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DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

*South Africa’s influence in the democracy-related processes taking place in
Zimbabwe, 1994 – 2014*

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Contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1. Methodology	11
2. Background of South Africa and Zimbabwe.....	16
2.1. South Africa	16
2.2. Zimbabwe.....	20
2.3. A discourse theory account of the initial democratization efforts of the two states ..	25
2.3.1. Introduction.....	25
2.3.2. Discourse Theory – Short Presentation.....	27
2.3.3. The discursive background	29
2.3.4. The hegemonic struggle.....	31
2.3.5. Social antagonism	35
2.3.6. The Dislocation of Dominant Discourses	39
2.3.7. The split subject	40
2.3.8. Conclusive remarks.....	41
3. Theoretical Framework.....	43
3.1. Democratization and consolidation.....	43
3.2. How states exert influence on other states. Short framework on conditionality	52
3.3. Diplomacy	60
3.3.1. International Organizations, Summits and Conferences.....	61
3.3.2. Economic diplomacy	64
4. Quiet Diplomacy.....	74
4.1. Mandela and the birth of quiet diplomacy	75
4.2. Mbeki – a continuator of quiet diplomatic behaviour	81
4.3. Reasons behind Pretoria’s chosen behaviour towards Harare	87
4.4. Movements with blood ties turned parties	90

4.5. Conclusive remarks	99
5. Civil Society: stakeholders and beneficiaries of democracy	101
5.1. Church denominations – a significant part of Civil Society	109
5.2. COSATU	115
5.3. Other Non-Governmental Organizations	120
5.4. Conclusive remarks	124
6. Economic Diplomacy.....	127
6.1. Crisis preamble and crisis development – states choosing paths	127
6.2. The business sector and policy-making	142
6.3. Stabilizing regional markets.....	144
6.4. Conclusive remarks	146
7. International Governmental Organizations.....	149
7.1. The Commonwealth of Nations	149
7.2. The New Partnership for Africa’s Development.....	168
7.3. The Southern African Development Community	177
7.3.1. SADC facilitator – South Africa mediator.....	177
7.3.2. The SADC Tribunal	193
7.4. Conclusive remarks	195
8. Conclusions.....	200
9. Post Scriptum.....	206
Bibliography	210

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1. Introduction

Democracy-related processes in general, and particularly those revolving around democratic consolidation are overwhelmingly tumultuous and often involve a chaotic succession of distinct stages: acceleration, stagnation and regress. While the stages vary in length and in the sequence of their manifestation, we argue that within a sufficiently generous timeframe, societies generally pass through various combinations of the said phases.

We have observed that in the last decades, the majority of states located in Southern Africa have been swept by a wind of change, fuelled by state leaders' commitment towards adhering to a democratic model perhaps most arduously advertised by South Africa. While some states neighbouring South Africa, such as Zambia and Namibia, are willing proponents of expanding democratization, Zimbabwe proves to be a much more elusive regional player. A preliminary scan of the situation therein has led us to believe that the numerous oscillations with regards to democracy make Zimbabwe a state in which transition can be best explored, by taking into account two major themes of IR, namely: processes of democratization and inter-state relations (and the various sub-themes, such as: human rights, individual freedoms, conditionality, sovereignty, foreign policy formulation, (economic) diplomacy, party connections, ideological relatedness, etc.). Thus, the main objective of our endeavour has become identifying to which extent – *if any-South Africa*, through their government, business sector and civil society organizations *has influenced political actors operating in its neighbouring state*, either directly or through the mediation of other entities (international non-governmental organizations, government-sponsored transnational actors and corporations) specifically in the furthering of democracy-related processes.

One particular observation has been the driver of our interest, namely that in Eastern Europe, the appetite for subjects related to African states is very limited, in spite of a series of similarities between the two regions. Thus, we have decided to shine new light on a seemingly far-fetched subject and deconstruct the relationships which constitute the core of Zimbabwean actors' behaviours towards democratization.

From a temporal perspective, our research focuses on South Africa and Zimbabwe over a period of two decades. *1994* has been chosen as the starting point of our research, for it is the year in which Nelson Mandela had become President of South Africa, whereby marking the end of an unequal and oppressive apartheid regime and pushing the country forward on its own democratic path. We have decided to set the upper temporal limit to *2014*, in order to have an overall image of the events that have unfolded.

From a methodological perspective, in our attempt to create a longitudinal study, we have not limited ourselves to a single research design type; thus we combine *descriptive*, *comparative* and *historical* research. The paper remains tributary to the secondary analysis of data – a hybrid research technique, both qualitative and quantitative. We have made use of the available literature: books, research articles, news articles, opinion articles and interviews, pieces of legislation, court decisions and statistics collected by different organizations/institutions - both in printed form and from online sources.

After asking ourselves: 'What kind of knowledge can we and should we produce?', it had become apparent that remaining within the framework of a single (scientific) ontology would

provide a safe-zone for our research. Nonetheless, we have abandoned safety in the attempt to provide a more comprehensive interpretation to the analysed events. While it can be argued that we fall into the category of *analyticists* – due to our emphasis on *logical generalization* and on *world-mind monism* - we have also integrated several other world-views that are specific to the field of international relations, such as *discourse theory*, *realism*, *liberalism* and *Marxism*.

The question this paper tries to answer connects to our research objective, being: ‘To what extent South Africa has influenced political actors operating in its neighbouring state, specifically in the furthering of democratic processes?’. Our initial hypothesis was that *South Africa has decisively influenced the democracy-related processes unfolding in Zimbabwe by using its available tools*. The quantity and quality of that influence have been debated herein, and while our initial premise was that influence had been overwhelming and purely positive - for we hoped to provide decisive proof that South Africa was Zimbabwe’s democratic light bringer throughout the three analysed decades - we have observed that things are quite nuanced and sometimes elusive.

2. Background of South Africa and Zimbabwe

This chapter is comprised of two separate parts. In the first, we analyse the historical trajectories of both South Africa and Zimbabwe, to see how the past connects to the situation of the countries in the period covered by the bulk of our research. We have briefly followed both countries throughout their colonial years and during the struggle to end colonialism and segregationist practices. We have observed similarities and differences with regards to how majority rule has been implemented.

In the second segment of this chapter, we put the process of transition and democratization in South Africa and Zimbabwe through the scrutiny of Discourse Theory. We have argued that in South Africa, since the early 1990’s, clearly separated interest groups can be identified and studied, each of them immersed in its own greater discourse - continuously competing to define and shape the social and political reality of the country. The presence of distinct groups is also observable in the case of Zimbabwe, where the population had been institutionally split on racial grounds; a fact which has defined the interests and actions of each camp. The colonial legacy of these two countries has allowed for the creation of consecutive discourses that have attained a hegemonic status in the aftermath of great efforts deployed by their proponents. Discourses that were based on separateness (as reminiscences of the colonial era) have been reshaped, so they could be perpetuated in post-colonial conditions. We have augmented, using principles developed by DT theoreticians, that all political practice happens on a discursive background and that the entire anti-apartheid culture is a sum of the different manifestations of the Western political culture (by former’s incorporation of signifiers belonging to the latter). Nodal points possess the capacity of structuring one narrative, but as they (becoming unrepresentative of reality) are replaced, the discourse changes, modifying reality. Gradually, the central nodal point “separation/apartheid” has been replaced by “democracy”, the latter structuring around it other signifiers such as equality, reconciliation or peace. The emancipatory discourse was able to reproduce itself and become dominant, due to its capacity of creating convenient identities for the majority population of the two states. There is an endless series of discourses that fight for supremacy, but only the ones that

offer a credible representation of the social world, while concomitantly having the capacity to control both the intellect and the instinct, can attain hegemonic status. Hegemonic discourses generally rely on simplification, which leads to ideological totality. Each studied group, from the National Party of South Africa to Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front has series of different narrations, on distinct topics, their only immutable (central) point being separation based on skin colour. Racial separation (as a central node) could not be attacked until a series of Western discourses had infiltrated the two states and people started migrating from one discourse to another. The combined pressure of external actors, internal pressure groups and moderates jumping ship has solidified a counter-narration. The power of apartheid lies in the fact that this regime has been spread for a generous period through a series of channels - ranging from official documents, to the representations in media, informal talks, etc. An artificial antagonism was thus erected through the usage of stigmatization (a fundamental discrepancy). Skin colour was placed on the highest pillar of discourse, being more important than humanity itself. By simplification, each of the two societies, though nuanced and complex, have been represented as dualist structures, marked by a unique source of tension. While each individual has a number of identities, which he uses according to the specificity of social situations, by simplification a single political theme acquires a central role and the identity related to that subject is magnified. Depending on the individual's reaction to the problem, the identity that they wear becomes a general one; thus separating individuals into distinct camps and positioning them inside politics become possible. Accordingly, race, although a social construct itself, has become the irreparable fracture between parties. The dislocation of a dominant discourse can occur as a result of transformation or replacement. The apartheid discourse is more moderate compared to its predecessors (whilst containing elements from within these predecessors), but we cannot discuss of a total replacement. In the case of replacement, the central nodal points become alienated in the discursive sphere and moved to the periphery, their place being is taken by external signifiers. The transition from the colonial to the post-colonial discourse denotes discursive transformation - some rearrangement of the central terms within the narrative - while the discourse focused on the majority rule is a replacement of the two previous narratives. We have also argued that the individual is continuously searching for a plenary identity, rallying to any speech that seems to be able to offer it. The black populations of the two countries have long been divided between two opposing speeches: the liberal one, by which they saw themselves equal to the white population and the discourse of separation, according to which they were inferior to whites.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the chapter that provides the theoretical backbone of the thesis, we have explored the concepts of democratization and consolidation, analysing how the meaning of democracy has changed and arguing that throughout history many states have seen themselves as democratic spaces (from the ancient Greeks, to the US in the nineteenth century, or the states of Central and Eastern Europe under socialist reign), even in the absence of basic elements, which made them incongruent with the modern definition of what a democratic space entails. Democratic consolidation has been defined as a democratization process in itself; so we have used the concept interchangeably with that of democratization. We have also argued that in order to be perceived as a (consolidated) democracy, a system has to demonstrate a long series of characteristics, from

which we have selected: the right to vote and to make decisions (often by delegation), individual freedoms, human rights (free speech, access to information, personal property, right to associate), rule of law (equality before the law), an independent judiciary that balances and is balanced by other state powers and the presence of an active civil society.

Next, we have focused on conditionality, as a way in which states can influence other states. We have presented hard and soft power, coercion and persuasion as means of ensuring compliance and have expanded on the forms in which all these concepts are to be applied.

Part of this section details the aspects of diplomacy as a practice that defines all negotiations between state representatives in order to achieve foreign policy objectives. The importance of international organizations has been presented, through their ability to structure multilateral interactions, which leads to consensus and, implicitly, balances of power. International conferences and summits have also been unveiled succinctly, providing that they constitute key mechanisms which encourage state-interactions. In a separate section, economic diplomacy has been delved on, alongside the actors involved in this specific activity. We would like to point out that the actors: state, civil society and private sector entities were integrated in this part, but their operations are not limited to economic aspects - thus their functions can be extrapolated to the entire area of diplomacy.

4. Quiet Diplomacy

The chapter on quiet diplomacy marks the transition from the theoretical part of this research piece to the contextual. The phrase 'quiet diplomacy' first appears during Mandela's presidency, to define a mechanism of addressing uncomfortable political leaders away from the spotlight, often through the use of secret meetings or secondary diplomatic channels. In an attempt to secure South Africa's position as a regional hegemon, Mandela relied on unilateralism in his contacts with the Nigerian dictatorship of the mid-1990s, thereby sparking criticism from regional partners. Mandela's isolation and the different approaches to the situations in Lesotho (in 1998) and the DRC have only multiplied critical claims. Mandela's personal relationship with Robert Mugabe has gone through a series of distinct stages: what started out as a friendship marked by admiration was to become overflowing with tension. Similar life experiences had shaped quite different personalities, with distinct governing styles: Mandela relied on mitigating conflict between the social forces in South Africa and the region, while Mugabe remained latched to a revolutionary mind-set even after gaining power. As such, the latter felt he had to fight in order to maintain a central role in both national and regional politics.

After Thabo Mbeki becomes president of South Africa, he proposes his vision of a united continent, with his country embracing a leading role. The idea of an "African Renaissance" advertised by Mbeki was hinged on resolving conflicts and trying to create an open market and a model of good governance based on fundamental rights and freedoms. South Africa was quick to observe that instability in the region may entice dramatic repercussions with regards to its own safety and impede the attainment of the aforementioned ideals; yet its leaders have preferred to remain partially blind to the problems in Zimbabwe and embrace quiet diplomacy. The main advantages of this type of diplomatic interaction lies in the possibility of keeping failed negotiations a secret – thus avoiding external pressures. While Mandela pursued the repositioning of South Africa as a region leader and a major global actor and resolving top-tier conflicts in the

immediate vicinity of his state, Mbeki wanted to create a deeper unity between the states of Southern Africa and promote stronger economic integration. Therefore, the Mbeki government has resorted to a form of political pragmatism by considering that national interest is a more prominent driving force for foreign policy than the promotion of democracy and human rights. It is noteworthy that African Renaissance had another distinct dimension: respect for the sovereignty of other states.

The three points on which Mugabe's government was attacked by critics throughout our studied period were: the forcible restitution of commercial farms, the economic crisis and opposition-directed oppression. First of all, South Africa's actions must be interpreted after understanding that Mbeki, together with the African National Congress (ANC), had time to acclimatize to Mugabe and have come to the realization that through direct confrontation South Africa would have sacrificed its own interests. At the same time, the use of sanctions (sticks) would have implied taking economic risks, as Zimbabwe was an important trading partner on whose territory many South African firms operated. In addition the risk of a refugee crisis at their own borders needed to be taken into account by the officials in Pretoria. Secondly, in terms of agricultural land redeployment, South Africa shared Zimbabwe's ambitions: awarding ownership to the historically oppressed black majority; but the former country had hoped that "willing buyer, willing seller" mechanisms would be a feasible solution. In Zimbabwe, the funds destined for land acquisitions had been severed, as international donor institutions and partners had withdrawn. Third, there are some blood-ties uniting the ANC with ZANU-PF, as both had been liberation movements that have become the main political parties in their respective countries. Even if the doctrines and the actions taken (before and after the introduction of majority rule) make the aforementioned entities different, they share a common purpose, that of surviving within national politics (consolidating their positions as means of ensuring survival). The ANC came to power through a pact with the minority government and maintained themselves in power by using nationalism as a unifying force and succeeding to create an inclusive constitution that they defend and apply. In the case of Zimbabwe, the majority government was imposed by external forces; as such the democratic constitution that mimics that of South Africa, while abounding in democratic principles, does not offer the necessary background to allow for a full understanding of those principles and, subsequently, for their reinforcement.

5. Civil society: stakeholders and beneficiaries of democracy

In the chapter on civil society, we have noted how these groups had been very active in both countries, despite demonstrating a limited impact on Zimbabwe's democratic consolidation. We have briefly delved on how Zimbabwe's civil society has transformed, as a result of its interaction with the liberation movements, the ZANU-PF government and external donors; whereby CSOs have abandoned several roles and embraced others.

South African civil society groups have been interacting with similar entities in Zimbabwe, either directly or under the oversight of international NGOs, by protesting the actions of the Harare Government and lobbying South African authorities, as to determine the latter to adopt a stronger position towards their problematic neighbor. Zimbabwe's civil society has been tackled, granted that some of its representatives have applied democratizing pressure on ZANU-PF governments (both directly and indirectly), either as a result of their own realization or because donors urged them to do so.

Religious groups have provided our research with essential information, for they are ubiquitous in Zimbabwean society. Furthermore, churches have been able to challenge the status quo when other actors had abandoned such goals and had chosen to rally behind official policies - either from fear of potential repercussions or from a desire to maintain strong ties with the government, to which they remained tributary. Confessional groups embraced their advocacy role, managed to involve their umbrella organizations in Zimbabwe's national affairs, directly disputed government positions and policies and acted as fact-finders for international observers and supranational entities. The Zimbabwean Council of Zimbabwe (ZCC) involved itself in politics directly, by creating (together with other partners) the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), which first supported the primary opposition party – The Movement for Democratic Change. The NCA later became a self-standing opposition party. ZCC also successfully crushed a referendum aimed to clear the bath for tyrannical laws, thus marking the first notable political defeat of Robert Mugabe. Confessional groups in South Africa repeatedly appealed to their own government, whereby trying to persuade members of the executive in pressurizing their Zimbabwean counterparts to uphold civil liberties and human rights.

By studying trade unions, we have noticed how the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the largest entity of its kind, arduously supported the policies created by the Mandela government, and especially those policies aimed at neighboring states. COSATU were co-opted by the ANC in government and encouraged to participate in policy formulation. During Mbeki's presidency, COSATU's ability to formulate state policies has been drastically limited. As such, trade unions have refused to support Pretoria's Zimbabwe-related actions, which were deemed too permissive. With Mbeki, relations were lukewarm, and COSATU acted in instances where South Africa's official response to various problems that had arisen in Zimbabwe was too temperate. COSATU acted either in dissent of governmental positions, or by back-channelling. COSATU had always been very vocal about the numerous infringements taking place in Zimbabwe, but, despite engaging South Africa's government on numerous occasions, it did not manage to bruise Mbeki's quiet diplomatic approach. The strong relations that the trade unions syndicate had with ZCTU - its counterpart from Zimbabwe - infuriated Mugabe, whom went to great lengths to make the former's visits unpleasant. During a fact-finding mission in 2005, the COSATU delegation was detained and forced to return to Pretoria. ZANU-PF then went to support the creation of an alternative national body for trade unions; one that better suited their needs. Instead of actively engaging CSOs in dialogue, both indigenous and foreign, Mugabe's governments have a track record of denying entrance, removing or replacing such bodies – as the circumstances dictate.

We have found that other CSOs in Zimbabwe had been the recipients of donations, some originating from South Africa, fact which makes the former indebted to the latter and morally obliged to act standalone at the impetus of the latter, or in concert to the latter on issues including but not limited to the pursuit of democracy. The feedback of donor entities manages to determine organizations that had affiliated themselves with regime representatives to end said practices, thus setting them back on their normal/moral path. Other NGOs – as is the case of churches – work either in concert with the government of South Africa, or against official policy, if that policy was too mild. In certain circumstances, civil society took matters in their own hands and pursued activism - for example: stopping a shipment of Chinese armament to Zimbabwe in 2008.

The dichotomous relationship between state and the world of CSOs is by no means easy to quantify: while some Zimbabwean organizations fight to strengthen government positions, others

remain in contestation of public policy. Overwhelmingly, organizations operating in South Africa have tried to further the democratization of Zimbabwe, either by direct contact with Zimbabwe's authorities, mediated contact – through their own government or by using Zimbabwean CSOs as middle-men.

6. Economic Diplomacy

After its UDI, Zimbabwe became politically and economically isolated, needing to resort to nonconventional trading partners such as South Africa in the midst of international sanctions and foreign investment detraction. The relationship developed, up until Mandela's presidency, when a decision was taken to steer South Africa towards a mercantilist policy. At the same time, Zimbabwe was pushing to open its markets and liberalize trade, resulting in a deficit of competitiveness which favored South Africa. Mugabe's short spending spree throughout the 1980's, the impossibility to reach agreements on tariffs with South Africa in the mid 1990's and the discretionary allocation of funds to the ZANU-PF clientele formed a mixture of factors that aided the apparition of an economic crisis the likes of which modern states had never encountered. Faced with this crisis, the Harare government acted detrimentally towards its own economy and its citizens, in a struggle to maintain its grip on the national executive and the legislature. However, South Africa adapted its policies yet again and started lending money to Zimbabwe, in an effort to prevent the spill-over of refugees and poverty across its borders. This caused other problems for the former, as its parastatals were forced to cash-in on unpaid Zimbabwean debts at home, starkly affecting the GDP.

In 2005, the government in Harare relaxed the monetary policy, following up with increased taxation to quench hyperinflation, started printing money, expanded the powers of an underperforming Reserve Bank, froze prices, declared inflation illegal, to later force the indigenization of companies operating nationally. South Africa was faced with *two major options*: on the one hand, it could support imposing *sanctions* on Zimbabwe – as an overwhelming part of the international community advertised, which could have resulted in regime change and the democratization of a space that had grown in its authoritarian practices (quite possibly through a popular uprising). This path would have implied putting more financial pressures on the citizens of Zimbabwe, whom were already in dire conditions, and facing the probable influx of immigrants, which was already a dangerous trend. Furthermore, the EU had already imposed 'smart sanctions' in the form of travel bans and asset freezes on the people closest to the Mugabe regime. It did so relying on the Cotonou Agreement it had signed with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, insisting that these sanctions would not be detrimental to the general population in Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, because Western states, monetary and aid institutions withheld funds aimed for Zimbabwe's development and retracted trade privileges, the population was further impoverished. The consolidation of democracy, if South Africa chose the option of sanctions, was also uncertain and regional intervention could have motivated Mugabe – whom the authorities in Pretoria must have envisaged would not go out without a fight – to burst out with even more iron-fisted actions, in his attempt to cling to power. The other option, implied *lending* money to Zimbabwe, in an effort to mediate the crisis, and placing some trust in the possibility that Mugabe could settle things internally and manage policies and the few resources left in such a way that economic redressal – followed by a social indemnification would be possible. Furthermore, by going with the second option, the situation of Zimbabwe's population would not be aggravated, as

it was reasonable to presume that Mugabe would revert to democratic practices once his party faced fewer contestation from the public and the political opposition. In addition, South Africa would have enough leverage on Harare sometime in the future. This second option was found viable by Mbeki, for it didn't put pressure on his country's borders and it aligned with the policies and the position of regional hegemon South Africa so arduously tried to consolidate.

Fast track democracy, which was not a certainty, was abandoned in favour of democratization that could be controlled, once enough leverage would be gained. The other plus-sides of this second option reside in the fact that some South African businesses would profit from the marginal prices practiced by Zimbabwean counterparts and that Zimbabwe would remain relatively weak and unable to contest South Africa regionally. South Africa went a step further, inviting Mugabe to its celebratory events and, by doing so, hinted that the situation in Zimbabwe was not that 'grotesque', in an attempt to convince investors that the region is still a fertile and stable place for planting seed-money, contrary to the claims of an inordinate number of critics. Nonetheless, foreign investors were baffled by Mugabe's daily contradictions, both in action and discourse. By further deteriorating the economy of Zimbabwe, South Africa risked to assist to a power void, possibly filled by the MDC, a party which was neither friendly, nor unfriendly towards its long-term interests. Thus, Mugabe was 'the devil you know', unpredictable but relatively friendly towards Pretoria. Mugabe was thus left to deal with the North, which sought his political demise, while South Africa was becoming increasingly benign.

The economic element of South Africa's foreign policy was constructed in a rather opaque manner, for there was but little trust placed in the vision of national stakeholders. Businesses and business organizations had a lot to gain or lose from Mbeki's decisions. Despite an evident stakeholder role, the business community's seat at the negotiating table was more than often purely ostensible. Rather than adjusting policy to suit businesses, the Mbeki government succeeded to make the latter fall in line with its vision and ultimately endorse a point of view that had not been properly discussed.

The position that South Africa was placed in, starting with the early 2000's was a delicate one. Cumulatively, it had to maintain the regional inflow of investors by palliating the decisions taken in Harare, deaden the economic crisis in Zimbabwe and prevent refugee spill over, tackle the international community whom was calling for rapid democracy-related measures and appease Mugabe, to avoid further tensions at its borders. Although one cannot claim that south Africa, through its economic economy clearly encouraged the development of democracy in Zimbabwe during the discussed period, we can declare that, in the midst of an economic crisis with devastating implications, the aforementioned state followed a coherent path, out of two possible such routes; one that neither further impoverished Zimbabweans, nor allowed Mugabe's regime to act in vengeance, in an attempt maintain political power.

7. International Governmental Organizations

International organizations are both stake-holders in the democratization of global spaces and normative institutions in charge of shaping and sometimes enforcing the rules of the political game for their members, both regionally and globally.

The Commonwealth of Nations is one organization that allowed us to follow the interaction between Zimbabwe and South Africa; amongst their peers and on one very polarizing issue. In

2002, Zimbabwe was suspended from the Commonwealth for a year, after Mugabe's regime had been accused of a series of breaching the organization's principles, particularly relating to human rights, the economic management of own resources and the electoral process. On the 'prosecution side' stood Western states such as the UK, Australia and New Zealand, while African states banded together to defend Zimbabwe's cause and, in part, to legitimize the latter's behaviour. Upon debating the possible suspension, Nigeria's president, acting in concert with the authorities in Pretoria pleaded for Zimbabwe, but to no avail. South Africa's judgement was based on several factors, including the facts gathered by its electoral observer mission - antithetical to those of international counterparts. Such sharp differences could stem either from different observations or from one party's effort to conceal the truth. The mission could have observed dissimilar events, but it could also have acted to reinforce Mbeki's stance on Zimbabwe and avoid an admission of guilt coupled with possible external pressure for South Africa to pursue policy changes *vis-à-vis* its northern neighbour. South Africa fought back, accusing Australia's Prime Minister of brokering dishonestly, in an attempt to bargain the imposition of further sanctions on Zimbabwe, while putting its own diplomatic relations with Australia under stress. In 2003, Zimbabwe's suspension became indefinite, after deadlocked discussions, prompting Mugabe to associate the organization with an 'animal farm' and lash out against the West. In reaction to the above decision, Zimbabwe withdrew from the organization. Pretoria's foreign policy was based on three distinct principles: Africanism, anti-imperialism and democracy, but the latter gave way to the first two when dealing with Zimbabwe, thereby alienating critics in the West, in Zimbabwe and at home. At the risk of putting further strain on South Africa's relationship with global powers such as Britain, Mbeki raised the land-seizure issue, arguing repeatedly that Western interests are vested with their own kith and kin, rather than with principles attached to the democratic process. South Africa's leader unsuccessfully argued that Zimbabwe could be directed towards a more democratic form inside the Commonwealth, rather than from the outside, which was plausible, but in ideal conditions that Zimbabwe had failed to meet, namely: the will of political leaders to steer towards has to be present. Mugabe's doublespeak, which is aligned with other despotic narratives, relies on the idea that there are no universal democratic principles and that there are forms of democratic behaviour outside and even opposed to those advertised by the West. By dangerously relativizing democracy, even its core precepts are found negligible and can be averted and replaced to fit Mugabe's struggle to maintain power and international relevance. The true danger lies in the fact that South Africa has been, albeit in part, convinced by the Zimbabwean growingly undemocratic model - which posed in a 'unique democracy'. This bad judgement from the government in Pretoria is one reason for its limited positive influence on Mugabe's regime inside the Commonwealth.

In the pursuit of foreign policy goals, South Africa became one of the fathers of NEPAD, a development program which was to plan to hold the seeds of human rights protection, protection of African interests and deeper collaboration between regional partners and with the developed world. These ideas and ideals were to be the foundation of an entity that would grow from them but also grow them and help them flourish. Inside NEPAD, South Africa sought to acquire the official leadership position it had been denied by previous similar endeavors. For this plan to come to fruition, the support of Zimbabwe as a country and Mugabe as a leader was considered invaluable. Mugabe was, in Pretoria's eyes, the 'make-or-break character'. We argue that by

ensuring that Zimbabwe was co-opted, South Africa could accelerate democracy-related processes therein – by opening NEPAD to the perspective of peer-review, albeit limited to matters of economic governance. Killing two birds with one stone was a hefty task, for Mbeki's team needed the full support of the leadership in Harare, whom was known to use double-speak or quit organizations that scrutinized it or its leaders. The North, as well as regional critics saw the co-option of Mugabe as a threat for the entire plan, rather than an opportunity – given the past trajectory he had put his nation on. Zimbabwe became part of the NEPAD program, but was unwilling to participate in the peer review mechanism, as the issue of human rights had not been resolved. NEPAD-participant governments bandwagoned to shield Zimbabwe from scrutiny in the following years.

The question of free and democratic elections in Zimbabwe is core to our endeavour. SADC has been one regional organization that created guidelines for its members, in order for elections to be conducted as democratically as possible. These guidelines have been incorporated in part by Zimbabwe – whom empowered its Electoral Commission in the mid 2000's - but the electoral process continued to be problematic therein. The SADC gathered in 2007 urgently to discuss the way in which Mugabe's government was handling the government crisis it had fuelled and the numerous reports of violent campaigns against the opposition in the wake of new elections. It was convened that South Africa should step in and mediate an agreement between ZANU-PF and the two MDC factions, to secure harmonized elections, guided by a consensually formulated internal plan. Mbeki's (personal) declared interest was to aid normalizing Zimbabwe's situation, for the said state had been plagued by political turmoil for some time. Painstaking negotiations took place, resulting in a series of electoral reforms which satisfied the stakeholders and vastly reduced the level of electoral violence in the following election. Nonetheless, the delays in announcing the results of the elections of 2008 made critics come up with different scenarios. Upon release, the results showed that albeit the MDC-T had secured a lead, it had failed to surpass the pre-imposed limit, and a runoff was needed. The runoff was engulfed in violence, and Tsvangirai refused to participate, resulting in SADC's authorization for Mbeki to intervene yet again. In the midst of regional and international pressure delivered through the voice of South Africa's government, whilst struggling to maintain or ascend to power positions both Mugabe and Tsvangirai accepted that some sort of consensus should be reached. The new mediation, difficult to say the least, resulted in a transnational inclusive government in which ZANU-PF secured powerhouse ministries, whilst staffing the ministries that MDC were managing. While the creation of an inclusive government formalized the success of South Africa as a mediating power and that of Mbeki as a sharp mediator, Zimbabwe was left to monitor itself and the situation turned into a struggle for power inside government, where survival became more important than good governance. Upon being elected Zuma wanted a more permanent solution to the Zimbabwean crisis which had been only resolved in part, and thus pushed for the GPA reached in 2009 to be implemented faster. Taking matters in his own hands, Jacob Zuma transformed the permanent meditation process, eliminating its transnational dimension and tailoring it to be somewhat bilateral in practice, for the SADC had understaffed and underfunded the commissions that were to observe the progress or lack thereof in Zimbabwe. Zuma, nonetheless did not take into account the pleas for rapid democratization emanating from outside the region, wanted to keep the

information that his predecessors had hidden – hidden and displayed a preference for non-confrontational tactics with regards to the political power in Zimbabwe.

The SADC Tribunal however, took the issue of land distribution in its hands, and in a landmark decision of late-2008 decreed that the farm invasions occurring in Zimbabwe had been illegal. The Mugabe regime met the decision with anger and refused to enforce it, only to pull Zimbabwe out from the tribunal and successfully denigrate the institution. As a result, the Tribunal went under review, whereas South Africa stood silent, due to foreign policy goals that needed the support of Mugabe. The plaintiffs moved the case to South African courts, hoping for impartiality and it reached the Constitutional Court of South Africa which, in 2013 decided that indeed, the plaintiffs could sue in South Africa and held that South Africa had obligations arising from treaties, to enforce the decision of the SADC Tribunal against Zimbabwe. The judiciary in South Africa was prompt to move from official governmental policy relating to its neighbour and give primacy to human rights concerns and the sanctity of property rights. Thus, while not directly being a force of democratization, it punished anti-democratic practices by compensating victims, through the sale of Zimbabwean assets.

8. Conclusions

We conclude by claiming that while South Africa has been split between two distinctive goals: encouraging Zimbabwe to continue on the path of democratizations and promoting its own foreign policy objectives. When the said goals conflicted, the latter gained primacy. In other circumstances, we have observed that the entire South African network of political actors has played an important role either in the democratic consolidation in Zimbabwe or in stabilizing the climate therein and, by doing so, protecting Zimbabwean citizens from autocratic outbursts. While we share the opinion of numerous authors, whom do not consider Zimbabwe a consolidated democracy, we argue that South Africa has involved itself in the democracy-related processes taking place in its neighbouring state. The results of this involvement have been positive overall, albeit not overwhelmingly so, and surely insufficient to satisfy all critics.

9. Post Scriptum

The final part of our paper is a succinct commentary on the present situation in Zimbabwe. We have decided not to include it in the previous chapters due to the temporal limitations that had been set from the onset of our endeavour. Given the events that were unfolding as the final draft of our research was being created –the most notable of which being Robert Mugabe’s resignation from office after nearly four decades in power – we have decided to provide a summary of the reasons behind the said action and of the impact it will have on the future of democracy in Zimbabwe.