

LEADERSHIP CRISES IN AFRICA: A STUDY OF POST COLONIAL ZIMBABWE, 2006 – 2016.

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between the neo-patrimonial character of the post-colonial State of Zimbabwe, and its leadership crisis, 2006-2016. The analysis is predicated on the Marxist Theory of post-colonial state and adopted the Ex-post facto research design. The method of data collection for this study is the secondary qualitative method, while content analysis was utilized for the analysis of data. Essentially, we discovered that the military – security complex in Zimbabwe played a leading role to keep ZANU-PF in power, hence they were rewarded with ministerial and ambassadorial appointments, hectares of land and cars. We equally discovered that the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe was a mere political gimmick, as land allocation was tied to support for the ruling ZANU-PF party. Consequently, the study recommends, among other things, that state institutions should be strong and legitimate in order to discourage neo-patrimonial tendency.

Keywords: Leadership, Crisis, Neo-patrimonialism, The State, Authoritarianism.

Introduction

Leadership is one of the world's oldest preoccupations, and a universal phenomenon in humans (Bass and Stogdill, 1990). From ancient to modern history, leadership has played an integral role in developing groups, societies and nations. According to Chikendu (1998: 1), it is leadership that mobilizes the people and arouses in them various levels of political consciousness. It is also leadership that sets the goals of the political community and ultimately determines their fate and destinies.

The crisis of political leadership has far-reaching implications for Africa's development. Thus, Okolie (2010:6) locates the source of Africa's "development – curse situation" in the circulation of incompetent leaders whose Achille's heel includes low capacities for initiating development agenda, as well as the insatiable crave for power. The political and socio-economic crises that underpin the fragility of African states are rooted

in the mindless appropriation and deployment of State Power for the satiation of personal and group interests.

Crises in this context denotes a challenge to the authority of the constituted decision makers, expressed through extra-legal means of protests (such as civil disobedience, strikes, assassinations, sabotage, riots), on a scale sufficient to threaten the incumbent's ability to maintain order and continued occupancy of authority roles (Flanagan; 1973:48). It is a challenge to the political system, arising from the dysfunctionality of institutions most specifically the State. When the State fails to engage the citizens' intelligence, when it miserably violates their rights, when it also fails to deliver the *common good*, crisis ensues and the spectre of revolution looms on the horizon (Fanon, 1964:27).

The character of the post-colonial state of Zimbabwe depicts a predatory neo-patrimonial permutation. To this end, the ZANU-PF government led by President Robert Mugabe distributed two hundred farms to army officers and party officials whose loyalty could be guaranteed. One giant estate was parcelled into 27 smaller farms and given to a handful of party figures, including the presidential spokesman, George Charamba (Zeiling, 2007:7). In 2007, the government spent thousands of US dollars to acquire luxurious Mazda 3 vehicles for the police officers. The army officers were given Toyota Prado and Mercedes Benz Cars, the government also acquired hundreds of Toyota Yaris Cars for the judges, and the Central Intelligence Organization (C.I.O) Officers. (Nkatazo, 2007:5).

There were a number of Military Officers appointed as Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, ambassadors, directors and board members of parastatals (Sackikonye, 2011:33). These appointments reflected the extensive patronage at the president's disposal to reward and retain loyalty. In return for material rewards, the military-security complex in Zimbabwe had played a leading role to keep ZANU-PF in power. Thus, the military chiefs had openly declared their support for President Mugabe. In the run-up to the March 2008 elections, the Commissioner of Prisons, Paradzai, Zimondi, in a function marking the promotion of 14 senior prison officers, remarked that;

If the opposition wins the 2008 elections, I will be the first one to resign from my job and go back to defend my piece of land. I will not let it go. We are going to elections and you should vote for President Mugabe... I am giving you an order to vote for the president. Do not be distracted. The challenges we are facing are just a passing phase... I will only support the leadership of President Mugabe... (Mpodi, 2015:516).

The army Commander, General Constantine Chiwenga, offered similar sentiments when he warned that he would overturn the Constitutional order if President Mugabe lost the 2008 elections. According to him "the army will not support or salute sell-outs and agents of the West before, during and after the presidential election" (Peter and Patrick

2008:65). Therefore, this study sets out to explore the nexus between the neo-patrimonial character of the post-colonial State of Zimbabwe, and its leadership crisis.

Theoretical Perspective Conceptual Clarification

This study is anchored on the Marxist Theory of post-colonial state. The Marxist scholarship argues that the post-colonial state exhibits an imposing stature, which pre-disposes it to play the role of a “parent” state, and intervenes in the socio-economic and political processes with reckless abandon. The classical Marxist Theory of the state has been further developed to take into consideration the peculiarity of the neo-colonial state. For instance, Alavi (cited in Ezeani, 2005:46) contends that the classical Marxist view of the state is not fully applicable to the post-colonial state. According to him; in the post-colonial society, “the problem of the relationship between the state and the underlying economic structure is more complex than the context in which it was posed...In the European Society, it is structured by yet another historical experience and requires fresh theoretical insights”. As Ekekwe (1986:15), rightly points out;

The difference between the two forms of capitalist states is thus, that whereas the state in the advanced capitalist formation functions to maintain the economic and social relations under which bourgeois accumulation takes place. In the periphery of capitalism, factors which have to do with the level of development of the productive forces make the state a direct instrument of accumulation for the dominant class or its elements.

In support of the above remarks, it has also been noted that the State has a critical function in all class societies. Accordingly, Langdon (1977:92) affirms that this is manifest in:

the maintenance of cohesion and domination; but it would appear to have a rather, particular further function in periphery economies, that of managing the meshing of capital and pre-capitalist modes of production. And that further function makes the colonial and post-colonial states more central in the direct process of surplus appropriation and capital accumulation than in the advanced capitalist economies.

Thus, the state in periphery economies have remained largely “the source of economic power as well as an instrument of it; the State is a major means of production (Ekekwe, 1986:12). Indeed, given the low level of autonomy of the State occasioned largely by low level of development of productive forces, the ruling class uses their economic advantages, social networks and political clouts and cleavages to influence and quite often determine the course of political processes.

As crisply remarked by Heywood (cited in Okolie; 2009:65), the term 'state' has been used to refer to a bewildering range of things, a collection of institutions; a territorial unit, a philosophical idea, an instrument of coercion or oppression, and so on. However, no matter the definitional crisis the term may be suffering from, it is important to reduce it by distinguishing between the liberal and realist perspectives. The liberal perspective views the state as a human contrivance to regulate human conduct, promote (not limit) the actualization of the protection of personal liberties, freedom, as well as the right to life and property. According to some liberal scholars of the social contract persuasion, the state derives its existence from the consent of the people and is designed to serve the common good of all. Thus, Lock (1980:15) contended that in the "state of nature", man did not live in a 'state of war', or in constant fear as Hobbes (1962) philosophized. According to him, it was a state in which men were equal and free to act as they saw fit within the bounds of the law of nature, they enjoyed liberty and were endowed with natural rights. As he puts it "the state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which is that law that teaches all mankind that being all equal and independent, no one ought to have another in his life, health, liberty or possession," it was a state of peace, goodwill, mutual assistance and preservation (Locke, 1980: 16).

He contended that the defects in the State of nature arose from the absence of an organization capable of protecting these rights; it was a State in which peace was not secure. Although rights existed, there was no final and impartial arbiter to protect the individual in the enjoyment of his rights. Thus, the great drawbacks of the State of nature were (a) The inability to define the laws clearly. (b)The absence of a common authority to enforce the natural rights, and (c) The absence of a recognized and commonly accepted judge to settle disputes (Locke, 1980:71). The State therefore arose out of the necessity to get out of this "ill condition"

Perhaps, the most realist conception of the State was advanced by Ake (1985:19). According to him, the State is;

a specific modality of domination in which class domination is autonomized. By autonomization is meant that the institutional mechanisms of class domination are constituted in a way that they enjoy independence from the society such that they appear, following Engels,(1978) as an objective force standing alongside society".

However, Ibeanu (1998), who shared this view with Ake (in terms of specified checklist of material pursuit by contending classes), later extended his analysis beyond abstract categories and indeed anchored his exposition within the purview of economic and political determinants. Moreover, he exposed the analytical weaknesses and web of intellectual confusion revolving around the definition of the State by Ake, and thus cautioned that: "we must not conflate the characteristic of a specific historical manifestation of the state with the essence of the state... On the whole, our position is that

commodity production neither determines the autonomization of class domination” (Ibeanu, 1998:120)

Other intellectual treatise on the state include; Bayart (2005), “politics of the belly”; Joseph (1987) “prebendalism”; Nnoli (2003) “theory of the grafted state”; Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) “Neo-patrimonialism”; Ake (1985) “limited autonomization”. However, in spite of the philological entanglement it has found itself, it is still possible to identify five key features of the State. (a) The state is a “benevolent despot” (the leviathan), its government is sovereign, and its power is absolute (Hobbes, 1962:18). It is expected that this “benevolent despot” should use the powers given to it by the people for the betterment of the society. (b) State institutions represent ‘public’ bodies that are charged with the formulation and implementation of collective decisions. (c) The state is a legal entity established for the purpose of regulating human conduct (Appadorai, 1986:25). (d) The state is the supreme coercive power in any society, which promotes the interests of those who possess its instrument of production (Laski, 1958:53). (e) The state is a geographical/territorial entity, and encompasses all those who live within its borders. On the international stage, diplomatic recognition is accorded to States on their ability to defend their territories and enforce laws within it.

In the light of the above features, we can define the State as a political and legal entity, charged with the responsibility for regulating the conduct of its citizens, the protection and promotion of their interest, as well as the development of the society. Our next task is to explain neo-patrimonialism.

The term ‘neo-patrimonialism’ is derived from the concept of patrimonial authority, which Weber (1968:51), used to designate the principle of authority, in the smallest and most traditional polities. In patrimonial political systems, an individual rules by dint of personal prestige and power; ordinary citizens are treated as extension of the ‘big’ man’s household, with no rights or privileges other than those bestowed by the ruler. Weber (1968:38) distinguished patrimonial authority from rational – legal authority, in which the public sphere is carefully distinguished from the private sphere; written laws and bureaucratic institutions routinize the exercise of authority and protect individuals and their property from the whims of capricious leaders.

As with classic patrimonialism, the right to rule in neo-patrimonial regimes is ascribed to a person rather than an office, despite the existence of a written Constitution (Rothchild and Chazan; 1988: 14) In neo-patrimonial systems relationships of loyalty and dependence pervade a formal political and administrative system, and officials occupy bureaucratic positions to acquire personal wealth and status, rather than perform public service (Migdal 1988:6). Although State functionaries receive official salary, they also enjoy access to various forms of illicit rents, prebends and petty corruption, which constitute an important entitlement of office (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:40). The chief executive and his inner circle undermine the effectiveness of the norminally modern State administration by using it for systematic patronage and clientelist practices in order to maintain political order. Thus,

one outstanding feature of neo-patrimonialism is the incorporation of patrimonial logic into bureaucratic institutions. Although neo-patrimonial practices can be found in all polities, it is the core feature of politics in Africa, thus scholars of African politics have analyzed the phenomena under related theoretical labels such as “personal rule” “prebendalism”, and the “politics of the belly” (Przeworski, 1986:15).

The dispensing of patronage to clients, particularly within the bureaucracy is integral to the functioning of neo-patrimonial systems. Bureaucrates who are loyal to their political patrons – by providing information, developing attractive policies (or blocking threatening ones) and assisting in the distribution of public benefits to constituencies outside the State apparatus, may be rewarded with much sought after ‘wet posts’; positions that offer considerable discretion and substantial informal and off-the-record opportunities for generating additional personal incomes (Van Gool, 2008:20). Conversely, the punishment of “uncooperative” bureaucratic agents who are unable or unwilling to do the neo-patrimon’s bidding, typically involves the denial of such lucrative forms of patronage, character assassination and threats of physical harm. Given these high stakes, the pressures on bureaucrats to comply with neo-patrimon’s wishes are often formidable.

Neo-patrimonial regimes typically attempt to *monopolize* political activities and resources, *minimize* any independent access of the periphery to the centre and to actively *prevent* the formation of ‘broader groups’ and potential rivals (Eisenstaedt; 1973:18). If successful, such attempts may result in the formation of what Médard, calls a “State patrimonial bourgeoisie”; a closed class or clique with privileged access to economic resources, directly occupying the best positions in the State apparatus (the senior echelons of party, army, bureaucracy and public corporations); a class, which actually owns the State, and in various ways uses it to its own profit (Médard, 1982:183).

Indeed, the rise of neo-patrimonial forms of governance is often associated with the rise and subsequent routinization and banalization of what Oliver de Sardon calls ‘big time’ corruption, the type practiced at the summit of the State (presidents, ministers, directors of public or parastatal enterprises), involving millions or even billions of CFA *Francs*’ Such big time corruption typically takes on the form of ‘market’ corruption, whereby power holders use their positions to drain off public resources and sell them to those who can afford to pay (Oliver de Sardon 1999:28).

With the stark centralization of power and wealth at the level of the State, ordinary citizens under neo-patrimonial rule may find themselves far removed from the centres of resource allocation and therefore miss out on getting their share (Beekers and Van Gool; 2012:18). Once in office, neo-patrimonial rulers face little constraints to care for ordinary citizens. In fact, from the ruler’s perspective, denying ordinary citizens unregulated access to markets and public goods and services (like security or economic stability), is a rational strategy, since it encourages individuals to seek the ruler’s personal favour (Reno, 2000:3).

The practice of neo-patrimonialism causes fiscal crisis and make economic growth highly problematic (Sandbrook, 1985:16). Taken together, shrinking economic

opportunities and exclusionary patterns of reward are a recipe for social unrest. When public resources dwindle to the point where the incumbent government can no longer pay civil servants, the latter join the anti-regime protesters in the streets to demand for the removal of the incumbent leader.

Leadership Crises in Africa:

It was the experience of the anti-colonial struggle that shaped the complexion of Africa's post-colonial leadership. During the struggle, the imperialist powers tried to separate the African leaders from the masses. The French, British, Portuguese and Belgian colonial authorities developed the art of '*flattering*' or buying – off their leading political opponents. Late Hastings Banda (Malawi), late Jomo Kenyetta (Kenya), late Omar Bongo (Gabon), late Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo), and late Felix Houphouet Boigny (Cote d' Ivoire) were typical examples of the success of this strategy, (Nwoye, 2005:271). It was this situation that prompted Ake (1989: 49, 50) to assert that;

The circumstances of our history have conspired to produce an elite which cannot function because it has no sense of identity or integrity and no confidence, does not know where it is coming from or where it is going. This has to do with Africa's long decline over the centuries and our domination by outsiders ... It is clear from the behaviour of our leaders that most of them have no respect for themselves, and do not take themselves seriously. That is why they have converted us into the mimic people. Lacking confidence and self-respect, they cannot develop any sense of efficacy. So even with the best of intentions, they are forever confused and perfunctory.

Consequently, the post-colonial political leaders of Africa became either willing or unwilling prisoners of the colonial institutions. Perhaps, it was easier for them to follow the tried and tested colonial structures which were inherently coercive and anti-democratic, than to innovate new democratic institutions. Thus, African leaders at the turn of independence became willing accomplices to the exclusion and alienation of the masses from the political process. The new leaders did not need mass movements, but coercive and repressive institutions of the State that were accountable to them. Their need for political institutions bordered on political control and domination rather than grassroots mobilization and participation. This is the secret behind the emergence of authoritarianism in the continent.

In his own contribution to the resilience of authoritarian regimes in Africa, Anyang'Nyango' (2002:47) remarks that "it is difficult for authoritarian regimes to give in to pressure for political openings of a democratic nature. Being more or less closed regimes, pressures for political openings threaten their stay in power and tend to

undermine the privileges that political, military and business elites enjoy under such regimes.”

O’ Donnell, et al (1986:41), have written profusely on Latin American authoritarian regimes, which they refer to as *bureaucratic authoritarianism*, such regimes depend on the use of political power at the centre, where a civilian or military bureaucracy dominates policy as well as decision making. The State allows very little voice (Hirschman, 1967:11), in the manner in which it runs public affairs, and it justifies its existence on the ground that it is ‘developmental’, or a ‘provider’ of ‘peace and security’, or a ‘protector’ of the ‘common man’, and works in the national interest. While most authoritarian regimes in Latin America are bureaucratic, their counterparts in Africa are presidential (Anyang’ Nyongo, 1989:40).

A presidential authoritarian regime is one in which the president is the central entity in the wielding of political power. It implies the systematic concentration of political power in the hands of one individual, who resists delegating all but the most trivial decision-making tasks. In Africa, personal dictators emerge from either the army or a dominant political party, but they consolidate power by asserting total personal control over formal political structures. As Hastings Banda of Malawi (cited in Bratton and Van de Walle, 1994:16) put it in 1972, “Nothing is not my business in this country: everything is my business, everything. The State of education, the state of our economy, the state of our agriculture, the state of our transport, everything is my business.” While there may be institutions within the State which are charged with some or all of these responsibilities, they are quite often ignored by the President, or they have to seek the “presidential nod”, in fulfilling their functions. Thus, the tragic failure and persistent decline of Africa’s post-colonial leadership is synonymous with its authoritarian disposition, lawlessness and extremism.

Data Presentation and Analysis: Neo-patrimonialism and Leadership Crisis in Zimbabwe

One of the challenges in Zimbabwe is the failure by the State to separate government from party politics. Thus, the government of Zimbabwe under the leadership of Robert Mugabe in conjunction with ZANU-PF provided agricultural subsidies to its key rural support base, the peasantry. Jobs were provided to party supporters, while State contracts were also awarded to companies owned by ZANU-PF officials (Dawson and Kelsall, 2011:60). After 2000 and Mugabe’s humiliating defeat in the February referendum, rent allocation became a free-for-all, at least for those in favour with ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe Times, 16 September, 2009).

In the 2000 parliamentary elections, the ZANU-PF campaigned with the slogan “Land is the Economy and the Economy is Land.” Thus using land issue to achieve their political agenda. (Zimbabwe Human Rights, Ngo Forum, 2010). An MDC activist from the

Chimanimani Constituency narrated his experience when he applied for land. According to him;

I went through all the procedures. I registered through my councillor, submitting all my particulars, curriculum vitae, national I.D. number and so on. The names given to the Councillor were taken to the DA's office. My name was called during the day when they were being distributed. I was number ten on the list, but people started shouting "Oh, he is opposition, he does not deserve that." I later met the DA to find out what happened to my claim, and he said "just leave it like that for your own safety." (HRW, Interview, 2006).

The ZANU-PF party used its long standing leverage in the executive to cultivate its patronage network, reward loyalty and punish dissents. Chapter 12 of the Zimbabwe Constitution provides for the establishment of key commissions to safeguard democracy, they include the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, and the office of the Registrar General. However, these two institutions responsible for the conduct of 2013 harmonized elections in Zimbabwe were tampered with by the Zimbabwean State. The chairman of the commission was Justice Rita Makarua, while Joyce Kazemba was the deputy chairman. The two were staunch members of the ZANU-PF party. Furthermore, the Registrar General, Tobaiwa Mudede who had held the position since 1980 was alleged to have manipulated the electoral registrar to keep ZANU-PF in power (Southall, 2013:54).

The key to the ZANU-PF victory in the 2013 elections lay in its *de facto* control of the voters' roll via the office of Registrar General and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. In many urban areas, registration was deliberately made difficult, as the registration team would set up shop in a particular ward for only three days, before moving to another ward for a further three days, demanding that prospective voters should follow them if they wanted to register. According to the electoral law and pre-election multi-party agreement, the Registrar General was required to make the voters' roll available to all political parties in good time before the election; allowing them adequate time to inspect it and if need be, register objections. On the contrary, the Registrar General made it available to the MDC two days before the election, and only in paper form (at the back of lorries) rather than in electronic form (Southall, 2013:56).

The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, mandated to conduct the 2013 elections, was reduced to a bystander in the election rigging fiasco and was forced to play the rubber stamping role, as the secret structure of the military and intelligence officials deployed to implement the rigging mission, directed and controlled everything (Nehando, radio, 6 November, 2013). In violation of SS 55(6) and 62 of the Electoral Act, police officers were inside the polling stations, they carried out various voting activities, such as the transmission of information about votes cast, assisting some voters and turning away voters, and they were also present during vote counting (Masunungure, 2013:45).

In neo-patrimonial regimes, one individual the (“Strongman,” “big man”, or “Supremo”) often a President for life, dominates the State apparatuses and stands above its laws. It was this situation that prompted Sachikonye (2011;62), to assert that,

In Zimbabwe, there is a campaign for Mugabe to be the country and party President for life, often referred to as God-sent, as God’s second son, as a gift from God. Other symbols of personality worship include activities of the 21st February Movement that celebrates Mugabe’s birthday every year, and the emblazoning of his face on Caps, t-shirts and dresses.

Neo-patrimonial regimes are typically highly exclusionary and consciously promote an image of omnipotence, which exaggerate the already considerable degree to which they dominate national politics (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1994:21). To this end, President Mugabe sacked the former Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa, in an apparent bid to clear the path for his wife, Grace Mugabe to eventually take the reins of the presidency. Angered by this development, the Zimbabwean military placed Mugabe under House arrest, in an apparent coup. This situation also generated utter chaos and protests as Zimbabweans took to the streets of Harare in their thousands to demand Mugabe’s resignation. Following Mugabe’s resignation, on 21 November 2017, Emmerson Mnangagwa was sworn in on 24 November, 2017, as the third president of Zimbabwe since the country gained independence in 1980 (Chikowore, 2017;18).

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The study sets out to examine the relationship between the neo-patrimonial character of the post-colonial State of Zimbabwe, and its leadership crisis. We predicated our analysis on the Marxist theory of post-colonial state, and discovered that the military security complex in Zimbabwe had played a leading role to keep ZANU-PF in power; hence they were rewarded with ministerial and ambassadorial appointments, hectares of land, and cars.

The subjugation of the office of Registrar General and Zimbabwe Electoral commission in the 2013 elections by the government of Mugabe, led to the manipulation of the electoral register in favour of the ZANU-PF party (Southall, 2013:14). Thirdly, the paper discovered that The Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe was a mere political gimmick, as land allocation was tied to support for the ruling ZANU-PF, thus many people were not given land because they were not prepared to show support for the ruling party.

Consequently, the study recommends that State institutions and systems should be strong and legitimate, in order to discourage neo-patrimonial tendency. There is need to conduct a comprehensive, transparent and non-partisan land audit, for the purpose of establishing accountability and eliminating multiple farm ownership. The study also takes the view that security of tenure to all landholders should be guaranteed.

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