

BOOK REVIEW

Ramaphosa's turn: Can Cyril save South Africa?

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Ralph Mathekga

Paballo Moerane
University of Kwa Zulu-Natal
moeranep@ukzn.ac.za

The book themed and titled *Ramaphosa's turn: Can Cyril save South Africa?* Is a necessary book as the “new dawn” has dawned upon us and many South Africans are desperate for a corruption free and economically healthy country after the Zuma era. The introduction intrigues the reader with critical questions such as “why should a billionaire businessman want to be president of a volatile society with such deep inequalities as ours?” herein, is the genesis of understanding how Ramaphosa “won the presidency, but lost the power play” (p. 16.), and how he will manoeuvre his saving of the country as many desperately need him to. The introduction further lays down the thorns that could make his reign difficult, example, an ideologically divided African National Congress (ANC).

The book begins with a chapter aptly titled, The Battle of Nasrec. This looks into the battle of the soul of the ANC. Zuma's involvement in grand corruption (What has come to be known as State Capture) resulted in the country's cry of him stepping down and some in the ANC made this call. Nasrec was Zuma's fight back through Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and to say they did not have numbers would be a blunt lie. This chapter beautifully captures how Zuma fought back and said anti-Zuma campaigns are from White monopoly capital (WMC), and thus, it was imperative for the party to fight for Radical Economic Transformation (RET). The author makes an interesting triangulation of the Zuma-camp; anti-Zuma camp and the so-called premier league which outsmarted both factions. It teaches us that beyond factions, there are powerful and focused interest groups with parasitic characteristics within the party (these are clearly described throughout the book). When Ramaphosa realised that his camp did not have sufficient power to take him all the way to victory (p. 29), we learn of the *Tiki Taka* nature of the premier league which assisted Ramaphosa in winning the presidential vote. Perhaps this is the first phase of knowing the real Cyril Ramaphosa. The negotiator and the trade unionist, how far was

Cyril willing to go for his presidency?

The author reminds us that Ramaphosa is a complex leader. In our quest to understand why a billionaire wants to lead a fragmented nation, the United Democratic Front (UDF), Unionism, his work on the National Development Plan (NDP) and his negotiation skills that produced the constitution of 1996 are tools detailed to give a glimpse of the nature of our leader. “He has demonstrated that he could improvise and adapt to different contexts and the demands of different institutions” (p. 45). His improvisation and adaptability are shown when he breaks a ‘deal’ with the not so credible premier league. How the premier league needs Ramaphosa to cleanse themselves is detailed in chapter 5, however what the book still needs to answer is “What is in it for Ramaphosa”? Chapter 2 answers this question in not so many words “Ramaphosa’s key agenda is not clear”.

Chapter Three poignantly reminds us that we are a fragmented nation. Yes, the ANC has been battling to position itself as more than a liberation movement (p. 45); it has battled to assert itself as a party capable of managing a complex society (p. 62); there has been shortfalls of the democratic system and Zuma years have left the country and its institutions battered and bruised. Herein, the author reminds us that even with no clear agenda or the quandary of whether to please the ANC or the broader society, South Africa urgently needs remedies in a form of innovative policies for challenges such as inequality, poverty and unemployment. Ramaphosa and the ANC are cautioned of their inward approach and are soundly advised on an outward approach for the benefit of the broader society. Ramaphosa has confidently stated that he aims and hopes to implement the NDP, which could result in a fragmented relationship with the alliance partners due to its Neo-liberal nature. The book outlines the “critical but stable” relationship Ramaphosa has with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The deep policy differences between Ramaphosa and the alliance partners prove that their relationship was found on getting rid of Zuma. With Zuma gone, they all need to discuss the basic conditions of the “new dawn” (p. 70) otherwise the limping alliance will prove to be a headache for Cyril.

In order to “save” South Africa, the book shows that Ramaphosa needs friends, important questions arise, who are Ramaphosa’s friends? Is he indebted to the premier league? Will he forge his own agenda? This chapter lays down Ramaphosa’s strange conglomeration with interest groups (p. 77)

which does not give him absolute power. He, to date, as both ANC and president of the country continues to navigate uncertainty between the competing agendas and interests of the people who surround him within the ANC. Can Cyril win 2019 elections? Was a necessary question as his campaign had more traction outside the ANC than inside? South Africa was desperate for recovery as the past decade was infested with corruption and lethargy within government. This chapter reminds us that the level of degeneration needed the ANC to ask for forgiveness from South Africans (p. 114). For the first time since democratic South Africa the ANC was uncertain of a majority win, the 2016 local government elections were humbling for the gigantic movement and thus, realised they needed Ramaphosa's "cleanliness". Even if the ANC won elections, this chapter argues that they do not need a strong majority as this will not give them room to self-correct and for Ramaphosa's agenda to thrive (p. 112). The 57.5% win (the lowest since 1994) is clear that the ANC needs cleansing and repositioning as the book predicted. Indeed, Gauteng was interesting to watch as the book suggests, the party hanged on a thread. Ramaphosa had to rekindle this relationship (the middle class) which saw the party make it with a mere 50.19%.

The book, in the rural voter game chapter prompts the reader to engage in scholarly rural studies. A significant part of the population in South Africa exists as rural and urban communities, therefore, rural voters want the same returns as urban voters. The rural areas have been neglected for too long, and even though ANC may have strong majority in these areas, they risk losing the ground if they do not fix themselves. The notion that "rural communities are isolated, lack meaningful contact with the dynamic economic and social world experienced in urban areas" (p. 122) is diminishing as rural communities have access to mass media and are able to consume near similar-information. Ramaphosa's demeanour appeals to the private sector and the middle class (clever blacks). He needs to also appeal to the needs of rural communities as they are also able to define their own struggles. It is imperative for Ramaphosa to craft policies that speak to the economics of the rural communities (p. 122).

Theorising Kwa Zulu-Natal (KZN) as a "headache" for Ramaphosa, which was proven to be true pre and post elections was intellectually argued. The author outlines the multi-layered complexities of factionalism and ethnicity in the province. The book was published before the 2019 general elections, it is interesting to see the thoughts prior to the elections. For example, the author predicts a decline of KZN voters which came to

live as ANC moved from 65.31% in 2014 to 54.22% in 2019. This chapter posits that Zuma still (to date) enjoys support in the province and it is no secret that ANC KZN was not happy with his axing and Nasrec loss. I am reminded of a factional popular song *Wenzeni uZuma, wena ulawulwa ipropaganda* (what did Zuma do, you are led by propaganda). Interestingly, Zuma left office asking “What did I do?” The lukewarm response by Ramaphosa has not provided a solid stance on Zuma’s corruption and therefore state capture. This is clearly outlined in chapter 10, knitting the increasing complexities of state capture which reveals the involvement of both the public and the private sector. While others have called for the enquiry to be widened to colonial and apartheid era, others have called for it to just focus on the Guptas. The chapter concludes, that however way the enquiry deals with the interrogation private sector should not be left out.

The chronology and synchronised nature of the book at this point (Chapters 11 and 12) provides the reader with a platform to interweave Ramaphosa’s worldviews and the private sector. Using Ramaphosa’s promises to the international community about Zuma’s exit, the author hypothesises that Ramaphosa is an internationalist and a private sector darling. He argues that ever since his ANC presidency and that of the country, he has been on a mission to draw South Africa closer to the international community, especially when it comes to the economic policy. Ramaphosa’s close associations to multinational companies (McDonald and Lonmin) makes him an ally to the west, posing a threat to the BRICS project and consequently the RET agenda. Ramaphosa needs a clear criteria for advances with other powers (p. 160) and must justify why his worldview is in the interest of South Africa. Chapter 12 reminds us of the elephant in the room being the private sector. The call for this sector to transform dates back to Mandela era and they felt punished by the Zuma’s reign.

Leading to Nasrec and general elections, the private sector preferred Ramaphosa and has thus, found difficulty in making both the ANC as per Conference resolutions and the private sector happy. For example, the call for expropriation of land without compensation makes the ANC happy, however a disclaimer of making sure that this does not destabilise food security and the economy gives Ramaphosa and the private sector time to stall the process. To date, the president has not according to this demonstrated that he controls the RET narrative. Drawing developments from the state capture enquiry, the author concludes arguing that the private sector needs to play a better role in democratic South Africa and should

not be left to self-regulate. Ramaphosa is again warned that he needs to set out the conditions of his relationship with the private sector or what RET forces would call “White Monopoly Capital”.

The author seeks to conclude the book by drawing the reader into the soul battle of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), we are reminded that these enterprises (Eskom, SAA, PRASA, Post Office) are embroiled in corruption, financial mismanagement and shadows of government failures. The author shows how political and business elites have brought these enterprises to a state of dysfunctionality and thus, the dominant narrative emanating from the private sector for the privatisation of SOEs. Ramaphosa has made it his mission to clean and bring integrity back into SOEs. Interestingly, taps into the apartheid regime and shows that SOEs have the potential of being fully functional and of service to society as the apartheid government was able to use them to tackle unemployment and poverty amongst those it served.

This book is certainly a valuable and useful source on understanding the dynamics and complexities within the ANC and the broader society. It is well written and provides insights on who and what Ramaphosa stands for. The contents of the book give nexuses on state capture, private sector, the voting game, who surrounds the president etc. The style, language and approach of the book are of a high quality, particularly with regards to the challenging subjects of Ramaphosa and the tripartite alliance, the private sector and the SOE dilemma, and the author thus, should be applauded. The book is thought provoking and bone pinching, it provides an intellectual discourse on various topical political issues.