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"Will he Pull us back or Push us over the Brink? Jacob Zuma and the Prospects for Democracy"
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CHAPTER 9

Will he Pull us back or Push us over the Brink?

Jacob Zuma and the Prospects for Democracy

HOW TIME FLIES. It seems like only yesterday that Nelson Mandela stood at attention ready to be sworn in as the first president of a democratic South Africa. Almost every leading statesman and -woman was here to witness the event for themselves and for their people. All over the world people stayed glued to their television sets in virtual communion with South Africa as we celebrated one of the greatest political moments of the twentieth century – the birth of a new country under the leadership of the most loved political leader in the world.

I have never felt more proud of my country. At academic conferences and seminars, at dinner parties, at musical and cultural events, the mere mention of South Africa captured people's interest. The conversations would turn on the miracle unfolding in South Africa. Even though I

knew that our achievement was not a miracle, I enjoyed the voyeurism of it all.

Amilcar Cabral, a great African revolutionary, once warned his people to 'claim no easy victories'.[1] This applied with even greater force to me. I had never been part of the ANC. I came from the other side of the liberation movement, the Black Consciousness movement. We had rejected the ANC's non-racialist approach to the liberation struggle even though we always insisted on building a democratic, non-racial society. Our political strategy, based on an exclusivist radicalism inspired by Steve Biko, succeeded in giving ownership of the struggle back to black people in the 1970s and in restoring pride and dignity to a people under the barrage of white supremacist doctrine. But our movement became a victim of its own success. The youths we had conscientised had swelled the ranks of the ANC military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, in exile. The liberals we had criticised became radicals. They did exactly as we had asked them, which was to organise in their communities. They became part of a militant groundswell against apartheid that ultimately became part of the UDF in the 1980s. Our movement, the Azanian People's Organisation, simply failed to adapt to the changing times, and to build new allies.

One of the worst mistakes – and perhaps an indication of how irrelevant we had become – came in 1985 when we staged a boycott against American politician Senator Edward Kennedy, one of the most well-respected and influential allies of our struggle. Kennedy was in South Africa as a guest of Desmond Tutu, and all we could do was to go to the airports with our placards: 'Yankee go home!' The mere thought of it makes me feel so embarrassed.

The UDF and the civic organisations took the initiative and mobilised the entire country into action – following to the letter Oliver Tambo's call to make the country 'ungovernable'. By the late 1980s the civic movements were part of new local government forums all over the country, prefiguring the emergence of new local government authorities in the 1990s. This went hand in hand with national-level negotiations and ultimately led to the announcement of democratic elections – an event brought forward by the murder of Chris Hani in 1993. That was the only way to avert further bloodshed.

Mandela governed with the assistance of F.W. de Klerk and the younger, princely Thabo Mbeki. Mandela had wanted Cyril Ramaphosa to succeed him as president but Mbeki had been groomed from exile for this moment. Mbeki was to be to Mandela what Nehru had been to Gandhi or what Jefferson had been to Washington, a worthy successor – or so we thought. Then with remarkable rapidity things began to change for the worse.

Mbeki put in place a celebrated programme of economic restructuring and stability. It was, however, not celebrated by those who saw their economic fortunes decline as unemployment and poverty took a toll on the quality of life in most black communities. The political temperature began to rise with Mbeki taking to calling his critics racists or foot lickers of the white system. The language and tone of the discourse became more coarse. And then there was Mbeki's denial of the greatest public health problem facing the country: HIV/AIDS. What has transpired since then has been surreal.

Fourteen years ago I never would have predicted that a country that was the toast of the free world would become the butt of jokes over its leadership's refusal to acknowledge that HIV was killing its population at unprecedented levels. Back in 1994 I never would have imagined that we would provide cover for a brutal dictator, Robert Mugabe, under the guise of black nationalism. I would have laughed anyone out of the room if they had dared to suggest that some of our political leaders would be carried shoulder high by their supporters to prison to serve time for corruption. The most surreal incident would be the president's suspension of the national director of public prosecutions for issuing a warrant of arrest for the national police commissioner who is suspected of ties to the South African criminal underworld. The last thing I would have believed was that just over a decade after our freedom the ANC would be split down the middle because of what *Sunday Times* editor Mondli Makhanya calls 'that darn arms deal': 'the deal that poisoned our souls and turned our heroes into grubby mortals. It was the arms deal that made corruption okay, and made good liberation fighters realise just how easy it is to cheat their people.'[2]

Who would have thought that an arms deal would implicate the deputy president of the country in the solicitation of a kickback, and

that there would be calls to investigate the country's president for possible corruption in that same arms deal? And barely a decade after Nelson Mandela had gracefully exited the political stage, his successor was manoeuvring to cling to power for a third term as president of the ANC. Thankfully, members of his party would have none of it. This all happened so quickly that the African writer Ayi Kwei Armah could have been describing Mbeki's South Africa in this passage: 'How horribly rapid everything has been, from the days when men were not ashamed to talk of souls and of suffering and of hope, to these low days of smiles that will never again be sly enough to hide the knowledge of betrayal and deceit. There is something of an irresistible horror in such quick decay.'[3]

The irony of ironies is that the person most publicly identified with the arms deal has been the one to gain the most politically because of a strong anti-Mbeki sentiment in the ANC – the prevailing view being that Mbeki uses state power to persecute his political enemies. That at least has been part of Jacob Zuma's political mobilisation for the presidency of the ANC. In one of the most remarkable political comebacks in history, Zuma unseated Mbeki from the presidency at the much anticipated ANC leadership conference in Polokwane in December 2007. Zuma obtained 2 329 votes and Mbeki 1 505, a wide margin that reflects Mbeki's unpopularity within the party. Now that Zuma has been successful, the question is: what kind of leader will he make, both in his capacity as president of the party and as the person in pole position to be the president of the country in 2009?

Naturally and understandably the South African public has been asking how it is that a man implicated in bribery allegations and in a damaging rape trial could still even be considered for the exalted position of the president of the country. Where will Zuma get the authority and legitimacy to speak about HIV/AIDS after sleeping with an HIV positive woman and then claiming that he had a shower to protect himself from the disease? How will he speak with any authority and legitimacy when he is still under a cloud of suspicion for corruption? How will the public trust a man who has surrounded himself with characters such as convicted fraudster Schabir Shaik? These are all important questions and it will take some doing for Zuma to be seen with an untainted eye.

A different set of questions for Zuma

The reality of the situation is that Jacob Zuma has been elected by the majority of the members of his party. Whatever our feelings about his social behaviour, Zuma is the president of the ANC. I wrote a column in the *Sunday Times* in early December 2007 in which I urged South Africans to accept the outcomes of the courts and of legally constituted electoral processes. Failure to do so would lead to the same kind of mob rule that critics of Jacob Zuma claim to fear:

> *I have never understood the idea of President Thabo Mbeki as an enigma. Mbeki is just like any other African leader who cannot resist the lure of power. I always thought I was alone in that observation but by the look of things the majority of ANC branches seem to be feeling the same way.*
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> *The president must have been shocked by the drubbing he received at the hands of his comrades during the nominations for the ANC presidency. I suspect he will get an even bigger thrashing if he should proceed to contest Jacob Zuma in three weeks' time; the ANC leadership conference would go down as the biggest repudiation of any sitting president in ANC history.*
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> *It is indeed ironic that this should be the repudiation of a man who saw himself as the only rightful heir of the ANC's leadership mantle. In that self-perception Mbeki committed one fatal political error: he acted like an oligarch in a country with strong democratic traditions. He took members of his own party for granted, and some might even say abused them. His stay in power is littered with all manner of political corpses – with only one that refuses to die. With each and every stab, Zuma seems to rise from the dead.*
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> *My purpose here is to make a few observations about how important the nomination process has been for South Africa, and how better to analyze the prospects for democracy under a Zuma presidency. First, in a society where one party is as dominant as the ANC it is vitally important that democracy be cultivated within the party. Political plurality is now the ANC leadership challenge, as never before. Second, the nomination process demonstrated the power of ordinary people when they are well mobilized – even against a strong*

state-backed candidate. Mbeki has been the beneficiary of all kinds of propaganda – SABC nightly news, pro-third-term newspapers, and all manner of biographies on the eve of the leadership elections.

The ANC in government has to find a way of keeping this base energized if it is to keep communities engaged with policy processes. An energized base will also provide a ready bulwark should Zuma start behaving like Mbeki.

Third, in the long-term interests of our democracy, Mbeki's campaigners should respect the decisions of legitimately constituted electoral and judicial processes.

Zuma was acquitted on rape charges by a court of law, and has yet to be found guilty of corruption by a court of law. Democracy requires that our passions should never substitute for respect for the law.

It would be ironic if it were to be Mbeki who undermined the decisions of our courts by constantly speaking of 'rapists and criminals' in his political rhetoric. Even though Mbeki has denied this is a reference to Zuma, the rhetorical style is classic Mbeki. He has long relied on a form of political argumentation that I can only describe in isiXhosa as 'ukukwekwa' *– a form of argumentation by indirect allusion and never through direct engagement. Hence his constant reference to those he disapproves of as 'some among us,' without referring to them directly.*

Another example comes from the HIV/AIDS controversy. The president could pose a rhetorical question about whether it is really possible for a virus (HIV) to ever cause a syndrome (AIDS). This enables his defenders to deny he ever denied the HIV/AIDS link thus: 'Where is the exact sentence where the president ever said HIV does not cause AIDS?' Yet the denial is there in the rhetorical question itself.

Similarly, it is hard to believe that the references to 'rapists and criminals' are not directed at Zuma. These rather self-indulgent language and rhetorical games may make a philosophy seminar a little more interesting, or be interesting kindergarten riddles, but they can never fool an adult citizenry all of the time. At least that is what the nomination outcomes seem to be suggesting. The consequences of this fake intellectual formalism are deadly, whether we are talking about HIV/AIDS or the integrity of our justice system.

The Zuma affair raises an interesting question about the relationship between the private morality and the public morality of elected officials. My own view is that while a leader's private morality may compromise his or her ability to lead, a leader's public morality may not always be reduced to his or her private morality.

An example of a leader whose private morality affected his public duties was the nineteenth century American president, Martin van Buren. Van Buren was known to disappear from work for weeks on end on account of his drinking.

But equally there are those leaders – Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, François Mitterand, Bill Clinton – whose questionable relationships never detracted from their public achievements or what Hannah Arendt would call their 'public virtuosity.'

The question to ask is whether Zuma is so incapacitated by the scandals of his personal life. But even if we think that to be the case, we must still respect the outcome of the democratic processes. Failure to do so would be the real precedent for mob rule.

Finally, in evaluating the prospects for democracy under a Zuma presidency, we should also bear in mind the institutional and cultural matrix within which any leader would have to operate: parliament, the courts, the media, the ANC and civil society.

If the rejection of Mbeki by the ANC is anything to go by, there is no reason why Zuma should be so powerful as to be beyond the recall of this institutional and cultural matrix.

If I had my way I would have neither of these folks as my leader. This country is way ahead of both of them.

But if you put a gun to my head, then I would have to go with Zuma. Better to confront the Zuma challenge now than go down the path of the leader-for-life model that Mbeki represents.[4]

What type of questions might a worried public ask about Zuma? Well, I posed some of these questions in one of my *Business Day* columns. Put together, the questions are about whether Zuma's private morality is so egregious as to hobble his ability to run a government and become the leader of a nation:

If Zuma should not be charged, and enter the ring as a candidate for the presidency his supporters would have to answer at least four questions. The first question is whether Zuma's corruption is congenital – in which case we definitely don't want him as our president – or whether we are dealing with a lapse in judgement? . . .

If Zuma can in the interim show remorse for his lapse in judgement we may give him another chance. But then such forgiveness would have to be taken in conjunction with consideration of a second question: Would Zuma come out of this gruelling experience a bitter man, ready to take revenge on those who 'persecuted' him? This would lead to even greater degrees of polarization than we currently have, both within the ANC and the country at large. Consideration would have to be given to whether Zuma can separate his personal feelings about perceived or real 'enemies' from the intellectual, political and social contributions they could make to his overall agenda.

Zuma's ability to compartmentalize would in turn depend on the answer to a third question: Is he a democrat by disposition? Oftentimes we complain about today's centralized authoritarian political culture. However, just as bad, if not worse, would be a form of decentralized civic authoritarianism – the kind we experienced with the intolerance of some of the civic movements of the 1980s.

Would Zuma be the kind of president who could retain autonomy from his grassroots backers or would he be so beholden as to be stymied by their demands? The Schabir Shaik trial shows a picture of someone beholden to his financiers, but can he change and overcome that weakness, if it is indeed proven to be a weakness. This is important given the multiple interest groups that one way or another seek access to the highest office in the land.

The fourth question is whether Zuma's lack of formal schooling would lead to insecurity about his ability to lead the nation? Given his record I see no reason for suspecting such insecurities. He could well use his story of overcoming adversity as a leitmotif for inspiring the young and marginalized. In recent weeks I have been arguing against the idea of a president who is also an intellectual. Such leaders tend to do the thinking for the nation . . . What we need is a leader who can call on us to think and act together – that's the true meaning of democracy.[5]

Zuma has done very little to bring the nation into his confidence on these questions. The reluctance to open up is partly a function of the politics of the ANC. Zuma may feel that he has explained himself to the ANC, and that is all that matters. He is too much of a party man to engage seriously with the public on these questions.

This is not to say that Zuma is not a people's person, or that he would not be good at building bridges and relationships with communities. In that respect he would be a welcome break from Thabo Mbeki's distance and aloofness.

Zuma and Mbeki: The 'benevolent chief' and the 'stuffed shirt'

I once asked an ANC and Communist Party veteran to describe Zuma's leadership style for me. 'He is Mandela-esque in a feudalistic kind of way,' he explained. Like a chief in a village Zuma likes to have many people and many different voices around him. The ANC and the Tripartite Alliance are constituent parts of his village. He reached out to the other members of the Tripartite Alliance, even as they came under heavy attack from the ANC leadership. In short, he is not the kind of person to banish from the room those with whom he disagrees. He does not see it as beneath him to reach out to political opponents, which probably explains his success in bringing about peace between the warring ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party factions in KwaZulu-Natal. Zuma's supporters even claim that the only sustainable peace process in Africa is the one he presided over in Burundi. There might be some spin in that, but the point is well made: Zuma has earned a reputation as a peace builder.

However, the idea that he is 'Mandela-esque in a feudalistic kind of way' also means he is a conservative traditionalist in his social views about women and homosexuals. He once castigated same-sex marriages as 'a disgrace to the nation and to God'. He used the derogatory Zulu word for homosexuals: 'When I was growing up, *ungqingili* [homosexuals] could not stand in front of me.'[6] For Zuma there is no greater earthly authority than the ANC, which he joined when he was only seventeen years old. The organisation is such an important part of his outlook that he often proclaims that the party will rule until the Second Coming of Jesus. He has an unquestioning reverence for the ANC that one usually sees only in religious groups. While he is accommodating of different views, his

dismissal of those who are not part of the ANC 'religion' can be quite condescending and patronising. By his reckoning, those who criticise do so because they do not understand the ANC, and in fact can never understand the ANC unless they join it.

This is a radically different reaction to criticism from what we have come to expect from Mbeki. For Mbeki those who criticise the ANC do so because they want to undermine the organisation. Critics are enemies. Zuma sees critics as wayward individuals who can be won over by persuasion about the rightness of the ANC. While Mbeki's instinct would be to isolate and ultimately banish, Zuma's instinct would be to proselytise and win over. Zuma's reputation as a peace builder may stem from this sense that others can be persuaded to come around to his position.

These radically variant political temperaments will lead to different leadership styles. The question is whether Jacob Zuma can be persuaded to see things differently from his ideological certitudes. This is important if he is going to avoid the gargantuan mistakes of his predecessor.

What characterised Mbeki's presidency was a strong resistance to the idea that he might be taking his cue from other people, let alone that he might be wrong. Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, a South African political analyst, captures Mbeki's leadership style as follows: 'One of the dilemmas of our very important, intellectual President is that he has what I call Andy Capp's disease: he has many [faults] but being wrong is not one of them.'[7]

Mbeki and Zuma are also different kinds of nationalists. All nationalists are driven by a search of identity of one sort or the other. However, they do not always do so in similar ways. Mbeki's search is intellectual and abstract, and Zuma's is through a mix of militarism and tradition. While the former is pursued as a lone project, the latter finds expression through symbolic appeals to community. Both can manifest in perverted ways.

According to Mark Gevisser's empathetic biography, *A Dream Deferred*, Mbeki is an intellectual nationalist in search of an identity. Gevisser effectively argues that Mbeki was disconnected from his roots and from his community from a very early age. Gevisser lays much of the blame for this on Mbeki's father, Govan, who abandoned his family in the

Transkei while he joined the broader family of the struggle. The young Mbeki so much wanted to be like his father that he too soon joined the revolution and began to look at the world in the same unsentimental fashion as his atheist, communist father.

In an interview for Gevisser's book Mbeki's mother says the children were not allowed to play in the streets with other boys after school. She recalls: 'There was to be no lolling about in the village with other boys. No aimless roaming about.'[8] Gevisser quotes Mbeki attesting to the disconnection thus: 'We were sort of disconnected from many things in the surroundings. Growing up among these *amaqaba*, we lived with them and all that, but we were not *amaqaba*. So in that sense we were disconnected: you can see it, you live in it, but it is not you.'[9] An even more revealing passage comes from his mother's recollection of Mbeki's response to an invitation to his birthplace: 'I've told Thabo the villagers want to see him. But he told me that this is the very last village in the whole of South Africa he will ever come to.' According to Gevisser, Mbeki's 'modernism does not seem to sit easily with the conventions of being a member of a clan, of having a "home-town" or roots. There is no apparent nostalgia for the tobacco-and-cowdung-scented hills of the Transkei. One senses it is little more than a place, like many other places, that must be improved.'[10]

This explains many things about Thabo Mbeki's political and policy leadership. To him human beings are an abstraction whose fortune can be improved by application of scientific methods and economic progress – no room or time for sentimentality there. Gevisser argues that Mbeki's disconnectedness is not an entirely bad thing because it allows him to have some remove and thus gives him a certain degree of objectivity about the world, or what he describes as 'relative freedom from the feudal constraints of traditional hierarchies'.[11]

Gevisser has come under intense criticism – including from me – for a psycho-biographical explanation of Mbeki that seems to excuse him from the political choices he has made and the shifts and alliances he has brought about over the years as a scheming adult politician. I have also argued that there are many leaders who have had far worse personal experiences than Mbeki, who was the child of two university graduates who owned a shop in a rural village. It did not get more privileged

than that in the black community under apartheid. This is perhaps why Govan Mbeki rejected the hardship of his children with a dismissive and perhaps even defensive flourish: 'I don't think they lost out on anything. They grew up well.'[12] Gevisser is not to be easily discouraged. He writes about the pain of a young Mbeki who had to read the letters of migrant labourers to their families. This led to a loss of Mbeki's childhood innocence. But, as Gevisser himself points out, Chris Hani was doing the same thing in his village in another part of the Transkei: 'But Mbeki seems to have responded to it in a particularly profound way.'[13] It is not immediately clear why Mbeki's response would have been any more profound than Hani's. This profundity extends from Mbeki's youth and later translates directly into the theme of his government, the African Renaissance: 'It is no coincidence that Thabo Mbeki first started talking about an "African Renaissance" publicly at around the time he was "called back home by the elders of his clan".'[14] Gevisser might as well trace Mbeki's position on HIV/AIDS, on GEAR, on Zimbabwe, on the arms deal to his childhood experience. Gevisser further insists that Mbeki's independence of mind also comes from this childhood experience. He would be willing to go against the world before kowtowing to popular opinion.

Garry Wills mocks this independence in leaders: 'That may be a proper credential for the lonely genius, the martyr to a truth, the austere intellect-people who forge their own souls in fierce independence. But what have such heroes to do with leading other people?'[15] Unfortunately that's the kind of nationalist intellectual Mbeki became.

When Gevisser launched his book at Wits University, I asked him why we should all be implicated in Mbeki's search for identity; why was it our business? I never really got an answer back. But what I should have said in addition is that the mark of a great leader is not someone who collapses under the weight of his or her own history, but one who uses that personal history to inspire others to greatness. It is not the leader's psychological baggage that matters, but the psychological freedom the leader gives to the people – indeed, drawing on his or her own troubled past. For example, Franklin Delano Roosevelt understood what was ailing the American people during the Great Depression. He understood that the best psychological response was to tell them that their salvation lay in their own hands. If he, a man suffering from polio, could have confidence in recovery, so could the able-bodied men and women of the United States about their country. He became through his own difficult life-situation the nation's metaphor for recovery. He did not make his individual burden their collective burden.

Jacob Zuma had a much harder upbringing in the rural village of Inkandla in northern KwaZulu-Natal than Mbeki would ever have had. Perhaps no one would have had a greater claim on history to explain his wayward behaviour than Zuma. But he has not come out to say 'blame me on history' – at least not yet. He has embarrassed us a great deal with some of his shenanigans but, unlike Mbeki, he has not been shy to apologise for his gaffes, including his remarks about having a shower after sex to prevent the contraction of HIV.

Journalist Jeremy Gordin is reportedly writing an empathetic biography of Zuma. It will most likely portray Zuma as the opposite of Mbeki. Instead of disconnection we will find connection and rootedness in an extended rural family. It will most likely paint a picture of a rural boy who grew up 'lolling about' with other kids, while retaining a sense of connectedness to family.

If Mbeki is a detribalised African, Zuma's tribal and ethnic identities are an important part of his identity. Ethnic identity is not in and of itself a bad thing for as long as identities are not essentialised as possessing innate qualities. But Zuma has been guilty of essentialism. An example is his comment during his rape trial that when a woman is dressed in a particular way, a Zulu man is duty-bound to respond to that as an invitation to sex. But his tribal essentialism comes across more as conservative traditionalism and machismo than as an expression of tribalism as a set of political beliefs.

Zuma is also acting out a typical nationalist script when he says the ANC will rule until the Second Coming. In more intellectual terms this is the idea that the nation never dies. Benedict Anderson described this phenomenon in his public lecture at Wits, with a reference to a famous passage about the nation's transcendental quality from German sociologist Max Weber:

> If we could rise from the grave thousands of years from now, we would seek the traces of our own being in the physiognomy of the race of the future . . . we can wish that the future recognizes in our nature the nature of its own ancestors. We wish, by our labour and our being, to become the forefathers of the race of the future.[16]

Zuma promises the disenchanted that as the leader of the ANC he will hold the fort here on this earth until the Second Coming. To that extent he is what Achille Mbembe called '*umprofethi*' (a false prophet) leading an undifferentiated millenarian, eschatological movement. Like the nineteenth-century prophetess Nongqause who urged the Xhosa people to kill their cattle and burn their grain in anticipation of a new season of prosperity, Zuma will lead his people to self-annihilation.

However, Zuma's election as president of the ANC demonstrated something much more sophisticated at work here. In his book *Certain Trumpets*, Garry Wills gives a contrasting picture of two American politicians, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson. In many ways Stevenson has all the makings of Thabo Mbeki. The child of a prominent political family in Illinois – his grandfather was vice-president to President Grover Cleveland – Stevenson fancied himself an intellectual. According to Wills:

> Stevenson had noble ideas – as did the young Franklin for that matter. But Stevenson felt that the way to implement them was to present himself as a thoughtful idealist and wait for the world to flock to him. He considered it below him, or wrong, to scramble out among the people and ask what they wanted. Roosevelt grappled voters to him. Stevenson shied off from them.

Wills continues:

> Liberal intellectuals stayed true to Stevenson in the 1950s despite misgivings, because they were horrified at what they took to be the anti-intellectual alternative of Dwight D. Eisenhower. It was literally inconceivable to these people that a rational electorate

> would prefer Ike to Adlai – which shows how far out of touch they were with the American people.[17]

This rings a bell, does it not? In the words of a letter writer to the *Business Day*, Pauline Morris: 'Thabo Mbeki represents a stuffed shirt from Sussex University, Zuma a benevolent chief from childhood.'[18] There has indeed been a great deal of incredulity among Mbeki's liberal-middle-class-intellectual support base at the fact that he was upstaged by his very antitype – the anti-intellectual Jacob Zuma.

Mbeki, the urbane, suave, whisky-drinking, pipe-smoking Renaissance man gave it all away when he said he did not understand what must have been going through the heads of the ANC Women's League when they rejected him in favour of Zuma for the presidency. The *Financial Mail* vividly captured elite angst in its headline: 'Be Afraid'.[19] But the person who most accurately reflected the sense of alienation of the media with what is going in South African society is Wits University academic Anton Harber:

> The blind spot, however, was to believe that Zuma's colourful record would make him unelectable. The real error was the assumption journalists often make: that their values are those of the wider society. Mbeki was cocooned in the presidency; and journalists are often cocooned in their own world, listening and talking to each other and their experts much more than to anyone else.[20]

But what was it about Roosevelt and Eisenhower that made them such effective and well-loved leaders? Despite differences in class background, the one thing that Jacob Zuma seems to share with Roosevelt is an instinctive connection to people. Roosevelt was physically impaired at a time when that was a stigma. He could have easily wallowed in his condition, and hit back at those who stigmatised 'cripples'. Instead, he used his condition to inspire the nation. Beyond his own personal biography Roosevelt was simply an excellent political leader. He understood the power of public opinion: 'If Roosevelt had power, it came precisely from his responsiveness to public opinion.'[21] At the centre of that

responsiveness was his attitude to the media – using his fireside radio chats to reach far-flung places in what his listeners experienced as intimate conversation.

Central to any strategy of governance must be a smarter approach to the media from that which has prevailed under the Mbeki administration. *Business Day* journalist Renée Bonorchis captured the strategic role of the media for any administration: 'Rightly or wrongly, the way the press perceives the president is what makes it into the papers and goes on to shape public opinion.'[22] She uses the George Bush and Al Gore presidential campaigns as an example of how much of a difference the press can make: 'While George Bush was goofing around with reporters and playing on his down-home image, Gore kept himself aloof and his communications people went as far as to keep the press at arms length.' Bonorchis draws an analogy with the Mbeki and Zuma campaigns. Like Al Gore, Mbeki competed against a candidate 'who is good at relating to most people, if not all of the people'. That may well be Zuma's greatest strength – in his Mandela-esque but feudalistic kind of way.

Now that Zuma is indeed ANC president, he should put into practice this piece of advice from Bonorchis: 'If Zuma were to be the next president we would already know he has a low regard for the media. But that's not the point. As long as his communications people are able to engage the press and keep them close, then his previously tainted image will continue to be reworked.' Zuma's rantings against the media and analysts after his acquittal on rape charges may have been understandable, but he would be better advised to change his tack on this one.

This is related to an argument that Ronald Heifetz makes, and which I referred to in Chapter 8, which is how important it is for leaders not to take the work of public leadership personally. Leadership is an activity to be shared among a range of people with different skills and the prospects for democracy will depend as much on the leader as they will on the group who surrounds that person. If a leader is surrounded by a bunch of mediocre yes-men and -women, then the leader will find himself or herself speaking for almost all of them, and mangling up in the way Mbeki has done over the past decade or so. However, if well-qualified, competent and well-respected individuals are appointed, then the battle for a 'reworked image' will be half-won at the outset.

A man of the people or a wolf in sheep's skin?

One of Jacob Zuma's great challenges is that he will soon be confronted with a fractious alliance – and that will call for some tough decision making on his part. Contrary to the idea of an irrational, millenarian movement, what we have with Zuma is a well-organised political movement arranged around what the sociologist Ernesto Laclau describes as a 'populist frontier'. According to Laclau, populist movements are by definition political. They are all about the construction of a popular 'we'. Although I find Laclau's three-stage theory of populism a little formulaic, it is useful in understanding the Zuma phenomenon.

First, a whole series of disparate movements emerge to challenge the centralisation of power – but they all act in silos. The HIV/AIDS group fights its battles on its own, paying little attention to the anti-privatisation forum, or the freedom of expression group or environmental protection organisations. The populist movement does not really emerge until all groups move to the second stage, that is, until they have established what Laclau calls a populist frontier. The frontier attracts people and groups from across the political and ideological spectrum, inside and outside the production relationship. Hence Laclau describes populism more as a 'dimension of political culture' than an ideological movement.[23] A leading expert on populist movements, Harry Boyte, similarly argues that 'populism is not a text or dogma. It has no written codes, no finished works, no canons of orthodoxy.'[24] And this is when someone like Jacob Zuma emerges to hold a non-ideological frontier together. As Laclau puts it: 'Since any kind of institutional system is inevitably at least partially limiting and frustrating, there is something appealing about any figure who challenges it, whatever the reasons and forms of the challenge.'[25] In a sense our calls on Jacob Zuma to say what he really thinks are misplaced. No populist leader in his or her right mind would risk dividing their frontier by proclaiming on ideology.

The third stage is the most precarious. Once the populist movement attains power, the frontier begins to dissemble, partly because positions must now be taken: on the economy, on wages, on HIV/AIDS, etc. The once united populist front – from Black Economic Empowerment wannabes to ethnic entrepreneurs to fugitives from the law and the ever-dodgy lumpen proletariat – is not an ideologically coherent movement.

There is no reason why Zuma should escape this stage. In a sign of developments to come, COSATU has already complained about its representation on Zuma's national executive committee, insisting that there be a reduction in the number of delegates of one of the organisations in the frontier – the ANC Youth League. This tussle is unavoidable, and will be a great test of Zuma's Mandela-esque, feudalist leadership style.

However, it would be a mistake to say populism does not have any content. It may not have an ideology but it certainly has an orientation towards the small man and woman. In the following column I complained about the denigration of populism in the commentary about what kind of leader Jacob Zuma might become:

Would our writers, commentators, activists, politicians please stop misusing the term populism? I am amazed by how much of the political analysis of Jacob Zuma hangs on a mischaracterization of populism as irrational, delusional mob rule.

Populism is one of the finest traditions in democratic history, based on the struggle of small men and women in farmers cooperatives against big business and political oligarchs in the nineteenth century. One of the world's leading authorities on populism, Lawrence Goodwyn, author of the classic book, The Populist Moment, *argues that the very experience of existing as members of farmers' co-operatives required a deliberative culture among populists: 'Populists would not fear that people, once encouraged to be really candid with one another, would promptly want the moon and ask for too much.'*

The eminent sociologist Ernesto Laclau recently wrote a book titled On Populist Reason, *so named deliberately to make the point that reasoning is at the heart of the populist political experience. The point is that all politics is populist to the extent that it is about the imagination of a new community. For example, there is no sentiment more populist than the first sentence of the preamble to our constitution: 'We the people of South Africa,' or the Freedom Charter's 'The people shall govern,' or the American Declaration of Independence's 'All people are created equal.'*

So how did such a noble concept come to be so misrepresented? We can trace it to a number of developments in the nineteenth century. First, the denigration of populism was nothing less than the rearguard

response of business and political oligarchs fearing the rise of democratic movements. Second, populism was denigrated because it came up against the prophets of Enlightenment rationalism – for whom political rule was the preserve of only a few scientifically educated elite. Third, the misrepresentation of populism coincided with an important sociological shift in Europe – the break of the elites from their communities.

Gianna Pomata describes this break as follows: 'In 1500 educated people could despise the common people but still, to a certain extent, understood and shared their culture. By 1800, however, in most European countries, the clergy, the nobility, the merchants, the professional men had withdrawn from popular culture, abandoning it to the lower classes, from which they were now separated, as never before, by profound differences in worldview. By then, from the viewpoint of the learned, popular culture had become a thoroughly alien world.'

Each and every one of these reasons for the denigration of populism applies with equal force in present-day South Africa. The political elites are in a panic because suddenly 'the natives are restless.' The policy elites cry wolf because the assumptions of their development model are under attack. And this is not an unreasonable attack, given the poverty, unemployment and inequality and the concomitant culture of intolerance all over the place. And the social elites are frightened because they have been so alienated from their communities they can barely recognize their own people. So they choose to describe them as nothing more than an undifferentiated, irrational, deluded mob fit for voyeuristic conversation at the suburban dinner tables . . .

Unfortunately, it is precisely because of this mischaracterization of populism that we have failed to ask the real political question of whether Zuma is a real populist. Does Zuma believe in the interests of the small man and woman or is he beholden to his financiers and behind-the-scenes lobbyists? What is it about his political programme and the political programme of the ANC that says they would restore power to the people in the finest populist traditions of the farmers' movements, trade union movements, civic movements and movements

for community revitalization and entrepreneurship that gave rise to civic populism all over the world?

South Africa's problem is not populism, which is to be properly understood as the creation of a popular democracy. What Zuma's critics are perhaps searching for is a phrase that comes from Hannah Arendt's essay 'Law and Power', in which she identifies the usual three types of government – monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Monarchy can easily slide into tyranny; aristocracy can easily slide into oligarchy; and democracy into ochlocracy – another word for mob rule.

So I am going to shriek the next time I hear anyone mischaracterize populism and I will smile wryly when I hear people asking whether with Zuma our democracy will slide not into populism but into ochlocracy.[26]

The question then is what manner of populist leader would Zuma become? Earlier I suggested that Mbeki adopted an overly intellectualised leadership style, alienating many people in the process. Zuma presents a different kind of problem: how exactly might the citizenry engage a leader who is convinced that his organisation has History, Tradition and God on its side? I have in my writings about the ANC presidential race often made a distinction between what the sociologists Richard Sennett and William Whyte respectively called 'public man' and 'organization man'.[27] Zuma is a true ANC cadre, but he is a master at using what Njabulo Ndebele calls 'spectacle'. When Zuma leads thousands in singing the popular revolutionary song 'Awuleth' Umshini Wam' (Bring me my Machine Gun), he is sending a clear message to party members and potential rivals: I have the support of the people.[28] As I argue in the above column, there is really nothing about Zuma's record in government that suggests he would return power to the people in the classic populist sense. Political analyst Steven Friedman describes Zuma as 'a mainstream figure who was a bosom buddy of Thabo Mbeki. He's not some wild man coming from the hills to destroy the palace.'[29] In addition, Zuma's primary loyalty is to the party before the public. One of Zuma's backers and an influential leader in Gauteng, Angie Motshekga, had this to say about a Zuma administration:

> Some will ask whether anything will be different from the present administration. In this all ANC leaders are guided by its policies. Hopefully Zuma is the archetypal party man and will seek the genuine involvement of the party membership in this process, as well as its allies. The party, too, will be closer to the ordinary citizen so that it more accurately reflects their needs and concerns.

Motshekga argues that this connectedness will most likely be interpreted as populism: 'Much is being said about populism, careerism and about people who want to be elected so that they can steal from the public. The ordinary people and members of the ANC are not stupid. They know what is in their best interest.'[30] While Motshekga is right about the misrepresentation of people's movements by members of the economic and social elite, her populism is based in an unshakeable faith in the party. While Zuma may stabilise and unify the ANC at the present time, he is unlikely to be the kind of leader to take the country to the open society of our dreams (I will return later to a discussion of who the leaders of the future might be in the ANC).

Zuma as a transitional figure

Given both his age and his travails, Jacob Zuma is most likely to be a transitional figure hemmed in by his own self-consciousness about his misdemeanours, and by the institutional and cultural matrix within which he has to operate if he were to be the president of the country.

There are three possible scenarios in which Zuma can play this transitional figure. First, by setting the trial date for August 2008 the state has put Zuma at a clear political disadvantage with respect to the presidency of the country. The ANC has to meet six months before a general election to select a group of people it would put on its list of parliamentary representatives. The party would be reluctant to put at the head of its list someone who runs the risk of a conviction. Given that the election must take place before April 2009, the list process must take place in October 2008. If Zuma won in his application for a mistrial then he would have a better chance of gaining his party's nomination for the state presidency. Barring an early election Zuma would take over as the president of the country at the age of 67, and would be 71 at the end

of his first term. He would finish his second term at the age of 76. This is not unheard of – Mandela was in his seventies when he was president.

The difference is that Zuma and his cohorts – the so-called Class of 1942 – come from a culture of exile, secrecy, solidarity and vertical hierarchy. And yet the world we live in demands openness, accountability and horizontal networks. It's a new world with new policy challenges – ranging from energy security to climate change to shifting geopolitical realities characterised by the emergence of China and India.

Even if Zuma were to serve for two terms, there can be no questioning that the ANC has come to the end of the leadership of the Class of 1942.

The second scenario would be one in which Zuma voluntarily stops short of making himself available for the presidency of the country. This could happen either before or after the mistrial application. His supporters would then most likely put their support behind one of two candidates: Kgalema Motlanthe or Tokyo Sexwale.

The third scenario is not much of a scenario were it not for the social consequences that would flow from it. In this scenario he would be found guilty and automatically barred from holding public office. However, a jail term for Zuma could lead to violence and instability. A political solution may have to be found as has been done in many other cases including, most recently, that of Adriaan Vlok, who was found guilty of atrocities but given a long suspended sentence. A presidential pardon as a quid pro quo for staying out of politics could be another option.

It is the first two scenarios that I am more interested in. Let us first examine what would happen if Zuma obtained a mistrial and became a 'transitional president' of the country.

A state president hemmed in by our institutional and cultural matrix

South Africa has a panoply of institutions that no single individual can ignore: parliament, the courts, the ANC NEC, as well as our resurgent and sophisticated constitution. And as I observed in the *Sunday Times* article above, Mbeki's mistake was to act like an oligarch in a community with strong democratic sentiments. Zuma's most feudalistic instincts will soon run into public challenges and demonstrations by women's groups; into court challenges by gay and lesbian groups; into a parliament that

consists of people who never wanted him in the first place; and a media that were afraid of him to begin with. Each and every utterance he makes will come under instant national and international scrutiny with the currency as a proxy indicator of what the world thinks about us.

His biggest mistake would be arrogance and haste that comes out of what political scientist Richard Neustadt calls 'newsness', particularly in the closely watched and highly contested areas of economic policy and foreign affairs. Neustadt describes the dangers of a badly managed transition thus: 'Everywhere there is a sense of a page turning, a new chapter in the country's history, a new chance too. And with it irresistibly, there comes the sense, "they" couldn't, wouldn't, didn't but "we" will. We won so we can.'[31]

To guard against such triumphalism and its consequences we need to do more to strengthen our countervailing institutions – and that would apply even under the most loved president. Parliament is in desperate need of revitalisation. We inherited a parliament that has historically rubber-stamped executive decisions. In the apartheid years what the prime minister wanted, the prime minister got. Parliament was seen as one of the principal means by which Afrikaner nationalists sought to impose their Christian national vision on the rest of the population. Public policy was always a tussle between the powerful and ubiquitous secret think tank – the Broederbond – the party, the cabinet and the prime minister. Early nationalist leaders such as J.G. Strijdom tried to keep the Broederbond out of policy making, but Hendrik Verwoerd relied on the Broederbond before its influence declined again under John Vorster. At the height of its influence the Broederbond set up expert task groups to decide on various aspects of public policy.[32] Their recommendations would be presented to the prime minister and cabinet, and would get the sanction of the parliamentary caucus, which was in turn filled with Broederbond members. However, whether it was the Broederbond or the prime minister and his cabinet that prevailed at any given time, parliament played the least influential role. According to Dan O'Meara: 'It was not unusual for one or more MPs [Members of Parliament] to find themselves in conflict with this or that aspect of government policy. However, given the vast pressures to conform – not the least of which was each member's hopes of political advancement –

it was very rare for individuals or groups within the caucus to oppose cabinet policy openly.'[33]

So diminished was the role of the ordinary MP that one Dr Albert Hertzog complained bitterly:

> It strikes me more and more that the ordinary Member of Parliament actually has no say at all. If he wants to achieve anything, then he must go and speak with the Cabinet Ministers and quietly try to influence them, otherwise he will get nothing done. The Prime Minister chose his Ministers before even knowing us ordinary MPs, without first asking our own opinion. They make their appointments without taking the slightest notice of us. Without us the National Party could never have won. But the moment that he had won, together with a few of his old friends, this man whom they call the Prime Minister simply decides what they want. They take the whole machinery into their own hands, they accept our loyalty and they make and break us as they see fit.[34]

A great challenge facing South Africa is to revisit the role of parliamentarians in holding the executive accountable. One way of building such accountability would be to have some kind of direct constituency representation in the electoral system. Constituency representation is no guarantee that parliamentarians would not be victimised by party leaders, but at least the constituency would have an opportunity to weigh in and express its opinion, whether that is in support of its MPs or to recall them. The power of the executive in South Africa is palpable. For example, even though the constitution provides for parliament to change money bills, the ANC has not passed legislation authorising parliament to do so. Parliamentarians would rather look to the executive for authority than exercise their constitutional responsibilities. Another example of parliament's weakness and powerlessness is the manner in which the senior members of the cabinet intervened in the inquiry into the arms deal. According to former ANC MP Andrew Feinstein, Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad literally instructed the parliamentary committee investigating the arms deal to lay off the investigation, saying:

'Who the fuck do you think you are, questioning the integrity of the government, the Ministers and the President?'[35]

Parliament needs to be revitalised so it can be the space where a new layer of leaders might find their way into the political system. As pointed out in Chapter 7, senior ANC leader Pallo Jordan has argued for a generational shift in the leadership of the ANC. One of the better ways to identify such leaders is to see them as they rise through parliament, having been directly elected by their constituencies.

Reimagining the relationship between the NEC, government and the public

Zuma also cannot run roughshod over the NEC of the ANC. True, many of the members of the NEC have been elected onto that list on his ticket, but it is hard to imagine an NEC that is as docile as the one under Mbeki. In many ways the ANC contributed to the creation of Mbeki's 'imperial presidency'.[36] At its 1997 leadership conference the NEC gave the president the power and prerogative to appoint premiers and mayors. The NEC became emasculated under Mbeki's presidency, and was packed with Mbeki's yes-men and -women, a sizeable number of whom served in his cabinet. Those were the people least likely to question the president's decisions and controversial public policy positions.

However, the ANC came to its senses at its July 2007 conference and stripped Mbeki of those powers of appointment. Mbeki had used this power to appoint his own people as premiers, and in the process alienated the provincial executive. From now the provincial executive committee will recommend the person to be the premier of a province.

This is not a bad thing. For as long as our electoral system says we should vote for the party then it is appropriate that the party should send its people into government. This must be done without the party micromanaging government and usurping the work of government employees. The practice of deploying party members to strategic institutions needs to be tempered by attention to professional competence and a sensitivity to the line between party and government. This is a tricky balance; it needs a party leadership that knows its limits, and a government leadership that knows the source of its legitimacy and authority.

While Mbeki tried faithfully to enforce the line when it suited his desire to come up with his own policies, he failed to appreciate that ultimately his authority came from the party. By keeping the ANC and its alliance partners outside the policy process, he undermined his own legitimacy and authority within the party. His supporters tried to justify his unilateralism in drafting the ANC's economic policy document. For example, as shown in Chapter 7, they argued that the departure from the RDP to GEAR was simply a function of the exigencies of everyday decision making – of what was required of another day in the office, if you like.

It is almost inconceivable that Mbeki could initiate such a major policy shift without paying attention to the party he represented in government. And yet he did. To have consulted with the ANC would not have amounted to micromanagement by the party. He probably feared that the party would not approve his economic programme – a programme whose outcomes were unsatisfactory, to say the least.

Jacob Zuma is therefore not very far off the mark when he says he will represent the interests of the party in government. It may well be that he does not have his own original ideas, but the more important question is whether the ANC, through its NEC, has any credible, original ideas of its own. If the party develops such a programme it can trust Jacob Zuma to implement it more than it could ever trust Thabo Mbeki.

However, the democratic challenge goes beyond the relationship between the ANC and the government – which Zuma could manage quite ably – and extends to the relationship of both to the broader population. The government is elected into power by a broader population than members of the ANC. In that sense it has to approximate as much as possible the classic populist maxim contained in the Freedom Charter: 'The people shall govern.' This immediately raises the question of how best to bring that into effect. One of the great ironies of democracy is that while leaders are often elected by the majority of the poor, they soon find themselves dancing to the tune of a rich few. It is this disjuncture that has given rise to the emergence of Jacob Zuma.

There are numerous models for participatory governance that a Zuma administration could study: from the Harold Washington administration in Chicago, which inspired American presidential hopeful Barack Obama's

approach to politics and governance, to the experiences of progressive movements in places such as Kerala in India. Spain is an interesting example of how to deal with issues of diversity without compromising the national integrity of the country. Gordon Brown is experimenting with citizen participation in government policy making, and the November 5th coalition in the United States has put together citizen transition teams to influence public policy making in the new administration.

What many of these examples have demonstrated is that there is no necessary trade-off between issues of equity and participation on the one hand, and efficiency and rational administration on the other. New technologies should enable new forms of public participation in governance, and new public platforms need to be established to maintain constant communication with the general public, particularly at the local government level.

In other words, the ANC as a party and the ANC in government would need to reinvent itself as a public organisation. The centralised, technocratic approach of the Mbeki years has been disastrous for South Africa, and there is much to be gained by experimenting with new forms of participation – starting at the local government level.

Paving the way for a new leadership

There is another way in which Zuma could exercise his influence and in the process secure a place for himself in history. He could do this by voluntarily stepping aside for someone else to take over as state president while he retains the role of party president. He could even step down from the party presidency and become an elder statesman. That would require a special congress to elect a new president and that might have the added benefit of aligning the election of the ANC presidency and the state presidency.

Depending on how long the corruption trial takes, Zuma could use his role as party president to prepare for a smooth transition to a new kind of leadership in the ANC. It has been reported that Zuma's Plan B, or at least the Plan B that has been announced by his supporters, is that ANC Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe should then be elected to take Zuma's position.

Motlanthe is not well known outside the ANC, but nothing has stopped lesser known figures in other parts of the continent from

acceding to power. For example, how many people readily know who Sam Nujoma's successor is in Namibia?

Like Zuma, Motlanthe is a true 'organisation man', a comrade's comrade. Motlanthe is well liked by the rank and file of the ANC, and as a former secretary-general of the National Union of Mineworkers he is also favourably viewed by the trade union wing of the Tripartite Alliance. He is affectionately referred to as *mkhuluwa* (older brother). As secretary-general of the ANC, Motlanthe has been a father figure to ordinary party members, and has often been called upon to mediate disputes among warring factions.

Motlanthe's reputation came under question when he became associated with the so-called 'hoax email saga'. The allegation was that Jacob Zuma's supporters had created emails that were disparaging of their candidate in an effort to demonstrate that there was a political conspiracy against him, and thereby elicit sympathy for the Zuma campaign. At least, that was the finding of the government's report into the matter. But clearly the ANC, and particularly Motlanthe, would not let government have the last word on a matter so politically sensitive. The party initiated its own investigation, which exonerated Motlanthe, providing in the process yet further evidence of the divergence between a party leadership mostly sympathetic to Zuma and a government leadership under Mbeki.

An added boost to Zuma's party presidency is the support he has received from business tycoon and ANC leader Tokyo Sexwale. Sexwale caused waves in the ANC when he announced that he would be available for party presidency if he were to be nominated. This was viewed as an unconventional path to leadership in the ANC. The injunction is often that leaders must wait until they are called upon by the membership – even though everyone knows there is behind-the-scenes campaigning. After it became clear he did not have the votes, and given his own criticism of Mbeki, Sexwale withdrew from the race to lend his support to Zuma. The businessman is likely to play a significant role as a voice for openness and tolerance of debate in a Zuma-led national executive committee of the ANC. He could still be the person that the ANC looks to as an alternative or partner to Motlanthe. In such a situation Motlanthe would take charge of the government–party nexus, while Sexwale would focus more on the more public role, building alliances with groups

outside the party both in the country and beyond. But even if Sexwale does not end up being the president of the ANC, and Zuma might be the popular choice rather than the intellectual elite's ideal candidate, both leaders have openly criticised the accumulation and abuse of power we have seen under the Mbeki presidency.[37] The question is: will they walk the talk as we proceed to yet another phase of our democracy?

I raised some of these issues in a piece on the role that Tokyo Sexwale and Jacob Zuma have played in opening up the ANC, but nonetheless suggesting it is perhaps time for Zuma to step aside for people such as Motlanthe and Sexwale:

> *That ultimate social quality called leadership has become a matter of inheritance. Thabo Mbeki writes about how a dying Oliver Tambo divined him with leadership of the ANC, and Jacob Zuma claims it is now his turn.*
>
> *No one will spare a thought for us – the people who actually elect these dudes into power. No one but Tokyo Sexwale dared play that role in the lead-up to the ANC leadership conference. In the end they all came around to appealing to the public for support. That is how it was supposed to be in the first place. The best countries are those in which individuals and parties compete for leadership in the public domain. The worst countries have historically been those in which leadership is a fix among a set of unaccountable comrades. It took the Soviet Union decades to recognize that and make a turn, and one hopes that the genie of open leadership contestation is out of the bottle for the ANC.*
>
> *One of my friends complained that I attribute this cultural shift to Sexwale instead of Zuma. In response, I said Zuma and Sexwale opened up ANC culture in radically different ways. Zuma was forced to defend himself against political persecution. It is quite likely that had there been no such persecution he would have kept quiet as a matter of old-fashioned party solidarity. This is not to say Zuma lacks courage. After all he was Sexwale's commander in the ANC's military wing Umkhonto we Sizwe. And those who know Sexwale will readily attest to his courage as a soldier. It is simply to say that there is a difference between military courage and democratic courage.*

The great political philosopher Hannah Arendt described democratic courage this way: 'It requires courage to even leave the protective security of our four walls and enter the public realm.' This is the cultural shift in our conception of courage that we need to spread throughout our land if we are to make this a truly successful democracy.

The ANC showed us glimpses of it in the way Zuma got so many people to be active in his campaign. But Zuma's appeal is limited mostly to the ANC and disaffected members of society.

I have in previous writings suggested that Tokyo Sexwale has that transcendent appeal required of a national leader – to assure business while working in the interests of the poor. Some have said Sexwale has shown courage because of his wealth. Frankly, that is not always such a bad thing. Wealth enabled Moshood Abiola to challenge the worst dictator in Nigerian history, Sani Abacha. And wealth enabled John F. Kennedy to free the Democratic Party from party bosses and patronage politics . . .

It is, of course, possible that Kgalema Motlanthe would be the person the ANC could look to if Zuma should either falter or voluntarily step aside. Motlanthe would be entitled to that because he was voted into the position of deputy president. He would not be my ideal candidate, but would be a big improvement on both Mbeki and Zuma. And even if Sexwale did not become president, it would still behove leaders of his generation to follow his example and show some democratic courage.[38]

Over the past few years South Africa's leaders have rubbished Nelson Mandela's legacy by their racialisation of every little policy disagreement, and ethnic mobilisation became a big part of the ANC presidential campaign. Now is the time to reinvigorate the sense of common belonging and creativity that Mandela epitomised. The question is whether or not the ANC has the common sense to recognise how far we have veered from the original promise that our newly created democracy held, and whether the organisation will have in it the wisdom and capacity to bring us back from the brink. But then again, getting back from the brink is a task for all of us.