

“Some Dilemmas and Challenges of Service as President in Africa, A Personal Reflection,”

Chairperson,
Administrators and Staff of Harvard,
Fellows of the Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs,
Members of the Student Council of the Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs,
My Young Friends,
And Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank you most sincerely for the invitation you have extended to me on this important occasion. The Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs serves as an important forum for cross pollination of views and ideas among many staff, fellows, and students at this reputable institution of learning. Indeed, the center has had many eminent personalities whose service to humanity has had lasting impact. I may add that the center is an invaluable cradle for moulding the young into credible future leaders.

I thank you for this chance to be at the 3rd Annual International Careers Dinner of the Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs Student Council. I am also glad that the Students have opened the invitation to others so that we can widen this discussion.

Chairperson, tonight, I am privileged to have been asked to share some reflections, with our promising young men and women, on personal dilemmas and challenges that I faced as one Head of State serving in Africa at a very challenging time. Chairperson, I am aware that, surely, a lot of the young men and women at Weatherhead will go on to have positions of great influence. I am aware that there are many fellows and professors here at Weatherhead who have experienced similar dilemmas and challenges in their careers.

My discussion with you tonight is a reflection on dilemmas and challenges of public office at various stages of life, and in various situations.

The events and roles we pass through create dilemmas and challenges on various situations: Personal, Family, Group, National, Regional, and Global.

Let me on the outset mention that I am a Christian. My father, reverend David Julizya Kaunda, was a missionary who helped in the foundation of Lubwa Mission in Chinsali District of Zambia in 1904. My mother, Mrs Hellen Tengwera Nyamunyirenda Kaunda, was also a staunch Christian and a teacher.

I am proud to say that my parents ensured that my brothers, sisters, and I lived by Christian principles. In their dealings with other people, my parents exhibited a high

degree of respect, love, and unwavering care. As a result, they were indeed role models. They taught me to love and respect other people and to do unto them as I would want them to do unto me. Their teachings have had an enduring impression on me. Through their influence, I learnt the importance of community service. I might add that their teachings and wise counsel were of great help to me in latter years of my life at national and international levels.

I wish to remind my fellow participants here that following the partition of Africa by European powers at Berlin, Germany, in 1884, the African people in their respective countries were subjected to dispossession, racial discrimination, and other forms of injustice. The colonial settlers got the best arable land and controlled the economies of the territories they were administering. Naturally, over a period of time, this situation in many parts of Africa led to organized resistance. Initially, the resistance was through labour activities such as industrial strikes, protests, and boycotts.

We got our independence from Britain in 1964. I do not know if we can compare our experience with the famous Boston Tea party here, but we had a lot of challenges in the struggle for independence.

Our struggle took the form of a movement of people who were seeking human justice and the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms for all. This movement was not composed of politicians and political parties only. It was people from various backgrounds – political parties, men, women, and from many races and ethnic groups. They were from a variety of religions, from Christianity to Hinduism. It was people united to fulfill God-given human rights. We had local and external support for our Cause. I was thrust into the role of a key leader in the movement.

Chairperson, I learnt that in public life, one must follow principles. I learnt that in public service there are many sacrifices for you personally and for others around you. I was busy organizing in the struggle. My family was affected. They took on big burdens to support me and the struggle. Mrs Kaunda had to do a lot to bring up a young family. Yes, there are many domestic hazards involving the fight for freedom. However, the challenge is to play both family roles and your role in the struggle very well.

Chairperson, sometimes you have to fore go some things if they conflict with your goals. Sometimes you have to sacrifice. During the struggle, I stopped taking red meat because of racial segregation at butchery shops, other retailers, and in the whole society. Those events contributed to my present position as a vegetarian. At that time, many people joined the protest of six months against butchery shops, post offices, and retailers. Through this non-violent method, our protest succeeded and butchery shops and post offices were desegregated. But the problem was much more than butcheries, shops, and post offices. Eventually, we used methods of non-violence to achieve our independence in 1964.

However, people in the movement for independence were of various beliefs and temperaments. The challenge was to work with every one and move together towards the

goal of freedom. I, personally, believe in Non-Violence, just like the great pioneer Mahatma Gandhi in India, and my great brother Dr Martin Luther King in the USA struggles against racism. Non-Violence is an effective and sustainable way of resolving human conflict. As Gandhi said: “It is my firm conviction that nothing can be built on violence.”¹ Gandhi also said “ violence can only be effectively met by non-violence.”² In his pilgrimage to Non-Violence, Martin Luther King’s Principle Number Three says: “Non-Violence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.” In Principle Number Five, Dr King says: “Non-violence chooses love instead of hate.”³

However, a challenge for those of us who believed in Non-Violence was when some of our people felt the process was moving slowly while the colonial rulers were even using force to crush the freedom movement. A few people were killed. Of course, even one death is too many. Some people in the independence struggle urged us to take up the use of force in retaliation. But we know that violence can result in uncontrollable situations. Our challenge then was to stay on the path of non-violence while faced with the use of force by the authorities. We had to do a lot of work to appeal to our members to continue on the path of Non-Violence. Fortunately, we managed to maintain the struggle with least violence and casualties.

At independence, we still had the dilemma of using force. When I was Prime Minister, the Lumpa cult of Alice Lenshina was involved with neighbouring communities in clashes that left hundreds of people dead. The colonial government imposed a state of emergency. I found it and, sadly, had to use it to protect life. Sometimes we have used force to prevent the massive destruction of innocent persons and property.

However, the dilemma on the use of force went on with us way after independence. Our neighbouring countries, such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, and Namibia had different circumstances. In Zimbabwe, then called Southern Rhodesia, in 1965, the Ian Smith regime made treason and took power from the British government in a “Unilateral Declaration of Independence,” UDI. At that time, the international community urged Britain to crush the rebellion. This was a dilemma for us. We believed Britain’s use of force would help prevent many deaths that would arise from a prolonged conflict. Britain suggested the use of United Nations sanctions. Zambia followed these sanctions but suffered greatly. The sanctions were not followed by many governments and businesses which supported the racist regimes. Sanctions could have worked if truly enforced. However, in his book, *Sanctions Double Cross*,⁴ the Portuguese author Jordin Jardim has explained how some oil sanctions were avoided through highly organized world wide network. The Commonwealth has also published materials on how sanctions were evaded.⁵

Because Britain did not use force, the Zimbabwe conflict went on for many years, much suffering, and needless deaths. Similarly, there were some problems with our other neighbours. Due to their situation, they took up arms. These also were to affect Zambia through raids by the Rhodesian, South African, and Portuguese armed forces. Zambia’s infrastructure was bombed and thousands of people in Zambia were killed by the racist forces. The use of armed force in Southern Africa was a challenge to our principle of

Non-Violence. A challenge for every one, my colleagues, is: how do you use methods of Non-Violence in situations where the other party is using force?

By 1994, when universal elections took place in South Africa, which was the pillar of racism in our region, Zambia and the Frontline states had lost thousands of lives, lost economic opportunities, and had got into debt because of the freedom struggle in Southern Africa. In monetary terms, Zambia lost in excess of \$20 billion. Zambia would have done much better had it not been for the human, material, and other economic costs of the political and armed struggle in Southern Africa. However, this was the price of our principles. Of course, it is possible that this could have been done differently and perhaps more efficiently. I don't know. Or things could have been worse – I do not know.

My dear friends, the challenges of Violence, Force, or Non-violence are even bigger for someone who is heading a political party or a government, as I did. Some pressures will come from within the movement, political party, or government. However, these pressures are sometimes useful in reminding us to search for further effective non-violent methods in reaching the goal.

Chairperson, public life also involves dissent within one's group – whether in a political party or in a government. The dissent can be for various reasons. However, it is often a painful thing. Sometimes your friends take on other positions which conflict against principles you think you all hold together. You have to decide to take an action that may alienate you from friends. However, one must follow the truth. At the same time, you must never have hatred for those who dissent.

Dissent and treason is a feature of public life. In Zambia, we had some coup attempts. Some of the accused were people I knew at a person level. Some accused people were convicted by courts of law while others were acquitted. However, I knew that there must be reconciliation. Every person is part of the nation and must play an important part. So, I remember that some trials for treason were discontinued. I also had to release those who were convicted of treason. I released some in 1990 as we re-entered the multi-party system. Some people were unhappy about the release, but I felt, as I still do now, that it is better for every one, from whatever background, to have the chance to work for the nation. Even though some people may have worked to destroy me as president, I did not take personal vengeance. Society has its ways of resolving these issues through the judicial process, not through vengeance. In the bible, it is said vengeance does not belong to the human being.

Here, I will also talk about the challenge of the One Party State. At independence in 1964, we were a multi-party system. I said quite early that I would not like to have imposed in Zambia a One Party State. In a normal situation, there would be no need for a one party system. However, as we went on, various challenges drove the country to the One Party Participatory system of 1972. There were various factors. One reason was that of scheming along ethnic lines. This emerged a few years after independence. In 1968, I could not take this ethnic scheming and I offered to resign as President. My colleagues pleaded that there could have been a national crisis. They pleaded that we work on

solving the situation and that I was in a position to do something to remove that scourge. I had to consider that situation and follow the path that would create least problems for the nation. From such experience, we tried to find a way of every one in the nation participating and sharing in national governance. We needed to make all – men, women, young persons, and people with disability participate. Every one from all ethnic groups and races needed to participate.

We also had the key problem of Southern Africa's racist regimes as they tried to destabilize our countries through direct and indirect military and political pressures. As Patrick Wele observes in his book, *Kaunda and the Mushala Rebellion*,⁶ and his other book *Zambia's Most Famous Dissidents, from Mushala to Luchembe*,⁷ the Mushala group was financed by apartheid South Africa. Due to the various forces, we therefore ended up in the situation of the One Party Participatory State. I have no doubt that we would not have achieved what we did in Southern Africa's liberation struggle had we not followed the One Party Participatory Democracy system. It was necessary.

However, let me mention that it has been observed that there have been different types of mono-party systems in Africa. It has been observed that ours was an *inclusive* One Party State. No one was chased away. It brought other parties under the UNIP umbrella. We tried to work as one family. Women's participation greatly increased. We had no exiles. However, in other parts of Africa opposition parties were banned – leaving only the ruling party. In December 1990, we went back to the multi-party system. In 1991, we had elections and I left the presidency as the Movement for Multiparty Democracy, MMD, led by Mr Fredereck Chiluba came into office. My party UNIP later withdrew from the 1996 elections because the conditions were clearly not free and fair. We did a non-violent protest but, even after Mr Chiluba promised President Mandela to remove the huddles, the unfair conditions were still imposed. So, a dilemma is what does one do when you are using peaceful, non-violent methods and the other parties do not respect non-violent methods?

Chairperson, sometimes your life is even threatened. In August 1997, I was shot at by the agents of Mr Chiluba's regime in Kabwe. A bullet grazed my forehead. Another opposition leader with us, Dr Roger Chongwe of the Liberal Progressive Front, had a bullet in his cheek. There was no investigation by the government. Mr Chiluba arrogantly said I deserved it. In Mr Chiluba's regime, there were other assassination attempts against me. Yes, politics, my friends, can be a dirty and hot game. But it needn't be. You as young people are our hope. In whatever field of life you are, you should strive to be principled and make politics as a field for service. The moral here is that there are very high personal costs.

In addition, the attempts against me give us some thoughts about how handling and timing of information is important. In 1995, I announced that we knew who was dealing with Zambia's mineral sales in a covert way. This increased the Chiluba government's determination to eliminate me or keep me quiet. They rigged the constitution to bar me from public office. There were also assassination attempts against me. My family was also threatened. It appears had I not spoken out on the mineral sales and other criminal

activities, I might not have been targeted. So a dilemma is how to share the truth without being a victim of those doing bad things.

Chairperson, there have also been challenges on the economic field. The IMF sponsored Structural Adjustment Programme created a lot of problems for our people. Poverty increased. This has happened all over the world where this programme has been imposed. In 1986 and 1990, there were food riots in Zambia. People died in the riots. Eventually, I could not bear the poverty that was emerging. In May 1987, we broke off relationship with the IMF programme. However, sanctions were imposed on us by IMF and creditor nations. Africa's leaders face such forces as they consider how to best meet the needs of their citizens. They must think about both the IMF and the citizens. Their interests are often not compatible.

Chairperson, in order to advance, sometimes we have to meet people from various sides of a conflict. Some people do not believe in that. However, during the Southern African conflict, I decided to meet the leaders of the racist regimes. This was controversial. But I met Ian Smith of Rhodesia, and South Africa's leaders Vorster, Botha, and de Klerk. The dialogue paid off. Smith released Mr Robert Mugabe, Joshua Nkomo, and other Zimbabwe freedom fighters. Smith also briefly stopped the military incursions into frontline states. In South Africa, as the conflict became very heated, I met President de Klerk. I managed to convince him to release Nelson Mandela and the other freedom fighters. Of course, at the end, South Africa had its change in 1994. Although controversial, dialogue does pay off even in a hot conflict. But it needs courage and respect to reach out to others involved in a conflict.

I must, Chairperson, also mention that one must be prepared for various outcomes. In 1990, I went to Iraq to speak to President Saddam Hussein not to go into Kuwait. We wanted to help avoid the Gulf War. I understood that Kuwait was a creation of British colonialism but we needed to avert a war. I spoke to Saddam Hussein but things did not work. I was sad, but I had played a role. A lesson is that sometimes your efforts may not achieve mediation and there are dire consequences for many people. What is important is how honest and principled you are in your effort towards peace.

However, this year, there has also been the current crisis involving the George Bush administration in Washington, the Blair administration in London on one hand, and the government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. When there was a demand that the United Nations inspectors should go back to Iraq, I went over to Iraq to persuade President Saddam Hussein to allow the inspectors to get back to Iraq. I believe this can avoid the war Mr George Bush and Tony Blair are talking about. However, President Saddam Hussein had already taken steps to call them back himself. The inspectors were not chased but pushed out by the USA administration. Now the Bush and Blair administrations are holding them back. Otherwise they would have been there by now. I have come across coverage of refreshing dissenting views in the *New York Times* and other media. In this respect, I thank President Carter, Robert McNamara, Henry Kissinger, and many others from the academic and other fields for speaking out and

raising caution about the George W Bush invading Iraq. We appeal to the George W Bush administration to head the voice of reason and peace.

Then a head of state must also consider their role in national, regional, and global issues. That is why OAU was important and is still vital as AU. That is why we helped to form the SADC, COMESA. That is why ECOWAS is important. That is why NEPAD can hold much hope. So a leader should not fear the bigger unit. There is no contradiction between roles in one government and the region.

In politics, there are many personal dilemmas. Sometimes they are spiritual. Death of family members, friends, and national tragedies affect you personally. The Mufulira Mine Disaster of 1970 led to many deaths. This affects you personally. I remember visiting each of the families whose members died. There are also deaths of friends. My friend and comrade Samora Machel died in a controversial plane crash on the Mozambican, South Africa border. This was just after coming from our Frontline States meeting which I hosted at Mbala in Zambia. Then there is my comrade Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. He died in the year 2000. We were very close. We did a lot together.

Then, of course, the death of my sons Masuzyo Kaunda and Major Wezi Kaunda. In December 1986, when Masuzyo died, I announced to the nation that he had died of HIV/AIDS. We needed to break the Wall of Silence. In the same effort of continuing to break the wall of silence, I did an HIV test in March 2002. Even if I had been found HIV positive, I would still have used my HIV Positive status in dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I believe politicians and public officers must take HIV tests. There should be no dilemma there.

I remember also the death of my son Major Wezi Kaunda. He was assassinated by his political opponents. This brutally affected us greatly. That price was too high to pay.

Challenges are many. When I was detained on trumped up “treason” charges by Mr Chiluba and his regime on the Christmas Day of 1997, I undertook a hunger strike. I stopped taking any food including water. I stopped shaving until government could tell me why I was detained. Mr Chiluba’s government knew that I was very serious. They came under pressure from various governments who demanded that they either released or charged me. After some days, the Chiluba government brought in my dear friend Julius Kambarage Nyerere. Now, my friend Julius came over to the prison. He said if I did not eat, he would not leave the prison. So, what could I do? In respect for my dear friend Julius, I resumed eating. It was a sad dilemma for me. However, in addition to the unnecessary suffering, I ended up with a huge legal bill. Yes, my friends, you will sometimes find yourself innocent but taken to courts and prisons at great expense to yourself. Legal bills are a feature of public life.

Chairperson, other spiritual challenges I have had include the signing of death warrants for those convicted by courts of law. I sympathise with the situation of state governors in the USA. It is a very agonizing experience. As head of state, one is playing a role that makes you sign death warrants while at the same time you believe in non-violence. I

prayed over this. I tried as much as possible to commute death sentences to life. It is a great challenge.

So, my friends, there are many occupational challenges and hazards. For now, let me remind you that principles and faith are very important in one's life. Without that, many of us would not have gone far. The challenges are too many. My Christian background was a pillar for me.

Chairperson, I am presently involved in the issue of HIV/AIDS –through the Kenneth Kaunda Children of Africa Foundation. This has made me learn more dilemmas and challenges. There are the issues of poverty and HIV. There are the issues of HIV testing.

However, I am sure you young persons here will contribute to thinking about these challenges in your own lives. You need to improve things so that others can learn from how you will be handling challenges and dilemmas. You have to deal with the challenges at personal, communal, national, and global levels. You need principles and sacrifice. And more important, Faith will give you strength and a sense of Justice. Love is Key to all we do. Through Love, we can achieve great things. Humanity can advance.

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with something to think about. Public life is a challenging venture. As we have mentioned, it calls for personal sacrifice, selflessness, personal dedication, and community service. A public servant, in whatever field, should not be arrogant or selfish. You are a servant of God's purpose. A leader or public servant should be principled. You also need the ability to take criticism. One needs a profound sense of commitment. It sometimes can be a thankless role. However, you still derive satisfaction in the fact that one is able to contribute, even in a small way, to making an input to our humanity. May you go out of this hall to fulfill what you dream to be your role in God's purpose.

In whatever field you are in, please remember that your present action affects many people. This is an interdependent world. The decisions you take here in the USA have implications not only for you personally, but your brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. You must tolerate and live with diversity of human and natural life. Your action has global implications. It will affect the economy, the environment, and cultures. It will affect human relations. Yes, this is an inter-dependent and connected world. Indeed, you are your brother and sister's keeper. Please let your action be a step for the Common Good.

God Bless.
I thank you.

References and Endnotes:

¹ Mahatma Gandhi quoted in quotations on www.mk Gandhi.org

² Ibid.

³ These two principles found in Martin Luther King Jr's *Stride Toward Freedom*, Harper & Row, 1958.

⁴ Jorge Jardim, *Sanctions Double-Cross, Oil to Rhodesia*, Intervencao, 1978, Lisbon.

⁵ Joseph Hanlon, (ed), *South Africa, the Sanctions Report*, Commonwealth Secretariat, James Curry, and Heinemann, 1990. A Report from the Independent Expert Group on the Evaluation of the Application & Impact of Sanctions against South Africa, prepared for the Commonwealth Committee of foreign Ministers on Southern Africa.

⁶ Patrick Wele, *Kaunda and the Mushala Rebellion*, Multimedia Publications, 1987, Lusaka.

⁷ Ibid