

**EXPLAINING SOUTH AFRICA'S QUIET DIPLOMACY TOWARDS
ZIMBABWE SINCE 2000: THE DILEMMAS OF A PLURALIST MIDDLE
POWER**

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Abstract

This study is a contribution to the literature on South Africa's foreign policy since 2000-2004. It provides a theoretical framework within which South Africa's foreign policy should be understood. It attempts to explain the contradictions that have been apparent in South Africa's foreign policy by looking at the constraints inherent in South Africa's position as an emerging middle power. It argues that South Africa's pluralist inclinations are constrained by Africa's evolving multilateral forums and that South Africa's preference for such undermines the realization and achievement of her foreign policy principles and goals. It also argues that as a realist middle power, South Africa is constrained the ambivalence shown by the region towards her exercising leadership in the region. This is due to South Africa's history of destruction in Southern Africa in the 1980's. South Africa's quiet diplomacy towards Zimbabwe provides the focal point for the study. The study argues that it is not the case that South Africa is not concerned with human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. Instead, this concern has been expressed in ways that do not tarnish South Africa's own image in Africa. This has been done by engaging Zimbabweans through multilateral forums. This study concludes that this strategy failed to bring about resolution to the Zimbabwean crisis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

General Introduction	1-4
----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER TWO

A Theoretical and Conceptual Appraisal of South Africa's Position within the International Environment

2.1. Introduction.....	5-6
2.2. Introducing the Concept of Middle Powers.....	7-8
2.3. Realist Middle Powers.....	8-11
2.4. South Africa as a Realist Middle Power.....	11-15
2.5. Pluralist Middle Powers.....	15-17
2.6. South as a Pluralist Middle Power.....	17-21
2.7. Conclusion.....	21-23

CHAPTER THREE

A Theoretical Framework For South Africa's Foreign Policy Discord Since 1994

3.1. Introduction.....	24-28
3.2. Incoherence Since 1994.....	28-32
3.3. African International Relations.....	32-35
3.4. External Constraints to Foreign Policy Making.....	35-38
3.5. Centralization of Foreign Policy Making.....	38-45
3.6. Conclusion.....	45-46

CHAPTER FOUR

The Internationalisation of the Zimbabwean Crisis: Western and African Responses

4.1. Introduction.....	47-48
4.2. The Land Question.....	48-54
4.3. British and European Union Involvement in the Zimbabwean Crisis Since 2000.....	54-57
4.4. The Impact of Sanctions.....	57-65
4.5. The Commonwealth and African Response.....	65-72
4.6. Conclusion.....	72-73

CHAPTER FIVE

‘Quiet Diplomacy’: South Africa’s Foreign Policy Towards Zimbabwe Since 2000- 2004

6.1. Introduction.....	74-75
6.2. The Pre-Crisis Relationship between South Africa and Zimbabwe.....	75-79
6.3. Enter the Zimbabwean Crisis: Quiet Diplomacy Revisited.....	79-88
6.4. African Solidarity and Liberation Politics.....	88-94
6.5. Trade Union vs. Political Party.....	94-96
6.6. International Pressure on South Africa.....	96-97
6.7. What if Mugabe does not Respond?.....	97-103
6.8 Conclusion.....	103-104

CHAPTER SIX

6.1. Conclusion.....	104-108
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Abstract

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwean crisis that has been unfolding since March 2000 has proved to be one of the most intractable diplomatic exercises for the South African government since 1994. When the crisis broke out, South Africa was inundated with numerous demands, from both some sectors domestically and the international community (read: West), to provide the necessary leadership. The main assumption informing these demands was that South Africa, as a regionally preponderant state both economically and militarily, had the ability to bring speedy resolution to the crisis. South Africa's professed concern for human rights since re-entering the international system also created an expectation internationally that she would always advance this cause. However, this concern has been found wanting since the Zimbabwean crisis broke out.

The inability of the South African government to provide leadership on this matter has crystallized the limitations inherent in the abilities of emerging middle powers. As an emerging middle power that is regionally preponderant, South Africa has proved unwilling, and indeed incapable, of bringing about change in Zimbabwe. The adopted strategy of the South African government- 'quiet diplomacy'- has been found wanting in terms of bringing resolution to the Zimbabwean crisis. This is a result of a plethora of factors that have coalesced to inhibit the South African government from having an impact on the direction of the Zimbabwean political and economic system since 2000.

This study seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate about South Africa's response to the crisis and to provide a modest explanation for what has become one of the most talked about issues in South African foreign policy since the country's re-entry into the international system. The study brings a theoretical dimension to a subject that has at times been ill considered by the media. This is done through providing an explanation of the issues that have influenced South Africa's adoption of 'quiet

diplomacy'. This study only concerns itself with South Africa's diplomacy in the period 2000-2004.

The first chapter deals with South African foreign policy from a theoretical perspective. The concept of emerging middle powers is employed to evaluate South Africa's standing within her immediate region and the international environment as a whole. As an emerging middle power, South Africa has economic and military resources second to none in her region. Because of this, the international community was, and remains, of the view that South Africa should have taken a decisive position to bring about change in Zimbabwe. This expectation is predicated on South Africa adopting a realist disposition and enforcing her will on the subcontinent. This view has been rejected in its totality by the South African government. Instead, the government has sought to identify itself with a pluralist conception of middle powers that prefers multilateralism and consensus building as its foreign policy strategy.

However, as an emerging middle power, South Africa has characteristics of being a realist middle power and of being a pluralist middle power. Which one of these is dominant at any given point depends on the issue concerned. Thus, South Africa has the ability to act as both and as none. As a result of this emerging middle power status, South Africa's foreign policy is riddled with inherent contradictions.

Chapter Two deals with the contradictions that arise out of South Africa's status as an emerging middle power. It argues that in her immediate neighbourhood, South Africa is constrained by her history as a destructive force in Southern Africa and, as such, is unable to assert her liberal democratic values on the continent. Because of Africa's history of colonialism, states on the continent are very wary of interference in their domestic affairs. Consequently, South Africa is unable to assert herself because of the parallels that are deduced between apartheid foreign policy which was characterized by interference in the affairs of Southern African states, and South Africa's foreign policy since 1994. Thus, South Africa is forced to balance its desire to see democracy flourish on the continent with the desire to maintain cordial relations with the rest of the continent. The chapter also argues that South Africa's considerable economy in comparison to the rest of the continent invites pressure from the international community for her to take charge of the continent. The result of this is to put limits on

what South Africa can achieve because of the fear of being declared a puppet of the West.

Chapter Four looks at the evolution of the Zimbabwean crisis and traces its development to Zimbabwe's liberation from white rule. It argues that the seeds for the crisis were partly laid at Lancaster when the willing-buyer-willing-seller principle to land redistribution was adopted as one of the clauses in the Zimbabwean constitution. This limited the progress the government could make because of the exorbitant prices that the government had to pay to effect this process. However, the chapter also argues that the Zimbabwean government has used this as a red herring to divert attention away from its undemocratic inclinations.

The Zimbabwean government failed to provide leadership by alleging a neo-colonial agenda on the part of Britain and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and, in the process, closed down the democratic space in the country. The chapter then proceeds to consider the different responses from the international community and argues that the international community (read: West) lost an opportunity to bring the crisis to an end through the adoption of public diplomacy. This diplomacy only succeeded in making the ZANU-PF even more determined to cling to power. The antagonistic attitude of the West also made it difficult for Southern Africa to intervene decisively in the crisis because of the unprecedented involvement of the West in Zimbabwean affairs. The chapter ventures that had it not been for this antagonistic attitude, Southern Africa would have been able to resolve the crisis amicably.

Chapter Five deals with South Africa's response to the crisis. It looks at issues such as the relationship between the Zimbabwean government and the South African government and considers how this would have informed the choice of tools to employ in resolving the crisis. It considers the nature of African international relations and the impact this would have on what policy to adopt. It also provides an analysis of the alternatives to 'quiet diplomacy' and evaluates the impact these were likely to have firstly on South Africa's own standing within Africa and then on the Zimbabwean situation itself. The chapter concludes that 'quiet diplomacy', unlike the public diplomacy and confrontational stance adopted by the West, has enabled South Africa to remain an influential force in the on-going attempts at resolving the

Zimbabwean crisis, even though the ultimate resolution of the crisis itself is as yet to be realized.

Chapter Two

A Conceptual and Theoretical Appraisal of South Africa's Position within the International Environment

2.1. Introduction

South Africa's policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe since 2000 has evoked confusion and wide-ranging academic commentary over the last three and a half years¹. This has been due mainly to the expectation, both within South Africa and internationally, that South Africa would intervene decisively to halt the disintegration of political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe. "One of the underlying assumptions (for the expectation) is that South Africa would serve its values best by promoting democracy, good governance and the rule of law throughout Africa"². This expectation is also premised on the fact that South Africa is the most developed economy in the region with a GDP eight times the size of the entire region combined³. There are a number of South African companies such as Eskom doing business in Zimbabwe that have suffered financially since the crisis broke out and in 2002 it was estimated that the Southern African region was losing up to seven billion Rands annually in tourism⁴.

Further, the belief that South Africa would engage its neighbour robustly was premised on the country's professed concern for human rights in the international arena. Former President Nelson Mandela had this to say about South Africa's commitment to human rights: "Issues of human rights are central to international relations...and the international community dare not relinquish its commitment to human rights"⁵. This sentiment found expression in the South African foreign policy discussion document of 1995, which made it

¹ This topic has been the subject of many a paper published over the last few years. Among these are Sachikonye L M, South Africa's Quiet Diplomacy: the Case of Zimbabwe, in State of the Nation (2003), HSRC Press: Johannesburg and Dlamini K, Is Quiet Diplomacy an Effective Dispute Resolution Strategy? In SA Yearbook of International Affairs 2002/03

² Dlamini K, Is Quiet Diplomacy an Effective Conflict Resolution Strategy?; SA Yearbook of International Affairs 2002/03 pg 172

³ Ahwireng-Obeng F & McGowan P, South Africa in Africa in Journal of Contemporary African Studies 1998 16 (1)

⁴ Schussler M, The Cost of Zimbabwe to South Africa in Zimbabwe Research Initiative March 2002

⁵ Mandela N, South Africa's Future Foreign Policy in Foreign Affairs 72 (5) 1993

clear that South Africa's foreign policy was to be guided by the respect and promotion of human rights⁶.

However, South Africa's commitment to human rights has, arguably, not been forthcoming in the on-going attempts at resolving the crisis in Zimbabwe. Instead, the South African government has preferred to employ constructive engagement⁷, which entails "trying to influence the behavior of others by secret negotiations or by refraining from taking specific action"⁸. For some, this approach has failed to bring about any tangible results. An editorial from the *Mail and Guardian* captures this sentiment as follows:

As the battle lines have been drawn one of the more puzzling realizations for democrats across the Southern African region has been that [Mugabe] does not fear the group of people with the power to bring him down to his knees more quickly and peacefully than anyone else. This group is the South African government. Why? ...Is our own government frozen by fear on the cusp of a difficult decision? Does Mugabe know that the ANC is so wedded to the notion that former liberation movements alone constitute legitimate governments in post- struggle states that it will not do anything it believes might endanger ZANU-PF's hegemony in Zimbabwe?"⁹

The simplicity inherent in the perspective offered by the *Mail and Guardian* constitutes the subject matter of this chapter. Countless reasons have been offered for why South Africa behaves the way it does in relation to Zimbabwe. Some are paralysed by their lack of theoretical and foreign policy analysis perspectives. Using realist and pluralist theoretical perspectives, this chapter seeks to cast South Africa's foreign policy to Zimbabwe since 2000-2004 within a theoretical framework. It argues that, at times, South Africa's foreign policy appears to be contradictory. This has to do with South Africa's status as an emerging middle power, something that places certain limitations on the policy options available to the country's policy makers.

⁶ South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document (1995), Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria

⁷ This will be explored later on in the discussion

⁸ Dlamini K, Is Quiet Diplomacy an Effective Conflict Resolution Strategy? SA Yearbook of International Affairs, 2002/03 pg 01

⁹ Mail & Guardian Editorial 23 February 2001

2.2. Introducing the Concept of Middle Powers

The concept of a middle power is of analytical utility to both pluralists and realists. They define the role of the middle power in the international system differently. Pluralists tend to advance normative theoretical positions whilst realists claim to be describing international reality in an objective manner.

Middle powers are those countries, which are located somewhere between the great powers and the low ranking countries that do not have any influence on the international scene¹⁰. Realists define middle powers as those “powers where much power ultimately grows out of capabilities: military strength, demographic size, economic production, resource bases and even geographic position¹¹. Realist middle powers are also “often regionally dominant...even though they are in turn in a weaker position vis-à-vis states in the core”¹². Such states are referred to as emerging middle powers.

Pluralists define middle powers as those countries that are distinguished by “an ability to stand a certain distance from direct involvement in major conflicts, a sufficient degree of autonomy in relation to major powers, a commitment to orderliness and security in interstate relations and to the facilitation of orderly change in the world system... and such states are considered ‘trustworthy’ because they claim a higher moral ground”¹³. Pluralist middle powers also want to exercise their leadership in a multilateral context because they do not have sufficient power to influence behaviour at the bilateral level. Solomon argues that “by itself a middle power is unlikely to have an overwhelming influence on the international stage and as a result middle power leadership is, in essence, multilateralist in approach”¹⁴. This category of middle powers is inhabited by countries such as Canada, Holland, Australia and New Zealand.

¹⁰ Cooper A F et al (1994), Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order; UCB Press: Vancouver

¹¹ Hughes B (1997), Continuity and Change in World Politics; Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, New Jersey

¹² Jordaan E, The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers in Politikon 30 (2) 2003

¹³ Westhuizen J, South Africa’s Emergence as a Middle Power in World Quarterly 19 (3) 1998

¹⁴ Solomon H, Fairy God Mother, Partner or Hegemon ISS Monograph no. 13 1997

Emerging middle powers are different from established middle powers because in their immediate regions “they seem to play or are expected to play the role of regional peacemakers or police; they have the responsibility for keeping their backyard neat and orderly with a measure of support from the big powers...sometimes they are called upon to exert influence in specific cases where big power influence does not seem sufficient to find solutions to problems”¹⁵. This category comprises countries such as South Africa, Brazil, India and Nigeria. South Africa’s policy of ‘quiet diplomacy’ towards Zimbabwe seems to show that South Africa is more of a pluralist emerging middle power than it is a realist emerging middle power.

2.3. Realist Middle Powers

Realism gained prominence in International Relations after the Second World War with Morgenthau as the most popular proponent. His seminal work on state relations, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* gave shape to the study of International Relations for decades. Realism holds that “states are the only major actors in international politics and no structure of power or authority stands above them to mediate their conflicts”¹⁶. In the realm of international relations, states are the only legitimate actors and no organ has the right to dictate to states how they are to conduct their affairs either domestically or internationally.

Realism developed in large part as a response to the idealism of the 1920’s, which vested all its hopes for a better world on the formation of the League of Nations whose purpose was to bring together states in a multilateral forum for the maintenance of world peace and order. When the League failed to prevent the Second World War, there was recognition that no international body had the power to tell states what to do. In his discussion of realism, Guzzini argues that “realism had a functional role after the Second World War in the same way as idealism after the First World War produced legitimacy for the foreign policy of the dominant states and the status quo of the international system”¹⁷.

¹⁵ Schoeman M, South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power: 1994- 2003 in Daniel J et al, State of the Nation; South Africa, 2003- 2004; HSRC Press: Cape Town pg 352

¹⁶ Smith M J (1986), Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger; Louisiana State Press: Louisiana p1

¹⁷ Guzzini S (1998), Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold; Routledge: London

The League of Nations failed, according to Morgenthau, because states have a will to power. Accordingly, “international politics like all politics is a struggle for power...sovereign nations are moved to action by what they regard as their national interests rather than by the allegiance to a common good, which as a common standard of justice, does not exist in the society of nations”¹⁸. Simply stated, states are self-referential entities that only seek the advancement of their vital interests. They are motivated only by the desire to secure their own interests in the international environment and that interest is manifested as the desire for power. Power guarantees that nations continue to exist and can extract benefits from other states as being powerful only makes sense in relation to a body less powerful.

Morgenthau defines power as “man’s control over the minds and actions of other men”¹⁹. In the same vein, Pfaltzgraff & Dougherty define power as the “ability to move others by the threat or infliction of deprivations” which is distinct from influence which refers to the “ability to move others through promises or grants of benefits”²⁰. A powerful state therefore has the ability to move other states to fulfill her wishes. Failure to do so could invite unwanted consequences. However, to say that a state is powerful is not only to talk about the range of weapons available to that country. Power has both military and non-military components such as the strength of the economy, population size, size of territory, natural resources and the form of government practiced in the country²¹. All these factors give the powerful country means and resources to become a formidable force within the international system. To achieve their goals states must demonstrate their willingness to use their resources to secure their national interests. This could involve threatening less powerful states with either economic sanctions or military force.

Given the preoccupation with achieving power, realist middle powers are concerned with achieving a measure of power; they tend to be concerned with establishing themselves as dominant powers in their regions²². Thus, they tend to behave as hegemons whose dictates are followed by other states. Antonio Gramsci defines hegemony as “a moment, in which

¹⁸ *ibid* p136

¹⁹ Morgenthau J A (1967), Politics Among Nations: The Search for Power and Peace; Knopf: New York p67 (Change reference to the one below or find original)

²⁰ Dougherty J E & Pfaltzgraff R L jr (1970), Contending Theories of International Relations; Lippincott: Philadelphia

²¹ *ibid*

²² Schoeman M, op cit

the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations. An element of direction and control, not necessarily coercion, is implied”²³.

However, not all realists are in agreement about the motivations and the factors that make it possible for states to seek power. To mark this difference, a new strand of realism emerged in the 1970s. This is called neo-realism, alternately called structural realism with Kenneth Waltz as the most vocal of the neo-realists²⁴. The main difference in the two schools is over the levels of analysis. The two are not in agreement as to what exactly forms the subject matter of international relations. Traditional realism takes states and the alliances they become involved in as the basic units of study within the international system. Neo-realists, while recognizing the importance of states in so far as studying the international system is concerned, take as their basic unit of analysis the system in which states exist. To this effect, they emphasise the anarchic nature of the international system and conclude that studying the system of states yields better results in terms of understanding²⁵. Because the international system is anarchic and therefore a self-help system, “units worry about their survival and this worry conditions their behaviour”²⁶.

To Waltz, the pursuit of power does not come about because of an inherent will to power as Morgenthau believes, but as a result of the international system. Because the units in the system cannot count on the goodwill of others not to be invaded, states must take every measure to make certain that they are secure. This can be any action taken for self-preservation i.e. invasion of a neighbour, a military build up or forming alliances with other states. Waltz argues that “because some states may at any time use force, all states must be prepared to do so-or live at the mercy of their militarily more vigorous neighbours. Among states, the state of nature is a state of war. This is not meant in the sense that war constantly

²³ Quoted in Taylor I (2001), Stuck In Middle Gear: South Africa’s Post-Apartheid Foreign Relations, Praeger: London

²⁴ Waltz K (1979) *op cit*

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid* pg 105

occurs but in the sense that, with each state deciding for itself whether or not to use force, war may at any time break out”²⁷.

Waltz is not denying the claim made by Morgenthau regarding the desire for power inherent in everyone of us. Indeed, he concedes that this plays a role in the insecurity felt by states. However, this is not the main source of insecurity. What makes the domestic more peaceful and predictable is not a benign nature in human beings, but rather the fact that domestic politics is properly regulated. There is organization and a clear demarcation of what individuals can and cannot do. Where an individual goes out of line, punishment through the enforcement of the rule of law will ensue. Internationally, however, this cannot happen, as there is no central authority to regulate the behaviour of states. There is no world government to inflict punishment on states that refuse to fulfill the wishes of more powerful states²⁸.

From the afore going, it appears that Realist (and Neo-realist) middle powers do not concern themselves much with issues of human rights. This is beyond the mandate of any state and as such it should be left up to states what they do in their domestic environment. For Nicholson “The security of the state and its citizens is the primary motivation of the state”²⁹. The most important thing for any state is that she secures benefits for her citizenry above everything else. Morgenthau argues that “a foreign policy guided by moral abstractions without consideration of the national interest is bound to fail. This means a foreign policy derived from the national interest is superior to a foreign policy inspired by universal moral principles”³⁰. Thus, the pursuit of the national interest is more important than the pursuit of international human rights where this is not in the national interest.

2.4. South Africa as a Realist Middle Power

South Africa emerged from its internal colonialism - apartheid- as the most powerful country in the Southern African region. Her economy is three times larger than that of

²⁷ *Ibid* pg 102

²⁸ *Ibid* p103

²⁹ Nicholson M (1998), International Relations: A Concise Introduction; Macmillan: London

³⁰ Quoted in Smith M J (1986) *loc cit* p155

the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries combined³¹, making her the richest country in the sub-continent. She is also a significant military power³². Schoeman argues that “emerging middle powers are also regional powers: In their own regions, they are considered powerful irrespective of whether they represent regional relationships of enmity or amity”³³. Because of her regional preponderance, those from the realist school would prefer South Africa to exercise hegemony over the region given her powerful economy and her preponderant military in comparison to the rest of the region³⁴.

In the 1980s, South African foreign policy towards Africa was one of antagonism and suspicion, characterised by an offensive and destructive siege mentality. This was part of wider efforts by South Africa to destabilise the Southern African region due to the decolonisation that was sweeping throughout the region. This was despite the efforts in the 1970s made by Prime Minister Vorster to create diplomatic relations between South Africa and the African continent³⁵. Having identified herself as a ‘bastion of Western civilisation’, South Africa was isolated by, and isolated herself from, the rest of the continent through pursuing policies that were detrimental to her neighbours. In the battle against Communism during the Cold War, South Africa identified herself squarely with the capitalist West and sought to assist it in defeating communism in sub-Saharan Africa, thus removing the socialist ‘threat’ represented by her newly decolonised neighbours.

It is in this context that South Africa was involved in the then civil war in Angola, taking sides with the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) headed by Jonas Savimbi. South Africa sought to oust the pro-Moscow government of Jose Eduardo Dos Santos by giving assistance to UNITA. To this effect, the South African government under President P W Botha supplied the rebels with “material

³¹ Ahwireng-Obeng F & McGowan P, South Africa in Africa in Journal of Contemporary African Studies 1998 16 (1)

³² Van Der Westhuizen J, South Africa’s Emergence as a Middle Power, Third World Quarterly vol 19, no. 3, 1998 pg 436

³³ Schoeman M, South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power in African Security Review 2000 9 (3)

³⁵ Nolutshungu S C (1975), South Africa in Africa: A Study of Ideology and Foreign Policy; Manchester University Press: Manchester

and strategic assistance”³⁶ in order to destabilize the country through UNITA. This destabilisation drive ended with the announcements of negotiation between the South African government and the liberation movements in South Africa.

The post-1994 period has seen a significant re-orientation in South African foreign policy. The foreign policy of the country is now guided by human rights principles³⁷ and has been re-oriented towards Africa. To the latter, former President Nelson Mandela wrote, “South Africa cannot escape its African destiny. If we do not devote our energies to this continent, we too could fall victim to the forces that have brought about ruin to its various parts”³⁸. This signaled a shift from a foreign policy, which “sought the domination of one country (South Africa) and incorporated others in subsidiary and dependent roles...”³⁹; a policy that entailed treating Southern African countries as provinces of South Africa whose sovereignty was violated frequently.

In light of the criticism leveled against the post-apartheid foreign policy as represented by continuity rather than change⁴⁰, the question to ask is whether the practice of South Africa’s foreign policy has followed declarations made by the government. The issue of a discord in the principles and practice of South African foreign policy first emerged in 1998 when South Africa opted to send troops to bring about order in Lesotho when the government of Lesotho was under threat. Although eventually justified as a Southern African Development Community (SADC) mandated action, this incident revealed a rift between the principles and the practice of South African foreign policy. The sending of troops to Lesotho was a direct contradiction of the peaceful and multilateral approach, which South Africa had been advocating in the resolution of the DRC conflict some years earlier⁴¹.

It also demonstrated South Africa’s willingness to use force where it perceived its interests to be under challenge. The imminent take over by the military of the Katse

³⁶ Johnson P & Martin D, *Op Cit*

³⁷ Foreign Affairs Discussion Document; Department of Foreign Affairs; Pretoria

³⁸ Mandela N, *Op Cit*

³⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁰ Vale P (2003), Security and Politics in South Africa: The Regional Dimension; Lynne Rienner Publishers: London

⁴¹ Mkalipi Z (2002), Promotion of Liberal Values in South African Foreign Policy: Beyond the Structural Imperatives of the International System, Unpublished MA Thesis; Rhodes University: Grahamstown

and Mohale dams which form part of the Lesotho Highlands water project have been cited by critics as the reason why South Africa decided to send troops to the country⁴². South Africa had invested huge amounts of capital on this project in order to safeguard its water supply as witnessed by the reliance of the Gauteng province for its water requirements⁴³. Instability in Lesotho would have also led to many fleeing the country and entering South Africa leaving South Africa with a refugee crisis.

South Africa also displayed signs of *realpolitik* with its sale of arms to governments known to be human rights transgressors and countries undergoing conflict in order to generate revenue for the national fiscus. This includes the sale of arms to Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1997⁴⁴, the sale of arms worth US\$ 15.2 million to Algeria in 1997⁴⁵, and the sale of arms worth US\$473 000 to Indonesia in the same year⁴⁶. All of the sales of arms were to governments with dubious human rights records and this was regarded as reneging by a government, which had stated that it would engage with the international community based on principles of human rights. This was also despite the efforts of the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) - the watchdog charged with assessing and overseeing South Africa's arms sales - to block the sales. Peter Batchelor⁴⁷ argues that the sale of arms to countries of this calibre " suggests that maintaining jobs in the defense sector is more important than the government's stated

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ Mathoma P, South Africa and Lesotho: Sovereign Independence or tenth province? In South Africa Yearbook of International Affairs 1999/2000 Johannesburg

⁴⁴ The three countries are part of the Great Lakes region that was, and to an extent still is, experiencing conflict. Justifying this sale, chairperson of the National Conventional Arms Control Committee Kader Asmal reasoned that they had sought assurance from the said countries that weapons purchased in South Africa would not be used in cross border conflict nor in pursuance of human rights violation. For a fuller discussion of the arms sales see Arms Trade in Practice, Human Rights Watch Report vol. 12, no 5 (A) October 2000 pg 3

⁴⁵ Algeria -a conflict zone at the time- was a backer of the African National Congress during the struggle against Apartheid. It is alleged that at the time of the sale the conflict had already cost over a hundred thousand lives with atrocities alleged against the government. The issue troubling observers and human rights groups was the sale of an unmanned "Seeker remote-piloted vehicle, a pilot-less plane with state of the art surveillance equipment, and possibly Rooivalk attack helicopters". The possibility led to questions being asked about whether the government was concerned more with keeping old friends than it was with the promotion of the respect for human rights. For fuller detail see *Ibid* pg 4

⁴⁶ Indonesia was at the time occupying East Timor "where its forces had been responsible over many years for gross human rights abuses against the local population". See *Ibid* pg 3

⁴⁷ Batchelor P, Arms and the ANC, The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, September/ October 1998 p58

commitment to human rights principles and that the ANC's historical ties tend to override human rights concerns when it comes to approving arms sales".

Thus, from during apartheid times, South Africa has consistently shown that where its interests are perceived to be under threat, it will intervene using whatever means to safeguard its national security. The intervention in Lesotho showed that despite South Africa's preference for multilateral solutions and its respect for the domestic affairs of other states, it will not hesitate to intervene where her interests are not secure.

2.5. Pluralist Middle Powers

Pluralism presents a challenge to the realist orthodoxy, which sees states as the unitary actors in the international system. Rather, the international system is composed of different entities such as Multi-National Corporations (MNC's), interest groups, supra national bodies such as the African Union and United Nations. Nicholson argues that "international activity is not just a matter of the behaviour of states but of other actors too. Domestically, pluralism tends to describe liberal democracies, within which exist different interest groups, which aim to influence government policy in different areas so that policies better serve the wishes of their formations".

Pluralist middle powers recognize that they do not have the means and resources that the big powers have and therefore choose their areas of engagement carefully, what Andrew F Cooper calls 'Niche Diplomacy'. They prefer multilateral diplomacy through established institutions such as the United Nations, regional organizations or through *ad hoc* forms of coalition and confidence building⁴⁸. Through these institutions, they play a role in the definition of the international order. In this they have the support of big powers that do not necessarily have an interest in all matters international. Middle powers are also expected to practice a managerial role within the international system. Henrikson⁴⁹ defines managerial role as "the practical ability to give direction and effect to international undertakings,

⁴⁸ Cooper A F, *Niche Diplomacy: A Conceptual Overview* in Cooper A F (1997) Niche Diplomacy Middle Powers After the Cold War; Macmillan Press: London

⁴⁹ Henrikson A K, *Middle Powers as Managers: International Mediation within, across, and outside Institutions* in Cooper A F (1997), Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War; Macmillan Press: London

especially in institutional settings”. Moreover, the international “manager must be a negotiator”.

International organizations provide middle power countries with the opportunity to exercise influence on the international system due to their resource limitations and hence inability to single handedly define the international order. When there is tension between countries, middle powers play a pivotal role through charting a middle course over which the disagreeing parties may converge due to their ability to listen to both sides of the story and accommodating the interests of all parties.

Pluralist middle powers carry a liberal internationalist agenda. Liberal internationalism is defined by Goldman as “ the inclination of people not to put what they regard as the welfare of their own nation above everything else, as this can prevent very significant legal regulation, organization, exchange and communication from taking place and from producing order even in the absence of central authority”⁵⁰. Stanley Hoffman even goes further than this and argues that “ The ethics of the statesman ought to be guided by the imperative of moving the international arena from the state of jungle to that of a society”⁵¹. Liberal internationalism is different from hegemonic internationalism that is designed to entrench the hegemonic position of a major power⁵².

Pluralist middle powers appropriate the liberal internationalist ethos of cosmopolitanism as opposed to pursuing a narrowly defined national interest. This means, among other things, that the “international interest must be served; and if that means anything at all, it means that national interests are subordinate to it”⁵³. If the international interest is to be served, that requires some sacrifices on the part of those who seek to advance the international interest and no dogged pursuance of the national interest at whatever cost, something that realists emphasise⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of internationalism see Goldman K (1994), *op cit* p21

⁵¹ Quoted in *ibid* p162

⁵² See Cecelia L, The Promise and Problems of Internationalism in Global Governance vol.5 (1) 1999
pg 3

⁵³ See Waltz K N (1979), Theory of International Politics; Random House: New York p109

⁵⁴ For a realist discussion of the national interest see Morgenthau H J (1967), Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace; Knopf: New York

An important characteristic of middle powers is that they do not want to assume responsibility for the international system, as hegemon must, but rather aim to exercise influence in certain specific areas, a feature referred to as ‘niche diplomacy’⁵⁵. Further, pluralist middle powers provide leadership, as opposed to hegemony as traditionally understood⁵⁶. The importance of this distinction is that leadership is based on consent as opposed to the imposition characteristic of hegemon. As Cooper explains, “hegemony tends to describe systems of domination”⁵⁷.

Pluralist middle powers do not have the resources for dominating the international system and choose to provide leadership in certain niche areas⁵⁸. This distinction between leadership and hegemony goes to the heart of what Keohane calls ‘legitimate domination’. Legitimate domination entails leadership, which articulates a “conception of an international normative order. In this way, hegemonic power is based upon right as well as might...the right to lead emanates less from economic and military power as such and much more from the willingness of smaller nations to buy into and internalize the norms and principles set forth by the hegemon”⁵⁹. This willing follower base makes it easy for the leader to install a just order, as the other countries are able to identify with what the leader seeks to achieve and also see the desirability of the project that is being initiated even if sometimes this goes against their own instincts as a sovereign nation.

2.6. South Africa as a Pluralist Middle Power

As a pluralist middle power, South Africa has demonstrated its inclination towards multilateral forums both in Africa and globally. Among these is membership of SADC, African Union, Commonwealth, Non-Aligned Movement⁶⁰. These organizations provide South Africa with “a sense of solidarity with its Third World neighbours in Africa and further afield as their governments struggle to come to terms with the pressures of

⁵⁵ Cooper A F (1997), *op cit*

⁵⁶ Cooper A F et al (1994), *op cit*

⁵⁷ *Ibid* p5

⁵⁸ Cooper A F (1997) *loc cit* p5

⁵⁹ Keohane R (1984) World Leadership and Hegemony (find publisher)

⁶⁰ Mbaol M L M (2003), A Review of South Africa’s Leading Role on the African Continent; North West University: South Africa, Also “South Africa maintains diplomatic relations with countries and organisations through 96 missions in 85 countries abroad, and through the accreditation of more than 160 countries and organisations resident in South Africa”, South Africa Yearbook 2004/2005; Government Communications and Information Service Pretoria

globalisation”⁶¹. Furthermore, these organisations provide South Africa with the opportunity to play a leadership role internationally. Because South Africa does not have the economic resources available to great powers such as the United States, the only feasible way for the country to have an impact on international affairs is through its involvement in multilateral forums, especially in areas where the big countries are not interested. South Africa’s crucial participation in the Kimberly Process⁶² is an example of this.

South Africa has also held chairing positions of the Commonwealth (2000-2001), African Union (AU) (2002), Non-Aligned Movement (1998-2001), among others. Within these organisations, South Africa has tried to chart a course of a respect for human rights, democracy and self-sufficiency as witnessed by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)⁶³.

Furthermore, South Africa demonstrated its pluralist middle power credentials by playing a pivotal role during the 1995 negotiations on the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NNPT)⁶⁴. Since 1994, the country has also been at the forefront of the calls for the reform and strengthening of international institutions such the United Nations (UN), the

⁶¹ Hamill J & Spence J, South Africa and International Organisations in Carlsnaes W & Muller M (1997), Change and South African External Relations; International Thomson Publishing: Johannesburg pg 215

⁶² South Africa was instrumental in getting this process under way and seeing to it that there was an amicable conclusion. Consequently, there is now a strict international code of ethics that prohibits the purchase of conflict diamonds as the revenue derived from such sales is used to finance the war chest thus perpetuating conflict

⁶³ South Africa played a pivotal role in the establishment of both the Peer Review Mechanism and the adoption of NEPAD as the economic doctrine of the African Union. This was done together with Senegal and Nigeria

⁶⁴ During this time, the United States of America sought the indefinite extension of the treaty. With the end of the Cold War, some countries were trying to strengthen their militaries by seeking to acquire nuclear weapons and the extension of the treaty was meant to guard against such an event happening. South Africa had been one of the countries to demonstrate political will in the banning of nuclear weapons by becoming the first country to dismantle its nuclear weapons unilaterally and sign up to the NNPT shortly before it was up for review. At the negotiations South Africa took the position that the NNPT be extended indefinitely and to win over those who resisted this proposal came up with a proposal, which turned out to be satisfactory to all. The proposal included establishing review mechanisms between the five-year review conferences and adopting a set of principles, which took account of the international situation and contained specific goals so that it would serve as a yardstick for governments to measure their non-proliferation and disarmament. This was enough to win over those who had been sceptical of indefinite extension and helped to resolve the impasse between the US and those who opposed the extension. see Van Der Westhuizen J, South Africa’s Emergence as a Middle Power in Third World Quarterly 19 (3) 1998 and Minty A, ‘The “South African concept” on Nukes’ in Mail & Guardian 21-27 April 1995

International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB) to make them more representative of the Third World in general and Africa in particular. She has been a keen participant in regional organizations such the African Union (previously the Organisation of African Unity), and the Southern African Development Community.

To complement its involvement in international organizations South Africa has also undertaken to mediate in different conflicts around the African continent⁶⁵. South Africa was responsible for the resolution of the impasse between the United States & Britain on the one hand, and Libya on the other over the Lockerbie bombing of a *Pan Am* flight, which killed citizens of both the US and United Kingdom in 1999⁶⁶. South Africa has also been a voice for the underdeveloped countries in the attempt to reduce the debt burden on African countries and the campaign to reform the international political economy⁶⁷.

Also because of its pluralist middle power credentials, South Africa firmly established human rights as a guiding pillar of its foreign policy. Having recently come back from the wilderness of apartheid isolation, the Government of National Unity (GNU) that came to power in 1994 sought to craft a foreign policy which would avoid the foreign policy shortfalls of apartheid South Africa. To achieve this end, the Department of Foreign Affairs published its Foreign Policy Discussion⁶⁸ document, which sought to define how South Africa would engage with the outside world. The most notable of the guiding principles that were contained in the discussion document was the principle of human rights as the main guiding tool of South Africa's foreign policy. As early as 1993 the then leader of the African National Congress (ANC), and later State President, Nelson Mandela⁶⁹ had written that the new South Africa would be guided by principles of human rights in its interaction with the international community.

Internationally, human rights had become the *lingua franca* of foreign policy thinkers and makers. International relations theory in the early 1980's increasingly began to take

⁶⁵ Witness South Africa's efforts in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo to bring peace to those countries. There have been a lot of setbacks along the way with parties not sticking to their undertakings and ceasefire's not being respected. Still South Africa labours on in the hope of finding lasting solutions to those conflicts.

⁶⁶ Hamill, J & Lee D, A Middle Power Paradox? South African Diplomacy in the Post-Apartheid Era in *International Relations* 2001 15 (4)

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁸ Department of Foreign Affairs (1996), South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document: Pretoria

cognizance of human security⁷⁰ as a goal that states need to strive for. Human security is concerned with the “welfare of human beings”⁷¹ as opposed to the security of the state. Taking cognizance of human security means that states must move away from a thinking which privileges military security over human security and that states must engage creatively with human rights violators. In this, post-apartheid South Africa has taken a leading role through the promotion of democratization and the respect for human rights.

According to Pratt “there is broad international acceptance of the view that states have the right and indeed the obligation to rebuke, and to apply pressure upon states which are severe human rights violators”⁷². Vincent, holding the same view argues that “it is no longer enough for a state to be, and to be recognized as sovereign. Nor is it enough for it to be a nation-state in accordance with the principle of self-determination. It must also act domestically in such a way as not to offend against the basic rights of individuals and groups within its territory”⁷³. This is in opposition to governments “maintaining good relations with foreign governments becomes the prime objective rather than one among many leading to a temptation to overlook or to downplay or make excuses for the domestic failings of clients in regard to the observation of human rights”⁷⁴.

The desire to pursue human rights on the part of South Africa arises out of the unique experience of being South African. The majority of South Africans were subjected to inhumane treatment by the white minority regime of apartheid over a long time. The experience of being oppressed and the support received from international organisations such as the United Nations and Commonwealth taught South Africans the value of empathizing with others who find themselves living under similar circumstances. South Africans are acutely aware of the suffering felt by those who live under oppressive governments.

⁶⁹ Mandela N, South Africa’s Future Foreign Policy in Foreign Affairs Vol. 72 (5) 1993

⁷⁰ For a discussion of human security see Buzan B (1983), People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations; Harvester Press: Sussex

⁷¹ Paris R, Still an Inscrutable Concept in Security Dialogue 35 (3) 1994

⁷² Pratt C (1990), Middle Power Internationalism: The North-South Dimension; McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal p8

⁷³ Vincent R J (1986) Human Rights and International Relations; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge p130

⁷⁴ *Ibid* p132-133

Promoting human rights also seemed like the logical thing to do given that the ANC received a lot of help from overseas countries and organizations during the struggle years. The people of the world stood together with South Africans even when this implied incurring losses on their part when they put pressure on governments to impose sanctions and boycotts against the South African state in order to speed up the decay of the South African state and to weaken the resource base of the ruling National Party. African people, especially the people of sub-Saharan Africa suffered immensely because of the support they were giving to the liberation movements of South Africa. The ‘Total Strategy’ of former President P.W Botha in the 1980s killed thousands and displaced millions⁷⁵ in the region for the support they offered to the liberation forces of South Africa.

The human rights policy also arises from the fact that South Africa today has one of the most liberal constitutions in the world with human rights protected under Chapter Two of the Republic of South Act (Act 108 of 1996). The constitution is the supreme law of the republic and there is a duty on the government to follow its provisions⁷⁶. Respecting the provisions of the constitution means that any policy, which has the effect of violating human rights, whether in South Africa or abroad goes against the constitution of the Republic. Both domestic and foreign policy must comply with the provisions of the constitution.

It is partly in the context of the constitution that South Africa’s assertiveness in international human rights issues since 1994 should be understood. As elsewhere, there have been problems with the application of the human rights principle in foreign policy in so far as it pertains to the economic benefits that the government has sought to gain from non-democratic countries⁷⁷.

2.7. Conclusion

South Africa is an emerging middle power- has characteristics of being both a realist and pluralist middle power-it can choose whether to act as pluralist or realist middle

⁷⁵ Johnson P & Martin D (1989), Apartheid Terrorism: A Report for the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa; Indian University Press: Bloomington & Indianapolis

⁷⁶ Chapter 1 of The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act 108 1996

⁷⁷ This is the subject of the next chapter

power or both. This, as argued above, is evident in the ambiguity⁷⁸ that exists between her foreign policy ideals and their implementation. Thus, when in her immediate region and the African continent as a whole, South Africa has the characteristics of a big power. Both her economy and her military are considerably larger than those of other African countries. South Africa has also shown willingness to use force to secure what it considers to be its vital interests as happened with the invasion of Lesotho. The sale of arms to human rights violators is another instance where the realist inclinations of a nation trying to rebuild itself have also shown.

As a pluralist middle power, South Africa has been a champion of both the multilateral process and respect for human rights. This is evident in her participation in organisations such as the UN, Commonwealth, African Union and SADC and her adoption of the promotion of human rights as a pillar of her foreign policy. Multilateral organisations have been used by South Africa as tools to exert influence on the international community because of its inability to impose its will on the international community. This arises due to the limited nature of its resource base when compared to big countries such as the United States. Through such organisations, South Africa has been able to successfully define the international agenda by defining certain niches for itself. The Kimberley Process is one niche where South Africa took the lead when the big powers had not shown a great interest. South Africa's leadership and managerial prowess ensured the success of this process.

Perhaps expectedly, the emerging middle power status of South Africa has led to charges of inconsistencies being leveled against the foreign policy of the country. However, there is nothing extraordinary about the behaviour of South Africa. A rigid and inflexible stance on human rights has the potential to endanger South Africa's own national interest of building a prosperous economy for the benefit of its people. As Danny Titus argues, "there should be no illusions that a foreign policy of human rights will mean a choice among priorities. The government will have to decide whether and when it will give a higher priority to human rights over other foreign policy considerations such as national security, foreign trade and economic relations.

⁷⁸ See Bischoff P H, External and Domestic Sources of South Africa's Foreign Policy Ambiguity: South African Foreign Policy and the Projection of Middle Power, *Politikon* 30 (2) 2004

These policy considerations will obviously conflict with each other. If they do a government will have to make a policy choice and set priorities”⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Titus D, Rights and Priorities in Mail and Guardian July 28- August 13 1995

Chapter Three

A Theoretical Framework for South Africa's Foreign Policy Ambiguity Since 1994

3.1. Introduction

Taking 'ambiguity' as its cue, this chapter aims to offer an explanation for South Africa's foreign policy contradictions that have been apparent since this country's re-admission onto the world stage. Firstly, the chapter looks into some of the inconsistencies that have emerged over the years, as evidenced by, among others, the two Chinas dilemma and the call for sanctions against Nigeria after the execution of the Ogoni activists.

Secondly, it looks into some of the factors that contribute to the discord between the principles and practice of South Africa's foreign policy. Among these is the African international relations environment and the limitations this imposes on South African foreign policy. Because of this environment, South Africa is finding it difficult to act as a pluralist middle power in the pursuit of its liberal democratic and human rights principles. For this reason, there has been a prevailing argument that South Africa must act as part of a collective through institutions such as the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the consequence of which has at times, been the forgoing of the liberal democratic principles that define her foreign policy.

However, the chapter argues that acting as part of a collective within the African environment has its limitations. These limitations arise out of the continent's history of colonialism and decolonisation that necessitated a show of solidarity and unity by African states. This solidarity and unity precluded states from getting involved in each other's affairs. This was institutionalized in the Organisation of African Unity Charter of 1963⁸⁰. As a result, there is still reluctance on the part of African multilateral

⁸⁰ According to the OAU Charter members shall respect and pursue the following principles "the sovereignty of all member states, non-interference in the affairs of states, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and its inalienable right to independent existence". See OAU Charter 3 (1)-(3)

institutions to get involved in the domestic affairs of their member states. Nevertheless, South Africa can be seen to be engaged in a project of transforming these institutions to make them reflect the interests of the people as opposed to being institutions that are merely concerned with regime security of their member states.⁸¹

Furthermore, there are limitations that arise out of South Africa's stature within the international environment. Because of this country's economic muscle within Africa, there has been considerable pressure from the international community that South Africa must utilise its resources for the benefit of the peoples of the African continent. According to this view, South Africa should fulfil a neighbourhood watch-dog role over the African continent. However, this notion has been fiercely resisted by African states that seize upon this issue in order to gain credibility for their own leadership ambitions. Examples are used below to illuminate this point.

Thirdly and lastly, the chapter argues that South African foreign policy has become elitist over the years with foreign policy making being centralized in the Presidency through the Policy Coordination and Advisory Service (PCAS). The advent of this body and the powers it has been assigned has served to marginalize the legislature and civil society. This centralization of policy making mirrors closely the views of such arch realists as Hans Morgenthau on the subject of foreign policy making. There is also not enough public information available on the subject of foreign policy, which would allow better participation by the public in general.

The advent of democracy in South Africa inevitably led to far-reaching changes within the South African political landscape. The elections of 1994 were the first sign of the changes that were soon to take place both in the domestic and foreign policy of the country. Domestically, black people were for the first time universally empowered to participate in the running of their lives through public representatives. The adoption of the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act (Act 108 of 1996) by the National Assembly (NA) represented the institutionalization of democratic and humane principles that the majority of South Africans had fought for, for so long.

⁸¹ South Africa's role in the implementation of the Peer Review Mechanism is testament to this.

As a tool of foreign engagement, foreign policy was significantly affected by the changes that were unfolding domestically. The foreign policy of the apartheid regime had been one characterized by an uneasy relationship between South Africa, the countries of Southern Africa and the rest of the African continent. South Africa was viewed with great suspicion by those who had been subjected to suffering by the apartheid state during the years of President P.W Botha and his 'Total Strategy' against the so-called 'Total Onslaught' during the 1980s. This combined with the economic and military preponderance that South Africa had gained over the years had left her neighbours feeling unsafe at the prospect of being destabilized by a powerful neighbour.

The coming to power of the African National Congress (ANC) at the helm of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 1994 was considered by many on the continent as a break with the past in their relations with South Africa. As the liberation movement, the ANC received political and economic support from countries all over the world, especially Southern African countries. Thousands of people died in neighbouring countries because of the support their countries had offered to the South African liberation movements. As such, when the apartheid regime was removed from power, all those who had suffered at the hands of the white minority of South Africa felt a great sense of relief. Many on the continent saw the new South Africa as the way out of the political and economic quagmire, in which the countries of the region found themselves⁸². The late President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania expressed this sentiment when he said "if South Africa failed to play superpower in SADC I would personally suspect the country of having a sinister agenda to destroy the region"⁸³.

The leadership of the new South Africa declared its desire to establish close political and economic relations with the rest of the African continent even before assuming the levers of power. As shown in the previous chapter, President Mandela, in his seminal exposition of the future foreign policy of a democratic South Africa made clear the nature of relations that the new South Africa would seek to establish with the African continent. At the core of this exposition was the belief that South Africa's

⁸² Msomi S, Not the Neighbourhood Bully in *Sunday Times*, 22 August 2004

own prosperity was inextricably linked with that of the African continent. Thus, it would be important for South Africa to become ‘a country of Africa’ and not merely ‘a country in Africa’ in order for her to play a meaningful role in the transformation of the continent⁸⁴.

The belief that South Africa’s prosperity was intertwined with that of the Southern African region came about firstly because of the destruction wrought by apartheid South Africa on neighbouring countries. Secondly it came about because of the desire on South Africa’s new rules to shed the image created by the apartheid regimes of South Africa being a bastion of Western civilization⁸⁵. To this effect, strong political and economic ties existed between South Africa and the West while relations with Africa were marginal. The ANC aimed to balance this out by working on the recognition that South Africa was ‘a country in and of Africa’. To achieve its objective of becoming a country ‘in and of Africa’, South Africa has increased its engagement with Africa at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.

Bilaterally, South African capital is being encouraged to increase its investment in African countries⁸⁶. This challenge has been taken up by companies such as Eskom, MTN, Standard Bank and Vodacom, all of whom have made substantial investments in African countries⁸⁷. South Africa is now the biggest source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for Southern Africa⁸⁸. Multilaterally, South Africa has been involved in the effort to strengthen African political institutions such the AU and SADC. In keeping with its pluralist middle power credentials, South Africa “prefers the use of multilateral forums rather than bilateral diplomacy as a vehicle for asserting influence. In the tradition of middle powers, the objective of multilateral diplomacy is

⁸³ Quoted in *Ibid*

⁸⁴ Mandela N, South Africa’s Future Foreign Policy in *Foreign Affairs* vol 75 (5) 1993

⁸⁵ Vale P & Booth K (find reference)

⁸⁶ Makgetlaneng S, South Africa- Southern Africa Relations in the Post-Apartheid Era: The Strategic Importance of Southern Africa to the Economic and Trade Interests of South African Companies, *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 14 (2) 2005 pg 239

⁸⁷ Daniel J et al, “The South Africans have arrived”; Post Apartheid Corporate Expansion into Africa in Daniel J et al (2003), *The State of the Nation 2003-2004*; HSRC Press: Cape Town

⁸⁸ *ibid* pg 379

to strengthen a rules based system which limits the possibility of unilateral actions by major powers...”⁸⁹

Thirdly, this new orientation in foreign policy came about in recognition of the role that states can play in alleviating the suffering of people in other countries. It was in acknowledgment of the role that was played by the international community in contributing to the demise of apartheid. According to President Thabo Mbeki, “as much as the world stood with us as we fought to end the system of apartheid, which struggle brought about the announcements that were made by the apartheid parliament ten years ago, so do we have an obligation ourselves to contribute to the construction of a better world for all humanity”⁹⁰. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs articulated this view when he opined that “since South Africa itself has been on the scene of grave human rights abuses...we have vowed to play a leading role in the promotion of human rights and democracy internationally”⁹¹.

3.2. Incoherence since 1994

South African foreign policy since 1994 has been described on the one hand in terms such as ‘*ad hoc*’, ‘uncoordinated’, ‘erratic’⁹². On the other hand there has been recognition of the remarkable successes. To earn the negative descriptions, South Africa acted in ways that were inconsistent with her projection of liberal democratic values to the international community⁹³. An example of this inconsistency is the arms sales to non-democratic regimes and countries involved in illegal wars discussed in the previous chapter. The recognition of human rights as a pillar of foreign policy is such that South Africa cannot be seen to be supporting or engaging in any business with those who are seen as violators of human rights⁹⁴.

⁸⁹ Schoeman M, South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power: 1994-2003 in Daniel J (2003), The State of the Nation 2003-2004; HSRC Press: Cape Town

⁹⁰ Thabo Mbeki in Muller M, Some observations on South Africa’s Economic Diplomacy and the Role of the Department of Foreign Affairs, IGD Occasional Paper no. 27 October 2000 pg 4

⁹¹ Quoted in Dube K M, South Africa’s Foreign Policy in Africa, Africa Institute Electronic Monograph, September 2003 pg 2

⁹² Nel P et al, South African Multilateralism in Context in Nel et al (2001) South Africa’s Multilateral Diplomacy and Global Change: The Limits of Reformism; Ashgate: Aldershot

⁹³ Mkalipi Z (2002), Promotion of Liberal Values in South Africa Foreign Policy: Beyond the Structural Imperatives of the International System? Unpublished MA Thesis; Rhodes University: Grahamstown

⁹⁴ Batchelor P, Arms and the ANC in The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists of September/October 1998

The adoption of the principle of universality can serve as an explanation for the ambiguity in South Africa's foreign policy. The principle of universality means that a country is free to engage in any relationships it chooses without being pressured by other states because of their dislike for that country⁹⁵. Janis Van Der Westhuizen defines universality as a belief that "foreign policy has been 'de-ideologised'"⁹⁶. In his Budget Speech of 1996, former Foreign Affairs Minister Alfred Nzo explained that "by trading or concluding diplomatic relations with a particular country, South Africa does not necessarily approve of the domestic policies of that country"⁹⁷.

One of the most glaring discords between South African foreign policy principles and behaviour of the post 1994 is the abandonment of human rights principles in favour of economic gains in the Two-Chinas dilemma. In 1997, South Africa made the decision to switch diplomatic recognition for China from Taiwan to the People's Republic of China (PRC). This was despite the expectation from the Taiwanese government that South Africa would continue its diplomatic recognition of Taiwan given the common democratic values espoused by the two countries, which stand in stark contrast to the human rights record of the PRC. This belief was also a result of the strong ties that existed between the Taiwan government and the ruling ANC, which had been in existence since 1990.

However, the South African government took the view that recognition of the PRC would grant South Africa access to its market of 1.2 billion people⁹⁸. This resulted from strong pressure being applied in international forums by the PRC government and the threat of closing the South African consulate in Hong Kong when the British colony was returned to China in 1997. Bischoff argues that this would have had negative consequences for trade with both Hong Kong and China⁹⁹. Furthermore, "other countries were making use of the political impasse with China to diminish

⁹⁵ Schraeder P, South Africa's Foreign Policy: From Pariah to Leader of the African Renaissance in Round Table 359 2001

⁹⁶ Van Der Westhuizen J, South Africa's Emergence as a Middle Power in Third World Quarterly vol. 19 no. 3 1998 pg 446

⁹⁷ Quoted in *Ibid*

⁹⁸ Van Breda N, South Africa Should Decry China's Record in Mail & Guardian 27 April 1996

⁹⁹ Bischoff P H, Democratic South Africa and the Asian Paragon: Issues of Foreign Policy Orientation in Afrika Spectrum 33 (1998) 2 pg 197

South Africa's chances in its low-key bid as an African contender for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council¹⁰⁰. In 1998, South Africa and China established a bi-national commission tasked with looking into issues affecting the two countries and aiming to strengthen political and economic ties.

How is this discord between foreign policy principles and foreign policy behaviour to be explained? Is it simply a question of the government not being committed to its stated objectives or are we witnessing an indifference to the plight of those who live under oppressive regimes? Danny Titus comes close to an explanation for this when he asks, "can a government promote the respect for human rights in other countries? Which governments and which countries? Which fundamental human rights will be addressed? How will these be promoted?"¹⁰¹.

Alexander Johnston offers a sound theoretical explanation for the discord in the principles and practice of South African foreign policy when he argues that "principles which are unduly numerous, narrowly drawn or rigidly applied may have to be frequently sacrificed to the effects of unpredictability and re-interpretation"¹⁰². Greg Mills concurs with this view and argues that "the world does not know how to create democracies and no country...has been able to promote these values (democracy and human rights)"¹⁰³. Elsewhere Mills argues that "it is clear that there is no automatic overlap of global and national interests -not yet anyway. Practical interests do not always equate with ethical considerations, as in the issue of arms sales"¹⁰⁴.

The national interest of every country is "centred upon the welfare of the nation and the preservation of the national way of life"¹⁰⁵. South Africa's national interest

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁰¹ Titus D, Rights and Priorities in Mail and Guardian July 28- August 3 1995

¹⁰² Johnston A, Democracy and Human Rights in the Principles of South African Foreign Policy in Broderick J et al (2001) South Africa's Foreign Policy: Dilemmas of a New Democracy; Palgrave: Basingstoke pg 12

¹⁰³ Quoted in Vickers B, Pulpit Morality or Penny-Pinching Diplomacy? The Discursive Debate on Mandela's Foreign Policy in Politeia 21 (2) 2002

¹⁰⁴ Mills G (2000) The Wired Model: South Africa, Foreign Policy and Globalisation; Tafelburg Publishers: Johannesburg and Cape Town pg 304

¹⁰⁵ Frankel J (1969), Key Concepts in Political Science: National Interest; Pall Mall Press: London pg 19

dictates that the country seeks ways of creating wealth and better socio-economic¹⁰⁶ conditions for her 45 million plus citizens. Export promotion has been identified as a key strategy for the achievement of this goal¹⁰⁷. In particular, Africa is regarded as a key region. Because of its developed economy, South Africa exported goods worth R17.7 billion to Southern Africa out of total trade of R20.3 billion, an imbalance of seven to one in her favour¹⁰⁸.

Thus at times, the maximization of the national interest enjoys a more privileged position than issues of human rights promotion. According to Mills the “promotion of human rights is one of the tools we employ towards our ultimate goal, and our ultimate goal is obviously to make South Africa a success for its own sake”¹⁰⁹. Where human rights do not coincide with South Africa’s developmental goals, the latter gets preference. Explaining this phenomenon, Johnston argues that “international human rights issues are part of politics, not above them. They have to be dealt with as more or less issues and not either or issues. Because of this, questions of human rights tend to be dealt with inside the debate on national interest rather than as matters of principle that transcend it”¹¹⁰. Therefore, if South Africa is to realize its goal of attaining development, the promotion of human rights cannot preclude the possibility of establishing trade relations with countries considered to be human rights violators. Thus, human rights principles as reflected in the discussion document of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) are not absolutes which are to be applied at all times regardless of the consequences of doing as the Two China’s issue clearly demonstrates.

The concept of national interest points to what according to realists every country ought to strive for in the international environment. To paraphrase the realism of Hans Morgenthau, the statesmen can have nothing to say about that which is moral. His main duty is to the people he represents and anything else that hinders this cause is to be shied away from¹¹¹. Recognizing the validity of this argument means that the

¹⁰⁶ Mills G, *op cit*

¹⁰⁷ Muller M, *op cit*

¹⁰⁸ Daniel et al in Daniel et al, *op cit* pg 376

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Vickers B, *op cit*

¹¹⁰ Johnston *Op Cit*

¹¹¹ Morgenthau H (1967), Politics Among Nations: The Search for Power and Peace: Alfred Knopf: New York

foreign policy of South Africa should first aim to further the rights and needs of those who live in the Republic before it can aim to enhance the human rights of others.

3.3. African International Relations

The principle of sovereignty which, theoretically has been held to be sacrosanct in international politics demands that states do not get involved in each other's internal affairs and that when others do get involved, the international community must oppose such intervention¹¹². Vincent argues that "if the members of the international community are taken to be sovereign states acknowledging each other's rights to rule in their own domains, then it follows that intervention - the attempt to subject another state to ones will- is illegitimate as an infraction of sovereignty"¹¹³. Vincent further argues that non-intervention does not equal amorality but rather the limits of morality in foreign policy; "any principle of humanitarian intervention would issue a license for all kinds of interference, claiming more or less plausibility to be humanitarian, but driving huge international wedges into international order"¹¹⁴.

The respect for sovereignty of other states is especially critical in the African context. It is critical in the sense of African governments being hostile to external involvement in their domestic affairs. For instance, at the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, African governments "took a decision to vote against any non-African member who introduces a United Nations Resolutions criticizing human rights practices of any African country"¹¹⁵.

Perhaps ignorant of the significance of the issue of intervention in other countries' affairs, democratic South Africa breached the principle of sovereignty in 1995 when it intervened in the Nigerian execution of Ken Saro Wiwa. The government of the military dictator Sani Abacha executed nine Ogoni environmental activists in

¹¹² World opinion against the War on Iraq is an instance of this opposition.

¹¹³ Vincent R J (1986) Human Rights and International Relations, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge Pg113

¹¹⁴ *Ibid* pg114

¹¹⁵ George S, Democracy, Human Rights and State Reform in Africa; Centre for Policy Studies Policy Brief 28 2004 pg 12

contravention of a promise of a stay of execution made to then President Mandela. South Africa had been one of the leading countries trying to answer the plea of those who had been arrested by the government for exercising their human right to protest against the destruction of the environment. While at a Commonwealth Heads of State and Government Summit in New Zealand, President Mandela received a message that the activists had been executed. He immediately called for oil sanctions to be imposed by the Commonwealth on Nigeria in order to force the government of Abacha to relinquish power to civilians¹¹⁶. South Africa also called back her representative to Nigeria.

Regrettably for South Africa, most of the members of the Commonwealth were not eager about heeding the demands that South Africa was making although sanctions were eventually adopted. African countries displayed the sternest unwillingness to partake in the proposed sanctioning of another African country by an international multilateral institution. This was the case with all African countries with the exception of Zimbabwe¹¹⁷.

When South Africa took the case for sanctions to the SADC, member states promptly rejected the mooted sanctions and took the decision to leave it up to the Commonwealth to make the decision¹¹⁸. Reacting to this, the Nigerian government said Mandela was a white man with a black face because of his vocal protest at the execution of the activists¹¹⁹. Due to the lack of support for the South African protest, South Africa changed its position from a hard-nosed dogged call for sanctions to working as part of a multilateral setting in the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)¹²⁰. This committee was appointed to look into human rights violations taking place in Nigeria and to advise the Commonwealth on how to proceed in resolving the crisis.

¹¹⁶ Black D R, The New South Africa Confronts Abacha's Nigeria: The Politics of Human Rights in a Seminal Relationship in Commonwealth and Comparative Politics 41 (2) 2003

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹¹⁹ Chhabra H S (1997), South African Foreign Policy: Principles-Options-Dilemmas; Africa Publications: New Delhi

¹²⁰ Black D R, *Op Cit*

This unilateralist and interventionist approach employed by South Africa in dealing with this incident alienated African countries because it was a breach of Pan-Africanist solidarity politics¹²¹, the defining feature of African international relations. Pan-Africanist solidarity is defined by Maxi van Aardt as “the unwritten law...that African states do not turn on each other in international forums, such as the UN but close ranks when attacks are made against them”¹²². Van Der Westhuizen argues that South Africa infringed this principle of solidarity by being the only country in the developing world to have recalled its High Commissioner from Abuja in protest¹²³.

The experience of ostracism by African states that followed this incident imparted a lesson to the South African government. As Defence Minister Mosiuo Lekota said about the incident, “we suddenly found we were the only ones who condemned the planned hanging. As a result, we learnt a valuable lesson that, especially in Africa, you cannot act alone because you will find yourself isolated and in a position similar to that of the apartheid government”¹²⁴.

It can be argued that South Africa’s failed initiative to have Nigeria suspended from the Commonwealth flowed from two factors. Firstly, it flowed from its emerging middle power status. As a middle power, South Africa does not have sufficient resources to play continental watchdog. As such, for her to play a leadership role, it is crucial that she establishes a willing follower base. Without this, her efforts will not succeed, as she does not have financial resources to entice other countries to follow her lead. Secondly, her projection of liberal-democratic values represented, and in some parts of the continent, (contrary to the rhetoric of the African Union about democracy and good governance) still does represent a Western construct that African countries, do not identify with. At times the projection of liberal democratic values coincides with the agenda of Western countries making South Africa appear to be in

¹²¹ Black D R, *The New South Africa Confronts Abacha’s Nigeria: The Politics of Human Rights in a Seminal Relationship*; *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* vol. 21 no. 2 2003 pg 38

¹²² Van Aardt M, *A Foreign Policy to Die for: South Africa’s Response to the Nigerian Crisis in Africa Insight* 26 (2) 1996

¹²³ Van der Westhuizen L, *South Africa’s Emergence as a Middle Power in World Quarterly* 19 (3) 1998

¹²⁴ Quoted in Black D R, *Op Cit* pg 35

cahoots with the West in their so-called efforts to re-colonise the African continent¹²⁵. This convergence of values between South Africa and the West undermines South Africa's ability to act unilaterally. This explains her preference for multilateral diplomacy as represented by the United Nations, African Union and SADC. This diplomacy has been evident in the resolution of the Democratic Republic of Congo crisis, the Burundi crisis and now the Ivory Coast in all of which South Africa has played a leading role through being mandated by the African Union.

3.4. External Constraints to Foreign Policy Making

Outside the African continent there are expectations on South Africa, which at times complicate her diplomatic efforts¹²⁶. Having emerged from apartheid with an economy eight times larger than that of the next biggest economy in Southern Africa and three times larger than that of the region combined¹²⁷, there have been calls for South Africa to intervene, even unilaterally, in the domestic affairs of other countries. Western countries see South Africa as the country most capable of placing the continent on a higher trajectory of democratic consolidation through its advocacy for building capable multilateral institutions. South Africa has also been encouraged to get more involved in peacekeeping initiatives and conflict resolution, hence the United Nations designated President Mbeki as mediator in the Ivory Coast.

This attitude from the big powers is typified by the following statement from Ron Brown, former American Secretary of Commerce when he said “there is no question that South Africa is the key to the economic success of Southern Africa, indeed in my opinion, the key to the renewal of the continent”¹²⁸. Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan affirm this point when they argue that “there is increasing evidence that the USA, the other G7 nations, the EU and the Bretton Woods institutions see South Africa's

¹²⁵ Mbaol L M, *A Review of the Republic of South Africa's Leading Role on the African Continent Towards Ten Years of Freedom: Progress in the First Decade - Challenges of the Second Decade*; Government Communications and Information Service 2004: Pretoria pg 30

¹²⁶ This is discussed fully in chapter 5

¹²⁷ Ahwireng-Obeng J & McGowan P, *Partner or Hegemon? South Africa in Africa* in Broderick J et al (2001) *South Africa's Foreign Policy: Dilemmas of a New Democracy*; Palgrave: Basingstoke pg 63

¹²⁸ *Ibid* pg 69

private sector as the savior of Africa, just as they want the South African government to participate in continental peacekeeping”¹²⁹.

The view that South Africa should lead Africa out of political and economic instability held by the industrialized nations of the West has, however, not met with universal acclaim within Africa. South Africa’s leadership is indeed viewed with some suspicion by African elites. Black and Wilson concur with this view when they argue that “despite South Africa’s preponderance of material resources, regional leaders are not particularly amenable to overt South African leadership attempts, particularly in sensitive matters bearing on regime security”¹³⁰.

The view held by the West on South African leadership of the continent has made it difficult for South Africa to push for human rights concerns on the continent, especially where this coincides with a view held by a Western power. Witness the hostile words of the DRC agricultural minister when he says, “President Mandela has lost a historic opportunity to become a true African leader who represents his people. Mandela is incapable of telling the Americans what they don’t want to hear”¹³¹. This comment was in response to South Africa’s peace plan for the Great Lakes region, which coincided with the view of Washington on the matter. In the scramble for United Nations Security Council seats, Nigeria asserted that it is the only true African country among the front-runners and as such would do better to represent the interests of the African continent in an expanded Security Council¹³².

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe has also seized upon the shared of liberal-democratic values of South Africa and the West in order to shore up his own fading support within the Southern African region. To this effect he failed to invite South Africa to a conference of Southern African leaders on the 18 August 1996 to discuss

¹²⁹ *Ibid* pg 74

¹³⁰ Black D & Wilson W, Rights, Region and Identity Exploring the Ambiguities of South Africa’s Regional Human Rights Role in *Politikon* 31 (1) 2004

¹³¹ Black D & Wilson Z, Rights, Region and Identity in *Politikon* 31 (1) 2004 pg 39

¹³² This statement was intended to garner support for Nigeria’s bid to be the African Union representative in an expanded Security Council. Taken to its logical conclusion, it meant that South Africa was still not African enough to occupy such a leadership position because of its close links with Western countries. This is despite the fact that Nigeria also has close ties with a number of Western countries who are courting the Nigerian government mainly because of the vast amounts of oil at its disposal.

the conflict in the Great Lakes region¹³³. It was at this conference that it was decided that the SADC would intervene militarily in the DRC even though an important member of the SADC was employing diplomacy to influence the parties to the conflict. This was an attempt by Zimbabwe to isolate South Africa because of the prominence that South Africa was gaining in the region while Zimbabwe was increasingly taking the back seat in conflict resolution within the subcontinent. Black and Wilson argue that “Zimbabwe’s intervention in the war under SADC auspices, even as President Mandela was advocating a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflict, was at least partly motivated by a desire to isolate and embarrass the South African government and by implication, reassert Zimbabwe’s identity as regional leader”¹³⁴.

These episodes led to South Africa taking an ambiguous position in African affairs. In order to gain leadership of the continent, South Africa has had to unequivocally renounce any ambitions of becoming a regional power and unilateral intervention in the affairs of other countries. To that effect, “South Africa cannot afford the charge of acting unilaterally”¹³⁵. Due to the desire to avoid being labelled a unilateralist, South Africa has at times been forced to adapt to the African international relations environment in order not to expose herself to the vagaries of leaders such as President Mugabe who feel threatened by South Africa’s economic preponderance and the implications this has for their leadership role within the African continent. In the unlikely event of the United Nations Security Council being expanded, South Africa stands a better chance of being Africa’s representative only if she is seen to be acting in consultation with the African continent.

To avoid the pitfall of being labelled ‘unAfrican’ South Africa has been appealing for a strengthening of multilateral institutions on the continent. As Bischoff argues “in appealing for change, the hope is that authoritarian opponents will be outflanked and have pressure put on them, something that South Africa and like minded states will be able to politically exploit when putting in place the architecture for a new political

¹³³ Ngoma N (2005), Prospects for a Security Community in Southern Africa: An Analysis of Regional Security in the Southern African Development Community; Institute for Security Studies: Pretoria

¹³⁴ Black D and Wilson Z *Loc Cit*

¹³⁵ Bischoff P H, External and Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy Ambiguity: South African Foreign Policy and the Projection of Middle Power in Politikon 30 (2) 2004 pg 191

framework on the continent”¹³⁶. A strengthened multilateral environment will also allow South Africa to canvass for a willing followership due to the existence of like-minded states that are more likely to accede to South African influence to transform politically if this is done as part of a multilateral initiative.

3.5. Centralization of Foreign Policy Making

The transition to democracy beginning in 1994 has left a politically different environment to that of pre-1994 South Africa. The advent of democracy created political space for citizens to try and influence government policy in significant ways. Whereas under the apartheid government, policy was solely the domain of public representatives, the public through interest groups now takes it upon itself to influence government policy.

This newfound political space has created what realists call ‘disruption from below’ in foreign policy making. ‘Disruption from below’ can be defined as the “harmful consequences of the popular pressures to which democratic governments must respond and that are assumed to drive foreign policy off the path of the cool reason and calculated reflection needed to deal with the anarchical world”¹³⁷. According to the adherents of the ‘disruption from below’ view, foreign policy should be left to those who fully understand the dynamics involved in making foreign policy. The ordinary person supposedly does not have the sophistication required to understand the intricate details that foreign policy makers have to consider when making their decisions. Accordingly, “foreign policy, as the most important instrument for preservation of the state must not be subjected to mass sentiment as this does not involve fully calculated outcomes. This should rather be left at the hands of those who have or are in a position to consider carefully all possible outcomes”¹³⁸.

This emanated from the view held by Morgenthau that “the thinking required for the successful conduct of foreign policy can be diametrically opposed to the rhetoric and

¹³⁶ *Ibid*

¹³⁷ Nincic V (1992), Democracy and Foreign Policy: The Fallacy of Political Realism; Columbia University Press: New York pg 5

¹³⁸ *Ibid* pg 7

action which the masses and their representatives are likely to be moved...the popular mind, unaware of the fine distinctions of the statesman's thinking, reasons more often than not in the simple moralistic and legalistic terms of absolute good and evil...the popular mind wants quick results; it will sacrifice tomorrow's real benefit for today's apparent advantage"¹³⁹.

However, this view is problematic because of its paternalistic undertones and the way it takes public representatives to be uneducated about the subject matter of foreign policy. It does not follow that because the government gets to make foreign policy that the rest of the citizenry and their representatives are not informed about what is in the best interest of the country. Indeed, public representatives are there to empower the electorate to participate in the decision-making processes of the government, whether this is related to foreign or domestic policy. This view leads to exclusion of public representatives and civil society from partaking in discussions about issues that affect the country in significant ways. No government is infallible and it is imperative that there is widespread discussion about government policy, be it foreign or domestic policy. Any view to the contrary tells the people not to even bother trying to influence government policy because this will only be considered if it coincides with that of the government.

Foreign policy making in South Africa has of course been lacking significantly in terms of widespread public participation. A survey conducted on public opinion on foreign policy found the following:

- Only a small percentage of the public is interested and informed about foreign policy
- Domestic social concerns override global concerns for respondents
- Government needs to explain more, educate better and consult widely on foreign policy issues¹⁴⁰

Involvement in foreign policy has however been forthcoming from interest groups and civil society groups, which get involved in specific areas dealing with their

¹³⁹ Morgenthau (1967) op cit 168

special circumstances. In this regard one can mention the visibility of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies who seek to influence the government to take positions that are favourable to Israel in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This is also true of the Palestinian Solidarity Group, which has been lobbying for favourable positions on the Palestinian struggle for an independent state.

The 2004 protest marches to the Union Buildings by families of some of the members of the mercenaries who were arrested in Zimbabwe early that year also fall in this category¹⁴¹. With their family members facing the death penalty in Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea, people took to protesting in order to force the South African government to apply for an extradition of the mercenaries to face trial in South Africa¹⁴². Upon refusal by the government to do so, a court application was brought against the government in the Constitutional Court (CC). The ground upon which the application was based was that government obligations to its citizens do not cease at the border. They argued that there is a duty on the government to protect its citizens abroad whose constitutionally guaranteed rights may be violated in that foreign context. The CC found in favour of the government on the grounds that “the government cannot be compelled to demand the return of the men to South Africa or be forced to ensure the men receive fair trials and are detained under internationally acceptable conditions”¹⁴³

The significance of this case is the willingness of sections of the public to organize themselves as groups that get involved in what the government does across its borders. There have also been significant calls on the government to get involved in the crisis in Zimbabwe emanating mainly from the local media and human rights organizations both domestically and internationally. Civil Society has taken a particularly vigilant position in this regard by continually publishing works that document the crisis in Zimbabwe and calling upon the South African government to take action against the government of Mugabe.

¹⁴⁰ Nel P & Van Niewkerk (1997), Constructing the Nations Foreign Policy Mood: South African Public Opinion and Government Foreign Relations, a Report by the Foundation for Global Dialogue, Johannesburg and the Centre International and Comparative Politics, University of Stellenbosch

¹⁴¹ Phillips B, South Africa's Mercenary Village, *BBC News* 12 May 2004

¹⁴² *Ibid*

Locally, the call for intervention has emanated from the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and more recently from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The SACC wrote a letter to President Mbeki in February 2004 asking that the government help to restore dialogue in Zimbabwe. The letter states that “It is our wish that President Mbeki makes a public statement to the South African public as to whether or not it is true that President Robert Mugabe is committed to the talks with leader of the MDC, Mr Morgan Tsvangirai”¹⁴⁴. Meetings have also been facilitated between the government and leaders of the church to try and find a way forward in dealing with the Zimbabwean government. The church in Zimbabwe has also made representations to the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs (PCFA) about the state of democracy in Zimbabwe¹⁴⁵.

COSATU has gone beyond calling upon the government to act decisively on the matter and has elected to get directly involved in trying to bring about change in that country. This took the form of a thirteen-member delegation sent to Zimbabwe to assess the rights violations taking place in the country and to hold meetings with its Zimbabwean counterpart, the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)¹⁴⁶. This visit by COSATU was not well received by the Zimbabwean government who subsequently deported the COSATU delegation within 24 hours of arriving in Zimbabwe. This intervention was not well received by the South African government, which criticized COSATU for what one ANC MP calls “a fishing expedition which was never going to achieve anything but titles of heroism for its members”¹⁴⁷. The Secretary-General of COSATU responded to this by saying “we (COSATU) are not quiet diplomats...we will not keep mum when freedom does not lead to respect for workers and human rights. Liberation must mean a decent life for all, not a selected few”¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴³ South Africa/Zimbabwe Mercenaries Lose Appeal, *Mostly AFRICA* 04 August 2004

¹⁴⁴ Taken from Letter to President Mbeki published by the [South African Council of Churches](#) on 04 February 2004

¹⁴⁵ Minutes of the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs published by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group at www.pmg.org.za

¹⁴⁶ Mbeki Slams COSATU Again in *Mail & Guardian* 5-11 November 2004

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁸ Vavi Z, We are not Quiet Diplomats in *Mail & Guardian* 5-11 November 2004

Business, especially the agricultural sector in South Africa has also been vocal about the land invasions taking place in Zimbabwe, although no delegations have been sent to Zimbabwe to investigate property rights violations. Agri-SA as the organization charged with representing the interests of farmers has been vocal in its criticism of the silence of the South African government in its dealing with the crisis in Zimbabwe. Farmers in South Africa have felt insecure because of the failure of the government to condemn the land grabs in Zimbabwe. According to Japie Grobbler “it is a disservice to South Africa when political and government issues are not dealt with clearly and directly. Issues such as Zimbabwe must be handled in a manner that people can understand. Mbeki must take a stand on illegal land claims in Zimbabwe. It is not convincing when assurances about this not happening in South Africa are not accompanied by public condemnation”¹⁴⁹.

Both this civil society and business initiatives failed to bring about any noticeable change in the direction of the foreign policy of South Africa. Zimbabwean courts resolved the mercenary saga without the South African government interfering in the legal processes of that country. South Africa’s ‘quiet diplomacy’ has not ceased despite the efforts of COSATU and other civil society formations within South Africa.

Thus, the government has identified itself with the elitist and realist view articulated by Morgenthau in issues of foreign policy making. This is evident from the criticism that was leveled against the South African government in the formulation of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). The South African government, as one of the formulators of NEPAD, was criticized for the lack of consultation with civil society on the trajectory Africa needs to take in order to pull herself out of the current economic hardships. Deputy Foreign Minister cast NEPAD as a foreign policy initiative of the South African government. According to him “...South Africa’s foreign policy is anchored on the theoretical framework of the African Renaissance, which finds concrete expression in the NEPAD document”¹⁵⁰. Hughes argues that despite NEPAD being cast in the fold of South African foreign policy, it is nothing

¹⁴⁹ Cobus Grobbler, Agri-SA Slams Mbeki in *Mail & Guardian* 10 October 2002

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Hughes M, South African Foreign Policy Formulation and NEPAD, Daniel et al (2003), *The State of the Nation 2003-2004*; HSRC Publishers: Cape Town pg 94

more than “a Presidential Initiative”¹⁵¹ because of the process, which brought it to life.

The South African Catholic Bishop’s Conference showed its disapproval of the process by asserting “the process that gave rise to the current NEPAD document is seriously lacking because there has been no consultation with Africa’s citizenry, without whose active participation there can be no real partnership”¹⁵². COSATU added its voice to this by saying “we accept the need for a plan for the development of Africa to put an end to dictatorship, war, corruption and transform the conditions of the people. But we believe that such a plan must be driven by the people of Africa...we therefore consider it essential that a process of civil society involvement takes place so that NEPAD reflects the wishes of the people of the continent, not just government and international financial organisations which we fear has been the case up until now with NEPAD”¹⁵³. In response to these criticisms, President Mbeki labelled these voices as “ill-informed” and stated that Africans needed to be “educated” as the facts did not support their criticism¹⁵⁴.

The exclusion of civil society from the NEPAD formulation process is symptomatic of the growing centralization of foreign policy making within the Presidency and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)¹⁵⁵. This marginalisation is also extending to the legislature, which has become less relevant in the conception of foreign policy. The role of elected representatives has been gradually reduced to one where parliament has become a rubber stamp for foreign policy decisions taken by the executive. This reflects the realist logic that those who have knowledge about the intricate workings of the international system are best suited to make decisions about what constitutes the will of the majority. One only needs to go through the minutes of the meetings of the Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs (PCFA) for the past four years to realize how limited the role-played by this committee is¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*

¹⁵² Southern African Catholic Bishop’s Conference- Justice and Peace Department, Media Release, Conference on New Partnership for African Development 01 March 2002

¹⁵³ COSATU vows to stop neo-liberal NEPAD, The Mercury 22 May 2002

¹⁵⁴ Hughes T, op cit pg 97

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁶ The minutes of parliamentary committees are available on the parliament website (www.parliament.gov.za) and on the website of the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (www.pmg.org.za)

According to Christina Murray, Parliamentary Portfolio Committees are supposed to play an oversight role over the different ministries they are charged with¹⁵⁷. Part of this duty is to call ministers to the committee to answer any questions that may arise within the sphere of the department. The minutes of this committee do not reveal a committee that is meeting its mandate of keeping the DFA in check. Indeed, the first meeting, which focused on the Zimbabwe issue, was not held until 2001, a year after the crisis broke out. Even when a meeting was held to discuss the crisis, it was not related to the response of South Africa to the crisis. The meeting had been convened to listen to representatives of the Church from Zimbabwe. The minister has never been called in to justify the reasons of the government for its stance on the Zimbabwe issue. The committee members do not have any deeper knowledge of the government response than the rest of parliament.

The centralization of the policy process has meant that even those who are interested in having an input into the policy process cannot do so as policy making is centralized in the Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services (PCAS) which consists of five Chief Directorates, one of which is responsible for International Relations and Peace and Security¹⁵⁸. According to the Director-General in the Presidency, Reverend Frank Chikane, the Cabinet Committee on International Relations, Peace and Security “brings ministers and their staff together and allows for focused debates on difficult policy choices and the resolution of these issues by the minister before issues are taken to the full cabinet”¹⁵⁹. This has the supposedly unintended effect of removing participation from the public representatives in parliament and centralizing it in the hands of the cabinet¹⁶⁰.

This centralization has also taken away from civil society the ability to have an input into policy making. There are twenty-seven groups registered with parliament for the

¹⁵⁷ Murray C, Constitution Parameters: Conceptual Framework, Paper presented at a Institute for Democracy Conference entitled MPs from SA & Abroad Debate Accountability, (date unknown): Cape Town

¹⁵⁸ Nel P & van Wyk J-A Foreign Policy Making in South Africa: From Public Participation to Democratic Participation in Politeia vol 22 (3) 2003

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in *Ibid* pg 62

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*

purpose of monitoring parliamentary proceedings and advancing sectional interests on policy issues. The current system of centralization however takes away their right to do so, as they cannot make any direct inputs into policy formulation. This confines them to a reactionary role¹⁶¹. They only have commentary status on decisions already taken somewhere else.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that South Africa's foreign policy has at times been characterized by ambiguity. This is the case in relation to the international relationships that South Africa has sought to cultivate since being re-admitted on the world stage. On the one hand, South Africa continued relations with countries considered to have undemocratic political systems in the process seeking to secure its national economic interests. The example of the Two Chinas dilemma serves to show this. On the other hand, South Africa has intensified efforts to transform the historically closed community of African states represented by the Organisation of African Unity into what is today known as the African Union. This arises out of the nature of African international relations; a system characterized by the inability or unwillingness of states to get involved in each others domestic affairs. This transformation has come about through a process of institutionalization that involves the strengthening of multilateral institutions such as the African Union and SADC. It is through these strengthened institutions that South Africa now seeks to promote democracy. This is in contrast to the immediate post-apartheid diplomacy of assuming a leadership position on the continent without having earned such a position.

It appears there has been a realization on the part of South African foreign policy makers that the African environment functions in ways that are not similar to those of the general international community in which states have an obligation to unilaterally condemn human rights atrocities wherever they may occur. As such, South Africa has had to tailor its diplomacy in such a way that its takes this fact into account.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*

This environment sometimes necessitates that South Africa takes positions that are divergent with those of the international community especially on matters pertaining to intervention in the affairs of African countries. A convergence of views between South Africa and the West is seized upon by countries that do not desire South African political leadership in order to portray South Africa as a lackey of the West. This happens primarily to bolster the ambitions of the said countries in their own attempts to make themselves relevant within the continent. Thus, South Africa has had to realign its diplomacy very closely to that of the African continent.

At the level of policy making, there is a trend by the government to assume a realist orthodoxy that seeks to remove the power to make inputs into foreign policy formulation from the legislature and civil society groups. This power is then centralized in the executive through the unelected PCAS, which holds a disproportionate influence over policy making. This trend is undesirable because it emasculates those who have an interest in foreign policy and denies them their constitutionally guaranteed rights.

Chapter Four

The Internationalisation of the Zimbabwean Crisis: Western and African Responses

4.1. Introduction

The Zimbabwean crisis has been a sensitive and divisive issue between Western Europe and Southern Africa. Even though this was an incident happening at the Southern corner of the world, which, since the end of the Cold War, has increasingly become irrelevant in terms of the attention it commands globally, Western countries still took an active interest in seeing that the crisis was resolved.

This chapter is an analysis of the factors that propelled the Western powers to get involved in the Zimbabwean crisis. This involvement was contrary to the quiet and, at times, supportive response emanating from the rest of Africa. Particular attention is paid to the different responses of Britain, the European Union (EU) and the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is of special significance because of the tensions that arose between South Africa and Nigeria on the one hand and Australia on the other, over the issue of the suspension of Zimbabwe from the organisation.

The chapter is structured in the following manner: The first section sets the context of the discussion by considering the question of land distribution, which, according to the Zimbabwean government, triggered the crisis. The chapter argues that land was indeed an important ingredient of the crisis. However, it cannot alone account for the crisis engulfing Zimbabwe. There were other factors, such as the rise of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 as an opposition party and the declining popularity of ZANU-PF. The latter was particularly evident when the party suffered its first electoral defeat during the “no vote” to its proposed constitution.

The second section deals with the involvement of both Britain and the EU in the crisis. The argument advanced is that their involvement did not make the resolution of the crisis simple because of two interrelated factors. The one has to do with their liberal internationalism, which is moulded, by their double standards as regards dictatorships. The other is their apparent preoccupation with white Zimbabwean farmers only when the crisis

had far-reaching consequences beyond the farmers. These factors have eroded any leverage they could have on the Zanu-PF regime, especially in light of the view (prevalent in ZANU-PF) that they are merely pursuing a neo-colonial agenda.

The third section deals with the involvement of the Commonwealth in the Zimbabwean crisis. Here, the chapter argues that this involvement, much as that of Britain and the EU, proved futile. This was particularly the case because of the divergence of opinion between the African contingent, led by South Africa and Nigeria, and the Western contingent, led by Britain, on what course of action was appropriate in dealing with the situation in Zimbabwe. In as much as the African contingent did not want to see a breakdown of law and order in Zimbabwe, it still opposed the use of sanctions and public criticism of President Robert Mugabe as this further alienated this leader, thus diminishing any possibility of a practical and negotiated settlement.

4.2. The Land Question

The Land in Zimbabwe occupies a special place in the hearts of those who were dispossessed by the white minority during the colonial days. This is indeed the case in the rest of Africa. It is partly because of this that the Zimbabwean people took up arms against the Ian Smith regime in the 1960's-70s to regain what had been stolen from them. Jeffrey Herbst notes, "From the very onset of political armed struggle against colonialism, the key issue was land. It was the fight for land which led to the death of tens of thousands of Zimbabweans during the armed struggle: true Zimbabwean patriots saw there could be no freedom without liberation of the land from colonial settlers"¹⁶².

The struggle for independence in Zimbabwe was ended by the close of the negotiations between the government of Ian Smith, Britain, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) at Lancaster House, which culminated in the adoption of a new constitution for Zimbabwe in 1979. During the negotiations, the talks almost ground to a halt because the British and the government of Ian Smith had proposed a principle of willing-buyer-willing-seller to

¹⁶² Herbst J (1990), State Politics in Zimbabwe; University of California Press: Oxford pg 40

land redistribution, something ZANU and Zimbabwe African People's Union ZAPU could not accept. This principle was contrary to the intentions of the two liberation movements. For them the struggle for freedom was conducted partly in order to redress the imbalances in the distribution of land prevalent in the country. Therefore, adherence to a willing- buyer- willing seller principle would slow the process of redistribution down due to the economic implications of using such a method. But in the end, the liberation movements felt the need to concede to this demand for the sake of stability. Their goal was to make the necessary changes when the time allowed, as President Robert Mugabe later noted:

We had to compromise on certain fundamental principles, but only because there was a chance, in the future, to amend the constitution. We had got the main concession of a creation of democracy. There would be democratic elections in the country, and if a government was going to be yielded up by those elections, based on majority rule, then that government would, in due course, bring about the necessary changes. We didn't worry very much. But it hurt us. We did not like it¹⁶³.

The volte-face also resulted from pressure being applied on the liberation forces by neighbouring countries that had grown fatigued of supporting the liberation movements in Zimbabwe. The final constitution also provided that owners of land be appropriately compensated for their land in foreign currency,¹⁶⁴ whilst prohibiting the government from expropriating land for a period of ten years following its adoption. As part of the Lancaster House agreement, the British government would finance half of the redistribution process.

After the elections of 1980, which brought ZANU-PF to power, the newly elected government proceeded to bring about land reform within the terms of the Lancaster House constitution. The government announced that it aimed to redistribute 1,1 million hectares of land at a cost of US\$60 million and resettle 18 000 families on the redistributed land. This was soon followed by an announcement that the government would resettle some 162 000 families within five years on nine million hectares of

¹⁶³ Meredith M (2002), *Robert Mugabe: Power, Plunder and Tyranny in Zimbabwe*; Jonathan Ball Publishers: Johannesburg & Cape Town pg 119-120

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid* pg 42

land at a cost of US\$570 million¹⁶⁵. Herbst argues that this was “an exceedingly ambitious programme as it would have meant resettling approximately twenty percent of all peasants in the nation”¹⁶⁶. Eventually this was scaled down to fifteen thousand families a year.

The sense of urgency displayed by the government when it came to power in 1980 soon began to wane and land redistribution started losing its importance within a few years of the government coming to power. Kinsey argues that “in the late eighties, budgetary appropriations for resettlement-always inadequate- had begun to decline...budgetary resources were never available to do what was promised...and for many years the government of Zimbabwe appeared not to regard the land issue as potentially conflict inducing”¹⁶⁷.

The government’s ability to effect significant change in land ownership was further undermined by its sourcing of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) Loan in 1991. The fiscal prudence and belt-tightening of the IMF curtailed the amounts available to the government for land redistribution whilst putting in place conditionalities that tied the hands of the government. According to Sam Moyo, the “major constraint on the evolution of land redistribution programmes in the post-colonial and post-apartheid era of the 1990s was the emergence and dominance of neo-liberal, monetarist macro-economic and trade investment policies, as well as export oriented sectoral policies in agriculture and land”¹⁶⁸. One of the conditions attached to the loan was that the government would not interfere with productive farmers and that the government could only acquire under-utilised land and land lying idle¹⁶⁹. Any land that was in use could not be taken from its owner because of the foreign exchange earning capacity of agriculture.

However, not all commentators agree about the effect of structural adjustment on the land question. Moore argues that “the Zimbabwean state did not resolve the land

¹⁶⁵ Herbst J *Op Cit* pg 44

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid* pg 43

¹⁶⁷ Kinsey B H, Zimbabwe’s Land Reform Program: Underinvestment in Post-Conflict Transformation in *World Development* 32 (10) 2004

¹⁶⁸ Moyo S, The Political Economy of Land Acquisition and Redistribution in Zimbabwe, 1990- 1999 in *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26 (1) 2000

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*

question in its social democratic days...the absence of ESAP (Economic Structural Adjustment Programme) in and of itself would not have erased Zimbabwe's post-independence conundrum, although a strong state- which ESAP helped to destroy- is necessary to surmount its transitional problems. ESAP has aggravated these tensions, but it did not cause them"¹⁷⁰.

The late 1990s witnessed rising discontent on the streets of Harare due to the decline in the economy of Zimbabwe resulting from the adoption of the ESAP. Up to twenty three thousand civil servants had to be laid off their jobs due to the conditions attached to the IMF loan¹⁷¹. The government was also required to reduce its spending on social welfare programmes and to introduce cost recovery measures in order to be able to pay for services rendered¹⁷². This was achieved with the introduction of user fees in health, education and the withdrawal of maize subsidies. The consequence of introducing user fees in health was a decline of hospital users at a time when HIV/AIDS was becoming more prevalent.

This resulted in tensions between the government and the trade union movement of Zimbabwe. The emergence of the popular Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 out of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) created a sense of insecurity on the part of the government. The first action undertaken by the MDC was to call for a successful "NO" vote against the constitutional referendum instituted by the ruling party in 2000. The proposed constitution would have empowered the President to override the courts in land redistribution. John Makumbe argues that "the almost instant and widespread support that the MDC was able to attract in a very short time frightened Mugabe and his party to such an extent that they realized that the land issue, racism, violence and intimidation were the only effective weapons that could be used against political rivals"¹⁷³.

¹⁷⁰ Moore D, Is the Economy the Land and the Land the Economy? Primitive Accumulation in Zimbabwe in Journal of Contemporary African Studies 19 (2) 2001

¹⁷¹ McGregor J, The Politics of Disruption: War Veterans and Local State in Zimbabwe in African Affairs 101 2002

¹⁷² Dashwood H S, Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transformation; University of Toronto Press: Toronto pg 172

¹⁷³ Makumbe J, ZANU-PF: A Party in Transition? In African Security Review no. 87 2003 pg 1

In response to the rejection of the constitution, the government embarked on what Campbell calls executive lawlessness. Executive lawlessness “exists when the politics of law and order is mainly rhetorical, given the widespread disregard for the law by those who are charged to uphold it”¹⁷⁴. In this the government colluded with ‘War Veterans’, most of whom were not old enough to have participated in the war, to create instability and lawlessness in the country, especially in the rural areas. This was done with a view to winning the year 2000 parliamentary elections that were due to be held in June.

The government conspired with ‘War Veterans’ in a process of land invasions that were designed to intimidate MDC supporters and to cow those in the rural areas into voting for the ruling party in the June elections. The main motivation for the farm invasions was purported to be a “fast track” reform process of the grossly unequal distribution of land in the country. Mamaila argues that “when Mugabe had become convinced that he was losing support, he devised a strategy to channel the anger of war veterans to the white farmers”¹⁷⁵. The invasions were accompanied by severe beatings for farmers who resisted relinquishing their land over to the ‘War Veterans’.

Members of the MDC were also targeted for punishment for their ‘betrayal’ of the Zimbabwean ‘revolution’. As one political analyst put it to the International Crisis Group (ICG) “they want to make a lesson of certain people. They are making people think twice about any action they might take”¹⁷⁶. The lessons that were being made of people were designed to scare those at the grassroots from supporting the opposition as this could be accompanied by severe consequences.

The ruling party also threatened rural communities about the consequences of not voting for it. An ICG report states “Chiefs and headmen were beaten or told that they would be killed if their constituencies did not vote for President Mugabe”¹⁷⁷. The

¹⁷⁴ Campbell H (2003), Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation; David Phillip Publishers: South Africa

Pg 80

¹⁷⁵ Smiles J, Zimbabwe: Review of the 2002 Presidential Election in Journal for Contemporary History volume 29 (1) 2004

¹⁷⁶ International Crisis Group, All Bark and no Bite? The International Response to Zimbabwe’s Crisis in ICG Africa Report no 40 25 January 2004

¹⁷⁷ International Crisis Group, Zimbabwe at the Crossroads: Transition or Conflict? In ICG Africa Report no 41, 22 March 2002

same report also reports on how “opposition supporters were beaten, tortured and sometimes even killed, particularly in rural areas, by ZANU-PF youth militia and ‘War Veterans’ unleashed to terrorise the electorate into supporting the ruling party”¹⁷⁸.

Alarmed by the silence emanating from government in dealing with the war veterans, farmers sought court orders to force the government to remove the invaders from their land. However, the government displayed contempt for the legal system of its country by not acting on any one of the orders that had been handed down by the courts. In response to the court orders Justice Minister Chinamasa stated that “the dispossession of land and the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe had not been done in the courts and similarly the repossession of the land would not go via that route”¹⁷⁹. In so doing, the government aimed to undermine the role that would be played by the judiciary in all matters political.

When the parliamentary election results came in, the electoral reports on the outcome of the elections were in opposition to each other with some observer missions calling the election illegitimate and flawed whilst others called it legitimate and free and fair. According to Baker “although hundreds of observers witnessed the same presidential election, the diversity of their reports is quite remarkable. Whereas some spoke of them being generally free and fair, others spoke of the abandonment of all electoral standards”¹⁸⁰.

African Observer teams were generally in agreement about the electoral environment during the elections. The Organisation for African Unity (OAU) now the AU called the election “transparent, credible, free and fair”¹⁸¹. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) endorsed “the position taken by the SADC ministerial task force on Zimbabwe that the elections were substantially free and fair, whilst South Africa called it legitimate except for administrative oversights”¹⁸². The

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁰ Baker B, When to call black white: Zimbabwe’s electoral reports in *Third World Quarterly* 23 (6) 2002 p1145

¹⁸¹ Taylor I, The New Partnership for Africa’s Development and the Zimbabwe Elections: Implications and Prospects for the Future in *African Affairs* 101 2002

¹⁸² *Ibid*

SADC view was pronounced despite the report of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, a group of MP's from national parliaments of SADC member states which was of the view that the pre-election process was characterised by violence which limited the ability of political parties to campaign freely, that a significant number of people were turned away from voting stations for not being registered despite them asserting that they had indeed registered¹⁸³.

The Western observer teams were not in agreement with the pronouncements of the African Observer teams. The Commonwealth observer mission was of the view that “the conditions in Zimbabwe did not adequately allow for free and fair expression of will by electors”¹⁸⁴. The following countries also denounced the election as not free and fair; The United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The conclusion emanating from the West was that ZANU-PF had stolen the election and that the results were illegitimate.

4.3. British and European Union Intervention in the Zimbabwean Crisis Since 2000

In attempting to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis, the Western community adopted the liberal internationalism of scholars such as Cranford Pratt who argues that there is “a broad international acceptance of the view that states have the right and indeed the obligation to rebuke, and to apply pressure upon states which are severe human rights violators”¹⁸⁵. Accordingly, pressure was applied upon the Zimbabwean government through statements in the media and public calls for the international community to impose sanctions on Zimbabwe.

When the crisis broke out in March 2000, Britain was one of the leading countries that attempted to get the crisis resolved speedily. Mugabe had sought to portray the land invasions in Zimbabwe as resulting from Britain's insistence on the willing- buyer-willing seller principle, which was designed to benefit only white farmers and

¹⁸³ Statement of the SADC Parliamentary Forum Observer Delegation, Election Observer Mission Zimbabwe; 08 June 2000

¹⁸⁴ International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe at the Crossroads: Transition or Conflict* 22 March 2002

¹⁸⁵ Pratt C (1990) *Middle Power Internationalism and Global Poverty*; McGill- Queens University Press: Montreal pg 5

maintaining the status quo by slowing the process of land redistribution. To this end, Mugabe opined “the British government continued to be wedded to the willing buyer willing seller principle only to protect the best economic interests of the white commercial farmers”¹⁸⁶. For the land invasions to stop, Britain would have to increase its funding for land reform in order to make it possible for the Zimbabwean government to carry out just and equitable land reform within the rule of law. In so doing, President Mugabe gave the crisis an international dimension. His rhetoric solicited further involvement by Britain.

As party to the Lancaster House agreement, Britain had remained an influential partner in post-liberation Zimbabwe. Under the agreement, Britain would provide funds for the land reform process in order for the Zimbabwean government to carry out redistribution using the ‘willing-buyer-willing-seller’ provisions as set out under the agreement. When the crisis broke out March 2000 ostensibly because of unequal land distribution in the country, Britain insisted that the Zimbabwean government paid farmers a market value for their land and for its part, pledged to give five million Pounds towards this end provided this was done within the rule of law¹⁸⁷.

This was codified by agreement signed in Abuja in 2001 concluded under the auspices of the Commonwealth. Under this agreement Britain would make available up to forty five million Pounds to the government of Zimbabwe for the purchase of land from farmers for redistribution to black Zimbabweans whilst the government of Zimbabwe undertook to put a stop to the land invasions taking place in the country¹⁸⁸. This was on top of a pledge of 36 millions Pounds made in April 2000¹⁸⁹. These financial pledges were complimented by repeated invitations for the government of Zimbabwe to send a delegation to London for meetings with the British government¹⁹⁰.

¹⁸⁶ Lee M C, The Western Response to the Crisis in Zimbabwe, Working Paper 2003/03 of Centre for Development and Environment; University of Oslo: Norway

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁸ Taylor I, Limits of Engagement: British Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Zimbabwe in International Affairs 78 (3) 2002

¹⁸⁹ Williams P, The Europeanisation of British Foreign Policy; Draft paper for workshop at the London School of Economics, 5 June 2002

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*

Despite these efforts by Britain, the situation in Zimbabwe continued to deteriorate. In part, this was because of Zimbabwean government's failure to cooperate. In other words, there was a lack of political will on the part of the Zimbabwean government to engage Britain on this issue. Because of this, the British government changed tactics and started publicly criticizing the government of President Mugabe. This was in recognition of the growing international and domestic sentiment, which was pushing the British government to become bolder in its dealings with the Zimbabwean government. The media took the lead in this regard. According to Ian Taylor "elements of the British and international media called for Zimbabwe to be suspended from the Commonwealth in recognition of Mugabe's role in bringing about the crisis"¹⁹¹. Within Zimbabwe, calls were increasingly being made for the international community to take decisive steps in halting the deterioration of the political and economic conditions within the country. The MDC and the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) in Zimbabwe lobbied vigorously for the British government to pressure Mugabe to return to the willing- buyer- willing- seller principle as agreed to at Lancaster House in 1980¹⁹².

The British government ratcheted up the pressure by calling for the international community to impose targeted sanctions against Mugabe and his closest associates whilst ruling out the possibility of sensible dialogue with the Zimbabwean government¹⁹³ given the conditions in that country. Britain took the lead in this regard and imposed targeted sanctions against Mugabe and nineteen of his ministers in 2001. As part of the sanctions package all aid to Zimbabwe would be cut except for that designed for humanitarian projects; Mugabe and his ministers would not be allowed entry into UK territory¹⁹⁴ and the withdrawal of the British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT). Smart sanction were preferred over general sanctions because the British government believed that these would exacerbate the plight of ordinary Zimbabweans whilst not affecting those close to the regime of President Mugabe¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*

¹⁹² *Ibid*

¹⁹³ Williams P, The Europeanisation of British Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Zimbabwe; Draft paper for workshop at the London School of Economics, 5 June 2005

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*

Under pressure from Britain, the European Union (EU) took the same steps as Britain and imposed targeted sanctions which entailed an embargo on “the sale, supply or transfer of arms and technical advice, assistance or training related to military activities and issued travel bans and a freezing of funds and other financial assets for Mugabe and nineteen of his ministers...”¹⁹⁶. The EU was also of the view that general sanctions would be counter-productive, because they would inflict more suffering on ordinary Zimbabweans than they would on the Zimbabwean political elite. The sanctions became effective as from February 2002.

4.4. The Impact of Sanctions

The hard-line stance adopted by Britain is yet to succeed in bringing about change in Zimbabwe. On one level it has failed because of the support given to, and close relations formed with, the MDC by the British government. The close relations between the two undermined the possibility of the MDC forming a sound relationship with the Zimbabwean government as there existed a perception within government circles that Britain was seeking to re-colonize Zimbabwe through gaining control of the MDC. Thus, the MDC was criticized for “being a puppet of Northern interests ranging from the BBC to white farmers in Zimbabwe”¹⁹⁷. At another level it failed because of the antagonistic and deeply personal tactic of publicly criticizing President Mugabe in person.

It did not serve the good of the MDC that its President, Morgan Tsvangirai sought the support of “leading conservatives such as Lord Howe, Lord Carrington, Lord Chalke of Wallasey, Malcom Rifkind, Douglas Hurd (all former ministers under Margaret Thatcher), former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester A. Crocker, Evelyn de Rothschild...”¹⁹⁸. It also led to Mugabe becoming more repressive in his dealings with the opposition party. This relationship closed the possibility of dialogue between the MDC and ZANU-PF because Mugabe was not

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁶ The EU and Zimbabwe: Too Little Too Late? In European Security Review Number 11, March 2002

¹⁹⁷ International Crisis Group *op cit*

¹⁹⁸ Slaughter B & Marsden C, Zimbabwe: Promotion of the MDC by Middle Class Radicals Politically Disarms the Working Class; International Committee of the Fourth International 07 October 2000 pg 4

willing to negotiate with a group that he publicly condemned as a ‘representative of Western interests’.

In a campaign to retain credibility and to undermine the stance of the British government, the government of Zimbabwe argued amongst other things that the British government aimed “to remove President Mugabe from power and to replace him with the more pliant and directionless MDC and its president, Morgan Tsvangirai”¹⁹⁹. The perceived campaign against President Mugabe by the British government enabled the Zimbabwean government to portray British involvement in Zimbabwean politics as merely an imperial exercise designed to “destabilize and derail the government’s land reform programme to give white farmers extended monopoly over Zimbabwe’s most fertile arable land”²⁰⁰.

The British position also contained seeds of its own failure because of its over-emphasis on the private rights of white farmers to ‘their’ land. This “obsession with violations against white commercial interests”²⁰¹ took place despite the fact that those who suffered most from the invasions were black farm workers who lost their only source of income and were displaced because of violence. According to Lee, “the international media’s over-concentration on the plight of white commercial farmers has given Mugabe’s liberation rhetoric greater resonance in many African quarters, reinforcing the belief that the West cares about Zimbabwe only because whites suffer”²⁰². According to Taylor, “a genuine resolution of the land question is unlikely to emerge from market-based approaches, not least because of their tendency to limit the participation of the ostensible subjects of land reform, the rural black poor. In this sense, the British government’s adherence to market-based solutions to the land question may actually prove to be an obstacle to its stated objectives of promoting long-term peace, prosperity and democracy in Zimbabwe”²⁰³. The advocacy for farmers’ rights was manipulated by the Zimbabwean government to depict British foreign policy as racist because, according to the Zimbabwean government, it was

¹⁹⁹ UK Policy on Zimbabwe, a document by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe, 12 December 2002 pg 1

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*- This found currency in some African circles as it will become clear under the section on the African responses to the crisis

²⁰¹ Lee M C, *op cit* pg 4

²⁰² *Ibid*

²⁰³ *Ibid* pg 557

designed to “perpetuate the marginalisation of the African majority in rural areas to form a huge reserve for cheap agricultural labour”²⁰⁴.

Perhaps expectedly, it became difficult for African governments to sympathise with the position of the British government. The insistence on using market solutions to the land redistribution question made it difficult for Southern African governments to follow such a course of action as they were also faced with uneven land distribution in their own countries. For instance, in Namibia as in South Africa, whites occupy far more arable land than do their black counter-parts; a result of the willing- buyer willing- seller principle. In an apparent show of his disdain for the willing- buyer-willing- seller approach, on the 29 August 2001 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, then President of Namibia Sam Nujoma made it clear that he was also considering engaging in similar style land reform in his own country in order to speed up the process. However, unlike the chaotic reform practiced in Zimbabwe, Nujoma expropriated land and simply paid farmers a lesser amount than that dictated by market principles²⁰⁵.

Land reform as dictated by the willing- buyer- willing- seller principle is extraordinarily constraining to governments as they are forced to pay exorbitant prices in order to acquire land. Moreover, the government may not force a farmer to sell, as the principle requires there to be a willing seller to a willing buyer. This led President Mugabe to declare as early as 1993 that “if white settlers just took our land from us without paying for it, we can in a similar way just take it from them, without paying for it or entertaining any ideas of legality and constitutionality”²⁰⁶.

The inclination of the British government in this case to resort to ‘mega-phone’ diplomacy as a tool against the Zimbabwean government contrasts sharply to the muted response adopted when twenty thousand blacks were killed in Matebeleland by the government of President Mugabe in the early 1980s. During the massacres no criticism of President Mugabe was forthcoming from Britain. On the contrary the

²⁰⁴ UK Policy in Zimbabwe, a Press Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe 12 December 2002 pg 1

²⁰⁵ Namibian Farmer Yields to Order in NEWS24.com at http://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/0,,2-11-1447_1565959.html

British government “increased aid to Zimbabwe by ten million pounds”²⁰⁷. The British government was quick to dispel such a contrast however, as it made it clear that the Conservatives had been in power when this incident took place and as such it would be unreasonable to expect the Labour government of Tony Blair to conduct itself in the same fashion.

The result of the mudslinging between Zimbabwe and Britain was a straining of the relations between the two countries, leading to an impasse in the resolution of the crisis. The ‘mega-phone’ diplomacy led to President Mugabe hardening his attitude towards international community and made it even more difficult for the West to make a positive contribution towards a speedy resolution of the crisis.

The acrimonious relationship between the Britain and Zimbabwe prevented South Africa, as the regional power, from working closely with the British government in the resolution of the crisis. For South Africa, the phenomenon of too much bark and little bite on the part of London had become very counter-productive²⁰⁸. It was the view of the South African government that the ‘megaphone’ diplomacy was not bearing any fruit other than to further antagonize an already belligerent Mugabe. According to this view the public ‘diplomacy’ adopted by Britain was, and continues to be, counter-productive as it has not led to any change of policy in Harare.

In its quest to pressure Zimbabwe into lawful reform, Tony Blair’s government resorted to applying pressure on South Africa to take decisive measures against the Zimbabwean government. One such proposed measure was for South Africa to come out in public condemning the nature of the reform as it was taking place in that country. Britain felt that as the regional power, South Africa’s voice could nudge President Mugabe in the right direction.

This policy revealed shortsightedness on the part of the British government. As shown in Chapter Two, South Africa’s past is marred by her destructive ventures into

²⁰⁶ Meredith M (2002), Robert Mugabe: Power, Plunder and Tyranny in Zimbabwe; Jonathan Ball Publishers: Johannesburg & Cape Town

²⁰⁷ Taylor I, *Op Cit* 552

²⁰⁸ International Crisis Group, Zimbabwe: The Politics of National Liberation and International Division; ICG Africa Report no 52 17 October 2002: Harare/Brussels pg 16

neighbouring countries during the days of apartheid. As such, South Africa cannot be seen to be taking her cue from Western powers as this could expose her to a charge of being a 'lackey of the West'. Consequently, "independent, meaningful action by South Africa and other key African states would be more likely if their policies were no longer the target of public pressure from the West"²⁰⁹. Unilateral criticism of Mugabe by any one government from the Southern African region would have resulted in that government being labelled a puppet of the West by the Zimbabwean government²¹⁰.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) argues that it would have been better for "special attention to be paid to Angola whose President, Eduardo dos Santos²¹¹, has some leverage with Mugabe, with whom he has at times co-operated in the Congo"²¹². Such a strategy would have had to be conducted behind the scenes in order not to make dos Santos the subject of public ridicule by Mugabe. Indeed, this strategy combined with incentives could have been used to encompass most leaders from the region instead of disparaging them for their refusal to publicly denounce Mugabe's programme of reform.

Having chosen to publicly censure Mugabe, it has now become particularly difficult for the British government to have any influence on the Zimbabwean political landscape. Sanctions had been imposed, assets frozen and travel bans issued and in 2005, there is still to be any noteworthy changes in Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political landscape. ZANU-PF still wields power and there is nothing to suggest that British efforts are bearing any results. ZANU-PF increased its majority in the legislature as a result of draconian laws that have been enacted in the past four years²¹³. Mugabe is on record as having said he would rather die than to see the MDC rule Zimbabwe²¹⁴. Thus, British foreign policy dismally failed to achieve its intended goals leaving a host of unintended consequences such as the perception of 'imperial arrogance' so utilized by the Zimbabwean government in its own defense. The

²⁰⁹ *Ibid* pg 17

²¹⁰ Lee M C, *Op Cit*

²¹¹ This partly results from historical relations between the ANC and ZANU. This is discussed fully in the next chapter

²¹² *Ibid*

²¹³ This is discussed fully in Chapter three

²¹⁴ Meredith M, *Op Cit*

motives of the British government have left open the opportunity for the Zimbabwean government to rubbish British leaders in a desperate attempt to cling to power²¹⁵.

EU involvement in Zimbabwe has been somewhat more muted when compared to that of the unilateral British involvement. The EU imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe in February 2002 when Zimbabwe turned down a request to send EU election observers for the presidential elections to be held in the country²¹⁶. This had followed division within the EU about the appropriate course of action given the level of violence before the 2002 presidential elections. On the one hand, Britain, the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries wanted the EU to move promptly and decisively against Mugabe given the level of intransigence he had shown when confronted with international pressure. On the other hand, France and Belgium were hesitant to heed the call for sanctions because this would lead to Mugabe resisting calls for EU observers in the then upcoming presidential elections thus reducing the chances of having a meaningful impact on the politics of that country. According to France and Belgium “time for action was not yet ripe”²¹⁷ as drastic action could lead to an erosion of whatever diplomatic influence the EU might have had on Harare.

In the end France and Belgium gave in to British demands due to Mugabe failing to make any meaningful reforms in the political landscape. Zimbabwe also denied the EU observers entry into Zimbabwe because there would be members from Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Britain in the observer group. In this respect it is worth noting the words of the European Commissioner for External Affairs according to whom, “We’ve been extraordinarily patient with Mr Mugabe and his colleagues. But there comes a point when we have to determine whether or not he’s serious and his colleagues are serious about holding fair elections and honouring their obligations under our development agreement with them”²¹⁸.

To show its seriousness about the Cotonou Agreement entered into by the EU with the African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) group of countries, according to which

²¹⁵ ICG Report no 52, *Loc Cit*

²¹⁶ The EU and Zimbabwe: Too Little Too Late in *European Security Review* 11 2002

²¹⁷ International Crisis Group, All Bark and No Bite? The International Response to Zimbabwe’s Crisis; *ICG Africa Report* no 40, 25 January 2002

²¹⁸ Sechaba K et al Zimbabwe Faces Sanctions Showdown in *Focus on Zimbabwe* 03 February 2002

appropriate action may be taken if human rights and governance criteria are not complied with²¹⁹, the EU decided to take ‘appropriate action’ as provided for in the agreement. By appropriate the EU meant “targeted sanctions against key members of President Mugabe’ government, including provisions for freezing assets and visa restrictions”²²⁰. Targeted sanctions were introduced in light of the fact that trade sanctions tend to affect those whose rights are violated in the first place and also tend to aggravate the suffering of innocent people²²¹. In its justification of the EU position, the Italian Embassy in Harare released a statement that read “the suspension or re-orientation of certain financial and development cooperation programmes with the Government of Zimbabwe is mainly due to the fact that it has not complied with the provisions of the pertinent bilateral agreements and to the political and economic environment which is not conducive to development co-operation with government structures”²²².

The EU was “keen to emphasize that the sanctions imposed are designed to affect only those against whom they are imposed and should not penalize the ordinary citizen of Zimbabwe”²²³. It is because of this that the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs (PCFA) in the British Legislature recommended to its Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that “ Because of their likely adverse impact on the Zimbabwean people as a whole, we would not yet advocate the introduction of trade sanctions against Zimbabwe, other than the arms embargo which is already in place...”²²⁴.

The sanctions were not well received by sections of the African media. According to Stephen Chan some in Africa perceived them as an imperial arrogance²²⁵. The Zambian press took the lead in this respect and compared “the West’s treatment of Zimbabwe to its treatment, befriending, of the military dictator of Pakistan- suddenly useful to the West in Afghanistan”²²⁶. The public criticism of Mugabe combined with

²¹⁹ HRW, Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe Human Rights Watch 14 1 (A): March 2002

²²⁰ *Ibid*

²²¹ European Security Review, *op cit*

²²² Position of the European Union on Sanctions Against Zimbabwe; Embassy of Italy in Harare, 2002

²²³ European Security Review *op cit*

²²⁴ Eighth Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Zimbabwe; Response of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs: 2002/2003

²²⁵ Chan S (2002), Robert Mugabe: a Life of Power and Violence; I.B Tauris: London pg 194

²²⁶ *Ibid*

the smart sanctions were perceived as an instance of the double standards that were being used by the West in dealing with African countries, especially ones regarded as non-compliant to the interests of Western governments. Lee concurs with this point and argues that “by insisting on regime change only in Zimbabwe, and not in the Middle East, Asia, and other African countries where other despotic and anti-democratic regimes are well entrenched, the UK and the US opened themselves for charges of double standards”²²⁷.

In a similar tactic to that of the British, the EU directed some of its efforts towards getting South Africa to intervene in the crisis. The European Parliament passed a resolution calling for Zimbabwe’s neighbours and particularly South Africa to “demonstrate regional leadership and take strong action in favour of democracy and the rule of law in Zimbabwe and urges the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly to demonstrate its commitment to democratic values by condemning the flawed election process and extending sanctions under the ACP-EU Cotonou agreement”²²⁸.

The focused and persistent public pressure applied on South Africa forced her and the rest of the region into an untenable position of having to express faith in the Zimbabwean government in public whilst putting pressure for reform behind the scenes. Moreover, the sanctions created tension between the SADC and the EU as a result of which was the cancellation of a SADC-EU summit to be held in Copenhagen on the 4-6 November 2003²²⁹. Reacting to the news of the sanctions, the South African government said they were “regrettable and unfortunate...we believe that sanctions will not achieve the intended result. On the contrary they may further compound the situation”²³⁰. Then President of Tanzania Benjamin Mkapa categorized the sanctions as “neo-colonialism and economic colonialism”²³¹.

²²⁷ Lee M C, *op cit* pg 4

²²⁸ European Security Review, *loc cit*

²²⁹ Zimbabwe-controversy strains EU-SADC relations, AFROL NEWS
http://www.afrol.com/News2002/zim058_eu_sadc2.htm

²³⁰ Statement released by the South African Department of Foreign Affairs quoted in EU and US Sanctions Fail to Impress Zimbabwe; AFROL News.

http://www.afrol.com/news2002/zim011_eu_us_sanctions.htm

²³¹ *Ibid*

Thus, failing to garner the support of the region for the sanctions regime imposed on Zimbabwe was counter-productive in the end. It meant that Mugabe was able freely to make friends because of the perceived attack on the sovereignty of Zimbabwe, an issue that African countries hold dear. In the end, the sanctions failed to bring about change in Zimbabwe

Having implemented sanctions against the government of Mugabe, the EU also placed itself in the same position as Britain in that whatever leverage may have existed over Mugabe eroded. As a sign of the displeasure felt towards the EU sanctions, then Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo, castigated the EU for what he called “economic terrorism whose aim is to unseat a legitimately elected government, which has decided to defend its national independence”²³². The sanctions resulted in lessening any meaningful role that could have been played by the EU in rendering a speedy resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis.

4.5. The Commonwealth and African Response

For its part the Commonwealth worked closely with the Southern African region in trying to curtail the excesses of the Zimbabwean government. As a Commonwealth member, Zimbabwe had an obligation to allow the organization to send observers during the March 2002 Presidential Elections. Prior to these elections the organization had sponsored the Abuja Agreement signed on 6 September 2001²³³. The meeting where the agreement was signed included delegations from Britain, Kenya, South Africa, Canada, Jamaica, Nigeria, Zimbabwe (Foreign Minister) and Australia.

It was at this meeting that it was agreed by Commonwealth members that Zimbabwe would bring to a halt the farm invasions and restore the rule of law in the country. For her part, Britain agreed to “make substantial funds available to Zimbabwe to compensate displaced farmers and finance infrastructure in the resettled areas provided Zimbabwe met its commitments”²³⁴.

²³² Chan S, *op cit*

²³³ Human Rights Watch, *Loc Cit*

However, Zimbabwe failed to fulfill her obligations under agreement. The violence against innocent people was never halted and the farm invasions continued with increased frequency. As a result the funds for land acquisition and compensation to the farmers whose land had been taken was never released.

In light of the disregard with which President Mugabe was treating the Abuja Agreement, the Commonwealth agreed to send the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) to Zimbabwe to measure how the agreement was being implemented on the ground. Zimbabwe refused to receive the group and consequently, it was left in a position where it could not make recommendations but rather state its “deep concern about the ongoing situation in Zimbabwe especially the continued violence, occupation of property, actions against the freedom and independence of the media and political intimidation”²³⁵. In its next meeting in January 2002, the committee agreed to recommend that Zimbabwe be suspended from the Councils of the Commonwealth.

At the 2001 summit of the Commonwealth, the motion for suspension was not supported unanimously and the consensus that emerged was that suspension would become very likely after the election if the Commonwealth observers found the election to be illegitimate²³⁶. The resistance to suspension came mainly from the African contingent who felt that reprimanding Mugabe before the election would lead to the organization not being able to send observers to the upcoming elections. Any discussion of suspension would have to be based on the report of the observer mission²³⁷. The Commonwealth observer mission was duly allowed to enter Zimbabwe.

In order to make it a speedy decision, the Commonwealth appointed a committee made up of three leaders called the Commonwealth Chairpersons Committee on Zimbabwe (CCCZ). The committee included Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Prime Minister John Howard of Australia. Based on the report of the Observer Mission, the CCCZ would make a

²³⁴ ICG Africa Briefing Paper, 12 October 2001, *loc cit* pg 4

²³⁵ Human rights Watch, *loc cit*

²³⁶ Chan S (2002) *loc cit*

recommendation to the Commonwealth summit about whether or not to suspend Zimbabwe from the Councils of the Commonwealth.

The report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission had this to say about the elections, “the conditions in Zimbabwe did not adequately allow for a free expression of will by the electors”²³⁸. The CCCZ recommended that Zimbabwe be suspended for a period of one year. The organization announced “the country would be suspended from the Councils of the Commonwealth for one year with immediate effect”²³⁹.

When the suspension came up for review a year later it was agreed to keep Zimbabwe out as nothing had changed on the ground. In response to this Zimbabwe decided to quit the organization because it felt it was not being treated as an equal²⁴⁰.

Divisions within the organization between the West and Africa marred the issue of Zimbabwe’s suspension from the Commonwealth. The Western contingent was led by Britain, which had already shown a sense of urgency, even if not entirely embraced by African leaders, in dealing with the crisis. The African response was led by South Africa and Nigeria which wanted the issue to be considered soberly without any emotion as this could give the organization credibility in the eyes of the Zimbabwean government and allow it enough room to engage in diplomatic maneuvering²⁴¹. In the end, the camps had to reconcile their differences and present a united front so as to prevent Mugabe from claiming support from some members of the organization and using that support to drum up his own legitimacy within his country. In 2002, the Commonwealth duly suspended Zimbabwe. During the 2003 Commonwealth Summit in Abuja Nigeria, South Africa and Nigeria were at forefront of a failed campaign to

²³⁷ Mbeki T, ‘One White and Two Blacks’ in *ANC Today* 2 (10) 2002

²³⁸ Afrol News, [Commonwealth has Suspended Zimbabwe](http://www.afrol.com/news2002/zim030_commonw_suspend.htm); 19 March 2002 available at www.afrol.com/news2002/zim030_commonw_suspend.htm

²³⁹ *Ibid*

²⁴⁰ Commonwealth keeps Zimbabwe Out at www.bbc.co.uk

²⁴¹ Letter from Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Appealing for Zimbabwe to be reinstated into the Commonwealth. According to this letter “...your government has proceeded to impose sanctions on Zimbabwe, a decision which of course is your government’s prerogative. However, his unfortunate decision would seem to me to compromise Australia’s position as an honest broker in the Zimbabwean crisis”. Thus, Nigeria would have preferred for the Commonwealth to be more conciliatory towards Zimbabwe in order to retain some influence over that government. The imposition of sanctions, in his interpretation, precluded such influence.

have Zimbabwe reinstated to the Councils of the Commonwealth²⁴². Sachikonye argues that this was South Africa's way of maintaining bridges to Zimbabwe, even if it has failed to bring about change in Zimbabwe²⁴³.

However, the Commonwealth suspension served no good purpose, as Mugabe was only happy to withdraw Zimbabwe's membership of the Commonwealth when the country was not readmitted into the councils of the organization citing unequal treatment as the reason for the withdrawal²⁴⁴. Similar to other initiatives taken by the West in trying to resolve the crisis, the Commonwealth suspension proved futile as it did not achieve its objective of forcing the Zimbabwean government to become democratic. In the view of this author, the failure of such initiatives can be assigned to the fact that the West and Africa were divided over the action needed in Zimbabwe. It can also be attributed to the fact that trade sanctions have not been touted as an option because of their adverse impact on ordinary citizens. Consequently, nothing that the West does will work so long as there is division about what action to take and so long as the ordinary Zimbabwean does not feel sufficiently disaffected to chart their own course to freedom.

The strategies adopted by the international community were also inadequate in light of the reluctance of African governments to sanction the ZANU-PF regime. For punitive measures to have an impact on the ZANU-PF regime, it would have been critical to obtain the support of Southern African countries as this would have denied the regime its current lifeline. Uncompromisingly however, the Western community insisted on going it alone and undermined their own efforts in the process.

African governments were cautious in the way they dealt with the land seizures in Zimbabwe because of the need to maintain dialogue with the government of Mugabe. The strategy used by African governments was to support the government of Zimbabwe by urging "donors and Britain to deliver"²⁴⁵ whilst applying pressure on Zimbabwe behind closed doors. It is alleged that at a meeting of regional heads of

²⁴² Sachikonye L, *South Africa's Quiet Diplomacy: The Case of Zimbabwe* in Daniel J et al (2004), *The State of the Nation 2004-2005*, HSRC Press: Johannesburg

²⁴³ *Ibid*

²⁴⁴ Zimbabwe Quits Commonwealth BBCNEWS
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3299277.stm>

state in Victoria Falls in 2000 the leaders of SADC read Mugabe the riot act behind closed doors whilst maintaining the posture of solidarity in the public domain²⁴⁶. This contrasts with the communiqué issued at the end of the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit in 2001, which expressed “satisfaction that the region (Southern Africa) generally continues to enjoy political stability and the consolidation of democracy, respect for the rule of law, respect for human rights, peace and stability”²⁴⁷. This statement was issued in spite of the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian, political and economic situation in Zimbabwe.

Nathan argues that SADC is “determined to maintain a posture of unity and solidarity. Forged in the heat of the struggles against colonialism and apartheid, this posture militates against public criticism of member states...the imperative of solidarity is greatest when foreign powers raise concerns that are perceived or can be portrayed as reflecting a ‘neo-colonial’ agenda”²⁴⁸. Mugabe did not hesitate in exploiting this ‘neo-colonial’ agenda as shown earlier. The public diplomacy of Britain played directly into his hands and made it very difficult for Southern Africa to break ranks in public with Mugabe.

At times this posture was forsaken and mild criticism of the government offered. To that extent, the Malawian Foreign Minister made clear the position of SADC claiming that “we have reiterated that the bottom line for Zimbabwe is a just and equitable land redistribution, which however must be done in a legally sound and violence free manner”²⁴⁹. Chairman of SADC President Bakili Muluzi also criticized Zimbabwe saying “we are very concerned about the worsening economy, the decline in the rule of law, and the spread of violence and political instability in Zimbabwe”²⁵⁰.

How does one explain this deliberate avoidance of a co-operation with Western powers on the question of Zimbabwe? Why did African countries choose not to support Britain and the EU in their efforts to bring about a resolution of the crisis? Taking the solidarist disposition of African countries into consideration, it is clear that

²⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, *loc cit*

²⁴⁶ South Africa’s Quiet Diplomacy: Has it Worked? in *Africa News Service* 27 March 2001

²⁴⁷ *SADC Heads of State and Government Summit Communiqué*, Blantyre Malawi, August 2001

²⁴⁸ Nathan L, *op cit* pg 11

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*

the silence of SADC on this matter does not necessarily mean SADC supports the unraveling of democracy in that country. Rather, it is about repelling interference by the West in the affairs of the region. Supporting such unsolicited interference would expose other countries to pressure from the West in light of their less than democratic systems. Angola is a case in point. President dos Santos has been President of Angola since independence in 1975. For Angola to support such interference in the affairs of a similarly disposed country would risk inviting pressure to democratize the political space in Angola as well.

Impulsive and unconsidered criticism of Mugabe also has the potential to create tension in the region, as Mugabe has a close relationship with Former President Sam Nujoma of Namibia (still a powerful actor in Namibia and the region) and President dos Santos of Angola. President Nujoma declared his full support for Mugabe by threatening to institute land invasions in his own country²⁵¹.

Thus, criticizing Mugabe unilaterally and heavily could have the unintended consequence of creating a regional face off between those against the land invasions between countries close to Zimbabwe and those who are not very close. Such an outcome would have been adverse for the region as it tries to forge stronger ties in order to eliminate cross-border conflict such as that witnessed with the involvement of five countries in the DRC²⁵².

Moreover, the insistence by the West that ‘Mugabe must go’ has given Mugabe leverage over his Southern African counter-parts by providing him with a weapon to “warn his fellow colleagues that today it is me, tomorrow Bush and Blair will call for regime change in your country”²⁵³. Because of the undemocratic nature of some of the regimes in Africa²⁵⁴, it is in their interest to resist foreign involvement in member’s domestic politics as foreign involvement could foreseeably take place in their own countries. Solidarity provides them with the assurance that should foreign powers try

²⁵⁰ ICG Briefing Paper, 12 October 2002 *loc cit* pg 4

²⁵¹ Namibia's Burning Land Issue, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/866019.stm>

²⁵² For a discussion of the involvement of these countries in the DRC see Nathan L, The Absence of Common Values and Failure of Common Security in Southern Africa, 1992-2003, Working Paper No. 50, Crisis States Research Centre, July 2004

²⁵³ Lee M C, *loc cit* pg 13

to intervene in their domestic affairs they will have the support of countries in the region.

It would also seem incorrect to argue that SADC supports the breakdown of law in Zimbabwe. The regional implications of the crisis necessitated concern on the part of neighbouring countries. The 2001 SADC Summit made clear the organisation was concerned by the “effects of the Zimbabwe economic situation on the region”²⁵⁵. The effects of the crisis have been manifested through increased volumes of Zimbabwean refugees in neighbouring countries, which had the effect of stretching resources available for that purpose. Given this concern, a SADC Troika comprising Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa was constituted to work with the Zimbabwean government on the economic and political issues affecting that country.

A meeting was convened between the troika, the Zimbabwean government, the MDC and civil society organizations to try and find a way out of the morass. This meeting failed to achieve its intended result as witnessed by the further spiral of the situation in subsequent years. This meeting was followed by another in Mozambique comprising Presidents Bakili Muluzi of Malawi and Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique and Robert Mugabe on the 27 August 2001. Speaking about the land reform process in Zimbabwe, Bakili Muluzi said “we are more concerned of the acts of violence and the deteriorating economy of Zimbabwe”²⁵⁶.

President Obasanjo of Nigeria also signaled his dislike of the ‘mega-phone’ diplomacy of Western countries. Instead he preferred to use ‘constructive engagement’ in partnership with President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa²⁵⁷. As part of this they held meetings with the government and opposition party in 2001, 2002, and 2003 in the hope of finding a mutually agreeable solution to the crisis. Their preferred solution was the formation of a government of national unity in that country²⁵⁸. Both the government and the opposition rejected this. For its part, the

²⁵⁵ SADC Heads of State and Government Summit Communiqué, Blantyre, Malawi, August 2001

²⁵⁶ Zimbabwe: Meeting in Mozambique Over Land Crisis; The Zimbabwe Situation
http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/aug29_2001.html

²⁵⁷ Acton- Quist O, Nigeria, South Africa Favours Constructive Engagement with Zimbabwe at
allafrica.com 08 February 2003

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200302080221.html>

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*

government contended that it had won a legitimate election and therefore did not see why it had to form a joint government with the MDC. The government also felt that by getting into a joint agreement with the MDC they would effectively be co-ruling with Britain as the MDC was regarded a stooge of the British²⁵⁹. The MDC on the other hand, felt it could not work in cahoots with the government because the election had been stolen from it. Nothing less than a new free and fair election would satisfy the party. Consequently, the efforts of Obasanjo and Mbeki failed to bring about any change in the policies of the Zimbabwean government.

4.6. Conclusion

The Zimbabwean crisis has proved very vexing for both the Southern African region and the international community. As a result the crisis continues to inflict untold suffering on the people of Zimbabwe. The economy continues to spiral out of control whilst the political environment sinks to even lower levels. Could this have been avoided? The answer appears to be in the affirmative.

Both the international community and the SADC exhibited an exclusionary vision- the West insisting on 'megaphone' diplomacy and Southern Africa adopting a less vocal diplomacy and failing to come to a united programme of action- in the way they dealt with the crisis and this led to the failure of their respective efforts. It is unlikely that the situation in Zimbabwe would have deteriorated so drastically had there been a unity of purpose between the West and Southern African countries. The 'megaphone' diplomacy chosen by the West proved unappealing to Southern African countries. Consequently, they resorted to messages of support for the Zimbabwean government. However, these cannot be interpreted to have been messages of support for the erosion of democracy that took place in Zimbabwe. Rather, it was support against 'colonial tendencies' seeking to re-exert their influence over the region. The solidarity exhibited towards Mugabe was more a signal of the rejection of the Western position more than it was support for the lawlessness that was taking place in Zimbabwe.

²⁵⁹ See next chapter for a fuller discussion of this

Instead of the divergent positions of the West and Southern Africa, the situation in Zimbabwe would have been better handled in co-operation with each other rather than in competition. It seems a fair conclusion to argue that Mugabe would have found himself isolated had it not been for Southern Africa's support against British influence. This proved impossible however in light of unilateral British involvement in the internal affairs of Zimbabwe. This failed to garner the required support from regional leaders because of the common history of colonialism and oppression they had to endure under British rule. Their response became about thwarting Britain's diplomacy more than it was about resolving the crisis in Zimbabwe. In the absence of a common position between the West and SADC, Mugabe has stayed in power and has managed to consolidate his position as President of Zimbabwe through denying the opposition political room and by strangling the independent media. This is likely to be the case until Southern Africa; working under SADC and African Union auspices finds a solution to the crisis

Chapter Five

‘Quiet Diplomacy’: South Africa’s Foreign Policy Towards Zimbabwe Since 2000-2004

5.1. Introduction

As indicated in the previous Chapter, the South African government was unwilling to adopt the methods of the West in dealing with the Zimbabwean crisis. This was in contrast to the expectation held by the international community and civil society organisations within and outside South Africa that she would exercise her considerable diplomatic and economic power, and fulfill her regional leadership position in Southern Africa, to resolve the crisis afflicting that country. However, South Africa has tended to lean towards a pluralist middle power disposition rather than assuming a domineering position over the region simply by virtue of it being the most powerful country in the region. But, unlike traditional middle powers, which tend to be vocal on issues of human rights²⁶⁰, South Africa’s intervention in the Zimbabwean crisis has not conformed strictly to the pluralist script. This is because of the constructive engagement or ‘quiet diplomacy’ that she opted to employ as a diplomatic tool to deal with the crisis in Zimbabwe.

This chapter argues that South African diplomacy has failed to bring about change in Zimbabwe due to a number of factors. Some are historical while others are structural. There are two major historical factors. Firstly, the relationship between South Africa (read: ANC) and Zimbabwe (ZANU), dating back to the days of struggle, has been characterized by ambivalence and mistrust²⁶¹. Secondly, South Africa seems to have learnt from the havoc wreaked by the apartheid regime on black Southern Africa that economic or military confrontation will do little to yield the desired results in Zimbabwe. Consequently, South Africa’s foreign policy has moved from a position of unilateral intervention, as in the Nigeria saga of 1995, to one premised on the multilateral process. She now prefers to act as part of a collective, through such

²⁶⁰ Cooper et al (1994), Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order; UCB Press: Vancouver

²⁶¹ Phimister I and Raftopoulos B, Mugabe, Mbeki and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism, *Review of African Political Economy* 101 (31) 2004

institutions as SADC and African Union, in order that she be not perceived as a neighbourhood bully.

Structurally, South Africa has been constrained by the nature of African international relations and the solidarity politics espoused by African elites. The solidarity politics of African leaders dictate that in order to maintain unity, African leaders do not criticise each other in public forums. However, the very multilateral process South Africa prefers has been weakened to a point where it does not function. As a result, leaving the Zimbabwean crisis to the multilateral bodies has proved futile as they have shown an unwillingness to chastise the ZANU-PF. Because of the weaknesses inherent in the African multilateral environment, which emanate from solidarity politics, South Africa is attempting to put in place what Robert O. Keohane calls “legitimate domination”. Legitimate domination is “the right to lead emanating less from economic and military power as such and more from the willingness of the smaller nations to buy into and materialise the norms and principles set forth by the hegemon”²⁶². This position is a reflection of South Africa’s emerging middle power status as it takes into account her inability to enforce her will on the continent in spite of her preponderance of resources. The chapter argues, however, that this desire to create legitimate domination has created what Goldman calls the ‘internationalist’s dilemma’, which is the desire to coerce while accommodating at the same time²⁶³.

5.2. The Pre-Crisis Relationship between South Africa and Zimbabwe

The relationship between South Africa and Zimbabwe has not always been an easy one. This emanated from the fact that Zimbabwe was perceived as a threat by apartheid South Africa because of the relationship between the ANC, ZAPU and ZANU. The ascendancy to power of ZANU in 1980 meant that apartheid South Africa was in close proximity to three black ruled countries, namely Mozambique,

²⁶² Keohane R (1989), Power and Interdependence; Harper Collins: San Francisco

²⁶³ Goldman K (1994), The Logic of Internationalism: Coercion and Accommodation; Routledge: London

Zambia and Zimbabwe, which provided support to the South African liberation movements²⁶⁴.

To counter the potential threat from Zimbabwe, the South African Defence Force (SADF) recruited 5000 white former security personnel from Zimbabwe's Defence Force which were used for hunting members of the ANC in Zimbabwe and destabilizing the country. Meredith argues that "South Africa's principal objective was to keep Zimbabwe in a weak and defensive position, to destabilize it so as to ensure that it presented neither a threat nor an example of a stable African state"²⁶⁵. Martin Rupiya argues that "with an African government in place in Harare, Pretoria intensified its policy of destabilization in the economic and security spheres of Zimbabwe"²⁶⁶.

The struggle days in Zimbabwe had bestowed upon Mugabe respect from regional leaders and he was held in high esteem for his efforts in the Front Line States²⁶⁷, which was "constituted as an informal forum for the discussion of mainly political and, to a lesser extent, military problems common among the liberation movements, and the problems faced by newly independent governments in Zambia, Mozambique and Angola"²⁶⁸. This leadership position was short-lived with the ending of apartheid and the re-entry of South Africa into the regional and global system. The stature of Mandela was such that he upstaged Mugabe as the leader of the continent with the world increasingly looking to South Africa to stand guard over the region whereas Zimbabwe was increasingly being relegated to a bystander in the affairs of the region.

South Africa assumed the position of a pivotal state. Pivotal States are "defined by their capacity to affect regional and international stability. A pivotal state is so important regionally that its collapse would spell trans-boundary mayhem: migration, communal violence, pollution, disease and so on. A pivotal state's economic progress

²⁶⁴ Meredith M (2002), Robert Mugabe: Power, Plunder and Tyranny in Zimbabwe; Jonathan Ball Publishers: Johannesburg & Cape Town

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶⁶ Rupiya M R, Zimbabwe in South Africa's Foreign Policy: A Zimbabwean View, SA Yearbook of International Affairs, 2002/03 pg 163

²⁶⁷ Masemola H (2005), An Analysis and Appraisal of Restructuring in SADCC/SADC since 1990, Dissertation submitted at the University of South Africa: Pretoria

²⁶⁸ Cilliers J, The Legacy of the Front-line States, ISS Monograph 43 1999

on the other hand, would bolster its region's economic vitality and political soundness"²⁶⁹. Both the political and economic stock of the country positioned it to play a leading role on the continent.

Mugabe was unhappy with seeing his position as hero of the liberation struggle being upstaged by the newest member of the international community. This unhappiness derived partly from the destructive role that South Africa had played in Southern Africa. It also emanated from the trade deficit that all countries in the region had in their trade relations with South Africa²⁷⁰. It was also a result of the less than friendly and more formal relations that existed between President Mugabe and President Mandela. Peter Vale writes that "formalized relations between the region's sovereign states - for all their commonalities - were not, nor ever had been, close and intimate. Rather, their relations were always impersonal, always contractual, notwithstanding the ritual tributes paid to solidarity and struggle. One relationship - that between Mandela and Mugabe- exemplified the tension. Always terribly formal, the personal and professional intimacies necessary to draw the regions strongest two poles were simply absent"²⁷¹

Tensions between South Africa and Zimbabwe became visible under South Africa's (President Mandela) chairmanship of the SADC in the negotiations around the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security that was launched in 1996. One of the founding principles of the Organ was that it would be functionally independent from other SADC structures²⁷². The chair of the Organ would rotate annually among member states and the chairman would serve on a troika basis with the incoming and outgoing chair of the Organ.

However, the provision that the Organ function independently of other SADC structures created tension as it brought into being two parallel bodies at the level of

²⁶⁹ Paul Kennedy quoted in Le Pere G, South Africa- An 'Emerging Power'? Global Dialogue Volume 3.1 1998

²⁷⁰ See Meridith *op cit* for a breakdown of the trade figures for South Africa and the rest of the Southern African region since 1995; see also Makgetlaneng S, South Africa- Southern Africa Relations in the Post-Apartheid Era: The Strategic Importance of Southern Africa to the Economic and Trade Interests of South African Companies, Nordic Journal of African Studies 14 (2) 2005

²⁷¹ Vale P, Ending Walls: Southern Africa in the New Millennium, paper presented at a Symposium organised by the CIIR, SACBC, ICS and NAJ, Windhoek; September 2003

²⁷² Nathan L, *loc cit*

Heads of Government which could potentially deal with the same conflict situation²⁷³. South Africa held a view opposed to this proposal. The argument from Pretoria was that “in terms of the SADC treaty, conflict resolution was also a core function of the SADC and therefore the Summit” whilst Harare argued that SADC had intended to “create a parallel and independent structure from the SADC economic forum”²⁷⁴. To show its disapproval of South Africa’s leadership position, Zimbabwe also argued that given South Africa’s history “it was morally incompetent to challenge the substance of the treaty, or to invoke it in a manner that defeats its spirit and purpose”²⁷⁵. The conflict around the Organ was only resolved in 2001 with its inclusion as a structure of SADC, contrary to the wishes of the Zimbabwean government.

Another area of conflict between Zimbabwe and South Africa was the intervention in August 1997 by Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola ‘under’ SADC auspices on the side of the Laurent Kabila government in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) whilst Mandela was still engaging with the parties to the conflict to resolve their differences through dialogue²⁷⁶. Further, South Africa had not been invited to the emergency ‘SADC’ meeting, which decided that SADC would deploy troops in the DRC to assist the government of Kabila held on the 17 August 1997. The meeting had been held at the request of Zimbabwe, which held the SADC chair that year.

Laurie Nathan argues that the snub of South Africa by Zimbabwe was a consequence of the after shocks of the row over the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security²⁷⁷. President Mandela reprimanded SADC for this action and called upon all participating countries to withdraw their forces and return to dialogue to seek resolution of the conflict²⁷⁸. President Mugabe responded by saying “No one is compelled within SADC to go into a campaign of assisting a country beset by conflict. Those who want to keep out, fine. Let them keep out, but let them keep silent

²⁷³ *Ibid*

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*

²⁷⁶ Malan M, *Regional Power Politics Under Cover of SADC: Running Amok with a Mythical Organ*, *ISS Occasional Paper No35* October 1998 pg 9

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*

²⁷⁸ Malan M, *Op Cit*

about those who want to help”²⁷⁹. Freeman argues that “Zimbabwe’s intervention in the war under SADC auspices, even as President Mandela was advocating a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflict, was at least partly motivated by a desire to isolate and embarrass the South African government and by implication reassert Zimbabwe’s identity as a regional leader”²⁸⁰.

5.3. Enter the Zimbabwean Crisis: ‘Quiet Diplomacy’ Revisited

In response to the crisis in Zimbabwe, Pretoria was very slow to criticize Harare in public citing that Zimbabwe was a sovereign state and that “the people of Zimbabwe must decide their own future”²⁸¹. This quiet disposition has since been dubbed ‘quiet diplomacy’. Responding to the international and domestic call for South Africa to act decisively against Zimbabwe, President Mbeki wrote that those who argue that South Africa should denounce the violence taking place in Zimbabwe “seem to believe that if we issued some instructions to the political leaders of Zimbabwe, as determined by themselves, this leadership would meekly obey what the *baas* across the Limpopo would have told them...no Zimbabwean with any pride in their country and respect for themselves, will accept that another should determine their destiny... for our part we will never treat Zimbabwe as the tenth province of South Africa”²⁸².

The South African government was also very resistant to calls for sanctions emanating from the European Union and the United States. Within the Commonwealth, South Africa and Nigeria were the leading countries in opposing the proposed targeted sanctions by the Commonwealth within the Commonwealth Troika, which was set up to look at options for dealing with Zimbabwe. South Africa’s and Nigeria’s opposition to sanctions was cast by the media as a divide between a black and a white Commonwealth. It is to this that President Mbeki wrote of how “international relations was and values of good and bad, in the eyes of some, including sections of the media globally, are still defined according to the historic black-white divide”²⁸³.

²⁷⁹ Quoted in Malan M, *Loc Cit*

²⁸⁰ Quoted in Black D & Wilson Z, *loc cit* pg 39

²⁸¹ The People of Zimbabwe must decide their own future in *ANC Today* 3 (18) 9- 15 May 2003

²⁸² *Ibid*

²⁸³ Zimbabwe: ‘Two Blacks and One White’ in *ANC Today* 2 (10) 8-14 March 2002

The South African government opted to use ‘constructive engagement’ to bring about change in Zimbabwe. According to this, South Africa would pursue “ ‘quiet diplomacy’, a policy designed to encourage Mugabe to change course from executive lawlessness, violent coercion and racial scapegoating...”²⁸⁴. According to President Obasanjo of Nigeria, South Africa and Nigeria “must help Zimbabwe out of its predicament and problem...we cannot do that if we become unduly and unnecessarily critical and antagonistic to Zimbabwe. We must remain constructively engaged with Zimbabwe”²⁸⁵.

South Africa chose not to publicly criticize Mugabe in order to retain a measure of influence over the Zimbabwean government. As a South African diplomat put it, “We need to engage Zimbabwe and force it to negotiate. We have to work with everyone, including Mugabe. We need to talk to the people around him. We need to press for movement from the leadership...the more his (Mugabe) situation becomes difficult, the more he will be willing to come back to us...Zimbabwe won’t be able to withstand the pressure for long. When they are ready to talk we will be here”²⁸⁶.

‘Constructive engagement’ entailed involvement by the South African government at both bilateral and multilateral levels. When the crisis first broke out 2000, President Mbeki visited Zimbabwe in May of that year to discuss the issue with his Zimbabwean counterpart. On this visit he stated,

“To you the people of Zimbabwe, I would like to convey the message that the overwhelming majority of your brothers and sisters across the Limpopo, share with you the hope that the land question in Zimbabwe will be addressed successfully. At the same time, as a people, we are convinced that it would be best that this important matter is dealt with in a co-operative and non-confrontational manner among all the people of this sister country, both black and white, reflecting achievement of a national consensus on this issue, encompassing all Zimbabweans. Accordingly, we trust that ways and means will be found to end the conflict

²⁸⁴ Hamill J, South Africa and Zimbabwe in Contemporary Review 49 (8) 2002

²⁸⁵ ANC Daily News Briefing 07 February 2003

²⁸⁶ International Crisis Group, The Politics of National Liberation and International Division in ICG Report no. 52, 17 October 2002

that has erupted in some areas of Zimbabwe, occasioned by the still unresolved land question in this country”²⁸⁷

Again in August 2000, President Mbeki accompanied by Ministers Alec Erwin (Public Enterprises), Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (Foreign Affairs), Thoko Didiza and Deputy Minister Shabangu (Land Affairs) visited Zimbabwe. On the agenda was “Zimbabwe’s post-election plans for economic recovery and South Africa’s contribution to such programme with particular focus on trade and finance issues”²⁸⁸. In March 2001, the South African government organised a ministerial level meeting between the Zimbabwean Ministers of Finance, Minerals and Energy, Land, Industry and International Trade, and their South African counterparts. This was an “attempt to influence the Zimbabwean government to take a more proactive interest in addressing its domestic problems”²⁸⁹.

In February 2002, a month before the Presidential elections in Zimbabwe, Deputy President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, together with the Minister of Public Enterprises, Minister of Agriculture & Land Affairs and Minister of Labour, visited Zimbabwe to hold talks about the crisis in Zimbabwe. This delegation met with President Mugabe, Vice-President Joseph Msika, Minister of Foreign Affairs, State Security, Finance and Transport. At this meeting, the South African delegation was assured that pre-election violence was not prevalent and electioneering was continuing normally and that the leader of the opposition would not be charged with treason as reported by the media²⁹⁰. The assurances did not come to pass as the election period was reported to characterised by incidents of violence against members of the opposition²⁹¹ and the leader of the MDC was in 2003 charged with treason²⁹², a charge he was acquitted on in 2004.

²⁸⁷ Speech by President Thabo Mbeki at the Zimbabwe Trade Fair, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe 5 May 2000

²⁸⁸ Van Wyk J-A The Saga Continues...The Zimbabwean Issue in South Africa’s Foreign Policy, Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations vol.1 (4) 2002

²⁸⁹ *Ibid* pg 195

²⁹⁰ Statement on the Visit to Zimbabwe by Deputy President Zuma, South African Government Information 28 February 2002

²⁹¹ International Crisis Group, Zimbabwe at the Crossroads: Transition or Conflict? ICG Africa Report no. 41 22 March 2002

²⁹² CNN World News 06 June 2003

<http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/africa/06/06/zimbabwe>

South Africa's bilateral efforts were complemented by SADC and the involvement of President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo. As the previous chapter showed, South Africa preferred to work as part of a collective in its attempt to resolve the crisis. Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo was also roped in to assist South Africa in its diplomatic endeavors. The two Presidents visited Zimbabwe in 2001, 2002 and 2003 to hold meetings with the Zimbabwean government and opposition²⁹³. Sachikonye argues that "there was a not unreasonable assumption that Mugabe would take seriously the overtures of the two largest powers on the continent²⁹⁴. The thrust of these meetings has been the return of Zimbabwe to the rule of law²⁹⁵. As part of the Commonwealth, South Africa and Nigeria also delegated the ANC Secretary General Kgalema Motlanthe as mediator alongside Adebayo Adedeji to act as mediators between the MDC and ZANU-PF²⁹⁶.

The main thrust of South Africa's policy towards Zimbabwe was to encourage the Zimbabwean government and the opposition, the MDC to enter into a Government of National Unity (GNU) in much the same way that the ANC entered into a GNU with the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the National Party (NP) after the 1994 general elections in South Africa²⁹⁷. This was especially the case after the Presidential elections of 2002 whose result the MDC contested. In line with its strategy of engagement, the South African government "placed pressure on the MDC to cooperate with the Zimbabwean government in a process of reconciliation, both before and after the elections"²⁹⁸. South Africa also took the position that increased contact with ZANU-PF at a party level would bring about change in Zimbabwe. This strategy is reported to have included appealing to the moderates within ZANU-PF and strengthening their hand within the party machinery²⁹⁹.

²⁹³ Sachikonye L M, *Op Cit*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid* pg 572

²⁹⁵ Taylor *Op Cit*

²⁹⁶ Field S (2003), Effects of the Zimbabwean Crisis on SADC: The Cases of South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Mozambique; Africa Institute of South Africa: Pretoria

²⁹⁷ Hughes T, *Composers, Conductors and Players: Harmony and Discord in South African Foreign Policy Making*; Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Occasional Paper September 2004

²⁹⁸ International Crisis Group, *Zimbabwe's Election: The Stakes for Southern Africa*, Africa Briefing 11 January 2002

²⁹⁹ Field S (2003), Effects of the Zimbabwean Crisis on SADC: The Cases of South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Mozambique; Africa Institute of South Africa: Pretoria pg 7

All of these efforts failed to yield any tangible result for the Zimbabwean people. Both the Zimbabwean government and opposition have proved unwilling to accede to South Africa's preference of a negotiated settlement which would see them sharing power in order to resolve the crisis. In 2002, dialogue with the opposition was rejected by the Zimbabwean government on the premise that the opposition did not recognize Mugabe's Presidency and that until such was rectified no meaningful dialogue could take place between the two parties³⁰⁰. The MDC rejected talks unless these were premised on the holding of new elections to nullify the fraudulent result win achieved by ZANU-PF in the 2002 Presidential Elections. The MDC was also unsure of the impartiality of the South African government given its endorsement of the Presidential elections result³⁰¹. It is worth quoting Morgan Tsvangirai's address to a meeting of the MDC Members of Parliament on the 18 December 2002,

"You will further recall that South Africa and Nigeria then came up with a strategy, conceived in the shadow of the Commonwealth Troika Initiative. The strategy suffered because of critical strategic differences on the way forward. South Africa was interested in the management of the Zimbabwean crisis, not its resolution. Pretoria saw a government of national unity as solution. This was a bid to legitimise Mugabe and at costs. In pursuit of this objective, over the past eight months, several high-ranking South African government and ANC officials have made public statements and embarked on diplomatic activities which, cumulatively are specifically intended to blunt the modest international pressure which seeks to make Mugabe account for his brutal misrule. They have turned their so-called diplomacy into noisy approval of the regime at any international meeting at which the Zimbabwe crisis comes up for discussion"³⁰²

By July 2003, the South African government was again claiming that ZANU-PF and the MDC were in talks about the crisis. During the visit by President Bush to South Africa in July 2003, President Mbeki told him that the Zimbabwean government and opposition "were engaged in discussions on all matters that would be relevant to the resolution of these political and economic problems"³⁰³. President Bush added that he would not be second guessing President Mbeki as he was the most involved leader

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*

³⁰¹ *Ibid*

³⁰² Address by Morgan Tsvangirai at a Meeting with MDC Members of Parliament at Harvest House, Harare, Zimbabwe 18 December 2002

³⁰³ Press Statement issued at the end of discussion between President Mbeki of South Africa and President George Bush of America 09 July 2003; Pretoria

and that he was making good progress³⁰⁴, as happened during President George Bush's state visit to South Africa by the end of which he declared President Mbeki to be the 'point man' on Zimbabwe, signalling that the US would allow South Africa to carry out its role of mediator without interference from the US³⁰⁵. The claim was again vehemently denied by the MDC and in the process; President Mbeki was accused of trying to buy time for President Mugabe³⁰⁶.

This is part of the severe criticism that was levelled at Pretoria for its 'quiet diplomacy'. The international community was at the forefront of this criticism as there was a feeling that their efforts at resolving the crisis were undermined by South Africa's unwillingness to act boldly in dealing with Zimbabwe with some even going as far as to say "it would be no exaggeration to say there would be no Zimbabwean crisis without South African support"³⁰⁷. Taylor takes this view further by arguing that, "South African support for Mugabe has undoubtedly frustrated British policy-makers and undermined any speedy resolution of Zimbabwe's crisis"³⁰⁸. This view emanates from the financial bail outs that had been extended by the South African government towards its Northern neighbour without this being attached to a set of specific conditions which would help to end the crisis in that country. For instance, in 2002 the South African government requested that Eskom and Sasol continue supplying electricity and fuel to Zimbabwe despite the Zimbabwean government failing to honour its debts to the companies³⁰⁹.

The South African government rejected the criticism with the President taking the lead in this regard. According to President Mbeki, the clamour over Zimbabwe reveals continuing racial prejudice³¹⁰. Thus "the agitation about these questions is driven by a deep seated concern that the misfortunes that had befallen the province of Zimbabwe were likely to spill over into or occur in the other provinces of South Africa... accordingly we must act to guarantee the property rights of the white

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*

³⁰⁵ Phimister I and Raftopoulos B, *Loc Cit*

³⁰⁶ *Sunday Times*, 13 July 2003

³⁰⁷ R W Johnson quoted in Taylor I, *The Limits of Engagement: British Foreign Policy and Crisis in Zimbabwe in International Affairs* 78 (3) 2002 pg 559

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*

³⁰⁹ *IRINNEWS* Report 5 March 2002

³¹⁰ Clamour Over Zimbabwe reveals continuing racial prejudice in SA in *ANC Today* 1 (9) 23- 29 March 2001

Zimbabweans. We must also act to ensure that the law is upheld both to protect the property and the freedoms of the Zimbabwe property owners”³¹¹.

It is in this context that President Mbeki was opposed to the Commonwealth imposing sanctions on the Zimbabwean government in 2002. In an interview with the *Sunday Times* on the 08 October 2002, President Mbeki revealed that “the commercial farmers in Zimbabwe had approached our High Commissioner in Harare and said: please, can you get this message to President Mbeki? We see in the media that he is going there for this meeting. Please say to the President it will not help us, it will not help Zimbabwe, to impose sanctions against Zimbabwe...when people say do something, we say to them do what? And nobody gives an answer because they know that when they say do something; what they mean is march across the Limpopo and overthrow the Zimbabwean government”³¹².

At times, South Africa’s response has appeared to be one of support towards the Zimbabwean government. In 2002, Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma backed the Zimbabwean government when she said Britain must compensate the dispossessed white farmers because Britain had benefited from the land theft by white settlers³¹³. In December of the same year she said that ZANU-PF and the ANC had “fought colonialism and oppression in our countries. We liberated our countries from the yoke of colonialism and we set to improve the lives of our people in our respective countries” and such would not be “dictated to by somebody else”³¹⁴. In February 2003, the South African government, together with Nigeria, lobbied for Zimbabwe’s suspension from the Commonwealth to be lifted even before the situation in Zimbabwe had shown any improvement³¹⁵. Similarly, in 2004, the South African government was instrumental in quashing a report by the African Union Commission on Human and People’s Rights, which was critical of the Zimbabwean

³¹¹ *Ibid*

³¹² Interview of President Thabo Mbeki with Mathata Tsedu and Ranjeni Munusamy of the *Sunday Times* 8 October 2002

³¹³ *Financial Gazette*, 14 November 2002

³¹⁴ *Natal-Mercury*, 20 December 2002

³¹⁵ See Letter from Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to Australian Prime Minister Ron Howard appealing for Zimbabwe to be reinstated into the Councils of the Commonwealth 13 February 2003

government. Consequently, the report was never tabled before African Union Foreign Ministers³¹⁶.

The response by South Africa is incomprehensible to analysts on two levels. Both levels centre on what is expected of South Africa as both a pluralist middle power and regional power as discussed in Chapter Two. At one level, it is argued that as a pluralist middle power South Africa is regarded as having 'abrogated' its role as a champion of human rights and her concern for human security in the region. Her response to Zimbabwe has been characterized as a breach of the core principles enshrined in her foreign policy document³¹⁷ and statements from some of the ANC leaders³¹⁸. This response is also diametrically opposed to the response by South Africa to the Nigerian execution of Ken Saro Wiwa in 1995 when South Africa demanded that sanctions be imposed on that country³¹⁹.

At another level, the response is mystifying because South Africa, as an emerging middle power, is also a regional power³²⁰. As a regional power, it is expected that South Africa would police the region and enforce good governance and good human rights practices through exercising her power and influence on Zimbabwe. This bewilderment is reinforced by the economic drawbacks that have been incurred by South Africa because of the crisis in Zimbabwe. Before the crisis broke out, Zimbabwe was South Africa's biggest trading partner in Africa³²¹. Zimbabwe is also heavily dependent on South Africa for her electricity requirements. According to a report by the Zimbabwe Research Initiative, in 2001 South African companies were owed four hundred million Rands by the Zimbabwean government, whilst the region as a whole had lost over seven billion Rands in tourism and investment. South Africa

³¹⁶ Phimister I and Raftopoulos B, Mugabe, Mbeki and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism, Review of African Political Economy 101 (31) 2004

³¹⁷ Department of Foreign Affairs (1996), Discussion Document on Foreign Policy; Pretoria

³¹⁸ Mandela N, South Africa's Future Foreign Policy in Foreign Affairs 72 (5) 1993

³¹⁹ Black R D, The New South Africa Confronts Abacha's Nigeria: The Politics of Human Rights in a Seminal Relationship in Commonwealth & Comparative Politics 41 (2) 2003

³²⁰ Van Der Westhuizen J, South Africa's Emergence as a Middle Power in Third World Quarterly 19 (3) 1998

³²¹ Ahwireng-Obeng F & McGowan P J, Partner or Hegemon? South Africa in Africa in Broderick et al (2001) South Africa's Foreign Policy: Dilemmas of a New Democracy; Palgrave: Basingstoke

alone had lost around eight billion Rands since 1995 due to the decline of the Zimbabwean economy³²².

A set of rationale has been put forward about the reasons why South Africa has behaved in the manner it has towards the Zimbabwean government when world opinion is nudging her towards a more assertive foreign policy and taking decisive steps to bring to an end the crisis in Zimbabwe. First, though, it is important to deal with the questions around what is expected of South Africa as a middle power.

Chapter Two began to provide a rebuttal of the argument that pluralist middle powers fulfil specific roles in the international community without considering the cost to their own economies. Thus Johnston answers this question by arguing that “international human rights issues are part of politics, not above them. They have to be dealt with as more or less issues and not either or issues. Because of this, questions of human rights tend to be dealt with inside the debate on national interest rather than as matters of principle which transcend it”³²³. Coming out in full support of human rights would have adversely affected South Africa’s own standing within the African continent. That South Africa protected her national interest does not render her unconcerned with human rights issues. On the contrary, the government aims to advance human rights on the continent by lessening the dominance of realist thinking on the continent by pointing to different mechanisms for crisis resolution such as multilateral institutions. Therefore, the view that South Africa is not concerned with human rights violations in Zimbabwe is incorrect. Rather, the methods she used in her attempts to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis was different to that expected by interventionists. As a pluralist middle power, South Africa seeks to create a rules based system that gives preference to multilateral institutions and, as such, she was, from the beginning, very unlikely to act in ways that did not seek to entrench a multilateral ethos³²⁴.

³²² Schussler, M, (2003), The Cost of Zimbabwe to the South African Economy, a economic report by the Zimbabwe Research Initiative

³²³ Johnston A, Democracy and Human Rights in the Principles of South African Foreign Policy in Broderick J et al (2001) South Africa’s Foreign Policy: Dilemmas of a New Democracy; Palgrave: Basingstoke pg 12

³²⁴ International Crisis Group, High Stakes

In as much as human rights principles are a guideline of South African foreign policy, it does not follow that the pursuance of this must neglect other policy considerations. As Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Aziz Pahad put it, “South Africa’s foreign policy is premised upon its national interests”,³²⁵.

Thus, the chapter will now turn to consider some of the factors that had a bearing on the methods chosen by the South African government in its involvement in the Zimbabwean crisis. These are African solidarity politics and the policy implications therein, the MDC’s emergence mainly from a trade union movement, international pressure on South Africa and the limitations this imposes on her and, the question of what to do should Mugabe not respond positively to pressure from South Africa.

5.4. African Solidarity and Liberation Politics?

According to an African solidarity and liberation politics point of view, the ANC government is reluctant to criticize ZANU-PF because of liberation ties between the two parties and because of a belief that Western governments are targeting liberation movements in Africa and seeking to replace them with non-liberation political parties³²⁶. Therefore, Mugabe is ideal if this plot is to be defeated because of his willingness to defy Western dictates regardless of the consequences for his own country.

However, this view is problematic because of how it distorts history and the relations between the ANC and ZANU before the merger with ZAPU in 1987. During the struggle, the ANC had close relations with ZAPU as witnessed with the Wankie Campaign of 1967 against the apartheid security forces³²⁷. Ian Phimister and Brian Raftopoulos argue that “the notion that the ANC’s policy towards Mugabe turns on a profound sense of shared historical ties forged with ZANU-PF during the anti-colonial days is not convincing...The ANC’s sympathies were always with ZANU’s

³²⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs Strategic Plan 2003-2005; Department of Foreign Affairs: Pretoria

³²⁶ International Crisis Group, Zimbabwe: The Politics of National Liberation and International Division; *ICG Africa Report* no 52 17 October 2002 pg 11

main rival, the Zimbabwe African People's Union led by Joshua Nkomo. ZANU, for its part, always supported the Pan-Africanist Congress, which was bitterly opposed to the ANC"³²⁸. This distorted view about close relations between the ANC and ZANU also assumes that South Africa is in fact not doing anything to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe but rather offering uncritical support to Mugabe.

The African solidarity and liberation politics view also suggests that South Africa has abandoned its principled stand on issues of human rights in its foreign policy³²⁹ which characterised the Mandela era as witnessed by South Africa's diplomatic stand off with Sani Abacha's regime in 1995. According to this view, South Africa has joined the ranks of African elites who seek to preserve their hold on power regardless of the suffering this imposes on their people. Taylor concurs with this view and argues that "many African leaders seem to believe that they are predestined to rule, particularly if they are the heads or inheritors of victorious liberation movements. Such thinking regards the country and its people as the rightful property of the leader, who can and must never lose power. If Mugabe were to be ousted, this legend would be shattered, setting a precedent for the likes of Dos Santos of Angola, Moi of Kenya, Mbeki of South Africa"³³⁰.

True as this might be however, it does not follow that because African leaders protect each other in international forums to retain power through extra-judicial means that this is the case with President Mbeki. It cannot be deduced from using 'quiet diplomacy' that South Africa is to go the way of Zimbabwe. Firstly, there has been no indication that President Mbeki is willing to use illegal means to retain power. He has made it clear that he will be leaving office at the end of his second term. He has stood for and initiated what is widely known as the African Renaissance, which among other things means "an African continent in which people participate in systems of governance, in which they are truly able to determine their destiny and put behind us the notions of democracy and human rights as peculiarly Western concepts. Thus

³²⁷ Hani C, The Wankie Campaign, *Journal of Umkhonto Wesizwe, Souvenir Issue* 1986

³²⁸ Phimister I and Raftopoulos B, Mugabe, Mbeki and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism, *Review of African Political Economy* 101 (31) 2004 pg 390

³²⁹ Van Nieuwkerk A, South Africa's National Interest, *African Security Review* 13 (2) 2004

³³⁰ Taylor I, *Loc cit* pg 406

would we assume a stance of opposition to dictatorship, whatever form it may assume”³³¹.

A more compelling explanation of South Africa’s foreign policy must, as a matter of necessity, take into account the nature of Africa’s international relations environment. As argued in Chapter Three, this is essentially realist in its nature and seeks to shield African countries from intervention into their domestic issues from external actors. South Africa’s isolation after the 1995 Nigeria saga serves to illustrate this point³³². South Africa’s pluralist and liberal democratic values are thus viewed as alien to the African international relations environment as they necessitate involvement in the affairs of other countries.

Thus, South Africa has readjusted its strategies in line with those of the African continent in its drive to become a continental leader. This readjustment involves discarding unilateralism in favour of a multilateral approach, which seeks to act in concert with the rest of the continent. In order for South Africa’s leadership to be accepted by African elites, she must act in consultation with them in order that the continent may not ostracize her. It is because of this that South Africa opted to act in concert with SADC during the invasion of Lesotho in 1998³³³.

Kuseni Dlamini argues that “South Africa’s foreign policy strategy seems to some to be one of isolationism and/or cautious engagement in its immediate neighbourhood and commitment and active engagement elsewhere in the continent and the world. Strategic national interests, defined as developments that could affect the lives of South African citizens, underlie this strategy”. Thus, South Africa’s interest in maintaining cordial relations with the region defines the nature of South African foreign policy. A lack of good relations with the region and the continent has the potential to unravel South Africa’s leadership ambitions within the continent. As

³³¹ Taylor I, *The Limits of Engagement: British Foreign Policy and the Zimbabwe Crisis in International Affairs* 78 (3) 2002

³³² See chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the events that unfolded during this crisis

³³³ Van Nieuwkerk, *A Implications for South Africa Foreign Policy beyond the Lesotho Crisis,*

ACCORD Occasional Paper no.3/1999

shown in Chapter Three, other countries are keen to scupper South Africa's ambitions of being a leader on the continent through their revolutionary rhetoric.

As part of its strategy to create a multilateral environment in Africa, the approach adopted by South Africa has focused on the strengthening of multilateral institutions, which traditionally espoused a principle of African solidarity at the expense of human security. This results from what Hussein Solomon refers to as "real fears about South Africa and middle-power leadership. These revolve around the fact that Pretoria's foreign policy is characterized more by continuity than change; that the coercive diplomacy, which characterized South African foreign policy during the destabilization years of the 1980s, has been replaced by the assertive diplomacy of the 1990s under the new mantle of middle power leadership"³³⁴.

The rationale behind the emphasis on the multilateral process also derives from recognition of the power of institutions in maintaining order within the international environment. Cox argues "institutionalization is a means of stabilizing and perpetuating a particular order. Institutions reflect the power relations prevailing at the point of origin and tend, at least initially, to encourage collective images consistent with these power relations. Eventually, institutions take on their own life; they can become a battleground of opposing tendencies, or rival institutions may reflect different tendencies. Institutions are particular amalgams of ideas and material power which in turn influence the development of ideas and material capabilities"³³⁵.

Institutions such as the OAU had as their *raison d'être* the liberation of colonised African countries³³⁶ and the protection of the newly independent African states from interference by Western powers³³⁷. The reform of the OAU into the African Union to include the NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) forms part of the reformist agenda of South Africa.

³³⁴ *Ibid* pg 61

³³⁵ Robert Cox quoted in Taylor I (2003), *Stuck in Middle Gear: South Africa's Post-Apartheid Foreign Relations*; Praeger: Westport, Connecticut pg 18

³³⁶ Venter D, South Africa and Africa: Relations in a Time of Change Carlsnaes W (1997), *Change and South African External Relations*; International Thomson Publishing: Johannesburg

³³⁷ Kariuki J N, The Jamaica Conference in Historical Perspective, *AU Magazine* vol. 1 Issue 4 June 2005

Jakkie Cilliers argues “in exercising its presumptive leadership role, South Africa needs to be over-cautious, ever-sensitive to possible accusations of domination or hegemony. The adoption of NEPAD, premised on African ownership and control of the continent’s destiny, with African leaders accepting that they will play their part in ending poverty and bringing about sustainable development, has brought in a new paradigm that can serve to motivate and provide a frame of reference for the interrogation of issues of good governance, corruption and democracy in a manner that does not threaten African leaders of long standing”³³⁸. According to the ANC foreign policy working document “the construction of a new regional order will be a collective endeavour of all the free peoples of Southern Africa and cannot be imposed either by extra-regional forces or self appointed regional power...a democratic South Africa should therefore explicitly renounce all hegemonic ambitions in the region. It should resist all pressure to become the regional power at the expense of the rest of the sub-continent”³³⁹.

Thus, South Africa is attempting to create a particular order that shares her liberal democratic values in order for the system to become more manageable and to avoid having to take charge of the affairs of the continent. Moreover, as an emerging middle power, South Africa does not have the resources to play continental bully. Thus, her response to Zimbabwe should be understood in this context. Because South Africa has been pursuing a multilateral agenda on the continent, Zimbabwe will have to be taken care of using this system.

Further, South Africa is deploying the lessons learnt during the Nigeria crisis in her attempts to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis. South Africa is now fully aware of the implications of acting unilaterally³⁴⁰ in Africa, hence the need to reform multilateral organizations. The simple and rude lesson for South Africa was that in Africa, those who could fall in the firing line of such an erratic foreign policy would not tolerate unilateralism in South Africa’s foreign policy behaviour. According to Black and Wilson, the first lesson that was learnt from this experience is that “some (African

³³⁸ Cilliers J, An Emerging South African Foreign Policy Identity, Institute for Security Studies Occasional Paper no 39 April 1999

³³⁹ Quoted in Solomon H, South African Foreign Policy and Middle Power Leadership in Fairy God-Mother Hegemon or Partner? In Search of a South African Foreign Policy, ISS Monograph no. 13: May 1997 pg 62

leaders) positively delight in seeing South Africa fail, and in tarring it with the brush of Western complicity”³⁴¹.

Sachikonye argues that in the Zimbabwean case “...it would have been difficult for South Africa to take a forthright position on Zimbabwe, if it had wanted to. South Africa would have risked isolation within SADC, and perhaps further afield in the AU- such tags as regional big brother or superpower would then have been derisively applied to it. The dilemma for the Mbeki government then, as now, was how to juggle between the sensitivities in SADC and the AU, and the need to apply pressure on the Harare government”³⁴². Maxi Schoeman goes further to argue that however “Western countries and the donor community may have expectations of South Africa as a regional peace-keeper and may want to make it responsible for peace and security in its backyard, but that does not necessarily give South Africa authority, capacity and inclination to do so, or that its leadership would generally be welcomed or accepted”³⁴³.

The thinking within the South African foreign policy setting is that South Africa will become a leader only through the consent of the region. Bischoff argues that “South Africa seeks to be a major player but one that will not act unilaterally or in ways that demonstrate her not inconsiderable power in the region”³⁴⁴. As Williams puts it, “South Africa must balance her desire for leadership with a sensitivity to the concerns of other SADC member states”³⁴⁵. Dlamini argues that South Africa is careful not to be seen to be throwing its weight around, particularly by bullying deviant African regimes like Zimbabwe into submission³⁴⁶.

³⁴⁰ Van Nieuwkerk A op cit

³⁴¹ Black D & Wilson Z, Rights, Region and Identity: Exploring the Ambiguities of South Africa’ Human Rights Role in *Politikon* 31 (1) 2004

³⁴² Sachikonye L M South Africa’s Quiet Diplomacy: The Case of Zimbabwe, Daniel J et al (2004) *State of the Nation 2004-2005*, HSRC Publishers: Johannesburg pg 574

³⁴³ Quoted in Mbao M L M, A Review of the Republic of South Africa’s Leading Role on the African Continent, *Towards Ten Years of Freedom: Progress in the First Decade - Challenges of the Second Decade*, Published by *Government Communications and Information Service* 2004
www.10years.gov.za/index.html

³⁴⁴ Bischoff P, *loc cit*

³⁴⁵ Williams P, South African Foreign Policy: Getting Critical in *Politikon* 2000 27 (1) pg 84

³⁴⁶ Dlamini K, Is Quiet Diplomacy an Effective Conflict Resolution Strategy? In *South African Yearbook of International Affairs* (2002/03), SAIIA: Johannesburg

This consensus seeking attitude by South Africa comes about as a recognition of the fact that willing followers make for better followers because of their inclination to do what the leader tells them and because of the common values that exist between the leader and the followers³⁴⁷. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that countries in the region will be responsive to unilateral pressure from South Africa. Black and Wilson make the point that “despite South Africa’s preponderance of material resources, regional leaders are not particularly amenable to overt South African leadership attempts, particularly in sensitive matters bearing on regime security or survival”³⁴⁸.

However, this soft approach towards the region poses serious challenges for South African foreign policy. The attempt to always work in a multilateral context is frustrated by countries like Zimbabwe who work within this system only when it pleases them and to give legitimacy to their own selfish agenda. There exist no common political values between the states of Southern Africa, a factor that inhibits the oversight function of SADC³⁴⁹. The unwillingness to assert herself regionally means South Africa remains weak in influencing deviant regimes. She lacks the “specific methods to speak out against and combat human rights abuses”³⁵⁰. Furthermore, SADC is defined by the principle of sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other member states³⁵¹. As such, SADC does not actively involve itself in the affairs of member states except where this is done in response to a specific request from that member state. The intervention in Lesotho and the DRC are examples of requested intervention³⁵².

5.5. Trade Union vs. Political Parties

To a lesser extent, the restraint shown by South Africa towards Mugabe might also be a consequence of an ambivalence held by liberation movements cum political parties

³⁴⁷ Cooper A et al (1994), Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order; UCB Press: Vancouver

³⁴⁸ Black D & Wilson Z, *op cit*

³⁴⁹ Cilliers J, *Op Cit*

³⁵⁰ Ryall D, Caught Between Two Worlds: Understanding South Africa’s Foreign Policy Options in Third World Quarterly 18 (2) 1997

³⁵¹ Cilliers J, The SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, ISS Monograph 43 1999

³⁵² See Ngoma N (2005), Prospects for a Security Community in Southern Africa: An Analysis of Regional Security in the Southern African Development Community; Institute for Security Studies: Pretoria

towards trade unions turned political parties in Southern Africa. According to the International Crisis Group “the largest political challenge to most of them (liberation movements) potentially comes from labour-based political movements like the MDC”³⁵³. Further “the sentiment is particularly acute with respect to the MDC, which the ANC views as a protest movement with an unpredictable agenda that could be malleable to Western interests and inimical to the ANC’s larger agenda of trying to build a Southern bloc in international forums”³⁵⁴. This point is echoed by Masimba Manyanya and Patrick Bond when they argue that the ANC was frightened by the “sudden rise of an opposition movement based in the trade unions, quickly backed by most of civil society, the liberal petit-bourgeoisie and the independent media-potentially leading to the election of a new, post-nationalist government”³⁵⁵. Thus, the ANC would rather continue to have ZANU-PF in power, albeit without Mugabe because of the predictability of his party position in relation to the Western community. Further influencing perceptions about the MDC are its associations with the British government, the white CFU and its political relations with the Democratic Alliance (DA) and RENAMO with whom the MDC held meetings in 1999 and 2000 respectively³⁵⁶. For these reasons, “the MDC represents what some view as a growing trend in Southern African politics, in which a labour-based political movement displaces a liberation movement, as was the case when Kenneth Kaunda was toppled by the MMD, a labour based party in Zambia”³⁵⁷.

The close and financial relationship between the MDC and Britain seems to be contrary to the vision of President Mbeki of an Africa charting her own course in development and security matters as it involves a Western power that, because of its economic status, will have undue influence over how the country is administered. This is mirrored by Botswana signing a US sponsored agreement relating to Botswana’s participation in the International Criminal Court (ICC)³⁵⁸. According to this agreement, Botswana will not extradite US citizens should this be requested by

³⁵³ International Crisis Group, Zimbabwe: The Politics of National Liberation and International Division in *ICG Africa Report no. 52*, 17 October 2002

³⁵⁴ Information conveyed to the ICG by a South African official in *Ibid*

³⁵⁵ Bond P and Manyanya M (2003), *Zimbabwe’s Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice*; The University of Natal Press: Pietermaritzburg

³⁵⁶ Field S, *Loc Cit* pg 4

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*

³⁵⁸ *NewAfrican* May 2003

the ICC. Such agreement was entered into under the threat of military sanctions being imposed on Botswana for failing to agree to this US demand.

5.6. International Pressure on South Africa

As argued in Chapter Four, the pressure by the international community on the region to condemn Mugabe pushed Southern African countries into a diplomatic impasse as they did not want to be branded as puppets of the West by Mugabe. This is also true for South Africa. One need only read the propaganda of the official Zimbabwean media to realize the extent to which the Zimbabwean government was willing to use politically suspect rhetoric for its gains³⁵⁹. According to President Mugabe “there is a Western, and especially Anglo-American plot to destroy ZANU-PF and evict it from power because it was a liberation movement. If this plot succeeded in Zimbabwe, it would then be applied successfully against all other ruling liberation movements in Southern Africa”³⁶⁰. This rhetoric is designed to shield President Mugabe from criticism by other African countries. Shannon Field argues that, “there is a view that Mugabe was prepared to isolate South Africa within SADC if it became too critical, thereby gaining leverage within the region. South Africa had already experienced the onslaught of propaganda levied against it when it spoke against Zimbabwe”³⁶¹.

As the ICG cautions, “the international community should take a more nuanced approach in dealing with President Mbeki... Crude pressure on South Africa may in fact be counter-productive. The more President Mbeki is perceived as carrying out an external agenda, the more isolated he will become in the regional context, making South African leadership all the more difficult”³⁶².

The ICG also presents evidence of the growing resentment within the ANC government of the interference in its regional policy from the West. One ANC official states, “we will not fall into the agenda of the West. We will be very wary of being seen to be working with the U.S. If we are perceived to be allying with the U.S., we

³⁵⁹ Phimister I and Raftopoulos B, Mugabe, Mbeki and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism, Review of African Political Economy 101 (31) 2004

³⁶⁰ Quoted in Johnson R W, The Final Struggle is to Stay in Power, Focus 1st Quarter 2002

³⁶¹ Quoted in Sachikonye L M, *Op Cit* pg 574

³⁶² International Crisis Group, Zimbabwe at the Crossroads: Transition or Conflict? ICG Africa Report no. 41, 22 March 2002

will then be perceived by the region and the continent to be advancing the U.S. agenda. We will never have the West dictate to us about who will lead Zimbabwe”³⁶³.

Therefore, by putting pressure on South Africa to act decisively on Zimbabwe, the West got it all wrong. It overlooked the fact that South Africa is still trying to change the suspicion created by the Total Strategy and its unilateralism in the Nigeria incident. The vilification that was unleashed upon South Africa for refusing to condemn Mugabe put South Africa in a position that rendered her incapable of acting in any decisive manner because doing so would have been viewed as caving into the demands of the West. As Mayakayaka- Manzini of the ANC’s International Relations Department articulated the ANC view on this matter, “there is no way in which South Africa can stand alone and out-rightly condemn Zimbabwe, knowing that their condemnation will not have an impact but will actually worsen the situation. We did that with Nigeria when Madiba took a position without consulting the Commonwealth, without consulting SADC, and without consulting the OAU; and what happened? Everybody stood aside and we were isolated because it was a terrible mistake we made...we acted as this bully, and people hate being bullied”³⁶⁴.

5.7. What if Mugabe does not respond?

One of the questions that have not featured in the media discussion about the call on South Africa to act decisively in Zimbabwe has been, what South Africa is to do should Mugabe not respond positively to South African pressure? What happens when Mugabe refuses to bow to pressure and continues using repressive means to deal with his opponents in Zimbabwe? What should South Africa do in that instance?

It appears that this was amongst the major considerations when South Africa decided on how it would proceed on Zimbabwe. This is backed by the statement made to the ICG by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad when he said about the British response, “we don’t believe that their megaphone diplomacy and screaming from the rooftops has helped...if it is not diplomacy we pursue in dealing with Zimbabwe, then

³⁶³ International Crisis Group, Zimbabwe: The Politics of National Liberation and International Division, *ICG Africa Report* no. 52, 17 October 2002 pg 14

³⁶⁴ *Mail and Guardian* 02 March 2001

it is war. We will not go to war with Zimbabwe. We do not need to be lectured about diplomacy, respect for the rule of law and human rights”³⁶⁵.

South Africa could have offered severe public criticism of Mugabe had it wanted to, but the South African government does not believe that this action could have achieved much in terms of persuading Mugabe to change his policies. Indeed, Pahad is correct when he points out that the ‘screaming from rooftops’ of the West has not achieved anything. The only quantifiable result of British foreign policy towards Zimbabwe has been to make Mugabe more popular within the continent because of his defiance of the West. There is nothing to suggest that South Africa would have achieved anything different to that achieved by the West. The only way for South Africa to achieve anything would have been to take drastic action the consequences of which would have had an impact on South Africa’s standing within the African continent as argued above.

Zimbabwean defiance of South African calls for reform could have been followed by sanctions both targeted and general in scope as per Greg Mills and Tim Hughes³⁶⁶. The former type of sanctions could have ensured that Zimbabwean officials stop crossing the border to do their shopping. Under general sanctions, South Africa could have stopped the supply of electricity to Zimbabwe. According to Schussler, Zimbabwe relies on South Africa to supply fifteen percent of its electricity³⁶⁷. However, this would have been detrimental to the Zimbabwean people themselves as hospitals would stand to lose some of their power from this action. Forcing South African companies out of that country as part of the sanctions package would have worsened the plight of the poor Zimbabweans through loss of the already scarce employment. Further, it is questionable whether this course of action would have brought about the desired conditions in Zimbabwe. According to Nandile Ngubentombi, “if Pretoria cut off Zimbabwe’s energy supplies that country would be able to rely on Mozambique, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo for its

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶⁶ Mills G & Hughes T, Time to Jettison Quiet Diplomacy in *Focus Zimbabwe* 15 April 2004

³⁶⁷ Schussler M, The Cost of Zimbabwe to the South African Economy, *Zimbabwe Research Initiative* 2003

power”³⁶⁸. As the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan argued in his Millennium Report, “when robust and comprehensive economic sanctions are directed against authoritarian regimes, a different problem is encountered. Then it is usually the people who suffer and not the political elites whose behaviour triggered the sanctions in the first place”³⁶⁹.

Thus, sanctions would have had an undesirable impact on the countries bordering Zimbabwe through an inflow of refugees the most likely destination of whom would have been South Africa. The number of estimated Zimbabweans living in South Africa is over 400 000³⁷⁰. Already South Africa is expending significant resources on deporting work seekers from Zimbabwe who cross the border illegally. There is already resentment towards black Africans both employed and unemployed, emanating mainly from unemployed black South Africans who feel that black Africans take away their jobs.

The Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) claims that “levels of intolerance are at an all time high in South Africa, leading to the charge that South Africa is the most xenophobic population in the world. Zimbabweans (and Mozambicans) have been the usual targets of xenophobic sentiment and action on the ground. All Zimbabweans have come to be stereotyped as a social, economic and criminal threat to South Africans”³⁷¹. An increase in the number of black Zimbabweans in the country will definitely lead to the already mounting xenophobia and violence against those perceived to be ‘*Amakwerekwere*’³⁷², something which South Africa does not need for its own image.

Beyond the domestic context in South Africa, this approach holds the danger of straining relations between the two governments and thereby closing any diplomatic doors that could have been used to ensure that Mugabe moved towards reforming the

³⁶⁸ Ngubentombi N, South Africa’s Foreign Policy Towards Swaziland and Zimbabwe; SA Yearbook of International Affairs, 2003/04

³⁶⁹ Kofi Annan (2000), We the People: The Role of the UN in the 21st Century; UN Secretary-General’s Millennium Report, April 2000

³⁷⁰ Ranchod K, Citizenship and Identity, Brain Drain and Forced Migration: The Case of Zimbabwe, Policy: Issues and Actors Vol. 18 no. 4: Centre for Policy Studies 2005

³⁷¹ Tevera D and Zinyama L, Zimbabweans Who Move: Perspectives on International Migration in Zimbabwe; Migration Policy Series no. 25 2002; Southern African Migration Project pg 25

³⁷² Slang with derogatory connotations used for describing black Africans in South Africa

political system in his country. Writing on behalf of Nigeria and South Africa, President Obasanjo requested that the Commonwealth reinstate Zimbabwe to the Councils of the Commonwealth in 2003 on the grounds that Zimbabwe's suspension limited possibilities in terms of what the Commonwealth could achieve in that country. Therefore, a resumption of cordial relations between Zimbabwe and the Commonwealth would help in "the final resolution of the crisis"³⁷³.

A less confrontational foreign policy as advocated by South Africa and Nigeria when dealing with Mugabe allowed South Africa to remain a player in Zimbabwe. The alternatives adopted by the West have led to a breakdown in relations between those who chose the confrontational route, whilst South Africa and the rest of Africa still have a chance of bringing about change in Zimbabwe without that country going through much instability.

What can be deduced from the above is that, unlike the West, South Africa is now the best-positioned country to influence the political direction in Zimbabwe. 'Quiet diplomacy' has ensured that the South African government retains access to the Zimbabwean government in contrast to Britain that chose to publicly censure the ZANU-PF government. A positive development for South Africa is that since his acquittal on a treason charge on the 20 October 2004, Morgan Tsvangirai met the President of South Africa and once again expressed confidence in the diplomacy of President Mbeki. Tsvangirai was satisfied with the commitment of President Mbeki to the resolution of the crisis in Zimbabwe and found it encouraging that the President wanted to ensure that there was dialogue between the Zimbabwean government and the opposition³⁷⁴. This is a positive development because Tsvangirai has moved away from his position of thinking the West would bring change to Zimbabwe whilst lambasting South Africa for the approach it took to resolving the conflict³⁷⁵.

³⁷³ Letter from Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to Australian Prime Minister Ron Howard appealing for Zimbabwe to be reinstated into the councils of the Commonwealth 13 February 2003

³⁷⁴ Mail & Guardian 28 October 2004

³⁷⁵ In one of its most scathing attacks on South Africa, the MDC stated that President Mbeki's statements on dialogue were patently false, mischievous and manifestly partisan and designed to buy time for Mugabe
http://www.news24.com/news24/archive/0,6119,2-1659_1385106,00.html

In as much as the South African government has remained in constant contact with the Zimbabwean government on the question of political reform, the question must be asked if the policy of treating Zimbabwe with such undeserved respect has produced any positive results. It has been four/five years since the land invasions started in that country and since South Africa started engaging with Zimbabwe on the question of political reform. Has ‘quiet diplomacy’ been a dismal failure or has it been a success?

The unfortunate yet inevitable response is that it has not been a success but to say it has failed would be exaggerating. In January 2005 the Zimbabwean government introduced “sweeping electoral laws designed to level the rigged playing field”³⁷⁶ of elections in Zimbabwe in preparation for the March 2005 Parliamentary Elections held in the country. These reforms were designed to comply with the electoral norms of the SADC adopted in 2004 which urge among other things, the creation of an independent electoral commission, reduction of voting days from two to one and enable counting to be done at the electoral stations³⁷⁷. The opposition MDC welcomed these reforms saying, “electoral reform is a central part of political and democratic transformation”³⁷⁸. Emerging out of this election was a strengthened ZANU-PF with a two-thirds majority and a weakened MDC with 41 seats, 16 seats less than in the 2000 elections³⁷⁹.

Beyond this, no significant changes have taken place in Zimbabwe. The *Mail & Guardian* noted in one of its editorials “The dictatorship of Robert Mugabe gets even more crude, brutal and idiotic; the Zimbabwean economy spirals with increasing speed towards total collapse...”³⁸⁰. In 2002, the government passed the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), which was amended in November 2004. Among the many provisions of the act is that foreign media organisations pay \$13 500 per journalist working in Zimbabwe, the establishment of a Media Commission, whose duty is to accredit journalists on a yearly basis, that foreign correspondents may be accredited only to cover special events and that it is an offence to spread rumours or falsehoods that cause alarm and despondency under the

³⁷⁶ *Mail & Guardian* 23-29 July 2004

³⁷⁷ *Ibid*

³⁷⁸ *Ibid*

³⁷⁹ Maroleng C, Zimbabwe: Increased Securitisation of the State? *Situation Report*; Institute for Security Studies 7 September 2005

guise of authentic reports³⁸¹. In the same year, the government passed the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), which made it illegal “to undermine the authority of the president or engender hostility towards him, to make abusive, obscene or false statements against the president, to disturb the peace, security and order of the public, which includes public gatherings to conduct riots, disorder or intolerance”³⁸². In 2004, the government adopted the Non-Governmental Organisations Act, a law that prevents NGOs from receiving foreign funding even where this is for human rights activities³⁸³.

The farm invasions by the war veterans have only led to the country experiencing food shortages while the government is not willing to admit this. More recently the *Mail & Guardian* again noted, “It is becoming harder and harder to pretend that all is well, and that reports of staple maize shortages are a devilish contrivance of neo-colonialist Britain”³⁸⁴.

ZANU-PF continued with its illogical policies as witnessed with the now infamous Operation Restore Order otherwise known as Operation *Murambatsvina* launched in May 2005. This operation saw the government embarking on what was dubbed as an operation to rid Harare of the slums springing up around the city. It entailed the demolition of illegal settlements and the resettlement of people to the rural areas³⁸⁵. According to the government, “the evictions were aimed at eradicating criminality and improving living conditions in the country”³⁸⁶ thus creating an environment conducive for investment. The government also claimed that it had put aside \$300 million for reconstruction to house the people whose homes had been demolished.

Consequently, thousands of Zimbabweans were displaced from their homes and dumped in rural areas they had never lived in before. The MDC claimed that the operation was never about cleaning up but more about political goals. According to

³⁸⁰ *Mail & Guardian* 26 April 2001

³⁸¹ Zimbabwe Controversial Laws, BBCNEWS
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1748979.stm>

³⁸² *Ibid*

³⁸³ *Ibid*

³⁸⁴ *Mail & Guardian* 22 October 2004

³⁸⁵ Manzana S & Kadima P, Zimbabwe’s Operation Mrambatsvina, *Inside AISA Number 4* 2005

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*

this, the operation was designed to destroy the MDC's urban support base³⁸⁷. The UN Secretary General dispatched a special envoy to investigate the consequences of this operation. In her report, UN-Habitat Executive Director, Anna Tibaijuka wrote, "The humanitarian consequences of Operation Restore Order are enormous. It will take several years before the people and society as a whole can recover. There is an immediate need for the government of Zimbabwe to recognize the virtual state of emergency that has resulted, and to allow unhindered access by the international and humanitarian community to assist those that have been affected"³⁸⁸.

Thus, 'quiet diplomacy' has failed to bring about change in Zimbabwe. Instead, it has opened South African foreign policy to criticism for no apparent gain. The only likely result of this policy is that South Africa will have gained acceptance among the African political elite for her reluctance to criticize another African country.

5.8. Conclusion

The period 2000-2004 was a testing time for South African foreign policy. The 'quiet diplomacy' adopted by the government has failed to bring about any meaningful change in Zimbabwe. Because of all the factors dealt with above, the government has not been able to hold a decisive position on its northern neighbour. The shortcomings of 'quiet diplomacy' seem to derive from a number of factors the most important of which is South Africa's ability to convert its preponderant economic position into meaningful diplomatic achievement.

South Africa's emerging middle power status places limits on what the country can achieve in its immediate neighbourhood. Her preference for evolving dysfunctional African multilateral organisations limits her ability to pursue the promotion of a human rights and democracy culture within Africa because of the reluctance to intervene in the domestic affairs of member states on the part of these organisations. Consequently, it would appear that there are real limits to South Africa's role as a

³⁸⁷ Maroleng, *Op Cit*

³⁸⁸ Tibaijuka A K, a Report of the Fact Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to Assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina, UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe 18 July 2005

pluralist middle power in Africa. At the same time, she is not able to fulfill the role of regional power because of sensitivities about her past of destruction in the subcontinent. As a result, she cannot unilaterally pursue the promotion of human rights on the subcontinent, as this will leave her alienated from the rest of the continent.

The apparent disregard of the voices of civil society in foreign policy making, especially in the case of 'quiet diplomacy', shows a neo-realist trend towards the centralization of foreign policy within government, with the executive taking a lead through the Policy Co-ordination and Advisor Services located in the Presidency. This is a trend the government will have to reverse if it is to continue acting as a pluralist middle power.

CHAPTER SIX

CHAPTER FINDINGS

Chapter Two sought to analyze South Africa's foreign policy positions from a theoretical perspective. The defining feature about South Africa is that she is an emerging middle power - has the characteristics of being both a pluralist and realist middle power. This means that within her immediate region, she is economically and militarily superior. This creates an expectation that she will take charge of the region and act as regional police. However, this country has rejected this conception of her role in the region. Instead, South Africa has declared that it rejects any notion of becoming a regional hegemon. She will seek to become a partner and will not dictate rules to the region. Furthermore, the strengthening of multilateral institutions is one of the cornerstones of South African foreign policy.

Through multilateral institutions, South Africa seeks to pursue a more egalitarian system that respects human rights and promotes democracy. In the immediate period after the dawn of democracy, South Africa was more unilateralist in its approach to international affairs as witnessed in 1995 with the stand off between Nigeria and South Africa. This unilateralism was short-lived as the government soon found that this unilateralism did not garner support from African elites. Out of this recognition, South Africa's multilateralist inclinations were born.

These two conceptions of South Africa have created inconsistencies in the country's foreign policy. Firstly, South Africa has shown that it will not hesitate to use its considerable military muscle when its interests are directly under threat. The Lesotho invasion was used to illuminate this point. Secondly, human rights have now become a priority among others and as such, do not precede other considerations such as what is in the national interest of South Africa. This was to be expected, as no country would forsake its own interests on the basis of furthering human rights outside its own borders. The government's first priority is to its own people. Any course of action that does not further the interests of the domestic constituency is unlikely to be seen as legitimate by the people on whose behalf it is being propagated. These considerations

then create tension in South Africa's foreign policy, as this does not necessarily tally with the principles of South African foreign policy.

Chapter Three continues the line of reasoning adopted in Chapter Two and argues that South Africa's emerging middle power status has created an expectation for her to take charge of regional affairs. This expectation held by the West and unpopular with African states has forced South Africa into ambiguity. African states such as Zimbabwe have shown their willingness to use a convergence of foreign policy positions between South Africa and the West to shore up their own credibility in the African continent. Further, South Africa's liberal democratic culture poses a threat to some regimes on the continent. Because of this, South Africa is careful not to be seen to be acting in ways that can be interpreted as neo-colonialism. Such actions are designed to ensure that she gains the trust of African countries in order to increase her followership on the continent, the lack of which undermines her ability to have an impact on the direction of the continent. This desire to create a willing follower base sometimes necessitates that South Africa acts in ways that are incongruent with her projection of liberal democratic values.

Chapter Three also found that there is a growing centralization of foreign policy making in the office of the President through the PCAS. The effect of this has been to remove policy making from the grassroots and to concentrate it in the hands of unelected representatives. Civil society has been disempowered in policy making. This muddles South Africa's democratic credentials by creating an elitist process that excludes the people on whose behalf government policy is made.

Chapter Four dealt with the internationalization of the Zimbabwean crisis; how the crisis became of international concern and the response of the international community. The finding was that the international community undermined its noble concern for Zimbabweans by adopting strategies that were antagonistic to the Zimbabwean government. In the process, they undermined their ability to influence the Zimbabwean government. The ZANU-PF regime became even more determined to cling to power in light of what the government has called a neo-colonial agenda of the West. This 'neo-colonial agenda' also alienated the most critical players, namely regional countries. It would be no exaggeration to argue that SADC countries felt a

historical duty to defy the West and to support another liberation regime under threat from a colonial power in the form of Britain. However, this support was not predicated on a twisted sense of liberation parties being entitled to rule forever. Rather, this was based on the position that African countries must protect each other from colonial interference based on their shared history of fighting colonialism. The chapter also argued that the West and Southern Africa would have better handled the Zimbabwean crisis cooperatively. The attempt to impose solutions on SADC was never going to succeed because of a traditional hatred of interference in the affairs of other countries.

Chapter Five provides an explanation and an assessment of South Africa's foreign policy between 2000 and 2004. Part of the explanation for this policy is based on the relationship between ZANU-PF and the ANC. The two parties, contrary to some perceptions, were never close during the struggle against apartheid and colonialism. ZANU maintained close relations with the Pan African Congress (PAC) whilst the ANC maintained close relations ZAPU in Zimbabwe. Relations between the two parties only became close after 1987 with signing of the Unity Accord between ZANU and ZAPU to form ZANU-PF. These relations never became close. Instead, they became got worse from 1996 when President Mandela, as Chair of SADC, clashed with President Mugabe over the direction of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. In 1998, Zimbabwe sidelined South Africa when it called a meeting of SADC Heads of States that decided on intervening in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Because of the tense relations between the two governments, the South African government chose not to adopt an antagonistic attitude towards Mugabe. The latter has shown his willingness to embarrass South Africa on a number of occasions. To come out criticizing him would have risked being brandished as a lackey of the West.

The chapter also found that South Africa's reluctance to exert influence on Zimbabwe is a result of safeguarding the country's national interest. 'Quiet diplomacy' is a continuation of South Africa's strategy of not antagonizing African countries in an attempt to gain support of African elites. Criticizing Mugabe would have risked endangering this strategy. The international pressure applied on South Africa also

made it difficult for South Africa to pursue the resolution of the crisis vigorously. The options dictated by the West became unworkable because of the risks to South Africa's own standing within the African continent. Furthermore, none of the options suggest what should happen in the case of South Africa failing to persuade Mugabe to reform the political system in Zimbabwe. Enforcement mechanisms such as restricting power supply to Zimbabwe would have been futile because they could have been easily subverted by procuring electricity from the DRC and Zambia. Moreover, sanctions have been shown to affect the ordinary people more than they do the intended recipients. Had such occurred, countries in the region would have found themselves facing an even bigger influx of Zimbabwean migrants seeking refugee status to escape the situation in their own. The burden this would have placed on the region would have been enormous.

The chapter found that 'quiet diplomacy' has succeeded in managing the crisis in Zimbabwe through the material support that has been offered to the Zimbabwean government in the form of extension of credit facilities for electricity and food. However, it has failed to bring about an improvement in the situation on the ground. Instead, the crisis seems to be getting worse and cruder. An important and overlooked factor is that South Africa is now the best placed country to steer Zimbabwe towards reform. All the countries that opted to criticize Zimbabwe have lost credibility with the Zimbabwean government and are unlikely to influence the Zimbabwean government. South Africa on the other hand, remains one of the few 'friends' that Zimbabwe now has. This, if used fruitfully, will help bring about change in the country.

At a theoretical level, the chapter found that South Africa's pluralist middle power credentials are undermined by Africa's multilateral context. The preference for these forums means that South Africa's ability to promote a culture of human rights on the continent is limited. Her past as a destructive force in Southern Africa also means that she cannot exert herself on the region because of the sensitivities that still exist around her leadership. Consequently, South Africa finds herself in a position where she cannot act decisively without alienating herself in the process. Until multilateral organisations assume a more interventionist stance, South Africa will not be able to

promote human rights vigorously on the continent and unless the region accepts her leadership position, she will not be able to promote human rights unilaterally.

Conclusion

The first five years of South Africa's democracy saw the country rise to international prominence because of its outspoken and firm stand on issues of human rights. There were questions about South Africa's commitment to human rights because of her relations with the Cuban and Iranian regimes. However, most commentators accept that the country has been a champion of human rights around the world.

The last four years have been somewhat different. Most commentators now seem to be of the view that the country has lost its way and discarded its ideals of promoting democracy and human rights around the globe. In support of this, South Africa's reluctance to sanction the Zimbabwean government for its human rights abuses has been cited. The failure to act according to specific ways such as denouncing the ZANU-PF regime have been held up as an example of how South Africa no longer views human rights as a priority.

However, this work cannot but disagree with this assessment. What has become apparent from the research into this topic is that the issues involved in this debate are more complex than some commentators would like to concede. It is the view of the author that, South Africa has adopted a policy based on what would be best for South Africa and the region as a whole. This is an example of what was referred to in Chapter Three as the promotion of democracy and human rights merely being a part of politics, not above politics. To elevate human rights to this status - as desirable as that might be - fails to take into account the historical record and the nature of politics in Africa. A more interventionist approach by South Africa would have left the country in a similar position to the one it found itself in 1995 after criticizing the Nigerian government headed by General Sani Abacha. The political implications of the isolation would have been disastrous for South Africa's ability to influence the course of events in other areas on the African continent.

Furthermore, as this study shows, South Africa's emerging middle power status places constraints on what she can achieve in her immediate region. The international

pressure to take charge of the continent undermines South Africa's ability to be more proactive in Africa on issues of human rights and democracy. This is because of the sensitivities held about her leadership of the continent. On the one hand, it is difficult for South Africa to act as a realist middle power in the sense of unilaterally advocating for human rights within Africa. This will be taken as interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, leaving South Africa isolated by the rest of the continent. On the other, working within multilateral organisation presents its own challenges because of the weaknesses of the organisations. These organisations are in the process of evolution and South Africa's role in this evolution is designed to steer them towards adopting bolder positions on issues of human rights. However, until these organisations are transformed, South Africa will remain weak as a pluralist middle power in the African context.

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