The copyright of this thesis rests with the University of Cape Town. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.
Analyzing Thabo Mbeki’s Policy of ‘Quiet Diplomacy’ in the Zimbabwean Crisis

Langelihle Phakama Malimela MLMLAN002

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Social Science

Faculty of the Humanities
University of Cape Town
2010

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Date: 02-02-2010
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

GRADUATE SCHOOL IN HUMANITIES

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER IN THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

I, (name of candidate)

Langelihle Phakama Malimela

of (address of candidate)

No. 6 Herald Drive, Umhlanga Rocks,

KwaZulu-Natal

do hereby declare that I empower the University of Cape Town to produce for the
purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents of my dissertation
entitled

"Analyzing Thabo Mbeki's policy of
'Quiet Diplomacy' in the Zimbabwean
Crisis"

in any manner whatsoever.

CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE

 DATE

02-02-2010
I would like to thank the David and Elaine Potter Foundation for their generous scholarship and the support that they have given me during the course of my studies over the last two years. I would like to thank the postgraduate funding office at the University of Cape Town, in particular Stacey Moses and Olivia Barron for all their help.

Thanks must also go to the Centre for Conflict Resolution and in particular Dr. Adekeye Adebajo, from whom I have learnt so much and will continue to learn in years to come.

I would like to thank the Department of Political Studies at UCT, especially Wahieda Gajjar, Ros Maree and Joanne Polzin for their administrative support. Thank you to Zweli Jolobe, Dr. Thiven Reddy, Associate Professor Andrew Nash for their time and the many invaluable conversations that helped shape this work.

I am very grateful to my supervisor Dr. John Akokpari who gave me a lot of space to develop my own ideas but always kept me focussed and on track.

Thank you to all my friends on and off campus for their support and encouragement. Thanks to Lethu, Mxolisi and Khanyi for always being there; I appreciate it very much.

Langa Malimela
This work is dedicated to my Mother and Father, and to the memory of my friend Tonderai Ernest Makoni.
# Table of Contents

**Chapter 1: Introduction**
1
Within or Apart, 3
Foreign Policy Begins at Home, 4
Anti-imperialism & Radicalism, 6
A Chapter Outline, 8

**Chapter 2: Theoretical Considerations & Literature Survey**
12
Idealism in International Relations, 13
Realism in International Relations, 16
Dominant Theoretical Trends in the Literature on South Africa and Africa, 18
An Alternative Theoretical Perspective on South Africa and Africa: looking to the Radical Tradition, 21
The Marxist/ Leninist Foundation, 22
Structuralism, 25
Modern World Systems Theory, 25
Neo-colonialism and the Radicalised State, 29
Conceptualising Diplomacy, 32

**Chapter 3: A Failed Revolution?: Neo-colonialism and the New South Africa**
35
Separating Capitalism and Apartheid, 36
Getting Into Gear, 38
The Comprador Class: Black Economic Empowerment & Its Discontents, 41
Two Foreign Policies for Two Economies: The Bifurcated State of South Africa, 46
Corporate Expansion Into Africa: A Sub-Imperial Agenda?, 49
Chapter 4: Neo-colonialism to Radicalism: Zimbabwe since Independence 54

The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Lancaster House Agreement, 54
Post-colonial Zimbabwe: The Breakdown of Lancaster House, 59
The Historical Context of the Land Redistribution Program, 60
The Politics of Redistribution, 62
The Cost of Hegemonic Aspirations: Operation Sovereign Legitimacy, 64
Radicalisation, Opposition and State Violence in Zimbabwe, 67

Chapter 5: Quiet Diplomacy in South Africa’s Africa Foreign Policy 73

Post-Apartheid South Africa, Africa and the African Renaissance, 74
SADC and the Zimbabwean Crisis, 78
How Did Mbeki Define the Problem?, 80
MDC and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism, 84
Regional Hegemony: Africanism or Economic Prowess, 87

Conclusion 90
...somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
   A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
   That twenty centuries of stony sleep
were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle;
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
   Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"
Abstract

This thesis discusses the approach taken by the South African government in response to the political and economic crisis that has gripped neighbouring Zimbabwe since the year 2000. Its aim is to explain why South Africa, under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki, adopted the controversial policy widely referred to as ‘Quiet Diplomacy’. It uses a Structuralist approach to international relations, and in particular Immanuel Wallerstein’s World Systems Theory to characterise South Africa as a prototypical semi-peripheral state, with a dual-contradictory role in international relations. It argues that post-apartheid South Africa’s failure to make genuine progress in terms primarily of economic transformation at home, has significantly constrained her ability to adopt more conventional diplomatic methods in dealing with the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe.
Chapter I: Introduction

This thesis discusses the approach taken by the South African government in response to the political and economic crisis that has gripped neighbouring Zimbabwe since the year 2000. Its aim is to explain why South Africa, under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki, adopted the controversial policy widely referred to as ‘Quiet Diplomacy’. It does not necessarily look to assess the policy adopted in relation to Zimbabwe, and deem it either a success or a failure, but rather looks to reveal the various constraints within which Mbeki’s government has operated in terms of its foreign policy towards Zimbabwe. It argues that post-apartheid South Africa’s failure to make genuine progress in terms primarily of economic transformation at home, has significantly constrained her ability to adopt more conventional diplomatic methods in dealing with the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe.

Few would disagree with the assertion that South Africa’s foreign policy towards Zimbabwe under Mbeki was highly controversial. The former South African president repeatedly ignored vehement criticism both from within South Africa as well as from abroad with regards to his handling of the autocratic regime of President Mugabe. In fact, his policy of ‘Quiet Diplomacy’ is matched only by his stance on HIV/AIDS in terms of the criticism that it generated towards his administration during nine years in power.

In contrast to this however, South Africa has achieved unprecedented stature within the international community in the years since the end of apartheid, and this has been due mainly to Mbeki’s efforts. Mbeki spent so much of his time and resources as president building relationships and institutions on the continent and further abroad, that one of the recurring criticisms against him back at home, was that he was not focused enough on pressing domestic challenges. Some commentators have even argued that this feature of his presidency led to his isolation within the ruling African National Congress (ANC), ultimately bringing
about his demise in September 2008, when he had to vacate office eight months before the end of his second term.

Nevertheless, under Mbeki’s stewardship, South Africa has emerged as one of the leading voices for the world’s developing nations. South Africa has been repeatedly invited to join the world’s richest nations at their annual Group of Eight (G8) summits and has more or less cemented her place alongside Brazil, India and China as one of the most powerful economic players outside of the G8.

On the African continent, Mbeki has been very hard at work, building institutions and establishing systems aimed at trying to permanently end armed conflict as well as bring an end to widespread poverty. In addition to his various mediation efforts in Africa, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Zimbabwe, he is acknowledged as having played a key role in the establishment of the African Union in 2002. Mbeki was also the principal architect in the creation of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) in 2001.

NEPAD is essentially an attempt to build partnerships between African leaders and international donor governments, on the basis of common commitments to upholding global standards of democracy and good governance; it embodies and epitomises South Africa’s Africa strategy.¹ It has largely been Mbeki’s project, although presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria were key strategic partners in establishing it as an official programme of the AU.

No real understanding of the approach that South Africa employed in relation to the Zimbabwe crisis under Mbeki is possible without an appreciation of South Africa’s broader

Africa foreign policy, and particularly its role in the establishment of and participation in these institutions. Part of this thesis will therefore be dedicated to placing the interaction with Zimbabwe within the context of that broader foreign policy framework. Zimbabwe, perhaps more than any other matter represents the impotence of these institutions and the failure of Mbeki to have them truly endorsed by important African leaders.

Within or Apart?

Several African scholars have agreed that an important question informing many African states’ interaction with post-apartheid South Africa is that of whether the Republic considers itself a part of Africa or as a part of the west. In other words, does South Africa look to merely play the role of a gatekeeper on the continent, protecting the interests of Western capitalist regimes, or does it prioritize the concerns of its fellow Africans?

This view derives from a mercantilist interpretation of South Africa’s historical relations with the rest of the continent, especially Southern Africa. A mercantilist understanding of state behaviour sees states as primarily concerned with maintaining favourable trade balances with their neighbours; developing agriculture and industry; and accumulating gold reserves: an accurate reflection of South Africa’s historical role in Southern Africa.

Historically, South Africa has dominated the regional economy, accounting for close to 80% of its GDP. Many southern Africans still fear that contemporary institutions such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Southern African Customs

---

4 Ibid.
Union (SACU) could be used as instruments to fulfil the historical aims of South Africa’s white-owned conglomerates to incorporate neighbouring vassals into a South Africa-dominated ‘constellation of states’.\textsuperscript{5} South Africa has indeed always been regarded by its African neighbours as a belligerent western power, geographically based in Africa, but ideologically aligned to the dominant capitalist states of Europe and North America.

The perspective which sees those historical economic relations continuing into the post-apartheid era stems from the view that South Africa has, in the time since the end of apartheid, failed in its efforts to achieve significant transformation, particularly in the economic sector at home. The relocation of the headquarters of the country’s biggest corporate players to London and other financial capitals in the short period since the apartheid regime fell, has of course given much credence to the understanding that these entities align themselves with the west and are determined to continue with the extraction and plunder which Africans have suffered at the hands of western corporate institutions for centuries.

\textit{Foreign Policy Begins at Home}

Taking into account the assertion of former British Foreign Secretary Francis Pym, that foreign policy is merely the extension of domestic policy, it is necessary to place South Africa’s foreign policy towards Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa within the context of its domestic policy framework in the post-apartheid era. While the establishment of sound institutions of democracy has not been successfully transported to Zimbabwe, in order to understand how a state behaves externally, we must necessarily look inside of it to

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
understand what the conditions and interests are that inform policy. Part of this thesis will therefore look to analyse the main policy initiatives undertaken at home by successive post-apartheid governments, with particular emphasis on the Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme or GEAR which the Mandela government introduced in 1996.

Several scholars have argued that GEAR, of which Mbeki is also regarded as being the main architect, went a long way towards cementing the exploitative and racialized economic relations of the colonial and apartheid era in the new South Africa. Thus it is widely regarded as the key factor in the failure of successive post-apartheid governments to bring significant transformation to the country’s economic sector. Such lack of transformation, as stated, has been a source of major concern for many African states in their interactions with the new South Africa.

In this thesis I argue that this is a crucial factor and a significant constraint, which goes a long way towards explaining the methods that Mbeki and his administration used in their dealing with the Zimbabwean crisis. On this basis, this thesis begins by characterising South Africa as a classical neo-colonial state, as discussed in particular by Franz Fanon. In this sense, South Africa is seen as a state controlled by a virtually impotent nationalist leadership which has achieved political freedoms for its vast population, but has failed to give any meaning to those freedoms by dismantling the exploitative and racially defined economic relations of the colonial era. In the process of South Africa’s very unique decolonization experience, I will argue that the nationalist leadership has been reduced to the role of facilitator and guardian of those economic relations.

---


As such, because of its majority constituency which still lives in rampant poverty and underdevelopment, South Africa cannot distance itself from the anti-imperialist and neo-colonialist critiques often laid out very eloquently by Mugabe and other radical leaders. Mbeki believed that Mugabe was right to criticise the dynamics in the international political economy which perpetuated the systematic underdevelopment of Africa. This was a major factor in his approach of Quiet Diplomacy, as will be argued later in the piece.

*Anti-Imperialism & Radicalism*

South Africa's lack of economic transformation and in particular with regards to land has proven a major constraint in the country's efforts to legitimately assume the role of leader on the African continent. In particular however, this issue has significantly constrained its efforts to be more assertive in mediating the Zimbabwean crisis; especially because the Zimbabwean government has very conveniently covered itself in neo-colonialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric, throughout the years of the crisis. Whilst the regime of Robert Mugabe has directed much condemnation at Britain and in particular the administration of Tony Blair, the vehement repudiation of imperialist tendencies in Africa, has partly been a means of keeping the South African government at bay. In this way, the government of Mugabe has gotten key regional states to rally in behind it, given their mutual desire for African economic autonomy and independence. Zimbabwe has thus been able to counter-balance South Africa's vast power, which flows from its economic prowess.

A thorough analysis of South Africa's efforts in Zimbabwe is however not possible without an examination of the Zimbabwean crisis itself. I will argue that much of the scholarship on

---

the political and economic crisis has failed to adequately portray its origins, and that only a very small set of scholars have been able to fill the gaping void.\textsuperscript{9}

A key turning point in Zimbabwe’s post-colonial history is the period of land invasions in the year 2000, following a failed government referendum aimed at fast-tracking the land reform process. It will be important in this analysis to note that land invasions have been a feature of independent Zimbabwe’s history from as far back as the early 1980s when squatters illegally began occupying land; and that the Mugabe government dealt harshly with those groups, instituting local ‘squatter control’ units in the rural areas.\textsuperscript{10} Land invasions had thus, up until 1997, taken place outside of and in opposition to government structures, and it was only following a 2000 referendum that militant groups seizing land were co-opted by and endorsed by the Zimbabwean state. This was the case predominantly because the Lancaster House agreement provision that Britain would provide funding for the purchasing of land from settlers had been abandoned by the new Labour government, and seemingly no other viable means of repossessing the land, the heart of the Zimbabwean economy existed.\textsuperscript{11}

It is this co-optation that led to the development of the Zimbabwean state into what Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros have called a ‘radicalised state’.\textsuperscript{12} For these authors the period at the end of the 1990s and in 2000 was one in which the Zimbabwean state moved past the status of neo-colonial state and became radicalised.\textsuperscript{13} As such, the state took the leading role in bringing fundamental changes to the structure of the economy. Through this process, the


\textsuperscript{10} Mamdani, 2.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12} Moyo & Yeros, 1.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
authors argue that the ground was set for a more genuine democracy to take root, following redistribution of the major source of Zimbabwean wealth: the land.\textsuperscript{14}

This thesis argues that the process of fundamentally redistributing the sources of wealth in the country is one which South Africa has not yet undergone, and must still undergo if it is to take a more assertive course of action in response to the Zimbabwean crisis. I argue therefore that another of the constraints which informed the interaction between South Africa and Zimbabwe during Mbeki’s terms in office, commonly referred to as ‘Quiet Diplomacy’, was that it was an interaction between two different types of post-colonial state, one neo-colonial and the other radicalized.

\textit{A Chapter Outline}

Chapter II of the thesis takes the form of a literature review. The aim of the chapter is to gain an understanding of the existing literature on the question of Mbeki’s ‘Quiet Diplomacy’. In the process of reviewing the literature, I aim to establish a clear definition of the concept of ‘Quiet Diplomacy’.

The literature on South Africa’s Africa foreign policy is dominated by perspectives emanating from the two biggest schools of international relations: realism and idealism. The realist school understands South Africa’s relations with the continent as being based on mercantilist principles. For many of these scholars, South Africa’s unorthodox response to the Zimbabwean crisis results from its seemingly contradictory efforts to integrate itself into the African continent while at the same time fully capitalising on its economic dominance within Africa; a ploy which has allowed the Zimbabwean state to undermine South Africa’s

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
mediation by playing on concerns over South African ‘sub-imperialism’, which pervade much of the region and continent.\footnote{See Bond, P 'The George Bush of Africa: Pretoria chooses Sub-Imperialism' in \textit{Foreign Policy in Focus}, available at \url{www.fpif.org} accessed 10/12/2009.}

The idealist perspective of South African foreign policy on the other hand sees it as dominated by issues of human rights and democratisation on the one hand, and south-south cooperation and solidarity with the continent’s developing nations on the other. Here much emphasis has been placed on the changes in direction that post-apartheid governments have taken in regional foreign policy, as opposed to the supposed continuities from before 1994, which are seen by the realists. Much of this literature attributes the Mbeki administration’s response to Zimbabwe to its concern for developing ‘African solutions to African problems’ and multilateralism. Thus the unorthodox stance taken in response to the crisis has to do with the developing nations of the world not only having greater autonomy, but acting together as well as having the capacity to find solutions beyond the clutches of western hegemony.

Chapter three of the thesis looks to place the notion of ‘Quiet Diplomacy’ within the context of South Africa’s broader post-apartheid policy framework. Assuming that foreign policy is indeed merely an extension of domestic conditions, we examine the dominant socio-economic policy programs employed by successive post-apartheid governments and from that basis try to understand how and why South Africa has, failed to significantly transform its economy and how this has in turn impacted on its regional foreign policy aspirations, particularly in Zimbabwe.

To sufficiently understand the macro-economic trajectory espoused by South Africa’s government after 1994, we will look briefly at the negotiated settlement of 1994, in order to
better understand the constraints under which the newly elected governments of Mandela and Mbeki were operating in their efforts to realise the promises of the liberation struggle.

The chapter will then look to cast South Africa as a classical neo-colonial state; highlighting its inability to meaningfully transform in the post-liberation period, and being led by a nationalist leadership which is weak in the face of strong international capitalist trends.

In the fourth chapter the thesis looks to firstly understand the origins of the Zimbabwean crisis. It begins by looking at some of the shortcomings of the Lancaster House Agreement, which ushered in majority rule in Zimbabwe in 1980, with regards to the all-important question of land redistribution. From this basis, it looks to understand why land invasions occurred in independent Zimbabwe and how these came to be incorporated into and co-opted by the state in 2000.

In discussing the events of independent Zimbabwe, we look at how the country moved in the opinion of Moyo and Yeros, in the late 1990s and the early 2000s from being a neo-colonial state to being a radicalized state.16

The fifth chapter of the thesis takes a look more directly at Thabo Mbeki’s mediation in the crisis in Zimbabwe from the time it began up until the formation of Zimbabwe’s Union Government in 2008. In this chapter we look essentially to highlight the various constraints that have arisen out of the interaction of two post-colonial states of a different type.

In this section we will look to place emphasis on Mbeki’s own understanding of the Zimbabwean crisis. In this regard, the analysis will be focused based mainly on a discussion document, which was written by the South African president in 2001, addressing his Zimbabwean counterpart on the problems faced by Zimbabwe. This text is particularly useful

16 Moyo & Yeros, 2.
in that it is perhaps the only occasion on which we gain access into Mbeki’s thinking on this issue, and it is useful therefore in understanding how he saw the problem and how he sought to resolve it. This chapter also looks to place the issue of Quiet Diplomacy within the context of SADC politics.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Considerations and Literature Overview

The aim of this chapter is to review the dominant literature on the subject of South African foreign policy towards Zimbabwe under Thabo Mbeki. In doing so, it looks to highlight some of the shortcomings in this literature by identifying gaps and important questions that have not necessarily been dealt with adequately in that literature up to this point.

In reviewing the literature, I will initially make use of the dominant theories of international relations; idealism and realism. While this is obviously a crude approach to the existing scholarship, it does provide a basic framework from which a more nuanced analysis can follow. These two perspectives have been highly prevalent in the literature on South African foreign policy, and it is worthwhile studying their key principles before looking at how they have been used by scholars who have analysed post-apartheid South Africa's foreign policy.

I argue in this chapter that neither of the two dominant schools of international relations is particularly helpful however in understanding the policies undertaken by the Mbeki government in response to the Zimbabwean crisis. Both of these theories are problematic primarily for the same reasons, which have to do with their assumptions about the international system and state behaviour.

Both theories fail to adequately address the prevalence of historical structural conditions in the international system, which determine the relative strengths of states and affect their internal politics which in turn determines their behaviour in the system. I argue therefore that amongst the major approaches to international relations, it is the so-called radical tradition, encompassing in particular the structuralist school, which yields more substantial and compelling explanations to this important question.
Structuralism has been particularly useful in explaining the constraints within which many of the world’s states function, both internally and in their relations internationally. The dichotomy between ‘core’ and ‘peripheral’ states in the international system is at the heart of the structuralist approach and these concepts have become essential to critical theory in the field of international relations. It is however, Immanuel Wallerstein’s introduction of the notion of a ‘semi-peripheral’ state which will be most essential to this paper.\footnote{Wallerstein, I, \textit{The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in Sixteenth Century} (New York: Academic Press, 1976).}

I will argue in this chapter that South Africa is a prototype of the ‘semi-peripheral’ state as discussed by Wallerstein. I characterise South Africa as having the features of both a ‘core’ and a ‘peripheral’ state in one, and argue that this dichotomy has been a source of major constraints in the country’s interaction with other states, particularly on the African continent, and most especially in relation to Zimbabwe during the years in which the political and economic crisis has unfolded there.

\textit{Idealism in International Relations}

Idealism as a theory of international relations has a great variety of influences and sources and is dominated by ideas arising out of the so-called enlightenment period in European history. Of particular relevance to this study though are the ideas of Hugo Grotius and Emmerich de Vattel, whose works were crucial to the development of the ideology of an international society or community of states, which interacted or could interact on the basis of the principle of justice.\footnote{Williams, P, Goldstein, DM & JM Shafritz (eds.) \textit{Classic Readings of International Relations} (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1994), p28.} As we will see later in this thesis, it is this principle of justice
amongst states in the international system, which has given the regime of Robert Mugabe a lot of durability.\textsuperscript{19}

The politics of anti-imperialism and the fight against neo-colonialism are founded on a sense which pervades much of post-colonial Africa and the third world, that the prevalent international system is fundamentally unjust. The Mugabe regime has been able to utilise those sentiments, not only to garner support at home, but also to keep South Africa at bay by garnering support in the region.

Given its failure to deracialise and restructure its very powerful economy, South Africa is seen as complicit in that prevailing injustice and thus supposedly lacks the legitimate authority to chastise the Zimbabwean government. The imperialist and neo-colonialist discourses have thus been prominent in the interaction between the governments of these two southern African states.

As stated, these dynamics are explored in greater detail later in the paper, for the moment let us return to Idealism.

In his seminal work \textit{The Law of Nations}, Vattel argued that justice was the basis of all society and was an important principle which all nations needed to observe.\textsuperscript{20} He asserted that "all nations are under a strict obligation to cultivate justice towards each other, to observe it scrupulously, and carefully to abstain from everything that may violate it."\textsuperscript{21} States thus have a moral obligation towards each other which is based on justice.

The crystallisation of these ideas into an influential theory of international relations came in the aftermath of the First World War when it was understood that the insular and selfish

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
activities of states had been a major cause of the war. Much scholarly and political effort was thus put into developing ideas and systems which would bring about a world that would supposedly be less war-prone. The most important document in this regard was undoubtedly Woodrow Wilson’s ‘Fourteen Points’ which formed part of a groundbreaking speech he delivered as American President in January of 1918, the year the war ended.\textsuperscript{22}

The central idea arising out of Wilson’s address was that international anarchy should be replaced by international organization, with the League of Nations playing the primary role in ensuring the rule of law; arms races would be prevented by general disarmament; and secret diplomacy would be replaced by public diplomacy and democratic control.\textsuperscript{23}

The opposition to Thabo Mbeki’s approach of Quiet Diplomacy towards Zimbabwe which has been most vehement amongst western states has its roots in Wilson’s pronouncements. Interacting in secret with the Mugabe regime goes against the fundamental tenet of this idealist approach to international relations, which purports that international peace is dependent on states deliberating with each other in the public domain, where all the others can observe. This was the founding idea of the League of Nations and of course later, the United Nations.\textsuperscript{24}

As we will see, Mbeki’s intransigence in this regard contradicts many of his other foreign policy stances which have for the most part been consistent with idealism, and his foreign policy therefore has frequently been labelled as schizophrenic.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
Realism in International Relations

The realist approach to the study of international relations also arose in the interwar period in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century and was in essence a response to idealism. The basic tenets of realism of course go back to the work of such philosophers as Nicollo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. More recently however, it is Hans Morgenthau’s \textit{Politics Among Nations} which best articulates realism as it has been understood in the contemporary period.

Realists differentiate themselves from idealists in that they claim to understand international politics as it is and not how humans would want it to be; thus warranting the name realism.\textsuperscript{25} They ask that their theory ‘be judged not by some preconceived abstract principle or concept unrelated to reality, but by its purpose: to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena which without it would remain disconnected and unintelligible.’\textsuperscript{26} Realists argue that idealism makes the fundamental error of prescribing theory to practice, when it is practice that should inform theory.

According to realism, war is the most defining characteristic of the international system because the system is anarchical. Without a world government, states are ultimately in a situation of war against one another.\textsuperscript{27} The activities of states therefore need to be understood primarily in terms of the fear that pervades an anarchical society, and the desire for power which states use to protect themselves from, and impose their will on the rest of that society.

Those states that benefit the most from a particular arrangement of international politics, in other words those that have the most to gain economically and otherwise, will always advocate for peace within that system, casting as rogues or pariahs, those that militate against

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Williams et al, 30.
it. For the realists, the utopian and moralistic ideas of the idealists only serve to disguise the real interests of powerful countries which are in actual fact driven by fear and the desire for greater power, just like every other state on earth. For as E.H Carr has put it, 'men come easily to believe that arrangements agreeable to themselves are beneficial to others.'

Theories of the public good, which turn out on inspection to be an elegant disguise for some particular interest, are as common in international as in national affairs.

As we will see, this understanding of the value system in contemporary international relations is again at the heart of the critique that many African leaders, not least Robert Mugabe, have levelled against the powerful nations. We will see also that it is an understanding which Thabo Mbeki himself espoused during his stay in office, although he sought to engage the wealthy countries on these matters rather than antagonise them.

The realist thread in the literature on post-apartheid South Africa’s Africa foreign policy is therefore founded on the premise that South Africa has sought to engage the continent with the primary objective of maximising on its considerable economic dominance at the expense of other states. This interpretation has given Mugabe the power to undermine South Africa’s influence in the region, as he has been able to play on fears of South African ‘sub-imperialism’ continuing from the old apartheid era into the new.

The state-centric approach of both the idealist and realist theories of international relations fails to incorporate the historical structural conditions which determine the relative strengths of states. Such conditions affect the internal politics of states and in turn determine their capabilities and behaviour in the system.

---

28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
Dominant Theoretical Trends in Literature on Post-Apartheid South Africa’s Africa Foreign Policy

In his paper Quiet Diplomacy in Zimbabwe: A Case study of South Africa in Africa, Tom Lodge notes that the literature on South African foreign policy can to a significant extent be separated into two categories. One set of writing is seen to approach the country’s foreign policy from an idealist perspective, while another sees it through a realist lens.\(^{30}\)

The idealist thread in the literature tends to understand South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy as being expressive of cooperation and partnership,\(^{31}\) and as advocating a rules-based system which places emphasis on human rights.

Out of this perspective emerge the principles of ‘south-south’ cooperation, African solidarity, multilateralism and interdependence, which have been key principles in the Mandela as well as the Mbeki presidencies.\(^{32}\) These works see the establishment of the NEPAD, active participation in the transition from the OAU to the AU as well as South Africa’s refusal to act unilaterally on the continent in relation to such matters as the Zimbabwean crisis, as demonstrating South Africa’s multilateral and consensus-based outlook. This perspective is consistent with what Chris Landsberg has referred to as the Mandela-Mbeki Doctrine, which is essentially a broad project aimed at bringing democracy to the African continent.

If one looks at the major policy documents that have informed South Africa’s foreign policy in the post-apartheid period, there is undoubtedly a core idealist paradigm to which they

---


confer. Most telling amongst these is the ANC’s official foreign policy statement of 1994 which was aimed at setting the parameters for future policy in the international arena. It lists seven ‘principles of South African foreign policy;’ which can in the main be seen as emanating out of the idealist conception of international relations articulated by Woodrow Wilson 80 years previously. These principles include:

- A belief that just and lasting solutions to the problems of human kind can only come through the promotion of democracy worldwide;

- A belief that justice and international law should guide the relations between nations;

- A belief that international peace is the goal to which all nations should strive. Where this breaks down, internationally-agreed peaceful mechanisms to solve conflict should be resorted to;

- A belief that our foreign relations must mirror our deep commitment to the consolidation of a democratic South Africa

As stated, other works have tended to approach South African foreign policy from a realist perspective. They have referred to South Africa as a ‘selfish hegemon’. These authors have drawn attention to South Africa’s protectionist trade and xenophobic immigration policies; and the aggressive drive by its corporations in search of new markets north of the Limpopo.

---

South Africa is understood to have a sub-imperial agenda which means effectively that there are greater continuities from the regional relations of the apartheid era, than there are changes.

Patrick Bond has perhaps been the most prominent advocate of the perspective which sees such programs as Nepad as looking to extend the tentacles of the domestic Gear program and expand the sphere of influence of South Africa’s major corporations.\textsuperscript{35}

Van der Veen states that NEPAD is seen in some circles as a program to ensure the free movement of South African capital throughout the continent.\textsuperscript{36} It is also seen as a duplication of South Africa’s fairly neoliberal domestic economic policy at a continental level. Although South Africa continues to work hard towards regional integration through SADC, some authors note, it fears unrestricted immigration and refuses to adopt a protocol on the free movement of persons within the region.\textsuperscript{37} The perception by its neighbours is therefore, not surprisingly, that South Africa simply wants to exploit them just like the previous government.

Several authors have discussed South Africa’s foreign policy towards Zimbabwe under the Mbeki administration. For the most part these have been descriptive accounts of the relationship between the South African and Zimbabwean governments during the years of the crisis. Few have really attempted to explain the policy of Quiet Diplomacy. These include Lloyd Sachikonye of the University of Zimbabwe. Chris Alden and Garth Le Pere have discussed this case in relation to the broader role played by South Africa in SADC.

\textsuperscript{35} Bond, 2002 & 2004.
\textsuperscript{36} Van der Veen, L. “\textit{Every Continent Needs an America}”, Independent Research Proposal. (University of Cape Town, Department of Political Studies, 2004, 16.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
Chris Landsberg has looked at Mbeki's approach to Zimbabwe as part of a broader tradition of Quiet Diplomacy. He argues that South Africa's transition owes its success to 'Quiet Diplomacy' and that the Zimbabwean case is not unique but part of a growing tradition of secret engagement in post-apartheid South African foreign policy. Landsberg's thesis is of particular relevance to this study, as it helps to emphasize the consistency with which quiet diplomacy has been employed in South Africa's African relations, particularly under Mbeki.

*An Alternative Theoretical Perspective on Post-Apartheid South Africa's Africa Foreign Policy: Looking to the Radical Tradition*

What we refer to here as the Radical Tradition in international relations is an approach with many different influences and schools, all of which in some way or other can be associated with Marxism/Leninism. These various schools, which include most prominently, Dependency Theory and Structuralism generally tend to agree that understanding the behaviour of states cannot be achieved without an appreciation of the historical structural conditions of the international system; characterised as it is by a division between the core countries predominantly of western Europe, and the peripheral areas of much of the rest of the world.

According to this approach, state behaviour in the system is better understood not necessarily by looking at their individual interests, but rather by looking at the characteristics of the system. In this study, we will deal predominantly with Structuralism and its Marxist/Leninist antecedents. We do not look specifically at Dependency Theory.
The relationship between the works of Lenin and Marx has come to form the foundation of the Radical tradition, for while Marx focused most of his attention on the domestic effects of capitalism, Lenin was able to substantially expand that work so as to explain how imperialism came about in the international political economy as a result of those domestic capitalist forces which Marx had discussed.

It is important to note at the outset one crucial aspect of this approach which differentiates it from the two dominant theories discussed above; which is that this approach is far less state-centric. ‘Marxist approaches to international relations are characterized by an emphasis not so much on state conflict as on class conflict.’ For these scholars, the crucial divisions are not those between states but those between the exploiters and the exploited, the oppressors and the oppressed within societies and between them.

For Karl Marx the process of change from one system of political economy to another was an inevitable and necessary feature of human history. Capitalism would eventually give way to another socio-economic system because it was intrinsically flawed and unsustainable. The bourgeoisie, which controlled the means of production in the society, exploited the proletariat, who were the actual producers but benefitted very little from the results of their labour. In this way capitalism contained the seeds of its own destruction, as poorly paid workers would not be able to afford the products of their own labour and the growing separation between workers and owners of property would lead to revolution.

---

38 Williams et. al, 36.
39 Ibid
40 Ibid
41 Ibid
Lenin developed Marx's ideas to give them explanatory value within the broader context of international relations. Combining Marx's ideas with those of English economist John Hobson who in 1902 authored the book *Imperialism: A Study*, Lenin explained how the industrial powers of Western Europe were able to stave off Marx's revolution by exporting the contradictions of capitalism to peripheral areas.

The need to maintain the relations of production at home, led the industrialised countries to seek territories abroad, on which they could dump their surpluses and extract raw materials to fuel further profit and expansion.\(^{42}\) This was the reason for the 'scramble for Africa' as far as Lenin was concerned and it was also the reason for the First World War, as the fight over territories inevitably brought the major European economies into conflict with one another.\(^{43}\)

Hobson's argument was that 'in the capitalist system those who had surplus capital preferred to invest it abroad rather than redistribute it at home.'\(^{44}\) They sought to broaden the channel for the flow of their surplus wealth by seeking foreign markets and foreign investments to take off the goods and capital they cannot sell or use at home.\(^{45}\) This emphasis on economic motivations was the foundation of Lenin's argument, which saw imperialism as the highest form of capitalism and argued that war between imperialist powers was inevitable.

Lenin argued that profit-seeking capitalists could not be expected to use surplus capital to improve the living standards of the proletariat. Capitalist societies would thus remain unevenly developed, with some classes prospering as others were mired in poverty. The

\(^{42}\) Ibid.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.
imperial phase of capitalism simply transferred this duality of wealth and poverty onto the world stage.\textsuperscript{46}

The core argument put forward by Lenin was that the rich capitalist nations were able to stave off what Marx saw as an inevitable crisis leading to revolution. They were able to keep poorer nations underdeveloped and deep in debt, and dependent on them for manufactured goods, jobs and financial resources.\textsuperscript{47} Lenin’s theory has thus been very influential, especially amongst intellectuals and politicians in the less developed countries, where his views have helped shape policy and attitudes towards international trade and finance generally. These views have been at the heart of the anti-imperialist discourse, particularly on the African continent.

Two salient features of this study will be, firstly the extent to which the regime of Robert Mugabe has been able to use ideas of imperialism and exploitation which emanate from Lenin in order to gain support both domestically and continentally and in so doing, limit South Africa’s capacity to get involved in the Zimbabwean political and economic crisis. The second is how Thabo Mbeki, being sympathetic to this critique of contemporary international political economy on the one hand, but acting as leader of a very well-resourced yet white-owned African economy on the other, has looked to play on both sides of the divide and find a middle ground.

As we will see, this dual-contradictory role of South Africa’s in international relations, which is most vivid in its continental politics and even more so when looking at its relations with Zimbabwe is a function of an internal duality, which successive post-apartheid governments have been unable to resolve.


\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
Structuralism

The fundamental argument forwarded by structuralists is that structure determines outcome. In the realm of international political economy, economic structure heavily influences the distribution of wealth and power. The activities of states are best understood by looking at where they are situated within the international political economic structure. According to this viewpoint, institutions associated with global capitalism are inherently biased in favour of the dominant powers, creating a web of dependency that mirrors, in some ways, the relationship of nineteenth century mother countries to their colonial possessions.

It is on this basis that structuralism perceives international relations as consisting primarily of two sets of actors: core states and peripheral. The core states dominate the peripheral states through unequal exchange and the extraction of cheap raw materials as well as by using the periphery as a market for dumping surplus production.

Core states tend to be characterised by relatively low unemployment, advanced technology and a highly skilled workforce. Peripheral states however tend to have very little technological ability, high unemployment and low skills. Their positioning within the structure of the international system determines the relative capabilities of these different actors, and explains their behaviour.

Modern World Systems Theory

Consistent with the key aspects of structuralism, Immanuel Wallerstein's Modern World Systems Theory argues that due to its capitalist nature, the world system largely determines
political and social relations, both within and between nations and other international entities. Thus in ways similar to Marx, this theory looks at the international system in terms of class relations and patterns of exploitation.\textsuperscript{51}

Modern World System theory was for Wallerstein a form of protest against the way in which social scientific enquiry had been packaged and conducted from its inception in the middle of the middle of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{52} His belief was that none of the so-called “disciplines” of social science could really yield substantial results when pursued in isolation. He advocated for a historical social scientific approach which brought all of these disciplines together, believing that more compelling explanations for the state of the world could be arrived at in this way.

An examination of Wallerstein’s theory in its entirety is not within the scope of this work. What is of relevance is Wallerstein’s choosing to delineate his work from the mainstream structuralist theorists primarily because he thought that the core/periphery binary was too simplistic. He argued that a third type of actor existed in the international capitalist system, and that that actor was crucial to the maintenance of the balance of power within that system.

Perhaps Wallerstein’s most important contribution to the broader structuralist paradigm then was that of introducing the concept of a ‘semi-peripheral state’. He argues that such states have features of both core and peripheral states and that in the international system they serve more of a political function than an economic one; they are both exploited and exploiter, diffusing opposition of the periphery to the core region.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} Balaam et. al, p 43.
\textsuperscript{52} So, A, Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency and World-System Theories (California: Sage Publications, 1990), p 178.
\textsuperscript{53} Balaam et. al, p 43.
Such states, according to Wallerstein are in between the core and the periphery on a series of dimensions, such as the complexity of economic activities, strength of the state machinery, cultural integrity and others.\textsuperscript{54} He states that some of these states had been core areas of earlier versions of a given world economy, and that others had been peripheral areas that were later promoted as a result of the changing geopolitics of an expanding world economy. Effectively though, these are states which have both strong core and peripheral features.

The semiperiphery is a very important feature of the capitalist world economy for Wallerstein. It is not merely a ‘residual category’.\textsuperscript{55} These states are vital to the maintenance of the hierarchical and exploitative global capitalist economy. Due to the fact that they have features of both core and peripheral states, semi-peripheral states are able to deflect the political pressures which groups located in the periphery might otherwise direct against core states.\textsuperscript{56}

For Wallerstein the exploitative relations of the capitalist world system cannot be maintained without a semiperiphery. He states that, ‘a polarized world-system with a small distinct, high status sector facing a large low-status sector can lead rapidly to acute disintegration. The major political means by which such crises are averted is the creation of ‘middle sectors’, which tend to think of themselves primarily as better off than the lower sector rather than as worse off than the upper sector.’\textsuperscript{57}

The dual-contradictory role played by these states in the international system is thus a function of their internal duality. They are often characterised by extreme wealth and extreme poverty; a high concentration of advanced skills and masses of low or unskilled people. Thus,

\textsuperscript{54} Wallerstein, 231.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 180.
whilst their constituencies may be located in the periphery, they do encompass groups whose interests are aligned with those of the core.

Such interests are however located outside the political arena of the core states, and semi-peripheral states find it difficult to pursue the ends in political coalitions that might be open to them were they in the same political arena as the core. It is a characteristic which allows for these countries to not always behave in a predictable manor in their relations with others, and their foreign policy can thus often be characterised as schizophrenic. The traditional realist and idealist approaches to international relations often fail to yield compelling explanations when used to analyse the sometimes contradictory behaviour of a semiperipheral state.

South Africa is a prototype of Wallerstein’s semiperipheral state. Thabo Mbeki and many other political actors and scholars have often referred to the ‘two nations’ problem in South Africa. One of these nations is predominantly white, highly skilled and wealthy and if it was a state on its own would rank alongside Italy and Spain on the United Nations Development Index. The other nation is mostly black, unskilled and very poor and would rank alongside the likes of Gabon and Congo on that same index, some one hundred places lower.

It is this internal characteristic of post-apartheid South Africa that needs to be fully understood before a meaningful examination of the policies that have been employed abroad can follow. The dominance of realist and idealist literature in the discourse only highlights

---

58 Wallerstein, 231.
60 Adebajo et al.
this dichotomy. The realist thread places much emphasis on the first economy and the mercantilist instincts that necessarily inform its activities in the region and on the continent. The idealist approach on the other hand has placed far more emphasis on the multilateral spirit in which South Africa has tried to conduct itself, as well as its efforts in advocating for a more just international political and economic system: concerns that derive from an understanding that without such systemic changes the plight of that majority which makes up South Africa's second economy is unlikely to change.

Neocolonialism & the Radicalised State

The term neo-colonialism is one which has been used by many third world scholars and political leaders in the second half of the twentieth century. Amongst the first to do so was former Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah, who authored the book *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. The core of the neo-colonialist argument is that the political freedoms won by the triumph over formal colonialism have proved meaningless given the fact that economic control of the liberated areas remains in the hands of former colonial masters.

In the post-colonial moment, frustrated liberation leaders generally found that 'political autonomy was something of a facade behind which lurked the continuing presence of powerful Western financial and commercial interests.' Nkrumah argued that the essence of neo-colonialism 'is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all

---

the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality however, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside."^{62}

Frantz Fanon, who discusses this condition at length in a famous essay titled ‘The Pitfalls of National Consciousness,’ notes that the key issue during the decolonization period is that the new nations’ economies are not set on a new footing, continuing to organise their economic activities such that they are defined by the demands of European markets.\(^{63}\) These economies thus remain incapable of serving their domestic populations, diversifying industry and creating prosperity at home.

The concept of neo-colonialism is key to the discussion embarked on in this study for two reasons. Firstly, the discourse around neo-colonialism helps us understand how the regime of Robert Mugabe has been able to garner support in the region for its very radical domestic socio-economic policies, and it also helps us understand the Zimbabwean state’s uncompromising stance towards the major world powers. Secondly, while South Africa’s colonial experience is unique in that it has essentially been colonised from within, its failure to achieve economic transformation in the post-liberation era, casts it as a prototypical neo-colonial state, a characteristic which has major implications for its regional foreign policy.

The term ‘Radicalised State’ has been coined by Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros to describe a state that has moved past the stage of neo-colonialism and has taken drastic steps to alter its colonial economic structure.\(^{64}\) The authors argue that within the neo-colonial state, subjected as it is to imperialism, the imperialist capitalist hierarchy is unable to resolve the national and

\(^{62}\) Ibid.
\(^{63}\) Fanon.
\(^{64}\) Moyo et al, 2.
agrarian questions and is therefore a foundation for recurrent economic, social and political crises.\textsuperscript{55}

Some states, (including Venezuela, Bolivia and Zimbabwe) have taken bold measures to alter that condition by playing a more interventionist role in the economy. They typically abandon measures set out for them by international financial institutions and look to forcibly alter the relations of production in their economies through such measures as the expropriation and redistribution of land.

Inevitably, these actions also lead to economic, social and ultimately political crises. Within a radicalised state however, such crises are seen as a necessary phase in the process of establishing more equitable economic relations in the society, and thus establishing a more firm foundation from which democracy can flourish.\textsuperscript{66} This is in stark contrast to the neo-colonial state, where democracy is expected to thrive within the context and despite the persistence of colonial economic relations.

As far as Moyo and Yeros are concerned then, these crises are a necessary stage in the process of moving past neo-colonialism. Radicalisation of the state as has been witnessed in Zimbabwe since 1997 as well as in other societies, is required to fulfil historic demands for social justice, which otherwise continue to plague post-colonial states.

The remainder of this paper thus looks to cast South Africa and Zimbabwe as two different types of post-colonial state; one neo-colonial and the other radicalised. It argues that this difference is crucial to understanding their very unique and controversial interaction during the years in which Thabo Mbeki was president of South Africa.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid; Mamdani, 1.
Conceptualising Diplomacy

It is important to clarify what may be meant by the terms Foreign policy, Diplomacy and Quiet Diplomacy before moving on. Foreign policy is seen as ‘the sum total of the official plans and initiatives taken by a country with respect to its external environment, plus the values and attitudes that underlie these plans and initiatives.’ Ken Holsti defines foreign policy as the “ideas or actions designed by policy-makers to solve a problem or promote some change in the policies, attitudes or actions of other states or states, in non-state actors (e.g. terrorist groups), in the international economy or in the physical environment of the world.”

Foreign policy is conducted in a number of ways. One way is the use of force or coercion, which may involve military means. Another is the use of sanctions or embargoes, which put foreign governments under pressure to alter their policies by affecting their economic situations. Another means of conducting foreign policy is through negotiation. Traditionally this form of engagement takes place through formal diplomatic channels.

One understanding of diplomacy argues that it seeks to mediate differences, and resolve and settle disputes, while also seeking to persuade or compel through conveying and communicating promises, threats, codes and symbols. It entails the management of international relations and politics through negotiations and is mainly silent or quiet in nature; “but this subtle form of statecraft can be vociferous – or of the megaphone variety.”

Most governments seek to exert influence through formal diplomatic channels or through direct communication between heads of government and ministers of foreign affairs. In general, diplomacy involves the methods and mechanisms employed in the pursuit of foreign policy goals.

As stated, diplomacy takes on many forms. On the one hand it can be vociferous and overt, such as that which takes place on such forums as the United Nations (UN), while its can also be secretive, covert and generally silent. This second type is often referred to as ‘quiet diplomacy’.

Those who have sought to grapple with the concept of quiet diplomacy have in some cases likened it to ‘Appeasement’, which is most famously identified with Neville Chamberlain’s engagement with Adolf Hitler in the 1930s. This policy involved negotiation and compromise and the eschewing of military means of engagement.

Quiet diplomacy can obviously be used in the pursuit of a variety of ends that fall within the foreign policy objectives of a particular state. This study however concerns itself only with that form of ‘quiet diplomacy’ which seeks to resolve an internal political and socio-economic crisis in another state. As such, it is argued that quiet diplomacy has three fundamental tenets, firstly that the intervening party will not humiliate or attack in public either or any of the parties to the conflict and there is not moral grandstanding; secondly, punitive measures are taken off the table, and are not an option; and finally, talking and dialogue are used to seek an agreement between the warring parties.  

In the next chapter, we look at the political economy of post-apartheid South Africa, with the intention of identifying those unique traits that make it at once, both a semi-peripheral and a

---

71 G Kennan, ‘Containment Then and Now,’ in Foreign Affairs 65(4), 1987.
neo-colonial state and thus vulnerable to criticism within the region of harbouring a sub-imperial agenda. The intention is eventually to demonstrate how these internal characteristics have constrained its ability to be more overt in its engagement with the Zimbabwean crisis.

This chapter discusses the political economy of post-apartheid South Africa. In so doing it casts the new South Africa as a prototypical neo-colonial state. It argues that successive ANC governments have failed to fundamentally transform the South African economy into one more equitable, accessible and beneficial to the majority of South Africans. It argues that this failure derives mainly from the ANC’s insistence, primarily under the stewardship of Thabo Mbeki, on a neo-liberal trajectory in macro-economic policy. Such austerity as we will see has however also come about largely because of constraints on economic restructuring that resulted from the negotiated settlement of the early 1990s.

The aim of this chapter is however not merely to cast South Africa as a neo-colonial state, but also to understand how its limited progress in economic transformation has not allowed it to cure its own ‘two-nations’ pathology. In failing to bridge the dichotomy in its racially defined economy, South Africa has, within the context of the international political economy settled into the role of Wallerstein’s semi-peripheral state.

The chapter proceeds in four parts. It begins by looking briefly at the ANC’s understanding of the relationship between apartheid and capitalism and its conception of liberation as well as debates around the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) and the shift towards the Growth, Employment and Redistribution program or GEAR in 1996. Some observers have argued that GEAR, based as it was on neo-liberal economic ideology, really set the foundation for the consolidation of colonial relations of production in the new South Africa. 72

The second part of the chapter discusses the South African government’s Black Economic Empowerment policy and how this fits into the neo-colonial character of the post-apartheid

state. The third part discusses South Africa as a bifurcated society comprising of two nations with two economies, and goes on to look at the foreign policy implications of this reality. Finally the chapter will look at South Africa’s corporate expansion into Africa.

*Separating Capitalism and Apartheid*

Only a month or so before his historic release from prison, Nelson Mandela wrote a message for his supporters outside to assure them that decades in prison had not weakened his commitment to the fundamental transformation of the South African economy. His note stated that, ‘the nationalisation of the mines, banks and monopoly industries is the policy of the ANC, and the change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable. Black economic empowerment is a goal we fully support and encourage, but in our situation state control of certain sectors of the economy is unavoidable.’

These were views consistent with the ANC’s Freedom Charter which was penned during the Defiance Campaign of the early 1950s. The Freedom Charter stated explicitly that ‘the national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people; the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; all other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people.’ South Africa’s liberation, as far as many in the ANC was concerned would be meaningless if it granted only political rights. A socialist state would be required in order for the fight for freedom to be won.

The perceived inseparability of apartheid and capitalism in South Africa was central to the conceptualization and theorizing that informed the liberation struggle from the 1950s

---

24 Ibid, 195.
onwards. The perception on the part of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) of the oppression of black people and the exploitation of the working class, as the work of one consolidated regime made a united effort on the part of black nationalists and the working class the most suitable antidote.

Whilst there were different ideas as to how any dismantling of the capitalist state should be conducted, there was general consensus that these two formidable forces of black oppression were inextricably intertwined.

The communist view of how this joint struggle was to be conducted derived from what was referred to as ‘two-stage theory’. ‘In the first stage, that of the struggle against apartheid, socialism appears as a junior partner to African Nationalism, the role of the socialist party defined in terms of its support for national liberation in the form of a national democratic state as well as being the bearer of socialist ideas; in the second stage, which begins when apartheid has been overthrown and a national democratic state has been established in its place, socialist objectives come to the fore and the socialist party asserts its claim to the leadership.’

This view is mirrored in the ANC document entitled “Strategy and Tactics”, adopted at its April 1969 Morogoro Conference in Tanzania, which asserts it as a ‘fundamental feature of [ANC] strategy that victory must embrace more than formal political democracy.’ It states that ‘to allow the existing economic forces to retain their interests intact is to feed the root of racial supremacy and does not represent even the shadow of liberation.’ The document goes on to emphasize a key notion espoused by both organizations; that of their being a difference

---

27 Ibid, 392.
between “formal liberation” and a “lasting emancipation”; the former to be realized by national democratic revolution, and the latter, by a dismantling of the capitalist system.

Going into the negotiations however, which had begun covertly in the early 1980s before becoming more formal in the early 1990s, the ANC found it impossible to persuade the National Party government to accept a developmental economic paradigm for the new South Africa. Talks repeatedly ground to a halt around issues of economics, with the government not willing to concede any ground whatsoever on the question of property rights for instance. It was clear from very early on in proceedings that the National Party was going to fight hard to maintain white privileges in South Africa, and it pursued several measures in this regard including proposals to break the country into a federation; and policy guaranteeing veto power for whites in parliament. At one point Mandela admitted that “what the National Party was trying to do was to maintain white supremacy with our consent.”

The ANC found that its lack of real expertise in the finer technical aspects of economic policy was a significant setback. The government on the other hand flew in droves of International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) specialists to confound and confuse the ANC economists, and in the end they found themselves outfoxed by their more savvy counterparts.

*Getting Into GEAR*

During the country’s first ever democratic elections, the ANC nevertheless campaigned under the banner of what was known as the Reconstruction and Development Program or RDP. The RDP was crafted just after the unbanning of the ANC in collaboration with the Congress of

---

78 Klein, 197.
South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), its key allies.\textsuperscript{79}

The program was socialist in nature and set out to achieve five primary objectives: meeting basic needs; developing human resources through education and training; reconstructing the economy; democratizing the state and society; and implementing the RDP through a people-driven process.

Soon after assuming power on the back of a resounding victory at the polls, the new ANC government was to encounter several obstacles in its efforts to meet these important goals. Looted by the outgoing National Party government, the state's coffers were virtually empty when the ANC took charge. With the non-negotiable arrangement on property rights, the dreams of liberation would have to be put on hold while the ANC figured out where the money was going to come from to fund its ambitious projects.

The answer was the Growth, Employment and Redistribution program, or GEAR. It was a neo-liberal macro-economic policy strategy almost entirely derived from the Washington Consensus. It was assembled by a very small group of ANC economists who included Maria Ramos (later CEO of Amalgamated Banks of South Africa or ABSA), Trevor Manuel (later Finance Minister) and Mbeki.

Having resolved that the only way to bring funds to the state and begin the process of poverty alleviation in the society at large would be to attract foreign investment, these architects with Mandela's help effectively forced GEAR down the throats of the broader ANC movement.\textsuperscript{80}

The policy had five primary objectives: reduction or at least 'freezing' of government expenditure, with a three per cent ceiling in the budget deficit, which is also the ceiling for

\textsuperscript{79} Adedeji, 54.
\textsuperscript{80} Gumede, 69.
euro-currency zone countries; privatization of the state and parastatal corporations and abolishing monopolies in public services; linking of wage increases to productivity growth; liberalization of external trade and capital movements; and tax incentives to promote new domestic investment.\textsuperscript{81}

It was argued by its proponents that this would create the desired environment for investment in the country, which in turn would bring about a projected growth rate of 6\% and create close to half a million jobs annually.

GEAR however yielded none of these returns and served, as many scholars have argued\textsuperscript{82}, only to reinforce the racially defined exploitative relations of production of South Africa’s colonial and apartheid eras. Indeed as the celebrated African economist Professor Adebayo Adedeji has stated, ‘the adoption of GEAR meant that the dualism (emphasis added) that has plagued South Africa persists: while the self-conscious citizens of the modern sector and the wielders of corporate power are put in a privileged position, the rural poor who constitute the vast majority of the population remain trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty.’\textsuperscript{83}

So, after a decade and a half of liberation, South Africa remains the most unequal society in the world; unemployment which affects the black population almost exclusively, still hovers at around 30\%,\textsuperscript{84} illiteracy and disease remain rampant and many black children still learn under trees; this while whites enjoy enormous wealth and comfort. As several studies have indeed shown, ‘if white South Africa were a separate country today, it would rank in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development ‘s(OECD) league table as 24\textsuperscript{th} in human development terms – just below Italy but above Portugal. In stark contrast, black

\textsuperscript{81} Adedeji, 55.
\textsuperscript{82} See Bond, 2004; Saul, J, ‘Cry for the Beloved Country: The Post-Apartheid Denouement’ in Review of Political Economy 28(89), 2001; Adebayo et al.
\textsuperscript{83} Adedeji, 55.
\textsuperscript{84} RW Johnson, South Africa’s Brave New World: The ‘Beloved Country’ Since the end of Apartheid (London: Allan Lane, 2009), p 465.
South Africa would rank 123\textsuperscript{rd} in the world – very much below Botswana, Gabon, Swaziland, Lesotho and Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{85}

In her illuminating book *The Shock Doctrine* Naomi Klein writes that in 2005, only 4\% of the companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange were owned or controlled by blacks, and that 70 \% of South Africa's land, in 2006, was still monopolized by whites, who are just 10\% of the population.\textsuperscript{86} Thus without doubt the sharp racial inequalities of South Africa's past still define its political economy today.

What tangible economic empowerment of blacks there has been has mostly manifested at the very top of the political pyramid, with a handful of highly placed ANC stalwarts becoming billionaires virtually overnight. The co-optation of many liberation veterans into the bosom of South Africa's corporate hierarchy through the controversial policy of Black Economic Empowerment or BEE, only enriches our conception of post-colonial South Africa as a neo-colonial state, because this new class legitimizes and entrenches the economic system, exploitative thought it may be, solely for its own financial benefit.

*The Comprador Class: Black Economic Empowerment and its Discontents*

In a typically illuminating essay titled 'The Political Thought of Patrice Lumumba' from his book *Colonialism and Neo-colonialism*, Jean-Paul Sartre discusses the conditions surrounding the decolonization of the Congo.\textsuperscript{87} Sartre highlights the fact that in the time leading up to decolonization, a recession had hit the Belgian economy quite hard and the subsequent unrest in the mother country was really what forced the Belgian government to

\textsuperscript{85} Adebajo et. al, 20.
\textsuperscript{86} Klein, 206.
\textsuperscript{87} Sartre, 180.
grant independence to the Congo. He stresses that such a grant could however not be seriously considered before discussions had been conducted with Belgium’s major conglomerates which controlled business in the Congo. The Belgian state could no longer afford its colonial administration and thus a careful swap had to be carried out—with the approval of the large companies—of the colonial regime for neocolonialism.\textsuperscript{88}

Many studies have revealed that at the time of capitulation, the apartheid state was indeed in dire straits and that big business had for some time, been struggling to reach the profit-levels of the late 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{89} By courting some of the ANC’s more liberal-minded leaders during the 1980s, in particular Thabo Mbeki\textsuperscript{90}, South Africa’s captains of industry began laying the foundations for neo-colonialism.

Sartre argues though that the establishment of a neo-colonial state is dependent on the creation of a ‘petty bourgeoisie’ or comprador class of aspirant natives who can in effect manage the overt contradictions of neo-colonialism because they see themselves as leaders of the masses but at the same time they are entirely dependent on the corporate regime of their former masters.\textsuperscript{91}

The policy of Black Economic Empowerment has been a crucial cornerstone of the post-apartheid political economy. It has been argued rather compellingly by several observers that BEE was engineered by the white corporate oligarchs of South Africa, with the purpose of undermining any radical economic ambitions.\textsuperscript{92} They resolved to create a class of black multi-millionaires overnight, out of key members of the liberation movement’s leadership.

\textsuperscript{88} Sartre, 186.
\textsuperscript{90} Hadland, A & J Kantao, The Life and Times of Thabo Mbeki (Rivonia, South Africa: Zebra, 1999), p139; Gervisser, M, Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2007), p 703.
\textsuperscript{91} Sartre, 189.
\textsuperscript{92} See Leon, T ‘Mbeki the Younger and Malaysia open door for BEE debate’ in Business Day, 17/07/2009.
Thus the brutal, overtly racist regime of apartheid could be laid to rest, but the exploitative and racially organized economy could survive; and under the guise of a democratic state, it could even thrive.

The ANC government understood the process of economic transformation rather narrowly from the outset. Rather than a fundamental restructuring of the economy, which would have been difficult anyway because of important concessions in the negotiation process, it opted for more superficial and cosmetic changes.

Two policy documents are especially important in understanding this process: the first is the Employment Equity Act of 1998 whose purpose was purportedly to achieve equity in the workplace by firstly, ‘promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination.’

Secondly, the Act sought to implement ‘Affirmative Action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.’

Whilst these objectives have to a small extent been realized in certain sections of the economy, the general make-up of South Africa’s skilled corporate workforce, particularly at the management level is still overwhelmingly white. In many ways such pieces of legislation as the EEA demonstrate the ANC government’s naiveté in its economic outlook, and reveal just how outmaneuvered they were in the negotiation process. This because, so long as the basic economic structure was going to remain the same as under apartheid, not enough skilled blacks existed to take up senior positions within it. Blacks were always going to struggle to

94 Ibid.
suddenly become active participants in an economy that was historically engineered to exploit them.

The second significant piece of legislation having to do with economic transformation in the new South Africa was the Black Economic Empowerment Act which appeared in 2003. It listed seven fundamental objectives:

- Promoting economic transformation in order to enable meaningful participation of black people in the economy;

- Achieving a substantial change in the racial composition of ownership and management structures and in the skilled occupations of existing and new enterprises;

- Increasing the extent to which communities, workers, cooperatives and other collective enterprises own and manage existing and new enterprises and increasing their access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills training;

- Increasing the extent to which black women own and manage new and existing enterprises, and increasing their access to economic activities, infrastructure and skills training;

- Promoting investment programs that lead to broad-based and meaningful participation in the economy by black people in order to achieve sustainable development and general prosperity;

- Empowering rural and local communities by enabling access to economic activities, land, infrastructure, ownership and skills; and
• Promoting access to finance for black economic empowerment.⁹⁵

Progress on many of these objectives has at best been slow. The government’s major projects in terms of skills training in particular have been dogged by problems of maladministration, incompetence and corruption. Such a lack of important skills amongst the black population has mostly rendered useless the ambitious plans to create more space for them in the mainstream economy.

Thus by 2005, only 4% of the companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange were owned or controlled by blacks; and 70% of South Africa’s land, in 2006, was still monopolized by whites, who are just 10% of the population.⁹⁶ By 2007, of South Africa’s 35 million black citizens, only 5 thousand earned more than $60 000 a year. The number of whites in that income bracket was twenty times higher, and many more of course earned far more than that amount.⁹⁷

The only place where BEE has produced visible results has been at the very top of the political pyramid, where a few closely connected and highly influential figures have amassed enormous sums of money in a few short years. It is they who fill the important role of comprador class or ‘petty bourgeoisie’. The comprador elites by definition, because of their dependence on the economic hegemony of their former masters, serve as stalwart defenders of the established order.⁹⁸ As a class, this group is isolated both from the masses as well as from the industrialists on whom they depend.

Frantz Fanon says of this class that, ‘because it is bereft of ideas, because it lives to itself and cuts itself off from the people, undermined by its hereditary incapacity to think in terms of all

⁹⁶ Klein, 206.
⁹⁷ Ibid.
⁹⁸ Smith, p103.
the problems of the nation as seen from the point of view of the whole of that nation, the national middle class will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of manager for Western enterprise. 99 Thus neo-colonialism thrives and a fundamentally unjust economic system prevails, despite the existence of black majority rule. The entire country has been lulled into a dangerous complacency as greed and dependency have come to define the role of blacks in South Africa’s new economy.

Two Foreign Policies for Two Economies: The Bifurcated State of South Africa

On the 29th of May 1998, then Deputy President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki delivered an address to the National Assembly on reconciliation and nation building. Referring closely to the newly ratified constitution of the land, Mbeki asked the question of whether all South Africans were doing what they could to achieve reconciliation and to build the nation. He argued that the new South Africa had inherited a very unique problem from its apartheid past. Mbeki stated that:

A major component of the issue of reconciliation and nation building is defined by and derives from the material conditions in our society which have divided our country into two nations, the one black and the other white. We therefore make bold to say that South Africa is a country of two nations. One of these is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure... The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, with that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realization. This reality of two nations, underwritten by the perpetuation of the

99 Fanon, p. 88
racial, gender and spatial disparities born of a very long period of colonial and apartheid white minority domination, constitutes the material base which reinforces the notion that, indeed, we are not one nation, but two nations.100

Many scholars have discussed the ‘two nations’ problem in South Africa. Aedejji, Adebajo and Landsberg have noted that if white and black South Africa were indeed separate states, they would rank one hundred places apart on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) league table. One of these is in effect a third world country, the other a first world country.101

In his address Mbeki made strong reference to the case of Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall. He informed the house that during the first five years after unification in 1990, $586, 5 billion of public funds were transferred from West Germany to East Germany to underwrite Germany’s project of national unity and reconciliation. In so doing the then Deputy President was emphasizing the point that reconciliation and nation building were not possible without financial support. His own government did not have the resources of West Germany, nor did it have the ability to tax the economic beneficiaries of apartheid in order to fund reconciliation. Instead all he could do was plead to the collective conscience of South Africa’s corporate establishment, to assist in this important endeavor.

His pleas seemingly fell on deaf ears however, given that five years later in 2003, in an online letter to the ANC, Mbeki had to revisit the two nations thesis. He acknowledged that the economic successes of the post-apartheid government had been enjoyed almost exclusively by those in South Africa’s ‘first world economy’ and that those in the ‘third world economy’

101 Adebajo et. al, 20
continued to suffer.\textsuperscript{102} Mbeki's main point was still that the onus was on those in the predominantly white first economy to invest in those in the predominantly black second economy.

This persistent dichotomy in post-apartheid South Africa has had major implications for its foreign policy, particularly on the African continent. In effect, South Africa's two economies have brought about a situation where it has two foreign policies: one geared towards a more developmental international political agenda; it is multilateral and allied to the poor nations of the world. It seeks to engage the powerful nations and the conglomerates they harbor in order to advocate for a more equitable international economic system. The other bears the characteristics of mercantilism, wherein South Africa uses economic clout to steer things in its favor, constantly creating space for its very large conglomerates to dominate the economies of regional neighbours often to the detriment of local development.

The dichotomy in the literature on South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy is testimony to this fact. The literature on its foreign policy could almost be divided down the middle between two sets of dominant ideas. Many authors have focused either on the realist impulses in foreign policy or they have focused on the idealist influences therein. This because South Africa's policies are dichotomous and therefore schizophrenic, constantly trying to balance the interests of a domestic constituency that is divided between great wealth and great poverty. As such, South Africa is often unable to take an assertive and unequivocal stance in the face of very serious crises in the region, as is the case with Zimbabwe. So long as South

Africa fails to deal with these glaring contradictions, ‘it will have very little room to manoeuvre, let alone play a leadership role in Africa.’

The concerns about South Africa having a sub-imperial agenda in the region will continue to undermine its role as leader. The sentiments of African solidarity in the face of neocolonialism and imperialism, while often treated as peripheral in the dominant literature are a central factor in South African regional politics. Corporate expansion into the rest of Africa in the post-apartheid era has only heightened these sensitivities.

*Corporate Expansion Into Africa: A Sub-Imperial Agenda?*

A discussion on South Africa’s economic role in Africa and more specifically Southern Africa must necessarily be situated within a particular historical context. South Africa has dominated the regional economy of Southern Africa for over a century. Its past military destabilization of the region and domineering mercantilist role have left profound scars on its neighbours and a distrust even of a black-led government that will take decades to overcome.

Indeed as Adebajo has noted, ‘South Africa’s control of 80% of the regional economy and a 9:1 trade balance with its neighbours, continue to spread fears of a mercantilist ogre dominating the subregion; and externally, much of South Africa’s trade remains with western Europe and Asia in ties established largely when apartheid’s architects believed the country was a western bulwark against communist infiltration into Africa.’ Efforts aimed at

---

103 Ade et al.
104 Adebajo, 2008, 1.
105 Ibid.
normalizing economic relations between South Africa and its neighbours in the post-apartheid era have thus been plagued by difficulties emanating out of this historical context.

The black-led government of South Africa has been at pains since 1994 to portray itself more as a partner to its neighbours and less as the mercantilist bully of the apartheid period. In the new era however, South Africa’s dominance of the regional economy has if anything become even more severe. Trade with the rest of the African continent in the time between 1993 and 2003, grew by 328 per cent, and South Africa continues to enjoy a comfortable surplus with each of its South African trading partners. Of its R20.3 billion trade with the member states of SADC in 1999, 17.7 billion were exports to the region. Total trade with the rest of Africa in 2001, excluding the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) – consisting of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and South Africa – amounted to $856 million in imports and $3.7 billion in exports: an imbalance of nearly 5:1.

South Africa’s major corporate powerhouses, such as MTN and Standard Bank have grown immeasurably as a result of their exploits on the African continent. South Africa’s Shoprite Checkers’ more than 72 stores in 13 African countries outside South Africa do business that accounts for 12 per cent of the group’s turnover. Reserve Bank figures show that the country’s investment in the continent grew threefold, from R8 billion in 1996 to R26 billion in 2001. Between 1994 and 2000, South African foreign direct investment (FDI) into the

---

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
SADC region amounted to $5.4 billion: a total more than the combined British and American FDI in the region.\textsuperscript{111}

The activities of South Africa's parastatals in Africa tell an even more interesting story. In a paper titled 'The South Africans Have Arrived' Sanusha Naidoo, John Daniel and Varusha Naidoo note that the investment pattern has been the targeting of Africa's generally underdeveloped, or in some cases non-existent infrastructure and it has proved to be a boon for South African contractors and parastatals.\textsuperscript{112} Organisations such as Transnet and Eskom have established themselves at the forefront of Africa's infrastructure development efforts. Eskom is active in the energy field in 17 African countries in a bid to secure South Africa's electric power and sources of revenue. Its largest project is its participation in the Southern African Power Pool incorporating a common power grid among SADC member countries.\textsuperscript{113}

Dale Mckinley has argued compellingly that the ANC government has endeavored to use its large parastatals to enrich its emergent black middle class by trying to match the considerable presence on the continent, of South Africa's private organizations, whose white ownership has been slow in incorporating blacks into the domestic economy.\textsuperscript{114} He argues that the very generous loans meted out by Eskom and others to the Zimbabwean government for example, place the black led South African government in prime position to reap the rewards of the economic recovery of that country. By early 2000 ZESA, Zimbabwe's electricity parastatal was estimated to owe its South African counterpart in the region of R300 million.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Hudson, 131.
\textsuperscript{114} D McKinley, 'South Africa's Foreign Policy Towards Zimbabwe under Mbeki' in Review of African Political Economy, 31(100), 2004, 357.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
Just before its 2000 elections the Zimbabwean government received a rescue package to the tune of R1 billion from South Africa and of course later, further packages were to follow. For Mckinley, the rescue package provided to the Mugabe regime was anything but a genuine attempt to help the Zimbabwean people out of a rapidly escalating crisis and in the process shield the region from the associated contamination. Rather it was the first major step in what has become a race against time, to secure the economic interests of an emergent black South African bourgeoisie, in both the state and private sectors, through the auspices of a foreign policy smokescreen.\textsuperscript{116}

Mckinley’s contention is that the approach taken by the South African government in response to the Zimbabwean crisis cannot necessarily be understood as one defined by issues of human rights, or even by issues of the African people’s self-determination. One has to look within the South African state to identify what the interests are that inform the approach which has been taken.

If we look at the policies relating to socio-economic development in South Africa, as this chapter has done, there can be no doubt that the Mbeki government more or less preserved the socio-economic landscape of times gone by, while at the same time a very small group of Africans have been able to gain access to large amounts of capital and in so doing force their way into the first economy. A fundamental reshaping of that landscape in terms of the ownership of land and access to resources has never really been on the table.

The state machinery in its various guises, has been used as a means for that emerging, very small and closely connected black middle class to prize open the tight fist of South Africa’s white-owned economy. Imperialism has in the process become firmly entrenched in the new South Africa.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
Foreign policy in Africa and in particular towards Zimbabwe has been yet another way in which this black industrialist group could on the back of white capital, widen its sphere of influence. The South African government has sought to achieve this by bringing about an economic recovery of the region, including Zimbabwe, which is reliant on South Africa's parastatals. Thus the services, skills, goods needed to fuel that recovery and development must necessarily come from South Africa, and in so doing, enrich its new black industrialists and entrench South African economic hegemony even further.

It is in this way that South Africa becomes immensely vulnerable to Robert Mugabe's lamentation of an imperialist agenda on the continent and in the sub-region. While his attacks have more overtly been aimed at Britain and the United States, more covertly, they have been an important means of keeping South Africa at bay and of undermining its sub-imperial agenda. It is an agenda that other neighbors of South Africa are not unaware of, and thus Mugabe has been able to find plenty of support within SADC, which has in turn allowed him to prolong his disastrous stay in power.

In the next chapter we look inside the Zimbabwean state in order to try and track the courses of the political and economic crisis which have gripped that country since 2000.
Chapter 4: Neocolonialism to Radicalism: The Zimbabwean State Since Independence

The aim of this chapter is to explore the origins of post-colonial Zimbabwe’s land problem and the impact that this has had on the politics of the Mugabe regime both in Zimbabwe and in the region. In doing so the chapter begins by looking at the circumstances surrounding the signing of the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979 which ushered in Zimbabwe’s first democratic elections in 1980. It then moves on to look at some of the issues which frustrated progress in independent Zimbabwe, reducing it in effect to a neo-colonial state. It also discusses the regional politics of independent Zimbabwe, in particular its intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1998 and the effects that this had on its economy and on the politics of the SADC region. Finally it discusses the land redistribution problem and how this brought about the radicalisation of the Zimbabwean state in the late 1990s.

The chapter makes two main arguments, firstly that the issues leading to the radicalisation of the Zimbabwean state have much to do with the inadequacies of Lancaster House, particularly in terms of dealing with the redistribution of land. Secondly it argues that its radicalisation has enhanced the reputation of the Zimbabwean state in the region, precisely because so many other states there, including South Africa, face similar issues with regards to imperialism and the lack of indigenous control over the sources of wealth in these countries.

The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Lancaster House Agreement

In 1979, the British government took it upon itself to organise a conference at Lancaster House, to which all the parties to the Rhodesian-Zimbabwean conflict were invited. The purpose was to find a solution to the conflict which incorporated all of the belligerents.
As the former colonial power, Britain took it upon itself to facilitate negotiations to end the Zimbabwean conflict. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher assigned the task of facilitator to a Lord Carrington.

Carrington began his mission by setting out certain fundamental principles; firstly that Britain was acting not unilaterally but on a mandate of the Commonwealth; that the British were serious about asserting their decolonizing responsibilities; that the constitution was the key to the settlement, and that only when it was solved would the conference proceed to discussions about specific arrangements; that Britain had much experience as a decolonizing power, which enabled the British negotiators to deal with the sticky issues involved in the conference; that agreement would demand compromise by all parties; that independence did not mean that one side would win but that all sides would have an equal chance to win an election and finally, that the British proposals would form the basis of the working document – other parties’ suggestions would be considered but only insofar as they dealt with the British document.  

The liberation movements in Zimbabwe’s war had gained much ground on their opponents since the decolonization (in particular) of Mozambique in 1975. While Zambia’s Kenneth Kaunda had hosted the ZAPU army ZIPRA for some time, it was the new Mozambican government led by Samora Machel, which allowed the more radical ZANLA forces of ZANU-PF to be based on Mozambican soil and from there, launch attacks on eastern Rhodesia that proved a very crucial factor.

Since 1975 ZANU-PF had slowly been gaining the upper hand militarily in the struggle for Zimbabwe. Their army had carved out chunks of the eastern territory of Rhodesia and

---

brought them under their control. There they set up parallel courts and social services offices. In the rural areas even the role of the formerly all powerful District Commissioner was under considerable pressure. His authority had been increasingly challenged by ZANU-PF officials, who had established their own administrative authority during the war in the 'semi-liberated zones'.

So while at Lancaster House the British tried to inculcate the belief that if no agreement was reached at the conference the situation would be made markedly worse, for ZANU-PF a continuation of the war was probably a more favourable outcome. As Stephen Stedman has observed, Mugabe did not perceive a moment that would be worse if the conference were to fail. In fact Mugabe was deeply suspicious of any settlement and feared that the conference was an attempt to strip ZANU of what it had gained on the battlefields. He was absolutely convinced that ZANU would win outright in the next three years.

Even though Mugabe was very optimistic, it was his support in the region which had been so crucial to the liberation movements' success so far, which may have compelled him to partake in the peace talks. Observers have placed a lot of emphasis on the fact that both Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Samora Machel of Mozambique had grown weary of the war effort and the considerable damage that it was having on their own countries. In fact a communiqué was sent to Mugabe and his ZAPU counterpart Joshua Nkomo, making these issues clear to them. It stated that "if the PF refused to take part in the Lancaster House negotiations, the Front-Line states would withdraw their support of the PF and close down

119 Stedman, 207.
120 Ibid, 173.
the war. At the same time, the PF was reassured that, if the Conference failed because of Britain..., the Front-Line states would support fully a renewal of the armed conflict.”\(^{121}\)

By the same token, Stedman and others have noted that none of the liberation movement leaders really took these threats of support being withdrawn by the front line states very seriously. They believed that given the imminence of victory, they could negotiate for further support from their hosts.\(^{122}\)

During a heated session towards the end of the Lancaster House conference Mugabe made some telling comments to the facilitators, which reveal his perception about the status of the conflict. He said: “there has been a liberation struggle in Zimbabwe since 1966; my delegation assumed the responsibility of decolonizing the country and in doing so we have established formidable forces...mine is a party to be reckoned with, which holds definite positions from which we cannot be moved if the intention is to force us to capitulate.”\(^{123}\) Later on he added: “We cannot accept a position of inferiority in a situation where we are moving towards victory – although victory may take time.”\(^{124}\) Mugabe was thus undoubtedly certain of victory, and one through which his party could facilitate a fundamental reorganisation of socio-economic relations in Zimbabwe.

Lancaster House was however a unique opportunity within the context of Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle for these parties to gain international credibility and participate in a dialogue which would expose the movement to outsiders. This would allow them to win friends and support in the international community by showing themselves not to be mindless, gun-toting communists bent on total destruction. This way they could begin to

---

\(^{121}\) Ibid, 171.
\(^{122}\) Stedman, 191.
\(^{123}\) Ibid.
\(^{124}\) Ibid.
build bridges for the future by being able to for example secure aid and other financial relationships with the world’s powers, for the new Zimbabwe.

The violation of principles enshrined in the Lancaster House Agreement by Zimbabwe’s post-colonial regime, represents the failure of that agreement. The agreement failed partly because of a misunderstanding on the part of the facilitators of the agreement, as to the real reasons for the participation of the liberation movement. Britain underestimated the strength of the liberation movements at the time, particularly ZANU.\textsuperscript{125} And this was to have profound repercussions in the post-colonial era.

Britain was under the impression that the liberation movement participated in the negotiations because the movement saw the costs of continuation as outweighing the benefits. This way Britain overestimated how much the movement felt it had to lose. The liberation movement however retained significant power throughout Lancaster and gained in power as a result of winning the elections that Lancaster House ushered in. From this position, hard-liners within the movement have pursued their interests in post-colonial Zimbabwe in a unilateral and brazen manner, in effect tearing-up the Lancaster House Agreement.

The radicalisation of the Zimbabwean state since the late 1990s needs to be understood therefore as flowing out of an agreement which the liberation movement saw as failing to deal with the fundamental issues concerning the political economy of Zimbabwe. While for a period the new black government was prepared to wait for assistance in order to facilitate such important programs as land redistribution (a period we might refer to as one of neocolonialism), when that assistance was not forthcoming, ZANU-PF radicalised the state, and in effect resumed the liberation struggle which had always been about the basic source of wealth in Zimbabwe: the land.

\textsuperscript{125} Stedman, 192.
Post-colonial Zimbabwe & the Breakdown of Lancaster House

Christine Sylvester, an observer of Zimbabwe's 1995 elections noted that 55 out of the 120 parliamentary seats open for contestation had already been decided for ZANU-PF, because the six opposition parties of the moment did not put up candidates for them. ZANU-PF could also count on another 30 parliamentarians: 12 non-constituency members, to be appointed by the President of Zimbabwe, as well as eight provincial governors; and then ten chiefs elected by local chiefs, all beholden to the ruling party for carrying forward traditional powers to the post-independence era. In other words, ZANU-PF was sure of obtaining 85 of the 150 seats in the House of Assembly before even a single ballot was cast.\textsuperscript{126}

Parliamentary democracy of the kind envisioned in the Lancaster House Agreement has been non-existent in post-colonial Zimbabwe. In fact, wholesale constitutional changes, have been the order of the day. In the 1990's local elections, candidates of ZANU-PF lost to challengers in more than twenty constituencies outside the capital and five in the Harare area. The ZANU-PF Central Committee decided to nullify the results and repeat those elections. In some constituencies primaries were held three times until the party's handpicked candidate won or the opposition withdrew.\textsuperscript{127}

Following a merger in 1987 with ZAPU, ZANU had enough votes to amend certain clauses in the 1979 constitution adopted at Lancaster House. The Westminster model with its system of the prime minister accountable to Parliament was replaced by an executive president elected directly by the voters and more independent of parliament. The Senate was abolished


and so were the twenty legislative seats reserved by the Lancaster House Agreement for white voters.\textsuperscript{128}

At Lancaster House it had also been agreed that land would not be forcibly expropriated from whites and that international funding would allow for land to be exchanged on a willing buyer, willing seller basis. The British government pointed to the case of Kenya, where it had somewhat successfully funded a land redistribution program just over a decade earlier. Such funding was slow in coming for Zimbabwe though and after the election of Labour’s Tony Blair in 1997, it dried up all together. Following a lost constitutional referendum in 2000 then, the Zimbabwe government ratified the wholesale seizure of white-owned farms. These seizures led Zimbabwe to experiencing one of the most severe economic meltdowns ever seen.

\textit{The Historical Context of the Land Redistribution Programme}

Despite their small numbers, the minority white population of Zimbabwe retained control of the economy after the democratic elections of 1980, in particular the commercial agricultural sector. The Lancaster House Agreement had stipulated that land redistribution would take place on a ‘willing buyer’, ‘willing seller’ basis, and Britain agreed to fund this process.\textsuperscript{129}

Mugabe’s reconciliatory policy at independence meant that the structures particularly of economic oppression remained in place. Land reform was very slow primarily because the government did not have the money to buy the land back. Mugabe was indeed very reluctant to make hasty moves regarding the economy in case he scared white skilled workers and

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, 24.
\textsuperscript{129} Mamdani, 3.
investors away. This is of course the exact situation Mandela would find himself in just over a decade later in South Africa.

These are the concerns that come to form the policy cornerstone of the neo-colonial state. The very pressing need to maintain economic stability, such that the corporate giants that control the peripheral areas don’t retreat, supplants the more basic imperative of reorganising racialised, exploitative and oppressive economic relations of the colonial era.

Despite the lapsing of the Lancaster House Agreement in 1990 and the incorporation of the Land Acquisition Act aimed at speeding up land reform, Zimbabwe’s economy continued to be defined by extreme white wealth and extreme black poverty. The dawn of liberation in 1980 did not bring with it a better life for Zimbabweans. The oppressive system which had been in effect since the late 19th century, when Cecil Rhodes’ British South Africa Company first crossed the Limpopo River, had simply mutated but maintained its original character. Some six thousand white farmers owned 15.5 million hectares of prime land, 39 per cent of the land in that country, while about 4.5 million farmers (a million households) in ‘communal areas’ were left to subsist on 16.4 million hectares of the most arid land, to which they’d been removed or confined by a century of colonial rule.\footnote{Mamdani, 1.}

The land redistribution program that followed years later in 2000, needs to be understood within this historical context. Mamood Mamdani has argued compellingly that, ‘the people of Zimbabwe are likely to remember 2000-3 as the end of the settler colonial era. Any assessment of contemporary Zimbabwe needs to begin with this sobering fact.’\footnote{Ibid.}
The Politics of Redistribution

Land invasions have been a feature of Zimbabwe’s politics since the early 1980s. After a decade of independence, only 58 000 families had been resettled by the state, on three million hectares of land. No more than 19 percent of the land acquired between 1980 and 1992 was of prime agricultural value, and as the 1990s wore on, land transfers actually declined.\textsuperscript{132}

The greater land hunger became, the more often invasions were mounted by land-hungry communal farmers. In response, Mugabe created local ‘squatter control’ units in 1985, and they were soon evicting squatters in droves. At this point Zimbabwean law still defined a squatter in racial terms, as an African whose house happens to be situated in an area which has been declared European or is set apart for some other reason.\textsuperscript{133}

This is a crucial point, which needs great emphasis in the context of this paper. Land invasions have historically not been a policy driven by the Zimbabwean state; a point which an overwhelming majority of the literature on this topic completely ignores. It was the government of Mugabe that dealt very harshly with squatters and invaders of farms while the Lancaster House Agreement was still in place. This was the period when the state was in effect waiting for the funds that had been negotiated for the ‘willing buyer’, ‘willing seller’ process of land redistribution, to be delivered.

As Mamdani has noted, by the late 1990s, market-led land transfers had slowed to a trickle; as had British contributions to the fund set up to pay landowners, with a mere 44 million pounds paid out between 1980 and 1992, much less than anticipated at Lancaster House.\textsuperscript{134}

When New Labour took over in 1997, Clare Short, the minister for International Development, claimed that neither she nor her colleagues came from the landed class in

\textsuperscript{132} Sachikonye, 2005; Mamdani.
\textsuperscript{133} Mamdani.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
Britain—‘my own origins are Irish and as you know we were colonized not colonizers,’ she wrote to the Zimbabwean minister of agriculture and land—they could not be held responsible for what Britain had done in colonial Rhodesia.\textsuperscript{135}

This default coincided with a rise inside Zimbabwe of demands for compulsory acquisition. Veterans led land occupations at Svosve and Goromonzi in 1997, clashing with Mugabe and Zanu-PF. Owing to pressure from the squatters, occupiers and local leaders, as well as from sections of the new black elite, Mugabe in 1999 decided to revise the constitution drafted at Lancaster's House.\textsuperscript{136}

In May of 1999 President Robert Mugabe established a 400-member commission, to formulate a set of proposals for constitutional reforms. Amongst the proposed reforms, were a significantly strengthened presidency and the establishment of the principle of land acquisition without compensation. These and other proposals were placed before the people of Zimbabwe in a February 2000 referendum. The newly formed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), under the leadership of former Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) leader Morgan Tsvangirai, campaigned for a ‘No’ vote in the referendum. This proved successful, as 53% of those who partook, rejected the reforms.\textsuperscript{137}

Shortly after a highly contested and narrow victory for ZANU-PF in parliamentary elections in June of 2000, the government announced the launch of its ‘fast track’ land resettlement program. The program set out to resettle some 3000 farms, including white commercial farms. By the end of 2000, some 1600 farms had been occupied, and by January 2002, some 6481 farms had been listed by the government, for acquisition and resettlement.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{135} Mamdani, 3.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Hughes, p 58.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
The program proved to be catastrophic, and began to paralyse one of Africa’s most vibrant economies. Owing largely to capital flight and a severe drought, many of the farms that were redistributed ground to a halt. The government was in no position to assist financially in this regard as it had just about exhausted its coffers fighting a war in the Congo to save the regime of Laurent Kabila. The result however has been that Zimbabwe’s economy fares amongst the worst in the world, with inflation at record levels along with unemployment and poverty.

It’s preoccupation with the Congolese conflict in order to assert some measure of regional authority contributed significantly to the economic crisis which befell the Zimbabwean state from the late 1990s onwards. The effort to gain a foothold in the region, and assert some form of hegemony, particularly with the rise of liberated South Africa in 1994 needs to be factored into any analysis of the economic turmoil that engulfed Zimbabwe after 1997.

*The Cost of Hegemonic Aspirations: Operation Sovereign Legitimacy*

Operation Sovereign Legitimacy emerged against a backdrop of political instability within the DRC. After Laurent Kabila’s AFDC toppled President Mobutu’s regime, Kabila himself assumed the presidency in 1997 and changed the name from Zaire to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Kabila however once in power was unable to consolidate due to a number of factors including: the fragmentation of the army, the alienation of Western investors as well as his refusal to move against Ugandan and Rwandan rebels operating within the DRC. He also decided not to vest in the traditional allies of Rwanda and Uganda and instead sought an alliance with long time Ugandan foes Sudan and Libya. In 1998, Kabila also formed an alliance with Zimbabwe and joined SADC.
These decisions and policies proved costly as mutiny broke out within the Congolese military. The mutiny snowballed and resulted in a general rebellion by August 1998, which gave indication that Kabila’s regime was on the verge of collapse. In turn, Kabila appealed for help from the UN, the OAU and SADC leaders. Almost immediately, leaders from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and Namibia met leaders from the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda in Victoria Falls. On August 18 Robert Mugabe announced that SADC would positively react to Kabila’s appeals and provide military assistance in the DRC\textsuperscript{139}.

Together with Kabila loyalists, the Zimbabwe, Angolan and Namibian forces defeated the Western rebellion and preserved Kinshasa and the Kabila Regime. After this initial success, the Eastern part of the DRC was still mainly controlled by rebels, which saw a stalemate reached between the rebels and the pro-Kabila forces. This stalemate however soon escalated and grew more and more complicated as thousands of troops from a number of African countries became involved in the conflict. Compounding the complex situation, a UN peacekeeping force was introduced following the Lusaka cease-fire agreement in August 1999, which failed to bring peace.

Furthermore, violence escalated in the DRC when Uganda and Rwanda broke their alliance over disagreements regarding control and influence over the Eastern DRC. Prospects for peace only improved once Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia withdrew their forces in 2001 thus leaving peacekeeping solely to the UN. The conflict however did not end, but SADC peace enforcement operations certainly had\textsuperscript{140}.


\textsuperscript{140} Ibid, 125.
Operation Sovereign Legitimacy was explicitly launched as a regional peace enforcement operation under the auspices of SADC. According to international law, as a peace enforcement operation it legally required a Security Council mandate.

The creation of the Organ for Politics, Defense and Security in 1996 within SADC gave the organization the internal capacity to decide on issues of peace enforcement and intervention.\(^{141}\)

There was no unanimous agreement between SADC members regarding intervention in the DRC either. As a member-state Zimbabwe took the lead and claimed, after an Organ meeting, SADC would respond positively to the situation in DRC. Although Mugabe claimed that SADC members agreed unanimously on the Operation, the Organ meeting had no legitimacy for decision making because it was not a summit meeting (which is the highest decision making structure within SADC).

Furthermore, South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique openly opposed the operation and stated that there was no uniform SADC policy on the DRC and that Zimbabwe had violated the internal rules of SADC.\(^ {142}\)

Zimbabwe’s decision to go through SADC in intervening in the DRC can be explained through several arguments:

One argument is that Zimbabwe was concerned with how the intervention would be perceived by other Southern African states. Mugabe thought that if Zimbabwe took the lead in peace enforcement in the region they would be recognized as having political importance. Furthermore, the motivation for Zimbabwe’s leadership of the operation has frequently been linked to Mugabe’s personal desire for prestige and international status as well as to establish

\(^{141}\) Ibid.
\(^{142}\) Ibid.
himself as a powerful military leader\textsuperscript{143}. This can be seen in the context of him trying to reassert himself as a leading African statesman after being overshadowed by South Africa’s Nelson Mandela since 1994.

Another argument holds that Zimbabwe took the lead in intervening in the DRC for reasons of national interest and a vision to exploit the DRC’s mineral wealth\textsuperscript{144}. Essentially Mugabe went through the structures of SADC to pursue his aims because he thought that other SADC members would coalesce behind him.

Whatever the reasons behind the intervention though, it cost the Zimbabwean state large amounts of money which it could ill-afford to spend. Zimbabwe failed to get the support of many SADC members, with only Angola and Namibia coming on board. Its very narrow support meant that Zimbabwe had to bear the brunt of the costs of the operation, spending over US$2 billion over a period of four years, with withdrawal only coming in 2002. Thus as the land resettlement program was gaining momentum, the Zimbabwean government was already losing large sums of money.

\textit{Radicalisation, Opposition and State Violence in Zimbabwe}

Raftopoulos and Phimister have argued that the dynamics of domestic tyranny and developmental collapse have worked complementarily to form the core of the Zimbabwean crisis. They note that the development of a tendency of coercion within the state has been a function of the emergence of oppositional structures in the socio-political landscape, in response to the impotence of the post-colonial state in dealing with developmental challenges.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item [\textsuperscript{143}] Ibid.
  \item [\textsuperscript{144}] Ibid, 155.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
As is often the case in post-liberation societies, the one unifying factor of oppression begins to dissipate once the colonial state has been removed, and slowly the very disciplined and highly consolidated movements start to fragment. This is often compounded by the fact that the new state is incapable of bringing fundamental changes in the society. The resulting disillusionment gives birth to a variety of organizations that in essence emerge from the liberation movements.\textsuperscript{145}

The case of Zimbabwe is much the same. The rampant forces of economic globalization, which have exacerbated the plight of many African countries in the post-war era, have only compounded the problem. In Zimbabwe, as trade unionists, public-sector workers and a broad range of civic actors, who had formed a new elite emerging from the monolith of Zanu-PF, all demanded economic and political changes of one kind or another, the corset of national unity as defined by the ruling party, proved unable to contain the expanding pressures.\textsuperscript{146}

One the groups which was placing pressure on the state and Zanu PF was the war veterans of the liberation struggle; and in the process of managing the fall out with this important constituency, Zanu PF effectively militarized state politics in Zimbabwe, bringing the military hierarchy of the movement into the centre of power.

Discussing the relationship between the ruling party and the war veterans, Norma Kriger says that:

Their relationship has been characterized by collaboration, conflict and accommodation. Veterans and the party have used each other to pursue their different, though overlapping, objectives. It has sanctioned and encouraged veteran’s violence against its opponents and rewarded them for work well done. It has invoked its role in the liberation struggle to justify its use of veterans and its objectives.

\textsuperscript{145} Raptopoulos & Phimister, 2004, 357.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
Veterans have used their allegedly superior contribution to the liberation struggle to justify their claims for preferential access to state resources — jobs, promotions, pensions and land.\textsuperscript{147}

From 1997 then, the Zimbabwean state, through its ruling party slowly began to incorporate the war veterans and their coercive capacity into the ambit of the state. This allowed the regime to become less democratic, as it gradually developed the capacity to use force to deal with its increasingly precarious position.\textsuperscript{148}

It was the national public sector strike of 1996 that perhaps dealt the fiercest blow to the confidence of the state however. It served as a warning that party loyalties could no longer be taken for granted. It was also a time when links became strengthened between the public-sector workers (now primarily African, due to government transformation programs), and the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).\textsuperscript{149} 'The labour movement as a whole had grown in organizational capacity and mobilization skills since the mid-1980s and by the late 1990s, used its autonomous national base to present a direct challenge to the ruling party’s economic and political policies.'\textsuperscript{150}

So while the material benefits of liberation continued to elude the vast majority of the Zimbabwean people, the unity that had brought about independence eroded and the state was on the back foot. The state remained largely unresponsive as the economic crisis deepened, and it was the labour movement that was able to skillfully articulate the linkages between this crisis and broader problems of democratization.\textsuperscript{151}

The success of the labour movement in articulating these issues had the larger effect of opening up the space for socio-economic and political debate in Zimbabwe, with women’s

\textsuperscript{147} Quoted in Rafiopoulos & Phimister, 2004, 360.
\textsuperscript{149} Rafiopoulos & Phimister, 357.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
groups being able to join the discussion as well as many other civil society players as well.\textsuperscript{152} These developments culminated in the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. Its formation marked a watershed in the postcolonial period. It allowed for issues around democracy and civic rights, once part of the liberation agenda but subsequently sidelined, were returned to the centre of political debate.\textsuperscript{153}

The Zimbabwean state succumbed to these pressures, both internal and external. Its inability to bring about the kinds of changes envisaged during the struggle fragmented its support base, particularly in the urban areas, where the new black elite which occupied public-sector posts and was starting businesses was now becoming a key constituency.

The state very conveniently, but not altogether mistakenly chose to define all of its failures in terms of the problem of imperialism. The fact that the economy continued to be dominated by the white settler community was a key stumbling block in the fight for socio-economic change.

Thus as Moyo and Yeros have stated, "if independence bequeathed a neo-colonial state in Zimbabwe, the late nineties saw a rebellion against neo-colonialism."\textsuperscript{154} The radicalization of the Zimbabwean state from 1997 onwards was marked by its interventionist role in the economy.\textsuperscript{155} For those advocating this shift in the state’s posture, the issues of democratization and civic rights had to give way to the more pressing matter of wealth redistribution. Seemingly these two imperatives were mutually exclusive.

Moyo and Yeros argue that, the respect for human rights require a secure economic, social and political context. Human rights cannot be detached from their context and propounded

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} Moyo et. al, 104.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
moralistically. So without a firm base for social justice, the pleasures of human rights and democracy cannot be enjoyed.

Indeed this was the argument being spelt out by Robert Mugabe at the United Nations 62nd Session of the General Assembly, when he responded to US President George Bush’s comments on the Zimbabwean state’s disregard for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In an impassioned speech, which drew much applause from the audience, Mugabe told Bush that it was the Zanu PF that fought to bring democracy and human rights to Zimbabwe and that overthrew a tyrannical regime which the United States and Britain condoned.\textsuperscript{157}

This ability to repeatedly invoke the struggle for liberation whenever the difficult questions of democratization and human rights surface is what has shielded Mugabe and his government from more stern and conspicuous criticism amongst his peers in the region. This, because all of them without fail are trapped between the two imperatives of democratization, rule of law and respect for property rights on the one hand, and the scourge of imperialism and neocolonialism on the other.

The radicalization of the Zimbabwean state is defined then primarily by the interventionist role taken by the state in the economy. In the process, the state has become authoritarian and undemocratic. Those who would advocate for it have argued that there is no other way for a post-colonial regime to pass through the status of neo-colonialism.

Mugabe’s UN address in 2007 drew much applause as stated, and this is because so many third world leaders agree with his basic argument against imperialism. One of those leaders is

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
Thabo Mbeki, who as head of the South African state tried by all means to find a solution to Zimbabwe’s crisis that had Zanu PF with its soaring anti-imperialist rhetoric, at the helm. For close to a decade, Mbeki looked to keep the door open to Mugabe while at the same time trying not to alienate the western powers the Zimbabwean leader was attacking.

The crisis in Zimbabwe is defined by two seemingly contradictory issues; on the one hand are the issues of democratization and human rights and on the other, those of sovereignty and anti-imperialism. That duality between what are seen as ‘western concerns’ and ‘African concerns’ characterizes the stalemate. South Africa, because of its two constituencies, has been delicately trying to resolve the matter without erring too heavily on either side. This has been the essence of the ‘quiet diplomacy’ approach.
Chapter 5: Quiet Diplomacy in South Africa’s Africa Foreign Policy

This chapter discusses the policy of quiet diplomacy towards Zimbabwe within the context of South Africa’s broader Africa foreign policy. It argues firstly that, its continental ambitions of hegemony require South Africa to have a strong domestic base for legitimacy, and that its failure to transform internally as discussed earlier in the paper, has denied it that legitimacy. It argues also that Mbeki, from the perspective of his African Renaissance ideology, sympathised strongly with the arguments being forwarded by Mugabe throughout the years of the crisis, as did many other Southern African leaders, but rather than antagonise the western nations seen as the perpetrators of imperialism, Mbeki always looked to find a middle ground between western interests and those of Africa. This he did because within his own country those two sets of interests in a sense converge and exist side by side making it the most unequal society on earth.

The chapter begins by looking at South Africa’s role on the continent since 1994 and the emergence of the African Renaissance ideology. It then focuses on the impact of the Zimbabwean crisis on the SADC countries and discusses how this organisation has looked to respond to the situation.

The chapter then looks to focus more specifically on Mbeki’s conception of the problem in Zimbabwe, making close reference to a discussion paper compiled by the former South African president for his Zimbabwean counterpart in 2001, addressing the crisis in Zimbabwe. From this basis it incorporates the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) into the equation with the intention of seeing how both Mugabe and Mbeki have marginalised this organisation on the basis of the anti-imperialist discourse.
Finally the chapter will discuss the struggle for hegemony within Southern Africa and how this has played out in relation to Quiet Diplomacy. It looks at the quiet diplomacy strategy as partly being about a tussle for dominance in the region based on the one hand on South Africa’s economic prowess and on the other on Zimbabwe’s anti-imperialist ideology.

*Post-Apartheid South Africa, Africa & The African Renaissance*

Perhaps the most recurring question that informs most African states’ interaction with post-apartheid South Africa is that of whether the Republic considers itself to be within Africa, or apart from it. In other words does South Africa continue to see itself as a western outpost,\(^{158}\) a gatekeeper of the interests of western countries and their conglomerates that dominate economic activity on the continent;\(^{159}\) or does the new South Africa have the developmental interests of the of the world’s poorest continent and region at heart? As Maxi Schoeman and Chris Alden have noted, ‘the country has been struggling since 1994 for acceptance by its African counterparts, and it is this “struggle” that largely explains its Zimbabwean policy, particularly when the policy is viewed in the context of international and broader African responses.’\(^{160}\)

A key turning point in South Africa’s relations with the African continent came in 1995 when the first ANC government had spent only a year in office. In Nigeria, the writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight co-accused had been arrested and tried by the regime of General Sani Abacha, and a global campaign to save them had been launched whose scale was

---

\(^{158}\) Adebajo et. al, 18.

\(^{159}\) Ibid.

\(^{160}\) Schoeman, M & C Alden, ‘The Hegemon that wasn’t: South Africa’s Foreign Policy Towards Zimbabwe’ *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Le Centre Sheraton Hotel, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, March 17, 2004*, 3.
reminiscent of the ‘free Mandela’ campaigns of a previous era. At the time it appeared as though the new South African president Nelson Mandela was their only hope, and indeed the western world in particular was looking to him to intervene. As Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka wrote, Mandela was the moral voice of the continent and a lot rested on him, as the world was waiting to take its cue from him.

It was Mbeki however, who initially convinced Mandela to take a calm, diplomatic approach towards Abacha. He convinced his boss that he had an inside track to the dictator and that whatever might be said in private, it was imperative to demonstrate African solidarity in public. Earlier that year, Mbeki had persuaded Abacha to commute the death sentences of 41 ‘coup plotters’ — including Olusegun Obasanjo — to 15 years’ imprisonment and at that stage Abacha had also agreed not to prosecute Saro-Wiwa. Mbeki was therefore quite confident that the situation could be resolved quietly and amicably.

In November of 1995 however, on the eve of the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (Chogm) in New Zealand which was to be South Africa’s glorious readmission into the organisation, Abacha went back on his word: Saro-Wiwa and his co-accused had been found guilty in court, and they would be executed. Mandela told Mbeki that the world expected action and they could not sit on their hands much longer. Mbeki pleaded for more time to try and persuade Abacha not to follow through with the executions, but it was to no avail, and the executions went ahead. Once news came out that the executions had taken place, Cyril Ramaphosa, then secretary-general of the ANC and Mandela all the way in

---

161 Gervisser, 703.
162 Ibid, 704.
163 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
New Zealand called press conferences where they simultaneously berated the Nigerian leadership and called for that country’s expulsion from all international organisations.\textsuperscript{165}

From that point onwards, the discreet back-door channels to important leaders on the continent were shut off to Mandela, Mbeki and the ANC. Other African leaders closed ranks around Nigeria and South Africa was out in the cold. Mbeki most especially was furious at the manner in which Mandela had reacted. Nigeria was by far the wealthiest member of the OAU, a regional powerhouse that could not simply be chastised by South Africa, a new kid on the block that still had to prove its credentials as an African state.

As Mark Gevisser notes in his groundbreaking study on the former South African president, the Abacha debacle provides an important blueprint for Mbeki’s later approach to Robert Mugabe. So much of the political personality Mbeki would later manifest with respect to Zimbabwe Gevisser writes, is discernable in the way that he handled Nigeria: an unshakeable faith in the back door and behind-the-scenes manoeuvring; a loathing of confrontation, and the instinctive recoil from public criticism of a sitting African head of state.\textsuperscript{166}

In Nigeria in 1995, as in Zimbabwe five years later, Mbeki worked off a belief that the west’s condemnation of African tyranny was driven by ‘we-told-you-so’ racism and the desire to continue controlling the continent’s destiny, rather than any real concern for the subjects of such tyranny. He also seemed to believe that any public criticism of an Abacha or a Mugabe would play into the racist belief that African’s were unfit to rule themselves.\textsuperscript{167}

It was out of these ideas about how the west views Africa and Africans, and also what Mbeki saw as a pressing need for the continent to provide its own solutions, that his own notion of

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
an African Renaissance was born. Mbeki's idea of an African Renaissance comes from his belief that Africa is yet to fully and properly define itself. In March 2001 he said, 'we speak about the need for the African Renaissance in part so that we ourselves, and not another, determine who we are, what we stand for, what our vision and hopes are, how we do things, what programmes we adopt to make our lives worth living, who we relate to and how.'\textsuperscript{168}

It is thus an ideology built on the important principle of self-determination. This is a principle to which all post-colonial societies can relate, and one which has defined the politics of national liberation movements, especially in the post-colonial period.

Africa in particular faces problems of independence and autonomy even in the post-colonial era as we have seen. African Renaissance as conceived by Mbeki was the vehicle in which the continent could move closer to ridding itself of this problem. It was essentially a political, social and economic vision for continental renewal.\textsuperscript{169}

Under the auspices of the ideology of African Renaissance, Mbeki, with the help of a handful of African leaders, developed and launched the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) in October 2001. It contradicted the principle of self-determination though, in that it seemed to have been devised along the lines of neo-liberal capitalist ideas, and lacked a developmental focus. As such it placed a lot of emphasis on foreign aid and donors from the west. Consequently drew a lot of criticism on the continent and it has generally had very little success.

\textsuperscript{168} Mbeki, T \textit{Africa Define Yourself} (Randburg: Mafube, 2002).
SADC and the Zimbabwean Crisis

The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was born in 1980. It was established -for the most part- as a response to the domination of sub-regional politics, by the apartheid state in South Africa. The terms of its establishment were enshrined in the Lusaka Declaration of that year. It also played a significant role in the mobilisation of international support in the fight against the tyrannical government of South Africa. It proved quite successful in getting international actors to impose sanctions as part of this coordinated effort.

In 1992 the leaders of SADCC, convinced that things in South Africa were taking a turn for the better, made the decision that a shift in the agenda of the organisation was called for. It was decided that a move towards market integration was necessary if the members were going to adequately deal with the demands of a rapidly globalising international economy.

As Margaret Lee has noted, it was this reassessment that resulted in the rebirth of the organisation as the Southern African Development Community or SADC. Amongst the key objectives, was for SADC members to “evolve common political values, systems and institutions.”

From its inception, which coincided with the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the organisation had been dominated by Harare, then the biggest economy in the region outside of South Africa. Mugabe and ZANU-PF with their strong Africanist rhetoric had emerged as the custodians of liberation politics in Southern Africa.

170 Schoeman, M., “From SADCC to SADC and Beyond: The Politics of Economic Integration”.
172 Ibid, 47.
The release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 was to have major repercussions on the politics of SADC therefore. The hegemony of the Harare regime within SADC was to come under threat for the first time. The tension between Mandela and Mugabe was almost immediate. In the period between 1994 and 1998 when the intervention in the Congo took place, Mandela missed many SADC meetings, often choosing to send his deputy Thabo Mbeki or on other occasions, some junior ministers from his cabinet.

The split within the organisation, which came as a result of the intervention in the Congo was thus a culmination of these tensions between the two strongest members, and was based on their aspirations for control of the organisation.

When the crisis in Zimbabwe began to unfold in 2000, SADC members were well aware of the damage that it would have on the region as a whole. It would suffer in terms of its international reputation; in terms of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); there was a risk of political instability in the region as refugees fled to neighbouring countries; and the racialised nature of the dispute in Zimbabwe had grave implications for the region as well.\(^{173}\)

The notion that SADC has never called the Zimbabwean government to task over the situation in that country since 2000 is not entirely accurate. In September 2001, then SADC chairman President Bakili Muluzi of Malawi openly chastised Mugabe’s government for the way that it was attempting to conduct the land redistribution process.\(^{174}\)

The Zimbabwean government was again called to task at the Extra-ordinary SADC summit in Blantyre in January 2002. The official communiqué which emerged at the end of that meeting criticised that Zimbabwean government’s lack of respect for human rights, its undermining of


\(^{174}\) Ibid, 206.
the independence of the judiciary and its inability to bring transparency to election processes.  

From the outset though, the reaction of SADC to the activities of the Mugabe regime was hesitant and quite muted. A military response was never on the table. The potential for general political instability, given the bifurcated nature of the organisation itself, was simply too great for any of the members, especially South Africa, to consider. Overt criticism also had the potential of exposing certain members to being characterised as puppets of the west, and thus undermining them in regional politics going forward. It was agreed early on in the crisis, that Thabo Mbeki and South Africa should take the lead in finding a solution to the problem, and of course Mbeki obliged.

How Did Mbeki Define the Problem?

The fierce outcry at South Africa’s approach to the Zimbabwean crisis has been identified by Schoeman and Alden as stemming from two sets of assumptions about foreign policy behavior which have been applied to South Africa. In the first place, its economic hegemony in the southern African region and the underlying assumptions of hegemonic theories lead many analysts to believe that South Africa could have done much more to address the Zimbabwean crisis.  

Secondly, South Africa’s identity as a country with a firm commitment to democracy and human rights, based largely on the fact that ‘apartheid has given the democratic South Africa a morally prominent position in international relations’, raised expectations of a ‘moral’ or

\[175\] Ibid, 207.
\[176\] Schoeman et al.
\[177\] Ibid.
‘principled’ vocal and public stance from the perspective of a normative commitment to liberal values in foreign policy.\textsuperscript{178}

Brian Raftopoulos and Ian Phimister have argued though that within the context of a post-9/11 international system, where George W. Bush and Tony Blair unilaterally embarked on a crusade to ‘bring the values of democracy and freedom to people around the world’ and in the process bring about regime change where necessary, Mugabe’s invocation of anti-imperialist rhetoric found a keen audience amongst his counterparts in much of Africa and other sections of the so-called third world.\textsuperscript{179} South Africa, as by far the wealthiest state on the continent by virtue of a predominantly white-owned economy has then been sensitive to this criticism and this has severely constrained in its capacity to deal with the crisis.

South Africa’s political values, as set out in its foreign policy objectives, tend to be in line with those of the liberal western democracies. Its own polity however, reflects the racial dichotomy of the North-South ideology, making it very difficult for the country to act in such a way that it is not accused of “treason”, either against its own stated principles of respect for human rights, or against its African counterparts.\textsuperscript{180}

In his discussion paper of 2001, written for his counterpart Robert Mugabe, Mbeki agrees with Mugabe’s assessment of the dilemma facing the nations of the south and their struggle against foreign domination. He states that in ‘the post-Cold War period, the developed capitalist countries have also increased their political influence globally, resulting in the globalization of their political positions as to the meaning of such political categories as democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law.’\textsuperscript{181} Mbeki clearly shows

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} Schoeman & Alden.
himself to be in agreement with the broader anti-imperialist critique forwarded by the Zimbabwean government in defense of its very radical policies.

Having done so, Mbeki also however tries to enforce the point that even though the relations of production remain racialised and unjust in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwean state’s efforts at resolving this cannot be racially defined, nor can they disregard basic economic principles. Mbeki writes that, ‘the bulk of the economy of Zimbabwe remains in white hands. It is a capitalist economy dominated by people who belonged among “the oppressor nation”. However, these characteristics should not lead the party of revolution to treat these white capitalists as enemies of the national democratic revolution and state.’

Mbeki proceeds to warn his interlocutor about the need to create wealth in order to be able to redistribute it, that redistribution on its own will mean that the wealth will soon run out. He writes that it is necessary for the party of revolution in Zimbabwe not to fall victim to the understanding that the major task of the national democratic revolution is the redistribution of wealth. The party must also understand that this state also has direct and indirect responsibilities with regard to the creation of the wealth that it might then seek to redistribute. ‘it must therefore be continually interested in building a strong and growing economy to provide the material base on which it can address the continuing and urgent question of meeting the needs of the people.’

With this particular take on the issues facing Zimbabwe, it is not difficult to see that Mbeki was looking to pull his counterpart into the thinking with which the ANC had proceeded in South Africa after liberation in terms of protecting the wealth of the oppressive white class, in

---

182 Ibid, 62.
183 Ibid.
184 Ibid.
the hope that that wealth can be used to generate more, which could then be distributed to the formerly colonized masses.

It is a strategy that has drawn a lot of criticism, particularly from the ANC's more radical allies, and in reality one that has not borne the fruits that Mbeki and other architects of GEAR anticipated. It thus must have had very little resonance with the Zimbabwean leadership, which by 2001 was convinced that no gradual approach to the redistribution question would suffice. What is more, South Africa was least able to give advice on the matter as its own more 'liberal' approach was worsening the conditions of the formerly colonized class.  

Thus while sympathizing with the basic grievances of Zimbabwe's leaders, who in effect, through programs to forcibly redistribute land, were shrugging off the status of neo-colonialism and looking to undo the profound injustices of Zimbabwe's colonial past, Mbeki asserts that they alienate the international institutions of neo-liberal capitalism at their own peril. Mbeki is adamant that Zanu PF has to 'take the necessary strategic decisions, bearing in mind the global balance of political and economic forces, about whether the national democratic state can afford an unfriendly relationship with the IMF at the same time as, in reality, it cannot do without support and assistance from the IMF.'

As the Zimbabwean state lost control of the economy and through the deteriorating relations with major financiers the US and Britain, fell out of favour with the IMF, it began through its rhetoric to project all of its domestic problems onto the international system. This way every issue being faced by the government at home could be pulled into the discourse on imperialism, which allowed for the regime to maintain some element of popular support at

---

185 Johnson, p 456.
186 Ibid.
home and in the region. The politics of opposition was no exception. The formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 came at a crucial time for the Zanu PF government and it has skillfully used the anti-imperialist discourse to try to keep the budding organization at bay.

**MDC and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism**

Several theorists have discussed the effect that independence often has on the politics of the liberation movement or dominant party, as the consensus of liberation struggle slowly dissipates and the harsh realities of state politics take its place, particular in a context where economic relations are still dominated by a settler minority. Zimbabwe’s case proved to be no exception and as ‘trade unionists, public sector workers and a broad range of civic actors all demanded economic and political changes of one kind or another, the corset of national unity as defined by the ruling party, proved unable to contain the expanding pressures.’

Perhaps the pivotal moment in this regard was the national public sector strike of 1996, which dealt a particularly hard blow to the confidence of the state. Having changed the racial complexion of the civil service between 1980 and 1985, Zanu PF had speedily Africanised the public sector, thus extending the tentacles of state patronage. It was a public sector that was filled with many of Zanu PF’s own people. ‘The national strike then served as an important warning that party loyalties could no longer be taken for granted.’

---

187 Raftopoulos et al, 2004(b).
188 As; Raftopoulos et al, 2004 (b).
189 Raftopoulos et al, 2004 (a).
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
The 1990s was a period during which the public sector workers and the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions had formed important links. 'The labour movement as a whole had grown in organizational capacity and mobilization skills since the mid-1980s, and by the late 1990s used its autonomous national base to present a direct challenge to the ruling party’s economic and political policies.'

All of these developments culminated in the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change in 1999, and this marked a watershed in Zimbabwe’s postcolonial politics. The MDC was able to skillfully articulate the linkages between the growing economic crisis and the broader problems of democratization. In addition, 'issues around democracy and civic rights, once part of the liberation agenda but subsequently sidelined, were returned to the centre of the political debate.'

The MDC had emphatically announced its arrival on the scene of Zimbabwean politics during the constitutional referendum of 2000 and was to prove a thorn in the side of Zanu PF from that point onwards, proving very competitive in elections in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008. There is compelling evidence which suggests that MDC won at least two of those elections. Of course this has been the major controversy in Zimbabwe: it is difficult to know what kind of support both of the major parties enjoy, precisely because successive elections have been so embroiled in controversy.

Mugabe was however always able to eloquently draw a direct line between imperialism and the MDC. His characterization of the organization as a mere puppet of the western nations which are the perpetrators of imperialism had some resonance at home and to some extent in the southern African region. In a fiery campaign speech prior to elections in 2000 he accused,  

192 Ibid.  
193 Ibid.
"the white man who thinks he is the son of God because he wants us to kneel down of sponsoring the opposition Movement For Democratic Change (MDC) and "training its guerrillas" because "they [Britain] do not want to give us money" for land."\textsuperscript{194}

With the use of this rhetoric the regime has been able to ignore many problems at home and increasingly become more authoritarian as the politics of the day is cast as being about the continuation of a struggle against foreign influence. The ‘party of the revolution’ as Mbeki repeatedly refers to Zanu PF in his discussion paper is posited as the only organisation that can carry out that struggle.

It became clear that this was ideology to which Mbeki was sympathetic. So much so that no matter how discreetly he carried out his intervention, he frequently clashed with the MDC which always saw him as mediating for a solution that would have Zanu PF at the helm.

Mbeki states at the outset of his document that ‘the question must arise – who shall carry out the complex task of elaborating [the] correct and objective characterisation of the problems facing Zimbabwe.’\textsuperscript{195} And to his own question his reply is, ‘our view is that this task must be carried out by the party of the revolution – Zanu PF.’\textsuperscript{196} In effect what Mbeki was saying was that only Zanu PF was capable of mapping a way forward for Zimbabwe. Later in the same document Mbeki reiterates that ‘the party of the revolution in Zimbabwe should be the leading party of democracy in Zimbabwe.’\textsuperscript{197}

Many observers and members of the MDC often accused Mbeki of not being impartial in his mediation in Zimbabwe, saying that he was too lenient on Zanu PF.\textsuperscript{198} His understanding that Zanu PF, as the party of revolution was the only suitable candidate for leadership in

\begin{footnotesize}
\bibliography{references}
\end{footnotesize}
Zimbabwe resonated with Mugabe’s own demonization of the MDC as an imperialist force and thus this organization has always played the role of underdog, even within the negotiation process.

**Regional Hegemony: Africanism or Economic Prowess**

As discussed in the fourth chapter of the paper, the end of apartheid and the release of Nelson Mandela had quite a significant impact on the SADC, which up until that point had been dominated and to some extent led by Zimbabwe. The dispute around *Operation Sovereign Legitimacy* in the Congo, having split the organization virtually down the middle has to some extent lingered in the period since then, and feeds into a low-level tussle for hegemony in the Southern African region between Zimbabwe and the new South Africa.

The expectation that South Africa should be the country that deals with the Zimbabwean crisis, in much the same way that it is expected to take the lead in disputes throughout the continent, stems obviously from the fact that it is the continent’s biggest economy. But as Schoeman and Alden argue, “obvious hegemony (being a much more powerful country than Zimbabwe in terms of tangible indices such as military strength and economic power) does not mean genuine hegemony, and unless the dominant country’s values are acceptable, it cannot exert its influence on weaker neighbours by means of so-called soft power.”

The historical relationship between South Africa and the other states in the region further undermines its prospects for genuine hegemony. The considerable prowess that South Africa boasts in terms of economics and military has come at the immeasurable expense of many of those neighbours. South Africa’s leadership is subject to many challenges therefore.

\[^{199}\text{Schoeman et al, 1.}\]
Schoeman & Alden note that hegemony means to exercise unchallenged leadership. From a Gramscian perspective this implies that the real power comes not so much from tangible resources, as from the fact that the hegemon’s ideology (its structure of values and understandings) is acceptable and unquestioned and forms a consensual order that determines behaviour in its sphere of influence.

Zimbabwe on the other hand does not have much claim to the position of regional hegemon when it comes to the more tangible indices. But within the context of African politics, it is the foremost advocate for and articulator of the interests of African countries in the international system. The onset of globalisation has contributed enormously to the further underdevelopment of Africa and imperialism has become further entrenched as the forces of neo-liberal capital have extended their pernicious reach.

Only Mugabe has been able to clearly and unequivocally spell out to western nations, how they are contributing to Africa’s problems. The applause he often draws when addressing the United Nations General Assembly is testimony to that fact. He can address the wealthy, in a way that no other leader can. That fact alone gives him vast leadership capacity in the region.

South Africa on the other hand draws power from its economic influence. In the process of trying to mend relations with regional states though, it cannot use that economic weight bluntly and has to be very discreet in how it exercises that power. This is reinforced by the fact that its economic prowess is enjoyed in the main by a small white minority and the formerly colonized black majority is still very poor.

Quiet Diplomacy then, is an approach to the Zimbabwean crisis by South Africa which is informed firstly by the fact that Mugabe was able to keep Mbeki at bay because Mbeki’s

---

200 Ibid.
201 Ibid.
influence and power derived from his first and white-owned economy, which in the context of Africa’s anti-imperialist politics lacks legitimacy. Secondly, Mbeki was sympathetic to Mugabe’s politics because Mbeki’s own constituency at home, his second economy was directly touched by the criticisms that Mugabe leveled against the international powers in the west. That constituency, much like the rest of Africa and the third world was being crushed by poverty as a result of a lack of developmental progress, which according to leaders like Mugabe was a result of imperialism. Quiet Diplomacy is in this way a function of South Africa’s internal duality.
Conclusion

The fast-tracked Land Redistribution Program embarked on by the Zimbabwean state in the year 2000 virtually paralyzed its economy. Since it had gained independence in 1980 Zimbabwe had enjoyed mixed fortunes economically. The 1980s were very prosperous, a time when the new government was very careful to maintain predictability and consistency in its economic policies, such that important skills would not be tempted to leave the country and also so that more investments could flow into it.

Following a difficult period in which the country experienced drought however, the economy began to run into some difficulties and was eventually forced to look to the IMF for assistance. The Structural Adjustment Programs which were applied courtesy of the IMF were an unmitigated disaster, and as many authors have noted served only to worsen the plight of Zimbabweans.

Despite or perhaps because of these financial problems, the government of Zimbabwe led a three nation mission, under the auspices of SADC’s Organ on Politics and Security, into the DRC to rescue the regime of Laurent Kabila. The operation was not officially sanctioned by SADC and thus Zimbabwe had to foot the $2 billion bill. At the time that the Land Redistribution Program began then, the Zimbabwean state was already losing large sums of money.

Since the year 2000 the Zimbabwean economy has steadily spiraled out of control. The economy has been brought to its knees as inflation has reached unprecedented levels. The rule of law has come under increasing strain as the ZANU PF-led state has cracked down on political opposition and civil society. Several newspapers have been shut down and every election has been dogged by accusations of vote-rigging and manipulation.
The situation has drawn worldwide condemnation. The leading governments in the world and the international institutions they control have gradually meted out sanctions against members of the Zimbabwean government and repeatedly called for South Africa (as the regional powerhouse), SADC and the AU to take stern action in response to this crisis.

SADC and AU leaders have themselves continually mandated South Africa to deal with the Zimbabwean issue, with no other head of state taking on a meaningful role in this regard. Perhaps the only exception has been Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, who partook in several meetings with Zimbabwe at Mbeki’s invitation and who also publicly opposed the suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth in 2002.

In the years since 2000, during which the Mbeki administration has sought to deal with the crisis in Zimbabwe, a military solution has not been pursued. South Africa has consistently fought to prevent the incorporation of the Zimbabwean crisis onto the agenda of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and despite repeated condemnations by the international community, has generally refused to join the chorus of dissent directed at the Zimbabwean government.

Instead of applying sanctions, South Africa has repeatedly extended lines of credit to the Zimbabwean government and used her parastatals to prop up a collapsing economy. Perhaps most controversially, this has included the scrapping of debts owed by Zimbabwe’s electricity regulator to South Africa’s Eskom.

Out of the variety of foreign policy options available to South Africa in relation to the Zimbabwean crisis, this paper looked to determine why the government, under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki chose ‘Quiet Diplomacy’ as its preferred means of engagement. The paper did not set out to assess Quiet Diplomacy and deem it either a success or a failure, but rather
looked to discuss the constraints within which Mbeki’s government was acting, in its engagement with the issue.

Having introduced the main ideas informing the paper and outlining the direction it would take in chapter 1, the second chapter looked to set a theoretical framework for the discussion. It argued that the dominant theories of idealism and realism were very prominent in the literature on South Africa’s Africa foreign policy. While acknowledging the relevance and usefulness of these perspectives, we have argued that more compelling explanations for the use of Quiet Diplomacy in relation specifically to the Zimbabwean question are arrived at when a more radical perspective is used.

Within the broad structuralist paradigm, we argued that Immanuel Wallerstein’s notion of a ‘semi-peripheral state’ best characterized South Africa’s position within the structure of international politics. As such we argued that South Africa played a dual-contradictory role in the system, where its two economies effectively made for two foreign policies that could often not be reconciled. We went further to note that its failure to bring fundamental changes to the structure of its economy made South Africa a prototypical neo-colonial state; thus being susceptible to criticisms of harbouring a sub-imperial agenda in the region.

In the third chapter we explored the South African state since the dawn of liberation. We saw that within the context of the negotiated settlement which preceded the elections of 1994, important concessions were made that did not allow for the new administration to set the economy on a new footing. We were able to see that South Africa remains a country of two nations, one white and very wealthy and the other black and very poor.

The persistent, racialised dichotomy feeds into fears in the region that South Africa still harbours the ambitions of the apartheid days, wherein it sought to exploit its neighbors at
every opportunity in the search for cheap labour and raw materials. It was also as we have seen a factor which allowed for the regime of Robert Mugabe to undermine South Africa’s influence, as it was able to get its domestic constituency and regional states to sympathize with it regarding the real intentions of the economically powerful South Africans. South Africa’s dual economy is thus a major constraint in its foreign policy aspirations on the continent and in particular with regards to its most pressing foreign policy issue: Zimbabwe.

The fourth chapter looked at the Zimbabwean state since independence and we were able to identify several important factors which have been underplayed in the dominant literature on this matter. Firstly, Zimbabwe was looked at as a classical neo-colonial state from the time of its independence until 1997. Following the abandonment of the Lancaster House Agreement by the New Labour government in 1997, the Mugabe regime took measures to move past the state of neo-colonialism and radicalized the Zimbabwean state.

Secondly, the phenomenon of land invasions, which has been at the heart of the crisis, was one that began—and for a long time occurred—outside of and in opposition to government structures. It was the Mugabe regime which worked very hard to expel illegal occupants of land throughout the 1980s and through most of the 1990s. This it did in accordance with the provisions of the Lancaster House Agreement which had established that land would be transferred according to a ‘willing buyer, willing seller’ principle, and would be funded by the British government. Finally the chapter looked at the radicalization of the Zimbabwean state and how it has taken an interventionist role in the economy.

The fifth chapter looked to scrutinize the interaction of these two states on the basis of their characterization in chapters 3 and 4. It explored the difficult position that South Africa has found itself in with regards to its foreign policies on the continent, especially since the failed attempt to save the life of Ken Saro-Wiwa in Nigeria in 1995. The fall-out resulting from
Nelson Mandela’s berating of the Nigerian government is one that South Africa has never fully recovered from. The desperate need to be seen as an African state, with Africa’s development agenda at heart has been a major factor in how South Africa has interacted with the continent in the post-apartheid era. This has meant that it has hardly ever, since the hanging of Saro-Wiwa, criticized another African head of state in public. Despite the liberal thread in its policy documents, it has consistently looked to avoid aligning itself with the western nations publicly on contentious issues affecting the politics of the continent, not least Zimbabwe.

Quiet Diplomacy is thus an approach to the Zimbabwean crisis which has sought to negotiate all of these various constraints. It has been about facilitating change in Zimbabwe and restoring South Africa’s African credentials by reintegrating it into the continent, while at the same time not alienating the powerful western nations which dominate the international economic system and which also have a major stake in South Africa’s powerful economy, and in whose hands rests the plight of many of the world’s poorest people; mostly Africans. Quiet Diplomacy epitomizes the dual-contradictory role of South Africa in international relations; a role necessitated by its internal economic duality.
Bibliography

‘MDC Slams Mbeki for Supporting Mugabe’, *The Zimbabwe Times*, 18 October 2008


Adebajo A, “South Africa: Messiah or Mercantilist?” in *This Day*, 2004;


Barber J, Mandela’s World: The International Dimension of South Africa’s Political Revolution, 2004;
Bond P, ‘Thabo Mbeki and NEPAD: Breaking or Shining the Chains of Apartheid?’

*Paper presented at the TNI Global Crisis Seminar, Amsterdam, 17-18 February 2002*


Department of Labour South Africa, ‘Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998’

Fanon F, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1967)


Hadland A & J Rantao, *The Life and Times of Thabo Mbeki* (Rivonia, South Africa: Zebra, 1999), p ;


Kennan G, ‘Containment Then and Now,’ in *Foreign Affairs* 65(4), 1987


Le Pere G, “Idealist Actor on a Disorderly Stage”, This Day, 5 July 2004;

Leon T, ‘Mbeki the Younger and Malaysia open door for BEE debate’ in Business Day, 17/07/2009


McKinley D, ‘South Africa’s Foreign Policy Towards Zimbabwe under Mbeki’ in Review of African Political Economy, 31(100), 2004


Mugabe RG, ‘Statement by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Comrade RG Mugabe, on the Occasion of the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 26 September, 2007 available at www.un.org


Nel P, & J van der Westhuizen, Democratizing Foreign Policy: Lessons from South Africa (Lexington Books, 2004), p


Schoeman M, ‘South Africa in Africa: Behemoth, Hegemon, Partner or ‘just another kid on the block’’ in A Adebajo, A Adedeji and C Landsberg (eds.) South Africa in Africa: The Post Apartheid Era (Scottsville: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2007)


Smith A, ‘Fiery Mugabe vows to end White Imperialism,’ The Independent. 04 May 2000

Smith B, Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Change and Development (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003)

So A, Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency and World-System Theories (California: Sage Publications, 1990)

Stedman S, Peacemaking in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe (Boulder: L. Rienner, 1991),


Van der Veen L, “Every Continent Needs an America”, Independent Research Proposal. University of Cape Town, Department of Political Studies, 2004