

INTERROGATING ANTI-COLONIAL RHETORIC BY POST MODERN AFRICAN LEADERS IN THEIR BID TO ENTRENCH THEMSELVES IN POWER

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ABSTRACT

African politics of liberation mobilized citizens through spelling out injustices by western colonizers to the extent of militating against euro centrism socially and economically in order to prop up the political ideology of African nationalism. The challenge today, however, is that this jingoistic supra africanism aimed against western colonialism and neocolonialism is a veneer covering up the African 'liberator's' intent to supplant the western colonizer and in turn oppress the same people and loot resources that should belong to the people. The result is that the poor who were brutalized by European colonizers are still languishing in their state of dereliction under their own countrymen's leadership. This study therefore interrogated how Africa can liberate itself from the yoke of depravity under this post colonial political dispensation by investigating the Southern African countries; Zimbabwe, South Africa and Lesotho. This was done through document analysis and in depth interviews with scholars, activists and civil society representatives from the countries under study.

Keyword: Interrogating, Injustices, Euro centrism, Nationalism, Jingoism, Colonialism, Neo colonialism

1. INTRODUCTION

Fighting to shed the yoke of colonialism, African freedom movements mobilized the masses through a lot of sloganeering. The primary purpose of this sloganeering was to whip up emotions of the citizens through the use of catchy anti- white, anti settler establishment enchantments in a bid to call citizens to arms. In Zimbabwe; in 1963, "Zimbabwe African National Union, ZANU" was formed together with "Zimbabwe African People's Union, ZAPU" coined in 1961, these two were patriotic front movements; these movements appealed to the masses through nationalistic jargon against British settlerism. These two political formations only resorted to violence when the white settler regime refused to compromise and negotiate a peaceful settlement. That is when ZAPU formerly formed ZIPRA "Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army" whilst ZANLA "Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army" was also formed by ZANU and violence started effectively from 1966 April [1]. As for South Africa, the Pan Africanist Congress popularly known as PAC, the African National Congress popularly known as the ANC together with the South Africa Communist Party also SACP also mobilized through nationalist semantics and

went underground and engaged in acts of physical sabotage as a last resort to bring down the brutal apartheid regime using the force of arms [2]. With the nationalists in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, the masses have not benefitted as much as was initially promised by the black leadership during the struggle for independence and the early years of freedom. With Lesotho, it has been a recycling of the same politicians, tried, tested and proven not to be effective as far as bringing real tangible socio- economic and political development is concerned [3].

The mobilization of the masses by Black Nationalist leaders through anti white, anti settler rhetoric, to a large extent, was the birth of a demagogic dictatorship in one of the countries under study because, like [4] points out, demagogues seek an easily hated enemy to agitate the masses against. Historian [5] summarises the situation in Zimbabwe under the Mugabe regime as "a situation whereby the regime has perpetrated patriotic history over a certain period, this would lead to a situation where the revolutionary tradition would continue especially to those who have betrayed the values. At the same time it confronts Western 'bogus universalism' which it depicts as a denial of the

concrete history of global oppression. This was achieved in philosophical eulogies and glosses of those speeches by Zimbabwe's media controller, Tafataona Mahoso thus the television and press, Robert Mugabe speeches, cabinet ministers, history textbooks and Border Gezi camps”.

The citizens of Zimbabwe were incessantly subjected to such rhetoric to gain freedom by use of the “Southern Rhodesia African National Congress” SRANC which was launched September 1957 till ZANU was born in 1963 [6]. This kind of rhetoric was carried on by the “Zimbabwe African National Union”, ZANU which is today ZANU Patriotic Front (PF). With Mugabe and ZANU (PF), this anti-western rhetoric, especially against the United Kingdom and her allies, the United States of America in particular, intensified after the year 2000 till the fall of Mugabe in 2017. This was so because Mugabe’s regime was under pressure from citizens of Zimbabwe due to a host of issues, particularly unfulfilled promises since independence in 1980, corruption by the political elite, gross mismanagement of the economy which led to the national economic meltdown, the formation of strong opposition political parties e.g. “The Movement for Democratic Change”, MDC. To stay relevant and contain the popular rise of the labour and student union based MDC, Mugabe roused the masses, particularly the rural peasantry who had and still have nasty memories of the brutality of colonialism, by bringing to life those sentiments that made him and his ZANU (PF) popular against the British and all those who supported them. From the year 2000, Mugabe verbally viciously launched virulent and vitriolic attacks on the British and western imperialists and their running dogs (the MDC) in particular, and the west’s neo-colonialist tendencies; all in a bid to tenaciously cling to power.

Writing about the enrichment of the political elite in South Africa after apartheid disadvantaging the poor, [7] says that “the reason why the post-apartheid distributional regime resembles its apartheid-era predecessor is not because post-apartheid government or interest groups wanted this particular outcome, but rather that various powerful actors sought to advance their interests, and may have even thought that this was in the interests of the poor also, through demanding only minor reforms of existing institutions and policies whilst blocking major reforms”. [7] Cites the example of the collusion between labour

organizations with the ruling ANC to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. [7] goes on to say of the South African dispensation that the, “rich have benefitted massively from economic growth, the poor hardly survive at all and for more than two decades of democracy, may not have failed the poor entirely, but democracy has failed to deliver many of the benefits that politicians promised”.

Despite the one political party dominance, by ANC in South Africa since 1994, presidency Jacob Zuma showed all the signs of a leadership that cared more for personal amassing of wealth at the expense of the people it is supposed to serve. Martin and Solomon sum this up saying that, “in recent years, South African newspapers routinely carry stories about corruption. Such corruption has become increasingly institutionalized leading to the phenomenon of state capture” says [8]. “This is where individuals or groups operating in the public and private sectors influence government policies for personal advantage” [8].

Lesotho has development challenges since independence due to successive incompetent governments since independence in 1966. The Refugee Document Centre (2012) writes that:

The “Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) founded in 1952 as a nationalist movement by Ntsu Mokhehle. The party was later renamed the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) and recently, the Basotho Congress Party (BCP). In 1957 a group of royalist left the party to form the Marematlou Party, which five years later merged with Basutoland Freedom Party (BFP), a break away party from the BCP. The Catholic chiefs and teachers within the BCP moved away from the party to form the Basutoland National Party, (now Basotho National Party (BNP) because of the Mokhehle’s support and admiration for Red socialist China in order to counter the communist threat within the BCP. When the BCP lost the elections in 1965 to the Basotholand National Party (BNP), the then Prime Minister Chief Leabua Jonathan and leader of BNP, responded by suspending the national constitution, arresting and then expelling the King Moshoeshe II and banning opposition parties (Refugee Document Centre, 2012). The King was exiled in Holland but was later allowed to return and to contribute to the government of national reconciliation. This was partly a successful effort but was one fiercely resisted by the opposition party (BCP), which

precipitated in a failed coup attempt resulting in many deaths within the BCP and the jailing or exile of the BCP leadership. Effectively, this was the beginning of the political stalemate and a de facto one party state in Lesotho”.

Lesotho has been divided deeply along the lines of the congress and nationalist political alignment since the 1960s and the status quo is worsened by splintering of these major movements since the late 1990s. Between 2012 and 2017, Lesotho has gone to general elections three times and the result has been three new coalition governments. In reality, however, the only new thing about these governments is the coalition partners because it is a recycling of the same old politicians. The end result is the same incompetence in service provision and the same stagnation in economic development.

[4], says that the demagogue can use the military in order to stay in power. This rings true of the Lesotho under former Prime Minister Mosisili. [9] writes that in his inaugural speech after the 2015 general elections, Mosisili, “promised milk and honey but more importantly spoke about how he would restore the good name of the country which was constantly being tarnished by the unsavory things done by the previous Thabane led coalition government”. Sejanamane (2016) goes on to say that, “Mosisili promised good democratic governance and accepted the reform package which had been suggested by the Commonwealth Special Envoy to Lesotho, Dr Prasad”. However, this seemed rhetoric as, according to [9] almost all members of the seven parties Mosisili led coalition had gone to bed with Lesotho Defence Force’s (LDF) “Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli”, who was fired, and he unconstitutionally refused to step down. Kamoli successfully caused the collapse of the Thabane led coalition government when he attempted a coup de tat that led to Thabane fleeing to exile in South Africa and only returned after SADC provided and guaranteed his personal security. When the SADC recommended elections for Lesotho in 2015, Kamoli’s military meddling in politics was legitimated as the Mosisili government reappointed him to office and Mosisili’s deputy, Metsing openly stood by Kamoli as well as Mosisili’s minister of Foreign Affairs, Sekhamane, publicly threatening a bloodbath in the event of any attempt being made to get rid of Kamoli [9]. The Mosisili led coalition government therefore unequivocally owed its tenure of office

to the LDF, especially the then LDF commander Kamoli.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The African leadership that took over from colonial masters does not have the interests of the ordinary people at heart but would rather use all the national resources at their disposal; human, material and capital, to consolidate their positions and entrench themselves in power. The challenge lies in how ordinary citizens can be educated in electing a leadership that respects the rule of law, human rights, following edicts of constitutionalism as well as tenets of accountability in governance.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to establish how post colonial African states of Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe can produce a leadership with ethics and who can purposely push the agenda of democracy, constitutionalism and uphold the rule of law.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can the three Southern African political spheres of Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe be liberated from tendencies of dictatorship, unconstitutionality and looting of national resources by the ruling political elite?

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of democracy informs this research, democracy is defined as rule of the people by the people; meaning that rule has to be to the satisfaction of the majority by a leadership elected, through equal and free participation of the majority of the people., “modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable [10]. [11] Says that “democracy is to be governed by the freely expressed will of the people whereby all individuals are to be treated as equals”. This hence is the best theory to inform this study whose main objective is to establish the best approach for the polities of the southern African countries of Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe’s leadership liberate their political spheres socio- politically and economically so as to pave way for development. The theory of democracy is appropriate to educate all stakeholders in these polities to set priorities right and focus on people participation and prevent monopoly on power by

the ruling elite which they abuse to enrich themselves economically and entrench themselves in power politically.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

“Interrogating the question of leadership in the context of antidemocratic tendencies of Africa’s leaders”, [12] write that, “the African continent has continued to struggle behind other continents of the world as a result of the failure of the leadership to address the political and socio-economic challenges of the continent”.

Democracy will lose its value if leaders full fill self-interests through Machiavellian politics [13].

Writing on the same subject of leadership challenges on the African continent, [14] says that “despite the mantra of Africa Rising that took hold over the past decade to date, there is no denying that African countries, with few exceptions, have been afflicted by a crisis of leadership”. [14] Continues to say that, “crisis has progressively become more and acute after the era of decolonization in the 1950s and 60s when the political struggle to break the yoke of Western colonial oppression focused minds and threw an abundance of leadership talent. Leaders have to a greater extent proved unable to achieve high standards of governance as an outcome of leadership, and economic transformation as an outcome of effective governance” [14]. [14] Cites the example of the “Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s” announcement in February 2017, “that there was no winner of the Foundation’s 2016 Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership”.

[15] Elaborated the fact that “fundamental tenet of modern constitutionalism is that nobody, regardless of his status is above the law”. [15] Continue to write that “extensive powers conferred on African presidents in the independence constitutions, reinforced by ineffective mechanisms of accountability and presidential immunities led to the phenomenon of imperial presidents who operated outside the law and regularly abused their powers”.

[16] Martin and Solomon (2016) write that “for over 100 years there were moments in which South Africa’s ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), and its leaders, were able to speak to and for the nation with the resonance and moral authority that comes from matching the right words with the right actions at the right time.

And where there was a lack of political innovation, the party’s organisational strength enabled it to absorb much of what had been achieved by independent initiative” [16]. “This in many instances allowed the ANC to renew itself and to sustain its vitality and connection to present and moral authority” [16]. “However, by the end of 2015, the ANC’s claim of representing the nation had rapidly eroded, with the President of the ANC, Jacob Zuma, becoming a particular liability” [16]. “It was the debacle around the dismissal of former finance minister, Nhlanhla Nene that influenced many South Africans to conclude that the president is unashamedly willing to place his own interests before that of the nation’s” (Whelan 2016: 4 in [16].

Writing on South Africa, [16] says that in 2015 civil society organisations and trade unions launched a “Unite against Corruption campaign, which organised under the slogan that R700 billion (roughly \$46 billion at current exchange rates) had been lost to corruption since 1994. Apparently this represented 20% of the country’s GDP over 20 years [16]. The figure has a tortuous history but likely originates in a 2006 handbook by Transparency International that estimated that “An average of 10% to 25%, and high averages of 40% to 50% of a country’s procurement budget is lost to corruption” (Africa Check: 30 September 2015 in [16].

7. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used to collect data. This qualitative approach gave in - depth data that answered the research question. Case study design was adopted to focus on a three country studies that the researcher wanted to focus on.

The case study method “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in - depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case themes”, [17, p.97]. “Case studies allow the exploration and understanding of complex issues. It becomes important when a deeper investigation is to be done especially when dealing with issues of education [18], “sociology” [19] and “community-based problems” [19] “such as poverty, unemployment, drug addiction, illiteracy, etc. were raised”. This design was preferred for this study in order to understand issues of Lesotho,

South Africa and Zimbabwe independently and to draw comparisons and consequently make meaningful conclusion.

The sample for this study was a retired district administrator, a newspaper editor, two university lecturers and a civil society activist. This sample was chosen depended on the intention of the research. It was chosen with the belief that it is well versed with political and civic matters and those they will shed a light on the subject under study.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select the population. This method of sampling was used since the researcher was well versed with the population and the purpose of the study and the characteristics he was looking for. Potential participants were who represented the group were selected. It was found to be relevant for this study because of its ability for “identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest”, [20] and [17].

For the purpose of this study face to face interviews were carried out. This was due to the possibility of detailed information provided by this method of interviews. The researcher also preferred face to face interviews because they allowed for probing of more information when clarification is needed on issues that will be raised during the interview. “These are carried out one to one with an interviewer and interviewee. Individual interviews are often described as a continuum, from structured to semi-structured to unstructured” [21].

Interviews done by means of face to face were audio recorded and data were transcribed. Data were analysed using themes that the researcher generated. All themes generated from the transcribed data aided in answering the research questions.

8. FINDINGS

In an interview, a Zimbabwean newspaper editor said that the dictatorship of former president Mugabe was problematic in the sense that in his successive cabinets, he had intelligent and capable ministers the former president could have managed productively for national development, but unfortunately Mugabe was not prepared to listen to anyone. The editor said Mugabe was just obsessed with power and had no interest in anything else but power politics and dominancy.

The editor went on to say that with Mugabe, all ministers had simply have to follow Mugabe’s directives or else they would get dismissed or even worse, be assassinated if perceived to a serious threat.

A National University of Lesotho lecturer said that in a research he carried out on the lack of accountability within the government of Lesotho, he came across audit reports from the Auditor General’s office which exposed that one company owned by a former prime minister of Lesotho won a tender to supply toilet paper and bottled water to the government. This company supplied the toilet paper to the government at the price of R56 a roll and 500ml of the bottled water at R34 a bottle. The researcher said he went to interview the Auditor General about such corruption and got the response that the auditor general’s office only carries out audits and write recommendations after their findings to the responsible authorities. The auditor general’s office went on to tell the researcher that there is no legal instrument in the constitution of Lesotho that empowers the auditor general’s office to stop such over charged payments nor can they institute arrests of companies involved in such corrupt business transactions. The NUL lecturer went on to say that the prime minister is not accountable to any office for any of his actions and the same applies to the first lady as well.

An interview with a retired District Administrator who is familiar with the politics of the three countries under study revealed that the problem with the political elite of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Lesotho is that appointments to government are based on political party affiliation at the base and particularly centered around one individual; the president or prime minister. He continued to say that for as long as appointments are not made according to merit but to partisan politics, cronyism, nepotism and hero worshipping will never end and national economic management will continue degenerating. He also went on to say that politics is a game for economic gain for most players due to the issue of tenderpreneurship especially is South Africa and Lesotho. He elaborated that most of these politicians are referees and players at the same time as they have many briefcase companies fronted by their relatives and friends and they siphon national resources through the awarding of tenders to their own companies. He said these politicians enrichen

themselves through these corrupt and illegal means that they would higher assassins to silence their critics permanently than operate on the straight and narrow. The former district administrator also identified the worrisome issue of the involvement of the military in politics especially the reports of the military being involved in ZANU (PF) politics in Zimbabwe and the military defying orders from a sitting prime minister in Lesotho.

A lady interviewee from civil society responded that politics should open up to civil society organizations who educate citizens on issues to do with good governance, human and civil rights because in the long run, an educated and well informed citizenry will save the same governments resources in the long run. She went on to say this education should start at the level of the political elite itself because ignorance of good governance at that level is frightening. She said that there is a misconception by this class in the sense that they are not aware that by virtue of being elected to public office, the elite has been given a noble task of serving the people not self interest. Because of this ignorance by this class, the end result is the unceremonious removal from office as was the case with Zuma and Mugabe or the vicious cycle of continuous collapse of governments as with the case with Lesotho from 2012 to 2017. The interviewee went on to point out the atrocities committed by the military under former Mosisili's tenure in office within a short period of just two years. She said that is a sign of a government with total disregard for human life and the welfare of its citizens in its bid to consolidate power. She did not spare the current government under prime minister Thabane where first of all the prime minister's estranged wife conveniently was gunned down just a day before the inauguration of the prime minister and also the convenient gunning down of the current first lady's first husband just a day before the prime minister's wedding. She also pointed out the manner in which the LDF commander Lieutenant General Motsomotso was gunned down by his officers in the heart of the LDF command which precipitated a speedy implementation of military reforms under premier Thabane and this was too convenient considering how troublesome the relations between prime minister Thabane and the LDF had been in his first tenure as premier between 2012 and 2015.

9. DISCUSSION

The status quo in the political sphere and socio-economic of the Southern African countries of Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe is only beneficial to the political elite. Due to this reality, the ruling elite will therefore resist the implementation of any meaningful reforms that will lead to the dilution of their power and dominance. For instance, one former cabinet minister under the Mugabe regime once declared that the regime would never reform itself out of power. Voter education and political reforms will therefore never be spearheaded by the ruling elite in any substantial manner because it is one of the most obvious threats to their interests.

For Zimbabwe specifically, nongovernmental organizations that sensitize citizens about governance issues have been labeled agents of regime change by the ZANU (PF) regime and therefore the government has had a perfect excuse not to cooperate with all reform efforts by such institutions.

The publishing of the book "Kill Zuma by any means necessary" by Gayton McKenzie at the end of 2017 when Zuma's reign was inevitably reaching its twilight shows evidence of an author in an attempt to salvage the career of a politician whose fate was sealed. McKenzie writes alluding to conspiracies of attempts on Zuma's life because of his popular pro people policies; that is Zuma's leading South Africa into the BRICS community and purportedly did not sit well with the western economies. In 2011, Zuma led South Africa into joining the BRICS which also had the effect of a notable ideological paradigm shift as the BRICS philosophy leans more towards sovereignty and territorial integrity as opposed to democratization and a polity emphasizing on prioritizing a conducive business environment [22]. However, suggesting that Zuma was unpopular with the west for his policies is typical of poorly performing African leaders who create phantoms to blame for all the challenges their countries experience in order to create the impression that the leader is trying his best in the face of stiff opposition from imperialists. The blame is on the imperialist even in the face of obvious incompetence by the African leader whose desire is to cling on to power against all the odds.

In Lesotho, the constant change of government, for instance the holding of three general elections bringing in three different coalition governments between 2012 and 2017, is a sign of a political elite that only cares for personal interests rather than those of the constituencies they are supposed to serve. This is more so considering the fact that two successive coalition governments collapsed as a result of irreconcilable differences of personalities within the coalitions more than anything else. For the citizens of Lesotho, the end result is the recycling of a political elite that has mastered the art of fleecing the meager resources from a limited national economy and a total control of the same limited resources by the ruling political elite as they entrench themselves in power.

In Lesotho, since 2016, the SADC and the AU have been putting pressure on the successive coalition governments for the implementation of reforms that will make the country governable. The Mosisili led government was very reluctant to implement the reforms. The current Thabane led government quickly implemented reforms in the military because the army was problematic to his first government of 2012 to 2015. There is reluctance in implementing further reform beyond the military to the extent that the AU gave the government an ultimatum of May 2019. This only serves to show the hypocrisy and reluctance by the political elite to reform themselves out of office.

The findings on Lesotho above are an indication of a leadership that is cold and calculating Machiavellian style in the consolidation of power and elimination of all perceived possible threats by not one but successive government. There is need for education to the politicians of the region under study when it comes to responsible, transparent democratic rule. A lot still needs to be done in order for politicians of the region to accept that their role is to serve the electorate, not the other way round and that humanity has to be respected and not used as cannon fodder to feed their political avarice.

10. CONCLUSIONS

African leaders employ anti west, anti colonial and nationalistic rhetoric in campaigning for political office and in consolidation of power but do very little of significance to improve the lives of the ordinary citizens who vote them into office. The

example from Zimbabwe under the leadership of Mugabe showed evidence of a leader who stayed too long in power capitalizing on anti western sentiments all in a bid to amass personal wealth. In South Africa, under Jacob Zuma, corruption was rampant with evidence of state capture by corrupt elements surrounding the president. In Lesotho, empty rhetoric is employed by political elite who can commit murder in order to consolidate power and stay in office only for personal gain.

It is ideal for international organizations to educate both the political leadership and ordinary citizens on issues of good governance, accountability, principles of democracy and rule of law in order to democratize these polities and improve people's lives.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the political leadership of the three countries of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Lesotho undergo workshops on good governance, respect for constitutionalism and the rule of law in order to democratise these polities. The SADC should take the initiative and work together with the African Union and the United Nations Organization in playing a proactive role in sensitizing these polities on the edicts of democracy and good governance rather than wait to intervene as is always the case especially with Lesotho and Zimbabwe in their perennial moments of political crisis. This education should be all inclusive, that is of the political parties in power, the opposition and civil society.

With Zimbabwe and Lesotho, there should be intervention by the international organizations on educating the political powers on the importance of separation of powers as well as the importance of the state apparatus' being apolitical so that the military stays out of politics and stick to defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state without dabbling in partisan politics.

Governments should ensure the safety of all citizens under their jurisdiction and put an end to assassinations of all kinds of opponents.

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