills development and digital learning. The underlying principle is that no nation can achieve sustained development without investing in its people. Roads, mines, factories, dams and digital systems require skilled citizens capable of designing, managing, maintaining and improving them. Human capital therefore remains one of the most valuable resources available to Zimbabwe.

The health sector represented another important dimension of national development. Hospital modernisation, rural healthcare, medical equipment, disease control and health infrastructure formed part of the broader objective of expanding access to healthcare. The experience of public-health emergencies also demonstrated the importance of resilient national health systems. A developmental state cannot be judged solely by the size of its economy; it must also be judged by the quality of life experienced by ordinary citizens. Access to healthcare, education, clean water, housing, employment and social protection remains fundamental to the meaning of development.

The Second Republic's digital transformation agenda further reflected the changing nature of the modern state. E-government, ICT infrastructure, innovation, artificial intelligence, smart cities and the digital economy have become increasingly important components of national competitiveness. Zimbabwe's future will depend not only on traditional industries but also on its capacity to participate in the global knowledge economy. Digital transformation offers opportunities to modernise public administration, improve access to government services, support entrepreneurship, expand education and connect Zimbabwean businesses to international markets. The challenge, however, is ensuring that digital development is inclusive and that rural and disadvantaged communities are not left behind.

Foreign policy and international re-engagement also formed an important pillar of the Mnangagwa presidency. Zimbabwe continued to participate actively within SADC and the African Union while deepening relationships with countries in Asia, Europe and other parts of the world. Its engagement with emerging economic powers and participation in broader international partnerships reflected the government's attempt to diversify diplomatic and economic relationships. In this context, Zimbabwe's foreign policy has increasingly been framed around sovereignty, national interest, economic diplomacy and mutually beneficial partnerships. The long-term test of such diplomacy will be whether international engagement translates into investment, technology transfer, trade opportunities, employment and sustainable development for Zimbabweans.

Nevertheless, a balanced historical assessment must recognise that the Second Republic has also faced substantial challenges. Economic instability, inflation, currency reforms, shortages of foreign currency, unemployment, poverty and concerns surrounding the cost of living have

remained significant issues. The country's economic difficulties cannot be understood through a single explanation. They have been influenced by historical structural weaknesses, domestic policy choices, international economic conditions, sanctions and restrictions, climate-related shocks, debt challenges and the broader vulnerabilities of a small and open economy. The effectiveness of future economic reforms will therefore depend upon policy consistency, institutional capacity, investor confidence, productivity and the ability to ensure that economic growth produces broad-based improvements in living standards.

Governance and democracy remain equally important dimensions of the historical assessment of the Mnangagwa era. Zimbabwe's political system has continued to attract considerable domestic and international debate concerning elections, constitutionalism, public administration, institutional independence, civil liberties and political participation. A mature democracy requires more than periodic elections. It requires institutions capable of commanding public confidence, respect for constitutional principles, peaceful political competition, accountability, transparency and equal protection under the law. The continuing development of Zimbabwe's democratic institutions will therefore be an essential component of the country's long-term national project.

The question of national unity has also remained central. Zimbabwe's history demonstrates the consequences of political division, conflict and exclusion. The Second Republic's emphasis on national unity and peace reflects the recognition that development requires political stability. Yet genuine unity cannot be achieved merely through political declarations. It requires dialogue, tolerance, inclusion, respect for different political opinions and confidence that every citizen has a legitimate place within the national project. Zimbabwe's future stability will depend upon its ability to transform political differences from sources of confrontation into opportunities for democratic engagement.

The Vision 2030 agenda provides perhaps the clearest framework through which the legacy of the Second Republic can ultimately be evaluated. The aspiration to achieve an upper-middle-income economy requires more than infrastructure projects or macroeconomic targets. It requires sustained industrialisation, productive agriculture, technological advancement, quality education, accessible healthcare, employment creation, efficient institutions, environmental sustainability and a competitive private sector. Vision 2030 must therefore be understood not simply as a governmental slogan but as a national development challenge extending beyond any individual administration or political generation.

Ultimately, the historical legacy of Emerson Mnangagwa should not be reduced either to praise or criticism. Historical leadership is rarely simple. Leaders operate within particular political, economic, regional and international circumstances, and their decisions produce both intended and unintended consequences. The proper task of history is therefore to examine the evidence, recognise achievements, acknowledge shortcomings and understand the broader forces that shaped a particular period. Mnangagwa's presidency should be evaluated within the longer trajectory of Zimbabwe's political and economic development, from colonialism and the liberation struggle to independence, the challenges of the post-independence era and the emergence of the Second Republic.

The most enduring question is not simply what Mnangagwa accomplished during his time in office, but what institutions, infrastructure, policies, ideas and opportunities will remain after his presidency. A political legacy becomes meaningful when it survives the individual who created it. Roads must continue serving communities, hospitals must continue treating patients, schools must continue educating children, industries must continue creating employment, agricultural systems must continue producing food, and institutions must continue serving citizens. If the foundations established during the Second Republic can be strengthened by future administrations, then the period will have contributed meaningfully to Zimbabwe's long-term development.

The responsibility for Zimbabwe's future, however, cannot rest upon one leader alone. The transformation of a nation is a generational undertaking. Government, Parliament, business, civil society, traditional leadership, academia, labour, young people, women and communities all have roles to play. The success of Vision 2030 and the broader national development agenda will depend upon collective ownership. Zimbabwe's future cannot be built solely in government offices; it must be constructed through the combined efforts of its citizens and institutions.

Young Zimbabweans will ultimately become the principal custodians of the country's future. They inherit not only the achievements and infrastructure of previous generations but also their unresolved challenges. The future generation must therefore be equipped with knowledge, skills, entrepreneurship, technological competence and a strong sense of national responsibility. Youth empowerment should extend beyond political rhetoric to meaningful participation in the economy, innovation, science, technology, agriculture, industry and public leadership. The Zimbabwe of tomorrow will be determined substantially by whether today's young people are given the opportunity to contribute to its development.

Women likewise remain indispensable to Zimbabwe's national transformation. A sustainable development model must ensure that women participate fully in education, entrepreneurship, agriculture, industry, public administration, politics, science and technology. Women's empowerment is not merely a question of social justice; it is an economic necessity. Nations cannot realise their full potential while large sections of their population remain excluded from meaningful economic and political participation.

The environmental dimension of Zimbabwe's future must also receive increasing attention. Climate change, droughts, water scarcity, land degradation and changing agricultural conditions threaten the country's development gains. Sustainable development therefore requires climate-resilient agriculture, responsible mining, efficient water management, renewable energy and environmental protection. The economic vision of the future must be compatible with the ecological realities of the country. Development that destroys the natural systems upon which communities depend cannot ultimately be considered sustainable development.

In this respect, the legacy of the Mnangagwa era will continue to evolve long after the period itself has ended. Historians will examine the policies of the Second Republic, economists will assess its economic outcomes, political scientists will evaluate its governance model, communities will judge its social impact, and future generations will inherit its successes and

unresolved problems. History will therefore remain the ultimate arena in which the meaning of this period is continually reassessed.

The story of Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa is consequently also a story about Zimbabwe itself. It is a story of liberation, political endurance, national sovereignty, economic aspiration, institutional transformation, international engagement and the continuing struggle to translate independence into prosperity. It is a story marked by achievements and difficulties, opportunities and constraints, ambitions and unfinished business. Above all, it is part of Zimbabwe's continuing search for a development path that combines sovereignty with openness, economic growth with social justice, political stability with democratic participation, and national identity with international cooperation.

The final measure of any national leadership is therefore not the number of projects completed or speeches delivered, but whether the lives of citizens are progressively improved and whether the institutions of the nation become stronger for future generations. If Zimbabwe can build upon the productive foundations established during the Second Republic, strengthen its democratic institutions, deepen economic reforms, expand industrialisation, improve public services, attract sustainable investment and empower its citizens, then the period associated with Mnangagwa will occupy an important place in the country's developmental history.

The journey towards 2030 and beyond is ultimately bigger than any one political leader. It belongs to Zimbabwe as a nation. The aspirations of economic transformation, modern infrastructure, food security, industrialisation, technological advancement, human-capital development, social inclusion and national unity must become enduring national commitments. The success of Zimbabwe will depend upon the capacity of successive generations to preserve what works, correct what fails and continually adapt to a changing world.

In the final analysis, the legacy of Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa will remain a subject of historical, political and academic debate. Yet whatever judgments future generations ultimately make, his period of leadership has undeniably formed a significant chapter in Zimbabwe's post-independence history. It represents an attempt to redefine the country's development trajectory through the Second Republic, to pursue Vision 2030, to rebuild infrastructure and productive sectors, to deepen international engagement and to place economic transformation at the centre of the national agenda.

The unfinished task now belongs to the Zimbabwean people. The true legacy of any generation is not what it claims to have achieved, but what it leaves capable of being improved by those who follow. Zimbabwe's future will be determined by whether the country can transform its natural resources into sustainable prosperity, its educated population into productive human capital, its infrastructure into economic opportunity, its independence into genuine empowerment, and its political aspirations into institutions that serve every citizen.

The story does not end with Mnangagwa. It continues with Zimbabwe.

And the ultimate legacy of the Second Republic will be determined not only by what was built between 2017 and 2030, but by what future generations choose to build upon those foundations.

Recommendations

The legacy of President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa and the Second Republic should ultimately be assessed not only by the projects completed during a particular administration, but by the institutions, systems and opportunities created for future generations. Leadership becomes historically significant when its policies survive beyond the individuals who introduce them and become embedded in national institutions. Zimbabwe therefore needs to consolidate the developmental gains associated with the Second Republic while addressing the economic, governance, social and institutional weaknesses that may undermine long-term national progress. The central recommendation of this book is that Zimbabwe's development agenda must increasingly move from presidential programmes to durable national institutions capable of delivering consistent results irrespective of political cycles.

Zimbabwe should continue strengthening macroeconomic stability as the foundation upon which all other development ambitions depend. Economic growth cannot be sustained where inflation, exchange-rate instability, fiscal pressures and uncertainty undermine household incomes and private investment. Recent assessments by the World Bank and IMF indicate that Zimbabwe has achieved greater macroeconomic stability while continuing to face significant structural vulnerabilities, including debt pressures, financing constraints and the need to strengthen economic governance. The government should therefore preserve policy consistency, strengthen fiscal discipline and ensure that monetary policy is sufficiently credible to encourage long-term investment and productive economic activity.

The country's currency and monetary framework should be managed with exceptional consistency and transparency. Zimbabwe's experience over several decades demonstrates that monetary instability can rapidly destroy household purchasing power, discourage savings and weaken confidence in formal financial institutions. The authorities should continue developing a predictable monetary framework in which exchange-rate policy, money supply management, fiscal policy and central-bank operations are coordinated. The IMF has specifically emphasized the importance of avoiding monetary financing, strengthening the monetary framework and moving toward a more stable currency environment. Monetary reform should therefore be treated not merely as a technical economic exercise, but as a fundamental component of restoring public confidence in the national economy.

Zimbabwe should accelerate the resolution of its external debt and arrears situation. The country's development ambitions require access to affordable long-term financing for infrastructure, energy, education, health, agriculture and industrial development. Persistent arrears restrict access to international capital and make major development projects more expensive. The government should therefore continue structured dialogue with international financial institutions and creditors while maintaining national ownership of the debt-resolution process. Debt transparency should be strengthened, and future borrowing should be guided by clear assessments of sustainability, developmental impact and repayment capacity. The objective should not simply be to obtain new loans, but to establish a responsible financing framework that prevents the recurrence of unsustainable debt accumulation.

The government should deepen the transformation from a resource-dependent economy into a diversified productive economy. Zimbabwe possesses substantial mineral resources, agricultural potential, human capital and strategic geographic advantages, but long-term prosperity requires value addition rather than excessive dependence on the export of raw materials. Mining should therefore be connected more effectively to manufacturing, engineering, technology, transport, financial services and local supply chains. The development of lithium, platinum, gold, iron and steel and other mineral industries should be accompanied by policies that encourage domestic processing and beneficiation. Such an approach would increase foreign-exchange earnings, create employment and ensure that a greater proportion of the value generated from Zimbabwe's natural resources remains within the country.

Agricultural transformation should remain at the centre of national development. Zimbabwe's agricultural sector is simultaneously an economic sector, a food-security system and a foundation of rural livelihoods. The World Bank has highlighted the sector's exposure to climate shocks and the vulnerability created by heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture. Government should therefore expand irrigation, water harvesting, climate-smart agriculture, mechanisation, research, extension services and affordable agricultural finance. Programmes such as Pfumvudza/Intwasa should increasingly be linked to commercialisation, productivity and value chains so that smallholder farmers are not merely supported to produce food but are integrated into profitable agricultural markets.

Zimbabwe should develop a comprehensive national water-security strategy. Water security is fundamental to agriculture, mining, manufacturing, energy production, public health and urban development. Investment in dams, irrigation networks, water treatment plants, urban water systems and rural boreholes should therefore be treated as strategic national infrastructure. The country should also strengthen catchment management and climate-resilient water planning. Instead of responding to droughts and water shortages primarily through emergency measures, Zimbabwe should establish long-term systems capable of anticipating changing rainfall patterns and protecting national water resources.

Energy security should become one of the most important pillars of Vision 2030. Reliable electricity is essential for industrialisation, mining, agriculture, digital transformation and small-business development. The World Bank has noted that electricity shortages impose significant costs on Zimbabwe's economy and that achieving reliable universal access requires major investment in generation capacity, renewable energy and grid expansion. Zimbabwe should therefore diversify its energy mix through solar, hydroelectricity, thermal generation, battery storage and other appropriate technologies. Independent power producers should be supported through transparent and predictable regulatory frameworks, while the national grid should be modernised to improve transmission and distribution.

Infrastructure development should move beyond the construction of individual projects toward an integrated national infrastructure strategy. Roads, railways, airports, border posts, dams, telecommunications networks, energy infrastructure and urban systems must operate as interconnected components of economic development. Infrastructure should therefore be prioritised according to its capacity to unlock production, trade, employment and regional integration. Maintenance should receive equal attention to construction because infrastructure

that is built without sustainable maintenance eventually becomes a financial burden rather than a development asset.

The government should place greater emphasis on industrialisation and manufacturing. A modern economy cannot depend predominantly on commodity exports. Zimbabwe should establish stronger industrial linkages between agriculture, mining, manufacturing, technology and services. Industrial parks and special economic zones should be evaluated according to measurable outcomes such as employment creation, exports, technology transfer, domestic procurement and tax contribution. Incentives should be transparent and periodically reviewed so that public resources are directed toward enterprises capable of contributing meaningfully to national development.

The mining sector requires stronger transparency, accountability and domestic value creation. Zimbabwe's mineral wealth can become a powerful engine of development, but natural resources can also produce inequality when governance systems are weak. The country should strengthen disclosure requirements, environmental safeguards, taxation systems, licensing transparency and community participation. Mining communities should receive tangible benefits through infrastructure, employment, education, health services and community development programmes. Mineral extraction should be linked to local manufacturing wherever economically feasible so that Zimbabwe does not remain primarily an exporter of unprocessed resources.

The government should strengthen institutions responsible for combating corruption. The fight against corruption should not depend solely on presidential declarations or periodic investigations. It requires strong institutions, transparent procurement systems, effective auditing, independent oversight and credible enforcement. Public officials should be held to clear standards of accountability, while procurement processes should increasingly use digital systems that reduce opportunities for manipulation. Anti-corruption institutions should be sufficiently resourced and professionally independent to investigate allegations without political interference. The long-term objective should be to create a culture in which public office is understood as a responsibility rather than an avenue for private enrichment.

Public administration should be modernised through digital transformation and performance-based management. Citizens should not have to navigate unnecessary bureaucratic procedures to obtain basic government services. Digital platforms can reduce administrative costs, improve transparency and make government services more accessible. The World Bank's recent work on Zimbabwe has specifically identified regulatory complexity, fragmented service delivery and manual processes as constraints on businesses, while recommending greater transparency, simplification and digitalisation. Zimbabwe should therefore develop interoperable government platforms through which citizens and businesses can access multiple services efficiently.

The principle of constitutional governance should remain central to the future of the Second Republic and to Zimbabwe's broader political development. The Constitution provides the fundamental framework within which executive, legislative, judicial and other state institutions should operate. Zimbabwe's Constitution was enacted in 2013 and has subsequently been amended, making constitutional literacy particularly important for citizens, public officials and political organisations. Government should therefore strengthen constitutional education so that

citizens understand their rights, responsibilities and mechanisms for participating in public affairs.

Electoral institutions should continue to be strengthened in order to build confidence in Zimbabwe's democratic processes. Elections are not merely periodic political events; they are mechanisms through which citizens confer legitimacy upon governments. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission should therefore continue improving voter registration, electoral administration, accessibility, transparency and public communication. Electoral disputes should be resolved through credible legal and institutional mechanisms. Regional standards should also remain important, particularly given SADC's established role in observing Zimbabwean elections under its regional electoral principles.

National dialogue should be strengthened as an instrument of political stability. Zimbabwe's political history has been characterised by periods of intense polarisation, and sustainable national development requires mechanisms through which political differences can be managed peacefully. Government, opposition parties, civil society, churches, traditional leaders, business organisations, academics, youth and women's organisations should have opportunities to participate in structured national dialogue. Dialogue should not be limited to moments of crisis; it should become an institutionalised feature of democratic governance.

The government should strengthen the independence and effectiveness of public institutions. Development depends on institutions that can implement policies consistently and professionally. Ministries, departments, regulatory bodies, commissions and local authorities should therefore be evaluated according to measurable service-delivery outcomes. Political leadership is important, but institutions must retain sufficient professional capacity to continue functioning effectively when political leadership changes. The historical success of Vision 2030 should ultimately be judged partly by whether it produces stronger institutions capable of sustaining national development beyond the current political administration.

Local government should receive greater attention. National development cannot be achieved exclusively from Harare. Rural districts, municipalities and provinces require adequate resources, technical capacity and accountable leadership to provide water, sanitation, roads, waste management, housing and other essential services. Constitutional principles concerning decentralisation and devolution should therefore be implemented in ways that improve service delivery rather than merely transferring administrative responsibilities. Local communities should have meaningful opportunities to participate in determining development priorities.

Zimbabwe should invest more aggressively in education and human-capital development. The country's greatest long-term asset is not merely its mineral wealth but the knowledge, creativity and skills of its people. Education policy should therefore combine academic excellence with technical and vocational skills, entrepreneurship, science, engineering, agriculture, medicine, information technology and innovation. Universities should strengthen links with industry so that research produces practical solutions to national challenges. Technical and vocational education should be treated as a central component of economic transformation rather than as a secondary pathway.

Youth empowerment should become a measurable national development priority. Zimbabwe has a large and increasingly educated young population whose aspirations must be matched by opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and participation. Government should expand access to affordable finance, incubation programmes, vocational training, digital skills and business development services. Young people should also be incorporated into policy-making structures rather than treated merely as beneficiaries of government programmes. A country's demographic dividend becomes an economic advantage only when young people possess the skills, opportunities and institutions necessary to participate productively in the economy.

Women should remain central to the country's development strategy. Economic transformation cannot be complete if women remain disproportionately excluded from land ownership, finance, entrepreneurship, leadership and high-value employment. Government should strengthen policies that expand women's access to productive assets, financial services, technology, education and leadership opportunities. Women's empowerment should be measured through actual economic and political participation rather than simply through policy declarations.

Zimbabwe should strengthen healthcare infrastructure and human-resource capacity. Modern hospitals, rural clinics, medical equipment, pharmaceutical supply chains and skilled health professionals are essential to national development. Health policy should increasingly emphasise prevention, primary healthcare, maternal and child health, disease surveillance and emergency preparedness. Rural populations should receive particular attention because geographic inequalities can translate into significant inequalities in access to essential services. A healthy population is not simply a social objective; it is a productive economic asset.

Climate resilience should become integrated across every major development programme. The effects of drought, floods, heat and changing rainfall patterns can undermine agriculture, electricity generation, infrastructure and household welfare. The World Bank has warned that climate-related shocks could impose substantial economic costs on Zimbabwe while also noting that preventive investment can be considerably cheaper than responding after disasters occur. Climate adaptation should therefore be incorporated into infrastructure standards, agricultural planning, water management, urban development and national budgeting.

Zimbabwe should strengthen regional economic integration. The country's geographical position provides opportunities to connect domestic production with markets in the SADC region and beyond. Regional integration can expand export markets, improve transport connectivity, facilitate investment and strengthen economic resilience. Zimbabwe should therefore continue supporting SADC integration, African Continental Free Trade Area opportunities and broader African economic cooperation. Regional diplomacy should be accompanied by practical efforts to improve border efficiency, logistics, standards compliance and export competitiveness.

Foreign policy should continue balancing national interests with constructive international engagement. Zimbabwe benefits when it maintains productive relations with African states, traditional partners, emerging economies and international institutions. Re-engagement should be pursued on the basis of national sovereignty, economic interests, mutual respect and diplomatic pragmatism. International partnerships should increasingly be evaluated according to measurable contributions to technology transfer, investment, infrastructure, trade, education and human-

capital development rather than simply the political symbolism attached to diplomatic relationships.

Zimbabwe should strengthen the relationship between diaspora communities and national development. Millions of Zimbabweans living outside the country contribute to the national economy through remittances, professional expertise, investment and international networks. Government should therefore create practical mechanisms through which the diaspora can participate in investment, skills transfer, entrepreneurship and national development. Diaspora engagement should extend beyond remittances and should recognise Zimbabweans abroad as potential partners in technological, academic, professional and commercial development.

The government should strengthen freedom of information, professional journalism and public access to reliable information. A modern democracy requires citizens who can obtain accurate information about government policy and national affairs. Media institutions should be encouraged to operate professionally, while misinformation and disinformation should be addressed through public education, media literacy and responsible digital governance rather than unnecessary restrictions on legitimate expression. A confident government should recognise that constructive criticism can contribute to institutional improvement.

The role of civil society should be protected and strengthened. Non-governmental organisations, professional associations, faith-based organisations, universities, community organisations and other civic institutions can provide valuable oversight, research, social services and public education. Their role should not automatically be understood as opposition to government. A mature democracy recognises that government and civil society can disagree on particular policies while sharing the broader objective of national development. Constructive engagement between the state and civil society can therefore strengthen public accountability and social cohesion.

Finally, Zimbabwe should ensure that Vision 2030 becomes a national project rather than simply an administrative programme associated with one political administration. The ambition of achieving an upper-middle-income economy requires continuity, measurable targets, transparent monitoring and broad national participation. Government should publish regular progress assessments showing what has been achieved, what remains outstanding, what resources have been committed and what measurable improvements citizens are experiencing. The ultimate test of Vision 2030 should not be the number of policy documents produced or projects announced, but whether ordinary Zimbabweans experience greater prosperity, better services, more employment, stronger institutions and expanded opportunities. Vision 2030 should therefore be understood as a generational undertaking whose success will depend upon the combined efforts of government, business, labour, civil society, academia, communities and citizens.

The recommendations advanced in this book should therefore be understood as a call for continuity with improvement. The Second Republic has established a developmental narrative centred on infrastructure, agricultural transformation, industrialisation, investment, re-engagement and Vision 2030. The next stage should deepen these ambitions through stronger institutions, greater transparency, economic diversification, inclusive governance and human-capital development. Zimbabwe's future should not be defined exclusively by the successes or

shortcomings of one presidency. It should be defined by whether the country succeeds in building institutions and an economy capable of giving future generations greater security, dignity, opportunity and prosperity.

The enduring lesson of the Mnangagwa era is therefore that national development requires both vision and institutional discipline. Vision provides direction, but institutions provide continuity; infrastructure creates physical capacity, but human capital creates innovation; economic growth creates resources, but good governance determines how those resources are distributed and protected. Zimbabwe's future will ultimately depend on combining these dimensions into a coherent national development framework. The country possesses considerable human, agricultural, mineral and strategic potential. The responsibility of the present generation is to transform that potential into sustainable national prosperity while ensuring that development remains inclusive, constitutional, peaceful and accountable.

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GLOSSARY

African Union (AU)

The continental organisation established in 2002 to promote unity, peace, security, political cooperation, economic integration and sustainable development among African states. The AU provides an important framework for Zimbabwe's continental diplomacy and its engagement with broader African development initiatives.

Agricultural Mechanisation

The introduction and use of machinery, equipment and modern technologies in agricultural production. In Zimbabwe, mechanisation has been associated with efforts to increase productivity, modernise farming, improve food security and reduce dependence on traditional farming methods.

Agricultural Transformation

The process of changing agriculture from predominantly subsistence-oriented production toward a more productive, commercialised, mechanised and technology-driven sector. It encompasses irrigation, mechanisation, improved seed varieties, livestock development, financing, infrastructure and market access.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

A field of technology involving computer systems capable of performing tasks that normally require aspects of human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, analysis, language processing and decision-making. AI has increasingly become relevant to Zimbabwe's digital transformation and technological development.

BRICS

An international grouping originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, later expanded to include additional members. Zimbabwe's interest in deeper relations with emerging global powers reflects its broader strategy of expanding economic and diplomatic partnerships beyond traditional Western relationships.

Border Post Modernisation

The upgrading of border facilities, infrastructure, information systems and administrative processes to improve the movement of people and goods. Modernisation of Zimbabwe's border posts has been linked to trade facilitation, regional integration and improved revenue collection.

Constitutional Governance

A system of government in which political authority is exercised according to the constitution and subject to constitutional limitations. It involves respect for constitutional institutions, fundamental rights, separation of powers and the rule of law.

Currency Reform

Changes to a country's monetary and foreign-exchange arrangements intended to address problems such as inflation, exchange-rate instability, currency shortages and loss of confidence in the monetary system. Zimbabwe's currency reforms have been an important component of its economic policy debates.

Digital Economy

An economy increasingly driven by digital technologies, electronic transactions, telecommunications, online services, data and technological innovation. Zimbabwe's digitalisation agenda seeks to expand the contribution of technology to economic development.

Digital Transformation

The adoption of digital technologies to improve government, business, education, healthcare, financial services and other areas of society. It includes e-government, digital payments, connectivity, artificial intelligence and technological innovation.

Economic Empowerment

Policies and programmes designed to increase citizens' participation in economic activity through access to employment, entrepreneurship, finance, land, skills, ownership and investment opportunities.

Economic Recovery

The process through which an economy seeks to restore production, investment, employment, fiscal stability and economic confidence following a period of decline or crisis.

Economic Reforms

Changes to economic policies, institutions, regulations and systems intended to improve productivity, investment, fiscal management, competitiveness and sustainable economic growth.

Economic Sanctions

Restrictions imposed by one or more countries or international institutions on another country, government, organisation or individual for political, economic or security-related reasons. Zimbabwe's relationship with Western sanctions has remained an important feature of its international relations and domestic political discourse.

E-Government

The use of digital technologies by government institutions to provide public services, communicate with citizens, improve administration and increase efficiency and transparency.

Electoral Processes

The procedures through which elections are organised and conducted, including voter registration, candidate nomination, campaigning, polling, vote counting, result declaration and electoral dispute resolution.

Energy Security

The ability of a country to maintain a reliable, affordable and sustainable supply of energy. Zimbabwe's energy-security agenda includes investment in electricity generation, transmission, renewable energy and related infrastructure.

Engagement and Re-engagement

A foreign-policy approach aimed at rebuilding diplomatic, political and economic relationships with international partners. The Second Republic placed considerable emphasis on international engagement and re-engagement as part of Zimbabwe's strategy for restoring external relations and attracting investment.

Export Growth

An increase in the value or volume of goods and services sold by a country to international markets. Export growth is considered important for generating foreign currency, supporting employment and strengthening economic resilience.

Fiscal Reform

Changes to government revenue, taxation, expenditure, budgeting and public-finance management intended to improve fiscal sustainability and efficiency.

Food Security

A condition in which people have reliable physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. Zimbabwe's agricultural policies have frequently placed food security at the centre of national development planning.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Investment made by individuals or companies from one country into productive assets or businesses in another country, usually with a significant degree of ownership or control. FDI is often regarded as an important source of capital, technology and employment.

Foreign Policy

The principles and strategies through which a government manages its relationships with other states, regional organisations and international institutions.

Governance

The processes, institutions and practices through which public authority is exercised and national affairs are managed. Good governance generally involves accountability, transparency, participation, effectiveness, legality and respect for citizens' rights.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The total monetary value of goods and services produced within a country during a specified period. GDP is commonly used as one indicator of economic activity and growth.

Heritage-Based Education

An educational philosophy that places Zimbabwean history, culture, indigenous knowledge, heritage and national identity within the learning process. It seeks to connect education with national development and cultural consciousness.

Human Capital

The knowledge, skills, education, experience, health and capabilities possessed by individuals that contribute to economic and social development.

Industrialisation

The development and expansion of manufacturing, processing and other productive industries within an economy. Industrialisation is closely associated with Zimbabwe's efforts to increase domestic production and reduce dependence on imported goods.

Infrastructure Development

The construction and improvement of physical systems necessary for economic and social activity, including roads, bridges, dams, airports, energy facilities, telecommunications networks, water systems and public buildings.

Investment Attraction

Government efforts to encourage domestic and international investors to establish or expand businesses and productive activities within a country.

Irrigation Development

The construction and expansion of systems that provide water to agricultural land. Irrigation can reduce dependence on rainfall and improve agricultural productivity and food security.

Lithium Industry

The sector involved in the exploration, extraction, processing and potential beneficiation of lithium-bearing minerals. Lithium has become strategically important because of its use in batteries and renewable-energy technologies.

Local Content

Policies designed to increase the participation of domestic companies, workers, suppliers and communities in economic activities associated with major investments and projects.

Manufacturing Revival

Efforts to restore, expand and modernise domestic manufacturing capacity after periods of industrial decline. Manufacturing revival is generally linked to employment creation, import substitution, export development and economic diversification.

Mining Beneficiation

The processing and refinement of minerals beyond their initial extraction stage. Beneficiation is intended to increase the economic value generated domestically rather than exporting raw minerals with limited processing.

National Development Strategy (NDS)

Zimbabwe's medium-term development planning framework designed to translate national priorities into programmes, policies and measurable development objectives.

National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1)

The first medium-term development strategy of the Second Republic, covering the period 2021–2025. It focused on economic growth, social development, infrastructure, investment, institutional reform and progress toward Vision 2030.

National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2)

The subsequent medium-term development framework intended to build upon NDS1 and advance Zimbabwe toward the longer-term objectives associated with Vision 2030.

Nation Building

The process of strengthening national institutions, identity, social cohesion, economic capacity and political stability following periods of conflict, division or institutional weakness.

National Unity

The principle that citizens and political groups should recognise their shared national interests despite differences in political affiliation, ethnicity, region, religion or ideology.

Open for Business

A policy slogan associated with the Second Republic's effort to communicate Zimbabwe's willingness to receive investors, expand international economic relations and create a more investment-friendly environment.

Pan-Africanism

An intellectual, political and social movement advocating African unity, solidarity, independence, sovereignty and collective development. It has influenced Zimbabwe's foreign policy and its understanding of African liberation.

Pfumvudza/Intwasa

An agricultural production programme designed to promote conservation agriculture, improve household productivity and strengthen food security through structured farming methods and efficient use of agricultural inputs.

Public Administration

The system through which government policies and programmes are implemented and public services are delivered. It includes government ministries, departments, agencies and public officials.

Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

A contractual arrangement in which government and private-sector entities cooperate in financing, developing or managing infrastructure or public services.

Re-engagement Policy

A diplomatic strategy aimed at strengthening Zimbabwe's relationships with countries and international institutions after years of diplomatic tension and isolation.

Rural Development

The improvement of economic and social conditions in rural areas through investment in infrastructure, agriculture, healthcare, education, water, energy, telecommunications and livelihoods.

Second Republic

The political and governmental period that emerged following Zimbabwe's 2017 political transition and the subsequent administration of President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. The term is used by the government to distinguish its governing philosophy and policy agenda from the preceding political era.

Servant Leadership

A leadership philosophy that emphasises service to citizens, humility, responsibility, ethical conduct and placing the interests of the community above personal interests.

Smart Cities

Urban areas that use information and communication technologies, data systems and modern infrastructure to improve transport, energy management, public services, security, environmental management and quality of life.

Special Economic Zones (SEZs)

Designated geographical areas where governments provide particular regulatory, fiscal or infrastructural incentives to encourage investment, production, exports and industrial development.

Sustainable Development

Development that seeks to meet present needs while preserving the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It balances economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 17 global development goals adopted by United Nations member states in 2015. They address issues including poverty, education, health, gender equality, economic development, environmental sustainability and peace.

SADC

The Southern African Development Community, a regional organisation promoting economic integration, peace, security and development among Southern African states. Zimbabwe is a founding member and an active participant in SADC institutions.

Rule of Law

The principle that individuals, institutions and governments are subject to the law and that laws should be applied consistently and fairly.

Universal Health Access

The principle that people should be able to obtain necessary healthcare services without facing financial or geographical barriers that prevent access.

Value Addition

The process of increasing the economic value of raw materials by processing, refining or manufacturing them before they are sold. In Zimbabwe, value addition has been particularly emphasised in agriculture and mining.

Vision 2030

Zimbabwe's long-term national development objective of becoming an **upper-middle-income economy by 2030**, accompanied by goals relating to economic growth, infrastructure, industrialisation, social development, governance and improved quality of life.

Women's Empowerment

Policies and programmes intended to increase women's participation and influence in economic, political and social life, including access to education, employment, finance, entrepreneurship and leadership.

Youth Empowerment

Efforts to equip young people with education, skills, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship support, access to finance and participation in national development.

Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA)

A government institution responsible for facilitating investment, promoting Zimbabwe as an investment destination and supporting investors through relevant processes and services.

Zimbabwe Open for Business

A broader expression associated with the Second Republic's investment and economic diplomacy agenda, signalling an intention to attract international capital, expand trade and promote Zimbabwe as an investment destination.

Upper-Middle-Income Economy

A World Bank income classification describing economies whose gross national income per capita falls within a specified upper-middle-income range. Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 objective has been framed around attaining upper-middle-income status.

Infrastructure Modernisation

The upgrading of existing infrastructure to improve capacity, efficiency, reliability, safety and technological standards.

Rural Industrialisation

The development of productive industries and economic activities outside major urban centres, particularly through agro-processing, mining-related enterprises, manufacturing and local value chains.

Economic Diversification

The expansion of an economy beyond dependence on a limited number of sectors, commodities or sources of revenue. Diversification can reduce vulnerability to external shocks.

Import Substitution

A development strategy aimed at increasing domestic production of goods that would otherwise be imported. It can reduce foreign-currency pressure while strengthening domestic industries.

Monetary Policy

Policies used by a central monetary authority to influence money supply, interest rates, inflation, exchange rates and overall monetary conditions.

Inflation

A sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services, resulting in a decline in the purchasing power of money.

Exchange Rate

The value of one currency expressed in terms of another currency. Exchange-rate movements can significantly affect imports, exports, inflation and investment.

Foreign Currency

Currency issued by another country and used in international transactions. Foreign currency availability has historically been an important issue in Zimbabwe's economy.

Devolution

The transfer of certain powers, responsibilities and resources from central government to provincial, metropolitan and local authorities. Devolution is intended to promote local participation and balanced development.

Decentralisation

The redistribution of administrative, political or financial responsibilities from central government to lower levels of government or public institutions.

Provincial Development

The coordinated development of provinces through infrastructure, investment, employment, agriculture, industry and public services.

Public Infrastructure

Physical facilities and systems provided or supported by the state for public use, including roads, schools, hospitals, water systems, electricity networks and public transport infrastructure.

Economic Sovereignty

The capacity of a state to formulate and implement its own economic policies, manage its resources and pursue national development priorities without undue external control.

National Sovereignty

The authority of a state to govern itself, determine its political and economic direction and exercise control over its territory and institutions.

Liberation Legacy

The historical, political and ideological inheritance arising from Zimbabwe's struggle against colonial rule and racial domination. It remains an important reference point in discussions of national identity, sovereignty and governance.

Liberation Movement

A political organisation or movement that seeks to end colonial, racial or foreign domination and establish self-government. Zimbabwe's liberation struggle produced political movements that later became central to post-independence politics.

Chimurenga

A Shona term broadly associated with struggle or resistance. In Zimbabwean political history, it has been used to describe major periods of resistance, particularly the liberation struggles against colonial rule.

Independence

The attainment of sovereign statehood and freedom from colonial or foreign political control. Zimbabwe achieved independence on 18 April 1980.

Sovereignty

The supreme authority of a state over its territory, institutions and political affairs, together with its recognised independence in international relations.

Ubuntu

An African philosophical principle emphasising humanity, interconnectedness, dignity, solidarity and mutual responsibility. Ubuntu is often expressed through the idea that a person's humanity is realised through relationships with others.

Inclusive Development

Development that seeks to ensure that economic and social benefits reach different regions, communities, social groups and generations rather than being concentrated among a narrow section of society.

Climate Resilience

The ability of communities, economies, infrastructure and ecosystems to withstand, adapt to and recover from climate-related shocks such as droughts, floods and extreme weather.

Renewable Energy

Energy generated from naturally replenishing sources such as sunlight, wind, flowing water and certain forms of biomass.

Energy Transition

The movement from energy systems dominated by conventional fossil fuels toward cleaner, more diversified and sustainable sources of energy.

Human Development

A broad approach to development that focuses not only on economic growth but also on people's health, education, living standards, freedoms and opportunities.

Social Protection

Government and community measures designed to protect vulnerable populations against poverty, unemployment, economic shocks and other social risks.

Public Policy

A deliberate course of action adopted by government to address a particular social, political, economic or developmental issue.

Institutional Reform

Changes made to government institutions, laws, administrative structures and procedures with the objective of improving efficiency, accountability, transparency and effectiveness.

Constitutional Reform

Changes to constitutional provisions, institutions or procedures intended to modify the framework through which a state is governed.

Electoral Reform

Changes to electoral laws, institutions and procedures intended to improve the administration, credibility, inclusiveness and effectiveness of elections.

Political Transition

A significant change in political leadership, governing arrangements or political institutions. Zimbabwe experienced a major political transition in November 2017.

Political Stability

A condition in which political institutions function without sustained violent disruption or severe instability and in which governmental authority is maintained through established institutions and processes.

National Development

The comprehensive advancement of a country through improvements in its economy, infrastructure, institutions, human capital, social welfare and quality of life.

Economic Growth

An increase in the production of goods and services within an economy over time, commonly measured through changes in real GDP.

Economic Development

A broader process involving improvements in living standards, productivity, employment, infrastructure, human capabilities and institutional quality, rather than simply an increase in economic output.

Job Creation

The generation of new employment opportunities through economic expansion, investment, industrialisation, entrepreneurship and public or private-sector programmes.

Entrepreneurship

The process of identifying opportunities, creating businesses, developing products or services and taking calculated risks in pursuit of economic value.

Innovation

The development or application of new ideas, technologies, products, processes or approaches that create economic or social value.

Technology Transfer

The movement of technological knowledge, skills, processes or equipment from one organisation, institution or country to another.

Knowledge Economy

An economy in which knowledge, information, research, innovation and specialised skills play a central role in creating economic value.

Human Capital Development

Investment in people's education, skills, health and capabilities to improve productivity and national development.

National Interest

The collection of objectives and priorities considered important to the security, sovereignty, prosperity and welfare of a state.

African Leadership

Leadership that places African sovereignty, continental cooperation, development, peace, self-determination and African interests at the centre of political decision-making.

Regional Integration

The process through which neighbouring countries cooperate economically, politically and socially, including through trade agreements, infrastructure connectivity and coordinated policies.

Continental Integration

The broader process of strengthening political, economic and social cooperation among African states.

International Re-engagement

The restoration or strengthening of diplomatic, economic and institutional relationships between Zimbabwe and countries or international organisations with which relations had previously deteriorated.

Multilateral Diplomacy

Diplomatic engagement involving several countries or international organisations working together on common issues.

Bilateral Relations

Political, economic and diplomatic relations between two countries.

Investment Climate

The overall economic, legal, political, institutional and regulatory environment in which investors make investment decisions.

Ease of Doing Business

A broad concept describing how straightforward it is for businesses to start, operate, invest, obtain permits, access infrastructure and comply with regulations within an economy.

Public Accountability

The obligation of government officials and institutions to explain and justify their decisions, actions and use of public resources.

Transparency

The availability and accessibility of information about government decisions, policies, finances and institutional activities.

Social Cohesion

The degree to which members of society share a sense of belonging, trust, solidarity and commitment to common national objectives.

National Identity

The shared sense of belonging to a nation based on common history, culture, citizenship, values and political identity.

Patriotism

A commitment to and identification with one's country, expressed through concern for its welfare, sovereignty, development and national interests.

Peacebuilding

Efforts to prevent conflict, strengthen social relationships, address sources of instability and establish conditions for sustainable peace.

Governance Debates

Public, political and academic discussions concerning the quality, effectiveness, legitimacy and accountability of government institutions and political processes.

Public Administration Reform

Changes to government administrative systems intended to improve efficiency, professionalism, service delivery, accountability and responsiveness.

Service Delivery

The provision of essential public services such as healthcare, education, water, sanitation, electricity, transport and social protection.

Public Service

The institutions, agencies and personnel responsible for implementing government policies and delivering services to citizens.

National Planning

The process through which governments identify national priorities, allocate resources and establish programmes for achieving long-term development objectives.

Sustainable Industrialisation

Industrial development that combines economic productivity and employment creation with environmental responsibility and long-term resource sustainability.

Green Economy

An economic approach that promotes growth and development while reducing environmental degradation, resource depletion and carbon emissions.

Climate-Smart Agriculture

Agricultural practices designed to increase productivity and resilience while reducing vulnerability to climate change and, where possible, lowering environmental impacts.

Water Security

Reliable access to sufficient quantities of safe and usable water for households, agriculture, industry and ecosystems.

Rural Modernisation

The transformation of rural communities through improved infrastructure, technology, agricultural productivity, housing, public services and economic opportunities.

Urban Development

The planned growth and improvement of cities and towns through infrastructure, housing, transportation, utilities, economic development and environmental management.

Smart Governance

The use of technology, data, innovation and participatory approaches to improve public administration and government decision-making.

E-Commerce

The buying and selling of goods and services through digital or electronic platforms.

Financial Inclusion

The ability of individuals and businesses to access useful, affordable and appropriate financial services, including banking, payments, savings, credit and insurance.

Digital Financial Services

Financial services delivered through digital platforms, mobile phones, electronic systems and other technological channels.

Investment Promotion

Government and institutional activities designed to identify, attract and facilitate investment into priority sectors.

Mineral Resources

Naturally occurring geological materials that have economic value and can be extracted and processed for productive purposes.

Mining Expansion

The growth of mineral exploration, extraction, processing and related economic activities.

Steel Production

The manufacture and processing of steel products from iron-bearing raw materials. Steel production is strategically important for construction, manufacturing, infrastructure and industrial development.

Manufacturing

The transformation of raw materials or intermediate goods into finished or semi-finished products through industrial processes.

Industrial Parks

Designated areas developed to accommodate manufacturing, processing and related businesses, often supported by specialised infrastructure and investment incentives.

Economic Resilience

The ability of an economy to absorb shocks, adapt to changing conditions and recover while maintaining essential functions and productive capacity.

Policy Implementation

The process of translating government decisions, legislation and development strategies into practical programmes and actions.

Development Planning

The systematic process of identifying national priorities, setting objectives and coordinating resources to achieve desired economic and social outcomes.

Visionary Leadership

Leadership characterised by a clearly articulated long-term vision and efforts to mobilise institutions and citizens toward defined national objectives.

Legacy

The enduring political, economic, institutional, social and historical impact of a leader, government or period on a country and its future generations.

Second Republic Legacy

The collection of institutional, economic, infrastructural, diplomatic and social outcomes associated with Zimbabwe's post-2017 governing period and its stated development agenda.

Vision 2030 Agenda

The collection of policies, programmes and national objectives intended to transform Zimbabwe into a prosperous, modern and upper-middle-income economy by 2030.

Future Generations

People who will live in the future and whose welfare is considered when governments make decisions concerning development, resources, infrastructure, education and environmental sustainability.

National Transformation

A comprehensive process through which a country seeks to fundamentally improve its institutions, economy, infrastructure, social systems and human capabilities.

Inclusive Governance

Governance that seeks participation, representation and access to public institutions and decision-making across different sectors and communities of society.

Constitutionalism

The principle that governmental power must be exercised within constitutional limits and that political authority is constrained by law.

Democracy

A system of government in which political authority is ultimately derived from the people, generally through participation, representation, elections and constitutional institutions.

Human Rights

Fundamental rights and freedoms belonging to individuals by virtue of their humanity, including rights relating to dignity, equality, liberty, participation and social welfare.

Rule-Based International Order

An international system in which relations between states are guided by agreed principles, treaties, institutions and norms.

Sovereign Development

A development approach that emphasises national control over resources, policies, institutions and development priorities while maintaining international cooperation.

Strategic Minerals

Minerals considered particularly important to national security, industrial development, energy transition or strategic economic interests.

National Beneficiation

The processing of domestic natural resources within the country before export, with the objective of retaining a greater share of economic value domestically.

Export Diversification

The expansion of the range of products, services and markets through which a country earns export revenue.

Trade Facilitation

Measures designed to simplify, modernise and harmonise procedures for the movement of goods across borders.

Regional Trade

The exchange of goods and services among countries within a particular geographical region, such as Southern Africa.

SADC Integration

The process of strengthening economic, political and infrastructural cooperation among SADC member states.

African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

A continental framework designed to create a single African market for goods and services, reduce trade barriers and promote intra-African trade and economic integration.

Economic Diplomacy

The use of diplomatic relations to promote trade, investment, economic cooperation, development partnerships and national economic interests.

Development Diplomacy

The use of international relations to mobilise investment, technical assistance, development partnerships and cooperation for national development.

International Investment

Capital invested across national borders with the objective of generating economic returns or establishing productive capacity.

Public Investment

Government expenditure on infrastructure, public services, productive assets and other projects intended to generate long-term social or economic benefits.

Capital Projects

Large-scale investments in infrastructure, productive facilities or other assets intended to provide long-term economic or social benefits.

Infrastructure Financing

The mobilisation of financial resources for the construction, maintenance and upgrading of infrastructure.

Public-Private Investment

Investment involving cooperation between government institutions and private-sector actors to finance or implement development projects.

National Resilience

The ability of a country and its institutions to withstand economic, political, environmental and social shocks while continuing to pursue development.

Developmental State

A state that takes an active and strategic role in guiding economic development, industrialisation, infrastructure investment and social transformation.

Transformative Governance

Governance directed toward substantial structural improvements in institutions, economic systems, public services and citizens' living conditions.

National Vision

A long-term statement of the desired direction and future condition of a country.

Upper-Middle-Income Vision

The objective of attaining the economic and social characteristics associated with upper-middle-income status as part of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 framework.

Prosperity

A condition characterised by improved economic opportunities, rising living standards, productive employment, infrastructure, social welfare and sustainable development.

National Competitiveness

The capacity of a country's economy and institutions to produce goods and services efficiently and compete successfully in domestic and international markets.

Globalisation

The increasing interconnectedness of countries through trade, investment, technology, migration, communication and international institutions.

Geopolitics

The study and practice of international relations in relation to geography, strategic interests, resources, power and regional influence.

Multipolarity

An international system in which power and influence are distributed among several major states or centres rather than dominated by a single global power.

Strategic Partnership

A sustained relationship between countries or institutions based on shared political, economic, security, technological or developmental interests.

National Development Priorities

The key areas identified by government as requiring concentrated policy attention and resources to achieve national objectives.

Policy Continuity

The maintenance of important government policies and development programmes across different periods despite political or institutional changes.

Development Outcomes

The measurable economic, social, institutional and infrastructural results produced by development policies and programmes.

Accountability Institutions

Public bodies responsible for oversight, auditing, investigation, regulation or other mechanisms designed to ensure responsible use of public authority.

Institutional Capacity

The ability of public institutions to formulate policy, manage resources, implement programmes and deliver services effectively.

Public Trust

The confidence citizens place in government institutions, political leaders and public systems to act competently, lawfully and in the public interest.

National Renewal

A process of rebuilding, reforming and modernising national institutions and systems following periods of crisis or stagnation.

Economic Modernisation

The transformation of economic systems through technology, infrastructure, industrialisation, financial reform, innovation and improved productivity.

Social Transformation

Long-term changes in education, health, livelihoods, gender relations, social institutions and living conditions.

Developmental Infrastructure

Infrastructure specifically designed or prioritised to support economic productivity, social welfare and long-term national development.

Intergenerational Equity

The principle that current development decisions should not unfairly deprive future generations of resources, opportunities or environmental security.

National Memory

The collective understanding of a country's historical experiences, struggles, achievements and political development.

Liberation Heritage

The historical memory, values, institutions and narratives associated with the struggle for Zimbabwe's independence and sovereignty.

Political Legacy

The enduring influence of a political leader or administration on institutions, policies, political culture and national history.

Economic Legacy

The long-term economic effects of a government or leadership period, including changes in infrastructure, production, investment, employment, fiscal management and economic institutions.

Institutional Legacy

The lasting impact of reforms, administrative structures, laws and public institutions established or strengthened during a particular governing period.

Development Legacy

The cumulative infrastructure, human-capital, economic and social improvements associated with a period of national governance.

National Leadership

The exercise of political authority and strategic direction at the highest levels of government.

Presidential Leadership

The exercise of executive authority and national political leadership by the President within the constitutional framework of the state.

Political Accountability

The responsibility of political leaders and elected officials to citizens, constitutional institutions and legal oversight mechanisms for their decisions and conduct.

National Cohesion

The strengthening of unity, social solidarity and shared national purpose among citizens and communities.

Peaceful Coexistence

The ability of different political, ethnic, social and ideological groups to live together without violence while respecting one another's rights and differences.

Inclusive National Development

A development approach in which economic opportunities, public services and national investments are intended to benefit broad sections of society and different geographical regions.

Sustainable Prosperity

Long-term economic and social improvement that can be maintained without exhausting natural resources, undermining institutions or compromising future generations.

Legacy of Leadership

The cumulative historical assessment of a leader's policies, decisions, achievements, failures, institutions, challenges and influence on subsequent generations.

Closing Note to the Glossary

This glossary is designed to accompany the broader historical and analytical discussion presented throughout the book. It provides readers with a common vocabulary for understanding the political, economic, social, diplomatic and developmental concepts associated with the **Second Republic, President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, Zimbabwe's Vision 2030 agenda and the country's wider national-development trajectory.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Talent Rusere

Professor Talent Rusere is a Zimbabwean political thinker, human-rights advocate, Pan-Africanist and public commentator whose work has developed at the intersection of politics, democracy, governance, constitutionalism and human rights. His public life has been characterised by a sustained engagement with questions concerning the future of Zimbabwe, the Southern African region and the broader African continent. Over the years, he has become associated with political advocacy, civic engagement, human-rights discourse and campaigns concerning democratic participation and accountable governance.

Born in Zimbabwe, Rusere's intellectual and political outlook has been shaped by the social, economic and political realities of Southern Africa. His experiences have exposed him to the challenges confronting ordinary citizens, particularly questions of political participation, economic opportunity, social justice, constitutional rights and the relationship between citizens and institutions of government. These experiences have contributed to his interest in examining African politics not merely as a contest for political power, but as a broader question of national development, historical responsibility and the dignity of the African people.

Rusere's public profile expanded through his involvement in political activism and civic advocacy. Public reporting has described him as a Zimbabwean activist and political figure, with his advocacy extending beyond Zimbabwe into wider Southern African affairs. His work has included commentary on elections, democracy, human rights and regional political developments, placing him within a generation of African voices seeking to influence public debate through advocacy, political participation and civic engagement.

A significant dimension of Rusere's work has been his interest in electoral democracy. Through the Southern Africa Human Rights Lawyers platform, he has participated in regional electoral observation and public discussions concerning the conduct of elections. A preliminary statement on Namibia's 2024 elections identifies him as High Commissioner of the Southern Africa Human Rights Lawyers and head of its election-observer mission. His engagement with electoral questions reflects his broader conviction that credible elections, constitutionalism and respect for citizens' political rights are essential foundations of democratic societies.

His regional perspective is particularly important to his intellectual work. Rusere approaches African politics from the understanding that the political experiences of individual African countries cannot always be separated from the wider regional environment. Migration, elections, economic integration, human rights, diplomacy, security and democratic governance frequently cross national borders. Consequently, his advocacy has increasingly addressed Southern Africa as an interconnected political and social space rather than a collection of isolated states.

Rusere has also been an outspoken participant in debates surrounding Zimbabwe's relationship with neighbouring countries and regional institutions. His public interventions concerning the 2024 elections in Mozambique attracted regional media attention, particularly in relation to

allegations of electoral interference and the role of Zimbabwean actors. Regardless of the competing interpretations surrounding these political controversies, these interventions demonstrate the extent to which his public work has engaged with questions of regional democracy and political accountability.

His approach to human rights is rooted in the belief that rights must be meaningful in the everyday lives of citizens. Democracy, in his conception, cannot be reduced to the periodic casting of ballots. It must encompass freedom of expression, equality before the law, political participation, institutional accountability, access to justice and the protection of human dignity. This perspective informs much of his public advocacy and provides an important intellectual foundation for his writing.

Rusere has further sought to connect political freedom with economic development. His political discourse has repeatedly emphasised the importance of creating societies in which political rights are accompanied by economic opportunities, employment, education, infrastructure and social development. For him, the success of an African democracy should ultimately be measured not only by the existence of constitutional institutions but also by whether citizens experience tangible improvements in their quality of life.

Another defining feature of his public philosophy is Pan-Africanism. Rusere's regional advocacy reflects an understanding that Africa's political and economic challenges require cooperation across national boundaries. The movement of people, capital, ideas and labour across Southern Africa demonstrates the interconnectedness of African societies. His work therefore places considerable emphasis on regional solidarity, African self-determination and the responsibility of African institutions to protect the dignity and rights of Africans.

His commitment to public advocacy has also brought him into direct confrontation with contentious political questions. In 2024, he was arrested after being deported from Botswana, an episode that received coverage in Zimbabwean media. In 2025, *The Herald* reported on his release following a nine-month prison sentence and his subsequent call for national unity and development. These events form part of the broader political context in which his public career has developed.

Rather than presenting his experiences simply as personal achievements, Rusere's writings seek to interpret them within the wider political history of Zimbabwe and Africa. His work reflects the conviction that individuals who participate in public life have a responsibility to document the political questions of their generation. His writing therefore combines political reflection, advocacy and historical interpretation.

The author's interests extend beyond contemporary political events to questions of constitutional governance and the future of African democracy. In 2026, media reports covered a High Court application associated with Rusere concerning proposed constitutional changes in Zimbabwe. This illustrates his continuing engagement with constitutional and institutional questions and his belief that political disagreements should ultimately be addressed through lawful and constitutional processes. His political activities have consequently developed alongside his civic

and human-rights advocacy, giving his work a dual character: intellectual engagement with political ideas and practical involvement in public affairs.

At the centre of Rusere's intellectual philosophy is the conviction that Africa must develop political institutions capable of responding to African realities while remaining committed to universal principles of human dignity, justice and equality. He argues, implicitly and explicitly through his public work, that African democracy must evolve beyond inherited institutional models and become responsive to the continent's historical experiences, economic circumstances and social aspirations.

His understanding of leadership is similarly connected to responsibility. Leadership, in his view, should not be understood merely as the possession of political office. It involves stewardship of national resources, protection of citizens, preservation of peace, respect for constitutional institutions and the creation of opportunities for future generations. This understanding provides an important conceptual foundation for his interest in governance and national development.

As an author, Rusere seeks to contribute to the documentation and interpretation of African political experiences. His writing is intended not only for politicians and academics but also for students, researchers, civil-society organisations, policymakers and ordinary citizens interested in understanding the forces shaping contemporary Africa. His broader objective is to encourage informed political debate rather than political discourse driven solely by partisan loyalties.

The present book reflects that intellectual ambition. In examining the political leadership, development agenda and legacy of Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa and the Second Republic of Zimbabwe, Rusere places contemporary events within a larger historical and political framework. The book explores leadership, economic transformation, infrastructure, agriculture, mining, education, healthcare, foreign policy, digital development, governance and Vision 2030 while also recognising the debates and controversies surrounding Zimbabwe's political trajectory.

The author's approach is deliberately broader than a simple political biography. It seeks to examine the relationship between leadership and national development and to ask difficult questions about what constitutes progress in a developing African state. It considers both achievements and challenges, recognising that the historical assessment of any political administration requires a careful examination of evidence, competing perspectives and long-term outcomes.

Rusere's work is therefore best understood as part of a continuing African conversation about leadership and development. His generation has inherited the successes and unresolved questions of the liberation era while simultaneously confronting new challenges associated with globalisation, technology, climate change, demographic transformation, economic inequality and changing international relations.

His contribution to this conversation lies in his willingness to engage controversial issues and to place Zimbabwe's political experience within the wider Southern African and Pan-African context. Whether addressing democracy, human rights, elections, constitutionalism, economic

transformation or regional cooperation, his work is driven by an enduring interest in the question of how African societies can construct institutions that serve their people.

Professor Talent Rusere's journey is consequently both political and intellectual. It is a journey shaped by activism, public controversy, regional engagement, political thought and an enduring interest in the future of Zimbabwe and Africa. His experiences have provided him with a distinctive vantage point from which to examine the successes, contradictions, opportunities and challenges of contemporary African governance.

Ultimately, the author views scholarship and public engagement as instruments of national service. His objective is to contribute to a culture in which political history is documented, democratic institutions are scrutinised, citizens understand their rights and leaders are judged by the consequences of their decisions. Through his books, public interventions and advocacy, he seeks to encourage a more informed, responsible and forward-looking African political discourse.

This book is therefore not simply a record of political events. It represents the author's broader attempt to participate in the intellectual documentation of Zimbabwe's contemporary history and to stimulate reflection on the country's future. Through the examination of leadership, governance, economic transformation and national development, Professor Talent Rusere invites readers to consider not only where Zimbabwe has come from, but also where it can go.

His enduring message is that Africa's future cannot be constructed solely by governments or political elites. It must be shaped collectively by citizens, scholars, entrepreneurs, professionals, young people, civil-society organisations and leaders committed to the principles of peace, justice, development and human dignity.

Professor Talent Rusere therefore writes with a clear sense of historical responsibility. His work seeks to preserve the political experiences of the present generation while encouraging future generations to learn from them. In this respect, his contribution extends beyond political advocacy into the broader field of African political thought, where the central question remains both timeless and urgent: how can Africa build democratic, prosperous, peaceful and sovereign societies capable of delivering dignity and opportunity to all their citizens?