

## Leadership Renewal and Succession in Zimbabwean Political Parties: A Critical Analysis of Leadership Succession and Renewal Processes in ZANU-PF and the MDC-T

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### Abstract

Political leadership in Africa vary from the “criminalization” of the state to political leadership as “dispensing patrimony”, the “recycling” of elites and the use of state power and resources to consolidate political and economic power. Political parties just like any other organizations always need leadership renewal and revamping, besides ideological and policy renewal. Zimbabwean politics present a shunned leadership renewal as reflected by the two champion political parties namely ZANU PF and MDC-T. Despite hot political power contestation between MDC and ZANUPF, the parties’ internal structures are hinged on the two Godfathers or Father figures that are Mugabe and Tsvangirai. They are the “labels” behind the two political parties. The suppressing of dissent voice on succession and renewal of leadership in the two parties has brew resistance from within and this has resulted in factional fights within the two political parties. The disgruntlement in the political parties has led to the stemming of the ‘bhoramusango concept’ from the electorate and party cadres whereby they are throwing or donating away their votes to other political parties. The ‘bhoramusango’ concept haunted ZANUPF in 2008 leading to its defeat by the opposition MDC-T. The paper takes the form of an analytic approach on leadership crisis in Zimbabwe. The narrative is framed on key concepts of leadership: namely leadership renewal and leadership succession, as agents operating within inherited structures negotiated political settlements, and form structures of leadership. Rulers gave priority to the consolidation of state power by installing party loyalists in the armed forces, civil service and local government. As part of this process, rulers have ensured consolidated power and authority.

The present paper analyses this succession challenge in what is widely regarded as one of the most emblematic cases in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. As for this paper, more emphasis will be on leadership renewal and succession as most scholars of comparative politics have been giving much attention to issues of regime change.

**Keywords:** Leadership renewal; Leadership succession; Political culture; Political legitimacy

### Introduction

For Hoffmann [1], succession in the highest political office marks a moment of crisis in any political system. For Calvert [2] as quoted in Hoffaman [1], suggest that, in democracies electoral mechanisms bear the brunt of resolving the problem of leadership change, even here manifold examples attest to the uncertainties involved. For Hoffmann [3], it is in strongly personalised regimes that leadership change proves a particular thorny challenge. ZANU PF has managed to maintain its hegemony status on Zimbabwean political landscape for the past 33 years, thus it is important to recognize that calling for a platform to explore renewed leadership in ZANUPF is not being discussed as core crisis inherent of the party structures. Political parties just like any other organization, institution or entity require key leadership renewal and viable effective succession structures.

According to Hoffmann [1], there are few leaders who willingly give up power in preference to other people even when they know that their continued presence in the organization may be detrimental to the health and success of the organization. Observations pointed out that it

is important to focus on the kind of questions that African leaders must face across political systems. There exists a number of conflicting theories of effective leadership, and learning about leadership, like leadership itself, should not be a passive process. There is need to approach it critically in the knowledge that there are no easy answers. Many African countries even those that purport to be democratic, leaders are not often subjected to any interrogation with respect to their record, capabilities and trustworthiness but the decision about who should be a leader ends up being taken by a cabal of individuals who see in the candidate an instrument to perpetuate and sustain their interests that many be in conflict with the interests of the nation. Most leaders end up being lonely in power because they invariably will be surrounded by self-serving cowards who cannot stand their own ground even if given an opportunity.

In the case of Zimbabwe, it has been realized that politicians and party supporters have wasted energy devoting more time to succession matters. In many of the African countries it is customary to discuss the issue while ignoring the structures of the parties the leadership comes from. Most if not all the African parties have deputy Presidents and yet people have come to accept that succession debate must be located outside the aspirations of these people. In Zimbabwe, ZANU PF has passed up several opportunities to fully address the issue of succession

of the Leader Robert Mugabe, it is quite unfortunate that instead of addressing the core crisis that of leadership renewal, the party has often resorted to sanctioning those who make the presidential ambitions public like when it disbanded the DCCs in 2012 which linked provincial structures with the district structures. DCCs polls were contested along factional lines (Mujuru-Munangagwa Camp) which have fronted the succession race in ZANUPF. As for the MDC-T; recently, there has been hot political power contestations between Tsvangirayi and the Renewal Team lead by Biti, Sipepa Nkomo and Mangoma. Observations points out that personal, personality politics and politics by leadership has affected the legitimacy and democratic litmus test of the opposition MDC-T and have gone the ZANUPF way that defines their political culture and institution. According to Jo-Ansie van Wyk [4] personality politics refers to the centralization of all political power in the executive ie the institutionalization of executive political leadership. Thus this paper is going to present a critical analysis of the management of succession and renewal processes and structures in Zimbabwe's two major political parties.

## Conceptual Framework

For Rush [5], political succession or and Leadership renewal is the transfer of sovereign power from a ruler or government to a successor. Such rotation is made inevitable by man's mortality, but it does not always wait on the death of leaders. Since changed circumstances cannot always be met by change in the leaders themselves, they may be required by the constitution or compelled by force to leave office during their own lifetime.

Hurt and Uhr [6] also defines political succession as, personnel changes in individual leadership positions within government (or political parties). The most dramatic succession of all is that between holders of the head of government position. The definition of succession can be applied to the analysis of leadership succession in elite Zimbabwe politics; it is indeed a definition which has universal application without any contextual inclination and implication. In the case of Zimbabwe both ZANUPF and MDC supporters and the rank and file in leadership position have only known Mugabe and Tsvangirai as the only leaders of their parties. Leadership succession and renewal has been a contentious issue in the two political parties.

## Theoretical Framework: The Succession Dilemma Theory

This paper will be premised on the Succession Dilemma Theory propounded by Burling in 1974. The theory is premised on the view that: When the successor is too clearly designated, weak leadership is often the result. When it is not designated clearly enough, the result may be a destructive succession struggle [7]. He further argues that, the underlining reason for this he sees in the second in command: A man in office with an unambiguous second position is usual. This is because any one holding an undisputed second position for a sustained period of time poses a potential threat to the man on top: If a person occupies a clear second place, every opponent of the top leader will tend to rally around him, and he will become a serious rival to the person on top. The issue of the undisputed second in command is apropos to the ZANUPF regime where Joyce Mujuru was now powerful and commanded large following and enjoyed sympathy from Mugabe's enemies. Mujuru's influences lead to factional fights with the Mnangagwa faction in an attempt to succeed Mugabe at both the government and party level. This has shown that, there are specific

problems in the management of succession at the elite levels of the political process. This has provided some uncertainty and instability in ZANUPF's leadership succession process. Mugabe himself has failed regulating elite behavior and ensuring certainty in succession and he is now haunted by the system that he created. The Party has not learnt from substantial past challenges to evolve into an organization which recognizes the need to prevent social upheaval. ZANUPF's leadership is premised on extra-institution and charismatic leadership which does not engage in planned succession and orderly processes in elite politics.

As for the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is different and there is no undisputed second in command but it was a protest where cadres were questioning the leadership qualities and acumen of Morgan Tsvangirai after successive electoral defeats on the hand of ZANUPF since the formation of the party in 1999. MDC also suffered from the same dilemma as ZANUPF. They do not have a clearly defined political succession process and this has led to factional fight between rival alliances. Rush [5] suggests that opposition parties lack an institutionalized process to govern the succession. He further argues that, without a clearly enunciated timeframe for the succession process and without clearly defined mechanisms which compel the incumbent to stand aside, a successor could instigate action to assume leadership, and the incumbent could become insecure expecting a leadership takeover. Such circumstances do not create effective and stable government. This non-institutionalized succession arrangement conforms too much of the succession experience of the MDC. The MDC has not yet attempted to address this problem by creating a mechanism which both provides a clearly outlined process for succession while impelling the incumbent to retire.

## Literature Review

In an account of what has been published about the issues leadership renewal in Zimbabwean politics, the guiding concept has been on leadership renewal that is imperative since leadership itself is not a passive process. Zimbabwean politics present a shunned leadership renewal and weak ineffective succession procedures and strategies, thus it has long been realized that those in power are not eager to give power to others whether through democratic means or any way legal.

There is need for leadership renewal in every organization, though there exists conflicting theories about leadership, but observations points out the key leadership renewal is important for effectiveness [5]. According to Chogugudza a political analyst, he suggests that the current state of leadership in Zimbabwe points to the fact that there is growing leadership vacuum which needs to be filled sooner than later. He further alluded that it is a fact that change of leadership is Zimbabwe would almost immediately inspire some measure of confidence in the economy. This is supported by Mohamed Salih who suggests that a major consequence that has stifled the renewal and succession issues in Africa is the absence of internal party democracy and the nondemocratic nature of African governments' party leaders is that the latter attempt to stay in power despite constitutional provisions that restrict their office to a specific number of terms (mostly two). He further posits that "there is also a strong correlation between government party leaders tampering with the constitution to secure more terms than what is constitutionally permitted and the flaring up of acute conflict. Among the cases of succession-driven conflicts in the prelude to democratization are those of Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togo and Zimbabwe. Observations have also revealed that key leadership

renewal will put maneuver the country into credible improvements in key areas such as economy and social services.

Chogugudza is also of the opinion that it is plain truth that the leadership is fast becoming a scarce commodity within the giant political parties in Zimbabwe especially in ZANU PF and unsuitable, greedy, incompetent people whose only qualification is religion loyalty to ZANU PF are being given huge responsibilities to oversee crucial department in Zimbabwe like local government. Most of these appointees lack the requisite skills let alone the vision and integrity to steer Zimbabwe forward a positive direction. Another analyst Alexander Rusero supports Chogugudza by positing that, "There is tragedy of Zimbabwean politics, creating demi Gods of politicians and promoting personality cults. For Rusero, MDC-T is now emulating ZANU PF strategy in handling leadership renewal issues, and also in emulating ZANU PF's personality cult politics.

Maxwell Saungwene, also points out that the recent development in MDC-T regarding Tsvangirayi's succession shows that the opposition party is not different from ZANU PF. Observers points out that Mangoma is being treated like Mavhaire after he demanded Mugabe to step down reportedly at the behest of his late close ally Edson Zvobgo, who wanted to succeed Mugabe. Mavhaire was called a "witch" by Mugabe after he demanded he must go likewise Mangoma's situation is even worse because he has faced vicious denouncement from media, leaders and members of supposedly democratic party left, save for Ian Khama the President of Botswana who supported the idea and insisted that the MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirayi must step down.

Chogugudza further suggests that, the cloud of secrecy and sacredness of the succession debate is not only a taboo in democratic societies but an indication that powers in the eyes of the establishment should not be a shared commodity but a preserve of the fittest but not necessarily the brightest. Mugabe's refusal to publicly name his preferred successor is not only unfortunate but a clear manifestation of the absence of sanity in ZANU PF boardroom. For Rush [8], posit that, it is a good leader who relinquishes power when people still want or love him like what the former President of South Africa Nelson 'Madiba' Mandela when he only ruled for one term, and Kabarange the Teacher Nyerere who was courageous enough to say "he has failed" after the failure of his "philosophy of African Socialism (Ujamaa)" therefore current state of leadership in Zimbabwe point to the fact that there is a growing leadership vacuum in both political entities. This is advanced by Elias Mambo who posits that the two major parties now find themselves embroiled in serious turmoil due to increasing internal discord fuelled by long-running succession power struggles threatening their own survival.

While the fight in ZANU PF is between factions which want to succeed the 90 years old President Mugabe particularly in the view that he is old and may not finish his five year term, while in MDC-T pressure is on Tsvangirayi to quit after he lost the 2000, 2002, 2008 and 2013 election race to what they called "unmarketable tyranny". Since Tsvangirayi's worst defeat in the July 31 2013 polls ever since the party's formation in 1999, the succession issue has moved top of the agenda amid growing calls for him to step down. Demands for leadership renewal have spawned serious struggles [9]. Professor Ncube G a former Midlands State University Lecturer in the Department of History, who is familiar with the internal political dynamics of both parties, pointed out that, "the problem with Zimbabwean politics is that the actors are concentrating on gaining state power for its own sake, not serving the best interest of the public, hence personalized factionalism and self-centeredness.

More observations points out that while Mugabe, who has faced serious internal pressure for him to retire culminating in the current Energy Minister Dzikamai Mavhaire making the unprecedented "Mugabe must go" statement is still under pressure to quit, Tsvangirayi is more vulnerable because he does not have similar control over the party and no state institutions to help him maintain his grip on the command structure. Tsvangirayi unlike Mugabe does not have patronage to dispense within the party to buy loyalty and exert punishment on dissenters.

Wyk [4] suggests that, due to the Patriarchal political system in Africa most leaders have circumvented democratic principles to remain in power. For him leaders have refused to relinquish power as they have venerated themselves as the "only ones", special Godfathers who can rule for ever and perfectly, as exemplified by Tsvangirayi's sentiments that "he was not going to resign without fulfilling the "people's project" despite attempts by his enemies to humiliate and barter him in a police station, torture and kill innocent Zimbabweans calling for democratic change. There have been intensified calls within the party ranks following MDC-T's electoral defeat by ZANU PF in the July 31 elections for Tsvangirayi to quit and facilitate leadership renewal as some feel the former Prime Minister has nothing new to offer after leading the party for over a decade (26 January 2014, The Standard).

Wyk [4] suggest that badly governed African countries suffer a deficit of leadership. Insofar as journalists and scholars analyze the concept of leadership, they emphasize the high-profile behavior of the often-charismatic individual who occupies the top political office in the land. While a grain of understanding can be gleaned from observing Africa's chief political executives, accounts of leadership are all too often reduced to the proclivities of particular "big men," as if individuals were all that matter.

For Rush [5], leadership is not a solo performance. Rather, it is a collective political process of mobilizing people and resources in pursuit of shared goals. Ideally, an effective leader starts by articulating a vision that inspires others. He or she then assembles a coalition of supporters, often organized in the form of a political party that can win political office, preferably by appealing to an electorate. Since unanimity of policy preferences can never be attained, a key leadership skill is forging compromise political settlements with rivals including, if necessary, sharing power with them. This paper intend to apply this approach to an account of Zimbabwe's postcolonial trajectory and an explanation of the country's institutional and administrative outcomes. Institutional outcomes concern the rules of the political game (whether democratic or authoritarian) and the procedures of administration (whether civilian or militarized) [10-13].

## Conclusion

Leadership succession and renewal is vital in an organization despite, the difficulties in projecting its future success. The model provides some semblance of order to an otherwise incomprehensible process. Politics of succession and renewal in any political system is subject to the push and pull of individual figures and shifting personal allegiances, it is clear that institutions and processes play an increasingly important role. Political players are subjecting themselves to greater regulation, as they have concluded that stability and certainty are more important than complete freedom of action, which can culminate in instability and violence. Having such processes at play in the elite, political institutionalization at other levels is likely to be pursued. ZANUPF and MDC need a model that promote greater

institutionalization of succession and renewal to ensure a stable transition that enhance the security and development of the two parties and to assist in the stability of the country.

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