

Book Reviews

Shumba, Jabusile M, *Zimbabwe's Predatory State. Party, military and business*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2018, 210pp.

This study on the predatory ZANU-PF regime is published at the right time: Zimbabwe is focusing on political decision makers in the region and on the international level. The British government in particular is eager to cooperate with the new President, Emmerson Mnangagwa. Several political analysts from Zimbabwe, who are mainly based in South Africa and in the United Kingdom (UK), and human rights organisations warn against an inappropriate euphoria after the fall of Robert Mugabe. They underline the continuity of authoritarian rule, nevertheless some political advisors are eager to trust Mnangagwa. He promised free and fair elections before July 2018. Some UK foreign politicians interpret his 'pragmatism' and balanced speeches as a signal for new business opportunities in their former colony. United States (US) diplomats, however, demand a clear commitment to democracy, punishment of human rights violations, reduction of corruption and demilitarisation of state institutions.

These are some of the contexts and controversies which show the importance of this in-depth analysis by Jabusile M Shumba in a book based on his PhD thesis at the University of Witwatersrand. The author, a development and public policy graduate, is mainly interested in governance and human rights issues. His focus is on the interdependencies and power mechanisms of the party, military and business complex. He presents profound and well researched explanations of the patterns of accumulation, the structures of corruption and lawlessness and their implications for development problems.

The book is subdivided into eight chapters. The introduction and a conclusion give readers who are not very familiar with Zimbabwean politics a good understanding of the key issues. In addition, experts are provided with some new information on governmental structures and public policies. The main chapters deal with the mapping of Zimbabwe's predatory state, the land reform, mining, the banking and finance sector as well as the transport and energy sector. This combination of topics is unique and it broadens the perspective in comparison to many other publications that just tackle the illegal land acquisition or the diamond mines. But through his analysis of other important sectors Shumba provides evidence of the extent to which corruption and accumulation prevent economic and social development in many fields.

Based on his profound empirical findings, the author reflects on the

predatory state in the context of development theory. In this way he enables the reader to understand the wide spread corruption, the development trajectory and dysfunction of governmental institutions that are supposed to provide basic infrastructure and the prerequisites of a functioning modern economy. But in Zimbabwe, development became hijacked and transformed into an accumulation project of the power elite (high ranking politicians and former army chiefs). Based on a variety of official data, primary and secondary material and interviews, the author can show that Zimbabwe's predatory state is characterised by party and military dominance. State-business relations are shaped by domination and capture, state-society relations are structured by violence and patronage.

All chapters provide valuable historical information. It is important to be aware of how the Rhodesian settler state was structured, because powerful institutions and networks continued after 1980, when Zimbabwe gained political independence. The new political elite inherited an authoritarian state and not really altered it substantially. A new patronage system developed and a very cautious Africanisation of the civil service took place. The new political elite collaborated with white capital, not least because it feared the emergence of an autonomous domestic bourgeoisie. The few local entrepreneurs that existed were linked to the ruling party networks.

ZANU-PF rewarded its military leaders with senior positions. After their retirement they started their own businesses or they became board members of parastatal corporations or other institutions. Members of state intelligence even controlled the supposedly independent electoral commission. The author draws the reader's attention to the ongoing predominance of the Joint Operations Command that includes high-ranking representatives of the army, the police and the intelligence services. Obviously major decisions were taken clandestinely in this institution and not in parliament.

Shumba's detailed analysis of the land reform reveals who profited from the illegal farm invasions which started in 2000: 200 army officers, all cabinet ministers, 56 politbureau members, 98 members of parliament who belong to the ruling party, 35 senators, provincial governors, police officers, and members of the Central Intelligence Organisation as well as President Robert Mugabe and his wife. While these influential people helped themselves to the best farms and fertile land around the capital Harare, several thousand small scale farmers struggled in the periphery without any infrastructure or capital. This was the main reason why agricultural production declined rapidly.

The analysis of the banking sector shows that the state was reluctant to support independent indigenous capital after independence. When the finance sector was liberalised in the 1990s, new opportunities for politically linked bankers

were opened. During the hyperinflation in 2008 public confidence in the finance sector was shaken. Indeed, some bankers with close contacts with key persons in the ruling party were involved in criminal activities.

With independence the state inherited a fairly well-developed energy structure that served the industry. But there was nearly no progress to connect the previously marginalised black majority to the power grid. This did not change when the energy sector became privatised during the economic structural adjustment programme in the 1990s. These problems are described with elucidating examples. Patronage and corruption limited the viability of parastatal companies to such an extent, that they even failed to maintain the infrastructure as the precondition for economic production.

Concerning the mining sector, the author explains how the ruling party dealt with international mining companies after independence. It was very clear that ZANU would not allow local mining firms to prosper. The ruling elite prevented the emergence of an independent indigenous entrepreneurial class that could become a strong and probably oppositional power note. While the industrial and agricultural sectors imploded, small scale gold mining became a survival strategy for many Zimbabweans, who had lost their jobs. But the government criminalised them, when several thousand small scale miners were arrested in 2006 and 2007, although many had valid licences. One year later over 200 small scale diamond miners were even butchered by the army. While the army leadership concentrated on diamonds, police officers profited from gold smuggling. When army generals and Chinese investors took charge, most of the diamonds were smuggled out of the country and the tax system lost several million US dollars.

This well researched book is a timely and most welcome contribution to current debates on Zimbabwe's political and economic problems.

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