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## **The Zimbabwean Entrapment: An Analysis of the Nexus between Domestic and Foreign Policies in a “Collapsing” Militant State, 1990s-2006.**

**Terence M. Mashingaidze\***

### **Introduction: A Historical Overview of Zimbabwe’s Foreign Policy**

Soon after independence in 1980 Harare quickly became Southern Africa’s diplomatic hub and a key player in the Frontline States’ efforts to dismantle apartheid and colonialism in Southern Africa. Zimbabwe adopted a policy of non-alignment in international affairs and its foreign policy trajectory was governed by sanctity of the right to life, self-determination, defense of national sovereignty, anti-imperialism, equality of sovereign states, and non-inteference in the internal affairs of other states<sup>1</sup>. Zimbabwe adhered to the positions of the Southern African Development Community<sup>2</sup>, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the Commonwealth. In 1983/4 and 1991/2 Zimbabwe assumed one of the non-permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council. Assumption of these positions gave it significant skills in international affairs.

The 1986 NAM summit meeting was held in Harare and Prime Minister Mugabe became chair of the organization. As chair of the Front Line states Zimbabwe strongly argued against apartheid and frequently called for the imposition of economic sanctions against Pretoria. Zimbabwe helped launch the African Fund whose main aim was to assist the liberation movements in Namibia and South Africa, and Southern African states threatened by Pretoria’s policy of destabilization.<sup>3</sup> Through its military intervention in Mozambique, Zimbabwe provided the FRELIMO government decisive support against RENAMO forces that had originally been nurtured by Rhodesian forces<sup>4</sup> and later adopted as surrogates by apartheid South Africa. Ultimately, President Mugabe, as the honest broker, of the Rome Accords helped to end the seventeen-year Mozambican civil war. In the 1990s, Zimbabwe’s security forces helped in

peacekeeping missions in Angola, Kosovo and Somalia. Though controversial, in 1998, Zimbabwe, together with Angola and Namibia deployed troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to prop up the Laurent Kabila regime, which was under immense threat from Ugandan, and Rwandan backed rebels. At its height in 2000, the DRC military venture drained at least US\$1 million per day, from the Zimbabwean fiscus.<sup>5</sup> Among other factors, which shall be highlighted in preceding sections, this war was one of the major contributory factors to the Zimbabwean crisis.

Zimbabwe's high profile foreign policy and effective domestic management record in the 1980s enabled President Mugabe to win numerous international accolades such as the 1988 World Freedom against Hunger Award. In the 1980s, many correctly labeled it the "African Jewel", its economy was diverse and vibrant, it had a young well-educated population, and the currency was even stronger than the United States dollar. Due to international goodwill, many in the western financial, donor and multilateral communities were enthusiastic to underwrite its economic development programmes. Aid flowed from many quarters of the Western world, including the Bretton Woods Institutions who were to underwrite its economic structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the 1990's. Many international and multilateral institutions set up their regional headquarters in Zimbabwe during this period. Zimbabwe's relations with the former colonizer, the United Kingdom, were also good. In 1991, Harare was host to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM) which crafted and adopted the famous Harare Declaration on good governance<sup>6</sup>.

Although Zimbabwe's foreign policy pursuits were quite successful in the 1980s and 1990s hitches were encountered at times. For example, its firm stance towards apartheid South Africa sparked diplomatic standoffs with some western powers. Between July 1986 and August 1988, the United States froze aid to Harare because of its criticism of the US policy of 'constructive engagement' toward South Africa. Zimbabwean authorities viewed this as tacit approval of apartheid Pretoria's policies. The Reagan administration was suspicious of the socialist rhetoric of the country's political leaders, despite the administration's often-expressed enthusiasm for Zimbabwe's political and economic direction.<sup>7</sup> Like in many parts of the globe, the United States was against countries with socialist leanings and in most instances went to the extent of destabilizing their governments by supporting their "anticommunist" opponents. The end of the of the Angolan civil war and the holding of majority rule elections in Namibia eased

tensions and enabled the resumption of sound diplomatic relations between the United States and Zimbabwe.<sup>8</sup>

By the turn of the twenty first century Zimbabwe's fortunes on the international arena had turned upside down. This scenario was a result of the ruling party's (ZANU PF) waning legitimacy in the late 1990's. The Zimbabwean economy began to collapse in the mid-1990s. Fiscal deficits, foreign currency shortages and fuel scarcity became common. Mismanagement and corruption, unfair terms of trade and indiscriminate servicing of foreign debt caused the underperformance of the economy. Unemployment levels increased coupled with reduced government expenditure on social services.<sup>9</sup> These developments prompted the emergence of a vibrant alternative political movement, in the form of the labor-backed opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Pressure from a popular opposition, vocal civil society<sup>10</sup> and a disenchanting populace compelled the ruling party to revive its political fortunes through aggressive and violent means. In an attempt to win lost political ground the ruling party co-opted various interest groups through violent means. Notably, President Mugabe embarked on a controversial and chaotic land redistribution exercise using veterans of the liberation struggle, the youths and party cadres in an effort to revive his party's waning fortunes. The infamous cliché *the land is the economy and the economy is the land* became the 'war cry'. Land assumed a hegemonic position in day-to-day discourse, political rhetoric, the media, and the country's international relations. Land became the sole signifier of patriotism and sovereignty.<sup>11</sup> Brian Raftopoulos argues that:

This mobilization has taken place through a heightened, racialised discourse, reminiscent of the liberation war rhetoric that has also sought to project a radical, Pan-Africanist, anti-imperialist image. Whether in SADC, the OAU, or in Harlem, Mugabe has proclaimed the need for a broad black, Africanist alliance, an essentialised and combative subject, to confront the racist West that has dismissed him as an anti-democratic tyrant...Those who seek to question the modalities of Mugabe's version of land redistribution, are defined as outside the nation, and mere imposters for imperialist designs. The central target for this invective has been the MDC, who have continuously been characterized as outside of "genuine" nationalist aspirations.<sup>12</sup>

Intolerance is central to the Zimbabwean crisis. The ruling elite have strong elements of sectarian and totalitarian approaches to nationhood. They cannot tolerate political plurality and harness diversity for development<sup>13</sup>. Citizens who do not belong to and identify with the ruling

party ZANU (PF) and did not participate in the liberation struggle are vilified as unpatriotic and traitors without any rights to participate in the Zimbabwean body politic. Those who try to get breathing space on the Zimbabwean political arena, as individuals, organizations and political parties outside ZANU (PF) set parameters have to endure a hostile state controlled media, and restrictive laws.

Zimbabwe's checkered international relations in the past six years is closely connected to the liberation war legacy. Like all liberation war movements that got into power, ZANU PF, the ruling party, considers itself the vanguard movement and this thinking has affected Zimbabwe's foreign relations. As in many post-colonial states, there has been a failure to tolerate political plurality and to harness diversity for development. The state has become intrusive and all permeating.<sup>14</sup> The ruling ZANU PF's thinking and approach to governance is that of a hegemonic and commandist party and this has narrowed space for citizens' democratic participation. In the 1990s Jonathan Moyo argued against ZANU PF's style of governance by aptly stating that:

To suggest that political participation is only possible within the context of the machinery of the ruling party is tantamount to saying that what is good for ZANU (PF) is good for everyone, a suggestion that is patently false as far as what is known about the diversity of the human conditions goes.<sup>15</sup>

To a large extent the ruling party is still stuck in the exclusionary mode of liberation war politics (Then it was a convenient survival strategy) whereby citizens, groups of any nature and even countries are separated into neat binaries of friends and enemies, patriots and traitors, western stooges and anti-imperialists/Pan Africanists. The Third Chimurenga/Liberation War and other associated struggles are being fought on two fronts. On the domestic arena, the war is against white farmers, civil society and the legitimate domestic political competitors. On the international arena, they involve vitriol against the United Kingdom, the United States of America, multilateral organizations and the international community at large. This bellicose stance obliterates sensible debate on national issues and even Zimbabwe's position in the community of nations.

On the domestic political arena, ZANU PF refuses to engage the domestic opposition, notably the MDC, because they assume they are surrogates of the British and in resolving the Zimbabwean crisis they would rather engage their principal at Number 10 Downing Street. This is incongruous thinking, especially for a government claiming to be on a warpath against foreign interference, a government that thinks it can go it alone. As far as modern international relations

are concerned the notion of sovereignty entails none deference to outside powers and authority beyond that of international/multilateral institutions such as Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union, the International Court of Justice, and the United Nations. If Harare and London were to engage in the context of the on going crisis there is no way they are going to relate on an even keel. The later will give conditionalities and the former simply has to comply. I am sure the Harare foreign policy experts are well aware of this. One is bound to ask, do the ZANU PF arch proponents of sovereignty and territorial integrity still want a Second Lancaster House Conference after twenty six years of independence? It appears Harare's call for bilateral engagement is aimed at giving credence to the notion that the Zimbabwean crisis is externally induced.

### **The Zimbabwean Crisis: Nature and Dimensions<sup>16</sup>**

Political and economic developments in Zimbabwe in the past six years have assumed global resonance.<sup>17</sup> Democratic space is severely truncated, the once shining economy is in the doldrums, corruption is rampant, there is debilitating brain drain, the state's hanging noose on the private press is getting tighter and tighter, and a plethora of laws are continuously unleashed to muzzle citizens' basic freedoms<sup>18</sup>. The World Economic Forum's 2005 Global Competitiveness Report ranked Zimbabwe among the countries with the worst macro-economic environments. It was number 109 out of 117 countries polled.<sup>19</sup> The business operating environment is hyper inflationary and over the past few years the country ceased being a net exporter of food to a regional "basket case". Inflation increased from 130 percent in January to 501 percent in December 2005 and by May 2006 it was above 1100 percent. Of all non-war economies, Zimbabwe is the fastest declining economy in the world having shed more than 40% of its real GDP since 1997.<sup>20</sup> Manufacturing has shrunk by fifty one percent since 1997 and exports have fallen by half. Hardest hit are major foreign currency earning industries such as mining, tourism and tobacco production. Foreign direct investment dropped from US\$444 million in 1998 to US\$9 million in 2004.<sup>21</sup> The United States Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Christopher Dell, noted that:

It is estimated that Zimbabwe's economic crisis has set the country back more than half a century. Further the purchasing power of the average Zimbabweans in 2005 had fallen back to the same levels as in 1953 when the Confederation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was established.<sup>22</sup>

In 2004, only Angola and Zimbabwe in Sub-Saharan Africa had inflation rates above 20 percent. Angola reduced its rate down from 77 percent in 2003 to about 30 percent a year later.<sup>23</sup> Industry officials say 400 companies have closed since 2000, leaving four in five people unemployed.<sup>24</sup> Coupled with all this is the ravaging HIV/AIDS menace<sup>25</sup>. Critics blame Mugabe's government policies for the negative state of affairs but the government and its allies on the other apportion the blame on "foreign and domestic enemies of the state opposed to the land reform". Due to the turbulent macro-economic environment, Zimbabwe is perceived to be a hostile investment destination where there is little regard for private property. Besides, uncertainties in the land sector in 2002 some government supporters threatened to seize industries in a replica of the land seizures.

In order to strengthen its grip on power the government passed a series of restrictive laws on people's freedoms in early 2002. These laws include the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Access to Information and the Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). These laws have been selectively applied because only journalists from the privately owned media have been arrested for violating AIPPA. Privately owned newspapers such as the Daily News, The Tribune and The Weekly Times were closed for having either violated registration or operating procedures set by AIPPA and the government media-monitoring agency, the Media and Information Commission (MIC). POSA was passed to give the police more powers to deal with terrorist activities and criminal elements<sup>26</sup>. The Act makes it mandatory for any organizer of a public gathering, demonstration or procession to notify the local police in writing. As part of the Act, it is an offence for any person to publish or communicate falsehoods with the intention or upon realizing that there is a risk of promoting public disorder. The Act further proscribes the publication of issues adversely affecting the defense or economic interests of the state, or disrupting an essential service. The government claims that the Act was passed to curb violence and irresponsible reporting that had become rife in the independent media but in reality, it was designed to proscribe opposition politics. In the run up to the March 2002 Presidential elections, the MDC director of elections, Paul Themba Nyathi, charged that the police were selectively interpreting and applying POSA, in favor ZANU (PF). The MDC claimed that ZANU (PF) had flouted most of the POSA provisions because the law was never meant to be applied to all the parties contesting the Presidential election<sup>27</sup>. In addition the governments enacted the General

Laws Amendment Act which banned foreign journalists and independent monitors from observing Zimbabwean polls.

Between 2000 and 2002, ruling party aligned youths regularly set up road blocks, conducted political party card checks, and declared certain rural areas off-bounds to opposition parties conducted regular party card checks especially in the rural areas. Civic organizations such as the National Constitutional Assembly argued the decision to seal off rural areas and restrict freedom of movement for the opposition limited the flow of ideas and rendered many citizens speechless.<sup>28</sup>

Soon after the June 2000, parliamentary elections the Commonwealth Election Observer Team strongly refused to endorse the elections due to unfavourable conditions to democratic participation. It claimed that the ruling party used its incumbency to exploit state resources for the benefit of its electoral campaign. Further, the government's tight control of the media was used to black out opposition activities. ZANU PF, as the ruling party, achieved this through its control of the state owned Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings which has an exclusive monopoly of the country electronic media. The violent activities, against MDC supporters, of ZANU (PF) paramilitary youth organized under the national youth training service were also condemned.<sup>29</sup>. The team was also concerned that the police seemed to deal high-handedly with the MDC, while being lenient with ZANU (PF). The team further observed that this failure to impartially enforce the law seriously called into question the application of the rule of law in Zimbabwe.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, this revived form of nationalism and repression emerged because of the government's waning legitimacy and failure to improve the citizens' material reality from the 1990s onwards. R L Sklar's observation captures the dynamics of the Zimbabwean saga:

Any government that fails to cope effectively with problems of society will seek solace in escapist, reactionary, and racialist forms of nationalism, which obscure the cause of its failure and accomplish little lasting value.<sup>31</sup>

The unfolding scenario is inimical to democratic political pluralism, rule of law, transparency and accountability.

### **The International Community and the Zimbabwean Crisis**

International response to the Zimbabwean crisis has been diverse. There has been international condemnation, ostracisation, and at times "indifference" by some states especially in

Southern Africa. The United Kingdom, the United States of America and much of the Western World condemned the situation obtaining in Zimbabwe and have imposed targeted sanctions against the political country's elite. Bilateral and multilateral aid as well as foreign direct investment from traditional Western quarters was drastically reduced. The ruling party's harsh stance toward perceived political opponents and critics on the domestic and international arena and the unfair conduct of the 2000 and 2002 elections account for this.

The Zimbabwean crisis has divided world opinion into two opposed standpoints. Commitment to human rights and rule of law, Third World and racial solidarity, liberation war commitments, Pan Africanism and neo-colonial agendas have been the major determinants of the international community's policies towards Zimbabwe. The United Kingdom, the United States of America and much of the Western World condemned the situation obtaining in Zimbabwe. On 5 December 2001, the United States Congress passed the Zimbabwe Economic and Democracy Bill, which imposed *smart sanctions* on the ZANU (PF) political elite. The muzzling of the press and violence against the political opposition were the rationale for the Bill.

Zimbabwe's domestic and international policies are on a collusion course with those of the United States. Most of the things being advanced by the US appear to be flouted by Harare. In September 2004 President Bush noted that:

For decades, the circle of liberty and security and development has been expanding in the world. This progress has brought unity to Europe, self-government to Latin America and Asia, and new hope to Africa. Now we have the historic chance to widen the circle even further, to fight radicalism and terror with justice, to achieve a true peace, founded on true freedom... Both the American Declaration of Independence and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaim the equal value and dignity of every human life. That dignity is honored by the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women, protection of private property, free speech, equal justice, and religious tolerance.<sup>32</sup>

The European Union and the United Kingdom imposed also travel bans and smart sanctions on the country's leadership. This situation was aggravated in March 2002 when Zimbabwe held its Presidential elections. The Commonwealth and the European Joint Parliamentary Assembly refused to endorse the election outcome and the reelection of President Mugabe citing electoral fraud and massive pre-election violence. Sensing imminent suspension Zimbabwe quickly withdrew from the Commonwealth. Characteristically, the Zimbabwean



government was contemptuous and a senior member of the ZANU (PF) administration D N E Mutasa noted, "... for us this is like an escape from hell because Britain and its white allies have turned the Commonwealth into a Zimbabwean lynch club".<sup>33</sup> President Mugabe further added, "The Commonwealth is a mere club, but it has become like an Animal Farm where some members are more equal than others"<sup>34</sup>. After the Presidential elections of March 2002, a new *war cabinet* was appointed in August ostensibly to defend the government position on land, human rights and even international relations. The President argued that the Zimbabwean crisis emanated from the efforts by the West to recolonise Zimbabwe. The erstwhile loquacious Minister of Information and Publicity, Professor Jonathan Moyo aggressively purveyed and defended purveyed this view.

Though there were apparent cases of violation of human rights and disregard of the rule of law, Zimbabwe's suspension is somewhat controversial. Foremost, Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth is the first instance a country's suspension was not preceded by a military coup. Zimbabwe's suspension largely on the basis of unfair electoral conduct was also unprecedented. Nigeria's elections of 1999 were equally chaotic but it enjoys good international standing.<sup>35</sup> This prompted some commentators to argue that major capitalist power's strategic and economic interests have influenced their tough positions toward Zimbabwe. The majority of the white farmers who lost land are of British stock and the west's attitude toward Zimbabwe is a matter of "fighting a kith and kin war". President Thabo Mbeki once noted that:

Indeed, the land question has disappeared from the global discourse about Zimbabwe, except when it is mentioned to highlight the plight of the former white landowners and to attribute food shortages in Zimbabwe to the land redistribution programme".<sup>36</sup>

In addition state sanctioned violence against opponents has deep-seated roots in Zimbabwe. In the 1980s, the government, through its infamous Fifth Brigade, killed close to twenty thousand civilians in Matabeleland purportedly because they were sympathetic to the destabilizing ZAPU aligned forces.<sup>37</sup> During this period, the world turned aside. The international community did not condemn the Zimbabwean government for the butchering of the Ndebeles and Shonas, which ended with the signing of the Unity Accord in December 1987 between ZAPU and ZANU. This shows the double standards in the international human rights regime. Third world countries are only condemned if they cease to be strategic allies in the western world's geo-strategic

calculations. A M Babu's statement still resonates today. Western countries in spite discord here and there had and have:

The same world outlook (capitalism); the same motivations (private enterprise and profit); the same political ethics (liberty, equality, fraternity-exclusively for themselves); the same politico-economic aspirations (world domination); the same international obligation (the White Man's Burden)<sup>38</sup>

Western self-interests, not hard and fast principles, have shaped international politics for too long. During the Cold War autocratic governments, corruption, coups and counter coups were supported as long as they could buttress Western political, economic and strategic interests. This accounts for the support given to dictators such as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, and Emperor Jean Claude Bokassa of The Central African Republic and, in the early days of his rule, Idi Amin of Uganda.

Contrary to the West's position, most African countries, with the exception of Botswana and Senegal, and much of the Third World have resolutely stood behind the country much to the frustration of many quarters. The African Union, the Southern African Development Community and African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP) endorsed the elections as fair. The ACP-EU<sup>39</sup> Joint Assembly (25-28 November 2002) session failed to take place because of the Zimbabwean crisis. ACP members opposed the banning of two Zimbabwean deputy ministers from participating in the ACP-EU Joint Assembly session in Brussels. All 77 ACP countries boycotted the meeting, plunging the entire ACP-EU relationship into an unprecedented crisis. This had never happened since the creation of the EU-ACP partnership in 1975. The two ministers were on the EU travel ban list, but under international law, they were allowed to travel to Europe on official ACP business. The decision to bar the Zimbabwean delegation from the meeting was considered illegal by the ACP, even from the European perspective, it was contrary to the spirit of the EU-ACP partnership.<sup>40</sup> This division partly accounts for Zimbabwe's election into the United Nations Commission for Human Rights on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2005. This was so in spite of spirited opposition from the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia. Attempts to censure Zimbabwe in the Security Council were also quashed by China.

South Africa, as the regional economic powerhouse and a major proponent of good governance in Africa has confounded many in the diplomatic and civic rights communities. It has either come strong in support of Zimbabwe or engaged in *quiet diplomacy*. When

Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth was extended for a further one year at the December 2003 Abuja Summit President Mbeki scathingly noted that:

This outcome (further suspension of Zimbabwe) demands of us that regardless of the fact that we are poor and need the support of others richer than ourselves to overcome our problems, we should always refuse to "rationalise the upside way of looking at Africa". Our poverty and underdevelopment will never serve as reason for us to abandon our dignity as human beings, turning ourselves into grateful and subservient recipients of alms, happy to submit to a dismissive, intolerant and rigid attitude of some in our country and the rest of the world, towards what we believe and know is right...<sup>41</sup>

Mbeki's quiet diplomacy has been seriously castigated by some in Zimbabwe and the international community. In fact Mbeki's approach to the Zimbabwean crisis caused acrimony and heated debate within the Tripartite Alliance between his African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions on the other (COSATU). COSATU and the SACP wanted South Africa to be tough with its recalcitrant northern neighbour. Blade Nzimande, the SACP secretary general, noted that: ZANU is less and less a liberation movement confidently fostering a progressive hegemony in its own country and in the region, and more and more a repressive machine focused narrowly on holding on to power.<sup>42</sup>

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the moral icon of the struggle against apartheid, has also been a trenchant critic of the Zimbabwean government and, much to the annoyance Mbeki, of quiet diplomacy as well. He has joined ranks with those calling for proactive engagement with Harare over its warped governance record and he once noted that:

What do we want our government to do with Zimbabwe? Are we satisfied with Quiet Diplomacy? Surely, human rights violations must be condemned as such whatever the credentials of the perpetrator.<sup>43</sup>

Contrary to the above views, quiet diplomacy appears to be a *realistic option* for Mbeki. It supports a broader strategy of dealing with the paradox of South Africa's relative power in the region. Stremlan argues that:

Any state stronger than its neighbor's risks causing the others to form an alliance of self-defence, much as the so-called frontline states did to counter apartheid SA. The ANC government must

deal with the natural tendency of smaller states to try to counter SA's influence... Since 1994 Mugabe has been the only Southern African Development Community leader capable of forging an anti-SA coalition, and appeared to have been moving in that direction in the earlier days of the Congo Crisis. Today he is a spent force, nationally and regionally. If SA wants to lead a voluntary regional order conducive to its own best interests, demonstrating self-restraint in the use of superior power will be necessary to reassure weaker states that they will be neither dominated nor ignored. Signs of self-restraint become critical to developing a durable and mutually acceptable regional order.<sup>44</sup>

It appears Mbeki has skillfully managed to elbow Zimbabwe from its hegemonic position as the *leading state* in Southern Africa. In the late 1990s, his predecessor Nelson Mandela almost lost it out to Mugabe when the former was the Chairman of SADC and the latter the chairperson of the influential SADC Organ on Politics and Defence. Mugabe projected the organ as a semi autonomous entity of SADC much to the chagrin of Mandela. Now the crisis in Zimbabwe has worked to South Africa's advantage and Mbeki has emerged as the leading Southern African head of state. South Africa has emerged as the sub-regional imperial power. His prominent role in promoting the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) is a further boon to his international profile.

Mbeki's quiet diplomacy can further be appreciated from the premise that:

If there is nothing or very little in the subject of human rights for politicians trying to be elected, there is not much in it for states either. Upsetting a foreign government on behalf of a victim does little for the state. It is a cost not a gain.<sup>45</sup>

Given this widespread mentality of "*what's in it for us?*" human rights issues can only surface in two kinds of situations: when it serves the interest of the state and when attention to it endangers no other interest of the state<sup>46</sup>. Since the land question, the fulcrum of the Zimbabwean debacle is so emotive in South Africa, and many other sub-Saharan enclaves, President Mbeki cannot condemn, at least in public, what is happening in Zimbabwe. Again, President Mbeki being particularly concerned with international relations seems to confirm the view that human rights issues do not excite foreign policy professionals. Vincent observes that:

When forced to take up a particular case, they (foreign policy experts) prefer acting behind closed doors to conducting it in public, and they place great stress on the efficacy of "quiet diplomacy", making use of their professional skills to go to the limits of the possible. In addition ...taken up

reluctantly, by diplomats in response to small but articulate domestic lobbies, human rights are received as a problem not a solution. They get in the way of ordinary diplomacy; they inhibit the flexibility necessary for operation in the world of states. They are enormously complex. Each new case requires different handling so that human rights policy cannot be turned into a routine. Any successes are better not claimed, while failures make the front page<sup>47</sup>

Events obtaining in Zimbabwe have divided world opinion to the extent that the ZANU (PF) government has fervent admirers and ardent opponents both on the domestic and international spheres. To many of the marginalized in the Third World Mugabe is their hero, the man who can square up to purported age-old western humiliation, embarrassment and exploitation. A 2004 *New African Magazine* readers vote for “100 Greatest Africans” put Mugabe on the third place behind Nelson Mandela and Kwame Nkrumah. His cogent arguments and articulate voice surprisingly evoke standing ovations on international meetings. This was quite manifest at the United Nations Earth Summit in Johannesburg (24 August to 4 September 2004) when he noted that:

The Unilateralism of the unipolar world has reduced the rest of mankind to collective underdogs, chattels of the rich, the willful few in the North who beat batter and bully us under the dirty cover of democracy, rule of law and good governance. Otherwise, how would they undermine at the global level the same values of good governance and rule of law they arrogantly demand from the South? Institutionally we have relied for much too long on structures originally set to recover and rebuild Europe after a devastating war against Nazism... That is why, for example, the IMF has never been a fund for the poor peasants seeking sustainable development. Even the UN, a body that is supposed to give us equal voices, remains unreformed and undemocratic, largely because of resistance from the powerful and selfish North.

President Mugabe has been assiduously defending his government’s position on various fora by attacking Britain, the former colonial power and in a speech delivered at the UN General Assembly, he noted that:

Zimbabwe has also had to withstand unprovoked, declared and undeclared sanctions, imposed by Britain and its allies who are bent on bringing down our legitimately elected government. Mr. Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, has arrogantly and unashamedly announced in his Parliament that his government was working with Zimbabwe’s opposition party to bring about regime change. Once again, the lawless nature of this man, who along with his Washington

master believes he is God ordained to rule our world, has shown himself...While the sadistic scenes from Abu Gharaib remain vivid in our minds, other places in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay have provided useful samples of the Western concept of respect for human rights. Let me say once again that the West should spare us their lessons on human rights. They do not have the moral authority to speak about, let alone, parade themselves, as torchbearers of human rights.<sup>48</sup>

The Zimbabwean saga shows that the government has developed a persecution mentality as a discursive trump card to ward off any criticism of its policies. When COSATU attempted to make a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe in October 2004, the thirteen-member delegation was abducted out of the country. Customarily, the Zimbabwean authorities saw international conspiracy in COSATU's actions by observing that:

The defiant visit, facilitated by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, itself an affiliate of the Western sponsored MDC constitute a direct and most frontal challenge to the sovereignty of the Republic of Zimbabwe by individuals purporting to be African and trade Unionists on a fact finding mission when, in reality, they are an integral part of Britain's disguised maneuvers to meddle in the politics and internal affairs of Zimbabwe in order to reverse her hard-won independence and gains of the land reform programme.<sup>49</sup>

The March 2005 Elections were dubbed the Anti-Blair Election. Anti-imperial/ liberation war thinking is rife in ZANU PF's political discourse. The violent electoral processes of 2000-2005 have been perceived as nothing but a justifiable anti-imperial crusade.

### **Responses to Isolation**

No nation-state is an island and Zimbabwe, even as its leaders assert an antiquated inclination toward autarky, is no exception to this rule. President Mugabe has made concerted efforts to forge stronger ties with states that are cast as "rogues" by the international community, especially western powers, and other multi lateral institutions. Between 2000 and 2002, Libya's Colonel Quaddafi offered Zimbabwe critical aid for fuel purchases. A third of a billion dollars in emergency oil credit was annually availed to Zimbabwe. Ironically, this was at the likely cost of mortgaging some of the land that Zanu PF has been repossessing and seizing from white farmers and businesspersons<sup>50</sup>. The relations between Zimbabwe and Libya are no longer good,

especially since the latter's rapprochement with the West and its recanting of the nuclear weapons development programme.

The government has also adopted the "The Look East Policy". Through the policy, the government is trying to court Eastern investors and political allies, namely China, Malaysia and Iran. In 2004, Iran made efforts to underwrite Zimbabwe's land reform by providing agro-industrial equipment and modern communication technology for the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings Corporation. In 2005 Zimbabwe bought three passenger planes, six trainer jets and nearly four hundred commuter buses from China. China agreed also to supply trains and to rebuild Zimbabwe's rail network.<sup>51</sup> The United States has expressed concern over China's relationship with Zimbabwe, but China allayed such fears by stating that its activities in Africa did not seek to jeopardize the United State's.

The Look East policy has sparked mixed reactions on the domestic arena. Certain ZANU PF aligned quarters support the policy but consumers and industrialists seem uncomfortable with the flooding of cheaper mass produced Chinese commodities, which have undermined local products on the domestic market. Former minister of finance Simba Makoni noted that, "even if Zimbabwe is looking east, whilst east is looking west, there is need for clarity in our policies".<sup>52</sup> As far European countries are concerned France and Zimbabwe have been mutually each other. President Mugabe has been attending Franco-African Summits for the past few years. The French obviously have an open neo-colonial agenda characterized by their patronization and incessant interference into almost all aspects of their former colonies' domestic affairs. They are trying to increase their sphere of influence by establishing stronger bonds with countries that were not part of their colonial system.

The Zimbabwean government has also tried to *establish* liberation movements solidarity networks with the ANC in South Africa, FRELIMO in Mozambique, UNIP in Zambia, SWAPO in Namibia and Chama Chama Mapinduzi in Tanzania. At the Silver Jubilee Celebrations in April 2005, the Zimbabwean government honoured Frontline States leaders with the Royal Order of Munhumutapa (Gold), for their sterling contribution to the liberation of Zimbabwe and other African countries. Those who were honoured were Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Samora Machel (Mozambique), Sir Seretse Khama (Botswana) and Augustinho Neto (Angola). Pan-African Organizations such as the Harlem based shadowy but populist December

12 Movement have also been wooed by ZANU (PF) in order to get the sympathy of the African diaspora.

Solidarity galas and transnational media networks have been held and established, respectively, at the instigation of Zimbabwe's unrelenting Department of Information and Publicity in the Office of the President. In this regard, The Southern Times newspaper, a joint venture between Zimbabwe and Namibia, is now operational. A twenty-four hour-satellite television network has been established at Walvis Bay in Namibia. The Zimbabwe-Mozambique solidarity bash was also held towards the end of 2004 in border town Chimoio. In spite of all these efforts Zimbabwe needs to get back into the community of nations and the precondition for this is fair and transparent conduct of national affairs.

## **Conclusion**

Zimbabwe's chaotic domestic management has had strong contagion effects in some neighboring countries. Besides compromising the livelihoods of millions of Zimbabweans, the crisis has spilled over into the region with an estimated three and a half million Zimbabwean economic refugees now living in South Africa.<sup>53</sup> Between twenty-five and thirty-three per cent of the population is in exile and at least seventy per cent of all university graduates are believed to be working outside the country.<sup>54</sup> The flow of Zimbabweans into South Africa is aggravating that country's dire employment prospects. The unemployment rate is well over twenty-six percent.

However, the effects of the Zimbabwean saga on South Africa are not entirely negative because South Africa has gained market share in exports, tourism and services. According to the University of Zimbabwe's business studies professor, Tony Hawkins, South Africa's share of investment in Zimbabwe has risen as there has been an element of bargain basement buying by some mining and industrial groups. SA is also taking significant skills from the country, especially scarce black skills in health, education, banking, engineering and IT.<sup>55</sup> South African black mining magnets such as Mzi Khumalo have made significant inroads into the Zimbabwean mining sector. His company, Metallon Gold acquired several mines in the post-2000 era. Zimbabwe's troubles have diverted tourists to South Africa. This includes international tourists to the Victoria Falls who choose to fly to the falls and spend time and money in SA hotels rather than in Zimbabwe. In fact, tourism authorities complain that some South African tour operators advertise the Victoria Falls as if they were in South Africa by saying, "Come to South Africa and



see the Victoria Falls”. Ordinary Zimbabweans visiting South Africa, largely for shopping scarce commodities on the Zimbabwean market, increased by thirty seven per cent in the first quarter of 2005.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, in as much as the ruling elite adopts diversionary tactics by projecting the government’s criticism by civic society, fellow African governments and the western world, as nothing but imperial encroachment and snooping into the domestic affairs of a small nation the worsening macro economic environment and increasing cases, real and alleged, of human rights violations are not doing it any good. The continued defensive and truculent posturing lacks moral legitimacy considering the poverty and hunger that continues to envelope an ever increasing majority of the citizens.

\* Lecturer, History and Development Studies, Midlands State University, Private Bag 9055 Gweru Zimbabwe TMMASHY@yahoo.co.uk

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See D P Chimanikire, “Foreign and Security Policy: From Independence to the DRC”, in Darnolf S and Laasko L, eds, *Twenty Years of Independence in Zimbabwe: From Liberation to Authoritarianism*, New York and Basingstokes, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 181.

<sup>2</sup> Zimbabwe was a founder member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1980. The organization sought to limit Southern African countries dependency on apartheid South Africa. Zimbabwe has played an important role in SADC/SADC, providing its first executive secretary and fulfilling its responsibility for regional food security portfolio. Ironically, now Zimbabwe can not feed itself.

<sup>3</sup> D P Chimanikire, *Ibid*, 182-183.

<sup>4</sup> L M Sachikonye, “Rambai Makashinga”: Zimbabwe’s Relations With The International Community”, paper presented at the OSSREA Zimbabwe chapter’s seminar-“ A Call for a National Dialogue on the Future of Zimbabwe”, Holiday Inn Zimbabwe, 25 July 2003, page 3,

<sup>5</sup> See also D P Chimanikire, “Foreign and Security Policy of Zimbabwe”, 191-192.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, page 4, Ironically Zimbabwe was suspended from the Commonwealth for violating aspects of the Harare Declaration.

<sup>7</sup> See Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1989/WR89/Zimbabwe.htm>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> Zimbabwe Election Support Network 2002: 23.

<sup>10</sup> Of major interest in this regard was the emergence of vibrant civil society, notably the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in late 1997, which spearheaded the crusade for a new constitution to replace the anachronistic Lancaster House Constitution of 1979. The government responded by establishing the National Constitutional Commission (NCC). The NCC was mandated to seek people’s views and consequently formulate a homegrown constitution. However, the NCC’s draft constitution was rejected by the people in the February 2000 Referendum. This outcome was due to opposition decampaigning of the Commission’s Constitution through both the electronic and print media by the NCA and the new opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change.

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<sup>11</sup> P Bond “The Labour Movement and the Emergence of Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe” in B Raftopoulos and L M Sachikonye (eds), *Striking Back: The Labour movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe, 1980-2000*, Harare, Weaver Press.

<sup>12</sup> Raftopoulos B, 2001, “Introduction”, B Raftopoulos and L M Sachikonye (eds), *Striking Back: The Labour movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe, 1980-2000*, Harare, Weaver Press.  
page 3

<sup>13</sup> For a thorough expose of the Zimbabwean Crisis see A Hamar, B Raftopoulos and S Jensen (eds), *Zimbabwe’s Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State, and Nation in the Context of Crisis*, Harare, Weaver, 2003, pp1-41.

<sup>14</sup> See also H Galborne, 1987, “The State of Development and the need for Participation Democracy in Africa” in P Anyang Nyo`ngo, *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, 27.

<sup>15</sup> J N Moyo, 1991, “The Dialectics of National Unity and Democracy in Zimbabwe”, in L M Sachikonye and I Mandaza (eds), *The One Party State and Democracy: The Zimbabwe Debates*, Harare, Sapes Books, 85

<sup>16</sup> See also A Hammar and B Raftopoulos, “ Zimbabwe’s Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation”  
page 26

<sup>17</sup> During confirmation hearings the US Secretary of State Designate Condoleezza Rice labelled Zimbabwe as one of the global ‘outposts of tyranny’. The Zimbabwean government seriously opposed and protested against this line of thinking.

<sup>18</sup> According to E A Brett industrial output has fallen by more than 30%, inflation has risen to 600%, more than half the population has depended on food aid, and a growing foreign exchange shortages constantly disrupts the supply of fuel and power. Politically there has been a shift from a relatively open one-party system to an authoritarian and predatory regime that is increasingly dependent on using force and fraud to stay in power, and destroying the legitimacy and effectiveness of the state apparatus by doing so; For more background information on Zimbabwe’s Foreign policy see D P Chimanikire, “Foreign and Security Policy of Zimbabwe: From Independence to the DRC”, in S Danolf and L Laakso, eds, *Twenty Years of Independence: From Liberation to Authoritarianism*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 179-195.

<sup>19</sup> Mail and Guardian, South Africa, 21 November 2005

<sup>20</sup> See C Bissekera and B Ryan, “

<sup>21</sup> See US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Christopher Dell’s speech entitled “Plain Talk about the Zimbabwean Economy”

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, these figures are derived from a paper published in July 2005 by the Centre for Global Development in Washington on the “Costs and Causes of Zimbabwe’s Crisis”.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> The Zimbabwe Independent, 18 November 2005

<sup>25</sup> According to the Movement for Democratic Change Election Manifesto for the 2005 Parliamentary Elections more than 600 000 Zimbabweans have died from HIV/AIDS since 1998, 2,3 million are now infected with the disease, 2 500 are dying each week from HIV/AIDS and there are now over 1 million AIDS orphans in Zimbabwe.

<sup>26</sup> The Herald 25 January 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Daily News 15 March 2002

<sup>28</sup> National Constitutional Assembly, 20 January 2002.

<sup>29</sup> Daily News 15 March 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Falola 2001:3

<sup>32</sup> President Bush’s address to the 59<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly, New York, 21 September 2004

<sup>33</sup> D Mutasa, BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk>, 8 December 2003

<sup>34</sup> CTV News, [www.ctv.ca](http://www.ctv.ca), 6 December 2003

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> President Thabo Mbeki’s comments on the suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2002

<sup>37</sup> For more information see J Alexander, J MacGregor and T Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the Dark Forests of Matabeleland*.

<sup>38</sup> See A M Babu, *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?* Harare, ZPH, 1981, page 11, see also pp 6-9

<sup>39</sup> The ACP-EU Partnership was instituted in 1975

<sup>40</sup> New African, January 2003.

<sup>41</sup> The Herald, 13 December 2003.

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<sup>42</sup> See Mail and Guardian, 5-11 November 2004. Zwelinzima Vavi has also been one of the vociferous critics of Mbeki's stance on Zimbabwe and once wrote a polemic entitled "We are not Quiet Diplomats".

<sup>43</sup> Second Nelson Mandela Lecture presented in Johannesburg at the end of 2004, see also New African Magazine, January 2005.

<sup>44</sup> John Stremlan, "Mbeki's softly stance on Zimbabwe in SA's best interests", in the Sunday Times (SA), September 21 2003

<sup>45</sup> Elliot Abrams quoted in R J Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986:136

<sup>46</sup> R J Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986:136

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, pages 136-137

<sup>48</sup> President Robert Mugabe's address to the UN General Assembly, New York, September 200

<sup>49</sup> Department of Information and Publicity in the Office of the President and Publicity, The Herald, 27 October 2004.

<sup>50</sup> E Worby "The end of modernity in Zimbabwe? Passages from Development to sovereignty", 54

<sup>51</sup> Znews, 7 December 2005

<sup>52</sup> The Zimbabwe Independent 18 November 2005.

<sup>53</sup> Blade Nzimande, "Zanu has become a repressive machine", Mail and Guardian, 12 to 18 November 2004.

<sup>54</sup> G Hill, 2005, *What Happens After Mugabe?: Can Zimbabwe Rise From The Ashes?*, Cape Town, Zebra Press. This book offers a good analysis of the dimensions of the Zimbabwean Crisis.

<sup>55</sup> C Bissekler and B Ryan, "Zimbabwe's impact on South Africa's Economy", in Financial Mail of South Africa, 21 October 2005

<sup>56</sup> C Bissekler and B Ryan, "Zimbabwe's impact on South Africa's economy".

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#### **Zimbabwean Newspapers**

The Daily News  
The Herald  
The Sunday Mail  
ZWnews  
Newzimbabwe.com

#### **South African Newspapers**

The Mail and Guardian  
The Sunday Times

#### **International Magazines**

New African Magazine