

Editorial Comment

## The recall of Thabo Mbeki

Friday 26 September 2008, by [Amandla!](#) (Date first published: 25 September 2008).

The recall of Thabo Mbeki by the National Executive committee of the ANC has less to do with his performance and policies he put in place as President and more to do with the internal conflicts in the ANC.

These conflicts have to do with the allegations of corruption linked to the arms deal and in the struggle for leadership inside the ANC in a context where leadership and position are important in securing economic empowerment. Amandla adds its voice to the many calling for a full investigation into the Arms Deal so that those guilty of corruption can be prosecuted and those falsely accused can be cleared. Without a full and transparent investigation the stench of corruption will follow those fingered to high office and will affect everything they do.

It is ironic that the very pro market policies driven by Thabo Mbeki at the expense of alternative possibilities for social redistribution of wealth created the environment in which a black elite could grow and whose struggle over the empowerment deals often exacerbates existing tensions and conflicts and gives rise to competing camps.

The Zuma camp, which challenged and defeated Mbeki's attempt to retain power in the ANC, is the emergence of this process aligning with a number of disgruntled individual and forces that have suffered at the hands of Mbeki's authoritarianism and tendency to marginalise all those that disagreed with him. COSATU and the SACP constitute a left-wing of this camp which can be characterised as populist with strong tendencies towards intolerance of those that do not share its point of view. Their pragmatic statements denying that they will change economic policies suggests they do not pose a real alternative to the anti-working class policies of the Mbeki government. Zuma himself has no record in government both as Deputy President and as MEC for Finance in the KwaZulu Natal government of opposing neoliberal policies

If Mbeki's recall had anything to do with his policies and style of leadership he should have been recalled a long time ago. He should have been fired for economic policies that left the structure and ownership of the economy largely unchanged. The set of policies like GEAR and others that liberalised the economy have been responsible for unemployment doubling, poverty increasing and inequality worsening since the end of apartheid. His AIDS policies resulted in the avoidable death of hundreds of thousands of AIDS sufferers that were denied proper medication, nutrition and access to basic services.

Progressive movements and forces must use the space that has been created by the removal of Mbeki and the formation of a new government under Kgalema Motlanthe to debate what policies are needed to address the problems of mass poverty, unemployment and overcome a situation where South Africa has become the most unequal country in the world. Failure to shift policy from those of Mbeki will simply create a new round of division, conflict and social upheaval.

We cannot forget that our country has just experienced a wave of xenophobic attacks against sections of the population that live under conditions of extreme vulnerability. Everyday more and more people are becoming more insecure and marginalised. Conditions are ripe for the rise of

demagogic, populist and reactionary tendencies of which xenophobia is just one expression. Racism, communalism and ethnic violence can easily burst forth unless we change direction fundamentally. The struggle for social justice is as relevant as ever.

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**P.S.**

\* Published as an editorial in Amandla!, issue 2, 2008.