

South Africa and Zimbabwe - Limits to Change

by Linda Freeman
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Events are moving swiftly in southern Africa. So caveat emptor, buyer beware on news and interpretations. What seems true today may change in the near future. Following a military coup in Zimbabwe and the unceremonious dumping of Jacob Zuma from the South African presidency 15 months ahead of the end of his term, the political world in both countries has been shaken up. Both countries face elections - scheduled in Zimbabwe before July and South Africa in May 2019, adding an intensity to an already fluid situation.

A year ago, it seemed reasonable to ask whether governing parties which had emerged out of liberation movements in South Africa and Zimbabwe had lost legitimacy; whether they no longer had the consent of the governed. In Zimbabwe, Mugabe's rule was coercive; its leader a geriatric "sleeping pilot"; and popular protest widespread. In Jacob Zuma's kleptocratic South Africa, the ANC government's slide was registered in the 2016 local government elections, the highest level of protests per capita (just surpassing China) and determined litigation by opposition parties and civic groups. It was not out of the realm of possibility that in the next elections the ANC might lose its majority.

So the logical question seemed to be: had liberation movements cum political parties had their day and become a spent force? Was popular disaffection sufficiently strong to open the way for a new era? Could we envisage politics in southern Africa without these heretofore dominant political parties? Were southern African countries in the process of moving from a nationalist phase to a more democratic phase?

A year later, we are on new terrain. What we are seeing is a determined effort from within ruling political parties to pull themselves together and to clean house, to rejuvenate and to recapture popular support. Change has come in both cases as a result of social pressures but essentially initiated and managed by ruling parties. An essential aspect of this process has been an attempt to reinvent themselves and to consign their record of misrule to the past.

In neither case (as far as we know) were Western countries involved - despite the fact that both of the new rulers are more acceptable to the West than the ones they replaced and despite the fact that those being displaced claim that sinister forces from the West were responsible for their predicament.

In Zimbabwe, the change was orchestrated by a faction within ZANU PF in alliance with the military with tacit support from forces within South Africa and probably encouragement from China. In South Africa, although change came out of internal ANC processes, the impetus had come from a very real appreciation that it was losing the electorate. The Zuma administration accomplished one very critical thing: it mobilised citizens, churches, labour, opposition parties and groups within civil society against its rule. The media and judiciary became active forces in checking a government out of control.

In both countries, the attempt to sweep off the stage regimes riddled with corruption and economic mismanagement is of great importance. The promise of the return to law is also a huge step forward as is the principle of rule in the public interest.

At the same time, it is crucial to understand both what the new governments will inherit and also what they represent. It will be argued here that while the changes in the leadership of ruling parties and then of the state are significant, there are definite limits to what they offer, especially for the majority of their people. The questions which these changes pose include the following: given the militarized nature of the state in Zimbabwe and the mafia state which had emerged under Jacob Zuma in South Africa, will changes at the top necessarily transform the nature of politics in either case? Given the state of ruling political parties in both countries, what are the prospects for change at all? Even more, given the predatory and in some respects parasitical states which have emerged, what prospects are there for economic and social transformation? Similarly, given the inheritance of lopsided economies and societies in both cases, what hope is there for the mass of the population in both cases for greater economic and social inclusion.

In their haste to secure international acceptance, both regimes have lost no time in making assurances that they are leaving behind the policies and practices of the past. The new leaders - Emmerson Mnangagwa in Zimbabwe and Cyril Ramaphosa in South Africa - have issued an invitation to international capital (both countries are now "open for business"), and demonstrate a strong interest in re-engaging with international financial institutions, Britain, the EU and the US. Regaining confidence is the key issue. In the haste for a quick fix, the lessons of GEAR in South Africa and the downsides of structural adjustment in Zimbabwe have been glossed over. Their approach opens to question whether we will see a somersault backwards to the experience of the 1990s rather than a move forward.

Origins of Change

There is no question that parties in power in South Africa and Zimbabwe have faced a crisis of legitimacy, not only as a result of highly factionalized and compromised politics but also from severely stressed economies and societies. The three ills permeating southern Africa - poverty, unemployment and inequality - are as bad or worse than ever.

Both countries are among the most unequal in the world, with an elite of super rich coinciding with huge populations of poor in squatter camps and townships. Wealth inequality in South Africa is extreme - with the top 10% of South Africa holding 93% of its wealth while the top 1% holds 50% or more of its wealth.¹ A recent study found that South African CEOs earn 541 times more than the average worker.² The richest South Africans are among the richest people in the world, and the poorest are among the poorest. South Africa has a GINI coefficient over 60 and Zimbabwe surely cannot be far behind (50.1 estimated in 2017).

The rate of poverty in both countries is severe. According to the University of Cape Town's Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit, two-thirds of South Africans survive below the poverty line. Social grants remain vital for 17 million people, about 33% of the population in South Africa.¹ Poverty in Zimbabwe where the economy has collapsed has been

¹ Jannie Rossouw, "Why social grants matter in South Africa: they support 33% of the nation", *The Conversation*, 16 February 2017. In the 2017/18 fiscal year there will be

above 90% for some years.

Unemployment is pegged at 90 to 95% in Zimbabwe (where its citizens have become vendors) and either 28% or 40% in South Africa, with the larger figure including discouraged job seekers. Youth unemployment in South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa claims, is 30% for blacks and 7% for whites,³ but economists put youth unemployment at 67% using the broader definition.⁴ While these problems are well known to those in power, resolving them is another matter.

Public education is in crisis. While education has been more broadly provided in the post-apartheid era in South Africa, one report has it that 80% of ten-year olds in South Africa are functionally illiterate. The majority of students have not continued through Grade 12. The pass percentage is low, and in key subjects— like science and maths — South African students are the lowest performers in the world. On the other side of the ledger, Zuma's rollout of ARVs on a national scale was one of the significant positive achievements of his presidency: treatment increased sevenfold; mother to child transmission dropped and life expectancy grew.²

Health and education in Zimbabwe, once the pride of the nation, have crumbled in these last decades of economic crisis except for the GNU period.

Growth in both South African and Zimbabwean economies has been lacklustre to poor (in South Africa as low as 0.3% in 2016 and estimated to be just above 1% in the next few years) and per capita incomes have declined. In the past year, two out of three of the key agencies have downgraded South Africa's credit rating to junk status, making borrowing on capital markets expensive and foreign capital leery. In late March 2018, Moody's kept South Africa at investment grade, providing a reprieve until October. Zimbabwe's growth figures are comparable to those in South Africa - ranging around 1% with 2016 about half that.

In terms of the Zimbabwean economy, since the GNU ended in 2013 and even more since the commencement of land invasions in 2000, the Zimbabwean economy has been in dire straits. The industrial sector has been decimated by company closures with a general process of deindustrialisation well advanced. Low levels of production have led to the informalisation of the economy. Government expenditure has been increasing even though revenues have shrunk. A debt of \$7-billion (R95-billion) is owed to western lenders. There is a severe shortage of capital for investment and a cash shortage of US dollars. Food prices are on the rise. International capital gave Zimbabwe a wide breach. In 2016, Zimbabwe attracted FDI of \$319

17 million grant beneficiaries, 11 million of them younger than 18; not to mention the number of extra people supported. Total expenditure on social grants in the 2017/18 financial year will amount to more than R150 billion.

² In addition, a 2016 World Bank study found that since the end of apartheid, the government has spent more than other middle income countries on social assistance programmes, health and education. *The Distributional Impact of Taxes and Transfers: Evidence from Eight Low- and Middle-Income Countries*, 2016. This expenditure rolls back about 40% of the increase in income inequality between 1993 and 2008. Dirk de Vos, "We can't tax ourselves out of inequality", *Daily Maverick*, 28 February 2018.

million compared to Mozambique's \$3 billion.⁵

The desperate nature of conditions in Zimbabwe produced massive popular alienation. The signs were clear at the moment of change. The jubilation of ordinary people at the end of the Mugabe regime, (however short lived their happiness may prove) bears testament to the oppressive reality (both politically and economically) which they have endured. Disaffection has been obvious for decades despite the fact that, under Mugabe, any form of opposition - new political parties or popular protests - was considered illegitimate and treated harshly. The resort of the Mugabe state to extremes - from the genocide in Matabeleland in the 1980s to Operation Murambatsvina in 2005 to the repression of opposition forces to the militarized rigged nature of elections and especially to the military campaign after Mugabe lost the 2008 presidential elections - meant that hegemony in Zimbabwe was established by coercion. "Let's bash them" Mugabe used to say.

The contrast between conditions in South African squatter camps, townships and rural slums and the flagrant extravagance and corruption of the Zuma administration had provoked widespread protest. The worry was that Mandela's ANC had increasingly come to be seen as Zuma's ANC. The low opinion of Jacob Zuma outside of rural KwaZulu Natal was a major factor in the ANC's drive to remove him.

In both countries, an increasing proportion of the population has demonstrated their disaffection by refusing to vote, by engaging in struggles at the community level, or by expressing their alienation in violent behaviour.

The Nature of Change

Although recent events have produced a reconfiguration of forces in both countries, in neither case did the changes reflect a rejection of ruling parties. The new conjuncture has arrived less on terrain that is ringing in the new as much as a regrouping of the old. In both cases, succession issues within ruling parties were paramount. Let us turn to the process of change in each case.

Zimbabwe - Moving to a Chinese/Rwandan model

In Zimbabwe, after years of factional struggle, the acute fragmentation which had divided ZANU PF was resolved in November with winners within the party coming to power through a military coup. The trigger for the change was Mugabe's firing of Emmerson Mnangagwa as Vice President on 6 November 2017, but the seeds of change were sewn much earlier in the history of ZANU PF's internal politics.

The immediate causes were linked to serious misjudgments by the Mugabes about their power and ability to control ZANU PF. Grace Mugabe's campaign to eject Vice President Joice Mujuru from state and party in 2014 was the beginning of the end of this project. At the time, it seemed a peculiar move to get rid of half the party (100 MPs, half the Cabinet and who knows how many members and how much public support). In the second round in November 2017 in dumping Mnangagwa and his associates, Mugabe was plundering his party for a second time. As a friend in Harare noted on this occasion, "this time Mugabe has gone too far". And indeed he had. Tearing apart one's party is risky business, especially if it is one of the foundations of your support. Mugabe's second mistake was to believe that his system of patronage -

especially his parcelling out of land - would keep the army behind him. He seemed genuinely surprised when it didn't. His third was to take the support of war veterans for granted and not to come to terms with their growing anger against his regime.

Following his successful flight to South Africa, Mnangagwa took the opportunity to regroup and to move forward in alliance with Commander Chiwenga and the army. As we know, on the evening of the 14 November, the army sent armoured vehicles into Harare and squashed attempts by the police forces and CIO to keep the Mugabes in power. The power base of the present dominant faction of ZANU PF is now composed of the military, war veterans and the Lacoste group within ZANU PF. The other principal faction - Grace Mugabe, the G40 group within ZANU PF and most of the top ranks of the police and CIO - have been axed. A rearrangement within the ruling party has occurred.

Some speculated that the jubilation which ensued in the general population at the end of the Mugabe regime might let the genie out of the bottle and lead to genuine reform in the political sphere. To date, however, there seems little indication that the new regime is prepared to make significant political changes. Three key issues make this point:

1) The first signal was the appearance of a new Cabinet under Mnangagwa which was exclusively made up of ZANU PF retreads - so similar to the previous Cabinet that some had it that only Mugabe was missing. The hope had been that younger politicians, opposition figures and technocrats might have been included to give a sense of the country coming together in a this new moment. However, Patrick Chinamasa the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning (resurrected from his one month stint as Minister of Cyber Security) put us straight: ZANU PF and no-one else would rule; it was preposterous to think otherwise. And so corrupt elements from the past like Obert Mpofu emerged as a senior minister (Minister of Home Affairs) and the widely discredited Tobaiwa Mudede remained as Registrar-General in charge of rigging elections. If you were corrupt and belonged to the G40 (Ignatius Chombo being the standout example), however, you went to jail and many were tortured. The millions in cash lying around your house (\$10 million in Chombo's case) were confiscated.

2) Beyond the Cabinet lineup and more telling still was the refusal of the new government to implement electoral reforms so that they would be in compliance with the 2013 Constitution. Mnangagwa announced in Davos that elections will be held before July and his government has blown off any consideration of changes before then.

What this means is that all the tried and true mechanisms for rigging remain in place. As it is, between 3,000 and 5,000 soldiers have been deployed in the rural areas. A systematic campaign of psychological and emotional terror meant to instil fear in the rural electorate is in place so that rural areas will deliver their vote to Zanu PF in the forthcoming elections. The regular delivery of new vehicles to chiefs (so instrumental in getting out the vote) went ahead... There are reports that in virtually all of the country's rural areas and some urban areas, people have been forced to surrender the serial numbers of their biometric voter registration slips to Zanu PF officials or local village heads. Concern is mounting over the nature of the paper on which ballots are printed and of course the shambolic voters roll. The newly appointed head of the Electoral Commission Priscilla Chigumba has been fingered for alleged corruption. Not a promising start.

The chances of a free and fair election are thus virtually nil except for the fact that the ZANU PF

government badly needs the election to be viewed as legitimate by the EU and the West. Direct foreign investment will depend on things being seem to be fair even if they are not. It will be interesting to see how all involved will square the circle. The usual pattern is to put mechanisms for rigging in place well ahead of time so that voting itself can proceed without violence and intimidation and can be judged as free and fair. Although the new government has said it will allow impartial international election observers, these have been managed in the past.

With the death of Morgan Tsvangirai precipitating intense battles over succession in the MDC-T and the MDC Alliance, the opposition has had little time to regroup and prepare to do battle. Serious divisions between Thokozani Khupe and Nelson Chamisa over the MDC presidency ended with Chamisa emerging as Tsvangirai's successor. There are at least three opposition alliances and over one hundred tiny parties.

Although early rallies point to huge enthusiasm for Chamisa, even in ZANU PF strongholds, it remains to be seen whether support will stand up. There IS a hunger for real change and Chamisa's charisma has led pundits to talk about his "Obama moment" Much is made of the fact that 60% of the voters roll is composed of people under 35; the "youth vote". At 40, Chamisa claims he represents the future and ED (now 75?) the past. In reply ED can point to his long experience in government.

3) A third indication that political reform is unlikely has been the hardline refusal of Mnangagwa and his associates to use this moment to pull the country together and to begin the process of healing old wounds. Reconciliation would mean coming to terms with the Gukurahundi and other repressive moments in Zimbabwean history - Murambatsvina and violence at election times.

The only moment when ED lost his cool during his charm offensive in Davos was in a television interview with the BBC's Mishal Husain when she asked him repeatedly whether he would apologise for his leading involvement in the Matabeleland massacres.⁶ His exasperated reply "I don't know what your problem is" was accompanied by a denial that 20,000 people had been murdered.³ The most that he could muster was a suggestion that the Gukurahundi might have been a "bad page in our history" but that a National Commission of Peace and Reconciliation could air people's grievances. Blame for this "bad page" was laid at Mugabe's door and with ZAPU and ZIPRA. No responsibility for ED, none at all.

Mnangagwa's response on the Gukurahundi issue was reminiscent of his refusal to discuss in Cabinet the violent repression which followed ZANU PF's defeat in the May 2008 presidential elections. When Joice Mujuru wanted an airing of what had happened, Mnangagwa said "next item". In recent interviews, Mnangagwa denied that previous elections, especially the one in 2008, were unfair. He also claimed that there was no evidence of violence in 2008, when NGOs reckoned that at least 270 MDC activists had been killed.⁷ His position is to encourage Zimbabweans "to let bygones be bygones".

³ ZAPU leader Dumiso Dabengwa now claims that the real figure is over 100,000 people murdered in the Gukurahundi campaign. "Zapu fumes at former president's Gukurahundi claims", *Southern News*, 21 March 2018.

Except for the principal architect, Mugabe, the leaders of the Gukurahundi are in prominent positions in the new Cabinet: Mnangagwa, then minister of state security is now head of state; Perrence Shiri, the commander of the Fifth Brigade (known as Black Jesus for his power over life and death and identified as a rapist during that campaign) is minister of lands, agriculture and rural resettlement, and Vice President Constantino Chiwenga was head of 1 Brigade in Bulawayo providing Shiri's brigade with logistical support during the Gukurahundi. Healing in Matabeleland and the Midlands won't happen under this regime.

While genuine reform in the political sphere seems unlikely, the new Zimbabwean government is making a determined effort to pull the economy out of its moribund state. The model mirrors authoritarian developmentalism à la China or Rwanda with their mix of political repression and economic reform.

Mnangagwa has implored all party cadres to "think, sleep, dream and walk productivity."⁸ The attempt now is to abandon some of the most egregiously lunatic of Mugabe's policies and to appeal to foreign (Western and Chinese) investors and financial institutions. Mnangagwa has signalled his commitment to a free-market capitalist approach as opposed to the more state-centred approach adopted by Mugabe. He has promised to protect property rights and in particular all Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (BIPPAs) which had been disregarded by Mugabe. Indigenization (the requirement that foreigners should give up 51% of their investments to locals) has been jettisoned except in the gold and platinum industries. Gestures have been made to white farmers with the offer of 99-year leases for farms and the promise of compensation.⁴ Loss making parastatals like Air Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (Zesa) will be privatized. Mnangagwa has promised to repay Zimbabwe's debts to lenders.

Austerity measures are also part of the new regime. These include a ban on first-class air travel for officials except the president and his deputy, rationalizing the size of delegations, and reducing overseas diplomatic missions. The Cabinet was cut back with six less ministers. The budget proposed life style audits of all public office holders to ensure they were commensurate with the level of income. Civil servants over 65 or who lacked qualifications were to be retired.⁵ The government also cut back on the provision of vehicles, offering car loans instead. Fuel allowances were reduced. The corps of youth officers was also cut in half. Firms and individuals who sent money abroad have been ordered to return funds to Zimbabwe.

At the moment it seems that instead of being unseated by the change in its top leadership and by horrendous economic and social conditions. ZANU PF has emerged from its crisis stronger than in its immediate past. Defeated groups - the G40 faction within ZANU PF, the police and the CIO - have been purged, bringing an end to the extreme factionalism which had permeated

⁴ Under the previous arrangement, white farmers had five-year leases that could be revoked if an indigenous person expressed interest in the land they occupied.

⁵At the time when Mnangagwa assumed office, Zimbabwe's civil service workforce amounted to about 298,000 employees, whose costs amounted to about 97% of state revenue. Ray Ndlovu, "First steps to reverse the ruin of the Mugabe era", *Business Day*, 10 December 2017.

ZANU PF for most of the 2000s.

South African battles

In South Africa, the rule of Jacob Zuma has also come to an end. The defeat of Zuma's ex-wife Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (NDZ) in her candidacy for the ANC presidency ended the prospect of Jacob Zuma continuing to control events indefinitely. One look at his face - shocked, angry and disbelieving - when Ramaphosa won the post indicates how important that loss was to be. At the same time, Ramaphosa's narrow victory (a matter of 179 votes out of 5,200) and the slimmest majority (42 of 80) in the ANC National Executive Committee imposed limitations on his presidency. Strong headwinds continue to blow out of the past.

The appearance of change in South Africa, although less dramatic than the armoured vehicles in the capital city of Zimbabwe, was equally significant. Jacob Zuma resigned from his position as state president in mid February 2018, fifteen months earlier than the end of his term. He left no-one in doubt that he was leaving against his wishes, protesting to the nation on SABC television that he did not know what he had done wrong.

The struggle to remove Zuma as state president was part of Cyril Ramaphosa's effort to establish his authority and to sustain the momentum of his first months as ANC president. Before Zuma's exit, Ramaphosa had already hit the ground running, making decisive moves at home and abroad. As in Mnangagwa's Zimbabwe, Ramaphosa made it a priority to reassure international capital and Western governments and to promise economic improvement and greater policy certainty. He led the South African delegation to Davos, gave presidential style interviews and announced that the nuclear deal with Russia was not possible.

At home, he pushed Zuma to appoint a long-delayed judicial commission of inquiry into state capture by Zuma's business associates, the Gupta family. Ramaphosa fired corrupt senior officials at Eskom, the electricity parastatal and declared that rooting out corruption was a priority. Changes at South African Airways followed on. His removal of Tom Moyane as the SARS Commissioner in mid March was essential to the process of rebuilding the institution and South Africa's ability to collect revenue. Indeed cleaning out and restoring the integrity of state institutions will be a central task of his administration.

For his part, Zuma was not constitutionally obliged to resign (barring an impending successful vote of no confidence and impeachment) and he had strong incentives not to go. He has been charged with 16 counts of corruption, money laundering and racketeering, originating from 783 questionable payments he received dating back to the 1990s arms deal and will no doubt face more charges once the books are open. As one journalist put it, "it is 100% certain he will spend the rest of his 70s and possibly much of his 80s in court or in prison."⁹ If not, it's exile in Dubai.

For a significant part of the ANC, the incentive to drop Zuma was based on a clear appreciation of the detrimental effect he was having on the ANC's electoral prospects. After the dismal 2016 local government election results which saw ANC support dropping by 8% to 54%, many in the ANC feared they might lose outright or be forced into a coalition if Zuma stayed on. Voting studies show that ANC supporters didn't jump ship in 2016; 3 million ANC voters stayed home. There is a real prospect that, once the ANC cleans house, shows it is serious about fighting misuse of public money, and produces some signs of economic recovery, former ANC

supporters might return.¹⁰

For opposition political parties in South Africa who had scented better times as long as Zuma was in power, Ramaphosa's victory is bad news.

Inconvenient Truths: The Shadow State - Penetration of the State and Political Parties

However, legitimate it has been for ordinary citizens to rejoice at the end of the Zuma and Mugabe regimes, it is important not to overplay the significance of these changes, especially in the short and medium term. The assumption that Mnangagwa and Ramaphosa will usher in a process of healthy renewal and lead their countries out of the wilderness reflects a hopeful view of existing realities. Underlying the political drama and the switch in leadership is an intertwined legacy of structures which confront the new/old leadership, a culture which served individual self-interest over the public good and the rise to power of a class of the economically incompetent.

At the national level, parties in power since independence and the ruling political forces within them have evolved and been transformed in ways which have produced a toxic mix of mafia politics and economic disarray. Both the Zuma and Mugabe regimes have left behind predatory, parasitical networks and, in Zimbabwe's case, a militarized state.

South Africa

As illustrated in Jacques Pauw's *The President's Keepers - Those Keeping Zuma in Power and out of Prison*¹¹, the Gupta emails published by the investigative units, amaBhungane¹² and Scorpio, and a comprehensive academic report¹³, a shadow state has emerged in South Africa while the policy making and coordination capacity of the rest of the state has languished. A network of predation has been formed which engaged in systematic looting and the siphoning off of billions at every level of the state. In parts of the country, the network has had a well-developed capacity for violence, often integrated with the state's armed forces; often immune from prosecution. Many are outright gangsters.

The penetration of the state was duplicated within the ANC. For years, senior leaders of the ANC (notably Kgalema Motlanthe) and veterans of the struggle lamented the deterioration and capture of the ANC. Predatory networks have penetrated the party from top to bottom and have criminalized party activity. Senior positions in the party were sought after as they might lead to government office and control over huge projects and sums of money. ANC branches which were originally formed as community structures representing local needs were transformed into vehicles promoting the careers of politicians at election times. In return, rewards were available for supporting the right people. At a time when poverty is widespread and unemployment around 40%, the ANC had become a means to gain employment and some form of subsistence.

Central to this process was the emergence of a predatory culture within the ANC political elite and the administrative elite in the civil service. As Mike Roussos points out, "The political culture under Zuma cemented into one that stressed the acceptability of serving one's own political needs - and thereby one's material desires - whilst serving as an ANC leader within the government. It became increasingly acceptable to find ways of ensuring the comfort and security of one's family and dependants".¹⁴ Eventually this orientation became the major preoccupation

of Zuma and the political elite under him – at every level of government. The administrative elite followed suit. The appointment of administrative heads increasingly became geared towards the appointment of people prepared to serve the needs of their political bosses, rather than the needs of the people.

As investigative units within the South African media (Amabhungane, Scorpio and GroundUp) have shown in great detail, government procedures were profoundly corrupted. Regular supply chains in government were sidestepped; tenders were non-existent or fraudulent. An array of practices - shady procurement, illegal grants, bribes, and dubious deals - became widespread. Government officials directed contracts to companies owned by family members or associates often at vastly inflated prices. As Mike Morris pointed out, the work was “either done very shoddily at a quarter of the price, or not done at all with the funds simply transferred into a bank account.... The money went straight into bogus or dubious companies, ... sheltered personal bank accounts, and (were) illegally transmitted into hidden foreign bank deposits on a massive scale”.¹⁵ In South Africa, the looting has been rumoured to amount to R100-billion thus far. Zimbabwean practices are a variation on the same theme.

In the process, the Zuma state attempted to destroy all those institutions which might allow accountability - the various arms of government and the criminal justice system - which had been established to provide checks and balances and to protect the country.¹⁶ As Pauw's book demonstrated, South Africa's intelligence agencies and police were politically compromised and stole millions. Alternative networks were set up to do Zuma's bidding, operating in the shadows outside the limits of the law. In public enterprises and parastatals, compliant Zuptoids were put in place as chief financial officers, chief operational officers and heads of acquisition. If that didn't work, “alternative workstreams” were set up as in the case of Bathabile Dlamini's SASSA. Looting and dysfunction then ensued. In sum, the South African state became weak and unfit to promote South African development,¹⁷ becoming instead a trough from which Mr. Zuma and his associates feasted.

The larger significance of these practices, the warping of state structures and the inculcation of a culture of serving one's own material needs has been *the emergence of a deformed economic class within the state*. As Mike Morris has argued, “Their economic existence has nothing to do with the efficient application of capital and labour in the basic forms of productive activity. They are not dependent on shrewd financial investment yielding returns. Indeed their stake in the economy ... exists outside of the usual parameters of capitalist economic activity.”¹⁸

Hence, this predatory form of capital accumulation became what Morris calls “a mechanism of class formation for the economically incompetent who would not survive in the cut and thrust of capitalist competition of the real economy, since they lack the real skills and capabilities required to operate productive enterprises. It provides such individuals with the opportunity to have “their chance to eat”, to rationalise that they “didn't make the sacrifices of fighting for liberation to end up poor”.¹⁹ As a result, they are able to maintain a life style unrelated to their actual skill levels, economic capabilities, salaries, and investment incomes.

The upshot is that the crisis in South Africa (and in Zimbabwe as well) has to be understood not just as “a political crisis created by individuals who have lost their ethical way, who have lost sight of their moral compass and strayed from the path of the “struggle”, and who by implication can be brought back into the fold and reformed. What exists now is a deep structural problem: the emergence of a particular section of the elite dependent on a predatory form of accumulating

wealth and maintaining political power.... The state (and its institutions) has become permeated with individuals – deployed or “discovered” to be corruptible – in strategic positions of power, actively seeking to secure control over resources and advancing their own corrupt interests.”²⁰ Once accustomed to this form of livelihood and the resulting life style, the prospect of change becomes remote.

The effect on those outside Zuma’s patronage networks has been entirely negative. The Zuma coterie’s looting choked economic growth and impoverished ordinary citizens by robbing them of funds intended for development and the delivery of a essential services. As Morris points out, the “cannibalism of state resources ...renders everyone else poorer. Its hollowing out of state capacity to sustain this predatory dynamic destroys the institutional fabric required to support a wide array of services for poor and rich alike. Its undermining of legality and due process renders the daily lives of those without connections insecure and arbitrary in the face of the police and the law. Its perversion of the constitutional obligations of the state fractures the foundations of democracy, rendering many social and political rights upon which the ordinary citizenry depend increasingly fragile.”²¹

One only has to think of Jacob Zuma’s Nklanda in the midst of rural impoverishment or the excesses of Robert and Grace Mugabe and their children and the effect of Grace’s farm and game park in Mazowe on local villagers to appreciate this point.

The predatory accumulation project, led by President Zuma paved the way with his own deep linkages to a corrupt, foreign, corporate network – the Guptas - and the phenomenon which has come to be known as “state capture”. However, the notion of “state capture” can be misleading. As Morris argues, it implies an “external relationship to a state which has been stolen, in which case it can be captured back”. As he argues, in South Africa the more apt metaphor is of a state “riven with conflict, internally racked with toxic agents, and deeply divided. In this sense the captured South African state is more similar to a cancer stricken body struggling to contain and overcome spreading tumours, and where renewed health entails finding and eradicating dangerous growths pretending to be normal tissue”.

Another inconvenient truth at this moment in South Africa is that corruption is not just a matter of perverse accumulation through the state. The private sector in South Africa (and elsewhere in Africa) regularly employs tools to spirit money out of sight - money laundering, the exploitation of tax laws, financial statement fraud, cartel conduct - and other forms of illicit financial flows.⁶

⁶ For example, as Shawn Hattingh pointed out, “it recently surfaced that blue chip South African companies, such as Liberty and Illovo, have been using measures to evade tax on an ongoing basis. Not to be outdone, several South African financial institutions were of late caught manipulating the Rand in order to profiteer from the volatility created. Then ... Steinhoff used Special Purpose Vehicles to fraudulently boost profits and lower debts on its books to the benefit of its shareholders and top management. When this became public knowledge, it was clear that the company was in reality in financial difficulties and its share price plunged at the end of 2017. ...Steinhoff’s days may be numbered and it soon may disappear altogether. Nonetheless its shareholders, like Christo Weise, have got away with the ill-gotten gains. Shawn Hattingh (ILRIG), “Out with the old, in with the not so new (or clean)” libcom, 16 February 2018, <https://libcom.org/news/out-old-not-so-new-or-clean-16022018>

These practices enabled Jacob Zuma to argue that theft and corruption in the white-dominated private sector were as bad as in government.²²

Therefore one might propose that in fact the private sector in South Africa is not bothered about corruption per se. According to Shawn Hattingh, the problem the private sector had with Zuma was that it was “being side-lined in the corrupt deals of the state under his watch, with far more going to the Gupta family and a new BEE elite. Hence, they turned on the Zuma faction and backed Ramaphosa as their man: they wanted back in on the money, often involving corruption, which could be made through relations with the state and top politicians.”²³ Given that Ramaphosa is committed to stopping illicit financial flows, one wonders how this expectation will play out.

In sum, Ramaphosa has inherited a party, a government, an economy and society riddled with the cancer of corruption. Looting has served as the basis of accumulation and class formation and “the extra-constitutional state that emerged deepened the macroeconomic, institutional and legitimacy crisis of the ANC-led state.”²⁴

In a different way given the interpenetration of the military and the political, the same could be said of Zimbabwe. Grand corruption benefited a few; a lack of accountability and pervasive impunity characterised the Mugabe state; the same phenomenal wastage and irrationality prevailed. Similar processes and structures have been organised to ensure an impenetrable network of allies and co-conspirators from State House, to the Treasury, to security forces to the lowest structures of government allied to the party.

With the advent of the new government, part of the ruling elite was purged based on its closeness to Mugabe and the G40 and not on capacity, competence and fitness for office. Moreover, the interest of Mnangagwa’s cohorts was not to pursue structural reforms but to continue their own lucrative rackets and rent-seeking. Murky business networks fought intensely to retain access to Zimbabwe’s mafioso economy.

Discourse and Power

For Mugabe and Zuma, part of the process of staying in power involved adopting a discourse which diverted attention, where possible, from practices of theft and corruption, nepotism and cronyism. Discourse has been used to camouflage what is done under broad ideological labels - the campaign to oppose white monopoly capital and to advance radical economic transformation.²⁵ The principal approach has been to reracialize and externalize the political narrative by making whites, and Western imperialism the real enemy of the people in Zimbabwe and white monopoly capital (both democratic and foreign) and Western imperialism the culprit in South Africa along with “clever blacks”, urban lackeys of the enemy.

In South Africa Zuma supporters dissed Ramaphosa as being a clever urban black. Thuli Madonsela was called a spy. So was Zwelinzima Vavi. Pravin Gordhan was recalled from London because he was allegedly working for foreign forces. Zuma’s most notorious ministers - Bathabile Dlamini, Mosebenzi Zwani, Faith Muthambi, Des Van Rooyen and others - argued that they were accused of corruption because they were advancing radical economic transformation. Mugabe and his ministers made much the same case; Mugabe never missed the opportunity of an international platform to attack Western imperialism.

In this discourse, the predatory class and its political representatives are portrayed in virtuous terms as saviours of the people, those that can bring true freedom and around which all black people should rally.²⁶ As Tim Cohen noted, “It is the mindset of those who have been stealing for so long that they believe they are doing us all a favour and that those who complain are the tools of foreign forces.”²⁷

To some extent, southern African liberation movements share this perception in sidestepping the downsides of their rule and framing their problems in highly ideological terms. In annual meetings the group of GFLMs (Governing Former Liberation Movements),⁷ identify sponsored regime change as the single most salient threat facing them. Political change, in this view, comes from the West’s project - defined in a 2016 report as “the increasingly widespread practice of overthrowing legitimate political authorities by provoking internal instability and conflict against governments that are considered inconvenient or insubordinate to their interests, replacing them with pliant puppet regimes that then pander to their interests”.²⁸ In short, they saw their predicament as a product of an imperialist plot and not as a result of matters intrinsic to their rule. Certainly Mugabe and Zuma held this view.

This view of democracy is distinctive. A democratic result which did not favour GFLMs was considered to constitute regime change orchestrated by outsiders. Hence domestic opposition forces of whatever source - political parties, NGOs, student organizations the media and other groups in civil society - have been cast as puppets of the West, Trojan horses which serve this subversive agenda. The GFLMs lament any drift of the youth, the “born-free” generation towards political parties other than those which emerged out of former liberation movements.²⁹

The purpose is clear - employing rhetoric about radical redistribution, black economic liberation and imperialism means that there is little interrogation of the contradictory practice that transformed liberation movements from vanguard parties of workers and peasants into elite projects where a few engage in wealth accumulation on an industrial scale.

Have the Parties in Power Changed?

The analysis above suggests, at the least, caution about personalizing the problem around one bad leader and assuming that problems are solved when they are removed. The parties in power have not changed; nor have the fundamentals of the economy and society over which they preside.

Thus, despite the understandable euphoria accompanying the departure of Mugabe and Zuma, does it necessarily follow that either ZANU PF or the ANC will transform themselves into instruments of genuine change? Not only have networks in both state and party been established which do not serve the common purpose, but the system offers few incentives to change. Although the leaders who have come to power may be more competent than the ones who were ejected, the question remains whether their parties can be reformed.

In the Zuma era the internal processes of the ANC were corrupted. “Charges of vote rigging and the manipulation of the electoral system at all levels - from branches to the national

⁷ The meetings include representatives of the ANC, ZANU PF, SWAPO, MPLA, FRELIMO and Tanzania’s CCM.

executive - have been rife.”³⁰ The dubious win of Ace Magashule over Senzo Mchunu for the position of ANC Secretary General in December 2017 was an important and strategic example. The ANC has also never been known to be particularly democratic, to encourage debate and to take criticism seriously. The very language of “deployment” and “discipline” hearkens back to the militarized structures of the past.

One must remember that the battle to expedite Zuma’s early exit from the state presidency provoked intense resistance not only from Zuma but also from his supporters within the ANC who remain powerful especially in KwaZulu Natal. Until the end, general ANC support for Zuma was strong. The ANC in parliament defeated six motions of non-confidence in Zuma, including one with a secret ballot in August 2017. The very close win of Ramaphosa in the contest over the ANC presidency in December showed just how powerful Zuma remained to the end. For almost a decade, the ANC-dominated parliament rubber-stamped Zuma’s initiatives and did his bidding. Many of the ANC NEC members who returned in December defended him against attempts to hold him accountable. It is not an exaggeration to say that for almost a decade the ANC acted as enablers for Zuma’s presidency.

In the new dispensation, Ramaphosa is up against a fifth column working to undermine him and a divided leadership within top ANC structures. Two of the top six ANC officials were staunch Zuma supporters and personally replicated the corrupt culture and activities which he represented. David Mabuza, the ANC and state vice-president came to national office with a history of corruption scandals and political assassinations from his time as Mpumalanga premier, jumping ship to the Ramaphosa camp for reasons of expediency and personal advancement.

The key organizational heart of the ANC - represented by the Secretary General and his deputy - are known Zuma supporters. Both Jesse Duarte and Ace Magashule defend the Guptas and have had family members working for them. Duarte supported Zuma, insisting (before he resigned) that “he is going nowhere” and continues to insist “that he has done nothing wrong”. Magashule has a chequered history in the Orange Free State and his chances of facing the criminal justice system without Zuma’s protection are high. Magashule openly supported Zuma and did not hide his intention to restore to power in 2022 those who lost out in December 2017. Already Magashule has appointed interim structures in two provinces (Kwazulu Natal and the Orange Free State) which appear to favour political leaders whose election in the past was found to be illegal by the courts.³¹ Like Duarte, he continues to insist that Zuma has done nothing wrong.

The limits of Ramaphosa’s power and his political debts were evident in the composition of his first Cabinet. Although he was able to restore probity to economic management with Nhlanhla Nene and Pravin Gorhan appointed as key ministers, a good number of tainted people were also included: notably David Mabuza as the state vice president and Zuma loyalists Malusi Gigaba and Nomvula Mokonyana as cabinet ministers. The fact that a minister as discredited and reviled as Bathabile Dlamini remained in Ramaphosa’s first cabinet is extraordinary; the choice was described by observers as “disrespectful of all South African women”.³²

Once in power, Ramaphosa has had to address the dilemma of his bare victory. His task for the near future is to keep the ANC together and to prevent a split while beginning the process of transforming the deformed state which he has inherited. He will also have to navigate the inevitable reaction within the ANC to the prosecution of senior ANC leaders from the Zuma administration, including Zuma himself. At the same time, he will not be able to defer indefinitely

the clamour for justice from the excluded majority. If his compromises become too distasteful to the general public, he will face a disenchanting electorate in 2019.

A recent example of the slim margin of power and the durability of forces linked to Zuma's regime has been the passing of a bill in parliament which promised to expropriate land without compensation. The Ramaphosa forces were able to add the rider that the process must not harm food security, agrarian production or inclusive economic growth. In the National Assembly debate, Ramaphosa made clear that South Africa will "not make the mistakes that others have made. We will not allow smash-and-grab interventions" - a thinly veiled reference to Zimbabwe.

The see-saw battle for power is clear.

Inconvenient Truths - Larger Barriers to Change

Even if these new versions of ZANU PF and the ANC are able to win battles to steer policy carefully, clean up corruption and the shadow state, it is important to remember that they still confront deep historical barriers to economic and social transformation.

In South Africa, Ramaphosa is faced with the dismal reality that the productive base of the South African economy has not changed in its fundamentals since the 19th century. The economy continues to rely, to a great extent, on cheap black labour and the minerals-energy complex, even though this accumulation model has been in crisis since the early 1970s. The country remains dependent on mineral exports and foreign capital inflows for foreign exchange with which to purchase capital goods, intermediate goods and high technology.⁸ Since the 1980s the dramatic rise of the financial sector has accentuated the structural imbalance of the economy and its vulnerability.

South Africa had the misfortune of coming out of apartheid at a time when the neoliberal consensus was at its zenith and alternatives ruled out of order. Hence the possibility of moving beyond this narrow accumulation model was compromised by the first government's uncritical adoption of neoliberal policies and its rejection of redistributive policies of a transformative nature. Here are some key examples:

At the end of apartheid, the ANC government rejected proposals to impose taxes on wealth accumulated under apartheid and opted instead for voluntary contributions from the private sector. The result was token. Indeed, tax policy was one of the most egregious areas of ANC policy in the period after the end of apartheid. Private companies' contribution to total tax revenue plummeted from 18% of total tax in 1990 when transition began to 11% in 1999 while the share of taxes from mines went down to 0.5%.³³ Nor has this approach changed. In the latest budget in mid February, attempts to address the Zuma legacy left low corporate taxes untouched.

The decision to relax capital controls by the first post-apartheid government allowed capital outflow by domestic conglomerates on an unprecedented scale with minimal inward direct

⁸ The highest post-apartheid growth period was a direct product of the commodity super-cycle from 2002 to 2006 driven by the Chinese demand for resources. Once the commodity boom tailed off, South Africa's growth rate also declined.

investment by way of compensation. South Africa's largest conglomerates shifted their main listings to London and New York. The lack of adequate government regulation also contributed to illicit capital flows

Bowing to IFI pressure to liberalize trade, Minister of Trade and Industry Trevor Manuel boasted that he had dropped tariffs more drastically than even the WTO had advised. The result was the decimation of the sectors where South Africa's formal employment was concentrated - textiles, clothing and footwear - by cheaper Chinese imports. Not only did employment not grow to the expected 1.35 million new jobs in that period but there was a net loss of 500,000 jobs in the non-agricultural sector from 1994 to 2000 and another 200,000 in the country's farms.³⁴

Instead of companies and workers benefiting from these policies, a form of deindustrialisation occurred. Working conditions and pay for labour deteriorated with the advent of casualisation in forestry, mining and agricultural sectors.³⁵

Social grants have been part of the way in which South African governments have attempted to compensate for these realities. However, the net effect of the ANC governments' orthodox macro-economic policies has been the deracialisation of its "modern" economy, leaving the rest "exactly where it currently is: marginalised, poor and overwhelmingly black".³⁶ Poverty, inequality, unemployment have thus been hardwired into the post-apartheid economy.

Hence it can be argued that South African leaders went through an earlier form of state capture - when the captains of South African industry and their international associates were influential enough to train ANC politicians and then to see them put in place policies which suited the broader interests of capital. Their success guaranteed the continued privilege of economic elites who had profited from apartheid albeit with the incorporation of a few black elites under the guise of black economic empowerment. Cyril Ramaphosa is one leader who, abandoning the political sphere, became ultimately one of South Africa's richest leaders (and second richest black capitalist after his brother-in-law, Patrice Motsepe).

In sum, what is being argued here is that, even if foreign capital responds to the Ramaphosa presidency with a renewed interest in South Africa's as a "hot" destination, the essence of South Africa's economic dilemma is unchanged, the prospects for the poor still dim. Although Ramaphosa's position may not resemble Zuma's with the Guptas and their associates, given his administration's links to transnational and financial capital, it is reasonable to ask whether the South African state can evade broader "capture".

So far, one has to look in vain for political forces within the ANC which will go to bat in a serious way for the interests and struggles of the majority who have been left out in the post-apartheid era. One litmus test of the new administration's alignment is impending labour legislation which will make it more difficult for workers to call a strike and will exclude some of the most vulnerable casual workers from the protection of the minimum wage. Indeed, the focus of the early Ramaphosa regime is on stabilizing the fiscus, producing an austerity budget and re-establishing confidence with the same world which brought South Africa neoliberalism in the early post-apartheid years.

Zimbabwe

The legacy of the Mugabe period in Zimbabwe is even more severe. From the late 1990s

through the 2000s, a series of policy choices, serious mismanagement and wholesale looting by corrupt officials led to the virtual collapse of the economy. By the time Mugabe resigned in November 2017 the crisis had escalated to a national emergency with the Mnangagwa government facing an economic recession, resurgent inflation, an extremely dire fiscal position; crippling shortages of foreign currency and cash dollars, a critical balance of payment (BoP) position, mounting sovereign debt distress, high and semi-permanent unemployment; fragile financial markets, a persistent liquidity crunch and declining social services.³⁷

The task ahead is immense. The banking system needs to be transformed, the currency system stabilized and huge transfusions of capital acquired to rebuild neglected infrastructure. A renewed attempt will have to be made to reschedule the vast debts incurred by the Mugabe regime. Industry must be updated and rejuvenated in a sector which has almost disappeared. A new and effective development strategy, other than increasing exports, is vital but not on the horizon.

Mnangagwa now has to juggle reviving the economy with stabilizing the country as it moves towards elections in a few months. The post-coup climate is precarious.

The re-emergence of Mugabe may or may not pose a threat. Mugabe has spoken his mind to the AU chair and to local and foreign media. The AU chair didn't take him seriously and Mugabe underwhelmed the media, not the least because of his hostility to them in the past. Much to Mugabe's annoyance SADC and especially the South African government have not come to his aid.

Initially, Mnangagwa went out of his way to pay tribute to Mugabe as the founding father of Zimbabwe and to give him a generous pension and benefits. The strategy seemed designed, in part, to placate those in Africa who still respect Mugabe and who oppose military coups in principle. While taking charge of the state, the new government made a great effort to downplay the military aspect of what was a coup, and insisted that the change was a "military assisted transition" to rid the state of corrupt and destructive elements around Mugabe (code for Grace and the G40).

Mugabe has expressed bitterness about his ouster and decried its illegality and defiance of Zimbabwe's constitution. His goal is to have Mnangagwa invite him back to the political stage so that the disgrace of his ouster by the military might be remedied and political power might be handed over "properly". Mnangagwa's polite response was to say that Zimbabwe had moved on. Mugabe remains lonely and isolated, holed up in the Blue Roof mansion, a figure rapidly shrinking into irrelevance.

The appearance of the newly-formed National Patriotic Front party led by former general Ambrose Mutinhiri, however, is widely believed to be a vehicle for the Mugabes, disgruntled G40 supporters and the Zezuru vote. Although Mugabe has broadly hinted at transferring his support to the NPF, his loyalties remain with ZANU PF as indicated by recent media interviews. The NPF is his last throw of the dice, but not much more. Should it become a functional party, it would, at most, dilute ZANU PF'S support and open the way for Nelson Chamisa and the MDC-T alliance. We shall see. But one thing seems certain: the Mugabe era is history.

Nevertheless, even if Mnangagwa is able to control factions within ZANU PF which did not support his ascendancy, he still has to accommodate the looming presence of the military.

Historically, the army has seen itself as the custodian of the nationalist project and has openly declared its interest in who should rule. In 2002, the Commander of the Zimbabwean Defence Forces, Vitalis Zvinvashe convened a press conference to announce that they would never salute a head of state without liberation war credentials; a proposition which ruled out Morgan Tsvangirai at the time and which would rule out his successor Nelson Chamisa now.

In fact, should losing seem imminent, there is nothing to stop the army from launching a campaign of violent persecution of the opposition as it did in the aftermath of the 2008 presidential election when Mugabe lost the first round of the presidential election. Moreover, as Tendai Biti, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president and MDC alliance secretary suggested, the military coup which toppled Mugabe set a dangerous precedent. "There is nothing that will stop the tanks from moving again", Biti said. "Because when they planned this coup, they didn't plan this coup in order to lose the election in July or August".³⁸

Conclusion:

In closing, the dramatic political changes which have ushered in the end of Mugabe and Zuma are unlikely to produce profound transformation in the short and medium term. The barriers are huge.

At best, stability may be on the horizon in Zimbabwe and the process of rebuilding a shattered economy may commence. Given the prominence of the military, however, political instability cannot be ruled out, especially in the event of a victory by the MDC's Chamisa. After a rush of interest, Western countries (excepting Britain which has had a love affair with Mnangagwa) and international capital have adopted a 'wait and see' approach - until the election unfolds. If the election proceeds with the usual cheating and violence, then all bets are off. If it meets the low bar set by observers, then the country may be able to begin the long trek out of its battered past.

In South Africa, one can only watch Ramaphosa's balancing act as he deals with noxious elements embedded in the ANC and the South African state while confronting their legacy of looting and dysfunction. The more formidable problems of poverty and unemployment facing the majority of the population will compete with the demands of international capital and institutions for attention. The options are difficult: forcing change on the owners of capital will kill investment and growth. Ignoring demands for reform will trigger costly resistance from the excluded.³⁹

A shifting, unstable compromise is the most that can be expected.

Cyril Ramaphosa's conclusion to his first SONA quoted Hugh Masekela: "I wanna be there when the people start to turn it around". There will be a lot of water under the bridge before this sort of change will prevail. Yet, twenty-four years after the end of apartheid, anger in the black community over the fact that the white minority still has control of the economy and society is real and growing and cannot be ignored.

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