

# Assessing South Africa's "Quiet Diplomacy" Towards Zimbabwe: Strengths and Weaknesses

By

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- As the candidate's Supervisor I have approved this dissertation/thesis for submission

Professor Laurence Piper

Signed: Laurence Piper.....

## ABSTRACT

The research project begins with the land reform programme in Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2008. Under colonialism Britain took most arable land from the indigenous Zimbabweans and gave it to the white (minority) settler population. The research attempts to look at how, after independence, President Robert Mugabe has handled the issue of land in an effort to reverse this situation. Some of the consequences of land reform include the collapse of the economy, political instability and social incoherence. Together, these consequences have led to the 'crisis' to describe social and political life in Zimbabwe. Most importantly, the project analyses South Africa's approach in dealing with this 'crisis'. Therefore, South Africa's approach has become the key subject upon which this project will be focused.

Initially, the approach that was adopted and implemented by South African government towards Zimbabwe was termed "Quiet Diplomacy". The reasons for this approach are several. Firstly, this approach was one way of respecting the sovereignty of Zimbabwe. In other words, this was an attempt to honour and respect the internal affairs of Zimbabwe. Secondly, Thabo Mbeki's government was of the view that using economic muscle to sanction Zimbabwe would worsen the situation because Zimbabwe is dependent on South Africa in terms of electricity supply and other resources. However, as Quiet Diplomacy appeared to be ineffectual in halting Zimbabwe's slide into further disarray, much criticism has been generated. Critics state that the approach is not working, and it has made the situation worse in Zimbabwe.

In addition, the study, therefore, has hypothesised that: "Quiet Diplomacy" is not a viable approach to deal with the Zimbabwean crisis. In making this claim, the study observes both the strengths and weaknesses of "quiet diplomacy". Finally, the study also seeks to make possible options (other than quiet diplomacy) that South African government should have considered. In the end, the study intends to make recommendations such as 'smart' sanctions that could be used to address the situation in Zimbabwe.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

African National Congress	ANC
African Union	AU
Confederation of South African Trade Unions	COSATU
Democratic Alliance	DA
Gross Domestic Product	GDP
International Monetary Fund	IMF
Movement for Democratic Change	MDC
New Partnership for Africa's Development	NEPAD
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation	NATO
Patriotic Front	PF
South African Communist Party	SACP
Southern African Development Committee	SADC
Unilateral Declaration of Independence	UDI
United Nations	UN
United States of America	USA
United States	US
Zimbabwe African National Union	ZANU
Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front	ZANU-PF
Zimbabwe African People's Union	ZAPU
Zimbabwe Electoral Commission	ZEC
Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association	ZNLWVA

# Chapter One

## Introduction

Zimbabwe (formerly known as Rhodesia) is a country that has had two distinct and competing political dispensations, namely, colonialism (prior to 1980) and independence (after 1980). Basically, it was Britain that colonised the territory that later became Zimbabwe, beginning in the 1890s and ending following a war of liberation from settler governance in 1980. This imperial conquest was largely aimed at acquiring and having control over land, resources, and including the change of culture. For instance, Mungazi argued that British colonisation of Zimbabwe, and indeed, other countries in Africa, constituted both cultural invasion and an act of violence<sup>1</sup>. Mungazi insisted that colonial domination, by its very nature, is violent<sup>2</sup>. Thus under colonial rule, the Africans of Southern Africa were particularly unable to participate in the government of the colony. According to Campbell, colonialism was anti-democratic and militaristic<sup>3</sup>. In pre-independence Zimbabwe, the freedom of the people was sharply reduced by the colonial state, which was effectively organised to ensure exploitation of the majority of the people. Of all the possible adverse effects that colonialism had on African countries, Mungazi was of the opinion that there were two significant effects, namely, a group of colonizers create an environment from which it seeks to reduce invaded to a level of political domination, and the second is that it utilizes the view of its own superiority to impose its own culture on the

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<sup>1</sup> Mungazi, D.A (1992) *Colonial Policy and Conflict in Zimbabwe A Study of Cultures in Collision, 1890-1979*, New York: Crane Russak, p.11

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Campbell, H (2003), *Reclaiming Zimbabwe The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*, Johannesburg: David Phillip Publishers, p.299

invaded<sup>4</sup>. Further, Mamdani cited by Alexander argued that colonial rule created a 'bifurcated state' that distinguished between citizens on the one hand and subjects on other<sup>5</sup>. Post-colonial states seem to have succeeded in de-racialising but not democratising, instead reifying the authoritarian characteristics of indirect rule in a variety of ways<sup>6</sup>. According to Mahmood Mamdani, "this, not economic inequity, was colonialism's most dangerous legacy, and it stands as the key obstacle to democratisation, political stability, and an accountable state"<sup>7</sup>.

In terms of the economic system, Zimbabwe was a tremendously rich country in agriculture before settler colonialism came in<sup>8</sup>. During colonialism, the Rhodesian economy was an enclave economy where agricultural production was never competitive in the classical sense of capitalist competition. Under colonialism, the progress made in economic development mostly benefited the members of the settler class while the majority of the population remained exploited<sup>9</sup>. Socially, the Rhodesian state had improved the standard of living at the expense of majority of the people. The native Zimbabweans used to have a room for cultural, spiritual, and material wealth before the arrival of settler colonialism.

In regard to transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, the series of struggles had paved way for independence. Most importantly, it was "the winds of change" of post-colonial independence in Malawi (Nyasaland), and Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), that prompted the settlers in Zimbabwe led by Ian Smith to make a Unilateral Declaration

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<sup>4</sup> Mungazi, D.A, p.11

<sup>5</sup> Alexander, J. (2006) *The Unsettled Land State-making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893-2003*, Oxford: James Currey, p.2

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Mamdani, M. cited by Alexander, J. p.2

<sup>8</sup> Mungazi, D.A, p.11

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.95



of Independence (UDI) in 1965. The intention of this was to prevent the British government from handing power to the indigenous majority over whom the settlers ruled, thus forestalling national independence<sup>10</sup>. Smith continually claimed that there would be no majority rule during his lifetime. As a result, the armed struggle was started in 1966<sup>11</sup>.

In essence, the freedom fighters were represented by Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and Joshua Nkomo of Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Together, they established an alliance known as Patriotic Front (PF) in 1979. Thus, it was this Patriotic Front which was pressured to sign the Lancaster House Agreement in London on 21 December 1979<sup>12</sup>. Apparently, this was an attempt to achieve Zimbabwe's political independence. In that conference, it was agreed that all parties must campaign peacefully and without intimidation that they must renounce the use of force, and accept the outcomes of the election<sup>13</sup>. Thus, the signing of the Lancaster House Agreement had assured a transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. Indeed, a new and absolutely unique dispensation emerged in 1980 when the burden of leadership was conferred upon Robert Mugabe (newly elected President). From 1980 onwards, Zimbabwe began to be recognised internationally as an independent state. Peron noted some overwhelming advances after independence with regard to children in school, for example, the number of children in school increased from 820 000 to 2,2 million<sup>14</sup>. This was partly attributed to Mugabe's initiative of increasing public spending from about 40 per cent of Gross Domestic

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.24

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.22

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Peron, J. (2000), *Zimbabwe The Death of a Dream*, Johannesburg: Amagi Books, p.2-3

Product (GDP) in 1980-81 to 47 per cent in 1987-88<sup>15</sup>. In post-independence Zimbabwe, lot of money was also being pumped into health services. However, the colonial legacy (particularly ownership of the land) continued to manifest itself. As such, the legacy was especially more noticeable in terms of politics and the economy of the country which did not change. For instance, agriculture continued to dominate. Hence, in the 1960s whites Zimbabweans had owned 70 percent of the land<sup>16</sup>, and despite the change in government, “white Zimbabweans own 75 per cent of most productive and arable land in the 1990s<sup>17</sup>. The change in ownership of the land did not prevail due in part to the fact that blacks were not incapacitated to control. The Land Reform programme had come into being because “the Rhodesians had systematically stripped the country’s blacks of all the best land since 1980”<sup>18</sup>. Typically, the struggle against Rhodesia had been fought to win back the land. Initially, a regulatory framework aimed largely at ensuring fair and equitable land ownership came into being. Most importantly, this framework was mainly an outcome of the Lancaster House Agreement. Originally, the agreement was solely based on “Willing buyer, “Willing seller principle”. Hence, the Lancaster House constitution protected property rights for 10 years, and dictated that the ‘European’ land be acquired under the principle mentioned. In effect, the constitution guaranteed a white monopoly of 20 seats in the 100-seat parliament for seven years<sup>19</sup>. In terms of the outcomes of the agreement, white farmers who were unwilling to stay in Zimbabwe would be bought out by funds provided by the British through the Zimbabwe government<sup>20</sup>. Actually,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia, *Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, p.2

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Meldrum, A. (2004). *Where We Have Hope A Memoir of Zimbabwe*, London: John Murray Publishers, p.128

<sup>19</sup> Alexander, J. (2006). *The Unsettled Land State-making & the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe, 1893-2003*, Oxford: James Currey, p.105

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia, *Land reform in Zimbabwe*, p.2 available at:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land\\_reform\\_in\\_Zimbabwe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_reform_in_Zimbabwe) Accessed: 16 March 2007

Robert Mugabe's attempts to redistribute land to the indigenous Zimbabweans had proven to be in vain following the failure of Lancaster House Agreement. This did not achieve its desired outcomes (not necessarily exponential growth, but to ensure that the assistance was provided to those in need). However, surprisingly, in 1999 it became clear that the Lancaster House Agreement did not achieve suitable outcomes. The main reason that led to the failure of the agreement was that unfairness and inequity in the allocation of the land that was perpetuated by Robert Mugabe. Land was mostly given to his 'cronies'. Secondly, this was so because proposals were amended to remove those clauses and insert a new one to compulsorily acquire land for redistribution without compensation. Subsequently, Mugabe introduced a far more radical approach to deal with the issue of land. Still in 1999, Mugabe decided to write a new constitution which was in accordance with the aforementioned changes. For him, the new strategy seemed to have worked because he was able to forcibly remove the whites.

Perhaps, this asymmetrical ownership of land had infuriated Robert Mugabe. Prior to the 1990 election, with few demonstrable benefits to show after ten years of independence, Mugabe maintained that:

"It makes absolute nonsense of our history as an African country that most of our arable and ranching land is still in the hands of our erstwhile colonisers, while the majority of our peasant community still live in squatters in their God-given land"<sup>21</sup>

Further, Meredith concedes that programme of land reform in the 1990s was implemented in a chaotic manner from the start; partly because no attempt was made

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<sup>21</sup> Meredith, M. (2002) *Robert Mugabe Power, Plunder, and Tyranny in Zimbabwe*, p.121

to consult farmers, rural communities or even government's own agricultural specialists<sup>22</sup>. As far as Peron is concerned, "Mugabe has consistently and publicly said that any decisions he makes can not be overruled or ignored"<sup>23</sup>. To make matters even worse, Mugabe also campaigned vigorously using land reform as the end-product of the June 2000 elections. Kriger asserted that in 2000 Mugabe's 20 year rule was conceived to be in jeopardy, and that is why he forged an alliance with the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association (ZNLWVA)<sup>24</sup>. In essence, the War Veterans spearheaded the invasion and occupation of white commercial farmers<sup>25</sup>. This had probably instilled a sense of apprehension on the part of the opposition, and it also resulted in the closure of polling stations where the opposition seemed to have a stronghold.

In the economic realm, the seizure of white farms has led to the deterioration of economic conditions in Zimbabwe<sup>26</sup>. All along, the economy of Zimbabwe has been based on agriculture. Campbell argues that "Zimbabwe's economy is based on agricultural production, a highly developed and diversified manufacturing sector and a very developed mining sector"<sup>27</sup>. In a nutshell, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe has predicted major fall-outs in three fronts:

- All foreign investment would disappear
- There would be no further money from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.122

<sup>23</sup> Peron, J. (200), *Zimbabwe The Death of a Dream*, Johannesburg: Amagi Books, p.10

<sup>24</sup> Kriger, N. "Zimbabwe's War Veterans and the Ruling Party: Continuities in Political Dynamics", in Darnolf, S, and Laakso, L. (2003). *Twenty Years of Independence in Zimbabwe From Liberation to Authoritarianism*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan Ltd, p.104

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Sachikanye, L.M. *South Africa's Quiet Diplomacy: the case of Zimbabwe*, p.569 available at [www.hrscpress.ac.za](http://www.hrscpress.ac.za)

<sup>27</sup> Campbell, H. (2003), *Reclaiming Zimbabwe The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*, Claremont: David Philip, p.4

- Many farmers had mortgaged their properties, and unless they could grow and sell crops, they would default on their loans to the commercial banks, creating a financial crisis<sup>28</sup>.

Quite aside from these horrible predictions, the economy continued to be unstable. For example, in 2002 presidential elections, the inflation was approaching 400 %, and the government lacked the ability to print the new notes required<sup>29</sup>. Ultimately, many industries were forced to close, and agricultural production continued to decline<sup>30</sup>. Apparently, this is attributed in part to the fact that many previously landless people who occupied the land for white commercial farmers had no expertise in farming. Van Buuren rightly points out that:

“While the rest of the celebrated the arrival of the new millennium, Zimbabweans were descending into the worst economic crisis of their country’s 20 year history”<sup>31</sup>.

At present, the inflation is now at more than 164,900 percent<sup>32</sup>. Amazingly, inflation in Zimbabwe is still accelerating. For instance, on a monthly basis (starting from March 2008) inflation rose to 36,3%, up from 30,1% the previous month<sup>33</sup>. Zimbabwe is struggling with rising poverty, unemployment of about 80% and chronic food and fuel shortages<sup>34</sup>. Inevitably, the country’s economy is contracting at a dramatic rate. Astonishing inflationary figures have continued to reinforce this decline.

<sup>28</sup> Hill, G. (2003). *The Battle for Zimbabwe The Final Countdown*. Cape Town: Zebra Press, p.10

<sup>29</sup> Brown and Saunders (2004), “Recent History”, in *Regional Surveys of the World, Africa South of the Sahara*, London: Europa Publications, p.1229

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Van Buuren, L. in Brown and Saunders (2004), *Regional Surveys of the World, Africa South of the Sahara*, p.1230

<sup>32</sup> Central Statistical Office, *Zimbabwe Inflation hits record of nearly 165,000 per cent*, available at: [http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gHsXPstmkHRXSCxqkPms\\_co9AVA](http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gHsXPstmkHRXSCxqkPms_co9AVA) Accessed 19 April 2008, p.1

<sup>33</sup> *Mail&Guardian Online*, *Zimbabwe inflation hits new record*, p.1 available at: [http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=295321&area=breaking\\_news/breaki...](http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=295321&area=breaking_news/breaki...) Accessed 10 March 2008

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

In the political realm, President Robert Mugabe has adamantly remained defiant (over his seemingly dictatorial rule), despite growing political tensions<sup>35</sup>. Thus, for Mugabe and his party, the key to election victory had to be through nationwide efforts to intimidate voters, and as a last resort to rig the count<sup>36</sup>. In essence, political intimidation along with state repression has rendered the state to be conceived as being authoritarian in nature. Political intolerance (between ruling and opposition parties) continues to dominate the political debates, and the manner in which Zimbabwe government is seen by international community. According to Peron, this is caused by Mugabe's strong belief that "there is no need for other parties since Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) speaks for the people"<sup>37</sup>. He further points out that Mugabe regards other parties as "counter-revolutionary"<sup>38</sup>. This is despite the fact, in my view, the opposition is accused of stressing the need for a far more creative and constructive way of handling the land reform, given the unintended outcomes the reform has had on innocent Zimbabweans. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the ZANU-PF coupled with thugs had begun to target members of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Such intolerance is further fuelled by the arrest of some leaders of the opposition including Morgan Tsvangirai (leader of the MDC)<sup>39</sup>. Tsvangirai has in fact survived the targets of assassination on more than one attempt<sup>40</sup>. Campbell maintained that in the 2002 Presidential Elections, Tsvangirai, the leader of the opposition was tortured, by the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Chan, S. (2003). *Robert Mugabe A Life of Power and Violence*, USA: University of Michigan Press, p.196

<sup>37</sup> Peron, J. (2000), *Zimbabwe The Death of a Dream*, p.7

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Brown and Saunders, (2004) "Recent History", in *Regional Surveys of the World, Africa South of the Sahara*, London: Europa Publications, p.1228

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

police and beaten by 'war veterans' while the police looked on<sup>41</sup>. Technically, Tsvangirai was accused of having threatened to use violence to remove Mugabe from office<sup>42</sup>. Further, large numbers of MDC supporters felt that this was the President's attempt to get away with opposition in the country.

Ideologically, Robert Mugabe endorses socialism. For Peron, Mugabe thinks that socialism means a state that treats its people like children and one that ignores individual rights in the name of "common good"<sup>43</sup>. Practically, Mugabe was first exposed to socialism at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. In 1983, Mugabe told thousands of people that his ZANU-PF party will rule forever, and he urged them to make it a mammoth party and prepare it for its historic one-party State role<sup>44</sup>. Later, however, Zimbabwe became the centre of international attention due to massive violence and social upheaval that had accompanied the farm occupations and land invasions. Consequently, Campbell maintains that human rights groups in Zimbabwe, opposition forces, women's organisations, the independent media, international organisations dedicated to human rights, and numerous other organisations, brought to world attention the political violence that created enormous political and psychological damage to society<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Campbell, H. p.308

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Peron, J. (2000). P.5

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Campbell, H. (2003). *Reclaiming Zimbabwe The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*, p.79



## **2008 Zimbabwe General Elections**

The turn of events in the 2008 elections seem to have thrown Zimbabwe into the yet further turmoil following the tension that the election has presented. In the 2002 election, the MDC lost the election, and it seemed as though that they were not entirely content with the results. A state of uncertainty was caused by the torture and arrest of Tsvangirai prior to the 2002 elections<sup>46</sup>. Further, the opposition party is also not allowed to campaign freely without fear and pressure. According to Peron, this is because in Zimbabwe government owns all television and radio and has taken direct control of many of the newspapers<sup>47</sup>. Thus, opposition candidates and views contrary to those of the ruling party are not allowed on the air<sup>48</sup>.

However, in the 2008 election, no arrests and tortures were reported prior to the election. The primary problem has been the inconsistency in regard to the release of presidential results. In fact, the Zimbabwean Electoral Commission (ZEC) has failed to release the totality of the results. Instead, it announced the results on the parliamentary seats, which were effectively won by Morgan Tsvangirai by 99 seats to 97 seats of Robert Mugabe. This was the first challenge to Robert Mugabe's 28 year rule since independence to be beaten by a 'weak and fractured' opposition party. In terms of the presidential election, official results were not yet been release. However, supporters of the MDC claim that they have won by 60 per cent twice the total of Mugabes with the half of results counted. Delays in the release of results have reaffirmed suspicions of election rigging. This led the African National Congress (ANC) president Jacob Zuma to suggest that the situation in Zimbabwe is worrying and that the rule of law must be complied with and applied. At the annual general

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<sup>46</sup> Campbell, H, p.308

<sup>47</sup> Peron, J (2000), p.115

<sup>48</sup> Ibid



meeting of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry South Africa in Boksburg, Zuma rightfully said that “we once again register our apprehension about the situation in Zimbabwe”<sup>49</sup>. He further argued that “the delay in the verification process and the release of results increases anxiety each day”<sup>50</sup>. In the process, the ANC encouraged Southern African Development Committee (SADC’s) principles and guidelines governing democratic elections.

Meanwhile, a Chinese ship carrying weapons such as rocket grenades, mortar bombs, tubes and millions of rounds of ammunition was caught in Durban. According to *DailySun* report, the cargo ship An Yue Jiang was carrying 3080 cases of weapons destined for Harare<sup>51</sup>. Responding to this event, the government Communications Head, Themba Maseko stated that South Africa could not stop the shipment and was “treading very carefully”<sup>52</sup>. But the Democratic Alliance (DA) spokesman warned that letting the weapons through would be “the surest sign yet that the government has lost the plot on Zimbabwe”<sup>53</sup>. Furthermore, Zuma argued that the region can not afford deepening crisis in Zimbabwe, the situation is more worrying now, given the reported violence that has erupted in the country. In actual fact, Mugabe faces an unprecedented pressure following the drastic collapse of the economy, increase in the HIV infection rates, inflation now reaching 100 000%. Delays in the release of results have been criticised. The opposition party believes that delays are an attempt to keep Robert Mugabe in power.

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<sup>49</sup> Naki, E, *Sowetan Newspaper*, April 17, 2008, p.5

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> *DailySun Newspaper*, 18 April 2008, p.2

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

In response to the aforementioned plight, the South African government (under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki) has opted for the so-called 'Quiet Diplomacy'- as a policy approach to remedy the volatile situation in Zimbabwe. Quiet Diplomacy is mainly considered as a softly-softly approach partly because it is based solely on dialogue and because it all happens behind closed doors. According to Victoria Graham, this soft approach has been the target of local and international speculation and criticism, especially in light of Mbeki's stated commitment to the African Renaissance and good governance in Africa<sup>54</sup>. As a result, quiet diplomacy was to be conceived as a reactive measure taken by South African (under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki). However, such an approach has become a hugely contested debate. As such, the policy has raised a series of concerns, especially among black Zimbabweans, in the SADC region, in Africa, and the rest of the world. In general, the primary objective of "Quiet Diplomacy" is to create and encourage dialogue between MDC and Zanu-PF. In particular, Graham believes that "quiet diplomacy" is the opposite of 'loud' diplomacy and as it refers to non-violent measures<sup>55</sup>.

Similarly, the study seeks to ascertain whether the 'Quiet Diplomacy' is viable or not given the varied responses that have emerged in regard to it. It is in the context of the South African response that the Zimbabwean crisis has attracted international attention. In other words, the international community is keen to see how South Africa responds to the crisis in Zimbabwe, as the leading force in the sub-continent. Also, large numbers of people within Zimbabwe have condemned the policy vehemently as being at best, alibi, and at worst, silent on addressing issues. Therefore,

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<sup>54</sup> Graham, V. "How firm the handshake? South Africa's use of quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe from 1999 to 2006", in *African Security Review 15.4 Institute for Security Studies*, p.114

<sup>55</sup> "How firm the handshake? South Africa's use of quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe from 1999 to 2006", in *African Security Review 15.4, Institute for Security Studies*, Internet Articles

hypothetically, the study states that “‘Quiet Diplomacy’ is not a viable approach to deal with the Zimbabwean crises”.

In addition, the study also has various research objectives that it intends to achieve. Such objectives include, amongst other things, an attempt to characterise the Zimbabwean crisis, especially during 2000-2008; an attempt to characterise South African foreign policy broadly, and towards Zimbabwe; an attempt to determine the Strengths of ‘Quiet Diplomacy’; an attempt to determine the Weaknesses of ‘Quiet Diplomacy’; and finally, an attempt to explore alternative policy options.

In regard to the research methodology and methods, the study will be qualitative. Qualitative research includes several approaches to research that are, in some respects, quite different from one another. However, qualitative approaches have two things in common. Leedy and Ormrod argue that, first, “they focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings- that is, in the real world; and second, they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity”<sup>56</sup>. Basically, qualitative approach is composed of a variety of methods, namely; ethnography, phenomenological study, grounded theory, interviews, and case studies. However, in regard to this study case study approach in combination with content analysis will be used. To start with, according to Leedy and Ormrod, in a case study “a particular individual, program, or event is studied in depth for a defined period of time”<sup>57</sup>. In this method, researchers focus on a single case, perhaps because its unique or exceptional qualities can promote understanding or inform practice for similar situations. Thus, in case study, the data often involve observations, interviews, documents (newspaper articles, past

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<sup>56</sup> Leedy, P.D and Ormrod, J.E, (2001), *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, New Jersey, p.147

<sup>57</sup> Leedy, P.D and Ormrod, J.E, (2001), *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, New Jersey Columbus: Merrill Prentice Hall, p.149

records such as previous test scores)<sup>58</sup>. Further, data collection includes appropriate written documents, while data analysis includes the organization of details about the case. For example, the “the specific facts about the case are arranged in a logical (chronological) order”<sup>59</sup>. Leedy further maintains that analyzing a case study data can be interpretational, structural, and reflective<sup>60</sup>. Thus, interpretational analysis includes examining the data for constructs, themes, and patterns; structural analysis involves searching the patterns inherent in discourse, texts, events, or other phenomena; and reflective analysis refers to using intuition and judgment to portray or evaluate the phenomena<sup>61</sup>. In regard to the study, structural analysis will be used instrumentally. This approach is used as it is assumed that it will provide better understanding about the events that have unfolded in Zimbabwe; it will also offer an understanding about the program of land reform, and most importantly it will be bounded by time. For instance, it will cover a period from 2000 until prior to the 2008 elections. The case of Zimbabwe has become known locally, and internationally. However, in my opinion, events that are taking place there have not been properly evaluated.

Another method to be used in this study will be content analysis. It is argued that content analysis can be used as a sole methodology or in combination with other methodologies<sup>62</sup>. According to Neuman, content analysis is a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of the text<sup>63</sup>. However, Leedy and Ormrod offer a more detailed explanation of content analysis. They argue that “content analysis is a

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Leedy, P.D, (1997), *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, (6<sup>th</sup>Ed). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 158

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Neuman, W.L. (2000). *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, p.310

detailed and systematic examination of contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases”<sup>64</sup>. In a content analysis, a similar approach is used as in a case study because it is also performed on books, newspapers, films, television, art, music, videotapes of human interactions, etc. Therefore, these methods have been combined to ensure that they individually and collectively provide a better understanding on Zimbabwe. In terms of data collection, a similar approach such as interviews, observations, and written documents is used. But more importantly, in a content analysis, a data analysis differs slightly because it includes recording the frequency of each characteristic; and descriptive or inferential statistical analyses may be used to answer the research question<sup>65</sup>. The Zimbabwean economy in particular offers some clear patterns as inflation and economic collapse develop at exponential rate. Indeed, in the case of Zimbabwe it appears that not even statistical analysis is required to identify correlation between economic collapse and deepening political crisis.

My study will be based solely in the library. The main purpose of the study will be to review and analyse recent publications and Internet articles which are based on “quiet diplomacy” in relation to Zimbabwe.

Finally, the structure of the treatise is as follows. Chapter Two deals with the theoretical framework that guides and justifies foreign policy. The key theories include: realism, institutionalism, and hegemony. Further, the key features of South African foreign policy are also dealt with. Key features include national interest and the respect for human rights. Chapter Three deals with the Strengths of ‘Quiet

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<sup>64</sup> Leedy, P.D and Ormrod, J.E, p.155

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

Diplomacy': its logic and its usefulness. In fact, it examines anything that seems to be good about "quiet diplomacy" as a policy approach. Conversely, Chapter Four deals the Weaknesses of "quiet diplomacy", and it is here that the heart of my case will be made against the effectiveness of "quiet diplomacy". Chapter Five deals with concluding remarks and recommendations, and it identifies areas that need more research, and at the same time, it attempts to make recommendations.

Given the existence of land reform problem, poverty and unemployment which are largely seen as the consequences of land reform, as well as an enduring and deeply serious political crisis in Zimbabwe, the study is going to argue that "quiet diplomacy" during 2000 to 2008 has not worked. Indeed, if one compares the situation in Zimbabwe in 2000 to today, it is clear that the situation has got much worse, and it is hard to imagine how "quiet diplomacy" has done anything other than to enable Zimbabwe's terminal decline. Given this, the study will argue that other alternative policy frameworks need to be assessed in order to assist or replace "quiet diplomacy".

## Chapter Two

### **Key Features of South African foreign policy since 1994 and the Approach to Zimbabwean Crisis**

In order to comprehend the nature and extent of the South African foreign policy, one needs to draw a skeletal diagram using the international relations theories as the guiding perspectives. Theories normally provide a direction of the study, and help identify a gap with which the study intends to address. Three theories will be considered in this study, namely, Realism, Institutionalism, and Hegemony. Each of these theories will offer an analysis of foreign policy, especially its purpose and goals.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

##### **REALISM**

Goldstein asserts that “realism” is a school of thought that explains international relations in terms of competition for power<sup>66</sup>. To start with, realism is defined as “an approach to international relations that accepts that struggle is an endemic feature of life in the international system, either because of the innate imperfectability of humans or because of the anarchic nature of the international system”<sup>67</sup>. The realist argument is mainly preoccupied with the reasons that make countries to go to war. It is widely accepted that this school of thought is mostly dominated by a wide range of scholars who differ in many respects. However, common ground is reached with regard to power and anarchy as the key contributing factors to war. In the realist assessment, power is conceived as the key variable or factor driving state behaviour<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> Goldstein, J.S (2003) *International Relations*, New York: Longman, p.71

<sup>67</sup> Shafritz, J.M, Williams, P. and Calinger, R.S (1993), *The Dictionary of 20<sup>th</sup> century World Politics*, New York: Henry Holt & Company, p.264

<sup>68</sup> Kolodziej, E.A, p.129



“Power” is often defined as the ability to get another actor to do what it would not otherwise have done (or not to do what it would have done)<sup>69</sup>. Further, Hill defines power as a foundational concept of political science and a central pillar of International Relations<sup>70</sup>. The lack of parity in the distribution of power is believed to be the skeletal structure of the global order.

In addition, due to the preponderance of military power possessed by the state, the state’s material capacity increases thereby constituting its ability to influence not only behaviour of other states but the system or balance of power prevailing between states<sup>71</sup>. Also, the international system within which state is embedded allegedly induces states to use their leverage over others. As such, the international system is anarchical in nature. Weber argues that “the claim that international politics is anarchical is almost universally embraced by IR theorists and practitioners<sup>72</sup>. In this line of thinking, the anarchy view assumes that international politics is largely composed of sovereign nation-states which are beholden to no higher power<sup>73</sup>. “Anarchy” refers to the lack of an orderer- someone or something who/which self-consciously imposes order in a top-down way onto sovereign nation-states<sup>74</sup>. According to Goldstein, “anarchy” is a term that implies not complete chaos or absence of structure and rules, but rather the lack of a central government that can enforce rules<sup>75</sup>. On the contrary, Mastanduno posits that states can deal with the consequences of anarchy by relying on time-honored instruments such as diplomacy

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<sup>69</sup> Goldstein, J.S (2003) *International Relations*, New York: Longman, p.73

<sup>70</sup> Hill, C. (2003). *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p.130

<sup>72</sup> Weber, C. (2005). *International Relations Theory A Critical Introduction*, (2<sup>nd</sup>). New York: Routledge, p. 14

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Goldstein, J.S (2003), *International Relations*, p.90



and the balance of power between blocs of states<sup>76</sup>. This claim, however, generates more doubts since realists believe that relations among nation-states are inherently competitive. On the one hand, Kolodziej posits that states must develop military forces, strategies, alliances, and weapons acquisition policies to sustain and improve their competitive position<sup>77</sup>. Also, Mastanduno posits that states seek power to achieve their interests. As a result, it becomes difficult to mitigate the consequences of anarchy. Holm and Sorensen argue the principle of "self-help" could be a possible remedy to anarchy<sup>78</sup>. In defining the principle of 'self-help', they argue that "self-help is necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order"<sup>79</sup>.

Finally, the extent of realism is particularly conceived to be elitist and frequently antidemocratic. Rothstein prescribes the extremely important criticisms of realism:

"Realism is implicitly a conservative doctrine attractive to men concerned with protecting the status quo. Realism has emphasised the necessity of Great Powers to maintain their prestige, status, and credibility. Great Powers, are compelled to 'prestige politics', that is to say, a form of politics particularly difficult to compromise or control"<sup>80</sup>.

In terms of the future of realism, Rothstein further maintains that the appeal of realism is deceptive and dangerous, for it rests on assumptions about state behaviour which have become increasingly irrelevant<sup>81</sup>. The significance of interdependence in areas such as economic, social, and cultural matters within the state system obviously

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<sup>76</sup> Mastanduno, "A Realist View: three images of the coming international order", in Paul, T.V and Hall, J.A (1999), *International Order and the Future of World Politics*. London: Cambridge University Press, p.20

<sup>77</sup> Kolodziej, p.131

<sup>78</sup> Holm, H and Sorensen, G. "International Relations Theory in a World of Variation", in *Whose World Order? Uneven Globalization and the End of the Cold War*, Oxford: Westview Press, p.188

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Rothstein, R.L "On the costs of realism", in Little, R and Smith, M, (2006) *Perspectives on World Politics* (3<sup>rd</sup>Ed), New York: Routledge, p.338

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.340

implies a system in which the autonomy and sovereignty of all the members- great and small- is being eroded<sup>82</sup>.

## INSTITUTIONALISM

The institutionalist view offers a slightly different approach in dealing with foreign policy. In fact, liberal theories conceive institutions as having a variety of necessary functions and impacts- especially in terms of facilitating co-operation and in altering the ways in which states identify and pursue their interests. Clearly, "liberal theories have also identified and stressed the importance of institutions among states that serve as foundational agreements or constitutional contracts"<sup>83</sup>. A normative approach is offered by scholars who subscribe to this school of thought. An institutionalist argument is largely preoccupied with normative accounts and rules that guide the behaviour of states. Basically, an institution is "a set of rules that stipulate the ways in which states should cooperate and compete with one another"<sup>84</sup>. In essence, international institutions prescribe acceptable forms of state behaviour, and proscribe unacceptable kinds of behaviour<sup>85</sup>. Scholars who subscribe to this school of thought believe that (against popular belief) international system is not anarchic in practice, but it has implicit or explicit structure which determines how states will act within the international system<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> Ikenberry, G.J "Institutions, strategic restraint, and the persistence of American postwar order", in Little, R and Smith, M (2006), *Perspectives on World Politics* (3<sup>rd</sup>Ed), New York: Routledge, p.134

<sup>84</sup> Martin, L.L , " An institutionalist view: international institutions and state strategies", in Paul, T.V and Hall, J.A, (1999) *International Order and the Future of World Politics*, p.19

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

Furthermore, criticisms of institutionalism include: the belief that this school is unable to force states to act in ways that are against their interests<sup>87</sup>. Most importantly, the institutionalism argument seems to be solely based on monitoring and mitigating the effects of competition, but the criterion that is effective (forcing states to comply) is not clearly demonstrated. In other words, no coercive measures are used to ensure compliance in the event of disobedience. Further, the theory can be perceived to be totally opposing the realist conviction that war is attributed to anarchy. However, since there is a lack of balance of power in the international system power is usually used to further ones own interests.

Finally, institutionalists and realists have common agreements and disagreements. For instance, institutionalists agree with realists of all stripes that overcoming selfish tendencies of states, especially their possession of a monopoly of violence, is a real problem<sup>88</sup>. As such, they agree that this problem can not be ignored simply by assuming that the benefits of cooperation are self-evident if states cooperate. They disagree in certain instances, for example, institutionalists insist that they are working within a “systemic perspective” to achieve a parsimonious explanation of state behaviour, but most realists generally reject this claim<sup>89</sup>. Realists mainly attribute war to the anarchic system within which states are embedded, but institutionalists believe that the international system is not anarchic in practice; rather it has an implicit and explicit structure which determines how states will act.

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<sup>87</sup> Wikipedia, *Institutionalism in international relations*, in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutionalism\\_in\\_international\\_relations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutionalism_in_international_relations) , p.1

<sup>88</sup> Kolodziej, E. A, p., 152

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

## HEGEMONY

Scholars who subscribe to hegemony are of the view that a unipolar system is good in terms of bringing international peace and order. Wohlforth defines unipolarity “as a structure in which one state’s capabilities are too great to be counterbalanced”<sup>90</sup>. By contrast, multi-polarity is produced when a structure comprises three or more especially powerful states, and a bi-polarity is produced when a structure consists of two states that are substantially more powerful<sup>91</sup>. Goldstein defines hegemony as “the holding by one state of a preponderance of power in the international system, so that it can single-handedly dominate the rules and arrangements by which international political and economic relations are conducted”<sup>92</sup>. Basically hegemony, as defined by Robertson, means the domination or rule of one actor over others<sup>93</sup>. Hegemony occurs when one country, for example, the United States of America (USA) in the West during the Cold War, is massively dominant over other actors in the relevant sphere – members of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in this case<sup>94</sup>. Thus, the system is hegemonic when the domination of one actor is taken for granted and unchallenged by those over whom it holds sway<sup>95</sup>. Evans and Newnham argued that “hegemony is a concept meaning primacy or leadership”<sup>96</sup>. Normally, such a state is called a hegemon<sup>97</sup>. Within the global world, United States of America (USA) seems to hold the hegemonic character even though some research has predicted a slow decline. Spence argues that South Africa is also composed of hegemonic character

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<sup>90</sup> Wohlforth, W.C “The stability of a unipolar world”, in Little, R and Smith, M. (2006), *Perspectives on World Politics*, p.99

<sup>91</sup> Ibid

<sup>92</sup> Goldstein, J.S (2003) *International Relations*, p.99

<sup>93</sup> Robertson, D. (2002). *A Dictionary of Modern Politics*, (3<sup>rd</sup>Ed), New York: Europa Publications, p.222

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p.223

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

<sup>96</sup> Evans, G, and Newnham, J, (1990), *The Dictionary of World Politics A Reference Guide to Concepts, Ideas and Institutions*, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, p.153

<sup>97</sup> Ibid

within the SADC region although it has tried to avoid giving offence to its weaker, poorer neighbours<sup>98</sup>. Further, under hegemony stability theory, the hegemon often provides common goods to be used by all<sup>99</sup>.

### **Analysing South African foreign policy**

It is quite hard to pin down confidently what foreign policy means, and what the key aspects or features that underlie the making of it are. Hill defines foreign policy as “the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations”<sup>100</sup>. Therefore, policy is the ‘sum’ of these external relations because otherwise every particular action could be seen as a separate foreign policy<sup>101</sup>. Thus, the policy is ‘foreign’ because the world is still more separated into distinctive communities than it is a single, homogenizing entity<sup>102</sup>. Also, more care is needed when a policy becomes foreign. This means that a state is expected to enter into a community of states because “a state is not a single conscious being; its actions are a composite of individual human choices- by its citizenry, its political leaders, its diplomats and bureaucrats- aggregated through the state’s internal structures”<sup>103</sup>. Foreign policy provides an insight on why states act the way they do toward other states. Goldstein defines foreign policy as “the strategies used by governments to guide their actions in the international arena”<sup>104</sup>. Further, foreign policies clarify the objectives that state leaders have decided to pursue in a given relationship or situations as well as the general means by which they intend to pursue those

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<sup>98</sup> Spence, J. “Introduction”, in Broederick, and others (2001), *South Africa's Foreign Policy Dilemmas of a New Democracy*, New York: Palgrave, p. 19

<sup>99</sup> Thompson, L (2001) *Development, Democracy and Aid in Southern Africa*, Bellville: Centre for Southern African Studies at the School of Government, University of Western Cape, p.19

<sup>100</sup> Hill, C. (2003), *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, p.3

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> Goldstein, J.S (2003), *International Relations*, London: Longman, p.155

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

objectives<sup>105</sup>. Foreign policies are generally designed to help protect a country's national interests, national security, ideological goals, and economic prosperity<sup>106</sup>. It is challenging to provide a full analysis of foreign policy. This is partly because foreign policy is perpetually changing. However, an agreement has been reached on three very important general influences on contemporary foreign policy: "the end of Cold War; the process of globalisation; and the challenge to the Westphalia state system represented by the doctrine of humanitarian intervention"<sup>107</sup>.

Certainly, realist argument appears to have strong influence when analysing the South African foreign policy- especially during the apartheid era. For example, during this time the key intention of the ANC was to improve its military base in the neighbouring countries, whereas the apartheid state looked to crush these attempts, often through the overt use of military force. The principle of "national interest" as zero-sum military conflict appeared to dominate the foreign policy agenda during the apartheid<sup>108</sup>. As a result, power and the competition thereof was the most important thing.

However, since coming to power, the approach of the ANC in their dealings with neighbouring countries appears closer to the theory of institutionalism. They formally prioritise human rights over and above any other important aspects. They prescribe the channels which have to be followed by other SADC countries in order to achieve democracy, human rights, and stability. Spence warned that South Africa has continued to base its political settlement on co-operative policies in resolving the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid

<sup>106</sup> Wikipedia, *Foreign policy* available at:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign\\_policy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_policy) p.1 Accessed on 30 November 2007

<sup>107</sup> Hill, C. *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.11

<sup>108</sup> Lodge, T, *Quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe: a case study of South Africa in Africa*, p.1

crisis in the Congo and Angola even though they seemed to have clearly damaged the prospects for closer integration in the economic and social fields<sup>109</sup>.

Finally, South Africa is in possession of hegemonic capabilities within the SADC region. Yet, it does appear that the government has been careful to take steps to show that they do not intend to bully the region. Johnston maintains that South Africa is the hegemonic power in the region, but it has tried hard to avoid giving offence to its weaker, poorer neighbours<sup>110</sup>. Further, Zimbabwe is largely reliant on South Africa's electricity supplier ESKOM- for its electricity supply<sup>111</sup>.

#### **South African foreign policy since 1994**

In order to understand the nature and the intricacy of South African foreign policy, it is imperative that the historical character of governance is given some attention. South Africa has actually experienced two different contexts in recent times, namely, apartheid and democracy. The apartheid context was largely witnessed before 1994. In the apartheid context, South Africa's relations with other countries, and especially its immediate neighbours, was hostile. As a result, security concerns dominated the agenda of South Africa policy objectives<sup>112</sup>. Therefore, South Africa policy makers devoted much time to exploring military options to protect the country from antagonistic states that resented the fact that they had to depend on South Africa for a number of essential services<sup>113</sup>. In the process, South Africa used its military

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<sup>109</sup> Spence, J. "Introduction", in Broederick, J, Burford, G. and Freer, G. (2001) *South Africa's Foreign Policy Dilemmas of a New Democracy*, New York: Palgrave, p.8

<sup>110</sup> Johnston, A. "Democracy and Human Rights", in *Principles and Practice of South African Foreign Policy*, p.9

<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Dube, K. *South Africa's Foreign Policy in Africa*, AISA Electronic Monograph, p.1 available at: [http://www.ai.org.za/electronic\\_monograph.asp?ID=1](http://www.ai.org.za/electronic_monograph.asp?ID=1) , Accessed: 10 August 2007

<sup>113</sup> Ibid



superiority to pursue its foreign policy objectives, which aimed at, amongst other things, creating instability in the region and preserving white minority rule<sup>114</sup>.

In the context of democracy, human rights and the belief in justice, and a belief in international peace started dominating the agenda of foreign relations. Nelson Mandela, the former President of South Africa conceded that: "human rights will be the light that guides our foreign relations"<sup>115</sup>. In fact, the respect for human rights was initially presented as the cornerstone for South African foreign policy. For the ANC in particular, the struggle against the apartheid system was indeed a struggle for fundamental human rights, so that is why the foreign policy places so much emphasis on respect for human rights<sup>116</sup>.

Conceptually, foreign policy is widely conceived to be an instrument through which a country and its government structures conduct relations with the rest of the world-politically, economically, and socially. In regard to South African foreign policy, similar definition could also be applied. However, it has its own unique emphasis on particular issues. Unique priorities are taken into cognisance. For instance, Alfred Nzo (a former Minister of Foreign Affairs) emphasised that Africa, and especially the Southern African region, were top of the policy agenda based on the assumption that South Africa could not prosper in isolation, without assisting in the development of neighbouring African countries<sup>117</sup>. Meanwhile, Deputy Foreign Minister (Aziz Pahad) has also emphasised South Africa's "Africaness"<sup>118</sup>. In the context of "Africaness",

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> Shelton, G and others, *South Africa and Australia: New Indian Ocean Partners*, Working Paper Series, East Asia Project (EAP), by Wits Department of International Relations, p.2

<sup>118</sup> Ibid



Pahad expressed the view that South Africa must play a major role in Africa's renaissance.

More importantly, other researchers such as Jack Spence contend that African unity and solidarity must be prioritised as the key components in the formulation of South African foreign policy. In particular, Spence acknowledged that "any redefinition of South Africa's foreign policy must recognise the African continent and the Southern African region in particular as a critical focus of interest and influence"<sup>119</sup>. When Nelson Mandela asked about South Africa's position in the global community, he responded:

"The great challenge for our age... is to answer the question, given the interdependence of the world, what is it that we can and must do to ensure that democracy, peace and prosperity prevail everywhere?"<sup>120</sup>

According to Alfred Nzo, Mandela's words had formed the "cornerstone" of South Africa's foreign policy and articulated Pretoria's hopes for, and vision of, the world<sup>121</sup>.

Meanwhile, the old South African foreign policy was mostly aimed at achieving "national interest". In this regard, security concerns were a focal point in the debates relating to foreign policy objectives. According to Stephen Chan, the term "national interest" is used to refer to the preferences of a nation's leaders, or put differently, the

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<sup>119</sup> Spence, J. in Broederick, J. and others (2001). *South Africa's Foreign Policy Dilemmas of a New Democracy*, New York: Palgrave, p.8

<sup>120</sup> A Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alfred Nzo, in the National Assembly, 18 May 1995, *Policy Guideline by the Minister and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs*, Department of Foreign Affairs, (1995), Pretoria, p.21

<sup>121</sup> Shelton, G. and others, *South Africa and Australia: New Indian Ocean Partners*, Working Paper Series by East Asia Project (EAP), p.2

goals that are sought by the state<sup>122</sup>. Further, Krasner, "specified that such preferences, or set of objectives, must be related to general societal goals, persist over time, and have a consistent ranking of importance in order to justify using the term"<sup>123</sup>. Generally, many analysts assume that foreign policy is solely based on national interest<sup>124</sup>.

However, the Post-Cold War South African context seems to differ significantly with the account of national interest as a primary objective of any foreign policy. Even though the debate on the issue of 'national interest' has led to disagreements on the actual definition of the concept, there is a broad acceptance that traditional vital interests, for example security concerns, are no longer the key issue on the foreign policy agenda in a post-Apartheid and post-Cold War environment<sup>125</sup>. In a context of new globalised and highly competitive environment, South Africa's foreign economic policies are designed to promote domestic economic development, in an effort to combat poverty and inequalities in living standards<sup>126</sup>.

In addition, the post-Apartheid and post-Cold War foreign policy is specially designed to grapple with issues pertaining to human rights and democracy. Anthoni van Niewkerk prescribed seven principles which were announced by the ANC between 1993 and 1994, and supposedly they were intended to guide the conduct of South Africa's new foreign policy:

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<sup>122</sup> Van Niewkerk, A. "South Africa's National Interest", published in *African Security Review Vol 13, No. 2, 2004, p.1* available at:

<http://www.iss.co.za/ASR/13No2/EvanNiewkerk.htm> Accessed: 12 October 2007

<sup>123</sup> Ibid

<sup>124</sup> Ibid

<sup>125</sup> Shelton, G. and others, *South Africa and Australia: New Indian Ocean Partners*, Working Paper Series, p.6

<sup>126</sup> Ibid

- A belief in and preoccupation with human rights
- A belief in the promotion of democracy worldwide
- A belief that justice and international law should guide relations between nations
- A belief that international peace is the goal to which all nations should strive
- A belief that South Africa's foreign policy should reflect the interests of Africa
- A belief that South Africa's economic development depends on growing regional and international economic co-operation
- A belief that South Africa's foreign relations must mirror a deep commitment to the consolidation of its democracy<sup>127</sup>.

By contrast, Johnston argues that South African foreign policy since 1994 has been characterised with two things, namely: "transformation", understood in various ways, and second that it has been heavily criticised for allegedly lacking coherence and consistency<sup>128</sup>. In fact, the imperative of transformation has two sources: the first one is the internal dynamic of democratisation which imposes its own priority and creates its own opportunities<sup>129</sup>. In this regard, democracy is mainly considered within the parameters of the state, whether it is growing or not. Thereafter, it enters into a community of states. The second is the changing international terrain, on which the new political configurations of the post-Cold War world, and the developing patterns

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<sup>127</sup> Van Nieuwkerk, A. "The Lesotho Crisis: Implications for South African Foreign Policy", in Lambrechts, K. (1999). *Crisis in Lesotho: The Challenge of managing conflict in Southern Africa*, published by Foundation for Global Dialogue, p.13

<sup>128</sup> Broederick, and others. (2001). "Democracy and Human Rights in the Principles and Practice of South African Foreign Policy", in *South Africa's Foreign Policy Dilemmas of a New Democracy*, p.11

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

of social and economic relationships usually described under the rubric of 'globalisation' make themselves felt<sup>130</sup>. Despite all criticisms, Johnston concedes that the new South African foreign policy shows a great deal of commitment to the promotion of human rights<sup>131</sup>. He firmly believes that human rights are the international currency of democracy. Finally, in the post-Cold War democratic governments have to find formulae for addressing international human rights issues.

Furthermore, the status and prestige of South Africa as the champion of human rights and democracy in SADC region is changing, possibly, because there are critics that have emerged. Mostly, critics have questioned the moral standard of South Africa's foreign policy. Critics say "why, for instance, was Pretoria quick to restore relations Libya, a non-democratic country?"<sup>132</sup>. Also, South Africa endorsed the outcome of the Zimbabwe elections even though Zanu-PF supporters allegedly violated human rights. Thus, South Africa is confronted with a dilemma of pursuing foreign policy goals which clash with the practices of some other African states<sup>133</sup>.

However, it is critically important to assess "quiet diplomacy" as the approach towards Zimbabwe in great detail. Thus, the following chapter on the strengths of "quiet diplomacy" will provide a meaningful and a fairly impartial assessment of "quiet diplomacy" particularly its strengths. It is in this chapter where the achievements of "quiet diplomacy" will be spelt out. Essentially, the following chapter offers a positive account of "quiet diplomacy".

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Dube, K. *Overview: South Africa's Foreign Policy in Africa*, AISA Electronic Monograph, p.2

<sup>133</sup> Ibid

## Chapter Three

### Strengths of “Quiet Diplomacy”

Of all the possible policy frameworks the South African government, in particular the Mbeki administration, has opted for the so-called “quiet diplomacy” in response to the Zimbabwean crisis. Indeed, “quiet diplomacy” is essentially an attempt to encourage and emphasise the significance of dialogue between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the opposition.<sup>134</sup> It is also a form of traditional diplomacy involving elite acting behind closed doors, out of the glare of publicity. This Chapter will begin by outlining what “Quiet Diplomacy” is. Secondly, it will outline the reasons regarding the selection of this policy. Finally, and most importantly, it will outline the strengths of “quiet diplomacy”.

Firstly, the above chapter on the foreign policy of South Africa has shown that South African foreign policy is mainly intended towards the promotion of peace and security (entailing the strengthening of conflict prevention and resolution capabilities of the region and rendering assistance in monitoring and addressing issues that affect regional stability)<sup>135</sup>. Other goals of foreign policy include: the promotion of democratisation and human rights<sup>136</sup>. Thus, Mbeki administration committed itself to fighting against human rights abuses. Arguably, the most difficult human rights challenge since 1994 has been with the gross human rights violations in Zimbabwe following with the failure of land reform programme. In its intervention, the Mbeki administration had used “Quiet Diplomacy” as the policy framework to deal with the

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>135</sup> Sachikonye, L.M. *South Africa's quiet diplomacy: the case of Zimbabwe*: available at [www.hsrc.ac.za](http://www.hsrc.ac.za) p.570

<sup>136</sup> Ibid

crisis. From the outset, “quiet diplomacy” has relied strongly on talks and dialogue especially between the ruling party (ZANU-PF) and the opposition party (MDC). Quiet diplomacy is not a well-written policy, but it is mainly guided by talks. The policy actually expressed the idea that the Zimbabweans should decide amongst themselves about the issues they face without anyone interfering in their own internal matters. In this regard, the South African approach has seemed to comply with the provisions of the international law – especially a law regarding the respect of sovereignty. Traditionally, sovereignty is the supreme legal authority of the nation to give and enforce the law within a certain territory and, in consequence, independence from the authority of any other nation and equality with it under international law<sup>137</sup>. Therefore, “quiet diplomacy” is a policy that was used to respect Zimbabwe as a sovereign state.

Secondly, one could perhaps ask what “quiet diplomacy” really means? Generally, the approach is conceived to be mainly soft and not coercive for that matter. Graham states that:

“The concept of ‘quiet diplomacy’, which has progressively become the *bon mot* of international relations, is a loose term, which is potentially problematic because as such it is bandied about reference to many kinds of ‘soft’ diplomatic approaches”<sup>138</sup>.

The supporters of the policy included former president Nelson Mandela who backed a quiet diplomatic approach to Zimbabwe. In an interview with BBC Radio, he argued that “an approach through diplomatic channels without much publicity is more likely

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<sup>137</sup> Keohane, R.O. “Hobbe’s Dilemma and Institutional Change in World Politics: Sovereignty in International Society”, in Holm and Sorensen, *Whose World Order? Uneven Globalization and the End of the Cold War*, Oxford: Westview Press, 172

<sup>138</sup> Graham, G “How firm the handshake? South Africa’s use of quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe from 1999 to 2006”, in *African Security Review* 15.4 *Institute for Security Studies*, p115

to bring about a positive result<sup>139</sup>. In fact, the major principle behind “quiet diplomacy” is that it should be quiet. To achieve this, it should take place away from critical public and media scrutiny. According to Kagwanja, “quiet diplomacy” as a policy was underpinned by the imperatives of African solidarity and peer pressure rather than ‘megaphone diplomacy’ and open criticism of illiberal policies<sup>140</sup>. Further, the South African government has opted for “quiet diplomacy” partly because if it used its economic leverage, the Zimbabwean situation would have been worsened. This is so because Zimbabwe is heavily dependent on South Africa in terms of electricity supply. Further, the negative consequence of such action would have been felt by innocent, poor Zimbabweans, not President Robert Mugabe. It is mainly the people at grassroots level who would suffer the consequences of either economic or any other form of sanction.

Accordingly, Graham provides the grounds/reasons regarding the selection of “quiet diplomacy” as a policy to deal with Zimbabwe:

First, she thinks that a very important reason for South Africa’s lack of effective action against its neighbour is rooted in historical ties, since the ANC was a former liberation movement supported by frontline states throughout their struggle; it stands to reason that the ANC has a large debt to repay<sup>141</sup>. In this regard, she thinks that the ANC feels it cannot turn its back on Mugabe and Zanu-PF, which it refers to as its “sister party”, since both the ANC and ZANU-PF fought colonialism and oppression in their respective countries.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p.117

<sup>140</sup> Kagwanja, P. *South Africa: Breathing New Life into “Quiet Diplomacy”* an Electronic Briefing Paper by the Centre for International Political Studies at the University of Pretoria, p.1

<sup>141</sup> Graham, V “How firm the handshake? South Africa’s use of quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe from 1999 to 2006”, p.119



Second, particular political figures have agreed that the principal objective of South Africa's soft approach has been to try to avoid a complete collapse of authority in Zimbabwe<sup>142</sup>. Mbeki asserts that "we cannot afford a complete breakdown. I don't know how we would cope with it"<sup>143</sup>. The hard approach would, therefore, worsen the situation even more. The already impoverished people would be forced to die without any form of assistance or whatsoever. The complete breakdown means that the government would not be able to function effectively, and an already impoverished population would be even worse off.

Third, the new South Africa is still trying to gain acceptance as a genuine African country. In fact, this attitude was perpetuated by South Africa's handling of the Nigerian crisis in 1995 when it was accused of not being 'African enough' and for acting like a bully on the continent<sup>144</sup>. Therefore, if the ANC-led government had threatened Mugabe's government with punitive measures, other regional elites/authoritarian leaders would have been furious<sup>145</sup>. Relatedly, Dlamini-Zuma has insisted that "quiet diplomacy" is an inherently African form of foreign relations. She also asserted that she will never condemn Mugabe's regime.

Fourth, due to Africanist diplomacy that exists throughout the continent, South Africa has suddenly become a "puppet of the West" and traitor to the "struggle". The logical implication of this discourse is that (elite) black solidarity, brotherhood, and support

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p.120

<sup>143</sup> Ibid

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p.121

<sup>145</sup> Ibid



for former comrades in arms take precedence over the need to ensure freedom, rule of law and respect for human rights<sup>146</sup>.

Finally, Mbeki's preference has always been motivated by an intra-African approach to Zimbabwe<sup>147</sup>. While the rest of the world remains flabbergasted over South Africa's response to the crisis, Mbeki wants the international community to leave it to the African Union (AU) and SADC to resolve it in "the African way"<sup>148</sup>.

In respect of the case for "quiet diplomacy", Tom Lodge provides a significant justification for not using economic leverage against Zimbabwe. He notes "one justification for not using the economic leverage that is sometimes cited in defence of the South African position is that refusing Zimbabwe economic support might bring about a simultaneous political and economic collapse"<sup>149</sup>. The economic collapse in Zimbabwe is mainly witnessed by high unemployment, high inflation, and poverty. In addition, the Centre for Policy Studies director Chris Landsberg asserted that "a policy based on force will aggravate an already unmanageable situation and hasten a meltdown"<sup>150</sup>. As far as Britain and other viewers are concerned, a collapsed Zimbabwean state would have rebounded on Pretoria with disastrous effect via mass influx of refugees, disrupted trade links, and generalised chaos on the borders. Kagwanja also share similar sentiments with Lodge. He maintains that the policy has

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p.122

<sup>149</sup> Lodge, T *Quiet Diplomacy in Zimbabwe: a case study South Africa in Africa*, Electronic Version, p.8

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, p.8

sacrificed democracy at the altar of stability and, particularly, of Pretoria's intense fear of having a failed state on its doorstep<sup>151</sup>.

The point however, is that it appears as if Zimbabwe is already that failed state. Given the current parlous state of the Zimbabwean economy it is hard to imagine how it could decline much further even should Mugabe refuse to step down. Further, the collapse of political legitimacy and state capacity for much other terrorising the population is severely limited. In nutshell, it seems that precisely the disastrous outcome of "quiet diplomacy" was intended to avoid has transpired. The policy has failed.

Another factor that explains South African dealings with Zimbabwe are the Africanist goals of Thabo Mbeki's foreign policy. Since 1999, the South African foreign policy has been based on reconstruction and reform of African continental institutions in such a fashion that they in turn can help to foster regional forms of economic collaboration and institutional renovation and democratisation at national level<sup>152</sup>. In fact, huge and tremendous inroads have been made in this regard. For instance, these include donor support for the New African partnership for Development's Africa Action plan – in 2002 G8 pledges represented more than \$20 billion of "new money" for the continent<sup>153</sup>.

Furthermore, other supporters of "quiet diplomacy" including the International Crisis Group believe that Mugabe government is at the heart of the crisis in Zimbabwe.

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<sup>151</sup> Kagwanja, P *South Africa: Breathing New Life into "Quiet Diplomacy"*, Pretoria: Centre for International Political Studies, Electronic Briefing Paper, p.2

<sup>152</sup> Lodge, T. *Quiet Diplomacy in Zimbabwe: a case study of South Africa in Africa*, p.8

<sup>153</sup> Ibid

They maintain that “responsibility lies with President Robert Mugabe’s government, which has mismanaged the economy, institutionalised state violence, and moved further toward autocratic rule”<sup>154</sup>. Consequently, it is only the talks organised by the ANC between the ZANU-PF and MDC which could be regarded as the achievement of “quiet diplomacy”. However, Lodge maintains that both parties were not in a position to describe these meetings as negotiations<sup>155</sup>. He went on to say that “their meetings, though, are perhaps the only positive consequence that the South Africans can claim from “constructive diplomacy” unless they count the occasional signal of residual judicial independence”<sup>156</sup>.

It is, however, quite significant to have an objective and neutral view on quiet diplomacy. In fact, this chapter has identified the reasons behind “quiet diplomacy”, and made only a passing assessment of the effectiveness of “quiet diplomacy”. These will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapter.

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<sup>154</sup> International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe in Crisis: Finding a Way Forward*, Africa Report No.32 13 July 2001, p. 1 available at:

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1483&l=1>

<sup>155</sup> Lodge, T. *Quiet Diplomacy in Zimbabwe: a case study of South Africa in Africa*, p.6

<sup>156</sup> Ibid

## Chapter Four

### Weaknesses of “Quiet Diplomacy”

A great deal of criticism and concern has been raised following the use of “Quiet Diplomacy” as the policy framework for dealing with the Zimbabwean crisis. Critics have rightfully pointed out that the policy is largely silent on poor and tyrannical governance and does not require any radical change from Mugabe’s government. Concerns have also been raised that the situation has actually worsened following the use of “quiet diplomacy”. Therefore, this Chapter will offer an assessment of the performance of “quiet diplomacy” and an assessment of the reasons for its failure.

Quiet Diplomacy is the target of local, international speculation and criticism, especially in light of Mbeki’s stated commitment to the African Renaissance and good governance in Africa. Similarly, Mbeki’s policy in regard to Zimbabwe has been vehemently criticised and even referred to as a ‘non-policy’ since it is “non-verifiable, non-specific, has no clear or given objectives or deliverables”<sup>157</sup>. The policy assumes that Mugabe, who has persistently ignored basic principles of democracy and rule of law, will be influenced by a soft diplomatic approach to change. Domestically, the independent media has consistently and strongly criticised the Mbeki government for its apparent inability to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis<sup>158</sup>.

Secondly, the approach has received various degrees of condemnation including media reports which believe that the ANC-led government should renounce her stance towards Zimbabwe. The ANC along with other advocates of the policy including the

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<sup>157</sup> Graham, V. “How firm the handshake? South Africa’s use of quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe from 1999 to 2006”, in *African Security Review* 15.4 p.116

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p.117

for the record, of ordinary Zimbabweans. It seems clear that a concern to build African solidarity has pushed South Africa into a more cautious direction in openly confronting abusive regimes. As noted above, this was Mandela's experience when criticising the Nigerian government in 1995. Further, given Mbeki's commitment to New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), "South Africa can not afford to be shunned by the rest of the continent"<sup>177</sup>. This is so because it seems to be leading the entire continent in terms of advocating for changes in the continent. In other words, African solidarity has been given more weight than respect for good governance principles.

While part of the reason South Africa did not use economic leverage was the hurt this might cause to ordinary Zimbabweans, it is clear now that this can no longer be a significant factor. With inflation at 1000 000%, unemployment over 80%, and half of the population in exile, ordinary Zimbabweans are hurting. Perhaps if South Africa has intervened more decisively earlier on this might have been prevented.

Moreover, it looks as though Mbeki has ended up enabling a rogue regime to continue its rule. As Graham notes, the international community has expected South Africa to assume the lead role in dealing with Mugabe, given its vast moral authority and its considerable economic power in the region<sup>178</sup>, and has taken its lead from Mbeki. Hence, the greater significance of South Africa's policy towards Zimbabwe, all of which heightens the failure of "quiet diplomacy".

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid

<sup>178</sup> Graham, V. "How firm the handshake: South Africa's use of quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe from 199 to 2006", o.125

The significance of ideology and values is also reflected in the fact that South Africa convened several meetings in an attempt to acquaint Robert Mugabe with the norms, rules, and guidelines which govern countries in the SADC region. In those meetings, however, Mugabe was not prepared to listen. In return, South Africa did not force him to comply. This reveals that the international approach can serve to advance cooperation but it is not clear how you enforce norms. Ideally, there are international regimes that prescribe the norms (acceptable standards of behaviour) that should be followed by states, but it is also problematic when it comes to making sure that it is achievable.

In many ways the failure of "quiet diplomacy" is tied up in the futility of trying to persuade Mugabe to change his ways. In this respect Mbeki's efforts at "quiet diplomacy" with Mugabe strongly echoes the failures of Chamberlain's "appeasement" strategy with Hitler. Despite meeting repeatedly with Mugabe, Mbeki has been confronted with a leader who either reneges on his promises or denies that he ever made them in the first place<sup>179</sup>.

But perhaps the judgement is too harsh, for as Graham notes, "South Africa does not view any other alternative to quiet diplomacy as being viable"<sup>180</sup>. The concerns at more confrontational tactics would have made things worse much faster has some merit, but given the tragic situation that has unfolded anyway, perhaps the prudent and the morally courageous thing to do would have been to intervene more assertively earlier. In this respect it is notably that Mbeki's insistence on "quiet diplomacy" has actually ruined his credibility. According to Graham, Mbeki has ignored views and

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid

<sup>180</sup> Ibid

advices from respected public figures such as Desmond Tutu, and the former President of the country Nelson Mandela<sup>181</sup>.

If not "quiet diplomacy", then what should be done? It is recommended that if sanctions are adopted and implemented, they should merely target particular individuals rather than the country blanketly. In other words, it should only target Robert Mugabe, his group of Zanu-PF leaders, not everyone. However, this is quite difficult because it is not easy to differentiate between ZANU-PF and MDC supporters. This paper also makes a recommendation that the imposition of "smart" sanctions by United Nations (UN) in consultation with the United States (US) could have made significant inroads because it was only intended to deal with Mugabe and his cronies. In fact, this freezing of their bank accounts, and travel bans could have a direct impact on them. This is so because it is a technical and selective way that would not affect the people of Zimbabwe as a whole.

Meanwhile, in order for South Africa to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis, it is recommended that it should also apply conditionality concerning at least economic reform to the credit line it proposes to extend to Zimbabwe and require a monitoring mechanism so it can assure itself that the conditions are being met and the money is being used for the intended purposes<sup>182</sup>.

Finally, the volatile situation in Zimbabwe continues to occur, and this is further witnessed by the series of arrests of the opposition leader, and his supporters in preparation for the run off of the presidential election. Perhaps, South Africa in

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid

<sup>182</sup> Ibid



partnership with AU, SADC and other institutions should send more mission observers to ensure that the election is free and fair. However, what are also more disturbing are Mbeki's claims that there are no crisis in Zimbabwe. Still, the MDC has decided not to participate in the re-run of presidential elections (scheduled for 27 June 2008) due to the arrest and intimidation of its leaders. This also proves that there are crisis in Zimbabwe which needs to be resolved even though Mbeki denies it. I think the international community should work with African organisations in removing this crisis.

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