

## The Corruption Conundrum of the Zuma Presidency

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### Abstract

*The Zuma presidency remains the most dramatic since the birth of liberal democracy in South Africa. The decision of the party oligarchy to support Zuma's ambitions despite overwhelming reservations about his moral uprightness demonstrates the "low" value placed on personal attributes by South Africa's political class. This article would through historical and descriptive methods interrogate the forces that brought President Zuma to power, and "why and how" the establishment remained loyal to him through various challenges. In this regard, the article seeks to investigate the conditions which provided the enabling environment for the president of the ruling ANC who doubles as the President of South Africa to be involved in such controversies as the Nkandla probe, state capture, and an alleged rape. The article would analyze the concept of corruption by drawing insight from various perspectives. This would allow us to determine the extent to which some of former President Zuma's alleged infractions in office can be regarded as corrupt practices. The article advances a thorough cleansing of the political space; this is a process that is expected to permeate the South African society as a whole.*

**Keywords:** Africa National Congress; Jacob Zuma; State Capture; Nkandla; South Africa

The issue of corruption can be viewed from various perspectives, which include; the legal, moral, ethical and religious. For the moralists, it is a reprehensible act, the legalists approach it from the angle of criminality, the ethical observer regards it as an unprofessional conduct, while the religious apologists view the act of corruption as a sin against God and man. The negative perception of corruption from all corners is not unconnected to its nature of being inimical to the growth and development of societies. Indeed, the moral, political, economic and socio-cultural well-being of many nations have been distorted through acts of corruption undertaken by high-ranking public officers. Across the ages, multiple political leaders have acted against the grains of extant laws through their engagements in corrupt practices. Two examples of such on the African continent are late Sanni Abacha of Nigeria (Garcia, 2019) and late Mobutu Sese Seko of former Zaire (Smith, 1997).

Jacob Zuma was the fourth president of post-apartheid Republic of South Africa.

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Unarguably, he had an uneasy ride throughout his nine-year tenure as the president of the Republic. For the most part he was confronted with attacks; indeed, most of which were not directly related to the policies of his government, but major attacks were against his personality and specifically against his conduct as a political office holder. Zuma fought back in his nine-year stay in office. According to Munusamy (2013, par. 1), “the people detested their new president, believing he is too weak, too corruptible, too backward, contemptuous of the Constitution and lacking the faculty to run the country.” This article interrogates the factors that made former president Zuma the “cat with nine lives” in his confrontation with damning accusations of corrupt practices. In effect, the article draws attention to the enabling conditions that made it possible for former president Zuma to have a firm grip on power despite the allegations of corruption against him. The starting point here is the conceptualization of corruption, and ultimately to highlight critical elements in the determination of an act of corruption. The determination of acts of corrupt practices is derived from Transparency International’s (2021) annual Corruption Perception Index. These acts include; public servants demanding or taking favors in exchange for services, politicians misusing public money or granting public jobs or contracts to their sponsors, friends and families, and corporations bribing officials to get lucrative deals (Transparency International, 2021). It is therefore imperative to examine the linkages between corruption and the collective advancement of the people.

## **Methodology**

This interrogation commences with an explication of the complex character of corruption, and how it may be difficult, in some instances, to determine actions that may be categorized as corrupt practices. For our case study, references are made to subsisting laws and court judgments. Subsequent parts of the paper deal with the Jacob Zuma phenomenon and how the corruption allegations impacted the state. Furthermore, the article connects the Zuma issue with the divisions within the ANC on the one hand, and how it pitched the powerful ANC oligarchy (that sustained Zuma in office) against the opposition that could not muster the required political mileage to effect Zuma’s exit from office. The final part of the paper presents policy options that may tighten the fight against corruption in South Africa.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Contextualization of Corruption**

The phenomenon of corruption as an archetypical character of the public sphere dates back to ancient times. However, there is a contention that:

what has genuinely changed over the course of history has been the very concept of corruption, oscillating between the configuration of a generic moral decadence on the part of a political and social body, clear evidence of an effort to harness the consensus that is linked and intrinsic to power itself, as well as the stigmatization of a veritable “abuse of public office,” the term that has come to be accepted in modern

times (Brioschi 2017, p. 4).

Cases of corrupt practices of public officials abound in history (Bagenholm 2018, 242), and it remains one of the fundamental challenges of humankind in this age because of its import on the commonwealth and direct consequences on the economic and social well-being of citizens.

Deconstructing the corruption phenomenon remains a topical discourse in academia. However, a profound intervention in the form of explanatory approaches to dissecting the nature and character of corruption is presented on a tripod of the “public interest approach, the public opinion approach and the formal-legal approach” (Chudhry and Shabbir 2007, p. 3). The interpretation of corruption from the “public approach” is regarded as a normative intervention (Warburton 1998, p. 83). At the public realm (inclusive of public interest and public opinion), corruption is essentially about misappropriation of public goods for private/personal purposes through illegal means. On this score, three “types of phenomena that classify as corruption can be discerned, they are; bribery, extortion and nepotism” (Alatas 1986, p. 9). In the case of the formal-legal approach to the understanding of corruption, the focus is embedded in legal interpretation of acts that are committed by public officers which are considered inimical to public interest. According to Proshunin and Kumukov (2020, p. 500) “it is important to note that in legal provisions there is often no definition of corruption, and the meaning implied in corruption may be understood via the analyses of illegal actions, which are understood by the law as acts of corruption.”

By implication, all corrupt acts fall within the context of an Us/Them dichotomy which emphasizes the passion for satisfying personal yearnings to the detriment of the public good. Therefore, corruption is “the subordination of public interests to private aims involving a violation of the norms of duty and welfare, accompanied by secrecy, betrayal, deception and a callous disregard for any consequence suffered by the public” (Alatas 1986, p. 9). There is even an all-encompassing submission on corruption as a phenomenon with implications for political stability, economic well-being, and socio-cultural relations which articulates the dangers it poses to the continued corporate existence of any nation. According to Hughes (2010, p. 36)

corruption is one of the most significant threats to democracy world-wide. It produces instability and thrives on the social inequality to which it is a substantial contributor. It undermines the confidence of people in the legitimate institutions of government. It is a major contributor to social, cultural and economic decline of nation states. It is evanescent, perverse and consequentially difficult both to detect and eliminate.

To check the possible dangers of multiple interpretations arising from the seeming amorphous nature of corruption, Transparency International offers an apt and generally acceptable definition of corruption. According to Transparency International (2021), corruption refers to “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” The organization

further categorizes corruption into grand, petty or political on the basis of the quantum of money lost in the process and the sectoral delineation of the act. Based on this view, corruption covers two levels of the public sphere which confer benefits to the high office holders in the conduct of their primary functions. At the level of the bureaucracy, where the job of administration involves daily interactions with the people that government is meant to serve, the process wheel is lubricated with corrupt practices such that the officials are rewarded with proceeds (mostly financial), while the benefactors gain unmerited advantages. At the highest political level, where corruption is a state art, political manipulations that distort the normal running of society are deployed. The positions of authority confer unregulated and unconstitutional privileges on political office holders thereby enhancing their influence and increasing their potentials for ill-gotten wealth. Accordingly, Shihata (1997, p. 19) a corrupt act has occurred when

a position of trust is being exploited to realize private gains beyond what the position holder is entitled to. Attempts to influence the position holder, through the payment of bribes or an exchange of benefits or favors, in order to receive a special gain or treatment not available to others.

In full realization of the negative consequences of corruption on humanity, global actors have stepped up efforts to curb the act. One of the major pillars of a good governance regime is tied to the twin-concept of transparency and accountability in public service (Adagbabiri 2015). The issues of transparency and accountability are antithetical within a corrupt system. In other words, if transparency and accountability have footholds in a system, corruption cannot thrive in such a system. The philosophy of accountability is that public office holders are accountable to the electorates since by design, they are custodians of state power and therefore, all their actions must be towards the advancement of the state. Inherent in this assumption is that national interest must override self-interest. When this happens, the people are better served. In a similar vein, transparency as an element of a good governance regime is one of the measures that counter the incidence of corruption. Specifically, transparency refers to a process whereby government actions, including budgetary system is undertaken in an atmosphere of openness where it is accessible to the people and they can make sense of government business. Instructively, the accountability and transparency character of a good governance regime implies that the electorates have the legal rights to query government's actions in all ramifications. Thus, governments are encouraged to pass their actions through due process (Ocheni & Nwankwo 2012, p. 94). The due process mechanism entails the adoption of constitutional procedures for taking actions. The main objective is to ensure that government is beyond reproach and that all citizens are aware of this condition.

The developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America have been known as havens of corrupt practices, partly because of the weak institutions in most of the countries (Olken & Pande 2012). While laying claim to democracy, there is little to show for the ability to counter corrupt practices through accountability and transparency in

the running of the government of some of these countries. Over the years, Transparency International has made attempts to investigate corrupt practices across the world, and African countries continue to appear as the most enabling environment for corruption, based specifically on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI). TI's methodology is controversial and has been questioned but remains generally acceptable worldwide.

The Southern Africa sub-region has equally been immersed in acts of corruption, with daily accusations against highly placed government officials (Lipton 2000; Sebudubudu 2002). In Zimbabwe under former President Robert Mugabe, corruption by high-ranking government officials was identified as the most potent factor that impoverished the people. In neighboring South Africa, corruption at the highest level became rampant under the Zuma presidency. Indeed, at no other time in the history of free South Africa has the issue of corruption dominated national discourse than under the Zuma presidency. As a matter of fact, Zuma was "charged with more than seven hundred counts of corruption" (Vos 2014, p. 42). While there is glaring evidence to show that corruption at the highest level was part of the existential realities of the Republic of South Africa under Zuma, the contradictions of the Zuma presidency ensured that he survived the corruption allegations leveled against him for almost a decade while he was at the helm of affairs.

## **Case Study**

### **Zuma's Path to Twin-Presidency**

As was the case with his three predecessors and his successor in office, Jacob Zuma was at some point, the President of the ANC and the President of the Republic of South Africa. It is on record that "since the Republic of South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the ANC President has, ex officio, been the president of the country" (Guha 2013, p. 6), with the exception of the interim presidency of Kgalema Motlanthe. It is not unusual owing to the parliamentary system practiced in South Africa which implicitly accords primacy to the political party over individuals in respect of elective office.

The history of Jacob Zuma's ascension to the office of the President of South Africa cannot be written in isolation of his roots as a foot soldier of the Africa National Congress (Gordin, 2008). His base and power are drawn from his long-standing commitment to the ideals of the ANC, and the loyalty he built around himself across the epochs. His attainment of the highest positions in the ANC and the country are reflective of his staying power bolstered by his ability to draw loyalty to himself, and not necessarily because of some superior philosophical logic. At every turn, controversy threatened to rock his boat of progression, but he never ceased to garner substantial support from the most critical base, which continually kept him in contention, and often made him triumph over most political adversaries.

Jacob Zuma enjoys the status of a prominent leading light of the anti-apartheid struggle. As a teenager, he became a member of the ANC in 1959 (Janjevic, 2018). Soon after becoming a member, the militant part of the ANC was awakened by the brutal policies of the minority, but all-powerful ruling party, the National Party (NP). The brutality of the NP was exhibited through the Sharpeville Massacre, banishment of freedom fighters, and the implementation of the Bantustans policy (South African History Online, n.d.). Zuma was subsequently recruited into the military wing of the ANC, and in later years, he participated actively in the war of attrition from both within and outside of South Africa, against the racist regime of the National Party. Prior to joining the war effort in neighboring southern Africa states of Mozambique and Swaziland, he had worked tirelessly with others in building the ANC structures in his local Natal Province and beyond (Weiss & Rumer, 2019, p. 7). It was therefore not unusual that he was caught up in the web of the ruling racist regime's clampdown on leading opposition figures.

According to Gordin (2008) as a prominent member of the militant wing of the banned organization, he was arrested and accused of conspiracy to overthrow the government, for which along with others, he was sentenced to prison for ten years in 1963. In Robben Island prison where high-ranking members of the ANC were held in custody, Zuma continued to discretely function for the party. Upon his release from prison after ten years in 1973, he went underground but continued to bolster the ANC with his energy and intellect, such that by 1974 the ANC structure in the Natal province under his leadership had become strongly established. He went on exile to Swaziland, and later Mozambique to join others in laying the foundation for ANC in exile. He was equally involved in facilitating the trips of young and willing members of the ANC for military training abroad. Based on his network of allies within the ANC and his experience of the ANC structure, he became the Head of ANC Intelligence Department in the 1980s. He returned home to become a prominent member of the team that facilitated the processes of the return of exiled political officers, release of political prisoners, and the negotiations that led to the establishment of post-apartheid political configuration.

Continuing Gordin (2008) notes that other high-profile positions followed in 1990, when he became the Chairperson of ANC's Southern Natal Region. In 1991, he was elected Deputy Secretary General of the ANC Party. Based on his experience, he had built a larger-than-life image within the party, which made him feature prominently in all ANC activities. For instance, he was a prominent member of the ANC negotiating team that calmed the tension between the supporters of the party and those of the local rivals - Inkatha Freedom Party - in 1993 (Gordin, 2008). His profile grew a notch higher when in 1995 he was elected the National Chairperson of the ANC. With this position, he remained a relevant figure and played critical roles in the processes that led to the enthronement of democracy in South Africa in 1994. By 1997, he was elected the Deputy President of the ANC, and when President Mbeki needed to pick a deputy for his government in 1999, Jacob Zuma was both a natural choice (for his ANC background) and a strategic choice (as a Zulu man). The scenario is captured below:

The ANC clash with Inkatha was still raw and still wielded significant sway in the east coast region of the country. Buthelezi's name was mentioned, yet when Zuma was put forth, he appeared the obvious candidate, a Zulu man who was also an ANC man (Waetjen & Mare 2009, p. 73).

Asides from their common commitment to the ideals of the ANC, and indeed their shared experience of persecution under the apartheid regime, both men were known to be friends. However, Mbeki and Zuma "are made of different, if not contradictory constituents" (Alozieuwa 2009, p. 102). Instructively too: "While Mbeki is of the 'bourgeoisie'-intellectual bent; Zuma, on the other hand, belonged to the 'proliterate'-populist class" (Alozieuwa 2009, p. 102).

Having attained national prominence, the examination of his actions and deeds were no longer limited to the confines of the ANC. While he had the opposition to contend with, there were equally forces within the party that abhorred his style. His long-time ally and principal, Thabo Mbeki played an intriguing role in the attempt to discredit Zuma and make him permanently irrelevant in South Africa's political landscape (Plaut, 2008). It is alleged that Mbeki's ambition of an unprecedented third term in office as the president of the ANC informed the attempt to discredit and disqualify Zuma from contesting for the position. Subsequently, a case of corruption was leveled against Zuma.

In a 1999 arms deal case in which Zuma's financial adviser - Schabir Shaik was found guilty of fraud and corruption in 2005, Zuma was alleged to be a major beneficiary in the infractions (BBC News, 2018). Thus, Zuma's name became synonymous with bribery and other fraudulent activities that shortchanged the state. It was on the strength of the case that President Mbeki sacked Jacob Zuma as deputy in 2005 and subsequently made him to stand trial that year. It is also believed that the institution of a case of rape against Zuma was politically motivated. Thus, the stage was set for a battle-royal between the president and his former deputy; a battle that defined the continued relevance or otherwise of Mbeki, and also shaped the perception of corruption in South Africa.

Rather than accept the political obliteration staring him in the face, Zuma reclined to the ANC cocoon and teamed up with loyalists who were themselves disgruntled about Mbeki's style of leadership. In this league were Cyril Ramaphosa, Tokyo Sexwale and Mathew Phosa. According to Alozieuwa (2009, p. 103)

following his sack however, Zuma was said to have moved to the background for political mobilization, finding common ground with such important grassroots figures like Mandela's former wife, Winnie, who since the Mandela presidency has also been sidelined to the political fringes.

It is intriguing that despite the dent on his moral standing, and indeed, accusation of financial impropriety leveled against him, Zuma was able to triumph in the ANC power game. In his bid to clinch the presidency, he deployed the support he enjoyed among a

cross-section of party loyalists, and indeed, the goodwill he enjoys from the grassroots and the poorer segment of the black community:

Indeed, it is important to underline the fact that Zuma's popularity and grassroots appeal should not be misconstrued as a result of a personal (natural) charisma as an individual human being. He certainly lacked the magisterial presence and natural charisma that Mbeki had. In any case, while his grassroots appeal has earned him robust political capital, the fact remains that he merely exploited to his political advantage, the leftist leanings of the founding fathers of the ANC, which defined the public personae of the party, and which subsequently seems to have been making strong protestation in the objective political and economic realities that daily confront the average Black South African emanating from the Mbeki government pro-West policies (Alozieuwa 2009, p. 107).

Thus, in addition to the Zuma appeal, the critical segments of the ANC that had been alienated by the Mbeki administration were waiting in the wings to be exploited. Of particular importance to the Zuma struggle for president were the ANC alliance partners: Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), the ANC Women's League and the ANC Youth League. Their support was overwhelming and with the benefit of hindsight, Mbeki's error of "throwing his hat in the ring" confirmed the erosion of his political relevance. According to Southall (2009, p. 317)

The two men were fighting not only over power, but also over the ANC's "political project." Zuma drawing much of his popular backing from the ANC's allies, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), which had long registered objection from the left towards Mbeki's pro-market economy strategy.

Upon winning the rape case in 2006, the ANC oligarchy (composed of the highest-ranking officials) beckoned on Zuma to resume his responsibilities as deputy president of the party. The party's support for Zuma was understandable against the fact of his own loyalty and commitment to the party for most of his life. According to Waetjen and Mare (2009, p. 72) this was based on

the political and military influence of the politics of the ANC, an organization which he joined at age 17, and whose military wing he entered three years later. He spent ten years of his young life under the harsh conditions of political imprisonment, but also under the formative influence of "movement politics" with political comrades ... and the rest of his adult life in the direct service of the ANC, both internally and in exile.

The real payback time for Zuma's loyalty and commitment to the party presented itself during the 52nd National Conference of the party in Polokwane's December 2007



elections. At the elections of national officers, it was victory for Zuma and humiliation for Mbeki (Southall 2009, p. 317). This is because for the momentous occasion

Zuma built an odd left-populist coalition of disgruntled grassroots activists, trade unionists, socialists, unemployed youth, veteran guerrilla fighters, women's lobbies, supporters of causes ranging from the death penalty to virginity testing, black business tycoons, evangelicals, and the "walking wounded" (Gumede 2008, p. 265).

With this scenario, it was a natural progression for Zuma to eventually become the President of the Republic. As the country awaited the end of the Mbeki era in 2009, the court suddenly presented the ANC another opportunity to continue with the political humiliation of Mbeki, ostensibly because of his machinations to decisively curtail Zuma's political ambitions. The ANC instituted the "recall" process against President Mbeki. He consequently resigned in September 2008 and was succeeded by Kgalema Motlanthe who ran the country for the remainder of Mbeki's tenure till June 2009. The subsequent general election of 2009 was presented in an editorial as "centred around the personality of ANC President Jacob Zuma" (Economic and Political Weekly 2009, p. 6). Upon assuming the post of the President of South Africa, his corruption case was struck off.

Zuma went on to win second terms in the dual offices of president of the ANC and President of the Republic of South Africa. This is despite the allegations of corruption that trailed his terms in office. For about four decades before reaching the pinnacle of both his political career and his activities as a comrade and loyal party man, Zuma had developed strong ties at the grassroots level, thus enjoying the loyalty of members of the party. Despite the moral weight he carried on his shoulders, he was able to weather the storm for a relatively long time. The moral weight bordered on accusations of corruption and misuse of public office, which in some other climes may have brought about the immediate end to his presidency and made him face criminal prosecution. But alas, the ANC oligarchy and the alliance partners ensured his continued stay in office until it became absolutely impossible to keep him as the President of South Africa, and he, like Mbeki, compelled to resign as President of the Republic after nine years in office (Piper & Matisson, 2009, pp. 145-146).

### **Zuma's Burden of Corruption Allegations**

Prior to becoming President, Jacob Zuma had not been alienated from legal battles, most of which bordered on his role as a member of the ANC. However, the first major test of his political career may have been the rape case instituted against him in 2005. Understandably, the case generated intense media attention and controversy among various groups in the country because of Zuma's personality as a high-ranking public figure. In 2006, Zuma was acquitted by Justice Willem van der Merwe, on the grounds that the complainant was "a psychologically disturbed, manipulative seductress, pathological liar and serial rape accuser" (Robins 2008, p. 415). If the public perception of his perceived moral indiscretion is rendered in low tones, his alleged financial impropriety

and misconduct subsists in the public domain.

The first legal battle concerning his presumed fraudulent activities was the earlier mentioned arms deal scandal in which it was alleged that Zuma may have been the beneficiary of R500,000 annual paycheck as bribe from “an arms company with the understanding that Zuma would protect the arms company from investigation for corruption” (Vos 2014, p. 45). Former President Thabo Mbeki had no inhibitions towards sacking him as Deputy President because of this allegation. Zuma’s case and Mbeki’s reaction had reverberating consequences on both the ANC and the country at large. It turned out that the ANC had existed on fragile peace prior to the development, and the cracks became apparent afterwards. The fall-out of the saga was that Mbeki lost his presidency of both the ANC and the Republic of South Africa.

The dynamics of the case and its outcome haunted South Africa throughout the period of the Zuma presidency. It showed clearly that despite the existence of enabling laws, there are some other factors that are critical to the prosecution of politically exposed persons in South Africa. The conditions under which the events transpired was akin to a situation in which the ground had been laid preparatory for ANC’s payback for Zuma’s loyalty, selflessness, and commitment over more than four decades of service. From the benefit of hindsight, it is apparent that the merit of the case was never considered in the process of its determination.

Another alleged corruption issue that dogged the Zuma presidency is the upgrade of his ancestral home in Nkandla. This has to do with repair works of his ancestral home in Nkandla, especially as it relates to the provision of security equipment and facilities befitting his status as president. There was huge discrepancy in the amount budgeted by a public officer and the amount expended on the Nkandla upgrade. While officials claim the amount spent was within the region of R65m, records show the amount was about R200m. As expected, there were denials from the president, but eventually, the court ruled that the president must refund the excess expended to the national treasury. The president eventually repaid the money in 2016 (Toyana & Macharia, 2016).

One of the most outstanding slights on his personality during his reign as president was the impact of his relationship with an elite Indian-South African family. The Gupta family is said to have a strong relationship with Jacob Zuma. There are allegations that a “patron-client” relationship existed between the Gupta family and former president Zuma. The relationship between both is believed to have interfered with state policy to the extent that the Gupta family nominated persons for cabinet positions and were usually favored in getting lucrative government contracts (BBC News, 2018). President Zuma was compelled by the office of the public protector to approve inquiry into the allegations of corrupt practices between him and the Gupta family.

A major concern is the impact of his indiscretion on the economy. During the presidency of Nelson Mandela, the government went beyond the attempts at healing

the wounds of the nation through reconciliation but also concerned itself with running the economy in a most responsive and responsible manner. By the end of the Mandela presidency, the South African economy was a reference point in Africa. Although, the challenges of poverty and inequality amongst others pervaded the landscape, yet the Mandela administration handed over an economy with a great potential. Though with focus on neo-liberal policies, the Mbeki administration's Black Economic Empowerment Strategy (BEES) and Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy were deliberate attempts to empower South Africans, and particularly shrink the inequality gap. The result was that GDP was growing by more than 6% per annum (Basson & Toit 2017). But for Jacob Zuma, the elevation of corruption to a state art prevented the consolidation of gains made in the past. In fact, the economy declined and unemployment rate rose to about 28%, with almost daily protests about poor service delivery (BBC News 2018). With such debilitating effects on the economy, the question therefore is, what factors made it possible for Jacob Zuma to stay in office as president for a period of nine-years?

### **The Hegemony of South Africa's Ruling Class**

The ANC dominates the post-1994 ruling elite landscape in South Africa. The political party has a long history of agitation fashioned against White-racist supremacy ideology. It was established as a platform for representing the socio-political interests of the Black majority in South Africa but has matured into a party for all. Though there were various other political organizations, but the ANC was prominent in the fight against White-supremacist rule. Prior to the implementation of the apartheid policy in 1948, the organization had been instrumental in fighting against the Pass Laws and land grabs, including all other atrocities committed by the National Party in the early and mid-twentieth century South Africa (Macozoma, 1994, pp. 242-244).

With the promulgation of the apartheid law in 1948, the ANC became even more vociferous against White supremacist rule and became determined to change the history of South Africa forever. It was banned by the government, and thus was forced to operate underground, shielding itself and members from official persecution as much as possible. And based on the armed confrontation of the apartheid police and military, the ANC had to set up its own military wing, called Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1961 to defend its members and its cause in armed struggle with the supremacist regime (Simpson, 2016).

The organization's structure is planned on "the need to build a mass based democratic structure to enable it to fulfil its historic mission ..." (African National Congress Constitution, 2007). The branch level is the most basic arena for all members where discussions pertaining to the local community are made and decisions taken about welfare and sundry other issues. At the Regional Committee level, there are representatives of various branches that are elected for a two-year period to make policies on the direction of the party. This is preceded by the Provincial Executive Committee which is composed of elected members that serve for three-year periods. The National Executive Committee exists to run the organization on a daily basis; members are elected every five years at the

National Conference of the party where important decisions are taken which provides policy direction for the government, and perhaps more importantly where the principal officers of the party are elected into office (African National Congress Constitution, 2007).

From the structure of the ANC, the power brokers are within the ranks of the NEC. It is within the body that concrete decisions, including those related to elections and selections of decision-makers are taken. All through President Zuma's travails, the ANC National Executive was evidently protecting him from facing the consequences of his actions (Motsoeneng, 2009). In addition to the NEC, he also had strong support from the branch level where he "cut his teeth" as a revolutionary (Ceruti, 2008, pp. 107-108). Referred to sarcastically as the "cat with nine lives," some of former president Zuma's behavior after assuming the presidency fell short of expectations for such high office. Based on the massive support he received from the party, the parliament was not able to call him to order. The parliament is controlled by majority ANC members who were unwilling to sacrifice the president despite the numerous alleged atrocities. In effect, the state had become captured by the various machineries and structures put in place by Jacob Zuma, such that ousting him from office was almost impossible. His larger-than-life personality was eventually humbled when he was becoming a liability rather than asset to the party.

### **Zuma's Long Walk to Resignation**

Jacob Zuma eventually ceased to be the President of South Africa upon his resignation on the night of 14th February 2018, after nine years as president with two tenures. Prior to the event, he had relinquished the post of the President of the ANC after his second term of office expired in December, 2017.

Jacob Zuma's resignation came partly on the heels of the impact of his various corruption cases on the party. This was beginning to impact negatively on the fortunes of the party, both in the perception of the public and on the results of general elections. The party apparatchiks may have felt the need to nip in the bud the possibilities of a disastrous outing for the ANC in the 2019 general elections. ANC had begun to lose grounds to the opposition parties, which was not so much a reflection of the competence and acceptance of the opposition, but more about the inability of the ANC to coordinate itself and weather the storm of rising discontent from within and outside of the party. Just like his predecessor in office, Thabo Mbeki, the all-powerful ANC NEC had decided that in the interest of the party, President Zuma had to leave the stage (Campbell, 2018). The former president had the option of facing a vote of no confidence in parliament or taking the more honorable route of resignation. He opted for the latter.

By and large, it can be discerned that Zuma lost out in the power play because he had outlived his usefulness with his baggage of corruption allegation burden. The party oligarchy no longer needed him to protect their interests, especially when there were signals that the electorates were becoming disgruntled with the party mainly because

of Zuma's sins. What is made clear in bold relief is that South Africa does not have a competent institutionalized process of fighting corruption; there are loopholes in the system that may provide a haven for corrupt public officials. Thus, existing measures must be refurbished while novel ones must be erected to ensure effective control mechanisms against corruption in both high and low places. In this respect, the interest of the state must supersede any other interest, including that of the party oligarchy.

### **Policy Options for the Fight against Corruption in South Africa**

For a renewed focus on the war against corruption in South Africa, there may be the need for the review of the constitution. There must be clear indication of non-interference in the workings of the executive and the justice system. The justice system would have to be composed of individuals with integrity who would not allow meddling in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Furthermore, the anti-corruption institution must be provided with all the tools required for an effective campaign against corruption. The possibilities of executive meddling should be erased by ensuring that the responsibility for the appointment of officers is not restricted to the executive. For instance, Zuma allegedly appointed "a personal friend and ally to be chair of the government's anti-corruption agency" (Guha 2013, p. 7). For a fair and just fight against corruption, the anti-corruption agency must be seen as an unbiased institution with the interest of the state as the utmost priority.

Finally, South Africa would have to direct deeper focus at domesticating the relevant contents of both the Southern Africa Development Community and the African Union protocols. Working with agencies from around the continent would equally help in the processes and procedures of the anti-corruption war.

### **Conclusion**

This article is an attempt to situate the corruption issues under former president Zuma within the context of the power-play in the ruling ANC. It also highlights the elevation of the interest of the ANC far above the interest of the state. The article describes the debilitating conditions of the Zuma era, with particular focus on the role of the powerful ANC oligarchy. However, there is a call for the reawakening of the relevant segments of the society; the civil society, opposition parties, etc. to ensure that corruption is curtailed in South Africa.

With the Zuma case, the ANC has lessons to learn. Instructively, the party must clean the Augean stable. It is no longer news that the electorate have become disgruntled with the organization and the signs of worst days are ahead, hence the need to rebuild the confidence most of the electorate repose in the party. The great division occasioned by Zuma's episode would take time to disappear, it is however expected that the Ramaphosa administration would be quick to halt the impending misfortunes of the

ANC.

From all indications, the opposition parties in South Africa have not been able to live up to expectations. Beyond the grandstanding and name calling, especially by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), no radical steps taken at the time affected Zuma's position. There were verbal attacks and vituperations, but none yielded results except disruptions at parliamentary sittings and presentation of State of the Nation addresses. In the final analysis, it was all bark and no bite. The responsibility before the opposition is to support without hesitation, a constitutional amendment process that would empower the justice system. While their visible disgust at the Zuma presidency is acknowledged, the effectiveness of their actions is almost non-existent. It is clear the actions and activities of the opposition did not alter the status quo, because it only took the powerbrokers in the ANC to change Zuma. It has been argued that "South Africa's weak, ineffective, and irrelevant opposition parties are the Achilles heel of the infant democracy" (Gumede 2008, p. 271).

While the Zuma presidency wreaked havoc on the nation as indicated in the economic performance indices, civil society organizations watched the deplorable situation helplessly. There exists a climate of fear that points in the direction of weakness, docility, and ineffectiveness on the part of the civil society in South Africa. Like the loud but ineffective opposition parties, the civil society played little or no role in the determination of the fate of Zuma. Similarly, the media relinquished its role as the fourth estate of the realm. Other than sensational reportage of the events, there were no concrete actions taken to initiate or aid the anti-corruption fight. For South Africa to institutionalize an efficient anti-corruption system, all segments of the South African society would have to play conscious roles in the fight against corruption.

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