

Change of guard: On Jacob Zuma's ouster

[Jacob Zuma's resignation](#) as South Africa's President brings an opportunity to start cleaning up its government and institutions. The 'Teflon' president, a moniker the 75-year-old earned for his survival skills, finally gave in to weeks of pressure from his own party, the African National Congress, ending an almost nine-year-long, scandal-hit presidency marred by hundreds of allegations and charges of fraud, money laundering and racketeering. Despite having survived eight no-confidence motions, Mr. Zuma had little choice this time as his own party asked him to resign, with ANC legislators looking inclined towards even a no-confidence motion against him in parliament. The growing pressure on Mr. Zuma was also visible on some of those who allegedly colluded with him, notably [the India-born Gupta brothers](#) whose home in the swish Saxonwold suburb of Johannesburg was raided by the police on Wednesday. The trio — Ajay, Atul and Rajesh Gupta — whose business interests range from mining to media and technology have been accused of using their ties with Mr. Zuma to enable "state capture" by possessing inside information, influencing ministerial appointments and swinging multimillion-dollar state contracts. The timing of the raids was hardly a coincidence. The ANC is only too aware of the need to get its house in order before the 2019 general election. Putting Mr. Zuma through a no-confidence motion would have further exposed a party that went from leading South Africa out of apartheid to administering a system and country characterised by high levels of inequality and corruption and a flagging economy, with 30% unemployment and low growth.

The way is now clear for the [reformist veteran Cyril Ramaphosa](#), the new President. He has been a trade union leader, a key figure in the anti-apartheid movement and a close associate of Nelson Mandela. He led the effort to draft the country's new constitution in 1994 and was an MP in the first post-apartheid parliament. With the ANC choosing Thabo Mbeki as Mandela's successor in 1999, Mr. Ramaphosa's presidential ambitions were dashed, and he focussed on his businesses instead — today, he is one of South Africa's wealthiest black businessmen. In December, he won a close and bitter contest against Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Mr. Zuma's ex-wife, to become ANC's leader, and has now been given a shot at leading South Africa. Mr. Ramaphosa has spoken of a new phase and about prioritising the economy. This, in addition to his background in politics and business, gives reason to believe that South Africa has a significant opportunity for a change in direction and speed. However, whether and to what extent the new leadership will allow the law to independently take its course with regard to Mr. Zuma remains to be seen.

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