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ABOUT THE COMPANY

DaMina is a preeminent independent frontier markets risk research, due diligence and Africa M&A transactions consulting firm.

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DaMina Advisors Note: Mrs Mugabe grabs top party spot to break deadlock over stalled succession. She may cut deal to forcibly retire 90-year old Mugabe.

Seeking to break the stalled decade-long presidential succession in Zimbabwe, Mrs Grace Mugabe, who has until now abstained from holding any executive role within the ruling Zanu-PF party is now poised to be elected leader of the revolutionary party's women's wing. At a weekend celebration of her 49th birthday, key leaders unanimously endorsed her to take over the presidency of the powerful women's wing at the upcoming party congress. From this influential position Grace Mugabe will move from playing a marginal behind-the-scenes role to a becoming a central figure in the country's political drama over Mugabe's succession. Grace favors a compromise "third way" candidate such as former Central Bank Governor Gideon Gono or even Information Minister Jonathan Moyo as Mugabe's successor rather than the two feuding leading candidates - 59 year old popular Vice President Joyce Mujuru and 67-year old security apparatchik Justice Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa. Both were conspicuously absent from the festive weekend affair.

Jockeying by the Mnangagwa and Mujuru factions have completely paralyzed the Zimbabwean cabinet, divided the Zanu-Pf politburo, fractured the top echelons of the military and made it impossible to cohesively tackle the re-deteriorating economy. As the health of the 90 year old president has declined, his long-term political interests have diverged from that of his young wife. (Robert Mugabe is 41 years older than his wife. When he first became prime minister in 1980, his wife Grace was only 15 years old). With the Machiavellian, but ailing Robert Mugabe, seemingly unperturbed about the paralysis, and happy to play along, Grace Mugabe, more worried about the fate of her children in a post-Mugabe era, and determined to secure her new found wealth is bent on breaking the stalled stalemate over the succession so her husband can retire in peace, and her children and personal wealth can be protected in safety.

Playing a role not too dissimilar from that which Mrs Edith Wilson played in the 1920s when her husband, President Woodrow Wilson become physically incapacitated, Mrs Grace Mugabe may yet emerge as a 'shadow president' in Zimbabwe. In her 1939 memoir, Mrs Wilson gave a peak into the enormous un-constitutional powers she wielded.

Mrs Wilson in her own words said,

"I studied every paper sent from the different Secretaries or Senators, and tried to digest and present in tabloid form the things that, despite my vigilance, had to go to the President. I, myself, never made a single decision regarding the disposition of public affairs. The only decision that was mine was what was important and what was not, and the very important decision of when to present matters to my husband." (Wilson, Edith Bolling Galt. My Memoir. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1939).

Mrs Grace Mugabe is without a doubt now playing such a pivotal role in Zimbabwe. By tightly managing access to the president and having been previously served as Mugabe's personal secretary before their marriage in 1996, she remains intimately aware of the levers of power.

Mrs Mugabe's surprise move may yet signal that president Mugabe's health may be fast deteriorating. Ironically with her previously publicly stated concern for the president's health, the emergence of Grace to frontline Zimbabwean politics may make it easier for a factional deal to be reached within the Znu-Pf party and with the security services chiefs to forcibly retire Mugabe and install a compromise figure. In short, the much much awaited political transition to a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe has finally begun.

For more in-depth analysis on Zimbabwe, kindly contact us.

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