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Reconstructing the Implications of Liberation Struggle History on SADC Mediation in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

Former liberation movements are at the helm of government in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa and Tanzania. They have maintained close ties rooted in common liberation histories and personal connections, and during times of crisis they draw on these linkages and solidarities. The paper explores the implications of these linkages for current mediation and conflict resolution efforts by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Zimbabwe. It discusses how the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF), with its complicated roots as a splinter group from the established Zimbabwe African People’s Union, strove to attain recognition as the sole and authentic liberation movement in Zimbabwe. ZANU–PF built alliances with dominant liberation movements in the region. These included the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola in Angola, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique in Mozambique, the African National Congress in South Africa, the Pan Africanist Congress in South Africa, the South West Africa People’s Organisation in Namibia and the Chama Cha Mapinduzi in Tanzania. The paper suggests that pre and post-independence, historical linkages and personal contacts continue to influence the character of SADC mediation and conflict resolution efforts in Zimbabwe. Even the policy of ‘quiet diplomacy’ that constituted South African foreign policy towards Zimbabwe under Thabo Mbeki was partly shaped by enduring historical and personal linkages dating back to the liberation war period, as well as by pragmatism and national interests. The paper’s historically grounded approach to the study of African foreign policy helps to explain why new political structures, like the Movement for Democratic Change, are finding it difficult to establish strong links and to attain acceptance within the Southern Africa region, which is still dominated by ‘brother presidents’ and ‘sister movements’.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAPSO	Afro–Asian People’s Solidarity Organization
ANC	African National Congress
BDP	Botswana Democratic Party
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
FLS	Front Line States
FRELIMO	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
FROLIZI	Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe
GPA	Global Political Agreement
JOC	Joint Operations Command
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC–M	Movement for Democratic Change–Mutambara
MDC–T	Movement for Democratic Change–Tsvangirai
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MPLA	People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PF	Patriotic Front
PF–ZAPU	Patriotic Front–Zimbabwe African People’s Union
RENAMO	Mozambique National Resistance Movement
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SWAPO	South West Africa People’s Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
US	United States
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU–PF	Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army

INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) national chairperson, Simon Khaya Moyo, told the co-ordinating committee meeting of the 11th ZANU–PF National People’s Conference held in Mutare in December 2010 that:¹

No liberation movement will ever be replaced by people coming from nowhere. This applies to ZANU–PF in Zimbabwe, ANC in South Africa, FRELIMO in Mozambique, SWAPO in Namibia, MPLA in Angola and Chama Cha Mapinduzi in Tanzania. We are not just neighbours with South Africa. We share a common liberation history, culture and values. Any of us who are not part of this revolutionary journey should think again because the train will not wait for anyone.

On 15 February 2011, Moyo received Cuban ambassador, Enrique Prieto Lopez, and Namibian ambassador, Panduleni-Kaino Shingenge, at the ZANU–PF headquarters in Harare. Moyo called for the close unity of former liberation movements in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to fend off what he termed attempts by the West to install puppet regimes in the region. He stated that:²

What we want is that the former liberation movements must meet often. That is why we are working to have a summit of liberation movements so that we can thwart efforts by the West to impose puppets on us. Let us strengthen the solidarity of liberation movements.

Addressing Shingenge of Namibia, Moyo thanked Namibians for their continued solidarity with Zimbabweans and stated that ‘our relations with Namibia are not just relations, we are like twins. Your former leader, Dr Sam Nujoma, has always been our father as well.’³

These excerpts from the engagement between the two former liberation movements (ZANU–PF and the South West Africa People’s Organisation or SWAPO) indicate how history and memory of the liberation struggle continue to produce similar political discourses of politics and perceptions and realities of the West. However, Henning Melber, a long-standing SWAPO member who was active during its exile years, has said to have known little about close contacts between SWAPO and ZANU–PF. He noted that during SWAPO debates in exile, ZANU–PF rarely featured. There was also no mention of collaboration with ZANU–PF in the SWAPO ‘liberation gospel’. According to Melber, Mugabe ‘was about the only SADC leader not attending independence ceremonies in Windhoek in 1990.’ He suggested that the close relationship between Mugabe and Nujoma only developed during the mid-1990s in a ‘joint aversion against Nelson Mandela as the newly celebrated leader.’⁴

Melber’s statements point to a possible reinvention of histories and reframing of relationships by former liberation movements to create an impression of historical closeness, regardless of whether none existed in the past. This practice might be useful particularly to embattled parties like ZANU–PF, which, apart from the SADC region, is surviving under a cloud of global isolation. President Mugabe consistently emphasises the strategic importance of history and memory of the liberation struggle not only in his own country but also throughout the region, continent and other parts of the world that experienced colonialism. Mugabe deliberately models himself and his party

(ZANU–PF) as the guardians of the African nationalist revolution, which is being threatened by latter-day imperialists led by the former colonial power Britain in collusion with the US and members of the EU. Phimister and Raftopoulos suggest the real reason for Mugabe's offensive against forces opposed to his rule is his repeated attempts to place the Zimbabwe problem at the centre of a larger, anti-imperialist and Pan African position. Zimbabwe's 'land question has been located within a discourse of legitimate redress for colonial injustice, a language which has resonated on the African continent and within the third world more generally'. Mugabe and ZANU–PF have constructed alternative discourses around the need for renewed liberation struggle solidarity.⁵ This resonates well within the Southern Africa region, which remains dominated by former liberation movements whose ideology is still deeply anti-colonial and anti-imperialist.

These historical factors help to explain the ambiguities of SADC's approach to the resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis. The regional body has been reluctant to use strong language and action to compel Mugabe and ZANU–PF to implement fully the Global Political Agreement (GPA) brokered on 15 September 2008. As a result, various stakeholders aligned to the Movement for Democratic Change–Tsvangirai (MDC–T)⁶ have doubted the sincerity and impartiality of those countries led by former liberation movements towards finding a lasting resolution to the Zimbabwean crisis that is not favourable to ZANU–PF.⁷ Only the leaders of Botswana and Zambia (Ian Khama and the late Levy Mwanawasa), and to some extent Tanzania, have differed openly with Mugabe and condemned ZANU–PF's political conduct.⁸

Botswana has been under the rule of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) since independence. Despite this, Botswana has always projected itself as a bastion of democracy and is recognised internationally as a stable democracy. Power has been transferred peacefully within the BDP from one leader to the next (from Seretse Khama to Ketumile Masire to Festus Mogae to the current leader, Ian Khama). Botswana also maintains strong diplomatic links with the West, particularly the US. These nations condemn ZANU–PF and Mugabe for being undemocratic. Unlike other ruling parties in the region, the BDP has never had strong links with ZANU–PF.⁹

In the case of Zambia, neither the United National Independence Party nor the veteran nationalist, Kenneth Kaunda, had close ties with ZANU–PF. This was despite ZANU–PF once being based in Lusaka before moving to Mozambique. In fact, the assassination of ZANU–PF national chairman, Herbert Chitepo, in 1975 on Zambian soil led Kaunda to detain the entire ZANU–PF executive. He suspected them of having killed one of their own because of ethnic and regional bickering for power within the party.¹⁰ Moreover, Kaunda had supported the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Joshua Nkomo instead of ZANU throughout the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. The democratisation wave of the 1990s that hit Zambia swept into power a labour-backed Movement for Multiparty Democracy under Frederick Chiluba, who had no links whatsoever with the liberation movements.¹¹

Under Julius Nyerere and his party, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), Tanzania had close ties with ZANU–PF. However, after his death, the CCM underwent several leadership changes at the top. The current leader, Jakaya Kikwete, belongs to a different generation from that of Mugabe and models himself as a democrat. Accordingly, he has openly criticised the dictatorship in Harare.

Other key states led by former liberation movements, like Angola, have adopted a regionalised form of ‘quiet diplomacy’. This behaviour by SADC leaders led Nkuubi James, a young Mozambican legal scholar, to describe the SADC as a ‘club of brother presidents’ leading ‘sister movements’ who are prone to supporting rather than condemning each other.¹²

However, regional support for ZANU–PF and Mugabe’s government has not been a foregone conclusion. Since 2000 ZANU–PF has actively sought to endear itself to those former liberation movements with which it had weak links prior to 1980. The People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) is a case in point. Mugabe has successfully reinvented a common history for ZANU–PF and the MPLA. Both movements have been born out of an armed liberation struggle and both have fought ceaselessly to isolate and defeat competing movements that also claimed legitimacy in each country’s national liberation struggle, like the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and ZAPU. They are also both led by presidents with the longest terms of office in the region.

Understanding the complex relations between ZANU–PF and other former liberation movements and how they impinge on inter-state relations is a crucial element in determining potential outcomes. Angola is a key state in the Southern Africa region whose voice on the Zimbabwean crisis might make a difference. Its rich oil and diamond resources are facilitating its ascendancy as a regional hegemon. To date Angola has not played an active role in regional issues. This is partly because of its recent emergence from a devastating and long civil war, which prompted it to adopt an inward-looking policy focused on national reconstruction. Angolan President José Eduardo Dos Santos is not an active foreign policy practitioner like Mugabe or former South African President Thabo Mbeki. However, his voice might help to strengthen the hand of South Africa, which is spearheading mediation and conflict resolution in Zimbabwe. Angola’s importance to the resolution of the Zimbabwe problem is also linked to its succession to the SADC presidency in July 2011. South Africa will chair the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. These two strategic states will be directly involved in regional efforts to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis.

ZANU–PF AND THE FORGING OF LINKAGES WITH OTHER LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

Since its formation in 1963, ZANU worked tirelessly to build closer ties with other liberation movements in the region. Its forging of linkages was compromised by its controversial birth, as a splinter movement from ZAPU, into a hostile international and regional arena in which ZAPU was dominant.¹³ However, ZAPU – as with the African National Congress (ANC), SWAPO, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) and the MPLA – received support and recognition from the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) designated these organisations as ‘authentic’ national liberation movements. They were also linked together through the Afro–Asian People’s Solidarity Organization (AAPSO).¹⁴

By 1968 the ‘authentic’ liberation movements mounted a major diplomatic initiative to prevent splinter groups like ZANU and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), which had

broken off from the ANC in 1959, from gaining international recognition and support. As a result, there were no direct linkages between the MPLA and ZANU throughout the 1970s. The MPLA remained a strong ally of ZAPU throughout the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. After 1975 the MPLA offered military training facilities to ZAPU. A number of cadres from the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), ZAPU's military wing, were trained in Angola.¹⁵

Zambia tolerated rather than wholeheartedly welcomed ZANU, until it shifted its base to Mozambique. Personal ties helped ZANU to gain initial international support from Tanzania and Ghana. ZANU's ties with the two countries 'stemmed from [the] personal frustration of their respective leaders – Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere – with ZAPU President Joshua Nkomo, and the appeal of ZANU's more confrontational approach.'¹⁶ In his autobiography, Nkomo wrote that 'Nyerere had a special problem with me personally. He always sought to dominate the policies and the personalities of the liberation movements to which he gave hospitality.'¹⁷ Nkomo went further to state that Nyerere 'has regularly taken positions opposed to mine, and backed my critics even when that damaged the cause of freedom in my country.'¹⁸ Nkomo blamed Nyerere for playing a role in the split in ZAPU, which led to the formation of ZANU in 1963. Although Nyerere offered bases to many liberation movements from Southern Africa and his country hosted the OAU Liberation Committee, he increasingly favoured ZANU over ZAPU. Therefore, ZANU maintained close ties with Tanzania and Zanzibar. In 2005 Mugabe was invited as the guest of honour for the 41st anniversary celebrations of the Zanzibar Revolution of 1964.¹⁹ Both ZANU–PF and the CCM continue to project themselves as revolutionary political formations – Chama Cha Mapinduzi is a Swahili term for 'revolutionary party'.

Nyerere was further prompted to support ZANU because of his personal relationship with Herbert Chitepo, who worked in Tanzania as the director of public prosecutions. Chitepo became ZANU's national chairman, a position he served in until his assassination in 1975.²⁰ ZANU also had close ties with the Convention People's Party in Ghana. The Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah, had developed personal ties with Mugabe, who lived and taught in Ghana and underwent ideological training at the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute at Winneba before becoming active in Zimbabwean nationalist politics in the 1960s.²¹

At the international level, ZANU exploited the Sino–Soviet crisis to move closer to China, whose search for clients coincided with ZANU's search for patrons.²² China's policy of supporting rival groups that were snubbed by the Soviets suited ZANU. ZANU sent cadres, like Josiah Tongogara and Emmerson Mnangagwa, to undergo training in guerrilla warfare at Nanking Academy in Beijing. Tongogara became the commander-in-chief of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA, the armed wing of ZANU) until his death in 1979 in Mozambique. Mnangagwa is currently the minister of defence in Zimbabwe. China remained a strong ally of ZANU, sending military instructors to train ZANLA at the Itumbi Training Base in Tanzania in the early 1970s.²³ Despite this progress, by 1969 ZANU was still struggling to establish effective links with the older liberation movements, like the ANC, FRELIMO, SWAPO and the MPLA. Movements with Soviet linkages dominated the World Peace Council of 1969 and AAPSO, and received preferential international support.

ZANU made a strategic breakthrough in the early 1970s. It capitalised on the internal crisis in ZAPU and the party's failure to take up the offer of its old ally, FRELIMO, to

establish bases in Mozambique. FRELIMO subsequently offered bases to ZANU, which ZANU accepted.²⁴ To win the favour of its new hosts, ZANU deployed ZANLA to attack Altena Farm in north-eastern Zimbabwe in 1972, thereby demonstrating its legitimacy and commitment to armed liberation. In the same year ZANU issued a radical policy statement, known as *Mwenge II*, where it presented itself as the vanguard of a revolution for socialist transformation. The policy statement also divided the world into a retrogressive capitalist or imperialist camp and a progressive socialist camp. ZANU placed the Soviet Union in the retrogressive imperialist camp and China in the progressive socialist camp.²⁵

ZANU conducted the armed struggle from Mozambique and Mugabe won the support of Samora Machel, with whom he shared common Marxist inclinations. FRELIMO assisted ZANLA in moving arms into Rhodesia, and they became close allies. Up until his death in 1986, Machel remained close friends with Mugabe and the two leaders often visited each other. His death ignited angry demonstrations in Harare, led by students at the University of Zimbabwe who suspected foul play by the South African Apartheid regime.²⁶

From 1974–75, internal troubles developed within ZANU, and Mozambique and Angola achieved independence. This period also coincided with South Africa and Rhodesia's initiation of a policy of *détente* or relaxation, aimed at securing a negotiated settlement in Rhodesia, supported by the principal regional actors. This prompted the independent African states of Southern Africa (Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola and Tanzania) to establish a regional common front on decolonisation, known as the Front Line States (FLS).²⁷ The FLS demanded unity among nationalists engaged in fighting for the liberation of Zimbabwe. It also recognised ZANU as a liberation force on condition that ZANU merge its efforts with the other Zimbabwean liberation movements into one nationalist movement. By 1975 the FLS had forced ZAPU, ZANU and the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) to unite under the ANC, led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa.²⁸

The internal ZANU dissension took the form of a leadership contest. This was ignited by the resolve of detained leaders, like Mugabe, Enos Nkala, Maurice Nyagumbo and Edgar Tekere, to dethrone Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole as ZANU's leader.²⁹ However, their decision was rejected by the FLS and the OAU. Even Machel did not support the idea of a new ZANU leader other than Sithole. While this leadership crisis was raging, ZANU Chairman Chitepo was assassinated by a bomb hidden in his car in Lusaka, Zambia in 1975. This had drastic consequences for ZANU.³⁰ There were suspicions that he was eliminated by his ZANU colleagues owing to tribal and regional competition for power and influence. President Kaunda was particularly incensed by this act. ZANU offices were closed immediately in Zambia and in Tanzania, and Mozambique threatened to follow suit. ZANU had lost the little regional recognition it was beginning to enjoy. It was partly this crisis that led ZANU to co-operate with ZAPU. ZANU accepted the formation of a united military front, known as the Zimbabwe Independence People's Army, which comprised forces from ZIPRA and ZANLA.³¹ It also accepted the formation of the Patriotic Front (PF) as a political alliance with ZAPU.³² Both parties were under pressure from the FLS and the OAU to unite.

The formation of the PF was a significant benefit for ZANU, and the FLS also accepted Mugabe as the leader of ZANU. Upon official assumption of ZANU's leadership in 1977 at a party conference held at Chimoio in Mozambique, Mugabe focused his attention on the internal consolidation of ZANU. He also embarked on several outreach visits to

generate international support for his party. Between 1978 and 1979, he visited Ethiopia, Syria, Pakistan, China, Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba, Gabon, Yugoslavia and Sudan.³³ At the Lancaster House Conference in London, where Zimbabwe's decolonisation was negotiated, ZANU remained with ZAPU as part of the PF throughout the negotiations, and in the process gained acceptance by ZAPU's allies.³⁴ By the time Zimbabwe achieved independence in 1980, ZANU was accepted fully as a legitimate liberation movement by the international community.

After 1980 Harare became a hive of diplomatic activity, as ZANU–PF expanded and intensified its search for allies. However, these initiatives were guided by historical ties and animosities that were prevalent during the liberation struggle.³⁵ At the global level the Soviet Union, which had sponsored ZAPU throughout the liberation struggle, was the first country affected. The pre-1980 hostilities between ZANU–PF and the Patriotic Front–Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF–ZAPU) surfaced barely two years after the formation of the Government of National Unity in 1980. ZANU–PF refused to permit the Soviet Union to open an embassy in Harare for three years after independence because it suspected the Soviets of sponsoring PF–ZAPU to destabilise Zimbabwe. It watched with some concern how the Soviets had supported the MPLA to emerge victorious as the new government in Luanda through a military takeover. ZANU–PF endeared itself to the US, which emerged as Zimbabwe's largest single donor in the 1980s. This was despite ZANU–PF's continued use of Marxist–Leninist rhetoric.³⁶

Although ZANU–PF recognised the need to integrate and align itself with the region, it remained suspicious of movements, like the ANC and MPLA, that had close ties with PF–ZAPU. Accordingly, it prioritised those relationships developed prior to independence with Tanzania and Mozambique. Zimbabwe and Tanzania sent joint troops to defend central Mozambique, particularly the Beira Corridor, from attacks against the rebel movement (the Mozambique National Resistance Movement or RENAMO) that was sponsored by Apartheid South Africa.³⁷ ZANU–PF also focused on isolating PF–ZAPU, which had established itself as a major opposition party to ZANU–PF. It sent representatives and former ZANLA members as military attachés to countries like Angola,³⁸ at the expense of former ZIPRA members serving in the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), some of whom were trained in Angola.³⁹

ZANU–PF preferred to downplay relations with the ANC because of its alliance with ZAPU dating back to the late 1960s. The ANC, ZIPRA and Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK, the military wing of the ANC) had staged combined operations in Rhodesia in such places as Wankie (now Hwange National Park), Sipolilo and Mana Pools.⁴⁰ Instead, ZANU claimed to have formed an alliance with the PAC. The ANC and ZAPU stuck together and both established headquarters in Lusaka. ZIPRA and MK cadres shared a common military tradition, both having undergone military training in Moscow. There were also close linguistic affinities between the largely Ndebele-speaking ZIPRA and the largely Zulu and Xhosa-speaking MK cadres, owing to Nguni historical connections.⁴¹ It seems there was a strong belief within the ANC until the March 1980 elections that ZAPU was going to win elections and form a government in Harare. Throughout the liberation struggle, ZANU advances and overtures to the ANC were roundly rejected. This included the 1977 ZANU proposal for military co-operation which the ANC rejected on the grounds that 'we can't be on both sides' – meaning on both ZAPU and ZANU sides.⁴²

When ZANU–PF won elections in 1980 ahead of PF–ZAPU, Gevisser mentions in his biography of Thabo Mbeki that within the ANC he was the only top ranking official who was not surprised. Mbeki had studied the ethnic demographics and realised that ZANU–PF’s Shona-speaking base far outnumbered the Ndebele-speaking community, among which PF–ZAPU was popular. According to Gevisser, Mbeki had begun to push for rapprochement with ZANU–PF.⁴³ Soon after 1980, the task of befriending ZANU–PF fell on Mbeki. Mbeki’s liaison person in ZANU–PF was Emmerson Mnangagwa, who had spent many years in a Rhodesian jail with MK operatives and had lived in Zambia where he had established close links with the ANC.⁴⁴ However, the confrontations between PF–ZAPU and ZANU–PF during the 1980s complicated the relations that were being built by Mbeki and Mnangagwa. The ANC was still involved with PF–ZAPU when the ZANU–PF government rounded up ex-ZIPRA commanders alongside MK cadres, imprisoning and torturing them, and destroying the ANC’s military infrastructure in one fell swoop.⁴⁵ It was only after 1987 when PF–ZAPU joined ZANU–PF under the Unity Accord that relations with the ANC improved.⁴⁶

Martin Rupiah, a Zimbabwean security studies expert, noted that ZANU–PF opened lines of communication with both the MPLA and the ANC after Zimbabwe’s independence. The intention was to earn the title for ZANU–PF of being the sole authentic liberation movement that fought for Zimbabwe’s liberation. The engagement was meant to isolate PF–ZAPU from its former allies.⁴⁷

Zimbabwe began to actively support forces like the MPLA, in its struggle against UNITA, and the ANC, which was fighting for self-determination and a non-racial democratic society in South Africa. In an interview with Gevisser, Mbeki mentioned that in the late 1980s the ZANU–PF government offered the ANC one of the most comprehensive deals compared with any other African country at that time in support of its struggle. The offer included allowing MK to move weapons and cadres through Zimbabwe; issuing Zimbabwean identity documents to ANC cadres; support by the Zimbabwean military forces; and opening an ANC office in Harare that would mask its secret military operations through above-the-ground diplomatic work.⁴⁸

In a recent study on Zimbabwe, Blessings-Miles Tendi, a Zimbabwean academic, revealed that the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Emeka Anyaoku, had brokered a secret agreement in the 1990s between the ZANU–PF government and the ANC. This related to Zimbabwe’s sacrifice of its core plan of radical land reform for the sake of South Africa’s struggle for freedom. ZANU–PF is said to have shelved its radical plans for land reform in the 1990s so as not to disturb the negotiations that were under way in South Africa.⁴⁹ This agreement is said to have influenced how South Africa has responded to the Zimbabwean crisis. Tendi believes it explains why the ANC has not openly criticised the controversial fast-track land reform, which has taken place in Zimbabwe since 2000.⁵⁰

That Mbeki was tasked to lead the SADC mediation in March 2007, and how he handled this, should be assessed partly against the background of his earlier task of opening linkages between the exiled ANC and ZANU–PF in the 1980s, his ideological inclinations and his political vision as a leader. Daryl Glaser described Mbeki as ‘more than one man: charmer of whites and race-baiter, technocrat and nationalist romantic, free-market convert and developmentalist-statist, globaliser and third-worldist, champion of the black bourgeoisie and bearer-of-warnings about society’s descent into crass materialism.’⁵¹ With specific reference to his approach to the Zimbabwean crisis, Mbeki

had become associated with the policy of 'quiet diplomacy'. With regard to his mediation role, the MDC-T has accused him of being biased towards the ZANU-PF position. This can partly be explained by the ties Mbeki has created with ZANU-PF since the 1980s; his ideological sympathies with former liberation movements; his knowledge of the complexity of the Zimbabwean situation; and his aim to reframe and position South Africa as a leader of the African continent.⁵²

Four issues emerge from this analysis on the factors that influenced Mbeki's approach to and mediation of the Zimbabwean crisis. Firstly, Mbeki was determined to avoid the pitfalls of unilateralism that South Africa had encountered in its dealings with Nigeria, Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).⁵³ Secondly, Mbeki wished to avoid repeating the bullying strategy that was associated with the Apartheid regime in the SADC region. Thirdly, Mbeki consistently avoided being seen in Harare as pushing a Western agenda of regime change.⁵⁴ Finally, Mbeki had his own ambitions of positioning South Africa as a concerned African state that was taking a leading role in stabilising the continent politically and economically, fighting for a dignified space for Africa within the global order and projecting the philosophy of 'African renaissance'.⁵⁵ These considerations formed the basis for Mbeki's policy of quiet diplomacy on Zimbabwe, which emphasised multilateralism as opposed to unilateralism as core approaches.

A comparison of ZANU-PF's engagement with Angola is interesting, particularly given the contemporary context. Dos Santos and Mugabe have constructed a strong nationalist-military alliance with a civilian façade. The difference, however, is that although the military sector plays a critical political role in Angola, its subordination to civilian rule has not been questioned. Nevertheless, as in Zimbabwe, the Angolan military has also infiltrated the national economy. Recently, veteran Angolan journalist, Rafael Marques de Morais, revealed how Angolan military generals have made inroads into the economy, including the Angolan oil company, Sonangol, and political party hierarchy.⁵⁶

Both ZANU-PF and the MPLA have maintained aspects of liberation-war, quasi-military qualities including maintaining secret operations and linkages that are not open to public scrutiny. In Zimbabwe, there is increasing evidence of the government being driven by the secretive Joint Operations Command (JOC) that is not clearly subordinate to civilian control. The JOC is made up of the heads of military, police, Central Intelligence Organisation and prison services, commonly labelled as securocrats who are opposed to current transitional politics in Zimbabwe. The members of the JOC dominate most echelons of the national economy. These include owning vast tracts of land and actively participating in the illegal selling of recently discovered diamonds at Chiadzwa near the eastern border of Zimbabwe.⁵⁷

Since 1975 the MPLA premised its foreign policy on 'enfeeblement, if not destruction, of its domestic security threat'.⁵⁸ It sought to isolate, destroy or swallow UNITA in the same way that ZANU-PF sought to do over the next decade with PF-ZAPU. Angola's penchant to destroy internal political opponents coincided with Mugabe's desire to do the same in Zimbabwe, as well as his consideration of establishing a one-party state in the 1980s.

Both Dos Santos and UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, attended the Gbadolite Special Summit of African Heads of States, convened by Mobutu Sese Seko on 22 June 1989 in Zaire.⁵⁹ This was the first initiative including both Angolan protagonists and moulded along the philosophy of 'African solutions to African problems'. By the time of the Harare

Summit on 22 August 1989, however, Mugabe had made it clear that he sided with the MPLA against UNITA in the Angolan conflict. Savimbi was not invited to participate, mainly because of Mugabe's open hostility towards UNITA. Mugabe was not in a position or willing to give Savimbi 'the benefit of the doubt as Mobutu had [done]'.⁶⁰ The outcome of the Harare Summit was inevitably a diplomatic triumph for the MPLA, as it suggested voluntary exile for Savimbi and the integration of UNITA into existing MPLA institutions. When Savimbi rejected the integration plan, Mugabe continued to denounce him as an international terrorist. By 1999 the MPLA had succeeded in isolating UNITA and had developed close contacts with Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, the DRC and Congo-Brazzaville. Only the military defeat of UNITA remained.

The build-up of mutual trust between Angola and Zimbabwe culminated in their collaborative intervention in the DRC in 1998, alongside Namibia, at the invitation of Laurent Kabila who had ousted Mobutu from power. Zimbabwe led the initiative as chair of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.⁶¹ Zimbabwe pushed for a defence pact with Angola, the DRC and Namibia, which South Africa was reluctant to endorse. Couched in language that emphasised the preservation of the sovereignty of the DRC and SADC's commitment to the promotion of peace and stability in the region, Zimbabwe and Angola's joint collaboration in the DRC with Namibia was prompted by various strategic interests.⁶² To the Angolans, the ascendancy of Kabila in Kinshasa provided a friendly ally who opposed UNITA. This was in contrast to Mobutu, who provided a safe haven for the Front for the National Liberation of Angola (led by Holden Roberto) and UNITA. Zimbabwe's interests were driven partly by the need to ensure a consistent supply of power from the Inga Dam and access to strategic resources. Following Zimbabwe and Angola's collaborative intervention in the DRC, ZANU-PF intensified its support of the MPLA against UNITA right up to Savimbi's death in 2002.

Despite this close, collaborative relationship between both governments, Angola has not clearly expressed its foreign policy towards Zimbabwe, with the exception of solidarity statements whenever MPLA officials have visited Harare. This view was confirmed in an interview with Gordon Moyo, the former Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office in Harare. Moyo stated that Angola has not only avoided openly expressing its foreign policy towards Zimbabwe, but also its position on the Zimbabwean crisis.⁶³

MAKING SENSE OF SADC MEDIATION AND THE MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE'S PREDICAMENT

This background history of pre and post-independence linkages among former liberation movements and concomitant personal ties helps to explain SADC's treatment of Mugabe and ZANU-PF with kid gloves. It also helps to explain why the MDC-T is experiencing problems in its drive to garner political support from the region.

Firstly, SADC is a regional security complex consisting of 14 member states whose national security concerns cannot realistically be considered separately. Since 1980 Zimbabwe has been a key military player in Southern Africa.⁶⁴ Zimbabwe intervened in Mozambique on the side of the FRELIMO government in the 1980s. It actively participated in UN peacekeeping operations in Angola in the late 1980s, including assuming the position of UN force commander. Zimbabwe played an active role in the mediation process

in Mozambique and Angola from 1989–1991. It intervened in the DRC in 1998, assuming the overall command of a combined force of Zimbabweans, Angolans and Namibians.⁶⁵ Over the years Mugabe created a name for himself in the SADC region as a statesman and committed revolutionary who spoke effectively on African issues. Through these activities, coupled with Mugabe's consistent anti-imperialism and anti-colonial speeches, Zimbabwe won many supporters in the region, continent and in the broader South.⁶⁶ Angola, Mozambique, the DRC and even South Africa, in one way or another, are indebted to Zimbabwe. This makes it hard for these countries to muster the courage to openly criticise Mugabe and ZANU–PF.

Secondly, SADC's reluctance to apply direct and open pressure on Mugabe to fully implement the GPA is because Mugabe and his associates have been so successful in projecting themselves as victims of an imperialist onslaught. Only smaller powers like Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania have raised concerns about ZANU–PF and Mugabe's handling of the results of the 2008 presidential polls. By using the term 'imperialist sanctions', Mugabe has sought to invoke sympathy from SADC's leaders for his cause. He has also used the imposition of sanctions by the EU and the US to explain the causes of the economic meltdown that engulfed Zimbabwe after 2000, and to justify his reluctance to implement the GPA. This strategy has had some regional success. Unanimity has emerged in SADC calling for the unconditional removal of 'sanctions' imposed on Mugabe and his close political associates. As the key SADC negotiator for Zimbabwe, South African President Jacob Zuma has taken the lead in trying to convince Britain, the EU and the US to remove restrictive measures and smart sanctions imposed on those accused of committing various human rights abuses.⁶⁷ Even Khama of Botswana called for the removal of sanctions during his 2010 state visit to South Africa. ZANU–PF has made the removal of sanctions a condition to implement the GPA in full.⁶⁸

Thirdly, there seems to be a general fear among governments controlled by the former liberation movements that allowing the MDC–T to take power would set an uncomfortable precedent, which might be repeated in their own countries. This is partly a result of the April 2010 visit to Zimbabwe by Julius Malema, president of the ANC Youth League. He openly indulged and embraced ZANU–PF as a former ally in the struggles against colonialism and Apartheid. In contrast, Malema snubbed the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations as 'popcorn' and 'Mickey Mouse' movements without liberation war credentials, whose existence served to reverse the achievements made by former liberation movement governments. Malema also called for former liberation movements in the region to close ranks and work together to safeguard the nationalist liberation tradition that is being threatened by new formations, like the MDC. To some extent, Malema's utterances and behaviour during his visit confirmed opposition and civil society fears that ZANU–PF enjoyed the support of the SADC region based on its history as a liberation movement.⁶⁹ However, the subsequent reprimand of Malema, and the discontent his statements generated within some quarters of the ANC, indicated a lack of consensus regarding the relationship with ZANU–PF. Yet his call for former liberation movements to close ranks was in line with the ANC's Polokwane conference resolutions in 2007, which emphasised strengthening linkages between the ANC and other former liberation movements.⁷⁰ The drive by former liberation movements to move closer to each other was formalised by their meeting in Tanzania in May 2010. The parties shared

experiences and notes on issues of governance, development, as well as strategies and tactics of dealing with new threats of imperialism.⁷¹

However, there is more to the MDC's regional isolation than the ideological disjunctures and differences with the region's former liberation movements. The emergence of the MDC as a formidable political opponent to ZANU–PF, and of Tsvangirai as a strong challenger to Mugabe's leadership, prompted ZANU–PF's strategy to strengthen its ties with regional powers. It sought to do this particularly with those countries led by former liberation movements. The MDC in turn only succeeded in cultivating good relations with the West and the US. Although it managed to isolate ZANU–PF and Mugabe successfully from the West since 2000, it also strengthened ZANU–PF's hand in portraying the MDC as a Trojan Horse of Western imperialism in SADC.

The botched elections of March and June 2008 brought home forcefully the importance of regional alliances and support, when the MDC realised the limitations of its Western allies. The West could not intervene to help the MDC translate electoral victory into state power. This realisation also explains why the MDC–T has made such deliberate efforts to counter ZANU–PF propaganda through engagement of the region. After the elections, Tsvangirai visited numerous African capitals, including Pretoria, Maputo, Kinshasa, Gaborone, Tripoli and Luanda, to explain the MDC's position. By October 2009, the MDC–T and ZANU–PF had become locked in a serious competition to win the support of the region.

Tsvangirai's visit to Angola to meet the Angolan president prompted ZANU–PF to send the Minister of Defence and ZANU–PF stalwart Mnangagwa to Luanda in November 2009. This signalled the importance of Angola's support to ZANU–PF. This is in sharp contrast with its engagement of lesser players in SADC. ZANU–PF seemed unconcerned when Tsvangirai took refuge in Botswana soon after the March 2008 elections.

ZANU–PF accepted the GPA merely as an opportunity to gain time to reconfigure and renegotiate the terms of its existence with the opposition, civil society and the international community after having lost the elections and refusing to leave power. It is part of a strategy to transcend an orchestrated political and economic crisis.⁷² The MDC formations accepted the GPA because they had failed to translate electoral victory into state power, the fear of ongoing repression and the exhaustion of their supporters, and the obvious limits of Western support in assisting the MDC–T to ascend to power. The MDC–T also realised the importance of engaging the SADC region too late.⁷³ SADC sought to secure participation through the GPA from both MDC formations and ZANU–PF in a unity government, without giving in to the forces of 'regime change'.⁷⁴ It is clear from one of the letters written by Mbeki to the Harare disputants (Mugabe, Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara, the leader of the breakaway MDC faction, MDC–M) that the regional concern was about the restoration of stability rather than the introduction of democracy and 'regime change'.⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

A post-liberation political formation like the MDC–T, with its roots in civil society rather than in the liberation struggle, has had to contend with resilient pre and post-liberation subtexts of histories, memories and reconstruction of myths of solidarity within Southern

Africa's national-liberation movements. These have favoured ZANU–PF as one of their own. The region's response is understandable, given that former liberation movements are still in power in strategic states of Angola, South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania and Namibia. Such movements have consistently drawn legitimacy from their liberation war credentials, with competitive elections being reduced to mere rituals and myths of legitimation. In the region, ZANU–PF was the first national liberation movement whose hold on state power was challenged significantly by a new political formation. The developments of the last 10 years have demonstrated the closing of ranks against any election result that leads to a radical power change from a former liberation movement to a political formation without liberation war credentials.

At another level, the Zimbabwean crisis has created a unique challenge to SADC leaders used to dealing with one protagonist who has articulated a similar discourse of liberation and national sovereignty. In 2008 SADC leaders found themselves confronted for the first time by a situation where a former liberation movement lost an election to a post-liberation political opposition without roots in the liberation tradition. SADC states are taking time to adjust to these new realities, as they too have not made the transition fully from national liberation movements to political parties. Ironically, instead of the SADC region preparing itself to accommodate new post-liberation movements like the MDC, key former liberation movements in power are reinventing their pre-liberation solidarities to fend off new political formations.

Thus, the MDC is a victim of this liberation war conservatism, which is likely to continue to be a feature of the Southern African political landscape at least for the next decade. This will be fuelled by the still-powerful rallying cry on the continent of anti-imperialism. As the generation who participated in the liberation wars starts to disappear, the mythmaking of solidarity and the common front continues to colour the perspectives of some of the younger generations, although often without the idealism that spawned the national liberation movement.

The MDC, through the manner of its engagement early in its life, gave impetus to Mugabe's ability to brand its politics imperialist and an instrument of the West. Relying on players outside the SADC region has proven costly for the MDC, in a region that is still saturated with anti-colonial and anti-imperialist memories, and where the land question in countries like Namibia and South Africa is still an emotive issue that needs a resolution. Belatedly the MDC recognised the importance of courting the ruling liberation movements, although in its defence these movements were not welcoming of any overtures.

The likelihood of a resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis in the longer term remains to be seen. On the surface, Mugabe's pan-Africanist message and anti-imperialist framing of the crisis has won the support of the SADC region. Yet SADC states do not have a common policy towards Zimbabwe. Undoubtedly, countries like Botswana and South Africa are concerned about the possibility of a total economic and political implosion in Zimbabwe, not least because of the domestic fallout of a flood of Zimbabwean refugees pouring over the border. Zambia, Kenya and, to some extent, Tanzania have indicated they may accommodate the MDC–T as a legitimate political formation that must be allowed to assume power if it wins elections.

SADC states would be well served to move beyond the self-imposed solidarity ties of former liberation movements. This is especially as the latter, to a certain extent, points to

a false sharing of experiences, which are located in key individuals rather than in a broad-based sharing of ideals, principles and vision for the region. This rather shallow premise for co-operation between states creates a false sense of security. As the recent events in North Africa have shown, there is no guarantee that a continuation of the current course will ensure the stability of the region indefinitely. The pursuit of stability above all else also has its price. Besides the need for a greater acceptance of the value of democracy, good governance, pluralism, human rights, social peace and human security as fundamental for the future stability of the region, individual states need to clearly assess the costs to the national interest of the continuation of the impasse in Zimbabwe. They should consider the political, economic, social and security costs of a continued diversion of national and regional resources to the Zimbabwean case. They should also reflect on the lost economic opportunities (both regional and national) as a result of the Zimbabwean crisis.

The coincidence of the leadership of the SADC troika and the SADC presidency by South Africa and Angola respectively, provides a unique opportunity for a stronger regional voice on Zimbabwe. However, the question remains whether the region is ready to grasp the Zimbabwean nettle.

ENDNOTES

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- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 E-mail communication regarding SWAPO-ZANU-PF relations, Executive Director Henning Melber, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, and research associate, Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, 4 February 2011.
- 5 Phimister I & B Raftopoulos, 'Mugabe, Mbeki and the politics of anti-imperialism', *Review of African Political Economy*, 31, 101, 2004, pp. 385-401.
- 6 The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was formed in 1999. In 2005 it split into two political formations over the decision to participate in senatorial elections and other issues, which ranged from ethnicity, power struggles and a lack of respect for party constitution. Since that time, the party led by Morgan Tsvangirai decided to use the name MDC-T (Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai) and the other group became identified as MDC-M (Movement for Democratic Change-Mutambara).
- 7 This suspicion was expressed by an academic in the Department of Politics and Administration at the University of Zimbabwe during my fieldwork visit. The academic emphasised the continuation of liberation war solidarities into the present and doubted whether the MDC's regional offensive to win over the region could work.
- 8 Botswana and Zambia's ruling parties have no deep history of engagement with armed liberation struggles, although both countries supported African liberation movements and offered bases for refugees during the liberation struggle. This might explain why Ian Khama and Levy Mwanawasa were able to speak openly against Mugabe and his ruling party.

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- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 Personal interview, colonel in the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 13 March 2010.
- 16 Reed WC, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- 17 Nkomo J, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life*. London: Methuen, 1984, p. 110.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 Cameron G & SR Dorman, 'Problems of nationalism and democracy in Zimbabwe and Tanzania', p. 1, <http://www.polis.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/events/democratization-2009/cameron-dorman.pdf>.
- 20 Republic of Zambia, *Special International Commission on the Assassination of Herbert Wiltshire Chitepo*, government report. Lusaka: Government of Zambia, 1976. See, also Martin D & P Johnson, *The Chitepo Assassination*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985.
- 21 Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
- 22 Reed, *op. cit.*, p. 40. See, also Ndlovu-Gatsheni SJ, *Do 'Zimbabweans' Exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity Formation and Crisis in a Postcolonial State*. Oxford & Bern: Peter Lang, 2009, pp. 315–317.
- 23 Martin D & P Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981, p. 84.
- 24 When ZANU initially approached FRELIMO to request access to its territory, FRELIMO replied that it remained allied with ZAPU and offered to co-operate with it rather than ZANU. However, by the early 1970s, ZAPU was suffering a second major split that affected its external wing in Zambia. James Chikerema and George Nyandoro as leaders of ZAPU were fighting with Jason Ziyapapa Moyo, George Silundika and Edward Ndlovu. The in-fighting was so terrible that it led to Chikerema forming a splinter political formation, known as FROLIZI.
- 25 Nyangoni W & G Nyandoro, *Zimbabwe Independence Movements: Selected Documents*. London: Rex Collings, 1979.
- 26 Samora Machel was killed in a suspicious aeroplane crash in 1986. South Africa's Apartheid government was suspected of being responsible for luring the plane with a false beacon into a hillside as it was making its way to Maputo. On hearing the news of Samora Machel's death, University of Zimbabwe students organised a demonstration where they attacked white motorists on their way to the city of Harare.
- 27 Thompson CB, *Challenge to Imperialism: The Front Line States in the Liberation of Zimbabwe*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1986, p. 14.
- 28 The mid-1970s saw the emergence of two new nationalist political formations that claimed to stand for unity, unlike ZAPU and ZANU that had divided people fighting for the independence of Zimbabwe. The two new movements were FROLIZI, which was dominated by such

- personalities as James Chikerema from ZAPU and Nathan Shamuyarira from ZANU, and the ANC, which had the blessings of the FLS and the OAU and was led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa.
- 29 Since the formation of ZANU in 1963 and its inaugural congress held in Gweru in 1964, there was a leadership contest between Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe. When Sithole was elected president of ZANU in 1964, some delegates had put forward Mugabe's name but Mugabe withdrew from the contest. While Sithole, Mugabe, Enos Nkala, Edgar Tekere and Maurice Nyagumbo were in detention in Salisbury prison, the leadership issue emerged again. Sithole was accused, just like Joshua Nkomo before him, of not providing decisive leadership and a lack of commitment to the armed liberation struggle. Sithole was said to have suggested that the ZANU detainees renounce the armed struggle so as to win release from detention. Sithole made this suggestion as he was facing a possible death sentence.
- 30 The top leadership of ZANU was accused of having taken part in the assassination the party's national chairman due to tribal bickering. Chitepo belonged to the Manyika tribe that was eliminated by the Karanga tribe. See Sithole M, *Zimbabwe: Struggles Within the Struggle*, 2nd edition. Harare: Rujeko, 1999.
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- 33 Reed WC, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–7.
- 34 Stedman S, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–113.
- 35 Reed WC, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- 36 Reed WC, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- 37 The Beira Corridor was a strategic oil route to Zimbabwe. See Vines A, *Renamo: Terrorism in Mozambique*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1991.
- 38 Personal interview, colonel in the ZNA, *op. cit.*
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 Between 1967 and 1968, ZAPU in alliance with the ANC sent 150 heavily armed troops into the Wankie Game Reserve and into Sipolilo and Mana Pools in Rhodesia.
- 41 Gevisser M, *Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred*. Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2007, pp. 431–446.
- 42 Gevisser M, *op. cit.*, p. 434.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 434.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 435.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 437.
- 46 Ellis S & T Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid: The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press and James Currey, 1992.
- 47 Interview with retired Lieutenant Colonel Martin Rupiah, Munhumutapa Government Buildings, Harare, Zimbabwe, 11 March 2010. Rupiah's analysis of the development of ZANU–PF's relations with the ANC and MPLA was echoed by a former ZIPRA combatant who is currently serving as a colonel in the ZNA. According to him, ZANU–PF treaded carefully in its relations with national liberation movements that had previously supported ZAPU and ZIPRA during the liberation struggle. Personal interview, colonel in the ZNA, *op. cit.*
- 48 Gevisser M, *op. cit.*, p. 436.

- 49 Tendi BM, *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Politics, Intellectuals and Media*. Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 2010, pp. 73–93.
- 50 *Ibid.*, pp. 84–86.
- 51 Glaser D, 'Mbeki and his legacy: A critical introduction', in Glaser D (ed.), *Mbeki and After: Reflections on the Legacy of Thabo Mbeki*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010, p. 4.
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- 67 The so-called 'imperialist sanctions' have divided the inclusive government in Harare, with ZANU–PF accusing the MDC–T of having invited the sanctions; they also seem to have united the SADC region of the need to remove these sanctions.

- 68 For instance, the swearing in of governors has been linked to sanctions removal by ZANU-PF. ZANU-PF blames the MDC for inviting sanctions. The MDC in turn argues that ZANU-PF invited sanctions on itself through its violation of human rights.
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- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 708.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 157.
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