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# The fates of SA and Zimbabwe are linked

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*Former Zimbabwean deputy prime minister and MIT professor calls for regional solidarity to ensure success across SADC.*

South Africa must take a vested interest approach to help address the crisis in Zimbabwe, former Zimbabwean deputy prime minister and internationally acclaimed robotics professor Arthur Guseni Mutambara says.

Speaking at the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) distinguished speakers programme in September to launch his new book, Mutambara said the country cannot succeed if Zimbabwe, is failing.

SA's northern neighbour is facing a severe economic crisis characterised by record high unemployment figures, reported shortages of foreign currency, basic foodstuffs and increasing political uncertainty ahead of elections next year. The problems in Zimbabwe, a country once seen as one of Africa's most advanced economies and the breadbasket of the continent, has led to the influx of its nationals to SA and other neighbouring countries as they seek better opportunities.

"South Africa cannot succeed if Zimbabwe is failing," said Mutambara. "An investor sitting in Japan will say, 'I want to go to South Africa, but how attractive is the region...? There is a problem in Zimbabwe so I will not go to South Africa.' We are moving away from national competitiveness to regional attractiveness and competitiveness. SADC must be attractive for South Africa to prosper. As we struggle in Zimbabwe to create a change, the entire region must work with us because it is in its interest to have a successful and prosperous region under globalisation."

Mutambara, a former research scientist and professor of robotics and mechatronics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in the US, served in the Zimbabwean government under a power-sharing agreement as one of two deputy prime ministers from 2009 to 2013. He left mainstream Zimbabwean politics in 2014.

In his new book titled "In Search of the Elusive Zimbabwean Dream: An Autobiography of Thought Leadership (Volume I)", Mutambara talks about the "Zimbabwean dream" describing it as peace, stability, equality, shared economic prosperity, inclusive democracy and economic growth. He emphasised that it was a dream shared by all of Africa and that to achieve it, the continent would need to work together.

As such, Zimbabwe, with the help of its neighbours, would be able to recover, he said. "We should always keep hope alive… we should always keep working hard and we should never give up. Yes we are going through a very rough patch politically, economically and socially, but let us keep hope alive."

Strong countries, said Mutambara required good leadership and growing economies. Unfortunately, the current crop of leaders in SA, in Zimbabwe and elsewhere on the continent lack the intellect and visionary quality which the likes of Kwame Nkrumah, the first prime minister and president of Ghana, were renowned for.

In Zimbabwe, he said that a focus on politics over the economy has been detrimental to the country. Despite the relative success of the negotiated settlement that led to the formation of a unity government between Mugabe and his main opponents the MDC following disputed elections in 2008, the country has failed to prosper.

"Our failures were around political reforms," he commented. "In all my discussions with Mugabe we never talked about the economy…it was always about politics, he is the consummate politician always thinking about how to outplay people. Our mistake was that when we got into government, we were very keen to work on the economy, serve the country and do all

the lofty ideals. Mugabe was like, ‘How do I get rid of these fools?’ From day one for five years [of the unity government] he [Mugabe] was plotting... to him it’s about power and power retention... forget GDP, forget per capita income. Mugabe is his own successor... he has an obsession with power,” said Mutambara.

Africans, Mutambara said, should be much more proactive in politics and demand selfless leaders who have vision, strategy and an ability to execute.

“[Mahatma] Gandhi once said, ‘Be the change that you wish to see in the world...’ We should not sit on the sidelines and complain about what is happening and do nothing. We need to act and work together, through organisations like SADC, and the African Union. Unity is strength.”


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