

Jacob Zuma and the New Politics of Grievance:

By

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Introduction

All politics is populist, at least to the extent that all political movements are always in the process of seeking to creating popular identities. Harry Boyte provides an excellent example of how people of different hues claim to be populists: In the 1980s, Reagan was called a populist for his calls to “return power to the people,” away from “big government.” Al Gore, who had been a member of the Congressional Populist Caucus in the 1980s, claimed to be a populist in 2000, “fighting for the people, not the powerful.” But in some ways George Bush trumped him with an alternative populist formulation: “I trust the people; my opponent trusts government.”² Similarly various politicians claim to speak on behalf of the people. Thabo Mbeki uses racial populism to explain his rather controversial policies, Tokyo Sexwale appeals to the Mandela way, and Jacob Zuma belts out Umshini Wam. The question then should not be whether Zuma is a populist or not, but what kind of populist he is, and whether that fact on its own would make him unsuitable to lead this country?

A Brief History of Populism as A Dimension of Culture

¹ This is still a working paper, prepared specifically for the purposes of the lecture but still to be modified for publication. All copyright rules apply.

² Harry Boyte, John Dewey Lecture, University of Minnesota, March 2007

The problem with public discussions of populism in South Africa is the assumption that it can only be a bad thing- that it threatens democracy. This is a rather strange assumption given the historical role populism has played as the source and fount of democracy over the past century and a half- I shall get to the negative expression of populism later. As progressive force populism in the 19th century in places as vastly different in political culture as the United States, Europe and Russia.

In the United States populism emerged as part of a farmer's movement very much in line with Jeffersonian ideals of building a yeoman republic- a vision to be contrasted with the Hamiltonian bias in favour of large industrial capital and big commercial farmers. Initially calling themselves the Alliance-men, these early populists established a popular party that challenged the dominant parties. Their central grievance was that of returning power to the people. One of the leading authorities on populism and author of *The Populist Moment*³, Lawrence Goodwyn dispels some of the prejudices against populism. He argues that based on their own experiences in the cooperatives '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.'⁴ This is against the perception that populism is an irrational movement with unreasonable demands. Goodwyn further argues that 'it was not the Alliance platform that taught the membership the realities of American politics; it was the experience they encountered in

³ Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America*, Oxford 1978. See also *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America*, Oxford University Press, 1976

⁴ Lawrence Goodwyn, "Populism and Powerlessness" in Harry Boyte and Frank Riesman, *New Populism: The Politics of Empowerment*, p26

collective assertion that proved so educational'⁵. This is a long theme in democratic theory going back to Rousseau's conception of democracy as an educative process. The well-known guild socialist GDH Cole argued that social organization was important not only because it was a vehicle for material efficiency, but also because it made possible the fullest expression of the members.⁶ John Stuart Mill argued similarly about how individuals experimented with democratic experiences in local organizations and thereby developed capacities to generalize those practices at the broader national level.⁷ The diversity of these political philosophers demonstrates that populism is not an ideology but what Ernesto Laclau calls 'a dimension of political culture.'⁸ Harry Boyte similarly argues that "populism is not a text or dogma. It has no written codes, no finished works, no canons of orthodoxy."⁹ I shall come back to the relevance of this term in describing the alliance that has emerged around Jacob Zuma.

Populism had an equally interesting life in 19th century Russia. There as well it was a response of small farmers to the growing encroachment and dominance of big agriculture and industrial capital. So fierce was this opposition that Russian populists for a long time argued that the path to socialism did not have to go through industrialization. This was of course happening within the context of a rapidly growing capitalist economy that was ravaging the very notion

⁵ Ibid., p28

⁶ GDH Cole, *Social Theory*, London: Methuen, 1920

⁷ For a discussion of Mill, Rousseau and a whole series of other early philosophers of democracy see Carole Pateman's *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970

⁸ See Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, ...

⁹ Harry Boyte, *op cit*, p305

of commons that had been central to peasant lifestyles in all of Europe. In short, the commune was the Russian populists' response to the private firm. And on this they would run against the resistance of capitalists and Marxists alike - for at the heart of Marxism was the idea that industrial development was inevitable. Marx's political and ideological heirs- Lenin and Stalin- came down heavily on the populists. Populist efforts to preserve pre-capitalist modes of production were viewed as backward and reactionary and deserving of the harshest possible treatment. Marx described peasants as 'the class that represents barbarism inside civilization.' But it was Stalin who sought to destroy not only existing populism but all memory of it.¹⁰

Populism has also had a long history in anti-colonial struggles in Africa. There is no call more populist than the Freedom Charter's assertion: "the people shall govern." It is precisely because it is a dimension of political culture and not an ideology that populism- again broadly understood as the creation of popular identities- would be shared by the black consciousness movement and the Pan Africanist Congress. There is also something that these populist movements shared with the Romantic movement- which was the intellectual foundations for populism in the 19th century. The Romantic movement played a critical role in defending populism by going to the people, and doing so by using poetry, folklore and ancient customs. In short it did all of this by appealing to the traditions of the people. The writer Lewis Nkosi drew the connection between the Romantic intellectuals and black nationalist movements by describing the latter as 'bastard

¹⁰ Gianna Pomata, "A Common Heritage: The Historical Memory of Populism in Europe and the United States, in Boyte and Riesman, op cit.

children' of Western modernity. Nkosi argues that the Romantic rebellion against Western formalism and rationalism suited black militants' desire to liberate themselves from that culture. "the instruments that lay close at hand were no different for the black writer than those which the Western artist , in his accumulating frustrations with the proprieties of Western bourgeois society, had fashioned out of a conglomeration of ideas and techniques, from Marxist economic theories to Freudian interpretation of dreams, from free association to verbal non sequiturs or surrealist techniques." Nkosi argues that 'in their efforts to liberate themselves from the 'civilized decorum' of Western culture these black writers were obliged to make use of the weapons which that culture had itself furnished points, of course, to the irony which we are at liberty to enjoy while appreciating the always underlying drama in the dialectic between colonizer and colonized."¹¹

The Denigration of Populism as Irrationality

So how did this fine tradition- populism as the creation of popular identities- come to be so misunderstood and spoken of so negatively. This is important if we are to understand why populism is also denigrated in South Africa. It is also important in understanding the tenuous relationship between the educated elite and the masses that Zuma has used as the base of his populism. In *Populist Reason*, Laclau attributes the negative and prejudicial description of populism not only to Enlightenment rationality –against which was arraigned the Romantics-

¹¹ Lewsi Nkosi, *Negritude : New and Old Perspectives*, in Lindy Stiebel and Liz Gunner, *Still Beating the Drum, Critical Perspectives on Lewis Nkosi*, 284

but also to the rise of the study of crowds under the field of mass psychology. The crowd or the masses suddenly became suspect. According to some scholars this represented a break with centuries of mutual existence between the educated and the non-educated classes throughout the medieval period. 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."¹² Ernesto Laclau puts it this way: 'populism has not only been demoted: it has also been denigrated. Its dismissal has been part of the discursive construction of a certain normality, of an ascetic political universe from which its dangerous logics had to be excluded."¹³ Marxists have always had a difficult time coming to grips with those who are outside of the production relationship- simply describing them as the lumpen proletariat. And yet these are the people who make up the people of the populist movements. And so it is that Enlightenment liberals and Marxists alike cannot comprehend the Zuma phenomenon.

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Three Populist Moments, and the Implications for the Zuma movement

As I suggested earlier populism is a dimension of political culture organized around the grievance of returning power to the people. Populists often do this in

¹² Pomata, op cit, p32

¹³ Ernesto Laclau, op cit, p19

three moves – first a whole series of disparate movements emerge to challenge the centralization of power. But a populist movement does not really emerge until all groups move to the second moment- i.e. until they have established what Laclau calls a populist frontier. This is when the frontier attracts people and groups from across the political and ideological spectrum, inside and outside the production relationship. And this is when someone like Jacob Zuma emerges to hold that 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.”¹⁴ However, the third moment is the more precarious. Once the populist movement attains power, the frontier begins to dissemble. This is precisely because the populist frontier- from BEE wanna-be’s to ethnic entrepreneurs to fugitives from the law and the ever dodgy lumpen proletariat- is not an ideologically coherent movement. Wait until Zuma has won, and see the in-fighting that will emerge among his fellow-travellers.

Where is the Populist in Zuma- Will he Return Power to the People?

There is a remarkable similarity between dismissals of Zuma as a populist and the dismissal of populists as an irrational crowd in the 19th century. In fact we could argue that the glue that held educated and uneducated together in the ANC is beginning to come apart. The elite prejudice we saw in Europe against

¹⁴ Laclau, op cit, p123

the populists as a delusional crowd is there in mainstream writings about Zuma. I may also have fallen into this trap in my treatment of Zuma. An example is an article in City Press by my colleague Achille Mbembe. Mbembe argued that Zuma is nothing more than umprofeti- and one that is similar to the 19th century prophetess Nongqause- who led her people to self-annihilation through the cattle killings of 1856. Mbembe paints a picture of Zuma as the anti-modern, anti-Christ threatening the cosmopolitan embodiment of modernity, Thabo Mbeki. Through this deployment of historical fiction the individuals and organizations that support Jacob Zuma are no longer political agents in a political debate or a populist frontier but delusional mobs fitting the description of a millenarian, eschatological movement. He suggests that the rational ANC leadership should separate from these delusional mobs.¹⁵ Nonetheless I would venture that a political assessment is more useful.

Is there anything in Zuma's politics that would lead us to believe that he is truly a populist in the finest sense of that term. My concern is that there is nothing about his public actions that suggest he is a populist- that he would return power to the people. We do not know this partly because of this rather strange phenomenon by which individual aspirants to the leadership of the ANC are not supposed to say they are being lobbied or are interested in leading their party. They go around the country campaigning, and yet will not dare suggest they are campaigning. Frankly, I don't know if this is more a commentary on them or a commentary on the South African public and our political system. It is hard to say that Zuma would bring power to the people because all he says is that he does

¹⁵ City Press article,...

not have ideas of his own separate from those of the party. The ANC speaks of a developmental state – a state that is at once autonomous and embedded in society, except that its notion of embeddedness is that of party embeddedness: “while we seek to engage private capital strategically, in South Africa the developmental state must be buttressed and guided by a mass-based, democratic liberation movement in a context in which the economy is still dominated by a developed but largely white capitalist class.”¹⁶ A populist insurrection is on the boil but the extent to which this movement would really return power to the people is anyone’s guess. Another key question is to what extent the movement will hold together at the rendezvous of victory. It is precisely because of the particularity of their original specific demands that the anti-establishment alliance will begin to dissemble. Inevitably a new government led by Zuma would create its own insiders and outsiders. Leadership becomes key in the management of the plurality of these movements. The key question becomes whether the populist leader is able to hold the alliance, or is a democrat enough to hold together the contending views that emerge as a challenge to his own rule. This is what Peter Evans calls encompassing embedded autonomy- the ability to recognize the plurality of the voices in one’s society.¹⁷ Given his travails, Zuma has often sounded as an angry and bitter man, particularly against the intellectuals and the analysts and the media. This raises the further question of whether a Zuma presidency would simply constitute pay back time? I frankly think this is inevitable, and will lead to even greater internecine conflict within the

¹⁶ ANC Policy Document on the Economy

¹⁷ Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1995

ANC. I agree that the media has often been unfair on Zuma but the bad press is not entirely of the media's making. His utterances about HIV/AIDS were not made up or foisted on him by a malevolent media. I also see someone who has demonstrated a worrying potential to surround himself with questionable characters, some of whom may not even belong to the ANC. So in the end this is not a matter of whether Zuma is a populist or not but a question of the exercise of political judgment in the pursuit of populist ideals. It is this quality that distinguishes progressive populist movements from fascist movements. Zuma is clearly not a fascist. I actually think he is a good man. But we would not be studying why good people turn into bad, if all we relied on was the goodness of the man. I just do not think he has demonstrated the kind of political judgment demanded by a complex society like ours. His constant complaints about the media are one manifestation of the lack of readiness to deal with a complex modern (or is it post-modern) in which much public and political discussion is mediated through the media. Modern leaders have to be comfortable and quite savvy with the media. The media requires engagement, not disdain. This is not because Zuma is not educated- the more educated Thabo Mbeki has demonstrated an even more profound lack of political judgment, especially when it comes to the media. .

None of this criticism should be taken to suggest that Zuma does not have the numbers to win the presidency of the ANC. If the man gets the majority of the votes, then we must in all earnestness and all honesty accept that as the will of the people. This is the democratic bargain. The worst thing we can do in reaction

to such an outcome would be to dismiss that as a reflection of a delusional mob incapable of reason. To reject such a democratic outcome would be the only guarantee that the populist movement around Zuma turns inward, defensive and authoritarian¹⁸ An important part of this equation must therefore be the role of civil society in holding whoever emerges victorious in the ANC succession battle.¹⁹

TRANSCRIPT OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON NEXT PAGE

¹⁸ For a description of how liberal regimes turn into fascist regimes see Robert Paxton's *Anatomy of Fascism*.

¹⁹ This point was not in the original presentation. I would like to thank the members of the audience for impressing it on me. Obviously it will need more elaboration. There are many other points that came up that I am busy trying to incorporate into the paper including the role of women in the ANC.

“Jacob Zuma and the New Politics of Grievance”

18 June 2007

T H Barry Lecture Theatre, Iziko Museum of Cape Town

Speaker: Dr Xolelwa Mangcu, Executive Chairman of the Platform for Public Deliberation and a Visiting Fellow at the Public Intellectual Life Project at Wits University

Dr Mangcu:

Thank you. Listening to my CV, perhaps I should consider going into politics! I'm delighted to be here, and thanks for having me. I wasn't expecting such a huge turnout, but thank you for coming tonight.

SPEECH

Questions from the floor:

1. You were saying you feel the leadership of the ANC has been partly unfair to the man. Have the courts been unfair to him as well, and can we expect more of the same in foreseeable future? Do you think that Zuma's brushes with the courts could have an impact on the leadership race, or do we have to accept that the structure of the ANC is such that the delegates have more or less made up their minds?
2. Doc, could you trace the historical development of Zuma's populism before his dismissal by the president? Secondly, it would have been great to hear you comparatively analyse Zuma alongside a couple of other populist figures. And finally, it's interesting to hear you talk about Tokyo and his shares! They seem to pop up all over the place! (*laughter*)
3. Thank you for a brilliant analysis. Have you yet identified anyone who *could* lead from the bottom up to give power back to the people?

Dr Mangcu:

Let me start with the shares. Some years ago I was working for the Steve Biko Foundation. As happens, I was approaching companies to ask for funds for the

Foundation, and I went to see a man called Mark Wilcox. He handed me a cheque for R250 000, from Mvelapanda Holdings, for the Foundation. Then he said: Tokyo is upstairs and he would like to see us. So we went up to the first and last meeting I've had with that man. Tokyo praised me for the contributions I make with my writings, and for helping to keep Biko's legacy alive.

Six months later, Wilcox called to tell me that Mvelapanda was going to set up a trust to involve community organisations in its transactions. He asked me whether I would be willing to chair such a trust. What's interesting is that my appointment to chair this trust was widely reported in the media. At that point, I was in the process of leaving the Steve Biko Foundation, and one of my main concerns in looking for a new position was financial security, because working for the Foundation was not a job I did for the salary!

So when Wilcox asked me what my next move was, I mentioned to him that I really needed to start earning a living. He immediately asked me whether I'd be interested in a share scheme, and I said of course, given my parlous finances! At that point, it didn't even occur to me that these shares were connected to a man that would later run for president.

From that point, I started to write about potential presidential candidates, and I continued to do so for about three years. Mostly, I was writing about Terror Lekota, and punting him as the next president potential, not even thinking about owning shares and thus 'owing' Sexwale something. I was punting Terror, although from the perspective of some, the natural thing would have been to punt Tokyo.

After a while, I got tired of writing. It was Peter Bruce, my editor, who persuaded me to keep going. Now, why would I want to stop if I'd been hired to play a role by Tokyo? There was never a quid pro quo between me and Tokyo, about shares. Does the fact that I own certain shares mean that I am beholden to Tokyo and that I can't be, and will not be, critical of him? Of course not.

Are there candidates that could emerge to lead? I'm not sure. I think we're in for the long haul. For myself, I think the ANC should elect either Tokyo or Cyril Ramaphosa. What I would love to see is a public debate between Tokyo and Cyril and others. But they won't do it. For me, those are the people who should be candidates in the ANC right now. You need a strong individual to put in place a lot of changes in the ANC. Tokyo has the struggle credentials, which will come into play. I would happily live under either of them as president of this country.

Does Zuma have the delegates? I don't think so. The only person who's a guarantor that Zuma will make it into the Union Buildings is actually Mbeki, ironically. As long as Mbeki is in the race, Zuma has a chance. If Zuma stands against Tokyo or Cyril, there's no way he will win. But if he stands against Mbeki, he has a chance. I wouldn't say that the delegates are in the bag.

Have the courts been unfair? I found myself saying the other day that if there's one thing I respect about South Africa, it's our courts. I studied law, and I can say that the attention to technical questions of law is supreme among judges in this country. I have read some of the judgments from both the rape trial and the dismissal of the corruption trial, and you cannot walk away feeling that those decisions were not based on sound legal argument.

Questions from the floor:

1. I liked your introduction, outlining the moments of the populist movement. What you've been saying just recently suggests to me that a coalition of dissent or grievance has been built around Zuma based on what the coalition members are against, and the glue that holds it together is a distaste for the type of leadership that Mbeki's circle has brought to the ANC in government.

The significant thing about Zuma is that he and those he represents have never presented what they are *for* and when you analyse the components of what fuels Zuma's populism, none of them can prove that their interests have been better represented by Zuma than by anyone else. Do you see that coalition breaking down in the near future, or do you see it sustaining throughout the election?

2. Individuals within the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance are not stronger than the movement. The effect of Mbeki on the thinking within the Tripartite Alliance is that things have to change, for instance: more power should be given to the secretary-general of the ANC. Now if this happens, it makes no difference who the next president is – they will not have the same powers that Mbeki has. Up until now, no individual has had the power to actually change the way the ANC works. What evidence is there that Tokyo would succeed in doing so, just because he's charming?
3. Where do you draw the line between populism and demagoguery, ie: offering what you can't deliver? In this instance, the promise is that power will be returned to the people, assuming that they ever lost power in the first place, could well be mere demagoguery.

Dr Mangcu:

One of the things always say is that what I say doesn't really matter, and that's just reality. I am not going to be able to influence branch members of the ANC to vote one way or another and I'm always so surprised at the apoplectic way in which people respond to my writing! I can give no guarantees of anything, all I do is speculate. So that is my disclaimer.

Why do I think Tokyo will be able to change more than Cyril? It's not just a matter of charm. What a lot of people are saying is that Cyril has withdrawn over the past few years, he doesn't engage with people in the ANC. Tokyo is the opposite. The way he is, he's more gregarious than Cyril, more out there, it's a personality thing.

What he's done successfully, I'm told, is build relationships with the Women's League and so on, which Cyril hasn't done. He's built relationships. When you talk of changing institutions, it's not a matter of riding roughshod over others, it's about relationships. To change the party you have to have good relationships.

What would cause the coalition to disintegrate? If Zuma is charged and people say Galema Motlante must come and take his place; that will break the alliance. The problem with a fall-back position is: what do you say to the people when you make that move? That JZ is unworkable, so we've replaced him? And second, *when* do you do that? And third, there are people who are in that coalition for Zuma, to the end. They won't compromise, because they have personal grounds for being there.

Questions from the floor:

1. My question is about the centre of government. The ANC created this constitution to guide the party's functioning. That constitution granted certain powers to the presidency. Now it looks as if the party is leaning further and further away from that constitution, searching for ways to reduce the power of the presidency. How have we landed, suddenly, with Zuma pitted against Mbeki, like two rivals, yet within one party and one government? How is it that Zuma can make speeches about how poorly the government is delivering on its promises when he himself is part of the executive?
2. One of the problems we have with understanding the succession race is that we've no idea how the ANC works internally. What are the dynamics of the ANC branches? How do they work? By your analysis, how will the eventual leader of the party emerge? Where will the basis of that decision lie? Is there truth in the myth of smoke-filled rooms, or will he come from properly elected delegates, who each have an equal vote, and so on?
3. There is a concern that although Tokyo is being punted for the job, he's not popular within the branches of the ANC, which will send delegates to actually vote the leader in. So is Tokyo a sure thing? I also want clarity on your assumption that Zuma is not going to be able to bring government back to the people.
4. My question is about the backwardness of black South Africans. Do you believe that black South Africans, especially the youth, are powerless?

Dr Mangcu:

I have no idea how the ANC works. I really don't. The best amongst us can only guess. Presumably branches will each send delegates to the conference in Polokwane, and depending on its size, each province has a certain number of votes. The way it has worked in the past is that, if the Eastern Cape decided they would vote for Zuma, then he would be assured of 400 seats in the bag. But now in the Eastern Cape, the ANC is divided in the middle, so things are not so clear. You'd have to do the arithmetic for each province and try and calculate which candidate would get the votes.

But the way it actually works is that the fact that someone is popular amongst the branches is no guarantee that the branches will actually vote for them. This is because of the power of the provincial structures. Those are the real seats of power, not the branches. Because the provincial executive committees are the people who are going to be the government of that province, if they say to a particular branch: we think it would be good for you to vote in a certain way, that branch will be very inclined to do so.

So it's a question of the relationship between the provincial executives and the branches. The other problem is that you go behind a curtain to vote, and so no-one knows who you've actually voted for. It's an anachronistic system that isn't going to last. This touches on the question about youth earlier – these kind of opaque, dated and unsatisfactory systems are going to be increasingly unpopular, with the youth in particular, and they could mean that in 20 years time, we have a party governing without legitimacy.

I don't know whether Tokyo is a sure thing or not. Perhaps Tokyo has more power with the provincial executives than with the branches, in which case he has a chance. If it's just the branches then Zuma has a better chance. But there are no guarantees about anything. I could be wrong. I think that people like Tokyo or Cyril can only win if they form coalitions, and that will only happen if Mbeki steps down and his people are freed up to join either Tokyo or Cyril.

The question regarding people leaning away from the constitution of the ANC - there's a saying that we do the most damage to ourselves under the leaders we love the most. Many of these issues about degrees of power, systems used and so on, are not in the constitution of the ANC, but are policy decisions that have to be made in the next few weeks, and some believe that Zuma will make his final drive over that period. I really think it's going to be between those four people: Mbeki, Tokyo, Cyril, Jacob.

At this point, a woman candidate isn't going to happen. Having a female candidate win under these circumstances would be like handing her a poison chalice. Who are the possibilities? There's no way that Phumzile Mlabo-Ngcuka has the support of the ANC. Perhaps as the deputy president, Nkosazana-Zuma has a chance.

The issue of the deputy-president is another interesting area that no-one speaks about. The reason it's interesting is precisely because of what's happening between Mbeki and Zuma right now – deputies often make the assumption that they will become president later. Suddenly that career path is open to doubt! Personally, I don't want Nkosazana-Zuma to become president, and I'm saying that based on her track record in government.

The bottom line is that something has to change within our political system. There are too many good people locked out by the system. And, one thing about Tokyo: he's the only one of all these people who has come out and admitted that he's been lobbied. It's ridiculous that we have all these adults lobbying and being lobbied, and yet no-one will admit to it! At least Tokyo admitted to it, said that he would consider the position, and set out the things he believes in. The others just stay silent.

Questions from the floor:

1. If the ANC leadership is in the process of crumbling, will it be able to resurrect itself, and thus what is the future of the ANC in this country? To go back to your take on a woman president, and I'd like you to share with us the deeper elements that are sitting in the ANC, informing your attitude. My other question is: we say power back to the people, but aren't we seeing just another struggle between men, fighting for over power for themselves?
2. I believe there are women who can be president, but the question is: within the ANC, are these women independent politically, or are they still being controlled by men? It perturbs me, what you say, that there is just no possibility of a woman president right now. However, I find myself agreeing with you, I don't see it happening either. Regarding Zuma, what will happen in December, if he doesn't succeed? What will happen to his followers? Do you think he'd leave the ANC and start his own organisation?
3. Regarding the nature of populism: in your view is there any ingredient particular to South Africa which would make a populist regime succeed and improve the nation we live in? In Europe, all populist regimes ultimately led to conflict and often war (look at the English and French revolutions). What could make South Africa different?

Dr Mangcu:

Not to be pedantic, but I think the English and French revolutions predate the rise of populism as we know it. What's interesting about the rise and consolidation of democracy in Europe is that it was very violent, and the idea that the Europeans were better than the rest of humanity and thus discovered democracy is silly.

There's a dimension about returning power to the people which I left out, and that is civil society. When we think about a regime (and by that I mean a collection of bodies and institutions all participating in governing a society) you get populism when you have a regime with people inside government who are well-disposed to democracy, and people outside of government that are always agitating for improvement, and are always questioning. These elements are essential for power to lie with the people.

What will happen to Zuma and his followers? Well, much the same thing that happens to all of us! We all have to fend our ways through life, we all have to wake up each morning and try and find meaning in what we do. This idea that someone has to take care of someone else is what leads to corruption and all of that. I'm not worried about what happens to Zuma and his followers, actually. I don't lie awake at night about that.

The fact that a woman is not going to win in this election is just a statement of fact, not of values and certainly not of my own preferences. Interestingly, many people have said that the one who destroyed the idea of women in power was Mbeki himself. He empowered *some* women, but his choices were terrible. Where are the great women that the ANC used to be famous for?

There is a contradiction, somehow, in the way in which the whole gender thing has evolved. There will always be a problem when it's men driving it – if someone else is driving the process, you are never really in charge. Someone has also said to me the ANC Women's League is the most powerful and organized component of the party right now, and that they will decide the future leader. If that is the case, Zuma has no chance. They will oppose Zuma.

Is the ANC crumbling? All political parties throughout time have crumbled. The ANC has real historians in it, but it seems to escape them that all big political parties at some point start to crumble. What we need to figure out is: how do you develop an electoral system that regulates political competition over time, without depending on whether the parties themselves are playing fair? That is the long term question.

END

