

The Saga Continues...The Zimbabwe Issue in South Africa's Foreign Policy

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Geo-political and geo-economic factors have always determined relations between South Africa and Zimbabwe. Relations between these neighbours went through all the motions of apartheid, destabilisation, liberation, decolonisation and democratisation. After the implementation of international sanctions against Zimbabwe due to UDI, South Africa became Zimbabwe's largest trading partner. At the time of its independence Zimbabwe's economy was largely dominated by South Africa. By 1981 South African investments in Zimbabwe was more than 478 million pounds. Economic disengagement from Pretoria became one of the cornerstones of President Mugabe's foreign policy. However, labour migration to South Africa became a physical manifestation of Zimbabwe's continued economic dependence on its southern neighbour. Full diplomatic relations were resumed in April 1994 after South Africa's first democratic elections.¹

Zimbabwe remains an important state to South Africa for a number of reasons - both as neighbours and members of SADC. Both states are major trading partners of one another. As a landlocked country Zimbabwe is dependent on South African harbors. Both states are members of SADC. The political events in Zimbabwe have an impact on the South African economy. Zimbabwe imports about 20% of its power from South Africa and has not paid its bills since 1999. It owns Eskom more than US\$ 20m in arrears. The South African government has not

provided any loans or credit lines to the Zimbabwe government directly. However, the South African export credit reinsurance scheme does have some exposure to ZISCO, the Zimbabwean Iron and Steel Company. A number of South African parastatals have provided credit facilities to their Zimbabwean counterparts.

By now the political, economic and social meltdown in Zimbabwe is well known and documented - as is South Africa's response to it.²

Southern Africa's future and the credibility of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) are linked to the Zimbabwe issue which remains one of the dominating foreign policy challenges for Thabo Mbeki's presidency.

The 9-10 March 2002 Zimbabwean presidential election campaign, the outcomes of the elections and subsequent events in Zimbabwe continue to have a negative impact on perceptions of Southern Africa. The presidential elections (to some degree overshadowed by the death of Jonas Savimbi) could prove a decisive point for South Africa's regional policy, Thabo Mbeki's regional standing, SADC integration as well as the NEPAD. Harare's foreign policy continues to be dominated by the growing international condemnation of Robert Mugabe's governance and Harare's involvement in the regional conflicts.

Robert Mugabe and Thabo Mbeki represent two different African leaders and therefore different leadership styles. Why did it take SADC and even South Africa so long to act on the Zimbabwe issue? Why is this action only limited to declarations and not actions? Whereas no stone was left unturned in rallying global support for the struggle against apartheid, African leaders was notably very silent about the crisis in Zimbabwe. Why should the world take efforts such as the NEPAD seriously against this background? If NEPAD is to succeed, unlike the OAU and the AU, its leaders have to be more focused on actions and by weeding out undemocratic practices on the continent. Another issue relating to African leadership, is the weakness of

African diplomacy.

This paper will attempt to analyse South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe since February 2000. The objective is to gain an understanding of Thabo Mbeki's efforts in defining, addressing and resolving this foreign challenge amidst his efforts to position South Africa in the region, Africa and further abroad. The contribution argues that South Africa initially artfully dodged the reality of Zimbabwe's domestic affairs. Moving away from "quiet diplomacy" to a more constructive engagement via bilateral and multilateral efforts (within Southern Africa, the continent and other international institutions), the paper attempts to assess South Africa's as well as that of other actors' efforts to resolve the impasse. Michael Lund provides a useful list of policies and instruments such as military, non-military, development and governance approaches that can be applied to resolve an international crisis such as this. Some of these are coercive and non-coercive diplomatic measures as well as the promotion of national and social development, human rights and civil society groups.³ By October 2002, South Africa had mainly applied non-coercive diplomatic measures and non violent strategies such as international appeals (moral persuasion to conflicting parties), fact finding missions, observer teams, bilateral negotiations, third party informal diplomatic consultations, track two diplomacy (by non official, non-governmental parties), third party mediation, conciliatory gestures and economic assistance. South Africa also followed development and governance approaches such as policies to promote national economic and social development via continued economic trade and Zimbabwe's economic integration in the region as well as recommending economic reforms and standards. South Africa also upheld all bilateral cooperative agreements and programmes between these states. Lastly, South Africa attempted to promulgate and enforce human rights, democratic and other standards via its participation in monitoring most of Zimbabwe's elections since 2000. As events in Zimbabwe impacts on South Africa as well as the credibility and

implementation of NEPAD, the final part of the paper suggests a number of alternative foreign policy options that can be applied to resolve the issue.

How Did South Africa Handle the Zimbabwe Issue So Far?

Since the farm invasions in Zimbabwe in March 2000 in the run up to the general election in June of that year and subsequent events, South Africa was faced with a number of challenges with regards to its handling of events north of the Limpopo. There were expectations by the international community that South Africa will provide leadership in this regard. By now South Africa's (and that of the United Kingdom⁴) initial low-key "quiet diplomacy" as well as its failure to condemn the political leadership in Zimbabwe is well documented. Despite the existence of a Joint Commission between South Africa and Zimbabwe with a dedicated sub-commission on foreign affairs, South Africa was until now unable to influence events in Zimbabwe. Acknowledging its failure in the handling of the issue, the South African government attempted various other approaches to resolve the impasse in its neighbour.⁵ As events in Zimbabwe unfolded South Africa's handling of the issue took the form of various non-coercive diplomatic measures such as international appeals (moral persuasion to conflicting parties), governmental fact finding missions, participation in various observer teams, various bilateral and multilateral negotiations, third party informal diplomatic consultations, track two diplomacy (by non official, non-governmental parties), various conciliatory gestures and continued economic assistance of which South Africa's continued trade with Zimbabwe and electricity supply via Eskom are examples.⁶

South Africa deliberately did not apply coercive diplomatic measures such as diplomatic sanctions (withholding of diplomatic relations or membership in multilateral organizations) and various kinds of economic sanctions.

South Africa is facing a further dilemma regarding this issue. International actors such as

the US, the EU and the UK are looking to Thabo Mbeki to provide leadership on Zimbabwe. Throughout South Africa stated that it is actively involved in the process, but that sanctions against Zimbabwe is not an option although Pretoria can literally switch off the lights in Harare (via Eskom and SASOL).⁷ Although South Africa urged the EU not to impose targeted sanctions against Zimbabwe, the EU continued with this action. The Department of Foreign Affairs issued a statement declaring that the “South African government finds it regrettable and unfortunate that the EU chose to impose sanctions against Zimbabwe.” It called on the international community to assist in efforts to create a climate conducive to free and fair elections.⁸ Furthermore, Pretoria has limited options in its dealings with Harare. After all, Robert Mugabe leads a sovereign state.

One of the leitmotifs of Thabo Mbeki’s presidency is the attempt to position South Africa in Southern Africa, the continent and further abroad. This constitutes an important aspect of South Africa’s foreign policy adaptation since the end of the Cold War and democratization in South Africa. The African Renaissance has emerged as the defining foreign policy concept of these changes. South Africa’s drive of regional integration within the context of SADC as well as initiatives such as the Millennium African Recovery Plan (MAP) and the NEPAD are further indications of this.

Methodology

Gerner⁹ defines foreign policy analysis as an attempt to present a focus on the intentions, statements and actions of an actor with regards to another and the latter’s responses to these. This paper will attempt to focus on South Africa’s intentions, statements and actions toward Zimbabwe and its responses. An evaluative approach will also be applied by considering the consequences of South Africa’s foreign policy actions and assessing whether South Africa’s particular goals were not only desirable, but achieved. A possible approach to foreign policy

evaluation is to determine whether the policy is balanced or not. A balanced foreign policy combines government and domestic satisfaction with regards to the adaptation of external demands and resource allocation. In addition to these requirements, a balanced foreign policy should be clear, consistent, continue, compatible and adaptable. Furthermore, a balanced foreign policy should have a clarity of purpose amidst complex, demanding and confusing events, foreign policy with regards to particular issue should be consistent with the broader foreign policy of an actor, a degree of continuity should be evident and it should be compatible with domestic and international conditions. Lastly, a balanced foreign policy should be able to adapt to purposes and activities in order to enhance policy innovation. South Africa's foreign policy with regards to Zimbabwe need be evaluated by considering, inter alia, four sets of variables applying to our foreign policy on Zimbabwe. One set of variables refers to implementation variables such as factors contributing to goal dissolution. This can include factors pertaining to bureaucratic implementation or not as well as bureaucratic "turf wars" between implementing agencies such as the Department of Foreign Affairs, Parliament and the Presidency. A second set of variables refers to bridging variables which include factors that set in motion the process to achieve the intended outcome. Bridging the gap between action and outcome can be achieved by the use of incentives and other linkages between policy issues. Thirdly, response variables include factors providing an indication whether an objective had been met. This can include factors such as an improvement in the economic indicators in Zimbabwe, a decrease in reported human rights cases, increases in the inflow of FDI and a restoration of universally accepted good governance principles. Lastly, external variables need to be considered in the evaluation of a foreign policy. External variables include contextual factors that may compound the impact of other variables. This may include the behavior of other states involved in the process or any other unforeseen event. Considering these variables requires continuous policy monitoring. This

will provide a “feedback loop” to determine the progress, impact, success and effect of an implemented policy.¹⁰

Intentions and Actions

The ANC government entered the international scene in 1994 with a strong moral dimension. However, since South Africa’s transition to democracy a number of foreign policy decisions were met with criticism.¹¹ One these had been relations with Nigeria under the leadership of General Sani Abacha with regards to human rights abuses. President Mandela pursued “quite diplomacy” in this case by arranging visits and contacts to influence General Abacha. Despite various efforts, this approach achieved very little and the Ogoni activists were executed in November 1995. President Mandela’s strong worded statements on the issues at the subsequent Commonwealth Heads of States meeting in New Zealand was met with explosive reaction. Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth. President Mandela took the moral high road by recalling the South African High Commissioner from Nigeria, urging the UK and USA to impose oil sanctions, requesting UN action on the issue and calling a special SADC meeting to discuss the issue. As Barber and Chhabra observed, none of this led anywhere.¹² Van Aardt described this as a South Africa learning the unwritten continental code that “African states do not turn against each other in international fora.”¹³ President Mandela received little domestic support for his approach. Members of the ANC reminded him of Nigeria’s contribution to the ANC in its liberation struggle. DFA officials attempted to avoid international isolation in a time when South Africa was seeking African support for a seat on the UN Security Council. Nigeria has meanwhile re-joined the Commonwealth and is currently, together with South Africa, one of the “founding states” of the NEPAD.

Foreign policy can connote one of a number of things. It can refer to the objectives sought by a state such as prestige or power. It can also mean the norms and means from which

such objectives are derived. Thirdly it can refer to the inventory of methods, measures, strategies and tactics by which decision makers seek to obtain their objectives in the international arena. Foreign policy can also refer to a sequence of positions or courses of action in pursuit of objectives. It can also refer to a particular decision or action undertaken in pursuit of a particular objective. Lastly, foreign policy can refer to an accumulation of piecemeal and pragmatic day to day actions, reactions and interactions to situations, events, issues, demands and pressures emanating from the international arena.¹⁴ A state's foreign policy is therefore determined a number of factors be it international, intermestic or domestic.¹⁵ As the constitutionally prescribed most important foreign policy actor in South Africa, President Mbeki walks a tightrope between these settings.

South Africa shares with all contemporary states at least four of these purposes: ¹⁶

- Security.
- Autonomy/Sovereignty.
- Welfare/Gain.
- Status and prestige.

These purposes are achieved by applying the “tools of statecraft”, or foreign policy instruments. These instruments are propaganda, diplomacy and negotiation, economic measures (such as sanctions or preferential trade), intervention and war.

Despite criticism against South Africa's foreign policy, or lack of it, the stated “primary objective” of the South African government is “to develop a better life for all citizens by generating wealth and providing security. South Africa's foreign policy objectives are therefore essentially an outward projection of the country's domestic imperatives.” These foreign policy objectives are to:

- “promote democratisation and respect for human rights;

- prevent conflict and promote peaceful resolution of disputes;
- advance sustainable development and alleviate poverty.”¹⁷

For South Africa’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, foreign policy objectives are “an outward projection of South Africa’s domestic imperatives, that is, to create economic and social development and to promote peace and stability.” She continued to outline South Africa’s broad foreign policy objectives:

- “to promote democratisation and the respect for human rights;
- to endeavor to prevent conflicts and promote the peaceful resolution of disputes; and
- to advance sustainable development and poverty alleviation.”

She added “The primary focus of our foreign policy remains Southern Africa and the African continent as a whole.”¹⁸ Presenting her budget vote speech in Parliament on 8 May 2001, Dr Dlamini-Zuma again outlined the values South Africa struggles internationally for:

- democracy,
- good governance,
- people centered development,
- peace, stability and security,
- promote cooperation and partnerships, and
- good neighbourliness.¹⁹

Pandelani Thomas Mathoma, chief director for Southern Africa at the South African Department of Foreign Affairs added another dimension, i.e. “the concept of the African Renaissance now represents the underlying vision and the guiding principle of South Africa’s foreign policy.” This follows on President Mbeki’s inaugural speech on June 16, 1999 calling on *Faranani - Towards the African Century*.²⁰

Initial Efforts

Although South Africa is often criticised for its initial so-called “quiet diplomacy” on the Zimbabwe crisis, it had been involved in attempts to resolve growing tension in that country during the presidency of Nelson Mandela. Before visiting Zimbabwe in April 2000, in an address to the nation, President Mbeki outlined how he as deputy president, with President Mandela’s authorization and President Mugabe’s agreement approached British Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1998. The purpose was to request the UK and other governments to contribute funds to enable Zimbabwe to address the land question. Prime Minister Blair agreed to his proposal and persuaded other governments and international organisations to join in this task. These donors met with the Zimbabwe government in 1998. Very little happened after this donor conference. Subsequently South Africa was in contact with both the Zimbabwe and UK governments. This was done in order to achieve a number of objectives - as supported by President Mugabe:

- to get a common commitment by all parties to solve the land question in Zimbabwe according to the framework and programed agreed to at the 1998 conference
- to end the violence in Zimbabwe,
- to create conditions for the withdrawal from the farms occupied by war veterans,
- to pursue these issues in a way beneficial for all Zimbabweans and Southern Africans.²¹

From 1999, South Africa’s involvement in resolving the Zimbabwe issue needs to be understood within the context of Thabo Mbeki’s presidency, his efforts to promote an African Renaissance as well as the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). Ostensibly,

his call for greater South African involvement on the continent on his inauguration day can be seen realised today by South Africa's leadership in both the AU and NEPAD. Often referred to as the regional hegemon or superpower, South Africa has to walk a tightrope between regional perceptions regarding its status and role in the region and a genuine foreign policy commitment to Africa's reconstruction and development. South Africa's role as an intermediary between African and developed states is not often appreciated by other African states.

The African Renaissance and the vision for the continent outlined in the NEPAD emerged as the defining foreign policy concept of the Thabo Mbeki's presidential administration. Regional integration is another major focus of South Africa's foreign policy under Mbeki. Before visiting Zimbabwe in April 2000, President Mbeki stated "...the African policy of our government is centered on the pursuit of the fundamental objective of securing a better life for all and building caring societies." He then continued to cite South Africa's assistance to Tanzania in 1996 and 1998 after the Lake Victoria ferry disaster and floods, to Mozambique during the floods in 1998, to Ethiopia after fires, and Lesotho in 1998.

Southern Africa and the states located in the region are identified as a major foreign policy focus. With regards to the region, "some of the most important goals" include:

- "The promotion of peace and security is one of South Africa's most important objectives in the region. This includes the strengthening of conflict prevention and resolution capabilities of the region and rendering assistance in monitoring and addressing domestic issues that affect regional stability."
- "The promotion of human rights remains high on South Africa's list of priorities in the region. Endeavors in the field of human rights include the monitoring of elections within the region and the rendering of

assistance in this regard upon request. The promotion of a culture of human rights is one of the pillars of South Africa's foreign policy."²²

By March 2000, a few months into his presidency, Mbeki was faced with the unfolding events in Zimbabwe and the country's gradual decline into political, economic and social decay. These events were preceded by South Africa-Zimbabwe bilateral discussions on trade and economic cooperation in September 1999. The first meeting took place at the Victoria Falls where the discussion focused mainly on the DRC conflict and Zimbabwe's involvement in it. Another meeting took place at these bilateral discussions. It was a meeting attended by various other SADC leaders. At the end of the meeting the SADC leaders seemed to close ranks with Mugabe rather than condemn him for the manner in which he was placing the whole region's development in jeopardy. As Zimbabwean political scientist John Makumbe observed "it was alleged that behind the closed doors the leaders basically read old Mugabe the riot act, but decided not to publicly express their legitimate views through the media."²³

In relation to Zimbabwe, South Africa under Mbeki's leadership, initially was slow in speaking out against the unfolding events in that country. Initially, the South African government confined its handling of the events in Zimbabwe to the realm of "quiet diplomacy". It was very careful not to attack President Mugabe in public. This drew severe international criticism against South Africa. At the time, this approach was regarded as typical of the Mbeki government with regards to foreign policy issues, i.e. not to respond vocally and declaratory in its dealings with Africa.²⁴ However, responding to a question during a conversation between BBC News online users and President Mbeki he was asked why he had not been more outspoken in his criticism of the violence in Zimbabwe, President Mbeki answered that by 18 May 2000 (the date of the conversation) he spoke out against it for the sixth time as well as twice in Zimbabwe.

Bilateral Efforts

By April 2000, South Africa shifted gears on the Zimbabwe issue. Moving away from a perceived “quiet diplomacy” on the issue, Mbeki embarked on a series of visits (at least four before the June 2000 elections) to Zimbabwe in an attempt to resolve the issue as its impact on the region and South Africa became more evident. At the opening of the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair in Bulawayo on 5 May 2000, President Mbeki said he stated one of South Africa’s intentions with regards to its handling of the Zimbabwe issue, “We have to end the violence in Zimbabwe. We have to end the confrontation around this land question; we’ve got to abandon an approach which does not seek a solution which benefits all the people of Zimbabwe...”²⁵ President Mbeki visited Harare a few days before the June 2000 elections. Details of this meeting was not released but it was notable that Mugabe reduced his inflammatory statements against his opposition.

Bilateral and Multilateral Efforts

By May- June 2002, the period around the election, a new approach towards Zimbabwe emerged in South Africa’s foreign policy. Moving away from bilateral attempts to address the issue, the issue was approached from a multilateral approach which became one of the hallmarks of South Africa’s foreign policy since 1994. This new approach also indicated a greater commitment by the South African government by focusing on post-election recovery in Zimbabwe and how South Africa can assist in this. South Africa’s mediating role initiated in 1998 resulted in a meeting between Zimbabwean and British ministers in March 2000 and in a statement confirmed the importance and urgency of land reform and the implementation of the communique agreed at the 1998 International Donors Conference on Land Reform and Resettlement. The UK agreed its willingness to fund a fair land reform program on the condition that violence be stopped as well as farm occupations. At the time, the Zimbabwe

delegation informed the UK of its intention to conduct free and fair elections. By May 2000, President Mbeki made the initial round of world leaders seeking donor funding for land reform in Zimbabwe amidst deteriorating UK-Zimbabwe relations. President Mbeki offered to mediate between these states in efforts to resolve the land question and initiated to engage his Saudi Arabian and Norwegian counterparts to fund the land resettlement programme in Zimbabwe.²⁶

President Mbeki issued a statement on the elections in Zimbabwe on 27 June 2000. He congratulated President Mugabe, his party as well as the opposition parties for the way the election was conducted. The statement continued: “South Africa stands ready to assist the people of Zimbabwe, where ever possible, to deal with the challenges they face within the context of integrated regional economic development, growth and prosperity.”²⁷

After the elections, South Africa’s approach towards Zimbabwe moved in a new direction as discussed above. President Mbeki led a delegation of South African government ministers to Harare in early August 2000 for bilateral discussions with President Mugabe and members of his new Cabinet. He was accompanied by Ministers Erwin, Manuel, Dlamini Zuma, Didiza and Deputy Minister Shabangu and senior official from their ministries. This bilateral meeting centered around Zimbabwe’s post election plans for economic recovery and examined South Africa’s contribution to such programme with particular focus on trade and finance issues.²⁸

The SADC Windhoek Summit in August 2000 publicly backed President Mugabe on his land reform process. However, the final communique made it clear that SADC’s support is conditional on the peaceful resolution of the land question. This replicated President Mbeki’s stand taken during his meeting with President Mugabe before the Windhoek Summit. The SADC Summit delegated President Mbeki and Malawi’s President Muluzi to negotiate with Britain to finance land distribution schemes seemed to be unsuccessful by September 2000. The Mbeki-

Muluzi mandate included the qualification that the rule of law has to be restored and invaders removed from farms.²⁹

After President Mbeki's initial initiatives UN Secretary General Kofi Annan offered UN assistance at the Millennium Summit in New York in September 2000 during a meeting with Presidents Mbeki, Mugabe and other regional leaders. The UNDP's head and Kofi Annan's special envoy on the Zimbabwe case, Mark Malloch Brown visited Zimbabwe in December 2000 offering a number of proposals. The UNDP's proposals took into account the 1998 EU sponsored donors' land conference in Harare and the SADC/EU ministerial conference held in Gaborone in November 2000:

- Resettling one million hectares (determined by the rate and volume of resettlement)
- Setting up an international fund with a board of trustees including the Zimbabwe government, donors, other stakeholders and the World Bank to provide resources for the resettlement process
- Setting up a revolving fund for buying farms for resettlement.³⁰

The presentation of South Africa's position by both President Mbeki, his deputy, minister of foreign affairs and government officials is another important act. The presentation of South Africa's position echoes its stated foreign policy objectives.

By December 2000 South Africa's bilateral efforts were stepped up with engaging a third party outside the region. (It is significant to note that MAP was taking shape at this period.) The presidents of Africa's two most powerful countries visited President Mugabe in Harare. President Mbeki's third visit to Zimbabwe was with the Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo on the land issue and the breakdown of law and order in the country. President Mugabe was told privately as well as publicly that the rule of law is of paramount importance. After a 2 ½ hour

meeting with President Mugabe the Nigerian president stated that the restoration of law and order should be achieved and then to follow laws already in place for the resolution of the land problem. President Mugabe departed from his own Land Acquisition Act of November 2000 to opt for his fast track land programme. President Obasanjo told President Mugabe that his land policies have repercussions beyond his own borders. This is evident in the fall in the value of the rand and the slide in the Johannesburg Stock Exchange during 2000.³¹

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The Persistence of Democratic Decay in Zimbabwe

The persistence of truth decay in Zimbabwe by early 2001 indicated that this issue will remain a challenge for South Africa's foreign policy. Amidst mounting international and domestic criticism against South Africa's approach, it became evident that none of South Africa's bi- and multilateral efforts were yielding any democratic and peaceful gains, that Zimbabwe is a foreign policy embarrassment and that South Africa was losing face on the issue.

There is a great expectation for South Africa to be the voice of reason and a force of stability in Africa and elsewhere. This is not a mere expectation, but, time and again stated by President Mbeki and his foreign minister.³³ International and domestic reaction to South Africa's handling of the issue highlighted some of these aspects. Whereas *The New York Times* described President Mbeki's handling of the Zimbabwe crisis as "remarkable quiet", in an editorial titled "A disastrous reign" the *Mail & Guardian* noted:

"He [Thabo Mbeki] has claimed the right to public silence on the merits of the situation. This is a privilege that might be allowed if his 'quiet diplomacy' had been successful. Yet his diplomacy has been a singular failure. The dictatorship of Robert Mugabe gets even more crude, brutal and idiotic; the Zimbabwean economy spirals with increasing speed towards total collapse, ordinary Zimbabweans' appeals for formative action on their crisis from their South African neighbours become even more hopeless...Asked why, then, he does not pursue a different approach - say, a more robust policy towards Mugabe - Mbeki claims that he has, indeed, criticised the Zimbabwean leader in public and that we, or media organisations, have somehow failed to hear him."³⁴

Political parties were also severe in their criticism. According to the head of the ANC's international affairs and policy, Mavivi Myokayaka-Manzini, South Africa under President Mandela acted as a "bully" against Nigeria in 1995 after the Ken Saro-Wiwa issue. She repeated that South Africa should not repeat this mistake in its handling of the Zimbabwe issue. The Democratic Alliance (DA) issued a statement condemning President Mbeki's response to events in Zimbabwe. According to Tony Leon, leader of the DA, President Mugabe is a serious threat to President Mbeki's Millennium Africa Renaissance Programme. Like other critics the DA offered

a number of alternative approaches to the handling of the Zimbabwe crisis:

- South Africa should expel President Mugabe as chairperson of the SADC Organ of Politics, Security and Defence at the March 2001 meeting of SADC
- South Africa should reconsider its electricity supply to Zimbabwe at a 25% discount
- A letter of support should be sent to the retiring Zimbabwean Chief Justice Anthony Gubbay
- The government should pressurize the ANC Youth League's attendance of the regional conference of ZANU PF's youth wing at Victoria Falls
- The government should initiate discussions on a free and fair presidential election in 2002.³⁵

At a media briefing at the beginning of the 2001 parliamentary programme the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs outlines her ministry's activities for the year. She did not refer to Zimbabwe specifically, but after a question responded that "One goal of foreign affairs is good neighbourliness, we build bridges across countries. Don't advocate war with Zimbabwe; we won't do it. Our aim is to assist, not to be an adversary. We will speak out, but in a way that encourages good neighbourliness." The minister went on to explain that the Zimbabwean government and president are treated as legitimate. She continued "Do not try to push us into a combative mood with Zimbabwe, it will not help. I did not say we would do nothing about Zimbabwe, but that our approach would not be combative. We will continue trade. We are not yet in 'e-diplomacy'; instead, we talk and discuss. We won't condemn...We want to achieve results."³⁶

Early March/April 2001 it was evident that the South African government was redrafting its strategy on the Zimbabwean crisis. A possible explanation for this new approach includes the fact that the Presidency since January 2001 received a number of local and international business people on the situation in Zimbabwe. President Mbeki announced the members of his International Investment Council during his State of the Nation address on 4 February 2000. This council made up of international business leaders made it clear to President Mbeki that the current situation in Zimbabwe is severely damaging South Africa's attractiveness to foreign direct investment. Upon advice from his international investment advisors it was also emerging that President Mbeki, while retaining a public "quiet diplomatic" approach was allowing his government to pursue a much harder line behind the scenes.³⁷

Replying to questions in Parliament, President Mbeki indicated that steps have subsequently been taken to engage President Mugabe.³⁸ President Mbeki referred to a proposed meeting between him and President Mugabe as well as work done on the Zimbabwe issue through a targeted Task Teams of Ministers on specific matters of mutual interests expected to find practical solutions and report progress. South Africa has similar interactions with Mozambique and Namibia. President Mbeki stated South Africa's objective in this process: "...[Our immediate common objective is to see what contribution we can make to address the economic challenges facing Zimbabwe. We have a common objective to resolve the land question in Zimbabwe so as to stabilise the situation politically and thereby create an environment conducive to economic recovery and development."³⁹

A ministerial level meeting between the Zimbabwean Ministers of Finance (Simba Makoni), Minerals and Energy (Sydney Sekeremayi), Land (Joseph Made) and Industry and International Trade (Nkosana Moyo) and their South African counterparts led by Minister of Finance (Trevor Manuel) took place in March 2001. This event was part of an emerging new

thinking in South African government circles to attempt to influence the Zimbabwean government to take a proactive interest in addressing its domestic problems. The meeting was followed by a series of workshops and planning sessions within South African government departments on various issues in relation to day to day developments in Zimbabwe. Four departments (including Foreign Affairs), Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) and the presidency were involved in preparation for a presidential briefing on the crisis. It was explicitly stated in these meetings that the clampdown on the press, judiciary and the deterioration of law and order in Zimbabwe impact negatively on not only Zimbabwe's economy but of the region as well. Furthermore, it emerged from these sessions that President Mugabe's leadership of ZANU-PF was identified as a problem. Nkosana Moyos' resignation in July 2001 was regarded as a setback for South Africa's relations with Zimbabwe. Moyo resigned after his call to end the invasions of business went unheeded. As the MDC is dependent on private sector support, it was hoped that donations to the MDC will stop. Moyo, who regarded these invasions as harmful to the economy, was regarded as representing a new approach in Mugabe's cabinet and open to South Africa's influence.⁴⁰

Despite various South African efforts, President Mugabe visited Europe in March and his Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa visited South Africa for consultations at a time when the intimidation of some judges in Zimbabwe was reported. South Africa responded to this and attacks by militant groups on South African companies in Zimbabwe by calling in the Zimbabwe High Commissioner to Pretoria demanding an end to these events. However, after the meeting South Africans were arrested and three more South African companies invaded.⁴¹

In May 2001 it was already evident that the South African government is adopting an approach focusing on a post-Mugabe scenario rather than a post-ZANU PF one. However, the South African government issued no statement regarding the fact that President Mugabe spoke

on behalf of Africa at the inaugural session of the summit in Jakarta of the G15 developing states.⁴² Other developments were the upgrading of links between the ANC and the MDC in Zimbabwe and tacit support to those members of ZANU PF (like Finance Minister Simba Makoni) who have shown an interest in stabilising the situation in Zimbabwe.⁴³

Statements remain an important symbolic act whereby a state can communicate its stance on a particular issue. Presenting her budget vote in Parliament on 8 May 2001 Dr Dlamini-Zuma stated “Zimbabwe remains of great concern to us. We have to continue to engage the Zimbabwean government whilst pointing out firmly and frankly where we disagree with them. We have a responsibility to avoid complete collapse and not to make things worse for ordinary Zimbabweans. All of us can help to a point but it is the Zimbabweans that must surely take final decisions...South Africa must continue to act in a way that maintains that flickering hope of transforming dreams into reality rather than get short term praise that does not solve the problem. In the same way that the Lockerbie impasse was unlocked by engaging the Libyans and not condemning them. We were condemned at the time but we persevered until a solution was found.”⁴⁴

Presidential Campaign 2002

In the period leading up to the announcement of the date for the presidential election (March 2002), Zimbabwe’s growing international isolation became evident as well the impact of events in the region. Despite its six projects in Zimbabwe totaling US\$ 271 million the World Bank suspended disbursements to Zimbabwe on May 15, 2000 due to overdue of service payments. An IMF team visited Harare in mid-September 2000. The team noted the rapid economic and social deterioration. The IMF urged the government to produce a 2001 budget targeting a substantial reduction in government spending while maintaining its social programmed. A 69-90% pay rise to civil servants, the cost of servicing domestic debt and the

devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar did not improve the situation.⁴⁵ By October 2000 that the World Bank placed all IBRD loans and IDA credits to, or guaranteed by Zimbabwe in non-accrual status. At that stage Zimbabwe owed US\$ 452 million to the IDRB and US\$ 437 million to the IDA.⁴⁶

South Africa was, like other international actors, engaged in various diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation. However, by mid 2001, President Mbeki conceded that his attempt at “quiet diplomacy” to persuade President Mugabe to restore the rule of law had not worked and ushered in a stronger more outspoken approach towards the Mugabe government.⁴⁷ In a letter to Mugabe, Mbeki requested assurances for a free and fair presidential election, the uphold of democratic practices and the rule of law. Signaling a move away from his “quiet diplomacy” towards Harare, President Mbeki told President Mugabe to accept the reality of the MDC as the official Zimbabwean opposition.⁴⁸ At the time it became evident that the ANC was consulting with the MDC. MDC secretary general, Welshman Ncube admitted that the ANC was consulting openly and regularly with the MDC and that talks took place between the MDC and the South African Department of Foreign Affairs. The ANC shared historical links with the ZANU-PF led by Robert Mugabe.⁴⁹

The Fourth UK/South Africa Bilateral Forum took place on 14 June 2001 and provided an opportunity to strengthen relations between South Africa and the UK. In a joint communique, Tony Blair and Thabo Mbeki stated that the issue of Zimbabwe was discussed, both expressed their “desire to see a stable, democratic and prosperous Zimbabwe”. Tony Blair also supported and encouraged Thabo Mbeki’s personal efforts and that of South African Ministerial Task Team to engage with the Zimbabwean leadership in resolving the situation in Zimbabwe.⁵⁰

With the impasse in Zimbabwe remaining unresolved, the South African economy suffered due to this. South Africa was increasingly influenced by events in Zimbabwe due to

investor reluctance and the influx of Zimbabweans to South Africa.⁵¹ A statement by the South African Reserve Bank governor, Tito Mboweni by August 2001 that the lawlessness and collapsing economy in South Africa were major causes of the decline of the South African rand caused Zimbabwe's Minister of Information Jonathan Moyo to reject Mboweni's statement in a strongly worded statement. With the South African rand sliding down and large numbers of Zimbabweans crossing into South Africa, Thabo Mbeki's new approach towards Zimbabwe was evident. Not only did Mbeki publicly criticise Mugabe three times, phoned Bakili Muluzi and requested a meeting of SADC's special task team (comprising South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi) on Zimbabwe and briefed the ANC on the government's tougher stance on the Zimbabwean crisis. Zimbabwe's state-owned daily, *The Herald's* headlines declared "Mbeki's shock u-turn" and "SA leader opens way for sanctions". It accused South Africa of "betrayal" of "complicity in the plot to overthrow the ruling ZANU-PF government". *The Herald* reported "President Mbeki's alleged utterances neatly dovetail into Britain's grand plan for a global coalition against Zimbabwe." In an editorial South Africa was accused of "mobilising other SADC states, notably Botswana, Mozambique and Malawi, in this fight to justify a regional and international onslaught." These statements signaled a new period in the relations between Pretoria and Harare.⁵²

It was not only South Africa that experienced the impact of these events. A number of African leaders and influential decision makers attended the Global 2001 Smart Partnership International Dialogue in August 2001 in Kampala, Uganda. The purpose of this meeting was to address the development challenges facing Africa. A meeting of the SADC heads of states troika was assembled to discuss events in Zimbabwe. The troika comprises the heads of state of Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa. These leaders decided to arrange a mini summit with President Mugabe at the sidelines of the Kampala meeting. However, President Mugabe did not

attend the meeting. Instead he send his deputy, Joseph Msika to attend, thus upsetting regional efforts to arrange a mini summit on Zimbabwe. A possible explanation for President Mugabe's defiance is the fact that he was ousted from his chairmanship of SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation and replaced by President Joachim Chissano of Mozambique. The 2001 SADC Summit Final Communique the organisation declared its consideration of the situation in Zimbabwe. It also welcomed the initiatives of President Obasanjo of Nigeria to mediate between the UK and Zimbabwe governments. It also "expressed concern on the effects of the Zimbabwe economic situation on the region and indicated its readiness to engage in a dialogue with the government of Zimbabwe and other co-operating partners to resolve the situation." The Summit established a task force comprising the SADC Troika to work with the government of Zimbabwe on the economic and political issues affecting Zimbabwe. SADC members signed the new SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security at the recent Blantyre Summit SADC (9-14 August 2001). Although the Protocol allows for the intervention in any SADC member which threatens regional security through its own domestic instability, it has not been applied against Zimbabwe despite the further melt down in this country.⁵³

An extraordinary summit of five neighbouring states (and all members of SADC) under the leadership of SADC's chairman at the time, Bakili Muluzi, the president of Malawi, took place in Harare to address the effect of events in Zimbabwe on their fragile economies. Muluzi did not only addressed this issue but also ordered, on behalf of SADC, meetings between the Zimbabwe government, opposition parties and white farmers. A regional task force was established to meet every two weeks to monitor events in Zimbabwe.⁵⁴

As Zimbabwe's growing international isolation became more evident, President Mugabe visited Libya , Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia in efforts to stymie Zimbabwe's

isolation. On his return, President Mugabe announced the re-imposition of socialism in Zimbabwe by gazetting the prices of selected consumer goods. Zimbabwe embraced IMF and World Bank economic reforms in the 1990s which contributed to a gradual erosion of socialism since independence. These IMF facilitated economic reforms were suspended in 1999 after the Zimbabwean government failed to meet specific targets.⁵⁵

The Commonwealth

Despite the Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991 which, inter alia, declared the organisation's opposition towards undemocratic forms of governance as well as the Millbrook Commonwealth of Action Programme on the Harare Declaration (1995), the Commonwealth initially did not act against Zimbabwe.⁵⁶ However, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) was eventually set up in preparation of the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Brisbane in October 2001. The Brisbane meeting was eventually cancelled. As South Africa's bilateral efforts were not yielding any results, it participated in the Abuja meeting initiated by the president of Nigeria. This meeting was attended by the foreign ministers of seven Commonwealth states (Australia, the UK, Canada, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa) to address the situation in Zimbabwe. The Abuja Agreement included:

- a commitment to the Harare Commonwealth Declaration and the Milbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration;
- an end the occupation of farm lands;
- to speed up the process by which farms that do not meet set criteria are de-listed;
- occupiers on non-designated farms will be moved to legally acquired farms
- acceleration of discussions with the UNDP;

- commitment to restore the rule of law to the process of land reform;
- commitment to freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Zimbabwean constitution at the time of the Abuja Agreement.⁵⁷

At the meeting in Abuja the government of Zimbabwe agreed to take measures to stop the occupation of white owned farms and violence against farmers and their workers. It also agreed to compensate these farmers. In return Zimbabwe would receive funding for its land redistribution programme. The role of Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo in brokering the agreement was pivotal. Not only did President Obasanjo initiated the meeting, but also spoke to both Tony Blair and Robert Mugabe before the meeting, attending its sessions and sending his foreign minister to Harare to brief President Mugabe on the meeting. This early success follows on Obasanjo's earlier efforts (inter alia through the establishment of his African Leadership Forum) to resolve conflicts in Sierra Leone, Sudan, Burundi and the DRC. This indicates to success on the part of Nigeria's diplomatic efforts as compared to the efforts of President Mbeki.⁵⁸

South Africa participated in the Commonwealth Ministers' visit to Harare after the Abuja Agreement to discuss its implementation. At this meeting, international actors undertook to engage the UNDP and the Zimbabwean government in pursuing land reform based on the UNDP's proposals of December 2000. Australia, Canada and the UK undertook to continue to contribute to their existing poverty reduction programmes. The UK further added that it is committed to meeting its obligations of the land reform process by pledging \$53m on the condition that it occurs within a legally defined framework.⁵⁹

As recently as September 2002, President Mbeki as a member of the Commonwealth Chairperson's Committee on Zimbabwe met with the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard,

Don McKinnon (The Commonwealth Secretary-General) and President Olusegun Obasanjo to discuss the situation in Zimbabwe. The recent Abuja meeting followed the Chairperson's Committee meeting at Marlborough House in London after the elections in Zimbabwe at which a decision was taken to suspend Zimbabwe from the Councils of the Commonwealth for one year. The London meeting decided that the matter of Zimbabwe's suspension would be reviewed after twelve months based on progress in Zimbabwe according to the Commonwealth Harare principles and reports from the Commonwealth Secretary General. At this meeting the presidents of South Africa and Nigeria were requested to actively promote the process of reconciliation between the main political parties in Zimbabwe.⁶⁰ Although President Mugabe was invited to attend the meeting, he did not show up. The Abuja meeting of September 2002 stated that it "deeply regretted that the process of reconciliation facilitated by the Special Envoys of the President of Nigeria and the President of South Africa had stalled." The *Zimbabwe Mid-Term Review* issued at this meeting reported that, as a consequence the divisions between various parties in Zimbabwe had increased considerably as well as harassment of the opposition, media and judiciary in that country. The report noted that "despite repeated efforts, including in collaboration with regional Commonwealth Heads of Government, the Commonwealth Secretary General had been unable to establish a dialogue with the government of Zimbabwe." The Committee called on the government of Zimbabwe to engage with the Commonwealth on events in that country. All members of the troika believed that efforts to engage the government should continue. However, Australia suggested the full suspension of Zimbabwe with immediate effect. Other members of the Committee stated that Zimbabwe should be allowed the next six months to respond to the Marlborough House Statement, after which stronger measures might need to be considered.⁶¹

Consequences

South Africa’s position in the international community since 1994 is characterised by various contradictions. One of these relates to ethical aspects of our foreign policy. Coming from a past dominated by human rights abuses, it was expected that the ANC government would be a strong voice of reason on these issues in the international arena. South Africa’s stated objective of the promotion of human rights contradicts not only our arms sales policy but also South Africa’s response to the events in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe issue in South Africa’s foreign policy epitomises a knotty problem for the Mbeki government. South Africa has to take into account the requirements of its membership of international society.

The primary duty of policy makers is to pursue the interests of their citizens within in the context of a wider set of duties towards other states. Brown⁶² argues that these “wider duties” include the abstention from forcible intervention in the domestic affairs of another state, obedience to international law and the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, peaceful cooperation with other actors and humanitarian intervention to stop crimes against humanity.

How does one determine the success of South Africa’s policy towards Zimbabwe amidst the continued meltdown in Zimbabwe, the collapse of the Abuja Agreement, the fact that Robert Mugabe is not the kind of man whose attention you try to reach via a megaphone approach?

Variables in determining foreign policy programmes

The Zimbabwe issue in South Africa’s foreign policy is complex and the product of various historical processes. How can we evaluate South Africa’s response to the issue? In the discussion above four sets of variables determining foreign policy programmes were identified:

Implementation variables	Bridging variables
Response variables	External variables

Implementation variables include factors contributing to goal dissolution. In the case of Zimbabwe, bureaucratic politics were one of the factors to take into account. Several initiatives on the Zimbabwe issue emanated from the Presidency. Mbeki's attempts to establish himself as well as South Africa as a major and influential power in the region and continent is a possible determining factor in his initial perception and definition of events in Zimbabwe. Snyder and others distinguished between two types of motivations determining decision-making: "in-order-to motives and because-of motives."⁶³ The former can be applied to Mbeki's handling of Zimbabwe. "In-order-to motives" are conscious and articulate. Decision makers are taking a particular decision or course of action *in order to* achieve a particular short or long-term objective. It often occurred that the Department of Foreign Affairs were sidelined in the formulation of policy responses, its implementation and follow up. In a parliamentary context, the President and the DFA could only be requested to explain policy responses in retrospect. This contributed to the fact that some opposition parties started to use the Zimbabwe issue against government as opposition politicians visited Zimbabwe as well as the UK to attempt to influence the process.

Bridging variables highlight factors set in motion the process to reach a desired outcome. In broad terms South Africa's adherence to the principle of "universality" can be regarded as one of the important bridging variables to take into account. Not only is this principle designed to bridge the gap between apartheid and post 1994 foreign relations, but it underscores the willingness of South Africa to establish diplomatic relations with all states regardless of their domestic and foreign policies.⁶⁴ In the case of Zimbabwe, one can argue that South Africa choose a particular course of non coercive action in favour of South Africa's own national interests. The Zimbabwe crisis unfolded at a time when South Africa clearly realizes Mugabe's influence among some of the older regional leaders such as Dos Santos and Nujoma. South

Africa implemented a series of initiatives or incentives to bridge the gap between its foreign policy actions and outcomes. One such incentive was the South African government's decision not to impose economic and diplomatic sanctions against Zimbabwe, but rather in the words of the Director General of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Siphos Pityana, to follow the route of searching for "an amicable solution to the problem."⁶⁵

Response variables are the third set of variables that can be applied when evaluating foreign policy programmes. It includes factors or indicators that can provide an indication that a particular foreign policy objective has been met. Addressing a hearing of the United States' House of Representatives' Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Africa on NEPAD in September 2002, Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad, stated with regards to Zimbabwe that President Mbeki called for, what can be interpreted to as response variables in this case, "free and fair elections, for the crisis to be resolved peacefully, for matters to be handled according to the rule of law, for violence to stop, for a process of legal and transparent land reform, for illegal land invasions to stop, and for a process of national dialogue."⁶⁶

External variables, lastly, refer to the contextual factors that may compound the impact of other variables. This may include the behavior or perceptions of other actors or unforeseen conditions and events. Within Southern Africa, South Africa faces a number of foreign policy challenges since 1994. One of these is building regional confidences signaling a move away from South Africa's hegemonic ambitions in the region as was the case during apartheid. South Africa's dilemma is that its record in the region is historically as well as recent as September 1998 with its invasion of Lesotho is not beyond reproach. Within SADC South Africa is isolated in speaking out against Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe maintains strong military alliances with other SADC member states such as Namibia and Angola. Furthermore, most SADC states are caught up in their own domestic problems. Since 1994 South Africa is involved in a process of

institutionalising this confidence building process via its involvement in the SADC, the OPDS and the Inter-state Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC). South Africa by virtue of its size and power (economic or otherwise) naturally dominates the region. Zimbabwe's pretensions to similar status have underlain the personal animosity that surfaced from time to time between Robert Mugabe and Nelson Mandela. Competing regional ambitions and strained relations between South Africa and Zimbabwe was evident since the mid-1990s. Strained personal relations and differences regarding the mandate of SADC's security structures came to a head when Zimbabwe broke ranks with South Africa in 1998 over SADC's intervention in the Congo (DRC), a new member state. Mugabe, backed by the presidents of Angola and Namibia, invoked SADC's security mechanism to lend military assistance to Laurent Kabila, whereas South Africa opted for a negotiated settlement. Almost at the same time, South Africa failed to obtain SADC's support for its botched military intervention in Lesotho in September 1998. States in the region, in particular Zimbabwe, continue to question South Africa's motives in the region. Despite its recent troop withdrawals, Zimbabwe's involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains a major contributing factor to strained relations between these states. SADC remains the major casualty of the Great Lakes crisis as Zimbabwe submitted troops in support of both Kabilas and South Africa's involvement in the peace process outside SADC structures. Mandela, and later Mbeki criticism, of Mugabe's involvement in the region added to strenuous relations as well as making cooperation in any other area more difficult. in the Great Lakes . It is more involved in the DRC than any other state in the region. The cost of this African safari was Z\$ 260m 1998, Z\$ 3.9 billion in 1999 and Z\$ 6 billion at the end of June 2000. Approximately 12 000 Zimbabwean soldiers are deployed in the DRC and certain economic interests are controlled by the Zimbabwean army. The official Zimbabwe death toll in the DRC remains unknown. According to the MDC the fatality rate is more than 600. By April 2001 the

withdrawal of 200 Zimbabwean troops was announced. However, Socebo, a Zimbabwean registered company owned by senior ZANU-PF and military officials was recently awarded a lucrative contract for logging operations in the DRC. The operation is to be run by the Zimbabwean army and Forestry Commission. As Moyroud and Katunga observes, Zimbabwe still maintains significant investments in the region. It has thus far shown no willingness to abandon the direct or indirect exploitation of natural resources, as developed over the past few years.⁶⁷

Amidst events in Zimbabwe, rising levels of xenophobia against Zimbabweans living in South Africa occurred. Apart from Mozambicans, Zimbabweans represents the largest group of illegal aliens repatriated from South Africa annually. In 1998, a number of 28 548 Zimbabweans were repatriated. As early as 1994, community organisations in Alexandra run a campaign entitled “operation *Buyelekhaya*” (go back home) targeting Zimbabweans.⁶⁸ Regarded as *bakhalangas*, xenophobic attacks on Zimbabweans living at the Zandspruit informal settlement near Johannesburg occurred in October 2001. South Africa first ordered and then postponed the deportation of about 15 000 Zimbabweans working as farms labourers. Some 8000 returned to Zimbabwe adding to the 2.5 million Zimbabweans already registered for food aid. The Zimbabwean government responded to these events by accusing the South African government of “sabotaging Zimbabwe’s land reform...If the South African government goes ahead with this unprecedented move, the Zimbabwe Government will gazette more farms to resettle these people. When we do that we do not expect anyone from South Africa to raise their voices.”⁶⁹ Responding to this, the ANC stated: “These acts of xenophobia are as unforgivable as they are unacceptable in a civilised society, especially that the perpetrators are South Africans, who owe the freedom they are enjoying, to the support the African countries, including Zimbabwe, gave the South African freedom fighters during the struggle to bring about that freedom.”⁷⁰

The sins of a rogue state such as Zimbabwe are the fact that it transgresses in the domain of high politics by breaking a principal rule of international politics, i.e. posing a threat to regional or international peace, order and security. Zimbabwe possess arsenals of conventional weapons, out of proportion to what it requires for defensive purposes. It also represents a new class of regional power, i.e. well armed, unpredictable and able to forge military alliances outside existing structures such as SADC and the OAU. A recent meeting between the defence ministers of Angola and Zimbabwe indicated the creation of joint weapons manufacturing companies. Angola and Zimbabwe both deployed troops to back the government of the DRC against rebel groups supported by Rwanda and Uganda.⁷¹ Lastly, it maintains and supports undemocratic forms of authority.⁷² In addition to these President Mugabe's own political survival is causing him to refuse to listen to any advice from any quarter. He was endorsed as ZANU-PF's candidate for the 2002 presidential election at his party's congress in December 2000. But how does President Mugabe survive?⁷³ Zimbabwean political scientist, Masipula Sithole, described Mugabe as "disciplined, articulate, learned, lucky and inordinately Machiavellian."⁷⁴ He projects himself as the political liberator of the Zimbabwe people. Mugabe's *chimurenga* name, *Karigamombe* (the cock that killed the lion) still proves to be one of his survival strategies. Now it is time for him to act as the economic liberator of Zimbabwe's people. His re-legitimization of the state, his tapping into foreign patronage (either in the DRC or other SADC states) and international support for and from dictatorships (in China, Libya, some Southern African states) are factors contributing to the complexity of the Zimbabwe crisis and any South African efforts to resolve it. What is also evident from recent initiatives is the role of leaders such as Nigeria President Obasanjo and Libya's Colonel Qaddafi's in the politics of Southern Africa.⁷⁵ This poses a serious threat to South Africa's sphere of influence.

A Balanced Foreign Policy?

One of the weaknesses of African diplomacy since independence has been the tendency to be based on exclamatory declarations and statements of intent, rather than on a more far reaching set of political, military and economic strategies. African organisations do not have the willingness or capacity to resolve conflicts on the continent. Despite serious violations, a silent conspiracy continues to be evident among African leaders vis a vis the domestic affairs of other African states. This is illustrated in the following cases. The communique issued in May 2001 after the meeting of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution does not even refer to the situation in Zimbabwe. Members of the African Union recently supported President Mugabe. Zimbabwe is a member of, amongst others, SADC, SACU and COMESA. None of these organisations have applied any pressure against Zimbabwe.⁷⁶

An extra-ordinary summit of heads of state and government of SADC took place in early January 2002 in Blantyre. Both Thabo Mbeki and Robert Mugabe attended the summit meeting. The final communique of the meeting referred to a number of actions undertaken by Zimbabwe (by February 2002 none of these were upheld) and “welcomed” the assurances by Robert Mugabe on the freeness and fairness of the upcoming elections.⁷⁷

Another weakness of African diplomacy is the dominance by leaders of foreign policy as this contributes to any resistance towards bureaucratisation and professionalism. In the case of Zimbabwe, Mugabe maintains tight control over his regime’s foreign relations. This contributes to this personalised type of diplomacy tends to age along with its practitioners.⁷⁸ In a rare move, SADC decided to take away the chairmanship of the Organ for Defence, Politics and Security from Robert Mugabe. SADC leaders issued a statement declaring “that the spillover effect from the Zimbabwe crisis will affect our countries.” This was the first sign that other African states

are worried by Mugabe's rule and its economic consequences.”⁷⁹

In most cases the idea of a balanced foreign policy with regards to a particular issue is an unattainable ideal due to the fragmenting, complex and multitude of factors at play in the foreign policy environment. Ideally, as Du Plessis⁸⁰ outlines, a balanced foreign policy should have:

- a clarity of purpose despite conflicting and demanding events. Statements by South Africa consistently indicated that Zimbabweans have the task to identify for themselves what the issues in their country are, have to built on the foundations of this process, have to work to end ethnic tensions in their country, to rebuilt their economy and to ensure peace in their land.⁸¹
- a consistency of purpose in the integration of the various strands of foreign policies maintained by a state;
- a continuity of design and execution that maintains long term policy objectives despite the temptations to surrender these for short term resolution of a particular issue. South Africa's foreign policy objectives are identified as the promotion democratisation and respect for human rights, the prevention of conflict and the promotion of peaceful resolution of disputes and the advancement of sustainable development and poverty alleviation.⁸²

South Africa is yet to adopt a coherent international strategy on the Zimbabwe crisis as was, for example, adopted towards the apartheid regime.⁸³ Geldenhuys, for example, refers to the foreign dimensions of change in South Africa before 1994. He identified a “four pronged international offensive against apartheid”, i.e. conditional engagement,

enforced isolation, intervention and mediation.⁸⁴

- a compatibility of policy and available resources with international and domestic conditions;
- an adaptability of purposes and activities to provide for policy innovation when needed. Since March 2000, South Africa's approach to Zimbabwe was adapted by engaging it first on a bilateral and later on a multilateral level. A change in Mbeki's leadership on the issue also occurred. A recent GCIS study indicated that ordinary South Africans were critical of government's handling of, inter alia, the Zimbabwe issue. After consultations with South African religious, trade union and farming leaders to ask their advice on how South Africa could assist in legitimising Zimbabwe's presidential elections, Thabo Mbeki stated in his State of the Nation address that "in the pursuit of stability" South Africa "will work tirelessly to support the people of Zimbabwe in their quest to hold free and fair elections in their country." Mbeki further stated that it is in the interest of the whole region that the government that emerges from the elections is legitimate. Mbeki announced the establishment of a multi-sectoral South African Observer Mission (SAOM) to Zimbabwe. This follows on the announcement of a Parliamentary Observer Team to Zimbabwe. The SAOM is a 50 member mission headed by Sam Motsuenyane.⁸⁵

By October 2002, South Africa had mainly applied non-coercive diplomatic measures and non violent strategies such as international appeals (moral persuasion to conflicting parties), fact finding missions, observer teams, bilateral negotiations, third party informal diplomatic consultations, track two diplomacy (by non official, non-governmental parties), third party

mediation, conciliatory gestures and economic assistance. South Africa also followed development and governance approaches such as policies to promote national economic and social development via continued economic trade and Zimbabwe's economic integration in the region as well as recommending economic reforms and standards. South Africa also upheld all bilateral cooperative agreements and programmes between these states. Lastly, South Africa attempted to promulgate and enforce human rights, democratic and other standards via its participation in monitoring most of Zimbabwe's elections since 2000.

Policy evaluation is the assessment of the overall effectiveness of a policy in meeting its objectives.⁸⁶ A selection of South Africa's foreign policy priorities/objectives and actions on the Zimbabwe issue is presented in Table 1. In assessing South Africa's handling of the Zimbabwe issue, the following elements of policy impact will be applied:

- Impact on the target group or situation. Since South Africa first responded to events in Zimbabwe in 2000 economic, political and social meltdown continued despite diplomatic efforts. Chronic shortages of foreign exchange, fuel, power and other basic commodities are a daily occurrence. The GDP for 2001 fell by 20% due to farm invasions and economic crisis. The government program to seize more than 4600 white owned farms, the violent occupation of 1700 white owned farms not only disrupted the production of tobacco, the main foreign currency earner, but also corn, the staple food. By October 2001, inflation reached 76%.⁸⁷ The country's tourist industry were also severely devastated by the events since February 2000. FDI has dried up and the World Bank, IMF and other Western financial institutions have frozen loans to Zimbabwe to protest land confiscation by the state, economic mismanagement and

government overspending. Furthermore, human rights abuses by the Zimbabwe government and its supporters continued. In July 2001 only, the Amani Trust, a human rights organisation, in Harare, recorded 11 political murders, 61 disappearances, 104 cases of unlawful detention by government and 288 incidents of torture. An increase of 142.6% in the budget of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) was announced in November 2001.⁸⁸

By February 2002, the agreement with the Commonwealth over land reform in early September 2001 has had little impact on the actions of the Zimbabwe government.

- Impact on situations or groups other than the target (spill over effects). The ZANU-PF elite won the election and continue to share in the resources of Zimbabwe. Farm invasions, human rights abuses and violence continues. In Southern Africa the impact of events in Zimbabwe is estimated at US\$ 1 billion in terms of the loss of foreign direct investment (FDI) to the region. By November 2001, Robert Mugabe initiated another effort to seize farms. This presidential decree stipulated the state's unrestricted power to issue eviction notes to farmers to leave within 90 days. This effectively enabled the Zimbabwean government to nationalise up to 90% of all white owned land. With immediate effect, 800 farmers have been given 90 days' notice to leave their farms. This resulted in almost 22 million acres of agricultural land falling out of production. President Mbeki's diplomacy towards President Mugabe reflects anxieties about South Africa's own rural land hungry poor. Recently a number of

illegal land occupations occurred in South Africa.⁸⁹

Civil society in South Africa is not very much interested in addressing and resolving the situation in Zimbabwe. One notable exception was the SAIIA's jointly staged a conference with the business sector (BOE Merchant Bank and BOE Securities) on the crisis in Zimbabwe and its implications for South and Southern Africa in February 2001. The conference was addressed mainly by Zimbabwean academics and decision makers in various fields. In May 2001 the Department of Foreign Affairs hosted a workshop on possible approaches to the Zimbabwe issue. This workshop was attended by various South African academics. Citizen and civil society engagement in the South African policy process can assume many forms such as the building of broad public support on Zimbabwe, using the mass media, engaging with decision makers in foreign policy dialogue on Zimbabwe, lobbying, monitoring and evaluation of South Africa's handling of the Zimbabwe issue, cross border alliances with Zimbabwe civil society groups and policy networks.⁹⁰ Despite the various strategies available, South Africans have not taken up the Zimbabwe issue.

Table 1: A selection of purposes and actions in South Africa's foreign policy approach towards Zimbabwe

South African foreign policy objective	South African foreign policy actions
Security Conflict prevention and promotion of peaceful resolution of disputes	Maintain bilateral and multilateral dialogue with Zimbabwe. Maintain economic and trade ties despite impact of Zimbabwe crisis on region. Brokering of DRC peace processes. Submitting forces as part of UN to DRC. Maintain defence posture.
Autonomy	Despite international and domestic criticism continue to engage with Zimbabwe. Trade continues with Zimbabwe.
Welfare Domestic and international promotion of democratisation and the respect for human rights. Sustainable development and poverty alleviation.	Announcement of MARP and NEPAD. Trade with Zimbabwe. SA did not switch off Zimbabwe's lights and water despite arrears. Provision of credit to Zimbabwe.
Prestige/status	Promotion of the African Renaissance. Projecting itself as a peace broker in Africa. Projecting itself as the voice of Africa through the NEPAD. Multilateral and bilateral efforts to resolve Zimbabwe crisis.

- Impact on future as well as immediate conditions. FDI to Southern Africa will continue to decrease. Regional economic integration is hampered by the economic impact of events in Zimbabwe on the region. A recent World Bank report asked the question, *Can Africa claim the 21st century?* It cites a number of development issues challenging Africa's claim. The report suggested a "business plan conceived and owned by Africans and supported by donors through coordinated, long term partnerships." The report recognized the unique problems faced by every state, but also focused on common problems. For the World Bank this "business plan" should focus on improving governance and resolving

conflicts, investing in African people, increasing competitiveness and diversifying economies, and reducing aid dependence and strengthening partnerships.⁹¹ A declining international commitment towards (conflict resolution in) Africa is evident. The events of 11 September 2001 in the USA and the subsequent global coalition formation clearly indicated Africa's marginalisation. The USA will continue to draft the global agenda. The fact that no African state is included in the coalition is another indication of Africa's position.

- Direct costs in terms of resources devoted to policy. Zimbabwe imports about 20% of its power from South Africa and has not paid its bills since 1999. It owns Eskom more than US\$ 20m in arrears. The South African government has not provided any loans or credit lines to the Zimbabwe government directly. However, the South African export credit reinsurance scheme does have some exposure to ZISCO, the Zimbabwean Iron and Steel Company. A number of South African parastatals have provided credit facilities to their Zimbabwean counterparts.

- Indirect costs, including loss of opportunities, to do other things. Instability in one state often has a domino effect on other states in its region. South Africa's economy has already experienced the impact of events in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's land issue served as a trigger among certain political communities in South Africa to redress land inequalities. Regional security issues cannot be sufficiently addressed under these conditions and in this way severely hampers development

Regional integration efforts are more successful in a stable environment

and among states of equal levels of development. During the 1990s Southern Africa reached the threshold of a security community. As a regional actor SADC is supposed best posed to address development, security and integration issues in Southern Africa. Instead, these efforts remains protracted and often sidelined by President Mugabe. States and their machinery - rather than people - seems to be the greatest threat to human security in the region. Cooperation remains the preserve of governments. Conflict resolution within SADC seems to be outsourced to individual states or to international actors outside the region. As an organisation SADC confronts a decision making environment and culture which is the product of its membership. Diplomacy remains undeveloped as well as other policy instruments to address members transgressing the ideals of the SADC.⁹²

South Africa is faced with major challenges in the process towards regional integration. Within SADC progress in this regard is hampered by differences between regional leaders. President Mugabe initiated his own peace process on the DRC - outside SADC. South Africa will have to take up the role of more than a reluctant regional power. South Africa must assume the role of a benign hegemon if SADC and regional integration and economic development is to succeed.⁹³

- Missed opportunities. The inability of South African civil society to engage with Zimbabweans remains one of the most glaring missed opportunities. A few initiatives took place. One was the Zimbabwe-South Africa Dialogue hosted by the Africa Institute of South Africa, the

Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and the Institute for Multi-party Democracy on 1 and 2 November 2001. South Africa's inability to address the plight of the marginalised Matebeles in Zimbabwe is one example.

This, for example, is in stark contrast to the US' response. Statements by the Bush administration indicated that the US is interested in democracy and good governance across Africa. The US Senate passed the Zimbabwe Democracy Recovery Act in August 2001. This will direct the Bush administration to support the people of Zimbabwe in their struggle to restore democracy in their country. It remains to be seen if this will realize. The EU is still attempting to engage constructively with President Mugabe and is said to be seeking talks under the terms of the Cotonou aid convention. However, in September 2001 the European Union announced sanctions against Zimbabwe.⁹⁴

Policy Alternatives

What policy or diplomatic alternatives could be applied to prevent the further political and economic meltdown of Zimbabwe, or even to enhance South Africa's efforts to resolve the situation? A number of policy alternatives to President Mbeki's approach can be identified.⁹⁵ A selection of these are:

- isolation of President Mugabe by closer consultation and cooperation with the parliamentary opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). South Africa's deputy minister of foreign affairs has confirmed contact between the ANC and the MDC.
- diplomatic rhetoric and symbolism. President Mbeki's hearty reaction to President Mugabe on airports and at news conferences sends a

wrong message.

- economic, “smart” and diplomatic sanctions should be carefully considered and applied in such a way as to harm the ruling party and president instead of ordinary Zimbabweans.⁹⁶ South Africa maintains full diplomatic relations with Zimbabwe. Apart from this, it signed a non-reciprocal trade agreement with Zimbabwe in 1964 as well as agreements on road transportation and civil air transport. South Africa can use these agreements to influence the government of Zimbabwe.⁹⁷
- suspending any form of aid to Zimbabwe such as the Zimbabwe Democracy Act 2000 passed in June 2000 by the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Not only will it suspend aid to Zimbabwe, but it will also block international loans until democracy is restored in the country.
- pressuring President Mugabe to step down. Robert Mugabe turned 78 in February 2002. Having underwent treatment for throat cancer in the UK in 1998, speculation about his health is rife. If the MDC does not win the election in March 2002 and Mugabe is victorious the debate about his successor focuses in Jonathan Moyo, his Information Minister, Sydney Sekeremayi, Defence Minister, Ignatius Chombo, Mugabe’s nephew or Simba Makoni, Finance Minister.⁹⁸
- economic actions such as President Nujoma’s exclusion of President Mugabe from a regional investment summit in Windhoek in October 2000 fearing that he will chase away potential investors in the region.
- Michael Lund (see table 2) provides a useful list of policies and

instruments such as military approaches, non-military and development and governance approaches that can be applied to resolve an international crisis. Some of these are coercive and non-coercive diplomatic measures as well as the promotion of national and social development, human rights and civil society groups.⁹⁹

- continuous mediation between Zimbabwe and the UK,
- renewed mediation between Zimbabwe and international financial institutions,
- intervention. This option was discussed at an African Round Table discussion hosted by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. This commission was initiated by the Canadian government and consists of politicians and NGOs from Africa, Asia, Latin America and North America. Prominent members of the commission include Gareth Evans (former Australian foreign minister), Cyril Ramaphosa (former ANC secretary general), Fidel Ramos (former Philippines president) and Mohammed Sahnoun (special advisor to UN secretary general Kofi Annan).
- renewed regional multilateral diplomacy by putting Zimbabwe on the agenda of organizations such as SADC and the OAU. Regional organisations have been historically weak and ineffective in this regard. These organisations are often constrained by members states' determination to maintain their individual sovereign national prerogatives. Regional leaders congratulated ZANU-PF on its election victory at the SADC summit of heads of state or government in Windhoek in August

2000. Earlier in 2001 President Mugabe was received by the EU commissioner Poul Nielsen, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt and French president, Jacques Chirac.

Table 2: Non-military policies and instruments¹⁰⁰

Non-military approaches

A. Coercive diplomatic measures (without the use of armed force)

Diplomatic sanctions (withholding of diplomatic relations, recognition as state or membership in multilateral organizations)

Economic sanctions

Moral sanctions (condemnations of violations of international law)

War crimes tribunals and trials

B. Non-coercive diplomatic measures (without armed force or coercion)

Non-judicial

International appeals (moral persuasion to conflicting parties)

Propaganda

Fact finding missions, observer teams, on site monitoring of human rights abuses

Bilateral negotiations

Third party informal diplomatic consultations

Track two diplomacy (by non official, non-governmental parties)

Conciliation

Third party mediation

Commissions of inquiry or other international inquiries

Conciliatory gestures

Non violent strategies

Economic assistance or political incentives

Judicial or quasi judicial

Mechanisms for peaceful settlement of disputes

Arbitration

Adjudication

Development and governance approaches

A. Policies to promote national economic and social development

Preventive economic development aid, Preventive private investment, Economic trade, Economic integration, Economic reforms and standards

Society-to-society, bilateral cooperative programmes (in social and cultural affairs)

B. Promulgation and enforcement of human rights, democratic and other standards

Political conditionality attached to economic aid, International human rights standard setting, Human rights suits, Election monitoring, Military to military consultations

C. National governing structures to promote peaceful conflict resolution

Power sharing, Consociation, Federalism, Federation, Confederation

Autonomy, Partition, Secession

Trusteeships, protectorates.

Conclusion

President Mbeki decided on the diplomatic route to resolve the Zimbabwe crisis. It presented the South African government with ways to peacefully conduct relations with Zimbabwe. This dialogue took the format of negotiations rather than force, propaganda, or recourse to law, and other peaceful means (such as engendering goodwill). South Africa attempted to harness its power for the purpose of achieving its foreign policy objectives and securing its national interests by certain actions.

This paper attempted to analyse South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe since February 2000. The objective was to gain an understanding of Thabo Mbeki's efforts in defining, addressing and resolving this foreign challenge amidst his efforts to position South Africa in the region, Africa and further abroad. The contribution argued that South Africa initially artfully dodged the reality of Zimbabwe's domestic affairs. Moving away from "quiet diplomacy" to a more constructive engagement via bilateral and multilateral efforts (within Southern Africa, the continent and other international institutions), the paper attempted to assess South Africa's as well as that of other actors' efforts to resolve the impasse. Michael Lund provides a useful list of policies and instruments such as military, non-military, development and governance approaches that can be applied to resolve an international crisis such as this. Some of these are coercive and non-coercive diplomatic measures as well as the promotion of national and social development, human rights and civil society groups.¹⁰¹ By October 2002, South Africa had mainly applied non-coercive diplomatic measures and non violent strategies such as international appeals (moral persuasion to conflicting parties), fact finding missions, observer teams, bilateral negotiations, third party informal diplomatic consultations, track two diplomacy (by non official, non-governmental parties), third party mediation, conciliatory gestures and economic assistance. South Africa also followed development and governance approaches such as policies to promote

national economic and social development via continued economic trade and Zimbabwe's economic integration in the region as well as recommending economic reforms and standards. South Africa also upheld all bilateral cooperative agreements and programmes between these states. Lastly, South Africa attempted to promulgate and enforce human rights, democratic and other standards via its participation in monitoring most of Zimbabwe's elections since 2000.

As events in Zimbabwe impacts on South Africa as well as the credibility and implementation of NEPAD, the final part of the paper suggested a number of alternative foreign policy options that can be applied to resolve the issue.

South Africa has problems in engaging with African states which relate both to its own past and current strengths. In this regard the principles of universality and the African Renaissance seems to be at odds. South Africa seems reluctant to employ other foreign policy instruments than diplomacy to apply pressure on states with poor human rights records. South Africa seems to be in this case more of an artful dodger than a confident regional and continental power.¹⁰²

South Africa's lack of confidence to address the Zimbabwe issue in a more stronger way poses the question whether South Africa remains the artful dodger or reluctant regional power in its practicing of diplomacy in Africa? South Africa applied all the traditional instruments of diplomatic bargaining with Zimbabwe - all with little change. Or has South Africa taken the long term route of confidence building? What President Mbeki did achieve was the creation of trust and new alternatives via the establishment of ministerial task groups on both sides of the Limpopo. Diplomatic negotiations seem to be continuing and the problem may somehow be resolved. However, South Africa's handling of the Zimbabwe crisis illustrates wider problems in its relations with African states. Zimbabwe remains a sovereign state. What President Mugabe's actions indicate is that influence and enforcement (or the inability of the enforcement) of

agreements count. South Africa either does not have the influence or the ability to enforce its objectives on the Mugabe government. The fact is President Mugabe remains an influential political actor in southern Africa. Both for historical reasons (in his campaign against apartheid South Africa) as well as his seniority. In addition to these factors President Mugabe's defence pact with Angola and Namibia regarding the DRC war indicates Zimbabwe's self styled leadership role in the region.¹⁰³

South Africa projects an image of representative of Africa in a larger international context. Yet within its backyard it seems to have mixed success.¹⁰⁴ South Africa needs to clearly define its role in the world and project itself accordingly. South Africa's diplomacy is compromised by its arms sales to unstable countries. Thabo Mbeki appears to have a more bolder and ambitious vision of South Africa's international influence than Nelson Mandela. This is evident in his NEPAD. President Mbeki's NEPAD may be regarded as just another African self help manual (such as the failed Lagos Plan of Action of 1980) causing delays in the development of Africa and the region. One example of the impact of the Zimbabwe crisis is the delay in the development of the Beira Corridor linking Zimbabwe to Beira which has not commenced because investors are unwilling to invest in projects where property rights may be disregarded.

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South Africa tolerates President Mugabe's actions and abuses of some of these objectives. Southern Africa is regarded as the most important foreign policy priority of the South African government. The first policy document adopted by the South African government was the *Framework for Cooperation in Southern Africa* approved by Cabinet in August 1996. However, South Africa's handling of the Zimbabwe situation is indicative of failure of the objectives set out in this document, i.e. highest degree of economic cooperation, mutual assistance, joint regional development initiatives and a leading role in integration consistent with

socio-economic, environmental and political realities.¹⁰⁶

South Africa applied various diplomatic instruments to ensure the desired outcome, i.e. fulfilling its foreign policy objectives as well as those relating to the Zimbabwe issue. South Africa's efforts included closed meetings with President Mugabe in Zimbabwe, bilateral (with the Zimbabwe government as well as with other relevant governments) as well as multilateral (through SADC) meetings, international multilateral approaches (through the UN and the EU) and mediation (with the Nigerian and Malawian presidents). Through its ministerial task groups South Africa even assisted in resuming power and fuel delivery to Zimbabwe. Other economic assistance were discussed above. All with very little success as President Mugabe seems to be on his old ways with symbolic gestures here and there.

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NOTES

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¹⁰⁶Department of Foreign Affairs, *Southern African Development Community (SADC)*, 4 June 2001, www.dfa.gov.za/for-relations/multilateral/sadc.htm .