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As Zimbabwe commemorates 45 years of independence, the spectacle of celebration orchestrated by President Emmerson Mnangagwa in a dilapidated and waterlogged stadium serves as a metaphor for the trajectory of the postcolonial state.

The accumulation of rainwater in the cracks of this Midlands venue epitomises not only infrastructural decay but also the consequential runoff from four-and-a-half decades marked by systemic looting, incompetence and the calculated erosion of collective dignity. The pertinent inquiry is not whether Zimbabwe possesses legitimate grounds for celebration; rather, it is to interrogate why the apparatus of the state continues to persist when its predominant outputs are poverty, violence and humiliation.

Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 was heralded as an epoch of self-determination and prosperity. Contrary to these aspirations, Zanu-PF supplanted colonial exploitation with a locally entrenched kleptocracy. Institutions such as the Sally Mugabe Hospital have devolved into necropolitical spaces where women tragically bleed out because of a lack of water and medical supplies, while state resources are siphoned into Mnangagwa's patronage networks. The World Food Programme's alarming estimate that six million Zimbabweans endure food insecurity must be recognised not merely as a consequence of mismanagement but as a direct outcome of state policy. The assertion that the state fails in its roles is profoundly misleading; it operates effectively to fulfill its true mandate: the concentration of power and wealth.

The catastrophic economic trajectory that Zimbabwe has traversed since independence is illustrated by the disintegration of its monetary system. This phenomenon reflects not merely a series of policy miscalculations but rather the systemic rot inherent in a predatory state. In 1980, the newly sovereign nation inherited a currency, the Zimbabwean dollar (ZWD) that was not only stronger than the US dollar but also pegged at parity with the British pound. But, within a mere two decades, this currency imploded, suffering a staggering 70% depreciation by 1997. This early collapse was exacerbated by the neoliberal Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, which, while apparently designed to liberalise the economy, functioned instead as a vehicle for elite accumulation, stripping public assets and entrenching inequality without fostering meaningful economic growth.

Subsequent decades have witnessed Zimbabwe's monetary system devolving into a farcical series of failed experiments: from hyperinflationary versions of the Zimbabwean dollar to improvised monetary instruments, such as traveller's cheques, bearer cheques, and bond notes. Each iteration has further undermined public trust. The introduction of Real-Time Gross Settlement dollars and the 2019 reintroduction of the Zimbabwean dollar have only deepened the crisis, as the state's compulsive money-printing and lack of fiscal discipline transformed each new currency into a temporary placeholder for value rather than a stable medium of exchange. Furthermore, quasi-currency systems such as EcoCash and Zipit have emerged as desperate makeshift solutions, underscoring the collapse of formal monetary authority.

This relentless churn of currencies more than a dozen in 15 years exposes fundamental truth: a national currency is not merely a technical instrument; it embodies a social contract, a collective confidence in the issuing authority. Zimbabwe's monetary chaos signifies a total breakdown of that contract, as the state's kleptocratic inclinations and its refusal to relinquish control over seigniorage revenue (the profit derived from the creation of money) have transformed currency into a mechanism for extraction rather than economic facilitation. The bastardisation of foreign currencies, such as the US dollar and the South African rand, which were once adopted as lifelines during hyperinflation, further exemplifies how state failures have forced citizens into informal, decentralised survival strategies.

This monetary unravelling is emblematic of a broader centralisation of power that monopolises economic life. The state's insistence on maintaining control over currency, despite its repeated failures, mirrors its overarching control over land, resources and political agency, even as it engenders ruin.

In stark contrast, grassroots initiatives such as dollarisation and mobile money systems reveal the feasibility of stateless alternatives, wherein trust is negotiated horizontally rather than imposed by fiat. Thus, Zimbabwe's currency crisis transcends a mere case study in mismanagement; it encapsulates the postcolonial state's enduring struggle to transcend its colonial legacy as an extractive institution.

The solution lies not in the introduction of another state-issued currency but in the dismantlement of the monopoly over monetary power, advocating for radical decentralisation that aligns with anarchist ideals of voluntary, mutualistic exchange.

The assemblies at Mnangagwa's rallies are not indicative of grassroots support; rather, they reflect an engineered desperation. When unemployment soars to 95% and inflation renders currency functionally meaningless, a handout of chicken and chips morphs into a coercive contract: endure the spectacle of one's own degradation for the sake of sustenance. This scenario is not governance; it exemplifies a protection racket masquerading as political engagement. The colonial racist ghost of Ian Smith, whose prophetic assertion of decay under Zanu-PF has been illustrated, haunts these gatherings, not due to its accuracy, but because the nationalist state has assimilated and perfected the colonial logic of resource extraction.

The solution is not another election, another party or another strongman. The Zimbabwean state is a corpse that refuses to decompose, and no amount of reform will resurrect it into something benevolent. Logic demands we confront the reality that centralised power whether colonial or "liberationist" is inherently predatory. Yet even under such oppressive pressure the solution, like a flower budding through concrete, the alternatives already flicker in the margins.

We see autonomous mutual aid, where the state abandons hospitals and clinics run by community collectives (such as those seen in Chitungwiza during cholera outbreaks), proving that survival happens despite the state, not because of it. We have seen land and food sovereignty where the state's land grabs destroyed productivity, but occupied farms reclaimed by agrarian cooperatives outside Zanu-PF's crony distribution could this restore subsistence autonomy? One can only hope.

Forty-five years of independence have proven that the state is not the vehicle of liberation but its antithesis. Zimbabwe's suffering is not a result of "bad leaders" but of the very idea that liberation comes from above.

The rain flooding Mnangagwa's stadium is a fitting emblem: the state cannot even build drains, yet it demands absolute sovereignty over lives it has no interest in sustaining. True independence begins when Zimbabweans stop asking the state for solutions and start recognising it as the problem.