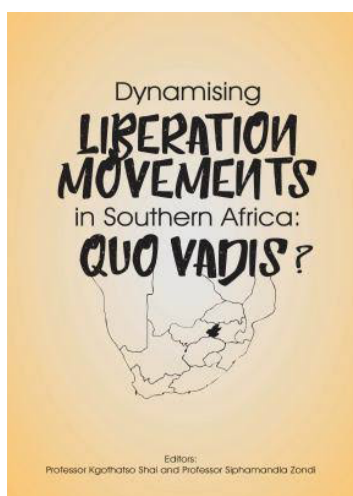


Dynamising Liberation Movements in Southern Africa

Quo Vadis?

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The book grapples with reconciling the ideological, policy and implementation bankruptcy of former liberation movements in Southern Africa especially as it applies to their incumbency of national government in their respective domains. The main thesis of the book is that prior to ascending to national government, these liberation movements seemed to have the relevant ideological muscle that reflected the axiology of their times, especially South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Conversely, these liberation movements plainly failed to translate the same axiological arsenal to relevant policy, implementation and practice once they morphed into national government. It is this dissimulation that raises questions on their seeming un-fit for purpose. Undoubtedly, prior to incumbency these movements identified with the masses; they represented the

future and a trajectory that embraced the aspirations of many. Sadly, those aspirations remain just but figments of imagination for many people that supported these movements now that these liberation movements have formed governments. Without recalibrating their objectives, visions, and aspirations these liberation movements risk being relegated to political dustbins as they have proverbially reached an ideological *cul-de-sac*.

It is evident, in the arguments of the book, that these liberation movements did not struggle as much in mobilising their people to rally behind them in their noble cause of attaining freedom for the Africans, as they do now when they have been investiture-d with political power. Political power alone does not translate to transformation of the economic sphere for example, as amply argued in the book. Political power is the first of many series of life stations for any political organisation that ensure transformation and emancipation of the formerly colonised and suppressed masses. Admittedly, as articulated in the book, former liberation movements were insufficiently prepared for governance. This is not a problem in itself. However, the continued failure to skill and train members of the former liberation movements for government is a weakness and thus problematic. This speaks broadly to lack of political will particularly from the leaders of these political outfits to respond to going trends of the day.

More nefariously, corruption has permeated these glorious movements of yesteryears. Corruption is largely responsible for the economic downturn, lack of infrastructural development, fraud and embezzlement of public funds by government officials and lack of accountability as a result. Leaders who preside over such political structures and governments once they have lost their moral authority due to their part in corruption, cannot stand and condemn or call to order their members and followers who are accused of the same offenses as themselves. Put differently, the book identifies

that corruption usually starts off at the very top echelons of political leadership. The state capture of South Africa's government during the Zuma presidency and the gross state-sponsored corruption in the Mugabe era, which continues unabated in the current Mnangagwa era, in Zimbabwe are cases in point.

Interestingly, in Zimbabwe the contention and contestation has always been between ZANU and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Both formations felt entitled to be at the helm of Zimbabwe seeing their undisputed participation in the liberation struggle that culminated in the 1979 Lancaster House negotiations, in Britain, that were to usher Zimbabwe's independence from the latter in 1980. ZANU was to later amalgamate with ZAPU to form the ZANU-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). The failure to reconfigure in the face of new ideas and players in the Zimbabwean political space has resulted in the formation of opposition political parties who desire alternative sets of politics, needless to say that ZANU PF has increasingly become intolerant of antithetical views. This demonstrates the lack of governing ideology and ideas. These liberation movements unless they embrace change and recalibrate their ideologies, policies and practices, their end is nigh.

The major limitation that often accompanies books of this magnitude is that they are limited in unearthing all the nitty gritty dynamics involved owing to publication space. This book too is not spared on that front. While there is minimal mention of Angola's People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), Namibia's South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and Mozambique's FRELIMO, the concrete case studies analysed involved liberation movements of only two of Southern African countries, South Africa and Zimbabwe. This is a limitation in that the two liberation movements, the ANC and ZANU-PF cannot be used to authoritatively generalise the trajectory of former liberation movements turned governing political parties. However, the book proffers a lively and robust debate on the way forward for these former liberation movements at an opportune time when the world is trying to reconfigure and recalibrate in imagining a post Covid-19 world. Perhaps too, the former liberation movements should be introspecting?

Book information

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