

# **South Africa's Foreign Policy of Quiet Diplomacy**

## **Towards Zimbabwe:** Constructivism as a Framework to Highlight the Contradictory Norms of Human Rights and African Solidarity

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I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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## Abstract

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The downward spiral of Zimbabwe under President Robert Gabriel Mugabe and the slide into lawlessness has excited international opinion. Perhaps even more controversial, has been South African President Thabo Mbeki's obvious reticence to condemn Mugabe's increasing authoritarianism and breach of human rights and democratic standards. South Africa's foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has received strong criticism. Whilst both domestic and international audiences expected South Africa to take a stronger stance towards Mugabe because of his increasing violation of human rights and democratic standards, President Mbeki has been notably reticent to publicly criticise Mugabe. Consequently, the South African government has been criticised for condoning Mugabe's behaviour, which in turn has raised questions as to South Africa's commitment to the advocacy of human rights and its attempts to establish a leadership position in Africa.

Although both internal and external pressures have given rise to South Africa's strong commitment to the international norm of human rights in 1994, this commitment seemed to weaken as the years passed. The commitment to human rights, that was especially prominent during the Nelson Mandela presidency, has given rise to foreign policy tensions and contradictions within the South African government. South Africa's turn to multilateral mechanisms as the main vehicle for South Africa's principled commitment to human rights has been accompanied by a decline in the priority placed on this principle. This loss of ardour in the commitment to the human rights advocacy, moreover, has seemed to increase during the Mbeki presidency. President Mbeki's desire to play a leadership role in Africa and his vision for African renewal and rebirth have been accompanied by a stronger emphasis on African solidarity as a foreign policy principle. South Africa's commitment to the norm of human rights, however, has thwarted South Africa's attempts to strengthen African solidarity since it required a rejection of the norms of 'state sovereignty' and 'not to speak out against each other'. Since high priority

is attached to these norms in Africa, contradictions arose between the norms of human rights advocacy and African solidarity.

This study argues that South Africa's policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe can only be understood by focusing on the role of norms and identity on South Africa's policy. It aims to illustrate how South Africa's aspiration for continental leadership has constrained its commitment to human rights advocacy, as accentuated by the Zimbabwean crisis. This study explores the role of norms and identity in South Africa's foreign policy decisions towards Zimbabwe by drawing on constructivism as a theoretical framework. The international relations theory of constructivism provides a framework for analysing the potential influence of norms in international relations. Constructivism illustrates that South Africa's freedom of action has been determined by the interplay between policy actors and social forces with very different ideological convictions about the country in the world, the pressures incumbent upon it and the extent to which it can influence world affairs.

## **Opsomming**

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Zimbabwe se toenemende ekonomiese en politieke agteruitgang onder die presidentskap van Robert Gabriel Mugabe, asook die geleidelike oorgang na wetteloosheid, het internasionale veroordeling voortgebring. President Thabo Mbeki van Suid-Afrika se ooglopende teensinnigheid om Mugabe se toenemende ouoriteit en skending van menseregte en demokratiese standarde te veroordeel, was selfs meer omstrede. Suid-Afrika se buitelandse beleid van 'stille diplomacie' teenoor President Mugabe van Zimbabwe het dus sterk kritiek uitgelok. Terwyl beide binnelandse en internasionale sfere van Suid-Afrika verwag het om 'n sterker standpunt teenoor Mugabe in te neem in die lig van Mugabe se toenemende skending van menseregte en demokratiese standarde, was President Mbeki merkbaar teensinnig oor Mugabe openlik te kritiseer. Die Suid-Afrikaanse regering is gevolek daarvan beskuldig dat dit Mugabe se gedrag verskoon, wat weer aanleiding gegee het tot die bevraagtekening van Suid-Afrika se verbintenis tot die bevordering van menseregte en pogings om 'n leierskapsposisie in Afrika te vestig.

Alhoewel beide interne en eksterne druk tot Suid-Afrika se sterk verbintenis tot die internasionale norm van menseregte in 1994 bygedra het, het hierdie verbintenis mettertyd geleidelik vervaag. Hierdie verbintenis tot menseregte was veral prominent gedurende die Mandela presidentskap en het spoedig aanleiding tot spanning en teenstrydighede in Suid-Afrika se buitelandse beleid gegee. Suid-Afrika se wending tot multilaterale meganismes as voertuig vir die bevordering van menseregte, het dus gepaard gegaan met 'n afname in die prioriteit wat aan hierdie beginsel geheg word. Hierdie afname in Suid-Afrika se dryfkrag in hul verbintenis tot die bevordering van menseregte, het gedurende die Mbeki presidentskap vergroot. President Mbeki se begeerte om 'n leiersposisie in Afrika in te neem, asook sy visie vir Afrika hernuwing en herlewing, het dus gepaard gegaan met 'n sterker klem op die belang van Afrika solidariteit as 'n buitelandse beleidsbeginsel. Suid-Afrika se verbintenis tot menseregte het egter Suid-Afrika se pogings om Afrika solidariteit te bevorder, verhinder, aangesien

'n verbintenis tot menseregte die verwerping van die norme van 'staatsoewereiniteit' en 'nie teenoor mekaar uit te praat nie' vereis het. Aangesien hierdie twee laasgenoemde norme steeds voorrang geniet in die Afrika konteks, het daar teenstrydighede tussen die norme van menseregte en Afrika solidariteit ontstaan.

Hierdie studie argumenteer dat Suid-Afrika se beleid van 'stille diplomacie' teenoor Zimbabwe slegs begryp kan word deur op die rol van norme en identiteit op Suid-Afrika se beleid te fokus. Daar word gepoog om te illustreer hoe Suid-Afrika se aspirasie om 'n leiersposisie in Afrika in te neem, beperk is deur die verbintenis tot die bevordering van menseregte, soos beklemtoon deur die krisis in Zimbabwe. Hierdie studie ondersoek dus die rol van norme en identiteit op Suid-Afrika se buitelandse beleidsbesluite teenoor Zimbabwe met behulp van konstruktivisme as 'n teoretiese raamwerk. Die internasionale betrekkinge teorie van konstruktivisme bied 'n raamwerk vir die analise van die potensiële invloed van norme in internasionale betrekkinge. Konstruktivisme illustreer dat Suid-Afrika se vryheid van aksie bepaal word deur die wisselwerking tussen beleidsakteurs en sosiale kragte met verskillende ideologiese oortuigings oor die staat in die wêreld, die druk wat daarop inwerk en die mate waartoe dit wêreld gebeure kan beïnvloed.

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## List of Acronyms

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ANC	African National Congress
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DA	Democratic Alliance
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GNU	Government of National Unity
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NNP	New National Party
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
PF-ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADF	South African Defence Forces
SAPOM	South African Parliamentary Observer Mission
UN	United Nations
UNCHR	United Nations Human Rights Commission
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZESN	Zimbabwe Election Support Network
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

# Chapter One

## Introduction

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### 1.1. Background

After South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, South Africa's foreign policy decision-makers have been preoccupied with transformation to end its years of international isolation (Mills, 1998: 72). This transformation was driven by both the internal dynamic of democratisation and the changing international terrain as brought about by the post-Cold War world and globalisation (Johnston, 2001: 11). South Africa's transition has not only constituted a change of domestic policy and government, but also a fundamental transformation of political values, norms and structures of authority. South Africa's transformation, moreover, compelled the new ANC (African National Congress) government to change South Africa's foreign policy identity from pariah state to international player.

Both internal and external expectations have given rise to a strong commitment to the international norm of human rights. This commitment to human rights was especially prominent during the Nelson Mandela presidency, and Mandela stating as early as 1993 that 'human rights will be the light that guides our foreign affairs' (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 249). This commitment to the promotion of human rights as a guiding principle that underpins its foreign policy formation, however, has given rise to foreign policy tensions and contradictions. Although South Africa initially illustrated a high level of commitment to human rights, other diplomatic concerns and obligations soon weakened this commitment. The reaction to Pretoria's unilateral position towards the Abacha regime in Nigeria can be highlighted as an important push towards multilateralism in the human rights field (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 113).

South Africa's turn to multilateral mechanisms as the main vehicle for South Africa's principled commitment to human rights, however, has been accompanied by a decline in the priority placed on this principle (Black, 2001: 88). This loss of ardour in the commitment to the human rights advocacy has seemed to increase during the Mbeki presidency. President Mbeki's desire to play a leadership role in Africa, as has been exemplified by South Africa's commitment to the African Renaissance and Nepad, has however brought some foreign policy contradictions to the fore. Mbeki's vision for African renewal and rebirth has been accompanied by a stronger emphasis on African solidarity as foreign policy principle. South Africa's commitment to the norm of human rights, however, has thwarted South Africa's attempts to strengthen African solidarity.

The current crisis in Zimbabwe, as well as Mbeki's reticence to condemn President Mugabe's increasing violation of human rights and democratic standards, have highlighted the contradictions in South Africa's foreign policy. Whilst South Africa has illustrated a commitment to human rights, their refusal to publicly condemn Mugabe's behaviour has refuted this commitment. The recent controversy surrounding Zimbabwe's continued suspension from the Commonwealth in December 2003 (*New African*, 425: 20-22), and Mbeki's appeals to end this suspension, have raised questions about South Africa's foreign policy identity.

A deeper understanding of South Africa's foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe cannot be gained by focusing on material interests alone. Rather, attention must be given to the importance of norms and identity in international relations and its influence on foreign policy identity. The international relations theory of constructivism provides a framework for analysing the potential influence of norms in international relations. It is within this framework that South Africa's attempts to act as 'agent' and 'norm leader' in Africa by promoting human rights and democracy, and its desire to play a leadership role in Africa, must be understood. Constructivism illustrates that

South Africa's freedom of action has been determined by the interplay between policy actors and social forces with very different ideological convictions about the country in the world, the pressures incumbent upon it and the extent to which it can influence world affairs (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 448).

## **1.2. Rationale / theoretical framework**

This study uses constructivism as a theoretical framework in order to gain a deeper understanding of South Africa's foreign policy decisions towards Zimbabwe. Unlike the international relations theoretical frameworks of neo-realism and neo-liberalism, constructivism does not focus on material interests alone, but highlights the influence of norms and identity on foreign policy decisions. South Africa's policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe and Mbeki's reticence to condemn Mugabe's behaviour, moreover, can only be understood by recognising the influence and pressures of norms and identity on South Africa's commitment to human rights. South Africa's aspiration to play a leading role in the continent, has also involved issues surrounding the norms of African solidarity and sovereignty, as well as 'not to speak out against each other'.

Constructivists's emphasis on the potential for dynamism and change in the international system by focusing on ideational power (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 3) is thus of value in providing an explanation of the changed environment in which South Africa found itself after the demise of apartheid.

South Africa's posturing as middle power after 1994, is also illustrative of the multiple pressures bearing upon South Africa both from within its own state-societal complex as well as from its position within the current world order. South Africa's realisation that domestic reconstruction and development can only be addressed if it works within the existing configuration of global economic power (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 450), strengthened its resolve to assume a middle

power role. This position enabled South Africa to build bridges of understanding between the Northern developed states and the Southern developing states, and illustrated the significance of this middle power position for South Africa's foreign policy.

### **1.3. Literature Review**

The literature on South Africa's foreign policy has grown considerably in recent years, largely because of South Africa's enhanced international profile since its political transformation in 1994. Whilst Mills' (1994) edited collection of articles *From Pariah to Participant: South Africa's Evolving Foreign Relations, 1990-1994* largely provided a historical and descriptive overview of South Africa's foreign policy, Schraeder (2001) highlighted the lack of consistency within the foreign policymaking process in the early post-apartheid years.

Spence, Johnston and Hamill in Broderick, Burford and Freer's (eds.) (2001) *South African Foreign Policy: Dilemma's of a New Democracy*, respectively provided a critical discussion of the role of the aspirational commitment to human rights in post-apartheid foreign policy, as well as of the foreign policy challenges that South Africa's position as regional superpower presented to the government after 1994. The contribution of Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan in Broderick et al.'s (2001) edition further illuminated this regional hegemonic role of South Africa.

President Mbeki's leadership role in championing the African Renaissance and the advocacy of Africa's sustainable development through Nepad, has also given rise to a significant growth in literature on South Africa's foreign policy by authors such as Cornwell (1998), and Ramose (2000). South Africa's membership of the new African Union and Southern African Development Community (SADC), has contributed to this attention in South Africa's foreign policy. Authors such as

Taylor (2002b), and Olivier (2003) have followed a more critical approach to South Africa's leadership role in Africa.

In *South Africa's Emergence as Middle Power*, van der Westhuizen (1998) scrutinised South Africa's emergence as a 'middle power' in the global political economy, whilst Nel (1998) and Nel, Taylor and van der Westhuizen (2000) further explored this theme. These authors focused on the normative underpinnings of South Africa's gravitation towards multilateral diplomacy. Maxi Schoeman (2000) also critically questioned South Africa's status as 'emerging' middle power, and the implications thereof on South Africa's foreign policy.

Chitityo (2004) and Moyo (2000) have contributed to the growing body of work written about the evolving crisis in Zimbabwe. Authors such as Taylor (2002a) and McLean (2002, 2003) have provided critical analyses of the impact of the Zimbabwean crisis on the Southern African region and the impact thereof on the credibility of Nepad's African Peer Review Mechanism. Despite contributions by van der Westhuizen (2004) concerning the role of norms in the acceptance of the African Peer Review Mechanism, there has been no study on the influence of norms and identity on South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe. The tension between South Africa's commitment to human rights on the one hand, and African solidarity on the other, has been neglected in analyses of South Africa's policy towards Zimbabwe.

Due to this lack of research concerning the role of norms and identity on South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe, and the contradictory nature of its commitment to the norms of human rights and African solidarity, this study has the potential to highlight the important role that these norms have played in South Africa's foreign policy decision-making. In this way this study can contribute to enhance a better understanding of South Africa's policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe. Constructivism, as conceptualised by Onuf (1998) and

Kowert in Kubálková, Onuf and Kowert (1998), will be used as a framework to examine the influence of norms on South Africa's foreign policy.

#### **1.4. Problem Statement**

South Africa's foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe has given rise to a fierce debate regarding Mbeki's reticence to condemn Mugabe's increasing breach of human rights and democratic standards. The South African government has been criticised for condoning Mugabe's behaviour, which in turn has raised questions as to South Africa's commitment to the advocacy of human rights and its attempts to establish a leadership position in Africa.

Up to this point in time, however, the debate surrounding South Africa's policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe has neglected to identify the influence of issues surrounding identity and norms on South Africa's foreign policy decisions. South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe, however, cannot be understood by focusing on material interests alone, but the role of norms and identity on South Africa's policy must be examined.

The aim of this study, therefore, is two-fold. On the one hand it aims to illustrate how South Africa's aspiration for continental leadership has constrained its commitment to human rights advocacy, as accentuated by the Zimbabwean crisis. On the other hand this study explores the role of norms and identity on South Africa's foreign policy decisions by drawing on constructivism as a theoretical framework.

#### **1.5. Conceptualisation of constructivism as a theoretical framework**

Theory is viewed as systematic, formal explanations of processes, behaviour and patterns of change that helps one to make sense of the world (Nel & McGowan,

1999: 51). Theory is useful in the sense that it helps one to understand or predict events in the real world (Sprout & Sprout, 1962: 40; Toma & Gorman, 1991: 50).

It is important to recognise that ‘theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose’, as suggested by Cox (1981: 128). Cox (1981: 128) argues that since all theories derive from a position in social and political time and space, there is no such thing as theory in itself, but that it is always related to a specific standpoint in time and space. Any theory that represents itself as divorced of time and space should therefore be examined as ideology and its concealed perspective should be uncovered. The primary task of theory, therefore, is to become clearly aware of issues that present themselves to consciousness as problems. Cox (1981: 128) highlights consequently that theory must be able to adapt old concepts or to reject them as the reality changes. New concepts must be forged in an initial dialogue between the theorist and the particular world that is trying to be comprehended. Social and political theory is thus history-bound at its origin, since it is always traceable to a historically-conditioned awareness of certain problems and issues.

Theory can serve two distinct purposes. It can either serve as a guide to help solve the problems within the terms of the particular perspective that was the point of departure (problem-solving theory), or it can be more reflective upon the process of theorising itself (critical theory). In this way the purpose of theory is to become clearly aware of the perspective that gives rise to theorising and its relation to other perspectives. It also opens up the possibility of choosing a different valid perspective (Cox, 1981: 128; Leysens, 2002: 129).

After the Second World War, there has been no agreement over what exactly the ‘right’ theory of international relations is and whether such a theory exists. Although the theoretical debate surrounding international relations used to be dominated between realists and liberalists, with the end of the Cold War it became clear that these two theoretical approaches were no longer able to

provide a satisfactory explanation of the international order (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 888).

It is within this context that constructivism, with its emphasis on norms and ideas, stepped forward. Despite attempts in the 1960s and 1970s to build a science of politics modelled on economics or natural sciences, it was not able to displace these normative and ideational concerns completely. In the 1980s constructivism illustrated that norm research was able to provide explanations of puzzles in international politics that other approaches had been unable to explain satisfactorily. Neo-realism and neo-liberalism were unable to explain change in the international system, such as the end of the Cold War. These approaches, moreover, are unable to cope with the issues presented by events such as September 11, 2001 and the rising importance of identity in world politics.

Constructivism, on the other hand, focuses on the way in which norms themselves change, as well as the way in which norms change other features in politics (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 888). By developing a constructivist argument, Wendt (1992: 132) has attempted to build a bridge between the traditions of realism and liberalism. Constructivism involves a 'sociological social psychological' form of systemic theory in which identities and interests are the dependent variables. According to Wendt (1992: 129) the debate between neo-realists (structure) and neo-liberals (process) has been based on a shared commitment to 'rationalism' and has re-emerged as an axis of contention in international relations theory. Whilst structure involves anarchy and the distribution of power, process has to do with interaction and learning. The debate between neo-realists and neo-liberals revolves around the extent to which state action is influenced by structure (anarchy and the distribution of power) versus process (interaction and learning). Identities and interests of agents are treated as exogenously given and these approaches focus on how the behaviour of agents generates outcomes. Whilst questions concerning behavioural change

are tolerated, questions concerning change in identity and interests are ignored (Weber, 2001: 62).

#### *1.5.1. Constructivism as a theory of international relations*

Constructivism, as formulated by Nicholas Onuf (1998:58) provides an ontology of the functioning of the social world. Onuf emphasises the social nature of human beings and the way in which humans are constructed by the relations in which they are involved. He also highlights the importance of language since talking is the most important way in which the world is constructed. Saying, in other words, is doing (Onuf, 1998: 59). The nature of international relations is thus determined by the interaction between states, since states are viewed as the most important actors in international relations. In turn, this constructed world influences states, and reality is made through a process of reciprocal construction. In this process, rules (norms) bind states and the world (Onuf, 1998: 59).

A norm is defined as a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a shared identity. Norms channel and regularise behaviour and often limit the range of choice and thus constrain actions. Norms are used to describe collective expectations for the proper behaviour of actors with a given identity. These standards of 'proper' or 'appropriate' behaviour, thus involve intersubjective meaning (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 890-894). According to Katzenstein (1996b: 5), norms operate like rules that define the identity of an actor in some situations. In this way the norms have 'constitutive effects' that specify what actions will cause relevant others to recognise a particular identity. In other situations norms operate as standards that specify the proper enactment of an already defined identity. In these instances, norms have 'regulative effects' that specify standards of proper behaviour. Norms, in other words, either define standards of appropriate behaviour that shape interests and help coordinate the behaviour of political actors (regulative norms), or express actor identities that

also define interests and thus shape behaviour (constitutive norms). Political interests are defined by both regulatory and constitutive norms, and by a norm of collective identity (Katzenstein, 1996a: 18-19).

Norms make not only cognitive but also behavioural claims on individuals and can thus affect behaviour in both a direct and indirect manner. Norms have a direct effect by defining collectively shared standards of appropriate behaviour that in turn validate social identities. Rather than specifying the end of actions, norms shape behaviour by offering ways to organise action. They create habits of interpretations and repertoires of practice that are grounded in experience (Katzenstein, 1996a: 18-19). Norms, however, do not float freely in political space but acquire particular importance when they crystallise through institutionalisation. Once institutionalised, norms are collectively held and exist external to actors. This institutionalisation creates a degree of stability and uniformity that might otherwise be lacking (Katzenstein, 1996a: 21).

Constructivism, therefore, takes as starting point that the world is constructed and not a given reality. According to this approach, the world is determined by the way in which it is viewed in a specific period and a specific space or context. Consequently, international structure is determined by the international distribution of ideas. Shared ideas, expectations and beliefs about appropriate behaviour give the world order, structure and stability. The way in which the world is viewed, moreover, can change since it is based on norms. Accordingly, idea shifts and norm shifts are the main vehicles for system transformation and change (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 894). The constructivist position holds that agents and structures constitute the other. Agents and structures thus simultaneously enable and constrain each other (Gould, 1998: 80).

States have relatively more agency under constructivism than under neo-realism or liberalism. This agency, however, is not unconstrained but choices are

rigorously constrained by the webs of understanding of the practices, identities and interests of other actors that prevail in particular contexts (Hopf, 1998: 177).

### *1.5.2. Intersubjectivity, identities and interests in world politics*

Although interest in the contribution of identity to international politics is not new, the growth of interest in identity politics has continued unabated since the end of the Cold War. In the absence of such well-defined ideologies that were prevalent during the Cold War, identity has become less certain. Distinguishing the self from the other in many different social levels, has therefore presented a greater challenge in the post-Cold War period (Kowert, 2001: 268-269).

Constructivism brings a shift from capabilities (as emphasised by neo-realists) to identity. This shift moves the focus from what states can do due to their position in a structure, to what they want to do because of how they see themselves in relation to others. Onuf (Kowert, 2001: 280-281) points out that 'interests are recognisable to us as the reasons we give for our conduct'. Interests, therefore, are expressed as foreign policies in the case of national interests. Policies are thus declarations of an agent's intentions presumed to be linked to that agent's interests. As explained by Kowert (2001: 281), however, foreign policy declarations do not necessarily represent an agent's interests. It is for this reason that the study of identity becomes important. Identity stands in for interest and describes the basis for our assumption that an agent's policy statements reveal (or obscure) intentions. Identity is thus central to foreign policy choices and is the medium through which national leaders and ordinary citizens translate recognition of similarity and difference into ontological statements about international relations.

Constructivism (Kowert, 1998: 103-104), therefore, suggests that social structure on its own cannot serve as a basis for a complete account of identity. Agents and behaviour must also be considered when giving an account of identity. Kowert

(1998: 103) maintains that constructivism provides an important link across levels of analysis. Cognitive bias does not only shape the identities of other people, but biases the functioning of language to create identities at every level of human relations. Agents at all levels are thus made meaningful because individuals confer identity on themselves and on the institutions that represent them.

Constructivism has a cognitive, intersubjective conception of process in which identities and interests are endogenous to interaction. Meaningful behaviour or action is only possible within an intersubjective social context and collective meaning constitute the structures that organise people's actions (Wendt, 1992: 135). Constructivism holds that actors develop their relations with, and understanding of, others through norms and practices. Norms give meaning to actions and structure derives meaning from an intersubjective set of norms and practices. States form an understanding of self and others through interaction and the self is therefore a reflection of an actor's socialising. This process of interpretation and reactions creates intersubjective meaning. The first social action between agents creates expectations on both sides about each other's future behaviour. If these actions are repeated enough times, relative stable concepts of the self and the other are formed. This reciprocal interaction creates enduring social structures, in terms of which identity and interests are defined (Wendt, 1992: 139).

According to constructivism, identities are relatively stable, role-specific understandings about self. Actors acquire identities by participating in collective meanings. As such, identities are inherently relational. Peter Berger (Wendt, 1992: 135) claims that 'identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially, constructed world'. A state, therefore, may have multiple identities as 'sovereign', 'regional superpower' and so on. Hopf (1998: 194) asserts that constructivism's expectation of multiple identities for actors in world politics rests on an openness to local historical context. Constructivism does not rest on pre-given assumptions of identity. Wendt

(1992: 135) maintains that although the commitment to and salience of different identities vary, 'each identity is an inherently social definition of the actor grounded in the theories which actors collectively hold about themselves and each other and which constitute the structure of the social world'.

Hopf (1998: 175) asserts that the identity of a state implies its preferences and consequent actions. Identity forms the basis of interests and is always a process. Interests are therefore defined in the process of defining situations and are the product of identity. Others are understood according to the identity a state attributes to them. Simultaneously, a state reproduces its own identity through daily social practice. It is important to realise that the producer of identity is not in control of what it ultimately means to others. Meaning is obtained through intersubjective structure.

In both international and domestic society, identities are necessary in order to ensure some minimal level of predictability and order. Relatively stable intersubjective identities are required to form durable expectations between states and to ensure predictable patterns of behaviour (Hopf, 1998: 175). Ted Hopf (1998: 175) suggests that identity performs three necessary functions in a society. Identity tells you and other who you are, and it tells you who others are. Thirdly, in telling you who you are, identities strongly imply a particular set of interests or preferences with respect to choices of action in specific areas, and with respect to particular actors (Hopf, 1998: 175).

Wendt (Kowert, 1998: 102) proposes that the structural context of state interaction, and systemic factors such as independence and the transnational convergence of domestic values all contribute to the formation of collective identities. Although norms are not static, it is important to note that collective identities are not easily changed. History and institutions prohibit that norms change all the time in response to push-and-pull factors. Institutionalised, taken-

for-granted norms limit the range of choice at any given time (Katzenstein, 1996a: 3).

### *1.5.3. Connecting domestic and international norms*

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 892) state that norms as shared assessments raise the question of how many actors must share the assessment before it can be called a norm. They assert that norms are 'continuous, rather than dichotomous entities' and that they 'come in varying strengths' with different norms commanding different levels of agreement. A norm may be regional, for instance, but not global. Other norms, such as human dignity, however, are global norms. The dynamics of this agreement process can be better understood by examining the 'life cycle' of norms. Agreement among a critical mass of actors on an emerging norm can create a tipping point after which agreement becomes widespread (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 892).

Since domestic norms are deeply intertwined with the workings of international norms, many international norms begin as domestic norms and become international through the efforts of 'norm entrepreneurs'. Domestic norm entrepreneurs that advocate a minority position, can on the other hand, use international norms to strengthen their position in domestic debates. A two-level norm game thus occurs where the domestic and international norm tables are increasingly linked (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 893).

Norm influence, or the norm life cycle can be understood as a three-stage process. Norm emergence constitutes the first stage and persuasion by norm entrepreneurs is the characteristic mechanism of the first stage. During this stage norm entrepreneurs attempt to persuade a critical mass of states (norm leaders) to embrace new norms. During the second stage norm leaders attempt to socialise other states to become norm followers. A combination of pressure for conformity and a desire of state leaders to enhance their self-esteem give rise to

this stage where the norm ‘cascades’ through the rest of the population. The last stage is characterised by norm internalisation. Norms acquire a taken-for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of public debate. Internalised norms may eventually become the prevailing standard of appropriateness against which new norms emerge and may even compete for support (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 895).

It should be noted, however that the completion of the life cycle is not an inevitable process and that many emergent norms fail to reach a tipping point. Norms are actively built by agents that have strong notions about appropriate or desirable behaviour. Norm entrepreneurs are critical for norm emergence since they call attention to issues or even create issues by a process called ‘framing’ (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 897).

A norm reaches a threshold or tipping point after norm entrepreneurs have persuaded a critical mass of states to become norm leaders and adopt new norms. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 901) state that although it is difficult to give a theoretical account to explain why norm tipping occurs, they suggest that norm tipping rarely occurs before one-third of the total states in the system adopt the norm. The adoption of a norm is also influenced by which states adopt the norm. ‘Critical states’ are those states without which the achievement of the substantive norm goal is compromised.

After the tipping point of norm cascading has been reached, more countries begin to adopt new norms rapidly, even without domestic pressure for such change. Norm cascading is promoted by an active process of international socialisation that is intended to induce norm breakers to become norm followers. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 902) argue that states comply with norms in this stage for reasons that relate to their identities as members of an international society. It is recognised that state identity fundamentally shapes state behaviour

and that state identity is in turn shaped by the cultural-institutional context within which states act.

Little attention, however, is given by literature when a new norm is contradictory with an 'older', established norm. Such is indeed the case in Africa, as will be argued in the conclusion. The 'new' norm of human rights requires states to accept the norm of state interference in the case of human rights violations. In the African context, however, high priority is attached to state sovereignty, and therefore foreign intervention in the name of human rights has been viewed as unwarranted interference in states' domestic affairs. Establishing the norm of human rights, moreover, requires states to 'speak out against each other', which is not normally done in Africa. In the view of these contradictions, it is argued that a new rising norm such as human rights may in fact be compelled to take a backseat as more priority is attached to older, established norms such as state sovereignty and 'not to speak out against each other'.

### **1.6. Research methodology and limits of the study**

This is a qualitative study and is based on a theoretically-informed content analysis, and on primary and secondary sources of information. Whilst research was mainly conducted by means of secondary sources, primary sources such as statements and publications by the South African government have been used as well. Secondary information was gathered by investigations of academic journal articles, books, publications, newspaper articles, media reports and other relevant literature.

This study presents a comprehensive literature review by means of secondary sources dealing with the changing nature of South Africa's foreign policy agency in the post-apartheid period, the evolving crisis in Zimbabwe and the international relations theory of constructivism. The value of the study is also enhanced by

using Zimbabwe as case study to highlight the contradictions inherent in South Africa's commitment to human rights and African solidarity.

An important limit to the study is that the analysis of South Africa's foreign policy identity and decisions are limited to a specific period, namely 1990-2003. Due to the sensitivity of the Zimbabwean issue, moreover, South African government publications regarding its Zimbabwean policy have been limited. The veil of secrecy surrounding South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe has also hindered access to information regarding the South African government's objectives of its policy of quiet diplomacy. A broader, more comprehensive study with a longer time period allowed for research, will enhance the quality and depth of the study.

### **1.7. Overview of study**

This study is divided into four chapters. Chapter one stipulates the aim of the study, provides a rationale for the study, and identifies limits to the study. It also constructs a theoretical framework for analysing South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe. This chapter conceptualises the international relations theory of constructivism that is used as framework in this study and highlights the role of norms and identity in foreign policy decision-making.

Chapter two identifies the main foreign policy trends in South Africa during the period 1994 to 2003. A chronological framework is used in this chapter to highlight the Mandela presidency's initial moral aspirationalism, and how elements of *realpolitik* compelled the South African government to dilute its commitment to the norm of human rights. This chapter illustrates how the loss of ardour in South Africa's commitment to human rights was continued during the Mbeki presidency, and how President Mbeki's aspiration for continental leadership gave rise to a commitment to African solidarity. These commitments

to human rights and African solidarity, however, gave rise to a contradiction in South Africa's foreign policy.

Chapter three highlights Zimbabwean president Mugabe's increasing authoritarianism and breach of human rights and democratic standards by providing a brief overview of Zimbabwe's economic and political decline since 1980. Chapter three also conceptualises South Africa's foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe, and illustrates the influence of the contradictory norms of a commitment to human rights and African solidarity on South Africa's foreign policy decisions. The international and domestic outcry against Mbeki's refusal to publicly criticise Mugabe's behaviour is discussed, as well as the criticism targeted against Mbeki's policy of quiet diplomacy.

Chapter four provides the conclusion, and uses constructivism as a tool to highlight the influence of the contradictory norms of a commitment to human rights and African solidarity on South Africa's foreign policy decisions.

## Chapter Two

### **South Africa's foreign policy in the post-apartheid years: 1994-2003**

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#### **2.1. Introduction**

South Africa's transition to a democratic society has been celebrated as 'one of the most extraordinary political transformations of the twentieth century' (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 249). The 'new' South Africa emerged at a crucial juncture in international relations and in global developments, and this transition coincided with momentous changes and upheavals in the international arena. With the end of the Cold War, international relations changed from the relative simplicity of the East-West struggle to a complex, interdependent and fast-changing environment (Mills, 2000: 256). The fall of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War ideological divide and the increasing prominence of the North-South divide were features of this changing global landscape with which South Africa had to deal after its transformation (le Pere and van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 249).

From 1948 to 1994, South African foreign policy sought to justify and protect its authoritarian apartheid political system. Racial segregation was imposed on a politically disenfranchised black majority that led to the branding of South Africa as an international pariah within the African continent and the wider international community. This pariah status ended in 1994 with South Africa's first multiracial, multiparty democratic elections (Schraeder, 2001: 230). After South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, South Africa's foreign policy has been preoccupied with transformation to end its years of international isolation (Mills, 1998: 72). This transformation was driven by both the internal dynamic of democratisation

and the changing international terrain as brought about by the post-Cold War world and globalisation (Johnston, 2001: 11). Since increasing South Africa's isolation through non-governmental relations formed a key pillar of the ANC's attempt to end apartheid, it was expected that the 'new' South Africa would be able to play a dramatically improved, more positive, international role (Mills, 1998: 72).

The ANC's new foreign policy orientation signified a complete break with the apartheid past and acknowledged acceptance of, and signified a willingness to work within, the prevailing global order (Evans, 1996: 259). Van der Westhuizen et al. (1999: 111) assert that because South Africa was unable to draw on the kind of resources, expertise and accumulated experience that countries with longstanding traditions of multilateral engagement had, 'learning how to swim in the deep end became the rule, rather than the exception'. Consequently, South Africa's foreign policy was criticised for being 'ad hoc', 'uncoordinated', 'erratic' and 'unpredictable' (van der Westhuizen et al., 1999: 114). These terms have demonstrated a transitory phase in which South African foreign policy has gradually moved away from 'heroism' towards a more 'routine' orientation<sup>9</sup>. Multilateralism as a 'safer' diplomatic option was emphasised (van der Westhuizen et al., 1999: 114), as will be discussed later in this chapter.

South Africa's escalating multilateral international engagements can be gauged according to four roughly distinguishable periods. The first period from 1994 to early 1996 can be seen as the 'heroic' early days, whilst 1996 and 1997 were viewed as the days of uncertainty and recalibration (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 113). A more 'routine' and established multilateral orientation was started under Mandela's presidency in 1998 and enhanced under Mbeki's reign in 1999. In late 1999 and 2000, a return was made to a somewhat 'heroic' orientation when Mbeki launched his multilateral drive to counter the marginalisation of

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<sup>9</sup> See Cooper (1997: 9-20) for a discussion of this range between 'heroic' approaches and 'routine' approaches to policy-making.

Africa in the global political economy. It is within this context that the structure of South Africa, as well as the evolution of South African agency in the post-1994 period, must be understood (Black, 2001: 88).

The ‘heroic’ days of the early Mandela administration, illustrated a strong commitment to the promotion of human rights. As the years progressed, however, the ANC government seemed to lose ardour in their commitment to human rights. This tendency was continued in the Mbeki administration and his aspiration for continental leadership gave rise to a commitment to African solidarity. As will be illustrated in this chapter, these two norms of human rights promotion and African solidarity, however, proved to be incompatible within the African context. The crisis in Zimbabwe, moreover, accentuated the contradictions between the norms of a commitment to human rights and African solidarity.

## **2.2. The Mandela years: 1994-1999**

Since February 1990, the De Klerk government was determined to reintegrate South Africa into the global political economy by liberalising South Africa’s domestic political and economic orders. During its final years of minority rule, South Africa largely succeeded to end its enforced international isolation (Vickers, 2003: 75). Vickers (2003: 75) maintains that South Africa was able to re-establish normal trade, investment, cultural, sporting and diplomatic relations with many states after 1990. It was only after the inauguration of the ANC in 1994, however, that South Africa could reach its full foreign policy potential. South Africa’s creation of a democracy, ties forged between the ANC’s leaders in exile and those in neighbouring countries, and President Mandela’s moral authority, allowed the ANC to advance the regional confidence-building process to a level which was beyond De Klerk (Hamill, 2001: 30).

In 1992, the ANC leaders ended their long-standing commitment to liberation politics and began the process of policy convergence and formulation. As leader of the ANC, Nelson Mandela identified six assumptions in a 1993 article in *Foreign Affairs* that would underpin the future foreign policy of South Africa (Mandela, 1993). These assumptions were going to rest on the belief in:

- The centrality of human rights to international relations that will extend beyond the political to include economic, social and environmental dimensions.
- The promotion of democracy world-wide as presenting the only lasting solutions to the problems of humankind.
- Justice and respect for international law as guide for the relations between nations.
- Peace as a goal to which all nations should strive through agreed non-violent mechanisms.
- The centrality of Africa in South Africa's foreign policy.
- Economic development that is dependent on growing regional and economic co-operation in an interdependent world.

These assumptions have been rooted in the notion of the primacy of domestic policy and the belief that national interest, if it is properly envisaged, 'can sit comfortably with the international interest' (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 442). Whilst this publication was highly pragmatic and recognised the reconstruction and development challenge that faced the new South Africa, the ANC sought to balance these statist imperatives with a strong aspirational commitment to the norms of democracy and human rights (Vickers, 2003: 77).

South Africa's post-apartheid diplomatic culture reflected the fragmented divisions within its state-societal complex. A division existed between an 'internationalist' and 'neo-mercantilist' camp. The latter group mostly consisted out of the *ancien régime* and emphasised the importance of trade and self-

interest. The internationalists, on the other hand, were in favour of a greater degree of solidarity with the collective problems of the developing world. This group, of whom many had been exiles during the apartheid regime, wanted South Africa to take a much more principled stand on issues such as human rights in its international affairs. They believed that apartheid compelled nations to adopt a standard beyond self-interest in their relations towards the apartheid government. This required, in other words, the willingness to sacrifice economic and other gains to a higher morality (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 444).

This tension between the neo-mercantilists and internationalists was also illustrated by the conflicting interests that developed between the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) during the early years of South Africa's transformation. After 1994, the DTI emerged as the chief steward of South Africa's bilateral and multilateral trade diplomacy. Tension arose between prioritising the perceived commercial, trade and political interests of the DFA and its role as a moral crusader in the promotion of global human rights and democracy (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 253; Ryall, 1997: 399).

Following the April 1994 elections, the ANC was thus faced with the task of translating the gains of liberation diplomacy into a pragmatic and principled foreign policy for South Africa (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 250). Since the blueprints of the ANC, however, focused more on ideals and orienting concepts than in frameworks for implementation and definitions of strategic visions, the ANC had to embark on a steep learning curve once it assumed office. It was necessary to increase pragmatism in the formulation of its foreign policy in order to move beyond an avowed set of aspirational principles and to manage key dimensions of a complex global order in a strategic way (Spence, 2001: 5).

### *2.2.1. Morality, human rights and democracy*

The promotion of human rights and democracy developed as one of the most consistent themes of South Africa's new foreign policy elite in the years following the democratic transition (Black, 2001: 76). South Africa's new foreign policy ideals were grounded on the commitment to human rights, democracy and majority rule. Already in 1993, Mandela asserted that 'human rights will be the light that guides our foreign affairs' (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 249). The ANC government's attempt to give an ethical dimension to South Africa's foreign policy aspirations is not surprising, given the fact that the 'new' South Africa was in part 'the creation of a massive human rights campaign waged on behalf of the deprived black majority' (Spence, 2001: 4). After the political transformation, moreover, it was widely assumed that South Africa had a special opportunity and obligation to provide leadership internationally on human rights issues (Black, 2001: 76).

The South African Government's Discussion Document of September 1996 on foreign policy refers to democracy and human rights as 'fundamental principles', 'pillars on which South Africa's foreign policy rests' and 'underlying principles which serve as guidelines in the conduct of foreign relations'. Little guidance is however provided as to the reasoning behind the centrality of these principles and only an instrumental explanation is given for the centrality of human rights and democracy: 'International organisations and governments all over the world increasingly place a high premium on the performance of countries and governments in these areas. Development assistance is, in many cases, linked to democratisation programmes, the observance of human rights and the exercise of good government' (Johnston, 2001: 24).

Anchoring its concern for human rights in either national interest or normative terms (Johnston, 2001:13-24), however, is of strategic importance to South Africa, given the urgent socio-economic demands domestically and the need to

justify the relevance of human rights in a country where a large part of the population is struggling to meet basic needs (Black, 2001: 81). This commitment of resources to goals which are not always morally clear and whose pursuit rarely brings quantifiable results, has created tension in South Africa (Johnston, 2001: 18). The usefulness of spending precious, limited national resources on costly foreign policy initiatives has been questioned when domestic inequalities are still prevalent. With an unemployment rate of 35 to 45 percent and the challenges of the AIDS pandemic, this question is especially contentious (Schraeder, 2001: 240).

Putting human rights issues at the centre of South African foreign policy has also created tension with the more apolitical demands associated with the pursuit of economic self-interest in the international arena (Schraeder, 2001: 240; Black, 2001: 76). The prospect of South African arms sales to Syria and Indonesia for instance aroused controversy both domestically and internationally (Spence, 2001: 4; Hamill, 2001: 33). The initial success of the arms industry to recruit Mandela to its cause at a very early stage of his presidency, has also been a source of concern. The neglect of the then President Mandela to foresee that his insistence that there was 'nothing wrong' in arms sales that are 'for the purpose of defending the sovereignty and the integrity of a country', could have a detrimental effect upon wider regional development, has also raised apprehension (Hamill, 2001: 34).

These broader deficiencies of vision, planning and management on the part of the foreign policy department have been much criticised. Critics have repeatedly highlighted the lack of coherence and consistency of South African foreign policy. No framework was provided to guide the management of human rights and democracy issues in a bilateral context, and these principles were not matched by careful strategic thinking about how to give them effect (Johnston, 2001: 13-24). This negligence to provide a strategic framework for dealing with human rights issues, has been exacerbated by the questions about universality of

human rights. Human rights can be seen as a universal ideology, since human rights goals are usually elevated above the rank of competing social goals and are usually endowed with an aura of timelessness and universal validity. This characteristic, however, brings forth a number of difficulties, as explained by Johnston (2001: 18-19). Given that human rights tend to be expressed in language which is abstract and absolute, they are dealt with as 'more or less' issues, rather than 'either or issues' (Johnston, 2001: 19). Even in pluralist democratic political systems, where human rights find the most support, human rights issues are part of politics and not above them. The 'inconsistencies' in South Africa's 'holistic' foreign policy, particularly its links with authoritarian regimes that have poor human rights records, are in part attributed to this abstract character of human rights principles (Johnston, 2001: 19). The ANC government's relations with rogue states such as Cuba, Iran and Iraq, received strong criticism from Western governments. Although this claim of friendship was an expression of President Mandela's personal commitment to the honouring of old debts, which was based on the support given to the ANC in the years of exile, it received much criticism (Spence, 2001: 4; Shcraeder, 2001: 234).

The tensions inherent in advocating human rights principles in Africa were highlighted by the Nigerian incident in 1995 (van Aardt, 1996: 107). When the then Nigerian ruler Sani Abacha executed nine environmentalists, including Ken Saro-Wiwa, Mandela's unilateral call for a boycott of Nigeria's oil and its expulsion from the Commonwealth, gave rise to a huge outcry from its fellow African states (van der Westhuizen, 1999b: 447). Controversy also arose when South Africa was the only government in the developing world to recall its High Commissioner in protest over the executions in Nigeria (Black, 2001: 78). This incident raised criticism from its fellow African states which accused South Africa of acting as a proxy for Western interests and priorities. South Africa was charged with the accusation that it is breaking norms of 'African solidarity' in turning in one of its own (Black, 2001: 83), and the then Nigerian president Abacha posed the question whether South Africa is a leading country of Africa

and the developing world, or whether it is a 'White country with a Black president'. This strong foreign policy stance taken by the South African government towards human rights violations, differed considerably between its reaction towards Nigeria in 1995 and towards its current approach of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe.

In the context of these contradictions and tensions, South Africa's foreign policy elite gravitated to multilateralism as the best means of giving effect to its advocacy of human rights (Black, 2001: 76). Multilateralism offers South Africa a means of enhancing its leverage and multiplying its influence, whilst simultaneously minimising its exposure to risk on sensitive foreign policy issues. After the Nigerian crisis, South Africa has demonstrated a commitment to act more in concert with international organisation such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the Commonwealth and others. South Africa has seemed to realise that it is necessary to distance itself from American and European pressures and to rather take its cue from multilateral deliberation (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 450). After the Great Lakes crisis, moreover, Mandela indicated that he would only act in concert with African leaders, the AU and the UN. South Africa's turn to multilateral mechanisms as the main vehicle for South Africa's principled commitment to human rights and democracy, however, has been accompanied by a decline in the priority placed on these principles (Black, 2001: 88).

South Africa's leadership profile in multilateral institutions mandated with issues of human rights, democracy and good governance was recognised in 1998 with the election of South Africa to chair the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNCHR) (Vickers, 2003: 173). South Africa's decision at the UNCHR to place emphasis on thematic human rights issues, rather than co-sponsoring any country resolutions, has been an indicator of South Africa's risk-averse approach and its loss of ardour on human rights issues. The danger of this, as noted by Black (2001: 81), is that the fulfilment of formal treaty

obligations has come to be viewed as largely sufficient in itself to meet South Africa's human rights commitments. In this way, the need to engage with more difficult and controversial cases in specific national contexts, has been reduced (Black, 2001: 81). Although South Africa's contribution to UN human rights institutions will yield marginal and incremental gains in terms of advancing the cause of human rights and will over time provide normative support for specific transformative challenges, it will not in any direct way challenge the existing global order (Black, 2001: 82).

### *2.2.2. Multilateralism*

As mentioned above, Pretoria's unilateral position towards the Abacha regime in Nigeria has been considered a watershed-experience in South Africa's turn to multilateralism as the best means of giving effect to its advocacy of human rights (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 113). When it became apparent that neither the governments of developed countries nor those of neighbouring states in SADC (Southern African Development Community) were prepared to follow South Africa's lead, the risks of unilateral actions were recognised. These instances thus lead to the gradual retreat to a more cautious, 'middle of the road' position both within the Commonwealth and beyond (Black, 2001: 78).

The political risks and elusive rewards of high level unilateral leadership attempts were also highlighted with Mandela's use of his close personal relationship with then-Indonesian President Suharto to facilitate a process of dialogue between Suharto and the jailed East Timorese leader Xanana Gusmao (Black, 2001: 79). Mandela's involvement in the East Timor conflict, and his efforts to broker a peace accord between Zaire's<sup>10</sup> declining dictator Sese Sese Mobutu and his rebel challenger, Laurent Kabila, also ended in diplomatic failure and was a personal affront to Mandela (Black, 2001: 79; van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 114).

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<sup>10</sup> The Democratic Republic of the Congo was previously known as Zaire.

A number of cautionary lessons were taken from these formative experiences and 'heroic' attempts. The Department of Foreign Affairs realised that the new South Africa could not rely on heroic executive leadership if it wished to maximise its effectiveness (Black, 2001: 79). The placement of human rights and mediated conflict resolution as 'pillars' of South African foreign policy became too much of a burden in an 'unforgiving globalised economy' (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 114). Careful advance and preparation was recommended and it was deemed necessary to concert South Africa's human rights efforts on a much broader basis. Hence multilateralism emerged as a 'safer' diplomatic option in dealing with thorny issues. The view was held that South Africa's human rights commitments would be best articulated in multilateral institutions (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 114). Since the promotion of human rights was largely associated with Western interests, multilateralism was chosen as the preferred means to promote human rights in Africa.

The above-mentioned high profile issues and controversies that were experienced during its first years in office, pushed the ANC government towards adopting multilateralism to sustain its human rights 'pillar'. Since then, multilateralism has become a cornerstone of South Africa's foreign policy (Black, 2001: 77). Multilateral diplomacy entails the involvement of official state actors in the practices and institutions that facilitate co-operation between three or more states (Nel et al., 2001: 9). Because of the size and capacity of states, multilateral institutions provide a legitimate entrée for smaller states such as South Africa into the affairs of the international community. This diplomacy has been guided by a belief that bilateral dealings are less effective means of resolving international institutions due to the high degree of interdependence in today's world. Bilateral agreements also do not promote global norms as effectively as those arrived at through multilateral negotiations (Nossal & Stubbs, 1997: 151). Multilateralism has thus offered South Africa a means of enhancing its leverage and maximising its influence, while minimising its exposure and risk on sensitive foreign policy issues. Although it should be realised that whilst

multilateralism could provide a rationale for caution and/or inaction in cases of human rights urgency, it can also serve as an effective instrument to advance human rights and democracy internationally (Black, 2001: 77).

South Africa's attempts to position itself as a middle power in the world have been closely associated with this turn to multilateralism. Since 1994, South Africa has emerged as a middle power and its foreign policy has reflected the dynamics of a new middle power<sup>11</sup> emerging in the developing world (van der Westhuizen, 1998a: 435). Change at the world order level, South Africa's position within the international political economy and diverse social forces that operate in its state-societal complex have all contributed to propelling South Africa into middle power behaviour (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 436). Both the position of South Africa in a hierarchy of power and influence in world affairs, and the specific nature of its foreign policy have affirmed South Africa's middle power position (Nel et al., 2000: 45).

South Africa's use of middle power diplomacy signified 'a certain content of foreign policy based on an attachment to multilateral institutions and a collaborative world order'. Although South Africa realised that it cannot act alone effectively, 'middlepowership' has enabled it to have a systemic impact in a small group or through an international institution (Nel, 2000: 45). Although middle powers in the developing world are usually dominant in their region, this status of 'middlepowership' is only acquired if it includes involvement and leadership in independent and multilateral initiatives beyond the regional domain. South Africa's acceptance of various multilateral leadership responsibilities, and its engagement in a variety of international issues far beyond Southern Africa illustrates such a position (Nel et al., 2001: 5). The peace process in Israel and Palestine, the conflict in Northern Ireland, the refugee crisis in the Great Lakes District, the East Timor question and the conflict in Sudan are all examples of South Africa's international engagement (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 437).

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<sup>11</sup> See Maxi Schoeman (2000) for a critical analysis of South Africa's status as emerging power.

South Africa's position as middle power has enabled it to play a truly leading role in the international campaign to ban landmines. Although it is debated whether this ban truly gave rise to fundamental global change, it is argued that South Africa's leading international role in this campaign has been viewed as its most significant attempt to contribute to such change<sup>12</sup> (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 119). The ban on landmines started as an essentially transnational civil-society driven campaign and South Africa only endorsed this ban when its conception of its own interests started to coincide with the proposed changes. It is thus evident that 'behaviour aimed at global transformation is reconcilable with self-interests as long as state actors are prepared to engage civil society in a joint process of socially constructed norms and interests'. This case has borne testimony to the joint potential of small states and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to effect significant normative change in the issues which the dominant powers have sought to sweep from the international agenda. The international campaign to ban landmines has illustrated to what extent transnational mobilisation can be enhanced either by highlighting the transgression of an embedded norm or by 'grafting' a prior norm onto the matter in contention (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 119).

Nel et al. (2000: 48) maintain that South Africa's wider multilateral role has been both a function of 'a deep-rooted internationalist commitment among the ANC ruling party', as well as a 'reflection of responsibilities being foisted on South Africa by high peers'. These expectations of South Africa's actual capabilities have however been inflated and in effect allowed South Africa to 'punch above its weight'. South Africa's position as middle power, on the other hand, has enabled it to enhance its mediation role, which has been identified as one of South Africa's foreign policy assumptions. This will be discussed in the following section.

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<sup>12</sup> Van der Westhuizen et al. (1999: 118-119) have argued that South Africa is anything but a rebel within the system of global governance and that its domestic and foreign policies became status-quo oriented.

### 2.2.3. South Africa as mediator

The activity of peacemaking is closely associated with middle power behaviour. Due to South Africa's position in the global economy, it has been called upon to perform activities closely associated with middle power behaviour. Expectations of South Africa to assume a peace-brokering role have been particularly notable (Nel et al., 2000: 47). In its peace brokering role, especially in cases involving the infringement of human rights, South Africa has attempted to use its international reputation in order to secure a peaceful outcome (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 448). South Africa's foreign policy actions have not been motivated by economic interest alone, but it has tried to use its international reputation in order to secure a peaceful outcome (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 448).

In the early post-apartheid years, South Africa's peace brokering initiatives were driven by the charisma of the Mandela persona as well as by its positive reputation after its relatively peaceful democratic transition in 1994 (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 448; Vale & Taylor, 1999: 630). Since reputation as an instrument is a declining asset, Mbeki had to deploy different diplomatic and political skills (Spence, 2001: 7). South Africa has acknowledged the need to seek a more formal role and the *Policy on South African Participation in International Peace Missions* has been adopted. This policy emphasises the need to address the root causes of conflict, its commitment to seeking long-term solutions to crises, and the importance of development, human security and governance issues. Peacebuilding, as a preventative measure, involves long-term processes that address the root causes of conflict. It also involves measures to prevent conflict before it erupts (Williams, 1999: 169).

Due to the increasing reluctance of the international community to get involved in African conflicts, African states have been compelled to accept responsibility for peace and security themselves (Cilliers, 1999: 3). While the international community dominated peace brokering in Africa in the past, Africans have begun

to petition vigorously for higher levels of participation and responsibility for an indigenous presence in international peacekeeping. 'African solutions for African problems' has therefore gained much ground in Africa (Taylor & Williams, 2001: 282). There has been a growing acceptance that viable solutions to African problems require African input and even control (Maclean, 1999: 953).

South Africa's mediation efforts have been increased by its middle power position. Its ability to stand a certain distance from direct involvement in major conflicts has enhanced this position. Despite the fact that middle powers have historically tended to be in the middle rank of material capabilities (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 438), it also stood in the middle of conflict situations. Middle powers, therefore, seek to expand the area of common ground between disputing states. This, together with a degree of autonomy in relation to major powers in the system, are critical elements for fulfilling the middle power role (Nel, et al., 2000: 46). Cox (Schoeman, 2000) also highlights middle powers' commitment to orderliness and security in the interstate relations, as well as to the facilitation of orderly change in the world system.

As middle power, South Africa has been involved in a wide range of diplomatic matters. Because of its regional preponderance, most of South Africa's diplomatic activities have been concentrated within its immediate region. South Africa intervened in Lesotho in 1994 during the constitutional crisis; it made efforts to ameliorate tensions in Angola; it followed a 'quiet diplomacy' approach towards Zambia to convince Frederick Chiluba to allow his rivals to participate in the 1996 elections; and it mediated attempts between Mobutu Sese Seko and Laurent Kabila in the then Zaire (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 437). South Africa's efforts to mediate peace have also at times extended well beyond its regional boundaries, such as its efforts to mediate peace in Israel and Palestine, in Northern Ireland, and in Iraq (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 437). South Africa's middle-power diplomacy has tended to adopt an activist style and often sought to insert itself into issues of international concern. Conflict reduction has usually

been focused on as a primary end of statecraft and an important element in the diplomatic activities of the state. Such diplomacy has usually included the development of confidence-building measures between adversaries so that conflicts of interest do not develop into 'hot' conflicts (Nossal & Stubbs, 1997: 149-152).

South Africa's foreign policy attempts to assume a mediation-role have however brought some issues to the fore. The question has arisen whether South Africa possesses the necessary capacity and expertise to fulfil such a role. This role, moreover, has been contradicted by acts such as South Africa's arm sales to other states (Hamill, 2001: 36). The question whether South Africa is prepared to commit many of the bureaucratic resources that are required to strengthen regional capacity and make crisis prevention viable, has also been raised (Hamill, 2001: 37). Whilst an important constituency in the ANC has desired to maintain a moral high ground in South Africa's foreign policy decisions, others have been driven by domestic imperatives to pursue material advantage and to avoid any unconditional, open-ended commitments to the region (Hamill, 2001: 48). There also exists the danger that aspirations to assume a peace broker position might be abandoned due to an overloaded domestic agenda and increasing pressures imposing on the ANC government (Hamill, 2001: 49).

South Africa's cautionary approach in regional attempts to pursue peace brokering initiatives has also been much criticised. Whilst South Africa has pursued more venturesome peace brokering initiatives in for example Iraq and the DRC, it has followed a much more cautionary approach in Zimbabwe. Whilst some fear South Africa's expansion into Africa, others expect South Africa, as the most powerful African actor, to play a leading role in development issues and in leading African diplomacy (Mills, 2000: 303). Since South Africa largely relies on multilateral means to assume a peace brokering role, fulfilling such a role in the region is dependent on regional cooperation. Such cooperation, however, will only be possible if South Africa is able assuage regional fears of its hegemonic

position, and if it can enhance regional integration. South Africa's regional dominance however questions South Africa's ability to shape the region's destiny without domination (Hamill, 2001: 48). The crisis in the DRC has also revealed divisions among SADC members which further hamper regional cooperation (Maclean, 1999: 952).

#### *2.2.4. Welding South Africa into the global economy*

The Mandela administration has committed itself to weld South Africa's economy into a global marketplace. Mandela declared at the 50<sup>th</sup> National Conference of the ANC in 1997 that 'the process of globalisation is an inherent mode of existence of capital. It is therefore neither the invention of some reactionary cabal that sits somewhere in the world nor can it be stopped' (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 115). Mandela and the ANC asserted that South Africa's economic development depended on growing regional and international economic cooperation in an interdependent world.

According to Vickers (2003: 80), the primary motivation for the ANC's economic policies were to place South Africa on the path of rapid economic development with a view to addressing the following four key problem areas in the economy, namely slow growth, severe poverty, extreme inequality, and the racial basis of inequality. The ANC maintained, moreover, that 'trade and foreign investment issues should be a cornerstone of our foreign policy' and that its 'trade policy will be aimed at raising the level of productivity and at improving the international competitiveness as a whole'. This highlighted the ANC's efforts to forge solid relations with the most advanced industrialised states in order to enhance trade and attract foreign direct investment (Vickers, 2003: 80). The ANC has come to realise, moreover, that foreign direct investment can only be attracted if an enabling environment comprised of good governance and economic performance in line with the 'Washington consensus' is created (Spence, 2001: 5).

This tension between balancing of its commitments to domestic transformation with the pressures of an increasingly globalised economy (Williams, 2000: 73; Vale & Taylor, 1999: 630-632), has been illustrated by its increasingly neo-liberal macro-economic stance. The ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) adopted in 1994 signified a commitment to meeting the populace's basic needs by providing housing, jobs, education, health and welfare (Rykliet, 2002: 109). This programme was largely driven from below by the trade unions and civic organisations. Macro-economic policy, however, became more compromised in the direction of free market premises as the years passed and culminated in the *Growth, Employment, and Redistribution: a macro-economic strategy* (GEAR) of June 1996 (Saul, 2002: 37). This strategy has created resentment among black labour and unemployed workers who maintained that GEAR has made concessions to wealthy businessmen while reneging on its redistributive obligations. GEAR, with its neo-liberal strategies, has also received staunch criticism from Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) that maintained that the economy has not grown sufficiently to meet domestic demand for social reform (Maclean, 2003a). Consequently, despite the ANC's belief that isolation from the global economy spells disaster, its foreign policy decisions have remained constrained by South Africa's domestic situation<sup>13</sup>.

As mentioned before, South Africa's foreign policy orientation in the post-apartheid period has been described as vacillating between 'realist' and 'moral' internationalism. In the early post-apartheid years, tension arose between prioritising its commercial and trade interests, and its role as moral crusader in the promotion of human rights and democracy (le Pere et al., 1999; Ryall, 1997: 398-399). Vale and Taylor (1999: 630-631) have argued that a large part of the incongruence in South Africa's foreign policy can be ascribed to the inability of decision-makers to reconcile South Africa's economic interests with that of the

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<sup>13</sup> South Africa's income inequality is among the highest in the world and jobless growth has been experienced, as result of trade liberalisation and global competition (le Pere, Lambrechts & van Nieuwkerk, 1999).

broader interests of the region. Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan (2001: 55-80) argue that South Africa has misused its economic hegemonic position in the region by generating economic profit for itself, rather than for the region as a whole. This is underscored by le Pere's et al. (1999) assertion that South Africa's free trade agreement with the European Union could lead to severe hardship in the other member countries of Southern African Customs Union (SACU)<sup>14</sup>.

#### *2.2.5. Regional cooperation*

Regional cooperation has been identified as one of the ANC's main foreign policy assumptions and the Mandela administration recognised that South Africa's destiny is intertwined with that of the region. Because of South Africa's contact and overall stake in regional stability, moreover, it was asserted that any foreign policy attempt to insulate South Africa from developments in the regional political economy, would lack credibility. Consequently, South Africa has made various efforts to demonstrate that its destiny is inextricably linked with what happens in the continent and all the ANC's statements on regional policy have emphasised interdependence and peaceful co-operation (Hamill, 2001: 29-30; Williams, 2000: 85).

In order to understand the regional dynamics in Southern Africa it is crucial to understand the enormous asymmetry between South Africa and the other states in the region. During the 1990's, especially since the ANC-controlled Government of National Unity (GNU) took office in 1994, relations between South Africa and its neighbours have improved considerably. Mandela realised that multilateral consultation, accommodation and collaboration were necessary for peaceful cooperation and mutual benefit in order to secure the region's future. The

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<sup>14</sup> Because of this agreement, other SACU member countries will lose a significant share of government revenue as the SACU revenue pools shrink once tariffs on EU imports into the customs union fall away; and industries in these countries might need to close down as they face increased competition from cheap EU products on the South African or their own market (le Pere et al., 1999).

difficulty, however, has been to ensure mutual benefit through enhanced interaction without suffering the strong polarisation of investment and migration that undermined earlier efforts at formal regional co-operation elsewhere in Africa (Simon, 1998: 5).

South Africa is Africa's most industrialised economy and occupies a structural position of advantage within Africa as a whole (Schraeder, 2001: 230). Although South Africa accounts for a mere 5 percent of Africa's population, it produces the largest percentage of total African Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Ahwireng-Obeng and McGowan (2001: 63) maintains that South Africa produces around 44 percent of total African GDP. As the second largest and the most populous country in Southern Africa – its population size is nearly one-third of the region's total population - its economy dwarfs the rest of the region. South Africa's economy is 3.4 times larger than the other eleven countries in SADC combined (Ahwireng-Obeng & McGowan, 2001: 63). South Africa is also widely considered as the unrivalled and military powerhouse of the Southern African region (Mills & Baynham, 1994: 10).

South African businesses, moreover, have aggressively expanded into Africa because of increasingly attractive African markets. The growth of South African businesses such as MTN, Vodacom, Pep and Shoprite in Africa has been an indication of this expansion. (Schraeder, 2001: 233; van Niekerk, 2003: S3). This expansion has been advanced by the decline in foreign investment in Southern Africa over the last two decades, which opened the field for South African firms; as well as the establishment of economic liberalisation and the creation of investor-friendly economic environments as brought about by the adoption of Bretton Woods Institutions Structural Adjustment Programmes (Ahwireng-Obeng & McGowan, 2001: 75). Even before the ending of apartheid, South African businesses were expanding rapidly into the rest of Africa. By 1995, 22 South African trade missions in African countries had been established. During 1994 and 1995, South African trade with Africa increased by 53,6 percent and exports

to Africa are now the largest destination for South Africa's value-added goods (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998: 116). Despite the view of 'Afro-pessimists', it is evident that the significance of African markets for South African business has been increasing. This growing importance of African markets is illustrated by the fact that although the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany and Japan still are South Africa's major trading nations; seven Southern African nations rank among South Africa's top twenty export markets. Five African nations, moreover, are among South Africa's top ten markets. If unclassified goods are excluded, Africa formed the largest regional export market for South Africa in 1994, ahead of the European Union (Ahwireng-Obeng & McGowan, 2001: 56-57).

Despite the ANC's resolve to ensure mutual benefit through regional cooperation, South Africa has gained the largest benefit out of this enhanced regional cooperation. Whilst South Africa exported R23, 9 billion worth of goods to its top seven African trade partners in 1994/1995, South Africa only imported goods worth R4,4 billion from these seven neighbours. A favourable trade surplus is thus generated by South Africa of R19, 5 billion, which is in line with GEAR's emphasis on the importance of exports (Ahwireng-Obeng & McGowan, 2001: 56-57), but against the ANC's promotion of wider regional benefit. Despite Mandela's assurances that South Africa will 'resist any pressure or temptation to pursue its own interests at the expense of the sub-continent', Hamill (2001: 47) argues that the government's objectives may ultimately be eclipsed by an economic realism driven by domestic priorities. Mills (2000: 318), therefore, argues that if the ANC's continental policy only focuses on export promotion and South Africa's growing business links with Africa, regional cooperation will be hampered over the long term. South Africa will be perceived as an economic bully that will impede regional cooperation (Mills, 2000: 319).

Despite the 'Madiba' magic that grabbed the admiration of the domestic and international arena, certain foreign policy contradictions were growing within the

ANC government. The Mandela presidency's decline in moral aspirationalism has become apparent as it became subject to the duties and prerogatives of a government. Whilst some were concerned with the apparent loss of ardour in South Africa's commitments to human rights, others – notably African states – were concerned with South Africa's increasing belief in the unavoidability of placing its economy within the global economy. This trend, and the accompanying accusations that South Africa is merely acting according to Western interests and priorities, grew during the Mbeki administration.

### **2.3. The Mbeki years: 1999-2003**

The ambiguity and uncertainty of South African foreign policy, that was a distinctive feature of the Mandela administration, was replaced by a stronger vision and purpose after Mbeki became President in 1999 (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 253). Discrepancies between rhetoric and reality, however, became more and more evident as the years passed. The wavering of the ANC's commitment to human rights, as the ANC became subject to the duties and prerogatives of a government, is illustrative of these discrepancies between rhetoric and reality (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 445). Both domestically and internationally, however, South Africa has been under pressure to give an account of the principles that guide and direct its foreign policies in ethical terms. The government policy-makers have thus been faced with a difficult task in trying to construct a coherent set of principles, which is defensible in terms of democracy and human rights, without neglecting national interest (Johnston, 2001: 14).

Following the second post-apartheid election in 1999, Mbeki secured political control in the hands of the ANC, himself and a small circle of colleagues at the centre of policy. In this way uncertainty was reduced and the promotion of wealth and security became the driving forces behind official foreign policy (le Pere et al., 1999). Jacki Selebi, as new Director-General and seasoned diplomat, led the

foreign policy initiative that reformulated the Department of Foreign Affairs mission statement in 1999. Wealth creation and security have been distilled by the Department of Foreign Affairs as the ANC's two primary objectives (Williams, 2000: 73). Wealth creation was to be achieved through a co-ordinated approach to globalisation, the enhancement of South Africa's international image and the vigorous pursuit of trade and investment. Security was to be achieved through the promotion of compliance with international law and active engagement in conflict prevention, management and resolution (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 254). Arising out of these two aims a third aim, namely that of promoting democratisation and a culture of human rights, has developed. According to Mills (2000: 300) these aims have reflected Mbeki's concept of a South African foreign policy built on two legs, where each is standing in the developing and developed worlds. In this way, the government has attempted to link foreign policy goals with domestic needs and values. The focus placed on the importance of the foreign policy principles of wealth and security creation, however, reflected the diminution in the priority placed on human rights and democracy. In this 'new' conceptualisation, human rights, democracy and good governance have been mainly deemed necessary in order to fulfil the first-order priorities – and it was therefore viewed as second-order priorities (Black, 2001: 88).

Whilst Mandela emphasised the importance of welding South Africa into the global economy, the Mbeki administration strengthened this impetus. The ANC government's approach to wealth creation, as developed by Selebi, has been exemplified by South Africa's macro-economic policy the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR). This macro economic policy, has formed part of South Africa's attempt to compete effectively in an increasingly global marketplace. Instead of considering a delinking from the global economy a viable option, the government has focused on what terms South Africa should engage in the global economy (Williams, 2000: 77). Whilst recognising the importance of domestic construction and development as the singular priority of the South African population, the Mbeki administration thus underscored the critical role of

foreign trade and investment in this process (Schraeder, 2001: 233). GEAR was adopted with the realisation that South Africa's foreign policy must demonstrate a commitment to an economic strategy that conformed to external expectations (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 442).

The emergence of GEAR, together with the promotion of wealth and security, provided a clearer definition of South Africa's foreign policy priorities than during the Mandela administration (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 255). President Mbeki has acknowledged that an improvement of South Africa's economic situation requires a continuation of the stringent measures explicit in GEAR's strategy. It was recognised, however, that these measures would involve pain in the short term if long-term benefits are to materialise (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 442). The desirability and effectiveness of GEAR, moreover, has been a much-debated issue within South Africa. Criticism has been provoked within the wider black constituency and growing dissatisfaction has taken place within COSATU, one of the ANC's most important political constituencies (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 442). It is argued that since inequality and poverty in South Africa are not diminishing, GEAR is actually contributing to the insecurity of South Africa's poor. Seen this way, South Africa's foreign policy is thus contradictory in the sense that whilst the government claims to promote the wealth and security of all their citizens, the primary strategy for generating wealth (GEAR) is contributing to this insecurity. Arguments are thus made for the need to focus on the means for providing security through constructive transformation, rather than trying to maintain a status quo which contributes to the insecurity of South Africa's poor (Williams, 2000: 82).

South Africa's introduction of Black Economic Empowerment has partly been established to offset this criticism that South Africa is merely playing into the hands of global capitalists. The South African government has acknowledged that economic performance and the delivery of social goods to the black majority remain essential if the legacy of apartheid is to be reversed. South Africa's

initiation of Black Economic Empowerment may therefore be seen as an attempt to balance the domestic and foreign policy imperatives. The balancing of these two opposing imperatives has been essential since there exists an inextricable link between domestic and foreign policy, and it is widely accepted that 'foreign policy begins at home' (Spence, 2001: 6).

During both the Mandela and Mbeki administrations, it became apparent that foreign policy has required the prioritisation of goals and the creation of an orderly and systematic manner of achieving them. It has been necessary to create a hierarchy of goals in which the most important is consistently pursued (Schraeder, 2001: 240). Consequently, the question has arisen as to how the idealism of a moral foreign policy can be balanced with the existence of more narrowly defined economic national interests (Mills, 2000: 300-304).

The imperative to promote human rights, moreover, has become more and more contradictory with Mbeki's increased efforts to assume a leadership role in the African continent. Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance and the advocacy of a commitment to African solidarity, seemed to clash with South Africa's commitment to human rights advocacy. Trying to reconcile the norms of Africa with that of the developed world soon proved to be a daunting task. The foreign policy of promoting human rights seemed to be incompatible with the norm of African solidarity, since it required states to 'speak out against each other'. Since South Africa's human rights/democracy pillar, moreover, could reinforce the impression that South Africa was an agent of Western interests and priorities in the South (the West was considered the most enthusiastic about intrusive human rights conditionalities), the Mbeki presidency has taken increasing care to avoid being perceived as a Western proxy. The South African government, therefore, increasingly emphasised African solidarity (Black, 2001: 79).

### 2.3.1. *The African Renaissance*

South Africa's foreign policy has recognised the African continent and the Southern African region in particular as a critical focus of interest and influence (Spence, 2001: 8). This recognition has been accompanied by the return of an element of global 'heroism' in South African foreign policy in 1999. Mbeki's speech to the Twelfth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1998 signified a willingness on the part of Mbeki to take on the 'heroic mantle of a global campaigner for the developing world'. Multilateral diplomacy was now focused on in a concerted drive to end the economic marginalisation of Africa, and to change the rules of the global economic game in order to end the perceived discrimination against developing countries (van der Westhuizen et al., 1998a: 115).

President Mbeki is credited with initiating the call for an African Renaissance even though the idea of the revival or renewal of Africa is not new. The current articulation of an African Renaissance borrows from several earlier calls for African revival from African leaders such as Nkwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kuanda (Vale & Maseko, 1998: 286; Barrell, 2000: 8). Whilst Nelson Mandela first invoked the vision of an African Renaissance in 1994 at an Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit, it was later popularised by Mbeki (Cornwell, 1998: 9) and the vision of an African Renaissance has figured prominently in the speeches of Mbeki and other members of the ANC since mid-1996 (Matthews, 2002: 100). The African Renaissance appeals to the rebirth and revival of Africa and has been an attempt to invoke renewed international interest in Africa and its economic, social and political potential (Kiguwa, 1999: 66-67; Mayer, 1998: 27). Rather than relying on African standards and excuses, the Renaissance promotes an increasing competitiveness of African economies in the global marketplace (Mills, 2000: 318). The word 'Renaissance' is not an original African concept but is borrowed from the French word meaning 'rebirth'. Describing a period in Europe, Renaissance refers to the period of renewal and

re-awakening that followed the Dark Ages and involved social, political and economic transformation. Despite existing controversy surrounding the word 'Renaissance'<sup>15</sup>, Matthews (2002: 102) suggests that the use of the term 'Renaissance' is seen as appropriate for an African vision of transformation, since the European Renaissance is held to be an example of the transformation of a society, based on the rediscovery of past achievements. Similar to Europe in the fourteenth century, contemporary Africa is emerging from an era of social and intellectual decay and neglect and is experiencing great upheaval and uncertainty. It is hoped that Africa, like Europe, will be able to build upon its historical legacy to bring about a transformation of Africa.

The African Renaissance has emerged as the defining foreign policy concept of the Mbeki administration and South Africa's continental policy has coalesced around the idea of an African Renaissance (Williams, 2000: 85). Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance has not claimed to be new, but rather that current

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<sup>15</sup> Matthews (2002: 103-105) argues that the use of the term 'Renaissance' in the declaration of a period of renewal and transformation in Africa create a few problems. It is highlighted that since the first reference to the European Renaissance only occurred three centuries later, the use of the term was a retrospective characterisation of a historical era. The African wish is thus an *a priori* wish rather than an *a posteriori* assessment. The use of an European word to describe an African transformation is also questioned. This is especially ironic since the European Renaissance has had various negative implications for the African continent. The European Renaissance gave rise to the search for new economic markets that in turn led to the invasion of Africa by Europeans. Ramose (2000: 47) argues that focusing upon the word 'renaissance' is the appropriation of a historical concept that does not belong to the history of Africa in the first place. Matthews (2002: 104) also highlights problems arising as to the content of the African Renaissance. It is argued that the content focuses on establishing something new in Africa, rather than on rediscovering something from the past. The African Renaissance, moreover, is more often than not, linked to improvements in technology, development, modernisation and to other changes that does not have anything to do with rediscovering the past. A last shortcoming of the term 'Renaissance' identified by Matthews (2000: 104) relates to the fact that the European Renaissance was also a period of violence, war and political instability.

circumstances in Africa are conducive to the realisation of this revival (Matthews, 2002: 101). The strong attachment placed on the concept of the African Renaissance, is a reflection of the classic African policy concerns that have become integral to South African foreign policy.

South Africa's interpretation of the African Renaissance has included the new themes of democracy and human rights promotion that are accepted in varying degrees throughout Africa. President Mbeki has maintained that South Africa's primary foreign policy ambition is to secure the conditions necessary for an African Renaissance by establishing 'genuine and stable democracies' in Africa, from which systems of governance will flourish (Mills, 2000: 310-312). This foreign policy has thus emphasised the centrality of the African continent in South African foreign policy, and outlined the critical role of South Africa as an intermediary between the African continent and leading foreign powers in the rest of the world (Schraeder, 2001: 233).

President Mbeki's State of the Nation Address in August 2002 underscored the fact that South Africa's foreign policy is anchored on the framework of the African Renaissance. This aspiration has found concrete expression in the *New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development* (Nepad) document (Pahad, 2002). Nepad was launched in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2001. This document was received by the developed world with considerable enthusiasm as 'an African-led initiative that would provide the framework for promoting development in Africa in the new millennium'. Nepad was essentially a partnership between African leaders, that would promote good governance and human rights, and the West who would provide increased trade and investment into Africa (Taylor, 2003). This document states that 'African peoples have begun to demonstrate their refusal to accept poor economic and political leadership' and that 'development is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance'. Nepad thus promised that 'a democratic

Africa will become one of the pillars of world democracy, human rights and tolerance' (Taylor, 2002).

In promoting Nepad, Mbeki did not only need the support from developed industrialised nations, but also the support and acquiescence of the present African leadership. This diplomatic agenda has proved to be a complex endeavour, since South Africa had to avoid being regarded as a regional bully and as a proxy to Western interests. Fearful of being isolated as a lone crusader, Mbeki had to rely mainly on his diplomatic powers of persuasion and multilateral diplomacy (Olivier, 2003).

An important feature of Nepad has been the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) that has been described as 'an instrument voluntarily acceded to by Member States of the African Union as an African self-monitoring mechanism'. This mechanism attempts to institutionalise a process whereby African states themselves will censure or praise states which conform to the governance criteria of Nepad (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 26). As will be illustrated in the next chapter, the evolving Zimbabwean crisis has been perceived as a test case of the APRM. South Africa's reticence to condemn Mugabe's violation of human rights and democratic standards, created an impression of inconsistency and ineffectiveness surrounding its mission to promote human rights in its foreign policy (Black, 2001: 78). The decision to move peer review about political questions out of Nepad and under the auspices of the African Union, moreover, raised criticism against South Africa's apparent loss of ardour in promoting human rights (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 30).

The dilution of South Africa's attempts to promote human rights, has to a certain extent been replaced by a stronger focus on promoting African solidarity. This has been accompanied by Mbeki's increasing leadership role in the Southern African region, and in the continent as a whole. Mbeki's attempts to act as the voice for the South, in order to build bridges of understanding between the

Northern developed states and the Southern developing states, have also been illustrative of these attempts to garner African support and solidarity.

Despite the laudability of Mbeki's Renaissance vision, however, this vision has largely failed to resonate across the continent and did not bring forth the anticipated continental embrace (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 261). There has remained a lack of clarity and conceptual understanding concerning the Renaissance in the ANC's foreign policy, and definitions of the African Renaissance and its operational meaning have been wide-ranging and vague (Mills, 2000: 310-312). The African Renaissance has been viewed, moreover, as being 'high on sentiment, low on substance' (Williams, 2000: 86). The romantic metaphors of 'rebirth, revival and reawakening' had to battle with the crude realities of Africa's decline, namely war, conflict, HIV/AIDS, poverty, malnutrition, famine, drought and underdevelopment (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 261). As well, Nepad has been criticised for being an 'elitist club' for African leaders as it neglected to involve civil society in its formation. Mbeki's attempts to promote African solidarity therefore seem to have been mainly aimed at gaining the support of other African leaders, rather than civil society.

Mixed feelings have existed, moreover, as to the desirability of Mbeki's dominance in the conceptualisation of the African Renaissance. Whilst some have viewed Mbeki's ability to popularise the concept outside the African continent (Mbeki seems to enjoy considerable international respectability) positively, others have criticised his relative popularity with Western leaders and accused him of acting as a proxy to the interests of Western leaders. This gave rise to a decline in Mbeki's popularity in the African continent that in turn has encumbered the acceptance of the African Renaissance by Africans (Vale & Maseko, 1998: 286).

South Africa's attempts to play a leadership role in the region and in the African continent were met by suspicions as to South Africa's interests (Schoeman,

2000). Although some have argued that South Africa is 'well placed' to lead the Renaissance because of its moral authority and strong economy, others such as Vale and Maseko (1998: 283-287), have opposed a South African-led Renaissance. They have argued that South Africa's relative economic and military strengths are reasons why South Africa should not assume a leadership position. This has been in line with accusations that South Africa equates South African interests with African interests. Due to its economic hegemony, South Africa's economic expansion and its efforts to promote the African Renaissance in Africa have been perceived as a veiled attempt by South Africa to impose its hegemony on the continent (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 261). These suspicions have been exacerbated by accusations that South Africa's penetration of African markets has only benefited South Africa, since trade has so far been a one-way street at the expense of producers and manufacturers from the rest of Africa. Some argue that 'the onslaught' is now led by 'profit-seeking South African businesses' that are led by private capital (Ahwireng-Obeng & McGowan, 2000: 77). Whether these perceptions hold true or not, the fact that Mbeki's African Renaissance has been perceived by some as a 'limitationist' concept that serves the transnational hegemonic interests and dominant capital of South Africa (Black, 2001: 86), has been detrimental to South African attempts to assume a leadership position in Africa.

Howard Barrell's (2000: 8) argument that the focus of Mbeki's African Renaissance stands in contrast to the essentially political emphasis of earlier African nationalists has also raised suspicions in Africa about South Africa's motives. Mbeki's forerunners such as Nkwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Kenneth Kaunda focused more on the revival of African culture than on economic integration with the West. Mbeki's emphasis on welding Africa within the global economy, therefore, has raised suspicions that Africa is merely acting according to Western interests. South Africa's initial strong emphasis on its commitments to human rights, about which the West is most enthusiastic, increased these suspicions as to South Africa's true identity and interests.

The principles of human rights and good governance that are promoted by the African Renaissance have not really caught on in Africa<sup>16</sup>. Although these principles have gathered strength throughout Africa since the end of the Cold War, they leave some African leaders uneasy due to their inevitable clash with the sovereignty principle, as well as because of their emphasis on democratic standards (Schraeder, 2001: 233; Onadipe, 1998). Because of the frequent accusations against South Africa for acting as a Western proxy in Africa, South Africa has been compelled to follow a more cautious approach in the region.

Within this context, it is not surprising that the Mbeki administration attempted to assuage regional fears by diluting its commitment to promoting human rights and instead emphasised a stronger commitment to African solidarity as a foreign policy goal. During the Mbeki presidency, it became apparent that South Africa's foreign policy fell more and more prey to the urge to identify with Africa and other members of the developing South (Mills, 2000: 298).

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<sup>16</sup> South Africa's campaign to extend or entrench democracy in Southern Africa has faced various problems. Only Botswana has a long democratic pedigree. The regular interventions of the military have made Lesotho a 'barrack democracy'; Swaziland clings to a highly authoritarian traditional order; Angola seems to be 'permanently suspended between war and peace'; Malawi experienced three decades of personalised dictatorship; Mozambique has a tentative peace and Zimbabwe has a de facto one-party state. It is thus evident that South Africa will need to be sensitive to the differing rates of democratic progress in the region (Hamill, 2001: 39).

## **2.4. Conclusion**

As time progressed, the ANC government's commitment to human rights advocacy became more and more diluted. Experiences such as the Nigerian saga and the increasing pressure of the 'neo-mercantilists' compelled the Mandela presidency to gravitate towards multilateralism as a vehicle for promoting its commitment to human rights. This however, gave rise to a loss of ardour in the ANC government's commitment to human rights. During the Mbeki presidency, on the other hand, Mbeki's desire to play a leadership role in the African continent and his emphasis on the African Renaissance gave rise to a stronger commitment to African solidarity.

Although a gradual decline in a commitment to human rights advocacy has been characteristic of both the Mandela- and Mbeki administrations, it has been more noticeable during the Mbeki presidency. This can partly be ascribed to Mandela's personal international standing, and the moral high ground associated with 'Madiba'. Mbeki, on the other hand, followed a much more pragmatic approach to foreign policy commitments. Compared to the Mandela administration, moreover, the Mbeki administration has received staunch criticism for acting as a proxy to Western interests. Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech (Mathebe, 2001: 115), has perhaps been the most illustrative of Mbeki's attempts to appeal to the African audience.

## Chapter Three

### **South Africa's foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe**

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#### **3.1. Introduction**

The downward spiral of Zimbabwe under President Robert Gabriel Mugabe and the slide into lawlessness has excited international opinion. Perhaps even more controversial, has been South African President Thabo Mbeki's obvious reticence to condemn Mugabe's increasing authoritarianism and breach of human rights and democratic standards.

The storm that surrounded the Commonwealth's decision over Zimbabwe's continued suspension in Nigeria in December 2003, and Mbeki's appeals to the Commonwealth to end Zimbabwe's suspension, have increased international criticism. Accusations of a loss of ardour in promoting human rights in an effort to repay old debts to a liberation partner, have been thrown at Mbeki. This chapter will argue that a deeper understanding of South Africa's foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe, however, cannot be gained by focusing on material interests alone. In order to gain a more nuanced understanding, it is necessary to look at the foreign policy norms within the specific historic context of Africa, and the way they have influenced South Africa's foreign policy context and identity.

South Africa's decision to follow a foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe must be understood within the context of Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance. With his dreams of a new Africa, Mbeki has seemed to follow in the footsteps of the founding fathers of pan-Africanism. Mbeki has exhibited a

grand vision for Africa and in his African Renaissance idea, he has articulated the idea of building a new, progressive and modernised Africa. Whilst original pan-Africanists sought the 'political kingdom' for Africa, Mbeki has cast himself as a neo-pan-Africanist, seeking the 'economic kingdom' for the ailing continent' (Olivier, 2003). Mbeki's attempts to place Africa within the global economy, however, have received criticism from African states as to the desirability of welding African states into the global economy (Mazur, 2000: 79). Green and Griffith (2002: 58) maintain that whilst it is recognised that globalisation brings benefits to some, globalisation does not bring benefits for everybody. It is for instance argued that globalisation's 'trickle-down' effect has yet to decrease the income gap between the very rich and the very poor (Cornwell, 2002: 93). Mbeki's relative popularity with Western leaders has also been a contentious issue. Whilst some have viewed this popularity positively, others have accused Mbeki of acting according to Western interests and priorities. These accusations have led to a decline in the popularity of Mbeki in the African continent that has in turn encumbered the acceptance of the African Renaissance by Africans (Olivier, 2003).

Seen within the context of trying to promote African solidarity, it is thus not surprising that the Mbeki administration has diluted its commitment to human rights. Since a commitment to human rights involves the rejection of the norms of state sovereignty and 'speaking out against each other' which are established norms in Africa, South Africa had to follow a cautionary approach with its advocacy of human rights and democracy in Africa. The rebuff from fellow African countries after South Africa recalled its high commissioner from Abuja during the Nigerian crisis, has also compelled South Africa to act with more caution in its commitment to human rights (van der Westhuizen, 1998b: 448). Accusations of acting as a proxy to Western interests and priorities in its commitment to human rights advocacy, as well as South Africa's desire to promote African solidarity, has played an important role in South Africa's foreign policy stance towards Zimbabwe. Before this policy of 'quiet diplomacy' is

discussed, however, a brief overview of Zimbabwe's political and economic decline will be given.

### **3.2. Zimbabwe's economic and political decline**

Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980 after a prolonged liberation war<sup>17</sup> led by ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front) and PF-ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) (Kagoro, 2003: 10). After the Lancaster House Conference and ZANU-PF assumed power in 1980, the transition was made from white-minority rule to black-majority rule. Although indicators in the early post-colonial years pointed to substantial economic progress and political stability, Zimbabwe has been increasingly faced with economic ruin and political dissent (Dashwood, 2002: 78). A confluence of both colonial and post-independence experiences has given rise to the unprecedented Zimbabwean crisis (Kagoro, 2003: 8). It is necessary, however, to recognise that the crisis in Zimbabwe has not primarily been about land, but rather about economic collapse and a crisis of political legitimacy, which has led to the abandonment of the rule of law (Lahiff, 2003: 82). Democratic standards have weakened and economic development and stability has worsened (de Villiers, 2003: 3). The combination of land invasions, political violence and the cost of the DRC intervention, moreover, has given Zimbabwe the status of international pariah outside the African continent (Dashwood, 2002: 97).

During the 1980s, it became evident that the ZANU-PF regime continuously used law as an instrument of coercion and repression<sup>18</sup>. The civic and political space

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<sup>17</sup> Zimbabwe's struggle for liberation that took place between 1966 and 1980 is also known as the Second Chimurenga.

<sup>18</sup> The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act No 7 of 1987 introduced an executive presidency with an unlimited term of office. Mugabe became the first incumbent with 'omnipotent powers typically given to executive presidents in a one-party state'. With the rationale of facilitating the exercise of state power, power was shifted towards the executive that led to the marginalisation of the legislature and the judiciary (Kagoro, 2003:12).

became more and more restricted during the late 1980s and 1990s<sup>19</sup> (Kagoro, 2003: 12). Repressive colonial legislation such as the Law and Order Maintenance Act was employed to stifle the emergence or continuance of opposition voices. After the repression of limited insurgency in Matabeleland, ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU signed a Unity Accord in December 1987 that ended ZANU-PF's military occupation of Matabeleland. After the Unity Accord, ZANU-PF began pushing aggressively for a one-party state as the only vehicle whereby comprehensive national unity and development could be achieved (Kagoro, 2003: 12). The Unity Accord, therefore, did not only consolidate Mugabe's power and facilitated the formation of a one-party state, but effectively destroyed the only viable opposition that remained after the attainment of national independence in 1980 (Makumbe, 2003: 35). The contours of an authoritarian state were thus determined early on in the post-independence era (Kagoro, 2003: 11).

Chitiyo (2004: 49) argues that Zimbabwe has been simultaneously confronted by two inter-related socio-economic challenges, namely the land question and the issue of war veterans. Two important agreements were reached between the various political parties and the British government at the Lancaster House Conference in 1979. The first agreement held that the new constitution would remain inviolate for at least ten years whilst the second agreement stated that the property rights of commercial farmers would be protected (Chitiyo, 2004: 61). After 1980 the new government was anxious to attract foreign investment and thus underlined its reconciliation theme by declaring white farmers as a valuable asset to Zimbabwe (Chitiyo, 2004: 62).

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<sup>19</sup> It is within this context that Edgar Tekere, the then Secretary-General of ZANU-PF, broke ranks with ZANU-PF. He maintained that 'democracy was in the intensive care unit' in Zimbabwe. Tekere joined forces with disgruntled sections of the student movement and workers to form the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) in 1989 and became the first person within the ZANU-PF leadership to publicly oppose the one-party agenda (Kagoro, 2003: 13).

With the attainment of independence in 1980, however, Zimbabwe inherited a highly dualistic economy<sup>20</sup>, as created by the large-scale 'settler-colonialism' (Lahiff, 2003: 77; Moyo, 2000: 6). Both the access to resources and the distribution of resources in Zimbabwe were extremely inequitable by the end of the liberation wars (Hoogeveen & Kinsey, 2001: 127). This dualistic economy was most visible in the agricultural sector where the division of land was extremely inequitable (Kinsey, 1999: 177). While a small group of about 4500 large-scale farmers dominated agriculture, six million people lived in highly populated and marginal rural lands<sup>21</sup> (Hoogeveen & Kinsey, 2001: 127). Since access to land has remained both a political and economic demand for a large part of the population (Lahiff, 2003: 78), achieving an equitable balance in the racial and national nature of land ownership has been a key political objective of Zimbabwe's land reform programme (Moyo, 2000: 23).

After twenty years of independence, however, it became evident that Zimbabwe's land programme lagged far behind its own implementation schedule (Manji, 2001: 328). The government lacked the financial resources to implement the land programme without external assistance (Dashwood, 2002: 88). At the same time increasing fiscal constraints and growing unemployment pressured the government to expand land acquisition for redistribution and to resolve this long-standing issue for once and for all (Kinsey, 1999: 173). The coincidence of the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1990 with the drought of 1990-1993, resulted in increasing unemployment, inflation and high prices. This, in turn, aggravated rural problems (Chitiyo, 2004: 63).

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<sup>20</sup> This economy consisted of a large-scale capital-intensive sector that produces commodities for national and international markets, and a small-scale, labour-intensive sector that mainly produces food crops for household consumption and local markets (Lahiff, 2003: 77).

<sup>21</sup> According to Kingsey (1999: 177), approximately 700 000 smallholders occupied 16,4 million hectares in generally less-favoured parts of the country at the time of independence. This figure is equivalent to 49 per cent of all farming land. On the other hand, some 5000 to 6000 large-scale commercial farmers occupied 46 per cent of the total generally prime land.

By the mid-1990s, Mugabe was free from the constraints of the Lancaster House settlement on land reform and he gradually began to show his true colours. The unleashing of war veterans into Zimbabwe has resulted in a breakdown of the rule of law<sup>22</sup>. These acts, moreover, have been perpetrated at the command of the state or political elite (Kagoro, 2003: 9). Violence perpetrated by former liberation war guerrillas during the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2000 and 2002, has illustrated Mugabe's attempt to secure victory by coercion, rather than to move forward in a transition to democracy (Makumbe, 2003: 30). Unbridled corruption has become widespread in Zimbabwe, and high levels of *de jure* and *de facto* impunity for various types of criminals has become the order of the day. A political culture of fear has been promoted and democratic values have been negated (Makumbe, 2003: 36).

The land reform rhetoric of the 1996 presidential elections that presented land reform as an urgent task to be completed, was backed in 1997 by Mugabe's aggressive vow that the mass expropriation would be concluded before the end of 1998 (Kinsey, 1999: 174). The occurrence of corruption and malfeasance scandals during the 1990s also increased pressure to defuse these issues by diverting attention to the land question (Kinsey, 1999: 178). Kinsey (1998: 174) maintains that Mugabe's attempted 'land grab' is commonly viewed as a crude attempt to deflect attention away from growing opposition and mounting economic problems. ZANU-PF's resort to authoritarian and dictatorial tendencies has exemplified the failure of the former liberation movement to transform itself into a democratic political party (Maclean, 2002: 520-522). According to Makumbe (2003: 33), it is evident that 'the guerrillas have still not taken off their uniforms; they have not yet laid down their guns'. During both the parliamentary

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<sup>22</sup> Chitiyo (2004: 50) maintains that there exists an important link between the land crisis and the situation of the war veterans. Both the peasant class and the war veterans have formed ZANU-PF's most powerful voting constituencies. After the liberation movement, the grassroots soldiers and peasants received little compensation, despite the fact that they had borne the brunt of the suffering during the liberation war. It is thus not surprising that both the peasant farmers and the veterans felt that the government had failed them and insisted on land and/or financial compensation as the price for allowing the government to remain in power (Chitiyo, 2004: 50).

and presidential elections, the former freedom fighters threatened to go back to the bush and restart the war if the MDC won<sup>23</sup> (Makumbe, 2003: 39).

Zimbabwe's claims that it would acquire commercial farms without compensation turned out to be extremely controversial both nationally and internationally (Chitiyo, 2004: 63), and a diplomatic rift developed between the Zimbabwean and British governments (Chitiyo, 2004: 64). Although the British government maintained that it is not opposed to land redistribution as such (provided that it is done in a transparent manner with the intention of alleviating rural poverty), it has been reluctant to finance land reform plans due to the failure of the Zimbabwean government to explain the modalities of land redistribution and to establish the necessary infrastructures to make it a sustainable and achievable goal (Chitiyo, 2004: 64).

With Mugabe's realisation of his declining popularity, as exemplified by the defeat suffered by ZANU-PF in the February 2000 National Referendum, he tried to impose short-term racial and political solutions on genuine agrarian problems (Chitiyo, 2004: 50). Over 800 white commercial farms were forcibly occupied by groups of so-called war veterans. Most of these 'war-veterans' however, were unemployed youths, some who were not even born at the time of the war of liberation. Whilst this militancy has provided politically expedient benefits for the government, the cost to the nation is unsustainable (Chitiyo, 2004: 51; Solomon, 2002: 152).

Bad government decisions and politics have thus produced a declining economy that has in turn increased the misery and despondency of the Zimbabwean population (Kagoro, 2003: 9). A chronic shortage of foreign currency, fuel and other imports exist (Robertson, 2003: 48). Capital flight has occurred, official

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<sup>23</sup> This is in line with Makumbe's (2003: 39) argument that whenever former liberation movements are threatened with loss of political power, they tend to resuscitate their original achievements as liberators as a license to continued tenure of office. Wartime tactics of instilling fear in the electorate in order to win elections are also harnessed.

development assistance has been withdrawn and foreign direct investment has dried up (Makumbe, 2003: 36). It is estimated that real GDP will contract by 13,1 percent in 2003 and 6,1 percent in 2004. Inflation, estimated at 368 percent in early 2003, will continue to soar (Maclean, 2003). Zimbabwe is currently facing a serious food shortage (Dashwood, 2002: 100) and half of the Zimbabwean population faces starvation. Unemployment is estimated to be at 70 percent and poverty has increased with over 80 percent of the population living below the poverty line (Tsvangirai, 2003: 135; Makumbe, 2003: 36).

The increasingly desperate agrarian situation already began with the drought of 1990 to 1992 (Chitiyo, 2004: 68). Implementing the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) as recommended by the International Monetary Fund, did little to improve Zimbabwe's economy. Since the introduction of ESAP corresponded with the government's abandonment of the social programs it had introduced upon assuming power, opposition increased against Mugabe (Maclean, 2002: 514; Moore, 2001: 915). Zimbabwe's economic decline was exacerbated by the government's war veteran disbursements<sup>24</sup> (Dashwood, 2002: 88). The huge increase in land invasions in 2000 and politically inspired murders and the spread of fear and intimidation, compelled the donor community to punish Zimbabwe. All new donor-funding was frozen in July 2000 which aggravated the economic crisis (Dashwood, 2002: 93). The government's disregard for property rights has also prompted foreign banks to withdraw credit lines and investment into Zimbabwe has been stopped (*The Economist*, 2002a: 30).

Mugabe's decision to commit Zimbabwean troops to the DRC in June 1998, in response to Laurent Kabila's request for assistance against Ugandan and

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<sup>24</sup> The ZANU-PF government's failure to financially compensate grassroots ex-combatants precipitated a political and financial crisis in the 1990s (Chitiyo, 2004: 66). In 1997, President Mugabe announced a package for war veterans that would pay each war veteran a lump sum of Z\$50 000 and a gratuity for life of Z\$5000 per month. The amount awarded had not been budgeted for and almost caused the collapse of the country's financial system (Kagoro, 2003: 18).

Rwandan-backed rebels, has been controversial both domestically and internationally. This request was made through the regional institutional framework of SADC and provided an opportunity to Mugabe to assert his leadership in the region (Dashwood, 2002: 80). Cilliers and Malan (2001: 22) assert that President Mugabe wanted to gain international prominence by providing a counterweight to South Africa's dominant role in SADC. This search for regional prestige and influence, however, has held serious consequences for Mugabe's domestic and international support. Not only did the international donor community refuse to commit funds for land reform when Mugabe sent troops to the DRC (Dashwood, 2002: 88), but this intervention gave rise to a huge domestic outcry (Maclean, 2002: 523). It has been alleged that the funds necessary to deploy 11 000 troops in the DRC led to a substantial diversion of resources that were originally earmarked for poverty alleviation and resolving the land problem. This intervention in the DRC thus exacerbated Zimbabwe's economic decline (Chitiyo, 2004: 68).

Mugabe and his ZANU-PF government's increasing unpopularity advanced the cause of opposition forces. The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed in September 1999, only months before the June 2000 general elections and reflected a coalescing of opposition forces (Maclean, 2002: 514). Morgan Tsvangirai stepped down as secretary general of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), to lead the MDC. This diverse group has been united by a general concern about the state of the economy, unemployment, and the government's poor management of the economy (Dashwood, 2002: 94).

The popular rejection of the draft constitution in the February 2000 referendum, exposed the vulnerability of the ZANU-PF government (Dashwood, 2002: 95). For the first time since 1980, the people had rejected ZANU-PF's proposals at the electoral ballot. This victory signalled to Mugabe that his stranglehold on power was starting to decline (McWilliam, 2003: 96). The widespread support the MDC was able to attract in such a short time frightened Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

The emergence of a viable opposition to the ruling party triggered ZANU-PF's authoritarian inclination (Dashwood, 2002: 95). Consequently, drastic measures were taken by the ZANU-PF government to maintain control over power and the government resorted to violence, racism and public intimidation. The land issue, racism, violence and intimidation were the main instruments used against political rivals (Makumbe, 2003: 27). Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party, moreover, have made considerable mileage out of the claim that it prosecuted the liberation struggle against the British colonial-settler regime (Makumbe, 2003: 29).

Opposition forces have found it extremely difficult to gain support due to the government's clampdown on all forms of opposition. MDC leaders have continuously been harassed and tortured (Tsvangirai, 2003: 136). In the run-up to the 2002 elections, opposition supporters were killed (Solomon, 2002: 151). Mugabe's growing disregard for the press and the courts has also encumbered the opposition (McWilliam, 2003: 96). During the run-up to the 2002 election, emergency legislation was passed that was designed to stifle independent media coverage and tight restrictions were imposed on local and international election monitors. The state controlled media behaved as a mouthpiece for ZANU-PF and denied access to opposition forces (Hamill, 2002).

The third Zimbabwean presidential election was held on 9-11 March 2002 (Raftopoulos, 2002: 413). According to the election outcomes, Robert Mugabe polled 56,2 percent of the votes cast, whereas Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC polled 42 percent. The verdict of the presidential election, however, has been disputed on both a national and international level. The differences in the perceived acceptance of the election are notable (Barber, 2002: 1145).

The leader of the MDC, Morgan Tsvangirai, protested that the result was 'illegitimate' and condemned the election as a case of 'highway robbery'. Tsvangirai claimed that the Zimbabwean authorities had engaged in systematic

cheating, spoiling tactics, rigid new laws<sup>25</sup>, sheer obstruction and political violence and intimidation during the run-up to the election (Barber, 2002: 1145). It is for these reasons that the MDC held that the election results did not 'reflect the true will of the people of Zimbabwe and consequently are illegitimate in the eyes of the people'. As a result, the MDC did not accept the election outcome (Barber, 2002: 1145).

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), a network of 38 organisations, did not judge the election free and fair. The Chairperson of ZESN, Matchaba-Hove, maintained that the elections violated almost all of the SADC Parliamentary Forum Norms and Standards<sup>26</sup> (Barber, 2002: 1147).

The African response to the election was somewhat different. Presidents Chissano of Mozambique, Muluzi of Malawi and Nujoma of Namibia all indicated their acceptance of the elections by attending Mugabe's inauguration as President. President Mkapa of Tanzania and Arap Moi of Kenya also accepted the legitimacy of the elections. The OAU, which has always been reserved in criticising its members, held that 'in general the elections were transparent, credible, free and fair' (Taylor, 2002b: 407). The Nigerian observer mission group was also supportive, and the SADC Council of Ministers declared the election 'substantially free and fair' and held that the vote was a 'true reflection' of the will

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<sup>25</sup> A newly amended electoral law determined that only state-appointed monitors may oversee voting and counting (*The Economist*, 2002a: 31). Mugabe also attempted to disenfranchise some voters by passing new laws. One example is the law that prohibited Zimbabweans abroad to vote, unless they are diplomats or soldiers. Those with foreign-born parents, unless they proved before January 6 2002 that they had renounced all claims to a foreign passport, lost their Zimbabwean citizenship (*The Economist*, 2002a: 31).

<sup>26</sup> Voter education was disrupted and there was insufficient time to conduct voter education, and to train the 22 000 monitors. These monitors, moreover, were all civil servants, in particular from the army and the police. Disturbing episodes of violence occurred even during the polling days. According to Matchaba-Hove, 'there is no way these elections could be described as substantially free and fair'. This view was shared by Zimbabwe's Women's Coalition - an umbrella body of individual Zimbabwean women and women's non-governmental organisations. They maintained that the elections were conducted in an unsafe, unfair and unacceptable environment and consequently rejected the outcome of the election (Barber, 2002: 1144-1147). The Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition (a coalition of some 500 hundred church and civic groups) also concluded that the election had failed to meet most of the basic requirements for being free and fair (Barber, 2002: 1147).

of the people (Barber, 2002: 1147-1149). SADC's statement declared that although the report indicated that there were some incidents of violence during the run-up of the election and that there were some logistical problems during the actual process of polling, SADC endorsed the positions taken by the SADC Ministerial Task Force on Zimbabwe that the elections were substantially free and fair (SA GCIS , 2002).

The head of the South African Parliamentary Observer Mission (SAPOM), Samuel Motsuenyane, maintained in its interim report that although the election was not adequately free and fair and that 'tension and incidents of violence and intimidation' occurred during the pre-election period, the 'outcome should be considered legitimate'. All the members of the SAPOM, however, did not agree with Motsuenyane's interpretation and the document was to be amended in its final version (Barber, 2002: 1150). Despite reporting some irregularities, such as the announcement of polling stations in less than 72 hours before polling, SAPOM concluded that the election 'substantially represents the will of the Zimbabwean people'. Therefore, it pronounced the 2002 Presidential elections as a 'credible expression of the will of the people' (South African Government, 2002). South Africa's minority parties, however, came to the conclusion that they could not endorse the elections as being genuinely free and fair (South African Government, 2002).

The Western response has been much more critical. Britain's Prime Minister Blair made his position clear before the election. Jack Straw, the British Foreign Secretary, declared after the election that there was 'pretty strong' evidence that Mugabe had stolen the election. President Bush took a similar stance and declared that 'we do not recognise the outcome of the election because we think it's flawed' (Barber, 2002: 1151-1153). Europe was also unanimous in its condemnation and France and Germany indicated that the election was neither free, nor fair (Barber, 2002: 1151-1153; Maclean, 2003a). Amnesty International, the Zimbabwean Human Rights NGO Forum and the Southern African Legal

Assistance Network supported this finding. Their findings were that irrespective of what happened on polling day, the election could not be adjudged free or fair because of events in the pre-election period (Johnston, 2001).

### **3.3. South Africa's foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe**

The political crisis surrounding land invasion and leadership succession have placed the international spotlight on Zimbabwe (Dashwood, 2002: 78). Mugabe's increasing authoritarian tendencies and continuous violations of human rights and democratic standards, however, have highlighted the perpetual reluctance of African elites to criticise 'one of their own' (Taylor, 2002a; Maclean, 2003b). As the Zimbabwean crisis enfolded, South Africa's foreign policy stance towards Zimbabwe seemed to be cautious and even ambiguous at times.

In reaction to the violent coercion and racial scapegoating which has characterised Zimbabwe since the February 2000 referendum, South Africa has designed a foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' to encourage Mugabe to change course (Hamill, 2002). The South African government has maintained that Mbeki would have a stronger impact on the Zimbabwean situation if he could use an attitude of sympathy and friendship to nudge Mugabe in the right direction (Johnson, 2001). Public condemnation of Mugabe, on the other hand, would alienate the Zimbabwean government and in effect prohibit South Africa from exerting any influence on ZANU-PF (Dempster, 2003). Aziz Pahad, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, has therefore stated that the international community has an obligation to create favourable conditions in order to facilitate dialogue between Zimbabwe's political parties<sup>27</sup> (*Die Burger*, 2003a: 4).

Since the February 2000 referendum, the ANC has attempted to facilitate dialogue between the MDC and ZANU-PF. This foreign policy of 'quiet

diplomacy' has therefore been a policy of 'constructive engagement'. President Mbeki's attempts to get funding from Saudi Arabia to provide funding for Zimbabwe's land reform programme, has been illustrative of South Africa's mediation efforts. This policy of 'constructive engagement'<sup>28</sup> however, has also highlighted the ambivalent place of human rights in global politics. According to this approach, human rights abusers are more likely to reform if they are treated with a mixture of contact and limited sanction, rather than a blanket boycott or embargo. This approach, however, has often drawn strong criticism since it has been viewed as a justification of the pursuit of self-interest under dubious moral circumstances. Johnston (2001: 21) highlights two concerns that should be kept in mind when the principle of constructive engagement is evaluated. The first is that constructive engagement is an inescapable principle since a position that demands the boycott of all human rights abusers by all democratic states would make international relations practically impossible. The second is that constructive engagement does not give a state a 'blank cheque' for full contact with abuser states, but a negotiable and graded programme of sanctions and inducements (Johnston, 2001: 21). Rather than publicly criticising and condemning Mugabe and ZANU-PF, the South African government's approach to the escalating crisis in Zimbabwe has therefore been to take the route of 'quiet diplomacy'. This approach has maintained that a hard line towards Zimbabwe will not bring any positive results and that sanctions will not result in any positive developments leading to the restoration of political sanity in Zimbabwe (Makumbe, 2003: 37). Therefore, the South African government has argued that it is not a viable option to force a solution onto Zimbabwe, since such a solution would be rejected<sup>29</sup> (*Die Burger*, 2003a: 4).

<sup>27</sup> A South African military intervention in Zimbabwe to enforce a commitment to human rights, has never been considered a viable option due to South Africa's focus on mediation and symbolic power which is consistent with its middle power position (Johnston, 2001: 3; Stremlau, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> This term is attributed to Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, to describe the Reagan administration's policy towards apartheid South Africa (Johnston, 2001: 21).

<sup>29</sup> According to official sources, Mbeki feels that he has little option but to support Mugabe since Zimbabwe could descend into Shona-Ndebele strife if Mugabe loses power. The military power of the war veterans and the support of Zimbabwe's army to Mugabe, also increases the likelihood of a lapse into civil war if ZANU-PF loses power (Johnston, 2001).

The various attempts made by South Africa and Nigeria to promote dialogue between ZANU-PF and the MDC, however, collapsed prematurely and raised questions about the success of constructive engagement. Despite meetings between the South African and Zimbabwean ministers of Foreign Affairs to assist the people of Zimbabwe in their strides toward national reconciliation (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2003), South Africa failed to get Mugabe to undertake any measures to resolve the political predicament that he finds himself in. Despite the South African government's claims that these meetings will lay a firm foundation for Zimbabwe's political and economic recovery, reconciliation between the Zimbabwean government and the MDC is yet to be achieved (Makumbe, 2003: 37).

In reaction to accusations that South Africa is following a foreign policy of 'silent diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe, Dlamini-Zuma, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has stated that the regional priorities of the government include stability in the region. Dlamini-Zuma has claimed that Zimbabwe remains 'a great concern' for the government and that the South African government has continued to engage the Zimbabwe government whilst pointing out firmly and frankly where they disagree with them. Dlamini-Zuma has argued, moreover, that South Africa has a responsibility to avoid a complete collapse in Zimbabwe as well as a responsibility to prevent the deterioration of life for ordinary Zimbabweans (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 259). Despite numerous setbacks and the lack of tangible results, Aziz Pahad has asserted that progress has been made in Zimbabwe, even if it is only talks about talks (*Die Burger*, 2003a: 4). The continuous denial that progress is being made, by MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, however, has raised doubts about progress made.

Olivier (2003) states that the moral neutrality and indifference with regard to intra-African politics has been particularly notable about Mbeki's foreign policy. This foreign policy stance has arduously respected the sovereignty of African states and has viewed judgement on their human rights records as unwarranted

interference in their domestic affairs. Whilst Mbeki got deeply involved in the anti-war campaign in the United States-Iraq confrontation, attempted to play a mediator-role in Palestine and helped to bring peace to the DRC crisis; he has followed a much more conservative role in his own region. His stance towards the enfolding crisis in Zimbabwe and towards the many cases of blatant autocratic mismanagement and undemocratic behaviour elsewhere in Africa, has merely been that 'we claim no right to impose our will on any independent country' (Olivier, 2003). South Africa's weakening commitment to human rights advocacy in Africa has illustrated its desire to forge ties with Africa, in other words to 'belong' in Africa. By attaching a higher priority to African solidarity than to human rights advocacy, South Africa rises in esteem in the eyes of its fellow African states. The importance of esteem in order to avoid other states' disapproval will be explained in chapter four.

During the unfolding Zimbabwean crisis, however, President Mbeki has been singled out for criticism. Although Mbeki leads the dominant country in Africa and has been a member of the core group of African leaders that created and promoted Nepad<sup>30</sup>, he has been notably reluctant to publicly condemn the Mugabe government's behaviour (Maclean, 2003a). Both domestic and international audiences expected Mbeki, as member of the Commonwealth, to take a stand in favour of the rule of law, against the suppression of civil and property rights and against the resort to violence. The failure to do so, it was widely believed, would go against its attempts to promote human rights and democracy (Johnson, 2001). It soon became evident, however, that Mbeki would not publicly condemn Mugabe. Despite numerous appeals by Zimbabwe's opposition, South African civil society and by the West that Mbeki follow a harder line approach towards Mugabe's flouting of democratic norms, human rights and

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<sup>30</sup> Nigeria (Obasanjo), Algeria (Bouteflika), Senegal (Wade), and Egypt (Mubarak) have formed the other member countries of Nepad's core group (Breytenbach, 2002).

increasing authoritarianism, Mbeki has refused to openly condemn Mugabe's behaviour.

Lack of transparency can be identified as one of the main points of critique against South Africa's foreign policy stance towards Zimbabwe. This lack of transparency has been illustrated by President Bush's sudden endorsement of South Africa's 'quiet diplomacy' after his South Africa visit in July 2003 (Carroll, 2003). Whilst Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State, warned Southern African states just a month earlier that political unrest in Zimbabwe posed a threat to the region's stability unless they pressured Mugabe to reform, Bush supported Mbeki's stance after private talks. After these talks, Mbeki has announced that they are in agreement about the urgency of addressing the political and economic challenges of Zimbabwe. Mbeki has further stated that both states urged the Zimbabwean government and the opposition to get together and that these parties are in the process of discussing all issues. The opposition, however, denied these claims and said that Bush has been misled. Morgan Tsvangirai accused Mbeki of 'buying time' for Mugabe with assurances to Bush that were 'without foundation' (Carroll, 2003).

Little, if any, effort has been made to explain what the exact goals of the government's 'quiet diplomacy' are, and how it will be achieved (*Mail and Guardian*, 2003f). This veil of secrecy has been aggravated by the government's contradictory statements and actions. The lack of transparency surrounding South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe, moreover, has fuelled perceptions that South Africa's 'silent diplomacy' is in fact condoning Mugabe's behaviour. These perceptions have been fuelled by Mbeki's continuing friendly relations with Mugabe, despite Mbeki's call for an end to military regimes in Africa on January 8, 2000. (Johnson, 2001). The appearance of Mbeki, standing hand-in-hand with Mugabe also strengthened domestic and international perceptions that Mbeki is condoning Mugabe's actions (Johnson, 2001). South Africa's acceptance of the 2002 presidential elections, moreover, has been

perceived as a tacit endorsement of Mugabe's violent actions (Hamill, 2002). The South African election observer mission described the election as 'legitimate' but not necessarily 'free and fair'. The ANC endorsed this finding and Smuts Ngnoyama, the ANC's spokesperson, described the election as a legitimate expression of popular will and offered 'warm congratulations to ZANU-PF and President Mugabe for a 'convincing majority win'. President Mbeki also declared that 'the will of the people of Zimbabwe has prevailed'. These statements were widely viewed as a betrayal of the very democratic and non-racial values championed by the ANC throughout its own history (Hamill, 2002).

Contradictory statements and behaviour have also increased critique directed against South Africa's foreign policy stance towards Zimbabwe. Despite Mbeki's proclamation at the African Mining Indaba in 2002 that national sovereignty should no longer serve as a barrier behind which African governments could hide, prominent ZANU-PF ministers were invited as special guests and were warmly applauded at the ANC national party conference in Stellenbosch in early 2003 (Olivier, 2003). Statements by Dlamini-Zuma that 'Mugabe will never be condemned' as long as the ANC is in power, and by ANC labour minister Membathisi Mdladlana that South Africa has 'had a lot to learn' from Mugabe, have contradicted Mbeki's statement (Olivier, 2003; Dempster, 2003). Rather than condemning acts that violate democratic standards, moreover, the Department of Foreign Affairs has only stated that things are done differently in South Africa (*Mail and Guardian*, 2003a). Continued oil and electricity supply to Zimbabwe, as well as the extension of a loan to guarantee a basic oil supply (Johnston, 2001), has fuelled the view that South Africa condones Mugabe's violations of human rights and democracy.

The failure of South Africa's 'quiet diplomacy' to produce any tangible results has exacerbated the staunch criticism directed at South Africa's policy. President Mbeki's inability to convince Mugabe to stop the violence and return law and order to Zimbabwe, has already become apparent after the failed Victoria Falls

Summit of April 2000. During this summit, which was attended by presidents Mbeki, Mugabe, Sam Nujoma of Namibia and Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique; Mugabe agreed to stop the violence and facilitate the withdrawal of the war veterans from white farms. It soon became evident, however, that Mugabe refused to stop the violence or restore the rule of law. Despite the fact that Mugabe did not keep his end of the bargain, all three other presidents continued to support him in public (Johnson, 2001). South Africa's inability to exert any influence on Zimbabwe is underscored by Dlamini, Mills and Grobbelaar's (2001) claim that South Africa has little if any influence on Zimbabwe. They argue that the competitive rather than collaborative historic relationship between the ANC and ZANU-PF has not been conducive to enhance South Africa's influence over Mugabe. Mbeki's repeated claims that they are helping to arrange an 'exit plan' for Mugabe, have been repudiated by statements of Zimbabwean Information Minister, Jonathan Moyo, that Mugabe will stay until the end of his term in 2008.

As Zimbabwe plunged further into state-sponsored anarchy and repression, it became apparent that South Africa's policy of 'quiet diplomacy' had few if any tangible results (Hamill, 2002). During the run-up to the 2002 elections it was clear that South Africa's 'quiet diplomacy' failed to achieve its desired objective of supporting a peaceful and stable Zimbabwe (Solomon, 2002: 151). Many ordinary Zimbabweans have illustrated resentment against Mbeki's 'quiet diplomacy' because they have failed to see any benefits arising out of South Africa's intervention. As food shortages mounted and the potential for widespread famine increased, Zimbabweans have become more frustrated over what they perceive as South Africa's complicity with Mugabe's government (Dempster, 2003). The exasperated Zimbabwean opposition has accused South Africa of assuming a 'fence-sitting' position (*Mail and Guardian*, 2003c).

The South African government has also been accused thereof that their lack of condemnation towards Mugabe has been influenced by the fact that they do not

consider the MDC as a more viable alternative to ZANU-PF. The belief that stability in Zimbabwe can only be achieved by a reformed ZANU-PF has thus influenced South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe. Mbeki, therefore, favoured a path of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe for fear of alienating the ZANU-PF government and catapulting Zimbabwe into accelerated collapse that would influence South Africa and the region in a negative way (Dempster, 2003). This lack of trust in the MDC can be partly ascribed to its lack of experience in governing a country, and to the uncertain motives of a group of people opposed to ZANU-PF (Johnston, 2001). Some have argued that because Mbeki faces opposition from COSATU domestically, another liberation leader toppled by a union-based movement like the MDC (President Kaunda of Zambia was ultimately toppled by a trade union-based opposition), could strengthen COSATU's leverage (Johnston, 2001).

President Mbeki's continued reticence to condemn Mugabe's actions, and his support for Mugabe as illustrated by Mbeki's appeals to end the suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth, has received much criticism. The reluctance of African Commonwealth leaders to criticise Mugabe, moreover, has led to a split between the 'old' and 'new' Commonwealth members<sup>31</sup>. This division exposed continuing anti-colonial and even racial sensitivities among its membership (McWilliam, 2003: 96, *Die Burger*, 2003b: 6). The reticence of African leaders to criticise Mugabe, did not only lower the potential impact of the Commonwealth on the Zimbabwean crisis, but also damaged the standing of African Commonwealth members (McWilliam, 2003: 97).

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<sup>31</sup> The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) took notice of the deteriorating political scene in Zimbabwe for the first time in 2000, in the run-up to the elections. Despite Zimbabwe's objections, CMAG sent a team of observers to Zimbabwe. Their report noted widespread violence and intimidation in the campaign as well as procedural irregularities. The voting and counting was however considered acceptable. Since the 2000 election, the Commonwealth has become increasingly concerned at Mugabe's infringement of democratic norms, violation of human rights and treatment of the press and courts (McWilliam, 2003: 96).

In reaction to South Africa's appeals to end Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth, fierce debates surrounding Zimbabwe's extended suspension from the Commonwealth developed (McWilliam, 2003: 96). Following the critical report by the Commonwealth observer group on the 2002 presidential elections, the presidents of Nigeria and South Africa, together with Australian Prime Minister John Howard, constituted a troika in March 2002. Despite initial indecision, the troika agreed on 19 March 2002 to suspend Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth for one year. This suspension did not trigger economic sanctions, but was largely a symbolic punishment (*The Economist*, 2002b: 61). It was also decided to meet in one year's time to assess the progress that was made with regards to encouraging a peaceful outcome to the situation in Zimbabwe (The South African Presidency, 2003).

The Commonwealth's decision on December 2003 to extend Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth, and Mbeki's appeals to end this suspension, have given rise to a huge outcry against Mbeki's 'approval' of Mugabe. The strong criticism given by the other troika members – Nigeria and Australia – has exacerbated the controversy surrounding South Africa's stance. Whilst Nigeria stated firmly that it would not allow Mugabe to attend the troika meeting in Nigeria (*Mail and Guardian*, 2003a), Prime Minister Howard asserted that it is unacceptable to allow Zimbabwe to resume participation in Commonwealth affairs until there is a complete change of approach, in other words until Mugabe is removed from power (*Mail and Guardian*, 2003b).

South Africa's decision to support Mugabe in the Commonwealth, however, must be understood within the context of its attempts to promote African solidarity. Although South Africa received criticism from the rest of the world, it rose in esteem in the eyes of its fellow African states that emphasise the norm of 'not speaking out against each other'.

SADC's initial reluctance to form a regional response to the crisis in Zimbabwe and to take a stand against Mugabe's behaviour, has raised doubts as to the effectiveness of this regional organisation<sup>32</sup>. Despite Mbeki's initiation of the creation of a taskforce<sup>33</sup> under the auspices of SADC to investigate the situation in Zimbabwe, this taskforce has seemed reluctant to condemn Mugabe's flouting of democratic norms, intimidations of his political opponents and occupation by ZANU-PF's 'war veterans' of white-owned farms (Dashwood, 2002: 98). Prior to the Zimbabwean crisis, the effectiveness and credibility of SADC has already been questioned<sup>34</sup>. SADC's limitations as regional organisation have already been illustrated by its inability to deal with the DRC crisis (Dashwood, 2002: 85). The DRC's admission to SADC has also highlighted this organisation's inability to develop a set of core 'democratic values' which are held to be prerequisites for membership as opposed to a vague aspiration that democracy will be fostered as a result of membership (Hamill, 2001: 41). Despite the draft protocol of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security commitment to intervene in member states if instability arises as a result of a breakdown in law and order (Johnson, 2001), the inability of SADC to stem instability and human rights abuses in Zimbabwe has undermined its authority for enhancing security in the region.

The crisis in Zimbabwe has raised the profile of land reform for South Africa. Although there has been an increase in militancy with the formation of the Landless People's Movement and a series of actual or threatened land invasions, it has not led to any fundamental changes in South Africa's market-based land reform approach (Lahiff, 2003: 83). The South African government directed its efforts towards assuring outside observers and investors that land reform, as it took place in Zimbabwe, 'won't happen here'. The government has also insisted

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<sup>32</sup> See van Schalkwyk (2002: 64-66) for a discussion on the challenges facing the SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security.

<sup>33</sup> This team comprises South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique. The absence of Zimbabwe's allies in the DRC intervention (Angola and Namibia) is not coincidental (Dashwood, 2002: 98).

<sup>34</sup> Despite Ngoma's (2003: 17) claim that SADC is indeed moving towards a security community, the general consensus has been that SADC has not achieved substantive gains in cooperation in economic or security areas (Maclean, 2003a).

that what the rural poor want in South Africa is not land but jobs and services. Unlike Zimbabwe, South Africa has kept a firm hold on political power and economic fundamentals to prohibit the creation of a land crisis (Lahiff, 2003: 83). Therefore, despite the similarities in South Africa's land holding patterns, the likelihood of a 'spill over' of 'farm invasions' into South Africa is small due to the very different political and economic conditions that prevail in these two states (Lahiff, 2003: 84).

Although South Africa does not seem to follow the same road as in Zimbabwe regarding the land question, the events in Zimbabwe have had a negative impact on South Africa's ANC. Despite South Africa's repeated assurances that rule of law and the property rights will be maintained in South Africa, investor confidence was shaken (Lahiff, 2003: 83). The South African business community was enraged and the markets were thoroughly alarmed by Zimbabwe's adherence to the principle of expropriation without compensation. Mbeki's failure to openly take a stand against Mugabe conveyed a message that the ANC condoned this behaviour and may even resort to such behaviour if faced with major electoral challenge (Johnson, 2001). Although most analysts forecasted a strengthening of the Rand for 2000 based on its undervalued purchasing power, the currency went into free fall, ending the year with almost 25 percent below value<sup>35</sup>. The South African Chamber of Business CEO, Kevin Wakeford, pleaded with the government to take a position against Zimbabwe due to the extreme fall of consumer confidence in 2000 (Johnson, 2001). Although business leaders rightly highlight the skittishness of foreign investors, the extent to which funds were withheld from South Africa due to its policy towards Zimbabwe is difficult to discern. Sound economic policies, world economic trends and access to markets

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<sup>35</sup> The weakening of the Rand in 2000, when the Rand was at 17 to the dollar, was attributed to South Africa's stance towards Zimbabwe. With the strengthening of the Rand in 2003, however, no mention is made of South Africa's lack of condemnation on the Zimbabwe situation (Stremlau, 2003).

are the factors that really count when deciding to invest (Stremlau, 2003). South Africa's contradictory behaviour towards Zimbabwe, however, does not strengthen investor confidence.

Another critique targeted against the South African government's approach of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe, is the failure of the government to reflect domestic interests. South Africa's political parties, churches and other organisations all appealed to the government to take a stronger stance towards Zimbabwe. After meeting with the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), COSATU's provincial secretary Tony Ehrenreich linked COSATU'S call for sanctions with sanctions against the apartheid regime. He stated that 'quiet diplomacy' is not effective and that a new strategy should be followed (*Mail and Guardian*, 2003c). Ehrenreich called on the South African government to end its 'silent' diplomacy in dealing with Zimbabwe and impose sanctions as a tool to end the unjust government. The Democratic Alliance (DA) and the New National Party (NNP) have also made calls for bold leadership from the South African government in helping to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis. DA leader Tony Leon has been of the opinion that Mbeki's pledges and assurances in early 2003 that dialogue between ZANU-PF and the MDC is making progress, is not bearing fruit and a bolder stance is necessary (*Mail and Guardian*, 2003e). It is also felt that Mbeki, as leader of the AU, has ample political leverage. It is maintained that Mbeki had more than enough time and opportunity to create political dialogue in Zimbabwe (*Mail and Guardian*, 2003e). The South African Communist Party has also been in favour of a more hard line approach towards Zimbabwe. It maintains that political freedom as non-negotiable should accompany South African diplomatic efforts in Zimbabwe (*Mail and Guardian*, 2003d).

Perhaps the staunchest criticism of South Africa's Zimbabwe foreign policy has been targeted against its undermining of the credibility of Nepad's African Peer Review Mechanism. During the launching of the AU summit in Durban in 2002, Mbeki urged Africa to proclaim to the world through its actions that 'Africa is a

continent of democracy, a continent of democratic institutions and culture- indeed a continent of good governance, where the people participate and the rule of law is upheld' (Olivier, 2003). Mbeki's conscious decision to refrain from publicly criticising Mugabe, however, has been viewed by many as a betrayal of the entire human rights tradition of the South African liberation struggle (Johnson, 2001).

Nepad's African Peer Review Mechanism has exemplified Mbeki's fluctuating attitude. This mechanism was originally designed to encourage African countries 'to consider seriously the impact of domestic policies, not only on internal political stability and economic growth, but also on neighbouring countries' (Olivier, 2003). It has been widely perceived, however, that the Zimbabwean issue fatally undermined Nepad's credibility, only six months after its launch (*The Economist*, 2002b: 62). Even though not all of Africa's problems are of its own making, the refusal of African leaders to get their own house in order has exacerbated negative attitudes in the rest of the world (Taylor, 2002a). Presidents Mbeki of South Africa and Obasanjo of Nigeria have effectively wasted the goodwill that surrounded the Nepad at its initial launch (Taylor, 2003). The South African government's reaction to Zimbabwe presented a severe blow to Pretoria's international standing and to the state's post-1994 'aspiration to be an evangelist for the expansion of democratic government on the African continent' (Hamill, 2002).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of South Africa's foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe, however, the role of norms must be taken into account. The normative clash between African reluctance to 'speak out against one another' and Western expectations to do the opposite (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 30), has placed South Africa in a difficult position concerning its reaction to the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe. The clash between the new norm of human rights and the other, well-established norms of sovereignty and 'not

'speaking out against each other', has played itself out within Nepad. This, in turn, has greatly impacted South Africa's foreign policy stance towards Zimbabwe.

Nepad's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), that is 'an instrument voluntarily acceded to by Member States of the African Union as an African self-monitoring mechanism' attempted to institutionalise a process whereby African states themselves will censure or praise states which conform to the governance criteria of Nepad (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 26). This mechanism, however, was perceived by African states as an extension of 'Western imperialism'. In addition, the APRM advocated interference in fellow African states, which goes against the norms of sovereignty and that of sovereign complicity (in other words to refrain from acting 'against one's own') that is highly valued by most African states. The introduction of a new norm 'whereby the practice of sovereignty is reconstructed to allow limited degrees of peer sanctioned infringements', apparently did not 'fit' with Africa's self-conceptualised identity (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 26-27). The adoption of the new norm of human rights has therefore been dependent on the rejection of the other, well-established norms of sovereignty and 'not speaking out against each other'. In order to adopt the norm of human rights, in other words, the norms of sovereignty and sovereign complicity must be rejected. This, however, is easier said than done, since norms are deeply ingrained and connected to identity.

Constructivism provides an understanding as to why South Africa was unable to persuade African states to adopt human rights norms as propagated by Nepad. Van der Westhuizen (2004: 4-8) argues that whilst Mbeki succeeded therein to 'sell' Nepad to the developed world, it failed to convince African states of its significance. As illustrated by van der Westhuizen (2004: 4), 'framing' new norms is essential to overcome extrinsic and intrinsic constraints. The minimum extrinsic requirement is that an argument must be heard (securing an audience and the assuring the credibility of the institution that advocates the norm), and intrinsic barriers include the fit with dominant belief systems, notions of identity and social

institutions. Van der Westhuizen (2004: 5) maintains that the potential receptivity of a norm is enhanced when it fits with the normative practices and beliefs of the actor; if the arguments are held to be congruent with the self-conceptualised identity of the actor; and if the argument matches with existing social structures that are a consequence of the belief systems through which societies are ordered. By emphasising Nepad's efforts to promote good governance and human rights, as well as its intention to off-set Africa's marginalisation by establishing a partnership between the North and the South, Mbeki succeeded therein to 'sell' Nepad to the Northern developed states (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 7-12). This success was attributed to Nepad's appeal to aspects of the target's (the developed states) identity.

The inability of African states to condemn Mugabe's behaviour, has illustrated that Africa was not (yet) ready to adopt these new norms of human rights and 'speaking out against each other' that were propagated by Nepad. What is important to note, moreover, is that receptivity to ethical arguments is enhanced by the degree to which arguments are held to be congruent with the self-conceptualised identity of actors. New norms will only be adopted if '(the) proposed norm better fits with the kind of people that they are or would like to see themselves as' (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 5). The decision to move peer review about political questions out of Nepad and under the auspices of the African Union, illustrated that the norms of human rights and 'speaking out against each other' did not yet reach a 'tipping point' in Africa, as suggested by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 895). It is therefore evident that a new norm of 'speaking out against the other' must be adopted before states will be held accountable for their human rights issues (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 30).

This reluctance by African states to embrace the norms of human rights and 'speaking out against each other' has illustrated that conditions are not yet ready to garner African support for a multilateral approach towards the enfolding crisis in Zimbabwe. This, together with Africa's poor track record for successful

multilateral responses to crises, has ruled out an African multilateral response to Zimbabwe (Johnston, 2001: 14). Due to lessons learnt during the Nigerian fiasco, it is very unlikely that South Africa will promote its human rights commitments unilaterally.

South Africa's policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe has also supported a broader strategy of dealing with the paradox of South Africa's huge relative power in Southern Africa. In dealing with Zimbabwe, as with other regional situations, South Africa has to be careful not to alienate its neighbours and cause them to form an alliance of self-defence against it (Stremlau, 2003). The potential for an alliance of self-defence against South Africa has in turn been exacerbated by the close historical ties among the militaries of Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola and Mozambique in their liberation struggle against South Africa. No close historical ties exist with the South African National Defence Forces (SANDF), which are still staffed by people who once served apartheid governments (Dashwood, 2001: 85).

Leadership struggles in the Southern African region have also compelled South Africa to take a cautionary approach towards Zimbabwe. During the DRC crisis, Mugabe was able to garner support from Angola and Namibia to intervene on behalf of Laurent Kabilia in the DRC, despite South Africa's opposition. If South Africa condemns Mugabe, therefore, a split can develop within SADC that will in turn hamper regional cooperation that functions as a cornerstone of South Africa's foreign policy (Cilliers & Malan, 2001: 22; Dashwood, 2002: 80-87; Stremlau, 2003).

To intervene in Zimbabwe on the grounds of human rights violations, moreover, would violate state sovereignty, which is still respected as a guiding principle of international law (Dugard, 2001: 235). State sovereignty is a much-valued principle in Africa and violation of this principle by South Africa would receive strong criticism from the rest of Africa (Olivier, 2003; Maclean, 2003a). A

commitment to human rights, on the other hand, is not a rule of customary law and therefore there is no obligation on states to enforce it<sup>36</sup> (Dugard, 2001: 27-34). The advancement of human rights versus national sovereignty has emerged as an important fault-line of post-Cold War international relations. Despite SADC's attempt to overcome this divide by emphasising its commitment to both human rights and sovereignty, there exists no clear-cut rule as what to do when these principles clash. Swaziland, for instance, threatened to withdraw from SADC when South Africa sent troops into the state in 1997 (Hamill, 2001: 40).

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<sup>36</sup> Since the international system as yet has no legislature or compulsory judicial system, international custom (the common law of the international community) occupies a significant role in the international legal order. A customary rule, however, is only created when there exists a sense of obligation, a feeling on the part of the states that they are bound by the rule in question. Despite the emerging consensus between states of the importance of protecting human rights, the provisions adopted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nation's General Assembly in 1948, had not become rules of customary international law (Dugard, 2001: 27- 34).

### **3.4. Conclusion**

The evolving crisis in Zimbabwe and President Mugabe's breach of human rights and democratic standards have thus had a grave impact on South Africa's international standing. Although President Mbeki's reticence to condemn Mugabe's behaviour must be understood within the broader context of normative influences, this policy of 'quiet diplomacy' still had a disastrous impact on South Africa's foreign policy objectives and South Africa's international image.

This chapter has attempted to illustrate that South Africa's foreign policy stance towards Zimbabwe has been complicated by South Africa's aspirations to play a continental leadership role and evolving norms in the international system. The lack of transparency in South Africa's quiet diplomacy, however, has given rise to domestic and international criticism.

The recent crisis in the Commonwealth, and Mbeki's insistence that the crisis in Zimbabwe is a crisis of land reform, received staunch criticism. Mbeki was criticised for prioritising his relations with previous liberation partners above that of a commitment to human rights and democratic standards. This tension created within South African foreign policy as to its commitment to human rights advocacy and African solidarity, has raised questions about South Africa's foreign policy identity.

## Chapter Four

### **Constructivism as a framework to highlight South Africa's contradictory foreign policy norms of human rights and African solidarity**

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South Africa's political transition in 1994 did not only constitute a change of domestic policy and government, but also a fundamental transformation of political values, norms and structures of authority. This reconstituted domestic regime was based on democracy, justice and the rule of law. It played a pivotal role in reorienting, revitalising and reformulating the country's foreign policy interests and practices, and its relations with the changing global order (le Pere & van Nieuwkerk, 1999: 249). Commitment to upholding and strengthening international norms associated with the United Nations formed a final strategy for adapting South African foreign policy to the international realities of the post-Cold War era. Membership of the Non-Aligned Movement, the British Commonwealth of Nations and the African Union have been indicative of South Africa's commitment to international norms (Schraeder, 2001: 234).

The Mandela administration's commitment to the promotion of human rights as 'fundamental' foreign policy principle was especially prominent during the early years of post-apartheid South Africa (Spence, 2001: 4). After the Nigerian incident, however, South Africa turned to multilateral mechanisms as the main vehicle for South Africa's commitment to human rights. The commitment to multilateralism, however, has signified a decline in the priority placed on these principles (Black, 2001: 88). The decline in the commitment placed on the advocacy of human rights has become more prominent during the Mbeki presidency. The focus placed on the importance of the foreign policy principles of

security and wealth creation in 1999 reflected a dilution of the priority placed on human rights. Although the commitment to the promotion of human rights has not been abandoned altogether, human rights have come to be viewed as a second-order priority.

South Africa's commitment to the African Renaissance has received extra impetus by the Mbeki presidency and attempts to promote African solidarity have accompanied this vision for African revival and rebirth. Accusations that South Africa is merely acting according to Western interests and priorities with its attempts to advocate the African Renaissance and Nepad, have compelled South Africa to take a more public stand in favour of African solidarity.

South Africa's attempts to act as 'agent' and 'norm leader' in Africa by promoting human rights and democracy have thus presented problems to the Mbeki presidency. It became evident that its efforts to promote human rights on the one hand, and African solidarity on the other, were not compatible foreign policy interests in Africa, since the promotion of human rights required a rejection of the norms of state sovereignty and 'not to speak out against each other'. The seemingly incompatible commitments to human rights and African solidarity were accentuated by South Africa's reticence to condemn President Mugabe's flouting of democratic standards and increasing human rights violations and authoritarianism. These conflicting demands, moreover, raised questions about South Africa's foreign policy identity and interests.

The international relations theory of constructivism provides a useful framework to gain a deeper understanding of South Africa's increasingly incompatible commitment to both human rights and African solidarity. The importance of norms in making sense of international relations has been illustrated by the end of the Cold War and the demise of apartheid. These events have illustrated the potential strength and influence of norms on state's behaviour. Audie Klotz (1999: 166) argues that the global diffusion of a norm of racial equality motivated

domestic, transnational, state and intergovernmental actors to protest South Africa's apartheid system of racial segregation. Due to the force of these norms, the South African government abolished apartheid and made concessions to universal-suffrage elections. It is because of the potential force of norms, as illustrated by the demise of apartheid, that these norms and identity issues must be taken into account when analysing South Africa's foreign policy of 'quiet diplomacy' towards Zimbabwe.

The socialisation of South Africa to end apartheid illustrated that norms constrain states' behaviour through reputation and group membership, and that norms constitute states' definitions of their own identities and interests (Klotz, 1999: 167). Klotz (1999: 169) suggests that the claim that states are socialised into the international system presumes a concept of identity. Since state identities do not evolve autonomously in isolation from other actors, South Africa's post-apartheid identity has not evolved in isolation either. Whilst some international pressures (such as membership in the African Union and United Nations) have reaffirmed South Africa's state-centric sovereign identity, other memberships (such as in the Commonwealth) have promoted broader transnational and collective commitments (such as a commitment to human rights and democracy) (Klotz, 1999: 171). These pressures from Western states that demand a commitment to human rights on the one hand, and from African states that demand adherence to the rule of sovereignty and 'not to speak out against each other' on the other, have created foreign policy tensions within South Africa. The crisis in Zimbabwe greatly accentuated these contradictory foreign policy interests in the African context.

South Africa's post-apartheid diplomatic culture has reflected the fragmented divisions within Africa surrounding the importance attached to human rights issues. A division has existed in Africa between those states emphasising the importance of promoting human rights (such as South Africa and Nigeria), and those refusing to comply with international human rights standards (such as

Zimbabwe and Liberia). This latter group has appealed to the principle of state sovereignty when attempts have been made to hold them accountable for their breach of human rights. These states in turn, have accused states such as South Africa that demanded a commitment to human rights, of acting 'against one of their own'. African states' outcry against the Mandela administration when it recalled its High Commissioner from the Abacha regime in Nigeria, is a case in point.

The debate surrounding Nepad's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has also brought these conflicting norms of a commitment to human rights and 'not speaking out against each other' to the fore. The decision to move the APRM out of Nepad and under the remit of the African Union was indicative of the 'backseat' given to the norm of human rights within the African context and illustrated that the norm of human rights has not yet reached a tipping point in Africa. It is evident that a new norm of 'speaking out against the other' must be adopted before states will be held accountable for their human rights issues. Therefore, Mbeki's increasing appeals to African solidarity, as illustrated by his leadership role in advocating the African Renaissance and Nepad, compelled him to give a 'backseat' to the international norm of human rights. Whilst the norm of a commitment to human rights is an international norm, it is not (yet) a regional (African) norm.

Seen within this context, Mbeki's reticence to condemn Mugabe's violation of human rights is not that surprising. A division between those in favour of a strong commitment to human rights (even if it negatively impacted on solidarity with African states) and those emphasising African solidarity (even if it negatively impacted upon its commitment to human rights) existed within the South African government. Despite various appeals by both the domestic and international arena to the South African government to take a stronger stand against Mugabe's violations of human rights and democracy, the government has refused to condemn Mugabe's behaviour. It is argued that the South African

government realised that too strong a push for human rights in Africa will ruin its attempts to promote African solidarity.

This contradiction between the norms of African solidarity and human rights has been complicated by the status of human rights in the international system. Despite the establishment of the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nation's General Assembly in 1948, human rights have not become rules of customary international law. States, therefore, have no obligation to uphold these norms and are not bound by the Declaration of Human Rights to intervene in other states on the grounds of gross human rights violations. The principle of sovereignty, on the other hand, is respected as a guiding principle of international law. African states' claim on the sacrosanct status of sovereignty, therefore, is a legitimate claim under international law.

South Africa's commitment to human rights, moreover, has brought some sensitive issues to the fore. South Africa's human rights culture is expressed in the South African constitution and is firmly based on the values of liberalism and democracy. This Western orientation, however, has placed South Africa in a difficult position as it has been viewed in the past as merely acting as a proxy for Western interests in Africa. Although Africa does have a human rights regime, as embodied in the African Commission on Human and People's rights, it is a weak regime. Both the founding charters of human rights, and attempts to shape the forms of democratisation in Africa have thus been dominated by Western powers (Johnston, 2001: 23).

This dilemma is complicated by South Africa's links to the developed world, and its desire to weld itself in the global economy in order to increase the welfare and social security of its people (Olivier, 2003). Although Mandela stated since his inauguration that South Africa was first and foremost an African country with responsibilities on the African continent, the majority of South Africa's economic and financial links have been with the major northern industrialised democracies.

The question has thus arisen whether South Africa should primarily focus on strengthening its links with the northern industrialised democracies, or whether cultural solidarity demands a greater focus on the African continent (Schraeder, 2001: 241).

The controversy surrounding South Africa's initial strong stance against the Nigerian Abacha regime accentuated this clash between human rights and African solidarity. This incident, which played out against the backdrop of the Commonwealth, placed South Africa's identity crisis at the fore. The question arose whether South Africa is a leading country of Africa and the developing world, or whether it is a 'White country with a Black president', as the then Nigerian president Abacha cuttingly remarked. Using the Commonwealth as forum, South Africa was accused thereof as acting as a proxy for Western priorities and preferences. South Africa was thus charged with the accusation that it is breaking norms of 'African solidarity' in turning in on one of its own (Black, 2001: 83).

Ironically (or maybe as a consequence of the above controversy), South Africa has been accused of the opposite during the recent crisis in the Commonwealth over Zimbabwe's continued suspension. Whilst South Africa has been associated with the Anglo-Saxon part of the Commonwealth during the Nigerian crisis, South Africa has aligned itself with Zimbabwe during the Zimbabwean saga - to the dismay of Britain and Australia. These states, consequently, have strongly criticised South Africa's decision to side with Mugabe. South Africa's behaviour has raised questions as to South Africa's commitment to human rights and democratic standards.

These contradictions in South Africa's foreign policy identities have been exacerbated by the controversies surrounding South Africa's advocacy of Nepad and the African Peer Review Mechanism. Mbeki's promotion of Nepad has advocated a 'new political will' by African leaders to embark upon good

governance, free market principles, respect for human rights and the rule of law (Olivier, 2003). Although Mbeki is the leader of Africa's strongest, most democratic and most developed state, he has illustrated an unwillingness take a strong and principled stand against Mugabe (Olivier, 2003). This behaviour has refuted South Africa's commitments to human rights and democratic norms.

Mbeki's contradictory behaviour of propagating human rights and democracy on the one hand, and his reluctance to criticise Mugabe on the other, can be explained by focusing on norms as a potential transformative force. South Africa's political transition in 1994 was an example of how international norms were used to compel a state to adopt universal human rights norms (that of racial equality in this case) in its domestic policies. After this success, the post-apartheid South African government attempted to assume a position in Africa as 'norm leader' to advance human rights and democracy – as illustrated by the leading role it has undertaken in advocating the African Renaissance and Nepad.

The crisis in Zimbabwe did not only accentuate the contradictions in South Africa's foreign policy attempts to advocate both human rights and African solidarity norms, but it has also raised questions about South Africa's identity. South Africa's strong emphasis on the advocacy of human rights in the early post apartheid years, raised questions over solidarity with Africa, since the advocacy of human rights has been mainly associated with Western interests. On the other hand, Mbeki's refusal to condemn Mugabe and his efforts to end Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth, has raised questions about South Africa's commitment to human rights.

The reluctance of Africa, however, to follow South Africa's lead in adopting these norms became apparent soon after the launch of Nepad. This reluctance illustrated that these norms have not yet reached the 'tipping point' in Africa, as explained in the previous chapter. South Africa, and other norm entrepreneurs, have not yet succeeded therein to persuade a critical mass of states to become

norm leaders and adopt these new norms of human rights (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 901).

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 895-904) highlight that socialisation functions as the dominant mechanism of a norm cascade whereby norm leaders persuade others to adhere to the new norm. Whilst the exact motivations for this 'cascading' of norms through the rest of the international society differ, it is argued that a combination of pressure for conformity, desire to enhance international legitimization, and the desire of state leaders to enhance their self-esteem, facilitates norm cascades. The concept of socialisation suggests that the cumulative effect of many countries in a region adopting new norms may be analogous to 'peer pressure' among states, since state and state elites fashion an identity in relation to the international community. Conformity and esteem involve evaluative relationships between states and their state 'peers', and this conformity demonstrates that states 'belong', which in turn fulfils a psychological need to be part of a group. Esteem, therefore, suggests that leaders of states sometimes follow norms because they want others to think well of them, and because they want to think well of themselves. State leaders' desire to gain or defend their pride or esteem, and their conformity to norms in order to avoid the disapproval aroused by norm violation, can thus explain norm following (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 903-904).

States comply with norms for reasons that relate to their identities as members of an international society. State identity, therefore, fundamentally shapes state behaviour, and state identity, is in turn shaped by the cultural-institutional context within which states operate. When enough states and enough critical states endorse the new norm to redefine appropriate behaviour for the identity called 'state', a tipping point is reached. As argued before, in South Africa's specific cultural-institutional context the norms of human rights and state interference have not yet reached a tipping point. In order to 'belong' within the African context, South Africa thus had to take a backseat in promoting its human rights

commitment. South Africa thus conformed to the norm of sovereignty and ‘not to speak out against each other’ in order to defend its national pride and esteem, and to avoid the disapproval of other African states. Mbeki’s reluctance to criticise the leader of another African liberation movement can also be explained by its desire to ‘belong’ within the African continent. It can be argued that this identity of ‘liberation partners’ increases South Africa’s esteem in the African continent, that South Africa has therefore been reticent to condemn President Mugabe.

Constructivism’s agency-structure debate provides a deep understanding of the impact of South Africa’s specific historical context on its foreign policy decisions. By acting as a norm leader, the post-apartheid regime attempted to influence the structure in which Africa is embedded by advocating the new norms of human rights. However, instead of acting as agent and influencing the established structure, the structure constrained South Africa’s behaviour. South Africa experienced pressure by both the African structure, that gives preference to the norm of sovereignty, and the Western structure, that emphasises the prevalence of human rights. This reciprocal influence, however, is a continuous process and thus never-ending. The potential still exists that South Africa can obtain a critical mass in Africa to adopt the norm of human rights – and thus influence the structure to adopt new norms.

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