

(soms fundamentalistiese) Ou Testamentiese aanslag nie. Hy probeer ook nie om kritiese vrae te beantwoord nie, maar laat Kruger in sy eie konteks self aan die woord. Wat uit die verf kom, is 'n energieke, bekwame, kindergelowige Christenstaatsman. Kruger is 'n uitstaande Afrikaner én 'n Dopper van sy tyd en 'n soeker na die wil van God in alles, ook staatsake.

Uit hierdie hoek is Bergh se werk 'n aanwinst vir historici.

*The contested idea of Zimbabwe and the violent power politics:
Lessons for South Africa*

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This review of Michael Bratton's book comes at a time when Zimbabwe is again poised for another election, a moment which heightens political stakes, power dynamics, and the haunting possibility of violence as a mediator of politics and power. The review is also taking place at a time when Zimbabwe's neighbour (South Africa) is caught-up in unprecedented political ructions within the ruling African National Congress (ANC) with ripple effects on the national economy and national politics. While on the surface, President Jacob Zuma's problematic leadership is given as the main cause of the crisis which has seen the national currency (the Rand) nose-diving and South Africa degraded by the credit-rating agencies *Standard & Poor* and *Moody* to junk status; there are deeper issues linked to the very contested idea of South Africa and the failure of the ANC to quickly and successfully transition from a movement to a cohesive political party. The operation of the ANC as a 'broad church' has come to haunt it at a time when it is expected to take radical decisions on the economy and corruption.

Unlike the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), which successfully captured the state since coming to power in 1980, the ANC's attempts to "capture the state" has provoked serious opposition including the calls for President Zuma to resign as state president.

President Zuma's links with the Gupta family of businessmen and women from India has been used as an empirical case of "state capture" as though the South Africa state was ever free from capture by European capitalists since the colonial and apartheid times. For far too long, Zimbabwe's experience has been used by South Africa in a rather cynical manner as a political scarecrow of the world and this time around, when distant tentacles of global governance through the credit-rating agencies have become imbricated in domestic politics, heightening the internal political heat within the ANC, giving confidence to the opposition to ratchet its calls for President Zuma to fall, the political trajectory of Zimbabwe offers some useful lessons.

Bratton's book poses penetrating questions that are of relevance to both Zimbabwe and South Africa today: Why did a predatory clique of black rulers cause such destruction? Why have rival political elites in Zimbabwe never been able to reach a valid political settlement, up to and including the recent charade of "power-sharing"? What, if anything, can be learned about current political outcomes in Zimbabwe from the country's own history, and from the histories of other countries that have also experimented with governments of national unity? How can developing countries avoid civil strife? What are the institutional requirements for strong and legitimate states? Do power-sharing pacts provide answers to recurrent problems of legitimacy? Do these kinds of political settlements foster or undermine the consolidation of democracy? For South Africa, the Convention for Democratic South Africa (CODESA) was a site of compromises and pact-making that produced what became known as the "new South Africa" in 1994. The tripartite alliance was another element of "power-sharing" pact in South Africa. The question is: Did the pact of 1994 and the tripartite alliance deliver a legitimate government and provide an environment conducive for consolidation of democracy? It would seem that indeed a legitimate government was delivered in South Africa but the unresolved questions of social and economic justice have come to haunt South Africa 23 years since 1994. The outbreak of the Rhodes Must Fall Movements highlighted the return of the contested nature of the idea of South Africa, with the descendants of those who have been excluded from apartheid economic looting and empowerment agitating for a South African ideal that put black lives at the centre.¹

1 SJ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Rhodes must fall: South African universities as sites of struggle" (Public Lecture delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Hong Kong Theatre, Clement House, London, 9 March 2016).

Therefore, for Zimbabwe as it is for South Africa, the current power politics cannot be understood outside the contested idea of Zimbabwe. A Mugabe-centric explanation of the Zimbabwe crisis just like a Zuma-centric discourse of the South African crisis is simplistic and inadequate. There is need to historicise and theorise the complex dynamics of power politics in “postcolonial” Zimbabwe and “post-apartheid” South Africa. Bratton’s book offers such a window for such a critical reflection. At the centre of the idea of Zimbabwe are key issues that were eloquently posited by Amanda Hammar and Brian Raftopoulos in terms of “the politics of land and resource distribution; reconstruction of nation and citizenship; and the remaking of state and modes of rule”. In South Africa, the Zuma regime is speaking of radical economic transformation and turning the treasury into an institution that supports the new politics of changing the economy in such a way that it benefits the poor. On the contested idea of Zimbabwe, Hammar and Raftopoulos elaborated on its entangled constitutive elements in this manner:²

... a historicised and racialized assertion of land restitution and justice, versus an ahistorical, technocratic insistence on liberal notions of private property, ‘development’ and ‘good governance’; a new form of ‘indigenization’, authoritarian nationalism (based around claims to loyalty and national sovereignty), versus a non-ethnicized, ‘civic’ nationalism (grounded in liberal democratic notions of rights and the rule of law); a radical, Pan-Africanist anti-colonial, anti-imperialist critique of ‘the West’, versus a ‘universalist’ embrace of certain aspects of neo-liberalism and globalization; and a monopoly claim over the commitment to radical redistribution, versus a monopoly claim over the defence of human rights.

At this moment the ruling ZANU-PF just like the ANC is rocked by factionalism as both former liberation war movements face elections in 2018 and 2019 respectively. In Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe has been identified as the symbol of the crisis – the undertaker of the Zimbabwe nation as well as the presidential candidate for 2018 elections. He would be 94 years old.³ The call for Mugabe to go dates back to 2000 if not before. Today, South Africa is inundated by calls for President Zuma to go taking the form of marches to the seat of government – the Union Buildings in Pretoria. But in both cases of Zimbabwe and South Africa, as Sarah Rich Dorman⁴ has

2 A Hammar, B Raftopoulos and A Jensen (Eds.), *Zimbabwe’s unfinished business: Rethinking land, state and nation in the context of crisis* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2003), pp. 1-47. pp. 1-47.

3 SJ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (ed.), *Mugabeism? History, politics, and power in Zimbabwe* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

4 SR Dorman, *Understanding Zimbabwe: From liberation to authoritarianism* (London, Hurst & Company, 2016).

warned there are deeper issues beyond Mugabe in Zimbabwe as they are in South Africa beyond Zuma presidency. Bratton is acutely aware of the limits of an analysis focused on what he termed “African Big Men” without absolving them from responsibility (p. 2):

An obvious, but all too easy, explanation for misrule in Zimbabwe lays blame at the feet of the country’s only leader during more than 30 years of independence: President Robert Gabriel Mugabe. His biographers have lent merit to this case... A veteran of the colonial liberation war, Mugabe is a quintessential purveyor of power politics... His path to the apex of state power - by bullet as well as ballot - shapes the way he has subsequently governed. As Zimbabwe’s top official, Mugabe has concentrated authority in the presidency and thus gained sweeping discretion over political decisions. Displaying his trade-mark political symbol of a clenched fist, he is usually seen in public surrounded by a phalanx of uniformed security forces. When challenged, he has seldom hesitated to apply his self-proclaimed ‘degrees in violence’ against enemies – real and imagined.

Yes, we have to liberate analysis from “undue attention to the biographical details and personal quirks of the towering gladiators who play starring roles in the political arena” (p. 7). This is important because besides the role of “Big Men” there is the “postcolonial” and “post-apartheid” struggle for control of political institutions, the media and civil society, for instance, in both Zimbabwe and South Africa and the complex resistance to this politics of capture. There is a see-saw between politics of control and co-option. Bratton articulated his conceptual/theoretical departure in this way (p. 7):

My goal is to de-emphasize individual leaders and instead emphasize the persistent elite coalitions and inherited political institutions through which they operate. My conception of power politics does not ignore political agency; rather, it situates groups of actors collectively within political structure.

The emphasis by Bratton on elite coalitions speaks to the ongoing attempts by Zimbabwean opposition forces to come together into a grand coalition with one presidential candidate to face Mugabe in 2018 elections. The fulcrum for the crystallization of opposition is the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) led by the veteran trade unionist Morgan Tsvangirai. In South Africa, the concept of elite coalitions speaks to the post-local government elections developments where the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and the Democratic Alliance (DA) agreed to co-govern some of the metros like Tshwane and Johannesburg. What Bratton ignores in his analysis, however, is the long-arm of the so-called “global governance” that is invisible but active to discipline deviant politicians and deviant regimes through such

means as down-grading by credit-rating agents and the imposition of sanctions. Dorman⁵ emphasised that in our analysis we have to go beyond pre-occupation with personalised politics so as to delve deeper into a complex understanding of “the state, nation and political identities which it forged, and the nature of its control over those political institutions”. Under President Zuma, it seems the ANC is struggling to take control of state institutions, and unlike in Zimbabwe, is facing stronger opposition and civil society activism that is quick to raise the flag of “state capture”. The Chapter 9 institutions particularly the Public Protector’s office under Thuli Madonsela specifically became an active and agile institution that opposed state capture, in the perspective of those opposed to the ANC and Zuma. With the departure of Madonsela and the recent problematic reshuffle of cabinet by President Zuma; there is a sceptical feeling that the move is part of implementation of state capture. President Zuma and his supporters, argue that the cabinet reshuffle is meant to facilitate the implementation of radical economic transformation of South Africa.

Bratton (p. 6) identified three essential power resources which are available for deployment in building power politics: coercion, incentives and persuasion. In Zimbabwe, coercion and violence has been key to the survival of ZANU-PF and Mugabe politically. But Mugabe and ZANU-PF have also used effectively the strategy of “punishing” for disloyalty and “paying” for loyalty. The Fast-Track Land Reform (FTLR) was a dark site of patronage, corruption, clientilism, and patrimonialism. Membership of ZANU-PF was a major determinant in gaining a piece of land. Civil servants particularly those in the judiciary, army, police, intelligence, and other government offices were another constituency that enjoyed preferential treatment in land redistribution. On top of the list of beneficiaries of the land reform were of course Mugabe himself, his wife, relatives, ministers, and ZANU-PF members of parliament.⁶

Having expressed his conceptual/theoretical thrust, Bratton then focused on the politics of power-sharing and offered a three-fold typology: “power capture” in which “a dominant elite unilaterally imposes its own rules” as is the case in Zimbabwe where the dominant elite “rule by law” while subverting “rule of law”; “power sharing” in which “contending elites” struggle to institutionalize competing sets of rules as was the case during the tenure of

5 SR Dorman, *Understanding Zimbabwe...*

6 SJ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (ed.), *Mugabeism? History, politics...*

the Inclusive Government (2009-2013) in Zimbabwe and is the case in South Africa today; and “power division” in which “elites agree on the rules for periodic circulating power among contending elites” (p. 10). What became known as the “Tsholotsho Declaration” of 2004 in Zimbabwe where elites from dominant ethnic groups negotiated how power was to circulate to the satisfaction of all ethnic groups was agreed.⁷

What Bratton has offered us is an institutional perspective that compares institutional arrangements in power-sharing politics as well as challenges such as electoral management, security sector reform and transitional justice in the specific case of Zimbabwe. This institutional analysis provokes one to delve into the dominant approaches that have been used to understand Zimbabwe. One can identify the following major scholarly trends: political economy approach; institutionalism approach; democratization approach; biographical approach; and the traditional nationalist anti-colonial approach, which is regaining ascendance because of the resurgence of decolonial approaches. Dorman⁸ isolated only three dominant approaches – political economy, institutionalism and democratization – which she argued reflected discipline of political science’s orientation. Dorman is critical of the value of these three approaches:

I suggest that they have proved unsatisfactory in explaining the changes and continuities in the relationship between state and society in Zimbabwe, because they were trying to answer particular questions and focused on discrete aspects of state power, rather than investigating interconnections between material, coercive and discursive aspects of power as developed by the regime. Nor do they examine patterns of governance which extend across rural and urban governance, state engagement with different societal groups, and the shaping and politicization of state institutions.

Political economy approach that is symbolized in the work of Ibbo Mandaza⁹ particularly his book *Zimbabwe: The political economy of transition, 1980-1986* (1986) focused on four key issues: class, policy making, ideology, and international geo-political environment. Institutionalists like Jonathan Moyo¹⁰ focused on studying institutions of the state, service delivery, governance, and power politics. Institutionalists were part of the first group of intellectuals to critique the state and reveal democratic and human rights

7 SJ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (ed.), *Mugabeism? History, politics...*

8 SR Dorman, *Understanding Zimbabwe...*

9 I Mandaza (ed.), *Zimbabwe: The political economy of transition, 1980-1986* (Dakar, CODESRIA Book Series, 1986).

10 J Moyo, “State politics and social domination”, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30(2), 1992, pp. 305-330.

deficits. What Dorman¹¹ termed the “democratization” approach, focused on such diverse issues as the role of civil society, constitutionalism, human rights violations, democratic deficits, elections, labour, race, and gender. The work of Brian Raftopoulos¹² represents this multi-issue research with its activist components. Bratton’s work straddles the institutionalism and democratization approaches. Dorman’s¹³ criticism of the institutionalist approach for presuming “a neutral administrative state, assessed on the basis of its material accomplishments” and for ignoring “the role of the party or fractions within the party in assuming and retaining power” is unfounded. Those scholars who have focused on institutions are equally critical of the state and the party. To Dorman’s credit, she was courageous to try and classify the diverse literature on Zimbabwe ideologically and disciplinary-wise.

Back to Bratton, while his book is empirically focused on explaining the failure of Zimbabwe’s power-sharing settlement of 2008-2013, he opened the canvas to reflect on the trajectory of Zimbabwe from a colony to a sovereign state, then to crisis and power-sharing government. The African experience is also brought into light as is the broader political theory. It is indeed an important book that evokes and provokes one to reflect on contemporary political developments in Zimbabwe and South Africa. One key lesson for South Africa drawn from the political trajectory of Zimbabwe is that of the reality of the exhaustion of liberatory discourse and liberatory memory giving rise to a new politics that pushes a former liberation movement to the defensive. Once it is on the defensive and on the ropes, the former liberation movement re-ignites the anti-colonial radical discourse and engages in ill-thought-out radical economic transformation that is no longer acceptable in a global neo-liberal environment. The attempt to implement radical economic transformation provokes not only the anger of local capitalists but also the distant global governors of the world market. Once this anger is aroused down-grades and sanctions kick in as the general population cry for the blood of the president. What is called “global governance” is a site of market fundamentalism that demands good behaviour from those like Mugabe and Zuma who are entrapped in this coloniality of markets.¹⁴ Bratton’s analysis ignores the aspect of entrap-

11 SR Dorman, *Understanding Zimbabwe...*

12 B Raftopoulos, “Beyond the House of Hunger: Democratic struggle in Zimbabwe, *Review of African Political Economy*, 54, 1996, pp. 59-74; “The Zimbabwean crisis and the challenges of the left”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32(2), 2006, pp. 203-219.

13 SR Dorman, *Understanding Zimbabwe...*, p. 8.

14 SJ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “The entrapment of the Global South in global economy” (Keynote Address delivered at the International Conference on Global Crises, Global Change (GCGC, Westminster Undergraduate Conference, Westminster College, USA, 30 March to 1 April 2016).

ment of postcolonial Africa in global coloniality where the “misbehaviour” of a leader to the dictates of the markets invites economic and political disaster to the local economy. If the leader does not “misbehave” to the market’s laws then it is impossible to launch any radical economic transformation and the leader is in trouble from those who aspire to the bourgeoisie after centuries of subjugation by colonialists and the workers and peasants too hungry to be patient with a leader who chooses loyalty to the markets rather than the voters. Worse still entrapment in coloniality inevitably ensnares the leader in corrupting tendencies of capitalism and those capitalists who survive by capturing treasuries and states in Africa.