

SACRIFICING DEMOCRATIZATION FOR THE SAKE OF NEPAD. SOUTH AFRICA'S RELATION WITH ZIMBABWE IN THE EARLY 2000'S*

Dan Petrica**

Abstract: *This article delves upon Zimbabwe's 2002 suspension from the Commonwealth of Nations and the relentless efforts of South Africa and other peers to get that suspension lifted, in the context of continuous rebuttals from states such as the UK and Australia. The research piece touches primarily upon the underlying motives for the said suspension, as well as the reasoning behind the bandwagoning of nations on the ongoing issues plaguing Zimbabwe in the early 2000s. Furthermore, it tangentially covers themes such as: the balance within the Commonwealth, global North versus South interpretations of democracy – and the realities they produce, and the rationale of two-sided post-colonial narratives.*

Keywords: international relations, international organizations, (post)colonialism, democracy, diplomacy, foreign policy;

Zimbabwe's initial suspension

In 2002, Zimbabwe was suspended from the Commonwealth, after it had been the black sheep of the organization for some time. Talks surrounding Robert Mugabe's regime and the dire situation of his country led to many divisive discussions amongst the Commonwealth's members. Standing accused of breaching the Harare Declaration of 1991, a document that underlines the basic principles of the Commonwealth, Zimbabwe's membership in the latter body was suspended. The list of accusations was lengthy for Mugabe's government, as issues were raised, which range from human rights abuses, to election rigging, and undermining one's own economy¹. The UK, Australia and New Zealand had pushed earlier for punitive action against Zimbabwe, which was rejected at the 2002 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). In March 2002, the CHOGM Chair-in-Office, alongside the former and

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** PhD. Asistant Professor, Agora University Oradea; e-mail: dan.petrica@univagora.ro

¹John Hatchard, Muna Ndulo and Peter Slinn, *Comparative Constitutionalism and Good Governance in the Commonwealth: an Eastern and Southern African Perspective*, London, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 11.

„Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca. Series Historica”, LIX, 2020, Supliment, 2, *Lucrările conferinței internaționale online „ROMANIA-ITALIA-EUROPA. Evoluții istorice - Dinamici culturale - Relații internaționale”*, 16-18 septembrie 2020, p. 585-597.

future Chairs (The Troika)² decided that Zimbabwe would be suspended from the Commonwealth, following a Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group³, which emphasized a problem that had developed in Zimbabwe; namely the government-instigated violence surrounding recent elections. The Report, which was later quoted by the Chair of the Troika stated that: “*the presidential election was marred by a high level of politically motivated violence*”⁴ and that “*the conditions in Zimbabwe did not adequately allowed for a free expression of will by the electors*”⁵. South Africa’s own observation missions, however⁶, reported that the elections had been legitimate⁷, granted the opposition parties participated in the election⁸. We argue that despite being allowed to formally participate in elections, opposition parties need not be harassed by the party in power, not have their votes stolen and their members and voters impeded from casting their ballot. Everything less is just a mimicry of democracy and far from a free and legitimate electoral process. Given South Africa had constantly minimized the amplitude of Zimbabwe’s problems, especially when presenting the situation to the international community, any admission that it had been wrong up to that point would have posed a series of questions for the credibility of the of the regime in Pretoria, concomitantly constituting an insufficient excuse for past misinformation. Such a concession would have called for South Africa’s immediate action and for a reversal of foreign policy towards Zimbabwe, one which Mbeki was not willing to take into consideration. Thus, we argue that the results presented by both South Africa’s observer missions were in harmony with the government’s foreign policy goals, not with the facts and political behaviours of The Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front’s (ZANU-PF) members and clientele during the 2002 elections.

Bargain, bark, belittle of no avail

² The Troika was composed of Thabo Mbeki – President of South Africa, whom had ended his chairmanship earlier that month, John Howard – Prime Minister of Australia – scheduled to hold office until December the following year, and Olusegun Obasanjo, the President of Nigeria.

³ See Commonwealth Secretariat, *Zimbabwe Presidential elections, 9-12 March 2002: The Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ The government in Pretoria sent 50 people, representing different areas (government, NGOs unions and businesses), to gather and compile data. A parliamentary observation mission, comprised of 20 persons was also on the ground.

⁷ South African Observer Mission, "Interim statement by the South African Observer Mission on the Zimbabwean presidential elections", *Department of Foreign Affairs*, 2002, Available at: zimbabwe.ms.dk/election02/interim.htm, Accessed on: 25 August 2020.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

While all other Commonwealth suspensions had been indefinite up to that point, in Zimbabwe's case, a period of one year was clearly stipulated. This one-year term led Zimbabwean officials to believe that the suspension would automatically be lifted on 19 March 2003. However, procedurally, the suspension needed to be lifted by the same body that imposed it, namely the Troika, as Australia's Prime Minister had announced from the get-go⁹. Nearing the Spring of 2003, the Troika couldn't come to a unanimous decision, with Australia favouring a prolonged suspension and South Africa and Nigeria both siding to end it. In a letter to Howard, Obasanjo wrote: "*I believe that the time is now auspicious to lift the sanctions on Zimbabwe with regard to her suspension from the Commonwealth Councils*"¹⁰, adding that "*President Thabo Mbeki shares the same view*"¹¹. The letter contained several clearly biased paragraphs, supporting Mugabe's actions or, circumstantially, lack thereof: it implied that the land reform was a responsible decision at the time, that Zimbabwe had put together a Z\$4-billion package to compensate the dispossessed commercial farmers, that these farmers had been in an active dialogue with the government, and that dispossessed land owners had means of attacking the malpractices, if they deemed fit to do so¹². In reality, the only known sum allocated for compensation at the time amounted to a mere 0.25% of what Obasanjo claimed; the farmers' outcry was not taken into consideration, and the latter had no formal way of denouncing malpractices and seeing those responsible brought to justice. The letter also claimed that the government was pushing the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) as a means of ensuring prosecutions succeed¹³, despite all the international outrage surrounding the new draconian piece of legislation, which effectively annulled free press in Zimbabwe. When discussing the state-backed violence against the opposing party's supporters, Obasanjo falsely asserted that the police 'apologized' for their cruelty and that punishment for those involved was on its way¹⁴. Obasanjo's motives, of course, went beyond the allegiance to an African brother, which was fighting off the colonial North. 2003 came with very troubled elections in Nigeria, where Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party won a landslide victory, marked by a near-perfect turnout in places where international observers had reported low numbers of voters¹⁵.

⁹ See Commonwealth, *Meeting of Commonwealth Chair persons' Committee on Zimbabwe*, Press release, 19 March 2002, No. 02/26, para. 8.

¹⁰ See Olusegun Obasanjo, *Letter to John Howard*, 12 February 2002, Available at: <https://sarpn.org/documents/d0000194/index.php>, Accessed on: 11 September 2020.

¹¹ *Ibidem.*

¹² *Ibidem.*

¹³ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

Despite efforts from both Mbeki and Obasanjo, John Howard could not be persuaded. As a result, with almost a month to spare, the Prime Minister of Australia and the Secretary General of the Commonwealth declared that the suspension imposed on Zimbabwe would not be lifted, at least not prior to the next CHOGM, later that year, when Nigeria was supposed to obtain chairmanship. The decision, which had been widely known beforehand, sparked an attack on John Howard from South Africa's acting Foreign Affairs Director General, Abdul Minty, during a Commonwealth briefing in February 2003. Minty accused the Australian Prime Minister of subjectivity when it comes to Zimbabwe and of breaching confidentiality with regards to telephone calls he had received from both Mbeki and Obasanjo¹⁶. In the same letter from February, Obasanjo had argued that "*this unfortunate decision [to maintain sanctions] would seem ... to compromise Australia's position as an honest broker in the Zimbabwean crisis*"¹⁷. South Africa's Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma later admitted that South Africa shares the Nigerian President's perspective on the said point. This marked a clear sign that South Africa was with Zimbabwe all the way, despite the latter had not fulfilled any of the prerequisite conditions for Commonwealth's passive sanction to be lifted. We consider that South Africa was not necessarily pushing for an end to sanctions at the time, rather it was trying to keep the Commonwealth from imposing further punitive measures on its neighbour. The government in Pretoria was using 'extremity bargaining' to meet its counterparts somewhere in the middle with regards to requests. In addition, African leaders had misunderstood Australia's role in the situation, for it was never to take on the role of the honest broker, rather it was to act against any development that would not meet Commonwealth norms and to push Zimbabwe's government to refrain from any anti-democratic practices it had triggered and supported. Siding with Zimbabwe and expressing dissatisfaction towards Howard's decisions and his activity as Chair, put South Africa's relations with Australia under some tension. Nearing December, the next milestone for a further decision, several Commonwealth leaders met in Abuja, Nigeria. The meetings, in which six states were called upon to make a proposition for all the Commonwealth were heated, and resulted in deadlock. Tony Blair was pushing for further suspension, backed by Australia and Canada, while Obasanjo was the voice of the coalition formed by South Africa and Mozambique - arguing for the readmission of Zimbabwe into the Commonwealth. India and the chair of the meetings, Jamaica expressed their neutrality. While Mugabe was continuously proclaiming that the

¹⁵ Patrick Bond, *South Africa and Global Apartheid: Continental and International Policies and Politics*, Nordic Africa Institute, 2004, p. 18.

¹⁶ Drew Forest, *Minty's broadside startles diplomats*, in "Mail&Guardian", 17 Feb 2003, Available at: <https://mg.co.za/article/2003-02-17-mintys-broadside-startles-diplomats>, Accessed on: 17 August 2020.

¹⁷ Olusegun Obasanjo, *op. cit.*

division in the ‘Zimbabwe case’ was on race lines – rather than higher principles, things were not actually black and white at all: Ghana, Botswana, Sierra Leone and other African states wanted the suspension reinforced, but kept low profiles, fearing Mugabe’s reaction¹⁸. African leaders knew that Mugabe’s words still weighted heavily across Africa; and siding with a colonial enemy, which did not share blood ties nor a history of struggle, would be close to ‘treason of kin’.

Africanism, colonialism, imperialism, land and kin

After a disputed decision in Abuja, which made Zimbabwe’s suspension indefinite, Mugabe withdrew from the Commonwealth – a decision that was announced at a ZANU-PF Congress. During this entire period, South Africa, through the voice of President Mbeki, sided with Zimbabwe, accusing the UK in unison of neo-colonial practices¹⁹. Mbeki had tried his best to get Mugabe invited to the Abuja meeting, and Obasanjo, whom had issued invitations, seemed to be on board, but increased pressures from Ottawa, London and Canberra, which noted regressions in all spheres of Zimbabwean politics, brought the former’s efforts to a forced stop.

Earlier in 2002, Britain had proposed active sanctions for Zimbabwe, believing that the AIPPA, which had been drafted by Parliament and pushed by the government, would either control or silence the media, making it an offense to criticize Mugabe and the ZANU-PF party.

We argue Mugabe’s repetition of the anti-imperialist discourse was strong enough to persuade South Africa that Britain’s accusations lacked any fundament. Convincing the government in Pretoria was not as difficult as one would imagine, for, arguably, South Africa’s foreign policy was based on three paradigms: Africanism, anti-imperialism and democracy²⁰. While the first two are complementary and never come into conflict, the latter had non-alignment issues with the former. When all three could not be accommodated, the democratic paradigm tended to give way to the other two²¹, for these referred to the Marxist core-periphery imbalances theory²²; one that encompasses numerous social (solidarity is the key to fight off the core’s dominion),

¹⁸ Richard Dowden, *Blair fails to reach Commonwealth agreement on Zimbabwe exclusion*, in “The Independent”, 6 December 2003, Available at: www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/blair-fails-to-reach-commonwealth-agreement-on-zimbabwe-exclusion-81411.html, accessed on: 19 August 2020.

¹⁹ Ian Taylor, *The Devilish Thing: The Commonwealth and Zimbabwe's Dénouement*, in “The Round Table”, 94 (380), July 2005, pp. 367–380.

²⁰ Suzanne Graham, *Democratic South Africa's Foreign Policy: Voting Behaviour in the United Nations*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 90.

²¹ James Barber, *The new South Africa's foreign policy: principles and practice*, in “International Affairs”, 81 (5), 2005, p. 1088.

political (such the need for a restructuring of power inside the UN and other bodies), and economic (the economic domination of the North, in detriment of the impoverished South) grievances that could be resolved only by solidary action²³.

Before his country was suspended from the Commonwealth, Mugabe had sent a letter to the organization, whereby promising that his government would respect the Declaration signed in Harare, protect human rights, and end the endemic political turmoil engulfed in violence. Mugabe was either incapable of keeping his promise, or unwilling to do so. It is our belief that the latter serves as a more accurate interpretation. Mugabe had no interest in ending a campaign of intimidation his party had orchestrated and put in motion with the purpose of securing a new presidency. Even upon winning the controversial elections, politically-driven violence continued in Zimbabwe, as a way of silencing any critics and punishing the political opposition, The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), and its supporters. On the ground, South Africa's ceaseless fight to keep Zimbabwe inside the Commonwealth alienated MDC leaders. MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai, whom had been accused at the time of treason – in an absurd attempt to denigrate him and keep him out of the upcoming elections – warned that Mbeki had yielded to blackmail and had “*embarked on an international safari to campaign for Mugabe's regime*”²⁴. Tsvangirai saw South Africa's points of view - expressed during the early 2000's both inside and outside the Commonwealth - as a departure from quiet diplomacy and movement towards the ‘noisy approval’ of Mugabe's regime, concluding that, by instilling a government of national unity, as Pretoria had recommended, the situation in Zimbabwe was to be controlled, not resolved²⁵. Mugabe's attacks on the British were further considered a despicable way of alleviating international pressure, although even the scarce essential supplies still available to Zimbabweans came from London²⁶.

As a result of the continuous suspension debate, which had at its core numerous human rights infringements, more losers emerged than winners. One of them, according to Hussein Solomon, professor at the University of Pretoria, was Mbeki, whom had lost his credibility as a leader and strayed away from the principles of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and African renaissance²⁷. Mbeki had been one of the fathers of NEPAD -an economic development program of the African

²² Numerous authors have delved upon the World-systems theory; see the works of Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, John W. Meyer.

²³ Laurie Nathan, *Consistencies and Inconsistencies in South Africa's Foreign Policy in Africa*, in “International Affairs”, 81 (2), 2005, pp. 368-369.

²⁴ Morgan Tsvangirai, *President of the MDC's Speech to MDC Parliamentarians*, Harare, 18 December 2002. Available at: www.zimbabwesituation.com/old/dec19_2002.html, accessed on: 11 August 2020.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

Union, which, amongst other things, offers economic aid in exchange for incorporating and developing good governance within states. Mbeki also had his share of critics back home; Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, the director of studies at the South African Institute of International Affairs, called for a change in Pretoria's strategy, arguing that Zimbabwe would implode economically, hurting both the efforts of The Southern African Development Community's (SADC) members and the NEPAD endeavour as a whole²⁸. She advertised sending clear messages to Mugabe, even by utilizing quiet diplomacy methods²⁹, thereby implying that South Africa had been too relaxed about what was going on in Zimbabwe and too preoccupied by how the events were seen inside the Commonwealth. Sidiropoulos essentially argued that South Africa shielded Zimbabwe's image, instead of doing something structurally productive for the latter state. Nevertheless, Mbeki had gone as far as bandwagoning alongside a small group of African countries and opposing the re-election of Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon. This unprecedented move was an attempt to punish the leader from New Zealand, whom had been vocally demanding Zimbabwe's continued suspension. McKinnon withstood a 40-11 vote, rendering Pretoria's accusations and wishes obsolete. After returning from the Abuja Summit, Mbeki created, with the help of other SADC leaders, a statement of that organization (plus Uganda), in which it was claimed that members of the Commonwealth had been "*dismissive, intolerant and rigid*"³⁰, and that they sought to transform their African counterparts into "*grateful and subservient recipients*"³¹. Although no such member had been named, Mbeki's words were aimed at Tony Blair, whom stood accused of playing the 'wrong card' since the 2002 suspension talks inside the Commonwealth. Blair had overwhelmingly focused on the land reform and land dispossessions, neglecting the various human rights infringement concerns raised by other Commonwealth members, thus giving African leaders fuel for a racially driven debate. Despite Blair's constant denial that the UK had any residual financial interests in Zimbabwe's land reform, critics were not convinced, considering the UK aimed to protect the interests of whites, while the rest of Zimbabwe's population was seen as collateral. Mbeki later expressed, in one of his weekly letters³² published on his party's official site, a dismissive attitude regarding the initial motive

²⁷Mbeki could harm Nepad, "Fin24", 8 December 2003, Available at: www.fin24.com/Economy/Mbeki-could-harm-Nepad-20031208, Accessed on: 09 August 2020.

²⁸*Ibidem.*

²⁹*Ibidem.*

³⁰ Stephen Chan, *Grasping Africa: A Tale of Achievement and Tragedy*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2007, p. 140.

³¹*Ibidem.*, p. 141.

³² Thabo Mbeki, *We will resist the upside-down view of Africa*, in "ANC Today", 3 (49), 12 - 18 December 2003, Available at: www.anc.org.za/docs/ancctoday/2003/at49.htm#presle, accessed on: 17 August 2020.

for suspending Zimbabwe, by quoting the observation mission that his government had sent to Zimbabwe, which reported upon arrival that: „*the mission is therefore of the view that the outcome of the elections represents the legitimate voice of the people of Zimbabwe*”.³³ Mbeki also implied that, since the mission from Pretoria had stayed longer on the ground than the Commonwealth’s observer mission, and had collaborated with the latter, the former cannot be wrong³⁴. Referring to history, both recent and of the past decades, Mbeki stated that the land issue was inflammatorily dealt with by the British, whom did not suppress Ian Smith’s rebellion in 1965, due to the fact their own ‘kith and kin’ had more important interests than those of the African majority³⁵. As a result, Zimbabwe’s 1979 Constitution had entrenched clauses that protected the white’s ownership rights for ten years; clauses which no Northern government had supported repelling since. After managing to acquire pledges for the funds required for the acquisition of 118 farms and handing over the issue to the UN, it was swallowed whole and forgotten due to bureaucracy³⁶. Mbeki’s letter argued that granted the failure to restore land in Zimbabwe, “*a forcible process of land redistribution perhaps became inevitable*”³⁷.

Surely, the act of forcibly removing property owners from their properties through the violent methods used by a government-sponsored militia, however ‘inevitable’ it may have seemed to the President of South Africa, was nothing of the sorts. Rather, one can argue that it is a manoeuvre, orchestrated by an increasingly authoritarian government, to utilize the latent sentiment of a majority population that had historically been politically oppressed, in order to capitalize in elections. While the urgency of the events taking place in Zimbabwe – particularly the land redistribution reform - is open to debate, the methods used for gaining political momentum are unjustifiable. Nevertheless, Mbeki sought justification, as he did for the critique targeting him for his preferred diplomatic strain, that of quiet diplomacy³⁸.

In the same letter, Mbeki referenced Kissinger’s seminal work ‘Diplomacy’³⁹, arguing that the CHOGM episodes displayed similarities to the way in which Reagan raised the human rights issue during the Cold War to help overthrow political regimes⁴⁰. For Mbeki, the entire issue seemed one of forceful regime change from

³³ *Ibidem.*

³⁴ *Ibidem.*

³⁵ *Ibidem.*

³⁶ *Ibidem.*

³⁷ *Ibidem.*

³⁸ See Dan Petrica, *Quiet Diplomacy: South Africa’s way of dealing with Zimbabwe during the presidency of Thabo Mbeki*, in “*Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai – Studia Europaea*”, 4, 2016, pp.151-165.

³⁹ See Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York, Simon&Schuster, 1994.

⁴⁰ *infra*: Thabo Mbeki, *We will resist the upside-down view of Africa*.

those which could not, such as Americans under Reagan, passively wait for free institutions to evolve inside a state⁴¹. Thus, in Mbeki's eyes, while state-sponsored violence and dispossession were the last resort in Zimbabwe, punishment for these acts should be slow or non-existent in the realm of international relations. One could argue that Mbeki's claims go far beyond any realist's dream of how the political spectrum is organized globally. Mbeki also expressed his deep concern that the suspension would only delay political reconciliation and economic restructuring⁴². We find that this argument has some validity: within the framework of an international inter-governmental body such as the Commonwealth, there is a better chance of moving towards a fuller democracy than there is in isolation. As might be expected, some conditions have to be met in order to attain further democratization: namely a wish, frail as it may be, to achieve democratic outcomes has to exist inside the governing body of a country. However, in the case of Zimbabwe, while this wish had been verbalized by the Mugabe government on many separate occasions, in practice, only dismal progress has been achieved, and the country, especially during the initial one year period of suspension, has done nothing to revert to the best-practices it had initially adhered to, only to later disregard. Thus, it is far better for Zimbabwe to be a part of the Commonwealth, as long as the Commonwealth, through its internal workings, can exert enough pressure to ensure the desired outcome of democratic consolidation.

Mugabe, on the other hand, was closely observing Mbeki's political moves and the developments in the former's narrative. In his new feud with the UK and Australia, Zimbabwe's president might have been overjoyed that someone appropriated parts of his discourse, and was ready to further develop the said narrative. Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth could be labelled as a gesture of pride, foremost. Granted his actions, one might consider Mugabe a person that likes to bask in the international limelight; subsequently, we envisage that there must have been some degree of satisfaction that his actions, despite resulting in the isolation of his country, managed to create rifts among the international community. Whilst constantly searching for international approval, Mugabe has permanently sought regional and national validation – especially after his organization won 'problematic', if not rigged elections. As one commentator puts it: "*he would perhaps like to be the headmaster's favourite, which he once was*"⁴³. Since he was unable to retain this position, the role of 'international bad-boy' didn't seem quite demeaning. Even so, as the North was turning against him, the lack of Commonwealth support from his closest peers, clearly increased both his anger and the number of his worries. As a result, Mugabe tried to

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² *infra*: Thabo Mbeki, *We will resist the upside-down view of Africa*.

⁴³ Stephan Chan, *op. cit.*, p.141.

minimize the Commonwealth, by drawing comparison with one of George Orwell's infamous novellas⁴⁴: "*The Commonwealth*[...]has become like an *Animal Farm* where some members are more equal than others. How can Blair claim to regulate and direct events and still say all of us are equals?"⁴⁵. One cannot accuse Mugabe of having been naïve and not understanding the power structure in this or any other international organization, but he could be accused of doublespeak. While his narrative worked, in part, for his at-home auditorium and some African Peers, it did not for the EU or the US⁴⁶.

On the meaning of democracy

We argue that it was Mugabe's belief that 'democracy' is to be treated as 'charade word', a pretext the North uses to coerce developing states around the globe in general, and specifically to make Zimbabwe submit. Even though democracy is an articulation of the North, its relevance and meaning reach far beyond what Mugabe tries to imply. Minimizing the value of democracy, even of one particular string of democracy promoted but the US and its allies may be perilous for a regime, weather peril should be brought about by peer pressure internationally, or by a sickened population nationally. One must admit that democracy is quite difficult to quantify, due to the numerous juxtaposed layers that need to be taken into consideration. Nonetheless, most parts of the world operate within the principles dictated by Northern values: such as human rights, free elections, free speech and assembly, separation of power and rule of law. We reiterate that it is within above postulates that the core of democracy resides. While it was fitting for Mugabe and ZANU-PF to make appeal to such principles in previous decades, when trying to overthrow a minority government, as the time has passed, the above signifiers became voided discursively and were filled up with new meaning, which transcended the field of discourse altogether⁴⁷. For Mugabe's political purposes, his population, his neighbours and the international community in its entirety need to know that Zimbabwe is democratic – just not according to the vision of the

⁴⁴ George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, which was written in the Wake of World War II constitutes a biting satire of totalitarianism. It tells a simple story of farm animals rebelling against their masters, and their efforts to manage themselves in the aftermath of mutiny. Ultimately, the novel depicts how good intentions can lead to tyranny. It provides one immortal phrase about equality: "Everyone is equal, but some are more equal than others".

⁴⁵ Robert Mugabe quoted in Richard Dowden, *Mugabe: Commonwealth is 'Animal Farm'*, in "*The Independent*", 7 December 2003.

⁴⁶ In 2003, in conjuncture with the international community, especially the Commonwealth and the EU, the US government extended sanctions, which had been previously put in place.

⁴⁷ See Petrica Dan, *Discursive Struggle and Social Change in South Africa in the Mid 1990's*, in „Analele Universității din Oradea”, 8, 2016, pp.171-180.

North. It was arduously argued that another form of democracy prevails. While the slight alteration of values to make them fitting to one community is allowed, even desirable, we claim that these values need to remain remotely the same at their core. For example, rule of law guarantees the equal treatment of citizens by the judicial power. If, under the declared auspices of rule of law, a state ends up treating citizens differently, based on any kind of hierarchy, racial or social status, we are faced with an illogical and perverted construction. For some terms, meaning is unalienable. What Mugabe was trying to achieve resembled, in part, what Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary, later referenced – drawing on the terms developed by Fareed Zakaria⁴⁸. In claiming that his country will become an illiberal democracy⁴⁹, Orbán has annulled the term ‘democracy’ altogether. While Orbán and other autocrats advertise the absence of civil liberties, when presenting a hybrid, pseudo-democratic product, Mugabe was more cunning. For him, the variations of what constitutes democratic were up for grabs, according to what he wanted to achieve. He never called for illiberal democracy or for partial democracy, rather insisting that a fully democratic form of government can exist, without the prerequisites advertised by the North. The North, observing the logical fracture, refused to go along, while some partners in Africa accepted Mugabe’s views, because they were accommodating the latter’s interests. As such, the North needs to re-establish its values in Zimbabwe, for they had been eroded and, to do so, used South Africa for mitigation. Africa has had its fair share of autocrats, including Idi Amin Dada of Uganda, Macías Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia’s Mengistu Haile Mariam, Central Africa Republic’s self-proclaimed Emperor Jean-Bédél Bokassa and, more recently, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya⁴⁹. Dictators, as was anticipated, find the idea that democracy is relative empowering and support the claim that each country should decide the path it wants to follow in pursuit of the democratic strings they deem fit. Furthermore, the said ‘band of brothers’, comprised of rulers which contest the core principles of democracy, have a way of standing together in the worst of times⁵⁰.

Conclusion

⁴⁸ See Fareed Zakaria, *The Rise of Illiberal Democracy*, in “Foreign Affairs”, 76 (6), 1997, pp. 22-43.

⁴⁹ Viktor Orbán, *Speech at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp*, in “Website of the Hungarian Government”, July 26, 2014, Available at: www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-25th-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp, Accessed on: 17 August 2020.

⁵⁰ For example, in 2001, while traditional external donors had retracted from Zimbabwe, Libya was willing to provide Zimbabwe aid in oil worth 45mil. In 2002, after Mugabe’s re-election, the two countries signed a trade deal. Thus, Libya took the role of a democratic spoiler, severely limiting the economic leverage of other actors such as South Africa.

As a result of the continued support of South Africa and other African peers inside the Commonwealth, a potentially critical opportunity, in the attempt to further democratization in Zimbabwe, was missed. The failure of Thabo Mbeki's government to grasp that punitive action conducted by African members was needed to halt and, later, try to revert Mugabe's profoundly antidemocratic practices, coupled with South Africa's vivid unwillingness to sacrifice its own foreign relations objectives for the sake of stability at its borders, and democracy across said borders, marked the impossibility to create a strong majority within the Commonwealth. The absence of a strong majority, if not centred around, at least with the concert of African political strongholds such as South Africa and Nigeria, contributed to the further descent of Zimbabwe into autocracy. While the fate of Robert Mugabe is now known, the future of ZANU-PF is a distinct issue, for even with Mugabe overthrown, the party seems to still be able to capitalize under new leadership and continue, at least in part, the practices it has created and enforced throughout the early 2000s.

