

## **Mugabe to Boost Zezuru Clan Power**

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With an election victory behind him, president now sets sights on bolstering his clan.

Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe, having guided his ruling ZANU PF party to another parliamentary victory, will move quickly to consolidate the control of his small Zezuru ethnic clan over the other clans that make up the larger Shona tribal group.

Hidden from the view of most of the foreign correspondents who arrived to report last month's sixth Zimbabwe general election has been a bitter intra-ZANU PF war between the Zezuru and the bigger Karanga clan.

As Mugabe's confidence grew that the election had been fixed in ZANU PF's favour, so the intensity grew behind the scenes of the Zezuru-Karanga struggle.

The daggers of Mugabe and his Zezuru henchmen were particularly drawn to get Emmerson Mnangagwa, the once powerful ZANU PF secretary for legal affairs, speaker of parliament and most influential Karanga leader.

Mnangagwa, long touted until recently as Mugabe's eventual successor as president, was to be toppled in a carefully drawn Zezuru plot after the election. But it has proved unnecessary because Mnangagwa was beaten in his Kwekwe constituency by a candidate of the opposition MDC.

"We want Mnangagwa out, totally out," a senior source in the Zezuru faction told IWPR before polling day. "We are hoping and crossing our fingers that he loses his Kwekwe seat. If he does, that will be the end of him. He is not going to be lucky this time."

To outsiders the great tribal split in Zimbabwe appears to be most visibly that between the Shonas and the Ndebele - the latter an offshoot of the Zulus of South Africa who now largely occupy the dry western part of the country. But Zimbabweans themselves have long known that the critical ethnic and cultural divide - the one that will in the long run decide the fate of their troubled state - is between the distinctly different Shona clans.

The Shona, who began arriving from west central Africa more than a thousand years ago, share a mutually intelligible language. But ethnically they are not homogenous. Between the clans there is a diversity of dialects, religious beliefs and customs.

The five principal clans are the Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Ndaou and Korekore. Of these, the biggest and most powerful clans are the Karanga and the Zezuru. The Karanga are the largest clan, accounting for some 35 per cent of Zimbabwe's 11.5 million citizens. The Zezuru are the second biggest, and comprise around a quarter of the total population.

The Karanga provided the bulk of the fighting forces and military leaders who fought the successful 1972-80 chimurenga (struggle) that secured independence and black majority rule. Nevertheless, the ZANU movement - since renamed ZANU PF - was led by a Zezuru intellectual with several degrees, Mugabe, who did not do any fighting.

Clan differences surfaced with a vengeance in late 2004, after Mugabe filled every top position in the state with members of his Zezuru clan and pushed out the Karangas.

One of the last prominent Karangas in Mugabe's administration, Foreign Minister Stan Mudenge, is almost certain to be sacked when Mugabe announces his new governing team. He will be replaced by Tichaona Jokonya, a Zezuru who was formerly a diplomat but who won a parliamentary seat in the March election.

The Karangas, who know that their men won the chimurenga, are angry but emasculated. How they will react to Mugabe's consolidation of Zezuru power is at present difficult to predict.

There are three other Shona clans - the Manyika, Ndau and Korekore. Of these, the Manyika, from the Eastern Highlands, are the largest with perhaps 1.8 million of the 11.5 million Zimbabwean people.

Mugabe intends wooing the Manyika by appointing one of their number, Oppah Muchinguri, as speaker of parliament in succession to Mnangagwa. In the murky world of ZANU PF internal politics, Muchinguri holds a powerful and dangerous card. In the bloody war that preceded Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, she was personal assistant to the ZANU guerrilla army chief, General Josiah Tongogara.

Just weeks before independence, Tongogara died in a mysterious and as yet unexplained car accident in Mozambique. Muchinguri has never spoken about the circumstances of Tongogara's death, which is cloaked in mystery, suspicion and rumour. Mugabe has kept Muchinguri close to him, and her elevation will further secure her silence.

It will also help quell discontent in Manicaland, whose representatives at the ZANU PF electoral congress last December cast their votes for Mnangagwa against Mugabe's chosen Zezuru candidate, Joyce Mujuru, for the newly created state post of second vice president. The Manyika provincial chairman of ZANU PF, Mike Madiro, was subsequently expelled from the party along with five other non-Zezuru provincial chairmen.

Assuming Muchinguri does become speaker of parliament, every other top post in the land will be held by Zezurus.

Mugabe's other vice president, Joseph Msika, is a Zezuru. Defence Minister Sydney Sekeramayi, who is also Mugabe's spymaster, is a Zezuru, as are the chiefs of the three main security forces.

Armed Forces chief General Constantine Chiwenga - whose highly combative wife Jocelyn threatened to eat a white farmer at the height of the 2000-2004 farm invasions - replaced a veteran Karanga fighter, General Vitalis Zvinavashe.

The Air Force chief is Air Marshal Perence Shiri, former commander of the notorious North Korea-trained Fifth Brigade, which in 1983 swept through Matabeleland destroying entire Ndebele villages and murdering more than 20,000 civilians. Shiri, also known as Black Jesus, christened his campaign against the Ndebele with a Shona word, Gukurahundi, meaning "the early rain that washes away the chaff before the spring rains".

Mugabe has since rewarded Shiri - who replaced a Karanga - with three confiscated white farms.

The national police chief is Commissioner Augustine Chihuri, a Zezuru who has publicly declared his

personal unwavering support for Mugabe and ZANU PF.

Further enhancing his grip on power, Mugabe has placed control of the electoral process since 1985 in the hands of his fellow Zezuru - Tobaiwa Mudede, the all-powerful registrar general. Mudede has been in charge of all Zimbabwe's electoral bodies and has been widely accused of rigging all elections for the past 20 years in favour of Mugabe, who has rewarded him with two former white-owned commercial farms.

The judiciary also is in the hands of the Zezuru. Godfrey Chidyausiku, a Zezuru, was appointed chief justice in 2001 after Mugabe toppled his predecessor, Anthony Gubbay, one of the last white Zimbabweans on the bench. With Chidyausiku's appointment came the gift of the 895-hectare Estees Park farm, north of Harare, newly confiscated from its white owner. Chidyausiku has ensured that all judges conform to Mugabe's decrees and has appointed two Zezuru relatives as High Court judges to help him.

One of Zimbabwe's most independent judges, Justice Benjamin Paradza, a Karanga, was forced out of office. Justice Moses Chinhengo, another Karanga constantly criticised by Mugabe's ministers for his independent judgments, resigned in disgust and said, "I hope that in future I will be able to serve Zimbabwe in another capacity as the call of duty may demand."

The Karanga are concentrated mainly in the Masvingo and Midlands provinces. Ironically, outgoing Home Affairs Deputy Minister Rugare Gumbo, a Karanga from Mberengwa, several hundred kilometres west of Masvingo town, is being groomed as one of the new Karanga ZANU PF "godfathers".

During one of the periods of internal ZANU bloodletting in its pre-independence exile years in Mozambique and Zambia, Gumbo was imprisoned in an underground dungeon from the mid-1970s until in 1980. His political comeback was engineered by the late vice president Simon Muzenda, a powerful Karanga, who Mugabe always used to cool anti-Zezuru sentiment among the Karangas.

Joseph Chinembiri is the pseudonym of an IWPR journalist in Zimbabwe.

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