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## The Leadership Dilemma in South African Presidency: A Focus on the Post Nelson Mandela Messiah Leadership Discourse

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### Abstract

The role played by former President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela in the reconciliation and peace in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) was appreciated by the World. His ascendance to the highest office in the land on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1994 was seen by many as the triumph of the human spirit against adversity. The departure of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela from the Presidential office in the Republic of South Africa was seen by many as putting the country at a crossroads. It presented a leadership dilemma for South Africa as many were skeptical of which discourse would the next leaders pursue in the post-Mandela era. This article evaluates the South African leadership in the post-Mandela era in RSA.

**Keywords:** Leadership, President, Dilemma, Transitional, Traits, Discourse

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*"The time is yet to come for farewells, as many of us – by choice or circumstance – will not return. However, there is no time to pause. The long walk is not yet over. The prize of a better life has yet to be won"*

(Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, State of the Nation Address 1999)

### 1. Introduction

Africa has been beset by leadership succession challenges in the post-colonial era (Bakhari, 2003). Key amongst these challenges is leadership succession. Leadership succession battles have led Africa to political instability, civil strife, intra-party conflicts, inter-party conflicts, civil unrest, and military takeovers (Bakhari, 2003). South Africa has endured six Presidential changes since 1994. Three of the Presidential changes were a product of democratic elections, whilst two were forced by internal strife with the ruling African National Congress. Yet all of them were characterized by the peaceful handover of power from one President to the other. Leadership in post-apartheid South Africa remains a contentious subject. At the advent of democracy, South Africa was spoiled with iconic leadership choices from Dr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, and many men and women who acquired the revered leadership status amongst the people of South Africa.

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The name Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela stands tall above all these other South African leaders as a symbol of peace and reconciliation, an embodiment of freedom, and above all a point of reference to both enemies and friends. Nelson Mandela's leadership was and remains not shaped by office, and the attached presidential prestige or bound by borders. He was a global icon and a leader of the world. Whilst Van Zyl (2015) views the preservation of leadership titles solely for those accorded titles or positions. It is inevitable to characterise the leadership discourse of a country through its leaders in government, civil society, clergy, business, and politics. Leaders are also characterized by their vision and influence. What they do or say becomes a point of reference for many. This paper seeks to examine the leadership of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela in South Africa and further assess the dilemma confronting the South African leadership discourse in the post-Mandela era. It is inevitable that all the South African Presidents elected after him shall be consciously or unconsciously assessed against Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela's leadership. The paper uses Mandela's leadership styles, discourse, and leadership theories as standards to assess the leadership discourse in South Africa after Mandela's Presidency.

## 2. Background

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela did not only become the 1<sup>st</sup> President of the democratic Republic of South Africa but he was acknowledged by the world for his efforts to build Unity amongst the grossly opposite forces namely; the African National Congress (ANC), the National Party (NP), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and other political parties. Mandela was according to Asmal (2003) imbued with a great deal of reason, imagination, justice, and freedom. Indeed, Mandela was beyond reproach to many. To many, he was an icon, a saint, and a liberator. Yet he spend most of his energies seeking to demystify the notion that he was a saint. Yet the name of Nelson Mandela is according to Harris (2010) the best-known and one of the most revered on earth. South Africa has seen four (4) State Presidents in office after the departure of President Mandela in 1999 namely (i) T.M Mbeki, (ii) K.P Monthlante, (iii) J.G Zuma, (iv) and M.C Ramaphosa (the incumbent).

Mandela's efforts to achieve national peace and reconciliation are unparalleled in South Africa. There is no known leader or President in South Africa who has advanced a case for reconciliation as he did. Nelson dined with his tormentors and pleaded for the people not to dwell in the past. "Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world" (Republic of South Africa, 1994). These words remain an inspiration and source of courage to many.

Of course even jail could not destroy Mandela spirit. Hence O'Toole (2003) observes that Mandela's image defied all odds, he was not identified by his physical being as his captors made sure he was never seen prior his release. Yet Mandela's name was huge enough to be celebrated by the world. The chains of his oppressors, and walls of jail could not suppress the Mandela name. Mandela stood for what his oppressors had never imagined for themselves, that they too could attain the only dignity worth having: *the dignity of common humanity*.

As he left the Presidency in 1999 Nelson Mandela declared that the work was not finished as he said "the world admires us for our success as a nation in rising to the challenges of our era. Those challenges were: to avoid the nightmare of debilitating racial war and bloodshed and to reconcile our people on the basis that our overriding objective must be together to overcome the legacy of poverty, division, and inequity.

To the extent that we have still to reconcile and heal our nation; to the extent that the consequences of apartheid still permeate our society and define the lives of millions of South Africans as lives of deprivation, those challenges are unchanged" (Republic of South Africa, 1999).

His reconciliation efforts went beyond the South African borders. In 1999, Mandela was invited to help mediate and broker peace deals in Burundi. As a result, the Arusha peace and reconciliation agreement for Burundi was signed in August 2000 (SAHO). It was therefore inevitable that all other State Presidents of the Republic of South Africa would be evaluated through the lens of Mandela's leadership. Indeed, many South Africans were concerned about what would happen when Nelson Mandela leaves the Presidential Office. This was the dilemma.

There were times in South Africa when the stock markets were highly influenced by the health status of former President Mandela as if the country did not have alternatives. The thought of a South Africa without

this leader presented a dark cloud of uncertainty. Yet today, the health status of RSA's Presidents has a lesser influence on the stock markets and the strength of the local currency.

The evaluation of leadership is not foreign there are various leadership discourses and theories that can be used to evaluate leadership including but not limited to Traits, messiah, great men, transitional, transformational, and echo leadership.

### 3. Defining Leadership

Leadership is about people, followership, and societies. It is a tremendously complex and pressure-loaded quest that cannot be captured comprehensively (Luedi, 2022). To this end there is no single definition solely attached to the concept. Indeed, leadership is according to Daglish (2015) about the act of leading and the role, style, and effectiveness of leaders, regardless of how they came to lead. With due regard to the developments in the post-Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela leadership discourse and the challenges that have affected the office of the President in the Republic. It is important to discuss the leadership dilemma that arose after Mandela's presidency.

### 4. Mandela and the Leadership Discourses and Theories

In this section, Mandela's leadership characteristics are posited against the leadership discourse (from Western) and leadership theories. This seeks to help identify the leadership discourses theories that represent Mandela's leadership. By his own assertions, Mandela suggests that his personality traits were shaped by his observations of a Regent leader in the Eastern Cape from who he learned to listen thoroughly even when harsh things are said about you before you react and not be emotional (April *et al.*, 2000). To this end traits are also essential in the evaluation of leadership.

#### 4.1. Messiah Leadership or Saint

According to Western (2013), a messiah leader influences the soul of followers, he or she creates a clear vision and strong cultures and followers. The apartheid South Africa brutalised and exploited its own people (Non-Whites in particular). The apartheid oppression created huge animosity between the black and white races in the country and high tensions and ethnic rivalry amongst the Zulu, Xhosa, and Sotho speaking persons.

The gruesome death of Martin Thembisile Hani (the former leader of the South African Communist Party) popularly known as "Chris Hani", the murder of people in Boipatong, the killings in KwaZulu Natal and the murders in hostels and trains East Rand and other parts of Gauteng raised the anger of the people. The leadership had a choice to take the country to the ruins or to pursue a peaceful path. Of something needed to be done to save South Africa. A Messianic approach was thus crucial for Mandela. On the event of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela's address to the Nation on April 13, 1993 on the day Chris Han was murdered Mandela said "Our decisions and our actions will determine whether we use our pain, our grief, and our outrage to move forwards to what is the only lasting solution for our country- an elected government of the people, by the people and for the people. We must not let men who worship war, and who lust blood, precipitate actions that will plunge our country into another Angola (African National Congress, 1993)".

On the day of Hani's murder South Africa was at a crossroads, the leadership had to make a difficult choice mobilize civil unrest or appeal for calm Nelson Mandela, then as the President of the ANC prevailed on the situation and like a true statesman calmed the emotions of the people and redirected the attention of the citizen to the bigger objective i.e. democracy.

The messiah leadership according to Western represents an idea of salvation and a promise to usher the people to a promised land (Western, 2008). "Madiba" as Nelson Mandela was popularly known carried the promise and hope to usher the people of South Africa to freedom, equality, and a better life for all. His message of reconciliation brought all South Africans together under a common vision of non-racialism. Regardless of his persistent denial of sainthood Mandela epitomises and embodies the messiah leadership. None of the subsequent leaders who occupied the Presidential position in South Africa has had an opportunity to match this stance. "I am not a saint unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying" (Nelson Mandela). Of course, no human being is perfect and so was Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

#### 4.2. Mandela's Transformational Leadership

Nelson Mandela was also a transformational leader. Transformational leaders engage with followers, focus on higher-order intrinsic needs, and raise their consciousness about the significance of specific outcomes and new ways in which those needs can be responded to Hay (2012). Nelson Mandela appealed to the conscience of the South African citizen and pushed them to focus on the ultimate end.

In his view on racialism, Madiba argues as follows "People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite... Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished" (Mandela, 1996). At his inauguration in 1994, Mandela seizes the moment and immediately pursue the vision of transformation when he said "out of the extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud. Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice strengthen its nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all" (Republic of South Africa, 1994).

Transformational leadership epitomises the messiah leadership discourse (Western, 2008). Therefore transformational leadership amplifies a messiah leadership discourse. The key element in both the transformational leadership theories and the messiah leadership discourse is the desire and hope for change from the adverse material conditions and experiences for the better. Mandela exhibits the four main characteristics of transformational leaders as identified by Dubinsky *et al.* (1995) namely: (i) charisma; (ii) inspiration; (iii) stimulation of the intellectual thoughts; and (iv) constant prioritization of the desires of the followers. Transformational leaders display some or all of these elements as identified by Dubinsky.

#### 4.3. Mandela's Decision Making

According to Gumede (2005), Nelson Mandela's President can be summed up as Moralistic. Mandela's persuasion is that of "it is a correct thing to do or it is a moral obligation" for the larger part of his Presidency and beyond this tactic worked in his favor. Mr Mandela continuously persuaded his opponents and friends towards a particular vision. Yet he also displayed an uncompromising stance on matters of the people. This was visible when he broke the rank on the HIV/AIDS stance of President Mbeki and the ruling party then. Madiba chose the people. It was also under President Nelson Mandela that South Africa adopted the Macro Economic Policy largely known as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) in 1996. This policy stance was criticized by the workers' unions and socialists in South Africa as neo liberal agenda in South Africa.

The core elements of GEAR were (i) a fiscal deficit reduction program; (ii) an increase in relaxation of exchange controls; (iii) public asset restructuring (iv) an expansionary public infrastructure (African National Congress, 1997). The opponents of GEAR compared it to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) (Hendricks and Whiteman, 2004) SAP was imposed on Africa in the post-independence era, especially during the '80s. Despite the criticism of the policy.

In response, Nelson Mandela on the occasion of his address to the SACP told the Conference in 1998 that GEAR is the fundamental policy of the ANC and chastized them for not engaging the ANC but rebuking the policy at public platforms. The President was very firm on the economic policy trajectory adopted then.

#### 4.4. Mandela and Trait Leadership

The trait leadership theory is focused on the personality elements that distinguish the leaders from others (Khan *et al.*, 2016; Benmira and Agboola, 2021). Section 4.1 above suggests that Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela imbued the messianic leadership a question that immediately arises is what are the traits exhibited in the Mandela leadership and Presidency? The first trait exhibited by the Madiba leadership is influence. There was a mantra that said, "when Madiba spoke the world stood still".

According to Rost (1997), leadership is concerned with the influence relationship between leaders and followers. As a result, the principles of the leader and of the followers are mirrored by each other. The second trait exhibited by Nelson Mandela is charisma. In 4.2 above, Charisma is identified by Dubinsky (1995) as one of the characteristics of transformational leaders.

Charismatic leaders are characterized by friendliness and warmth, strength, dynamism, and being powerful (Sacavém, et al., 2017). It was this charisma that enable Madiba to pursue peace amidst the turbulence of state-sponsored violence against the people in South Africa. Mandela was also an inspirational leader. An inspirational leader possesses the ability to consciously or unconsciously inspire followers to rally behind his vision or thought at all times. Their message is constant and vision driven even in difficult times. Inspirational leaders constantly act in an exemplary manner to their followers. The declaration of the HIV/AIDS status of his son is one example where Mandela was exemplary to his followers. This stance by Mr. Mandela assisted many citizens held in denial and fear of stigmatization to learn to accept that HIV/AIDS exists and it doesn't discriminate. Mandela is also recognized for his call for the RDP of the soul and the establishment of the Moral regeneration movement in South Africa.

At the death of his late son Mr. Makgatho Mandela in the year 2005, Nelson Mandela took the courage to use his loss and pain to educate, conscientise and inspire the people to take a stand on HIV/AIDS. "We have called you here today to announce that my son has died of Aids." Mandela disclosed. He further said, "Let us give publicity to HIV/Aids and not hide it, because the only way to make it appear like a normal illness like TB, like cancer, is always to come out and say somebody has died because of HIV" (Peta, 2005).

On the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Steve Biko memorial lecture, 2004 in Cape Town Mandela said: "The values of human solidarity that once drove our quest for a humane society seem to have been replaced, or are threatened, by crass materialism and pursuit of instant gratifications" At this stage, Madiba sought to invigorate and re-inculcate the values of Ubuntu meaning human existence tied to the existence of the other to the South African social which was then perceived to be harbouring on moral bankruptcy.

## 5. The Post Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Leadership in South Africa and the Leadership Dilemma

*"It is no easy thing to rest while millions still bear the burden of poverty and insecurity. But my days will be filled with contentment to the extent that hands are joined across social divides and national boundaries, between continents and over oceans, to give effect to that common humanity in whose name we have together made the long walk to where we are today. Though I shall not be seen as much as I have been, I shall be amongst you and with you as we enter the African century; working together to make a reality of our hopes for a better world".*

(Republic of South Africa,1999)

The South African leadership dilemma intensified when Mr. Mandela left office. At his departure from office in 1999, South Africa had already been prepared for a take over by Mr. Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki who had been a Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa. "The transition from Mandela to Mbeki in 1999 had been well managed, with Mandela deciding early to transfer certain responsibilities to Mbeki, who was Deputy President. He had already done so as early as October 1995" (Chikane, 2012). Mbeki focussed on day to day business of the state and transformation whilst Mandela pursued reconciliation, unity, and asserting South Africa's global standing.

Mr. Mbeki was already celebrated for his popular mantra of 1996 "I am an African". Mr. Mbeki assumed Presidency in June 1999, he was re-elected in 2004 and served in the highest office until he was removed in September 2008. Indeed there were fierce leadership battles in the ANC henceforth and another State President was also recalled prior to the end of their second term. The current State President is also facing stiff opposition brewed by those who ideologically do not agree with him ever since he took office in 2018.

## 6. Thabo Mbeki and the Leadership Discourse and Theories

In his famous "I am an African" address Mr. Mbeki said "I am born of a people who would not tolerate oppression. I am of a nation that would not allow that fear of death, torture, imprisonment, exile or persecution should result in the perpetuation of injustice.

The great masses who are our mother and father will not permit the behaviour of the few results in the description of our country and people as barbaric. Patient because history is on their side, these masses do not despair because today the weather is bad. Nor do they turn triumphalist when, tomorrow, the sun shines." (Republic of South Africa, 1996). At this juncture, Mr. Mbeki presented himself as a Pan-Africanist and an

African visionary. His firm belief was that African problems need solutions from the Africans themselves. Mr. Mbeki was also accredited and appreciated as a Sussex graduate.

### **6.1. Pan Africanist and African Renaissance**

Mbeki's celebrated "I am an African" speech presents Thabo Mbeki as a Pan-African fundamentalist and an African renaissance visionary. The genesis of Pan-Africanism is according to Lopes (2013) is embedded in the struggle for equal rights. Mr. Mbeki positions himself as an architect of the agenda for the reawakening of Africa from its post-colonial slumber. Lopes (2013) further observe that it was during Mr. Mbeki's term of office that South Africa's influence grew within the African continent. Whilst Pan-Africanism was not a new concept, Mr. Mbeki's poetic speeches and passion for African indigenous knowledge present him as a Pan-African fundamentalist and agent for the reawakening of Africa.

In sum, Thabo Mbeki's outlook is a combination of charisma, controller, and transformational leadership. He is presented as an intellect, an administrator of note, and what Dubinsky *et al.* (1995) characterises as the stimulator of the intellect. His "African renaissance" mantra is a clarion call to the best minds of the continent to rise to the occasion and ensure that Africa reoccupies its rightful place in the world. In South Africa, Mr. Mbeki represented a shift from Mandela's messiah discourse to the controller discourse. The African renaissance agenda became a popular topic in South Africa and a subject of societal and media engagement (Maloka, 2001). Mbeki was able to capture and redirect the mind-set of the country and the continent to reimagine Africa awoke and arose beyond its monumental slumber from the ashes of colonial rule and wars of dispossession.

### **6.2. Mbeki's Transitional Leadership**

Both as Deputy President and President of the Republic of South Africa and the ruling party Mr. Mbeki was at the center of the transition from the old apartheid administration to a democratic government (Gevisser, 2009). Mbeki also represent a transition from the Mandela euphoria to the reality on the ground. The people were still impoverished, the economy was still in the hands of the few. The freedom honeymoon was over. As a result Mbeki ushers in the notion of the ANC as the "agent for change". Mr. Mbeki's Presidency and leadership would inevitably be compared with his predecessor i.e. Mr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. Chikane (2012) affirms that Mbeki knew that he was not and never could be a Mandela indeed had no wish to be one. Mr. Mbeki was his own man and assumed a path to establish the Mbeki legacy. Mr. Mbeki had as much as possible work towards what Gumede (2005) coins the escape from Mr. Mandela's shadow. As a result, Mbeki said "Yes indeed Mandela has much larger feet. I guess I could go back 27 years, and try going to jail, and then come and wear funny shirts" (Gumede, 2005). Mbeki's Presidency was well prepared when he was still serving as Deputy President. According to Chikane (2012), Mbeki had already been in charge of the government engine room of governance and transformation, developing policies and enhancing the governance capacity of the democratic government.

### **6.3. Mbeki and the Partnership for Africa's Development**

It was during Mbeki's term of office that South Africa together with the presidents of Nigeria and Algeria, Olusegun Obasanjo and Abdelaziz Bouteflika that these leaders conceived the idea of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which sought to advance the African driven economic development. NEPAD focussed on specific targets and programmes for various economic sectors, whether infrastructure, industrialization, agriculture, or education (Mbeki, 2021), and the African peer review mechanism.

However, Mbeki (2021) recently observes that RSA's Africa policy experienced a decline from 2009 henceforth. It was a period when Mr. Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma became the President of the RSA. According to Mbeki (2021), RSA has been through a period where she destroyed the respect the rest of the continent had for her. Mr. Mbeki criticizes the celebrated occupation of the African Union (AU) Commission Chairperson by Ms. Nkosazana-Dlamini as a downward trend from the previous strategic positioning of RSA as a country of influence and point of reference in Africa. Mbeki argues that South Africa had in the past decided not to contest the leadership positions in the continent bodies but set the tone for the African agenda as a major role player. He further notes the collapse of some of the bilateral efforts between countries within the SADC region. Mr. Mbeki then argues that for the country to once more play a positive role beyond a purely selfish one there is a need to redevelop a Pan-African perspective.

#### **6.4. Mbeki the Controller Discourse and Enigma**

The most difficult for leaders following after Messiah and popular leadership is the expectation to maintain the affinity created with the followers. Whilst former President Mbeki pursued the aforementioned African agenda an impression was created in South Africa that he was aloof and distanced from the people compared to Mr. Mandela. The London and Sussex background drew ire to him, especially from the Soviet cohort and those who spent more time at the Camps (Gevisser, 2009). Those who spent less time at the ANC camps were somehow less militant and not in touch with the ground forces.

Thabo Mbeki had performed serious work for the ANC on different fronts including being representative to Nigeria and being the Secretary of Oliver Reginald Tambo who was the President of the ANC in exile from 1967 until it was unbanned in 1990. From early age, Mbeki was not tied to a core of friendship and was perceived as uprooted from the mainstream. He was not too open and thus perceived to be alone in the midst of his peers. (Gevisser, 2009) The mantra of the Sussex boys would later come back to haunt Mbeki as his detractors mounted antagonism against his perceived capitalist and anti-worker agenda.

A perception grew that Mbeki was against the socialists and the worker in the ruling alliance and thus the enemy of the left. The difficult public sector bargaining processes sustained the anti-worker narrative. This narrative would simultaneously position his Deputy President Mr. Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma as a leader closer to the people, charismatic worker-friendly, and warmer to the masses. A major shift in the governance approach from a somehow decentralized approach Mbeki is recognized for centralizing authority in his office (Gumede, 2009) unlike Mandela who delegated some responsibilities to him. Indeed the party was over. Mbeki's Presidency was monocratic (Masilela and Mthiyane, 2014). The delegation and decentralization of powers by Mandela to Mbeki and his fellow Ministers was a vote of confidence to his heir apparent. Clearly, the centralization of powers by President Mbeki suggested otherwise about his confidence and trust in his Deputy, Mr. Jacob Zuma. Yet it was Mbeki and his allies who chose the well-decorated leader from the battlefields of KwaZulu-Natal, a former member of Umkhonto WeSizwe in the name of Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma against Ms. Nomzamo Winnie Madikizela Mandela at the ANC conference, Mafikeng, 1997. This was a sign of things to come.

#### **6.5. Mbeki's Decision Making**

Thabo Mbeki is somehow presented as a hard-line non-conformist leader. Perhaps this was a deliberate approach to escape the Mandela shadow (Gevisser, 2009). He was seen as a hardliner. As a result, Gumede (2005) wrote that "throughout his Presidency, Mbeki's Achilles heel has been his uncompromising attitude". It was either you are in his corner or not.

Gumede (2005) further indicates that the former President did not take kind of the critics of his government within the ruling alliance and outside. His decisions stood. There are many examples of Mbeki's decisiveness, this article draws reference to only two hard-line positions of President Mbeki whilst he was in Office. Thabo Mbeki single handedly drove the ANC to a hard-line stance against the provision of ARVs in South Africa. His pessimism about Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) resulting in the death of humans shook South Africa.

He questioned the causal relationship between Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and AIDS (Gumede, 2005). He directed his government to promote nutrition and a healthy lifestyle as a response to HIV/AIDS instead of what he perceived as the agenda of the pharmaceutical companies to prey on the health status of the African people. This would prove to be one of his downfalls. Mbeki's hard-line approach created a chasm between him and the eminent leaders in South Africa. His tough attitude towards the ex-wife of Nelson Mandela, i.e., Ms. Winnie Madikizela Mandela was a source of concern. Yet Mr. Mbeki insisted that Ms. Madikizela Mandela was not disciplined. Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela took the Mbeki stance on HIV/AIDS head.

At this stage, Mandela broke the rank with Mbeki and supported the HIV/AIDS campaigns of the Treatment Action Campaign. He challenged the ANC leaders to join and lead the HIV campaigns in South Africa. Yet Mbeki was brave enough to characterise Mandela's action as having crossed the line (Gumede, 2005). Mandela was according to Gumede (2005) roughly challenged by the then-ANC leaders for his stance. Very few could

hold such an act of courage not to succumb to the moralist persuasion of Mandela but Mbeki had such courage. Very few could have the courage to chastise Ms. Winnie Mandela for constantly arriving late at events and disrupting the programme but Thabo Mbeki. Mandela was expected to toe the line. As they popularly say “a new sheriff had arrived in town.” Desmond Tutu also entered the fray and unapologetically challenged Mbeki’s stance on HIV/AIDS.

*“It would be tremendous if our President said this is the common enemy. The stance adopted by the President has harmed his image. He has done wonderfully well – the world thinks the world of him, and I want to see him succeed. I think it is silly to hold on to positions that are untenable. At the present time, everybody recognises that the President’s position is undermining his stature in the world”.*

However, Mr. Mbeki was uncompromising that he could not succumb to the pressure mounted by Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Zachie Achmat, and Mangosuthu Buthelezi on HIV/AIDS and took along the ANC and government to his corner. The most difficult decision taken by Mr. Mbeki as President of the country in 2005 is the removal of Deputy President Jacob Zuma on June 14, 2005 after the scathing Judge Hillary Squires on the guilty verdict against Schabir Shaick. “However, I have come to the conclusion that the circumstances dictate that in the interest of the honourable Deputy President, the Government, our young democracy, and our country, it would be best to release the Hon. Jacob Zuma from his responsibilities as President of the Republic and Member of the Cabinet” ([Republic of South Africa, 2005](#)). The action to remove Zuma was tough yet decisive. It was a firm decision to take. His stance was appreciated. Yet the Mbeki downfall was accelerated by this decision to remove Mr. Zuma.

The Zuma trial had according to Chikane (2012) created destructive suppression relations between Zuma and Mbeki. Subsequently, Mr. Mbeki was removed from the Presidency on the basis of the decision to recall him from his party in 2008. Mbeki announced his resignation on national television on Sunday, September 21, 2008, and officially resigned on September 28, 2008. “I would like to say that gloom and despondency have never defeated adversity. Trying times need courage and resilience. Our strength as a people is not tested during the best of times. As we said before, we should never become despondent because the weather is bad nor should we turn triumphalist because the sun shines.” This was President Mbeki’s parting shot, he resigned as he was instructed and he graciously departed.

## **7. The (Caretaker): President Kgalema Petrus Monthlante**

The post-Mbeki era created another leadership dilemma, South Africa was due for an election in 2009 and the President of the ruling party was not in Parliament. The ruling party decided that the incumbent President of the ANC would not avail himself of the position of President of RSA immediately. The Deputy President of the Republic was not in office also as Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka had also resigned in the aftermath of the resignation of President Mbeki ([Chikane, 2012](#)). The then ANC Deputy President was serving in the Mbeki Cabinet from July 2008. This was according to many not by his will but in respect of the party decision. At the delivery of his acceptance speech, Monthlante said this to Mr. Mbeki “I know that I speak on behalf of all this country when I say that we have been privileged to have you as our President this last nine years. There is no value that we can place on service you have rendered to your country, nor any tribute that can adequately capture your contribution to building this nation” ([Republic of South Africa, 2008](#)).

The September 2008 Monthlante speech was quite ironic. A few days ahead of his election as President, he attended an ANC National Executive which decided that it was in the best interest of the ANC and the country that President Mbeki should vacate office. If Mr. Mbeki’s contribution was so much valued, could the party have not waited and allowed him to remain in office for the remaining months before the 2019 elections? The same NEC led by Zuma, Motlanthe, and others decided otherwise. The dilemma was sustained.

### **7.1. Kgalema Monthlante’s Leadership**

Unlike the Mandela to Mbeki transition, Chikane (2012) sums up the Mbeki to Monthlante 2008 transition as abrupt. This change was sudden. However, the new President was at least exposed to the business of the Executive Council from July 2008. It is also affirmed by Chikane (2012) that Mr. Monthlante displayed a sound understanding of his role as the 1<sup>st</sup> citizen of the Republic.



### **7.2. Monthlante Situational Leadership**

The strength of situational or contingency leadership is the flexibility to be shaped by a particular situation (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). Situational leaders assess the context in which they operate. They on the basis of the prevalent situation choose the correct path or contingent. The primary task of President Monthlante was to bring in stability and assure South Africa and the World that South Africa was in safe hands. Conscious of the fact that he did not have much time in the office. Kgalema Monthlante chose not to disrupt the trajectory with major announcements and policy shifts from his predecessor. This marked the beginning of his downward spiral.

### **7.3. Monthlante Leadership Traits**

Kgalema Monthlante presents himself as a class cadre of the mass democratic movement (Chikane, 2012). He did not seek to be celebrated. It was about the people and not him. From the time he emerged as the Secretary General of the ANC to his election into higher office, Mr. Monthlante presents himself as a humbled leader who is not in for self-gratification and grandstanding. Mr. Monthlante was a Man of limited but carefully selected words.

Monthlante's exposition is summed up by Harvey (2012) as a less ambitious leader who does not strive for attention, publicity, and power. He is an intensely private person. Yet Mr. Monthlante has served in positions that others may only dream of. It is amazing how such a character was able to lead the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) as its General Secretary, became the first leader of the ANC in Gauteng, served as Secretary General of the ANC, Deputy President of the ANC, and the President of the Republic. Monthlante is a pacifist, he does stir conflict. According to SAHO (2011), there was a view that when serving as Secretary General of the ANC under Mr. Mbeki Monthlante was seriously undermined yet the publication confirms that Monthlante denied such. However, it was Monthlante's report to the ANC's National in the year 2000 that raised an alarm about poor consultation between the ANC and the Executive Council (SAHO, 2011).

In the build-up to the ANC National Conference at Polokwane in 2007 tensions were heightened in the ANC and criticism against Mbeki was mounting, Mr. Monthlante remained organizational. As the Secretary General of the ruling party, he never criticized his party or President in public. Monthlante ensured that the centre was holding. As Chikane (2012) affirms it as he wrote: "In the light of the tensions that had developed between the President and the Deputy President of the ANC, Comrade Kgalema as the Secretary General of the organization became the critical person around which the ANC was able to hold together". Monthlante remained calm during the season of heightened turbulence and torrential rains of interpersonal conflict between leaders.

It was only at the Polokwane ANC Conference that Motlanthe openly confirmed his availability for the Deputy President position against the views of those who were in favour of Mbeki. Goleman (2004) identify the characteristics of emotional intelligence as (i) the ability to motivate yourself; (ii) the ability to persist in the face of frustrations; (iii) the ability to control impulses; (iv) to delay gratification; (v) to regulate your moods; (vi) not allowing distress to swamp your ability to think; and (vii) to empathize and to hope. To find all these elements of emotional intelligence in a single person is an uphill struggle. As much as I tried, I did not succeed in separating Monthlante from the above elements of emotional intelligence. As a sitting President Monthlante did not escape the veil of criticism from within and outside the ranks of his party and alliance. His moves were highly monitored and rigorously tested. Some sceptics started accusing him of projecting himself as the sole paragon of righteousness in the ANC. Chikane (2012) notes that there was an unwritten expectation for him to try and obliterate the Mbeki legacy. It was a move highly impossible to achieve in a very short term. He also had to be very careful not to upset the heir apparent or create an impression that he was getting too comfortable. At his address to the Freedom Day celebration on April 27, 2009 in Durban, the nation watched in awe as a group of unruly participants tried to disrupt his address singing about the incoming President Mr. Zuma live on National television. Monthlante remained calm and was unhindered. After all, he was a President as elected constitutionally and legitimately. The South African constitution does not provide for an interim President. The leadership dilemma continued.

### **7.4. Monthlante the Manager of the Transition**

Mr. Monthlante was aware that he had very limited time in the office. As a result, Chikane (2012) notes that his

Presidency focussed on service delivery and rounding off the 2004-2009 government term initially led by his predecessor. As Chikane puts it, there was no room for major decisions and long-term shifts. This was a transition. Although he had limited time, President Monthlante was able to take decisions when required to do. For instance, when he was expected to dramatically remove the directors general appointed during Mbeki's Presidency.

According to Chikane (2012) he opted to treat the appointment and termination of directors general following applicable regulations and did not destabilise the administration with transitional approaches. Monthlante did not accede to the mentality of a moratorium on key appointments at the government level until the period after the 2009 elections. Where appointments and extensions of contracts had to be made he did so. He however maintained continuous consultations with the heir apparent Mr. Jacob Zuma (Chikane, 2012). The Presidency of Mr. Motlanthe is summed by Calland and Sithole (2022) as follows "Kgalema Motlanthe was a caretaker President, but while he may have been only had been a President for eight months, he had a disproportionate impact—and not just because he provides such a contrast to other Presidents in both leadership style and personality". Mr. Motlanthe was indeed unique, not celebrated, and very sincere. Indeed, he is the President that South Africa never had. South Africa was left pondering: if he only had more time in office? Mr. Motlanthe is an embodiment of humility and emotional intelligence. He is very economical with words. The term of office of President Motlanthe ended on May 9, 2009 and he was replaced by Mr. Zuma. His mission was complete, he had rescued the country and the party from a potential crisis. Yet another debate immediately ensued within the party ranks on whether President Zuma should appoint Motlanthe as his Deputy or a woman. At that time Ms. Baleka Mbethe the ANC national chairperson had already served as a Deputy President of the Republic to Mr. Motlanthe. However, it was a very calculated decision that Mr. Zuma took when he appointed Motlanthe as his Deputy President until he was replaced by Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa in 2014.

Ironically, Motlanthe contested the ANC Zuma Presidency at the ANC 2012 Conference in Mangaung and he was defeated, although he enjoyed the support of the Youth League.

## 8. The Zuma Years: President Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma

*"Part of the reason I talk about my self-education more these days is that I am trying to encourage those whose circumstances also did not allow them to go to school. If you are determined to educate yourself, it's possible - I've done it"*

(Gordin, 2010)

Mr. Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma became the 4<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic on May 6, 2009. According to Gordin (2010), it was unimagined that an uneducated rural Man from the outskirts of KwaZulu-Natal would progressively rise to the highest office in the land. Mr. Zuma proved his foes wrong. It was possible.

### 8.1. Zuma the Hero of the Working Class Darling of the Left

*"It took considerable skill for Zuma to create coalitions powerful enough to displace the entrenched (Mbeki) Leadership"*. Mr. Zuma was able to create a good rapport with COSATU, The SACP, and the Youth League of the ANC (Shapiro and Tebeau, 2011). These alliance partners had already grown an adverse relationship with Mr. Mbeki. Mr. Zuma became their hope. According to Shapiro and Tebeau (2011) Mr. Zuma was a populist and he had a support base somehow independent from the ruling party based on the workers' trade unions. It was this defiant force supported by the youth leaders who ensured Zuma's ascendance to high office.

### 8.2. Zuma's Irony of Decentralized Centralized Authority

According to Masilela and Mthiyane (2014), the first years of the Zuma government were characterized as Ministerial Executive. As a result Masilela and Mthiyane conclude "the transition from Mbeki Presidency to the Zuma Presidency was marked by a shift from a monocratic to a Ministerial government". Simply put, the Members of the Executive council under Mr. Zuma enjoyed some level of distinct authority in their departments whilst they remained accountable to the State President. At his entrance, President was seen as an open, transparent, and consulting leader with a good rapport with the leaders within the ruling alliance led by the ANC.

Zuma's leadership initially represented a shift from the poor relations with ANC alliance partners. "Zuma's policy of governing by consensus had effectively meant perpetual compromise, and in such a process there can be little bold leadership" Gordin (2010). This would prove to be one of his handicaps in the later years of Zuma in office. The alliance partners could not accept his decisions to remove Nhlanhla Nene and Pravin Gordhan as Ministers of the Treasury without a consensus of the alliance partners.

### 8.3. Zuma's Traits

Zuma's strength was primarily to present himself as a leader who knows and sympathises with the people. Mr. Zuma was a leader with empathy. For instance, Eloff (2021) notes that on the matter of HIV/AIDS the Zuma Presidency immediately drifted away from the antagonist approach of Mr. Mbeki and immediately acknowledged the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a challenge to the country in 2009.

Zuma is characterized by Calland and Sithole (2022) as the master of intelligence gathering and highly securitized. Yet, his instructions were mainly unwritten but very decisive. His Minister would know that the President's words are final yet he was projected as the democratic leader. When it comes to fending off those who do not agree with you Zuma is found to be indifferent to Mbeki. Like Mbeki, Zuma also surrounded himself with a group of lackeys and praise singers. A voice descent would be silently dealt with compared to Mbeki who would boldly eliminate opponents. Even Dr. Blade Nzimande, once a Zuma defender fell off the radar screen.

Mr. Zuma possesses great charisma. He is able to steer the emotions of his audience through his speeches. He is aware of his craft and is not afraid to use it to his advantage. When under pressure Zuma fends off opponents for playing the Man and not the ball. When he is cornered he is not afraid to seek sympathy. Unlike Mandela, Mbeki and Motlanthe Zuma are not afraid to use their art to rally sympathisers from the rank and file. "Leadership is an art".

### 8.4. The Struggle Songs and the Sympathy Charms

Like a real Commander of the Armed forces, Mr. Zuma has always marshalled the rank and file to his defence. "Wenzi uZuma? Wenzen' uZuma Khawuphendule? Wen' ulawula ipropaganda. Khawstjel' ukuth' uZuma wenzeni? (What has Zuma done? You are in charge of the propaganda. Tell us what Zuma has done)". His "*ngimancebanceba zintsizwa engakhula nazo*" song (I bear scars from my peers) mobilized solidarity for him. Those who loved him just loved the Man, they cared little what was said of him. Many were afraid to say he was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most popular President of the ANC.

Mr. Zuma has survived many trials of character. The rape case, the Schabir Shaik relations debacles, the Nkandla saga and of late the shenanigans of the Saxon world. There were many votes of no confidence against Mr. Zuma in parliament and they all failed. The ANC majority would not take instructions from the Commanders of their opponents (except a few in the secret ballot). Mr. Zuma uses his struggle credentials and of late the posture of radical economic transformation to advance his defence. He is victimized because he advances policies that would destabilise the white monopoly capital. Zuma's posture was Just like Mbeki's defence stance on his HIV denialism. Mbeki argued that he was vilified by the pharmaceutical companies because he was a threat to their HIV/AIDS profiteering.

### 8.5. The Zuma's must Fall Season, Nkandla Fire Pool and the Gupta's

The antagonism against President Zuma mounted after the 2014 elections making his 2<sup>nd</sup> term tumultuous. The tone of his once allies COSATU and the SACP quietly changed. The country was clearly mobilized against Mr. Zuma. He was gradually isolated from his party and allies. The Nkandla scandal put the ANC on the defensive it had to blindly defend Mr. Zuma and Nkandla (Ndletyana and Maserumule, 2015).

#### 8.5.1. Secured in Comfort

The Security upgrade at Mr. Zuma's residence became a thorn in Zuma's flesh. Also emerging from the findings of the Public Protector's report entitled "Secure in Comfort" No. 25 of 2013/14, the report investigated allegations of whether President Zuma benefited unduly from the security upgrades at his Nkandla residence.

Throughout this process, Mr. Zuma pleaded ignorance of the developments around the Nkandla security upgrades.

*“The Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, had released a damning report revealing that the Department of Public Works had spent an amount close to R250-million on what were termed security upgrades at Zuma’s private residence in his home village of Nkandla, in KwaZulu Natal.”*

**(Ndletyana and Maserumule, 2015)**

Adv. Madonsela ruled that Mr. Zuma to a larger extent did accrue undue benefits and he was ordered to pay back part of the expenditure deemed in excess of what was due for upgrade including the popular “fire pool”. The Nkandla debacle would be used to dethrone Mr. Zuma from his position by his opponents.

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a political party in parliament launched the infamous “pay back the money” chant in parliament disrupting Zuma’s addresses. This culminated in the increase of the Security detail in parliament. Mr. Zuma remained unshaken, his assertion was that those attacking him were not primarily targeting him but the ANC as the party. This antagonism culminated in the Zuma must fall marches in December 2015 after the dismissal of Minister Nene, the mass action continued until 2017.

### 8.5.2. State of Capture

Apart from the Nkandla security upgrades, there were many other developments that blurred the Zuma years including the allegations of the state and the Gupta family. State capture is viewed by Hartley (2018) as “akin to a silent coup” in South Africa. Although state capture was continuously denied by Mr. Zuma and those close to him. The Public protector’s report entitled “The State of Capture” on October 14, 2016 covered findings and recommendations in relation to alleged improper and unethical conduct by the President and other state functionaries relating to their relationship with the Gupta family. This covered the appointment of ministers and other appointments by the government including the CEO of State-owned enterprises like Transnet, SABC, SAA, PRASA, DENEL, and Eskom. At its conclusion, the Public Protector’s report recommended amongst others that a Judicial Commission to investigate the allegations of State Capture be put in place. The Public Protector further recommended that a Judge recommended by the Chief Justice be appointed by the President. Mr. Zuma underestimated the implications of the recommendations and assumed that they are not binding until proven otherwise by the Constitutional Court. Whilst Mr. Zuma questioned the Jurisdiction of the public protector who had instructed him on how to establish a judicial commission of inquiry, he missed an opportunity to take the report on review. However, Mr. Zuma insisted that the Public Protector had literally usurped his powers. Of course, it was unprecedented in the RSA’s jurisprudence that a Judge could tell the President whom to appoint to preside over a Judicial Commission of inquiry. This would prove to become a serious error of judgment on his side as the courts would compel him to implement the recommendations.

### 8.5.3. The Eight Days in September Arrive Earlier

In the aftermath of the ANC December 2017 Conference, calls for Zuma’s removal mounted. The Mbeki’s eight days in September drama as told by Chikane (2012) had come earlier for Mr. Zuma, February 13, 2018 was Zuma’s D-day. It was now “the twelve days in February” (Calland and Sithole, 2022). A decision has been made, and Zuma was recalled by his party. “As I leave, I will continue to serve the people of South Africa as well as the ANC, the organization I have served all my life. I will dedicate all my energy to work towards the attainment of the policies of our organization, in particular the Radical Economic Transformation agenda.” This was Mr. Zuma’s parting shot.

It is common knowledge that Zuma had been given an ultimatum by his party (the ANC). “Resign or be removed by a vote of no confidence by your party.” Like Mbeki, Zuma saved his party of the embarrassment of facing it off through impeachment or a vote of no confidence and gracefully bowed out from the Presidency. The leadership dilemma continued.

## 9. Thuma Mina, the New Dawn, and the Renewal: President Cyril Ramaphosa

*“As I conclude, allow me to recall the words of the great Bra Hugh Masekela. In His song ‘Thuma Mina’ he anticipated a day of renewal, of new beginnings.”*

*He sang:*

*I wanna be there when the people start to turn it around when they triumph over poverty*

*I wanna be there when the people win the battle against AIDS*

*I wanna lend a hand*

*I wanna be there for the alcoholic*

*I wanna be there for the drug addict*

*I wanna be there for the victims of violence and abuse*

*I wanna lend a hand,*

*Send me"*

South Africa was in a crisis the allegations of State Capture, economic downgrades, and the collapse of State Owned Enterprises like the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), ESKOM, DENEL, Passenger Rail Agency (PRASA), Transnet, the South African Post Office (SAPO) and the South African Airways (SAA). The collapse of the SOEs was also a major concern during the Zuma years. South Africa needed someone they can send and trust to intervene against the aforementioned problems.

Mr. Zuma has always argued that state Capture does not exist in South Africa. The "Thuma Mina" mantra marked Ramaphosa's grand entrance full of promise and presenting himself as an agent for change. He was destined to turn things around for the country. South Africa was going to tell a good story.

Things had to turn around. A new dawn was on the horizon. Like Motlanthe, Ramaphosa began his 1st address by extending a vote of thanks "I also wish to extend a word of gratitude to former President Jacob Zuma for the manner in which he approached this difficult and sensitive process. I wish to thank him for his service to the nation during his two terms as President of the Republic during which the country has made progress in several areas of development". Just like Motlanthe Mr. Ramaphosa was part of the ANC National Executive Committee that felt that it was in the best interest of the ANC to recall Mr. Zuma. Indeed, the Mbeki removal 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition was at play.

It was Mr. Paul Mashatile whom the ANC had sent with Mr. Mantashe and other leaders to brief the ANC caucus in parliament to whom Calland and Sithole (2022) quote "Our people want to see change. They want to see the new leadership taking over the management, not only of the ANC but of the affairs of the state. We don't have time to be bickering about who should be President. We have elected President Ramaphosa, he should be President". It is a fact that Mr. Zuma was elected as President of the country in 2014 after the democratic elections. He was the Presidential candidate for the party and was serving his 2<sup>nd</sup> term. Clearly, a blurred line exists between the state and the party in South Africa.

As a result, when Mr. Mbeki was removed from office calls were mounted for separate Presidential elections from those of the National Assembly. This was to protect the sitting Presidents from the experiences of the eight days in September 2008. The dilemma continued. I do recall the call for the separation of the state and party made when Mr. Zuma was removed. The proponents of a separate Presidential election were loudly silent.

### ***9.1. Ramaphosa and the Renewal***

The renewal concept is not new in the recent times of the ANC. According to Gumede (2009), it was President Mbeki who as early as 2004 presented the vision of organizational reforms and modernization of the party. However, Mbeki's renewal focussed on systems and adapting the ANC from a liberation movement in the conflict with the Apartheid state to an ANC as a liberation movement in government. Governance was thus required to form part of the ANC rhetoric like never before. The Ramaphosa era's organizational renewal is more focused on the conduct of the members of the ANC and what the people see in them. It is about restoring the moral compass of the party and reasserting it to societal leadership. It is about restoring the values of respect, humility, and putting the people first.

For the 1<sup>st</sup> time, the ANC and the country are led by a wealthy person. As Mr. Mantashe the Present National Chairperson of the ANC has said at the commemoration of the release of Mandela in Cape Town and

at the OR Tambo celebration in Gauteng Mr. Mantashe is on record for having said “We have a President who has money who is wealthy, who will not be tempted to steal”. It is quite ironic from the former National Chairperson of the Communist Party in RSA and a well-decorated trade unionist insinuate that theft is associated with the circumstance of not having money.

There is no lie in Mantashe acknowledging that the ANC President is rich because he is and his wealth is well known. His departure from the government to business was announced by Mr. Mandela in 1996. Mr. Ramaphosa is a former trade union leader, he was elected as Secretary General of the ANC at 39 and has served in the national executive committee of the ANC since 1991. Whilst his detractors try to tarnish his political credentials arguing that he lacks a struggle history and he is the lackey of the white monopoly capital. Ramaphosa’s credentials are well-decorated. It was Mr. Ramaphosa who held the microphone for Mr. Mandela when he addressed the public for the first time on February 11, 1990 in Cape Town. That hand became Madiba Secretary General in 1991.

It was Ramaphosa who handed over the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996. He became the Deputy President of the ANC in 2012 and subsequently Deputy President of the Republic in 2014. Of course, it was that hand of Mr. Ramaphosa that swore allegiance to the South African Constitution as a Deputy President in 2014 and as President of the Republic in the year 2018. Ramaphosa’s ascendance to the ANC Presidency was never easy. The former exiles or at least some of them were not happy about his challenge to Mr. Alfred Nzo and Mr. Jacob Zuma for the position of the Secretary General of the ANC in 1991.

A narrative was created that Ramaphosa was parachuted to the NEC of the ANC and to the position of Secretary-General. As a result, efforts were mounted to hinder his possible takeover from Mr. Mandela. On the agenda against his Presidential race, Ramaphosa said “I have been prevented at all costs from ascending to the position of President of the ANC. Some have even said it will happen over their dead bodies. I have not committed crimes, I have not stolen any money, and I have not looted state resources. But I am being targeted and smeared.” (Hartley, 2018)

## ***9.2. Ramaphosa’s Traits: Resilience, Over-Consultations, Vacillations, Vaccines, the Lockdown, and Family Meetings***

Mr. Ramaphosa is rich but he doesn’t talk about it. He does not display opulence. Unlike Motlanthe, Ramaphosa does completely not hide his ambition but calculates and chooses his battles very well. Whilst he had positioned himself very well as Madiba’s Secretary General and founder of the Constitution of the Republic as the leader of the Constituent Assembly. Mr. Ramaphosa bowed out of the leadership race to avoid a contest between him and Mr. Mbeki.

At the heightened tension and emergent contest between Mbeki and Zuma in 2007, some ANC members called for a third way wherein Mr. Ramaphosa would contest the ANC Presidency as an alternative against Mbeki who had lost ground in the party, and Zuma who was under siege from the rape allegations and the Schabir Shaik relationship. However, Mr. Ramaphosa refused to enter the ANC Presidential race if Zuma and Mbeki were contesting. Yet, in 2012 when Mr. Motlanthe broke off the rank and contested Mr. Zuma at the Mangaung conference Ramaphosa contested and won the position of Deputy President of the ANC.

When he finally chose to enter the leadership fray of the ANC Mr. Ramaphosa knew it was the right time to fight. According to Hartley (2018) Ramaphosa used the firing of Pravin Gordan and Mcebisi Jonas from the Cabinet to announce a signal that the gloves were now off between him and Mr. Zuma. “I raised my concern and objection on the removal of the Minister of Finance, largely because he was removed based on an intelligence report that I believe had unsubstantial allegations” Hartley (2018).

From that point onwards Hartley concludes that it became a fight to the death in a political sense between former President Zuma and President Ramaphosa. To this end, Ramaphosa has emerged victoriously on two counts both at NASREC 1 and NASREC 2. In the build-up to the 2022 NASREC Conference Zuma did not mince his words. Whilst speaking at an ANC gathering at Msinga Mlaba Sports Centre at eThekweni Municipality on December 4, 2022 broadcast live on the national SABC’s television channel. On that day, Mr. Zuma called Mr. Ramaphosa a thief who stashed money under the mattress against the backdrop of the people’s hunger and starvation. Without directly refereeing to the new daw promise Zuma further questioned

the failure to bring change as people were still residing in squatter camps, hungry and unemployed. There was no formal response from Mr. Ramaphosa or the Presidency. Mr. Zuma has on more than one occasion broken the tradition of the ANC in which the predecessor does not openly attack his successor.

In the year 2020, Zuma launched an attack on Mr. Ramaphosa in a private letter addressed to the current President that was however made public. Zuma wrote, "However Mr. President your letter (referring to the open letter to the nation by Ramaphosa published on August 23, 2020) is fundamentally flawed in several respects and plays right into the hands of those who seek to destroy the ANC and builds from its ashes a counter-revolutionary party under the guise of fighting corruption."

Zuma further stated that Ramaphosa betrayed the memory of the founders of the ANC by openly accusing the ANC of the wrong acts committed by individuals. He put it to Ramaphosa that he is loved by those in white circles and said it was unforgivable that Ramaphosa's letter accused members of the ANC to be guilty due to the ill acts of a few. To this day, I do not recall whether there was any direct or indirect public response from Mr. Ramaphosa to this blatant attack by Mr. Zuma. Neither did the ANC National Executive Committee of the ANC give a response or report on having discussed the Zuma letter. After all, it was a private letter. No one has ever shown interest in knowing how it became public. Like Mr. Motlanthe, Mr. Ramaphosa has been able to display elements of emotional intelligence and self restraint when tested. He until this far allowed Ms. Lindiwe Sisulu to serve in his cabinet despite the known and publicly declared opposition to his leadership by Ms. Sisulu. When he constituted the cabinet in 2018 he also included his contender Mrs. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma. Mrs. Dlamini-Zuma again attempted to contest against Mr. Ramaphosa at the 2022 ANC National Conference but did not make it to the ballot.

### **9.3. Ramaphosa Leadership**

Mr. Ramaphosa's Presidential term has been confronted with critical moments which has put his decision-making to a critical test namely (i) The Covid-19 outbreak; (ii) the economic meltdown in the aftermath of the Covid-19 outbreak; (iii) the jail sentence of Mr. Jacob Zuma and the July 2021 unrest; (iv) the energy crisis in South Africa; and (v) the Russia Ukraine war and its economic impact on South Africa. There might be more decisive moments that Ramaphosa's leadership faced but those listed above stand on a higher pedestal. The aforementioned problem is the Achilles heel of the present ANC-led government. Pollitt (2022) observes that South Africa's deepening political crisis is displayed through the breakdown of much of the country's infrastructure.

Pollitt (2022) further wrote that (i) there are regular disruptions of power and the water supply; (ii) the nation's rail, road and health, and education infrastructure is crumbling; and (iii) transport, education, police, and health care services at a breaking point. Pollitt (2022) views the aforementioned challenges as indicators country's decay. Unlike Mr. Zuma, Mr. Ramaphosa has adopted a stance where his leadership acknowledges that things might have not gone consistently in the right way.

Ramaphosa is not too defensive and to a larger extent tries to take responsibility. "We have made missteps, and we have paid for them in many, many ways" (African National Congress, 2022). Yet, he is quick to absolve himself and his collective as taking responsibility to resolve the challenges "Even having found ourselves on the brink, we have been able to pull ourselves back. And we have been able to back from where many thought we would stumble and fall forever because we know there is a greater task yet to be fulfilled, and that task is building a better South Africa that leaves no one behind" (African National Congress, 2022).

The "zizojika izinto (things will turn around)" mantra was Mr. Ramaphosa's trump card when he contested for the ANC Presidency in 2017. The question today is "did things turn around for the better or worse?" At the backdrop of his promise for "a new dawn" which was Mr. Ramaphosa's promise when he assumed office from Mr. Zuma Pollitt (2022), Ramaphosa's Presidency has endured very heavy tidal waves from the Covid-19 breakdown, the July 2022 unrest, the KZN floods, and the economic meltdown. Was it a new dawn or dusk? Ramaphosa's detractors are critical of his over-consultation and delay in taking critical decisions. They also feel that he is also biased toward the view of the monopoly capital. The worst weakness raised by those in his opposition is that things have got worse under his nose and he did nothing but act like his hands were tied.

#### **9.4. Surviving Phala-Phala and Winning the 2<sup>nd</sup> Term as ANC President**

In the year 2022, Ramaphosa's leadership suffered an indelible dent when the news of the Phala-Phala saga was broken out. Ironically it was a well-known Zuma ally and former head of State Security and Correctional services Mr. Arthur Fraser who opened a criminal case against Mr. Ramaphosa on the matter. According to Pollitt (2022), the Phala-Phala saga raised questions about possible tax evasion and money laundering.

A similar observation would also be made by the Section 89 Panel established by Parliament to conduct a preliminary inquiry into the motion that alleged that the President might have violated the Constitution or committed serious misconduct in relation to the Phala-Phala scandal. As a result, the Panel found that Mr. Ramaphosa might have a case to answer on (i) violation of Section 96(2)(a) read with Section 83(b) of the Constitution; (ii) violation of Section 34(1) of PRECCA read with the SAPS Amendment Act (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2022). If adopted by Parliament, an impeachment inquiry would have been put in place against Mr. Ramaphosa. However, the ruling ANC majority supported by the Al Jama-ah party did not support the adoption of the report pending finding of other investigations by the Public Protector, the Hawks, SARS, and the South African reserve bank.

When Mr. Zuma was pressured by the Economic Freedom Fighters who insisted that Mr. Zuma should indicate when he was going to pay back the money in 2014 in line with the Secure in Comfort Report 25 of 2013/14 of the Public Protector. Mr. Zuma also argued that the call was premature as there were still other investigations that were in progress including the (i) December 2013 Presidential Proclamation R59 to investigate certain aspects of the Nkandla Security Upgrades; (ii) Investigation by the South African Police Service and the Police Minister on the Security upgrades at the Nkandla Private Residence. Mr. Zuma pleaded for parliament to wait for other due processes to be concluded. Mr. Zuma would also argue that there was no determination made by whoever on how much he should pay for the item deemed non-security by the public protector.

Just like Mr. Zuma, Mr. Ramaphosa's working relationship with the public protector is acrimonious. The latter has culminated in the suspension of the public protector whilst Mr. Zuma always downplayed the role of the public protector as a mere ombudsman without binding powers. The former Public Protector Prof. Thuli Madonsela raised a complaint about the lack of cooperation and compliance from the President. The current serving and suspended public Protector Ms. Mkhwebane who was suspended by Mr. Ramaphosa saw his act as an act of vengeance. The question remains; how will Ramaphosa pull through the Phala-Phala saga?

## **10. Conclusion**

Every nation is given a few leaders who become global points of reference. These individuals set the leadership bar far above the rest. It is only after a long time that such a leader emerges. Ghana had a Kwame Nkrumah, Tanzania had a Julius "Mwalimu" Nyerere, Cuba had a Fidel Castro, China had a Mao Tse Tung, and the United States of America (USA) had Abraham Lincoln, Singapore had Lee Kuan Yew and South Africa had Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. These leaders became global icons and points of reference. One of the significant observations from the South African leadership changes since September 2008 to date is according to Shapiro and Tebeau (2011) is the consistent adherence to the Constitution.

Two sitting Presidents were removed peacefully using Constitutional measures. No blood was shed nor were incumbents jailed for their political views. The country has continued to hold free and fair elections. However, these changes are still characterized as "scrupulously procedural" meaning though these removals were constitutional they were still not well decorated in relation to procedures.

South Africa has been placed on a difficult leadership path since 1997. There are two lowest common denominators to the South African leadership dilemma namely former Presidents Mbeki and Zuma. Their silently extinguishing approach to opponents is indifferent. Of course, Mbeki is a scholar and a poet but Mr. Zuma to is the master of his craft, i.e., charisma and song. He knows where his power and influence lie. They are the best at hiding visible acrimony against each other.

Zuma and Mbeki do not mind hugging their foes and each other, whilst holding daggers with one hand. Mr. Motlanthe distinguishes himself from Mr. Mbeki and Zuma as a pacifist and an emotionally intelligent who is able to control his ambitions. Yet he is too unpredictable. Very few are able to foretell his next move. Like



Mandela, Mr. Motlanthe is a very humbled leader but he is not charismatic like Mandela and Zuma. Mr. Ramaphosa is also a very emotionally intelligent leader. He takes sufficient time before pronouncing his decision. Just like Motlanthe Ramaphosa is able to manage his ambitions.

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela is one leader whose tenure is not easily questionable. He will however be remembered for launching the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and leading South Africa to the adoption of the new Constitution in 1996. It was under Madiba that Ms. Winnie Madikizela Mandela was removed from Cabinet as a Deputy Minister for reason not much known. Anyway, it was a Presidential prerogative. He was loved by all including the opposition. As a result Mr. Tony Leon characterises him as South Africa's once-in-a-lifetime offer (Leon, 2014). Indeed, akekho ofana naye (There is none like him).

A new trend is emerging in the leadership race for the Presidency since 2012. This is important to note as it affected the leadership race and the Presidential choice. In 2007 when Mr. Zuma was elected as President of the ANC. It was argued that it is a tradition of the ANC that Deputy Presidents are elected to succeed their Presidents when they are not continuing to serve. At least that narrative can be affirmed from the O.R Tambo ANC Presidency to the Mandela takeover to date. But the new trend now is that Deputy Presidents elected in the first term of the ANC President do not make the 2<sup>nd</sup> term and a new Deputy is elected. It happened to both Mr. Motlanthe and recently with Mr. Mabuza. This speaks volumes about the leadership succession in the ruling party.

Whilst Mr. Motlanthe was allowed to see his term as Deputy President finished after the Mangaung Conference, there are presently talks of the current Deputy President Mr. Mabuza making way for the newly elected ANC Deputy President to be appointed as Deputy President of the Republic. Mr. Mabuza was explicit in a video clip broadcast on social media about his imminent departure. "I have spoken to the President about my resignation and he will make the announcement at the right time. I am making way for the newly elected Deputy President of the ANC Mr. Mashatile to become a Deputy President. I made a commitment to respect the President until I finish my term and I hope those elected will respect him too." Is he being pushed or he has chosen to jump? It is only a matter of fewer than twenty months before South Africa goes to national and provincial elections in the year 2024. Why is the party unable to wait for Mabuza's dignified exit in 2024?

Furthermore, Mr. Ramaphosa is in his second term now as the President of the ANC. If the ANC wins elections in 2024, he will be elected President of the country for the 2<sup>nd</sup> term. Worth noting is that the ANC will go to its National Conference in 2027 and possibly choose a new President who might be Mr. Paul Mashatile if the trend is maintained. Yet many have already started asking the difficult question. "Will Mr. Ramaphosa finish his second term?" There are those who have already declared on social networks that he won't deliver the State of the Nation Address on February 9, 2023. They suggest that South Africa should brace itself for a Mashatile Presidency.

*And, the leadership dilemma in the South African Presidency is sustained.*

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