Responding to Crisis: A Comparative Look at South Africa’s and the U.S. Government’s Policies Towards Zimbabwe

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Abbreviations

ANC  African National Congress
AU  African Union
COSATU  Council of South African Trade Unions
DA  The Democratic Alliance
DIRCO  Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DRC  Democratic Republic of the Congo
EU  European Union
GDP  Gross domestic product
IMF  International Monetary Fund
PAC  Pan African Congress
PF-ZAPU  Patriotic Front – Zimbabwe African People’s Union
MDC  Movement for Democratic Change
NEPAD  New Partnership for Africa’s Development
NGO  Non governmental organization
SACP  South African Communist Party
SADC  Southern African Development Community
UK  United Kingdom
UN  United Nations
ZANU  Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANU-PF  Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU  Zimbabwean African People’s Union
ZCTU  Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions

Abstract

Why have South Africa and the U.S. adopted and maintained different foreign policy stances towards the crisis in Zimbabwe? This question is of particular importance due to the political, economic, and humanitarian implications of the Zimbabwean situation since 2000, the regional impact of the crisis, and the recent potential for positive developments under the newly established Zimbabwean unity government. Previous studies predominately concentrate on analyzing either the western or the regional approach towards Zimbabwe to the detriment of gaining a complete understanding of why these approaches have differed. This study builds upon the existing literature by employing a comparative approach to demonstrate the ways in which the U.S. and South Africa have varied towards Zimbabwe and the effect this variance has had on the crisis. Following field research and interviews in South Africa and Washington D.C., I trace the history of the crisis in Zimbabwe and discuss the external relations of the U.S. and South Africa towards Zimbabwe. The study identifies four main factors that explain the source of variance – differences in geographic proximity, hegemonic influence, interpretation of the source of the crisis, and the primary goal for engagement. In addition, the study argues that greater cooperation between the U.S. and South Africa on the issue would strengthen both states’ ability to effectively respond to the crisis. The report concludes with policy recommendations for how joint collaboration can be achieved to better influence positive change in Zimbabwe.
Section I. Introduction: The Crisis in Zimbabwe and Foreign Response

Zimbabwe has had both a proud and tumultuous history. Emerging out of the carcass of white colonial Rhodesia, Zimbabwe was a bright star in Southern Africa. The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), led by liberation hero Robert Mugabe, had strong promise in governing and developing the breadbasket of Africa. Zimbabwe, at the time, was also a fine African example for health care, infrastructure, and higher education. This great potential and past achievement has made Zimbabwe’s fall from grace all the more troubling.

Since 2000, Zimbabwe has been in a state of crisis. Like a slow burning fire, the country has smoldered under a corrupt and authoritarian regime. At the turn of the century, ZANU-PF led a radicalized campaign of violent farm seizures and clamped down on the newly formed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition party. Mugabe maintained his grip on power through electoral violence and by suppressing the opposition. Political change looked particularly bleak in 2005, when the MDC split over whether or not to partake in the upcoming parliamentary elections.1

In the words of Kofi Annan, the situation in Zimbabwe has been “intolerable and unsustainable.”2 Hyperinflation peaked at 231 million percent in 2008 and left the Zimbabwean dollar next to worthless.3 Unemployment remains at 94 per cent and several key industries have severely contracted over the course of the decade. Once a food exporter, now seven million Zimbabweans currently depend on external food aid.4

1 The dominant faction, the MDC-T, lead by Morgan Tsvangirai campaigned to participate in elections while the smaller faction, the MDC-M, lead by Arthur Mutambara opted out in protest.
4 Ibid.
Further, an outbreak of cholera in 2008 infected over 100,000 citizens and approximately 20% of the adult population lives with HIV/AIDS with limited access to a now exhausted health care system. In less than a decade, the average life expectancy plummeted from 63 to 37 years of age. Political oppression, restrictions on individual freedoms, the expelling of the free press, and obscene acts of violence and electoral intimidation all have been characteristic of ZANU-PF rule. As a result of the crisis, approximately four million Zimbabweans have fled south to seek refuge and a better life in South Africa.

The Zimbabwean presidential election of March 29th, 2008 marked a watershed in Zimbabwean politics. The main contenders in the political race were longstanding incumbent Robert Mugabe of ZANU-PF and Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC. The election passed in relative peace and importantly represented the first time since independence that the ruling ZANU-PF suffered electoral defeat. Soon after the polling period closed Tsvangirai claimed electoral victory. However, after a five-week delay, the announced results credited Tsvangirai with only 47.9% of the vote to Mugabe’s 43.2%. The lengthy delay cast doubt on the legitimacy of the results and since neither contender secured an outright majority, a Presidential run-off was scheduled for June 27th, 2008.

The blow of electoral defeat propelled ZANU-PF into a violent frenzy. Horrific levels of ZANU-PF directed violence and political oppression marked the three months preceding the run-off. During this time, Tsvangirai and other MDC leaders faced multiple instances of arrest and MDC supporters were abused and tortured by ZANU-PF backed youth militias. At least 106 individuals were murdered during the wave of terror, 96 per cent of them being MDC supporters, and thousands more required medical assistance from the brutality. Mugabe justified his party’s violent scheme to maintain power by stating, “The MDC will never be allowed to rule this country – never ever. Only God, who appointed me, will remove me – not the MDC, not the British. Only God will remove me.” Fully recognizing the extent of the attacks and the failed potential for a free and fair election, Tsvangirai stated on June 22nd, 2008 that he would “no longer participate in this violent, illegitimate sham of an election process,” and withdrew from the political race.

Following the election sham, SADC commissioned Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, to mediate negotiations between ZANU-PF and the MDC. On September 15th, 2008, the three parties signed the Global Peace Agreement. Under the GPA, Mugabe remains President, while Tsvangirai assumes the position of Prime Minister. The GPA also outlines the key issues for the new government to resolve. Since the government of national unity was formed in February of 2009, it has received a mixed report card. Significant challenges remain and the GPA has yet to be fully implemented. ZANU-PF maintains the unilateral appointments of Gideon Gono as Reserve Bank Governor and of Johannes Tomana as Attorney General, while the MDC’s Roy Bennett has been blocked from being sworn in as Deputy Agriculture Minister and the appointment of provincial governors remains unsettled. Moreover, there have been difficulties in crafting a new

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7 ICG, Negotiating Zimbabwe’s Transition, 1-15.
8 Ibid.
9 Global Peace Agreement.
constitution and hardliners in the security sector are deemed to hold “a de facto veto over the transition process.”

Yet there have also been positive developments. Schools and hospitals have reopened, stores are restocking their shelves with goods, and civil servants are being paid a modest stipend. The MDC controlled Ministry of Finance minimized inflation by dropping the Zimbabwean dollar in exchange for an economy based on U.S. dollars and South African rand. This positive move has also minimized ZANU-PF’s patronage base and Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono’s ability to print cash and control the economy. Zimbabwe experienced positive GDP growth in 2009 for the first time in the past decade. Political advances are less apparent. Human rights abuses and violent farm seizures continue to occur, although now at a lesser rate. At 86 years of age, Mugabe cannot rule forever. As a result, factions have developed within ZANU-PF to vie for the eventual succession of political power.

The crisis in Zimbabwe, from the turn of the century to the present, has received external attention both from the African region and western states. Thabo Mbeki adopted a policy towards Zimbabwe which the media coined ‘quiet diplomacy.’ This policy is defined as one of constructive dialogue and good neighborliness. The policy rejects tactics of public criticism and punitive measures. Instead, it positions South Africa as an objective and neutral mediator committed to non-violent conflict resolution. Moreover, South Africa extended economic safety lines to Zimbabwe in order to prevent a collapse of state and to minimize the destabilizing effects on the region.

The primary goal of South Africa’s engagement in Zimbabwe since the start of the crisis has been to promote economic and political stability in that country. Stability has been prioritized over other potential goals, such as promoting democracy or protecting human rights. A DIRCO official indicated this when stating:

South Africa’s national interest in this engagement is to have a politically and economically stable neighbor which would lead to that country working to return to an economically prosperous country and its citizens currently resident in South Africa returning to their country to help rebuild the economy of that country.

From the beginning of the crisis, Mbeki was intimately involved in bilateral and multilateral mediation efforts. In 2001, South Africa, together with Australia and Nigeria, formed the Commonwealth Trioka, which was tasked by the Commonwealth to monitor the situation in Zimbabwe. Also in 2001, SADC appointed a task team, consisting of South Africa, Mozambique and Botswana, to work with key stakeholders in Zimbabwe to settle the land issue and to restore the rule of law. Despite taking a leading role, Mbeki had little to show for these early diplomatic efforts. It was not until after the 2008

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11 International Crisis Group, Zimbabwe: Political and Security Challenges to the Transition.
13 Tsvangirai Carries the Can, Africa Confidential, 6/26/2009.
14 In February 2000, South Africa provided a rescue package in the form of an R800 million loan to sustain Zimbabwe’s petrol and electricity supply.
15 John Vilakazi, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Interview, 7/28/10.
16 Tom Lodge, Quiet Diplomacy in Zimbabwe: a case study of South Africa in Africa, 3.
election that Mbeki was successful in facilitating compromise and the formation of a unity government.

The election of Jacob Zuma as President of South Africa in May 2009, following Mbeki’s resignation from office in September 2008, instilled hope in Mugabe’s critics that Zuma would bring change to South Africa’s Zimbabwe policy. In the past, Zuma had broken ranks with Mbeki on Zimbabwe. However, most scholars and government officials now agree that Zuma’s foreign policy and his stance on Zimbabwe represents continuity rather than change. Unlike Mbeki, Zuma is not regarded as a foreign policy president. Yet Zuma has incorporated the same fundamental tenets that have guided the ANC’s foreign relations for close to 20 years. Zuma continues to apply the principle of quiet diplomacy in his engagement with the unity government and refrains from using any forms of public criticism.

On the other hand, western nations have taken a critical stance towards President Mugabe’s regime. The situation in Zimbabwe received U.S. Congressional interest in the context of a rapidly deteriorating economy, alarming humanitarian conditions, and an escalation of farm invasions. The House subcommittee on Africa held a hearing on June 13th, 2000, titled Zimbabwe: Democracy on the Line, and the Senate subcommittee followed suit by holding a hearing on June 28th, 2001, titled Zimbabwe’s Political and Economic Crisis. These key organs of U.S. African policy utilized the early hearings to respond to the crisis and consider policy options.

During these hearings, members of Congress expressed why Zimbabwe is a matter of concern to the United States. U.S. government officials involved in U.S. Africa policy were alarmed to discover the conditions of Zimbabwe’s decline and the destabilizing potential for the region. While Zimbabwe, in and of itself, is not of vital importance to the United States, Southern Africa as a region is a vital interest. The threat of an interstate security and humanitarian crisis compelled the U.S. to take notice and respond to the situation. The U.S. government has also clearly stated its primary goal for engagement. The cited objective is to influence “a sustainable democracy based on respect for the rule of law and protection of human rights.” The principle of democracy promotion has long been incorporated in U.S. foreign policy to the extent that Huntington states, “Americans have a special interest in the development of a global environment congenial to democracy.” This principle has become even more instrumental in international relations since the fall of the Berlin wall. This objective clearly continues today and strongly influences U.S. engagement in Africa.

In 2001, the United States Congress passed the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA). The policy is committed “to support the people of Zimbabwe in their struggle to effect peaceful, democratic change, achieve broad-based and equitable

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19 Interview DIRCO; Interview Nathan; Interview Schrire; Interview Zondi.
20 Laurie Nathan, Interview, 5/12/10; Robert Schrire, Interview, 5/12/10; However, informed individuals have suggested a small change in tactics under Zuma, such as the appointment of a high profile team to cover the situation, sending retired generals to engage Zimbabwean securocrats, and more evenhandedness towards the MDC.
22 Samuel P Huntington, The third wave: democratization in the late twentieth century, 30.
economic growth, and restore the rule of law.” The U.S. has imposed travel bans, frozen financial assets and has placed economic sanctions on individuals and entities “responsible for the deliberate breakdown of the rule of law, politically motivated violence, and intimidation in Zimbabwe.” Although the U.S. remains a primary donor of humanitarian assistance, ZDERA restricts all government-to-government non-humanitarian aid to Zimbabwe and requires the U.S. to oppose the granting or extension of any loan, credit, or excused debt by international financial institutions. Lastly, the act authorizes the United States to provide assistance in support of the free press, in support of equitable, legal and transparent mechanisms for land reform, and in support of democracy and governance programs. ZDERA is characterized as having both the stick of sending a stern warning towards Mugabe and a carrot through leaving room for added assistance. However, the U.S. policy decision was far more hard line than the approach taken by South Africa and other nations in the region. Also, the U.S. policy stance towards Zimbabwe is reflective of the positions taken by the UK and the EU, as they have also implemented similar schemes of targeted sanctions against the ruling elite.

At the time ZDERA was signed into law, members of Congress and the State Department recognized the importance of closely coordinating U.S. policy with the South Africans. This is so because the U.S. views South Africa as the pivotal state in the region and the external actor possessing the capacity and leverage to influence a peaceful transition in Zimbabwe. Former Assistant Secretary of State for African affairs Chester Crocker emphasized this point when stating, “Pressures from the outside world which are not fully supported and focused by the South Africans will be highly diluted by the time they get to Zimbabwe.”

During a joint press conference in South Africa in July of 2003, President Bush indicated that President Mbeki “is the point man” on Zimbabwe. Moreover, Bush stated that he has no “intention of second-guessing his tactics” and that “the United States supports him in this effort.” Bush’s rhetoric was an attempt to place the initiative and responsibility of Zimbabwe in Pretoria’s lap. Despite these efforts, the U.S. and South Africa have not succeeded in closely coordinating their Zimbabwe policies. Instead, government officials from both sides have voiced disapproval for the other’s policy stance. Senator Feingold, chair of the Senate subcommittee on African Affairs, stated, “The unwillingness of a few key regional leaders to criticize the regime for its abuses or consider punitive measures against those responsible has been deeply disappointing. This has led some to speak of a divide between the West and the rest.” From the other side, former South African Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad characterized Pretoria’s disapproval of the western approach when stating, “We don’t believe that their megaphone diplomacy and screaming from the rooftops has helped.”

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Legislative Assistant in the House of Representatives, Interview, 7/27/10.
29 Senator Russell D. Feingold, Testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, 7/15/2008.
The divide that Senator Feingold speaks of has been to the detriment of both the U.S. government’s and South Africa’s engagement in Zimbabwe. Through quiet diplomacy and calling for the lifting of western sanctions, Pretoria has effectively shielded Mugabe from the bite of western influence. In 2005, the U.S. intensified its condemning statements towards the Zimbabwean ruling elite, a fine example being when former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice denounced Zimbabwe as an outpost a tyranny. The U.S. also extended its targeted sanctions list from 75 individuals in 2003 to 128 individuals and 33 entities in 2005, with additional actors being added in 2007 and 2008. America’s estrangement with Zimbabwe has restricted development aid and deterred investment- two tools that would benefit South Africa’s mediating and stabilizing efforts.

Despite modest changes on the ground, official U.S. policy has also not changed since the establishment of Zimbabwe’s government of national unity. U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe James McGee classified the unity government as an “imperfect union” that still has severe problems that need to be addressed. On March 1st, 2010, President Obama announced, “I am continuing for one year the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe’s democratic processes or institutions,” and cited that the policy must continue since “the crisis…has not been resolved.”

Of recent, new sentiments have emerged that suggest a shifting Washington consensus towards Zimbabwe. Prime Minister Tsvangirai met with President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton on an official state visit in 2009, which suggest a new U.S. interest in assisting the Zimbabwean unity government. Also, new pieces of legislation, which will be discussed in section V, have recently been introduced that propose changes to the U.S. Zimbabwe policy. Nevertheless, ZDERA continues to guide America’s current engagement and interactions with Zimbabwe.

To revisit the guiding research question of this report, the situation in Zimbabwe is worthy of our attention for several reasons. First, Zimbabwe has reached a crucial crossroad. After a decade of intense suffering, the prospects now exist for future stability and democratization. Second, thousands of lives hinge on the success or failure of the current government. As MDC Finance Minister Tendai Biti stated, “The consequences of it not working are drastic, it will lead to a failure of the state, a collapse of the state and all the civil unrest that follows.”

Third, the crisis poses drastic consequences for the region. Neighboring countries have already experienced a loss in investment and an influx in refugees and will be further destabilized by a worsening of the situation. Lastly,

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31 In 2007, as a temporary member of the UN Security Council, South Africa voted against a resolution on the crisis in Zimbabwe; Most recently the SADC Summit of the Troika of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, meeting in Maputo on 11/5/2009, called for the lifting of all western sanctions.
36 Charles Tembo, Zim Will Slide into Total Anarchy if Unity Govt Collapse: Biti, 3/26/2009.
the changing conditions now apparent under the unity government create a new impetus for external states and donors to reconsider their current policies.

The primary purpose of this report is to understand and explain why the U.S. and South Africa have adopted and maintained different stances towards the crisis in Zimbabwe. In doing so, this report aspires to be distinctive from the existing literature in two key ways. First, an extensive analytical comparison of South Africa’s and the U.S. government’s policies towards Zimbabwe has not yet been provided. Second, the several existing explanations provided for (i) South Africa’s policy of quiet diplomacy and (ii) the U.S. government’s policy of targeted sanctions only reveal part of the comparative picture. This report forwards that a comparative analysis of four additional factors, represented by important differences between the U.S. and South Africa, are necessary to provide a more compelling explanation to the posed research question. The differences considered are proximity to Zimbabwe, hegemonic influence, interpretation of the crisis, and the primary goal for engagement.

A better understanding of why the U.S. and South Africa have differed towards Zimbabwe will also help us ascertain why there has been a shortage of cooperation on the issue. In turn, this will enable us to draw conclusions on what is necessary to improve collaborative efforts between the U.S. and South Africa, and thus improve the effectiveness of their respective Zimbabwe policies. Moreover, the substance of this report will be useful for considering how the U.S. and South Africa can best influence future crisis situations in Southern Africa and what limitations may constrain this influence. It will also shed light on the prospects of democratic consolidation in this region.

From this point of departure, Section II will analyze the historical trajectory of the modern crisis in Zimbabwe and provide a comprehensive understanding of the causes leading to this crisis. Section III will demonstrate the ways in which the crisis has been partially interpreted by South Africa and the United States. Section IV will survey the literature on quiet diplomacy, concentrating on the several explanations offered in justification of this policy and the debate surrounding South Africa’s policy choice. Section V will review the literature on the U.S. policy towards Zimbabwe, considering the debate and contradictions surrounding the formation of this policy and outlining the contestation over what policy the current administration should employ. Section VI will substantiate the four additional factors listed above in order to address the holes in the existing literature and to provide a more compelling explanation for the differences in the U.S. government’s and South Africa’s Zimbabwe policies. Last, section VII will conclude the report and add final remarks.

Section II. Repetition Without Difference: The History of the Modern Crisis in Zimbabwe

“It could never be a correct justification that because whites oppressed us yesterday when they had power, the blacks must oppress them today because they have power. An evil remains an evil whether practiced by white against black or by black against white. Our majority rule could easily turn into inhuman rule if we oppressed, persecuted or harassed those who do not look or think like the majority of us.”


37 Robert Mugabe, Long live our freedom!, in The day after Mugabe, 17-19.
"As clear as day follows night...ZANU-PF will rule in Zimbabwe forever. There is no other party besides ours that will rule this country."


The crisis in Zimbabwe is best understood as the result of lasting influences transcending from several monumental time periods in the history of the nation. These periods include the pre-colonial, the colonial, the liberation struggle, the negotiated settlement, the 1980s and the establishment of a one party system, the 1990s and the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP), and the radicalization of state and fast-track land reform occurring at the turn of the century. Themes represented across this trajectory have been reproduced in the current crisis, most notably being the use of violence, the suppression of opposition forces, reliance on authoritarian rule, and the use of elite pacts as a form of transition.

As expressed by Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “pre-colonial societies were characterized by non-competitive politics" authorized by “life kingship or chieftaincy.” The lasting influence of these political characteristics represented in pre-colonial Zimbabwe include suspicion towards opposition forces, single party dominance, and “the notion of life presidency.” The period of British colonialism and white minority rule under the Rhodesian government entrenched violent and authoritarian tendencies in the political culture. “Colonialism…was, by definition and design, an autocratic system of governance.” In Rhodesia under the Smith regime, white minority farmers stole and accumulated the majority of land and wealth, while African farmers were largely confined to less fertile land in Native Reserves. Moreover, the Rhodesian settler colonial agenda was characterized by “brazen and brutal denial of basic human rights to the Africans.” This colonial mission was disguised behind “altruistic slogans of the ‘Civilizing Mission’ and the ‘White Man’s Burden’,” while in reality, the white minority used these tactics to justify and maintain their position of power.

Zimbabwean national liberation forces reacted to the violent machinery of the state by igniting a bush campaign led by the barrel of the gun. Frantz Fanon, in conceptualizing national liberation, stated, “decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.” Besides a reliance on violence, Dorman expresses that national liberation movements “may generate political practices that prefigure undemocratic outcomes in the wake of revolutionary success.” Mair and Sithole further characterize this phenomenon by stating, “the authoritarianism of the colonial era reproduced itself

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39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Raymond W. Copson, Zimbabwe: Current Issues, Congressional Research Service, 10/17/01.
44 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, 2.
45 Sara Dorman, Post-Liberation Politics in Africa: examining the political legacy of struggle, Third World Quarterly, 1086.
within the nationalist political movements. The war of liberation, too, reinforced rather than undermined this authoritarian culture.\textsuperscript{46}

There are many ways in which the trends of African national liberation movements apply to Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, violence was viewed as a legitimate tool against the oppressive regime. Unlike in South Africa, the liberation movement in Zimbabwe was a prolonged bloody and violent struggle, to the degree that a ZANU-PF official later remarked, “The area of violence is an area where ZANU-PF has a very strong, long and successful history.”\textsuperscript{47} The hierarchical structure of the Zimbabwean national liberation movements further entrenched the lasting norm of authoritarian leadership. This type of command structure left little room for dissent and created a hostile environment towards opposing viewpoints. Moreover, the militarist approach of liberation bred close relationships between political and military leaders, one that continues to commit hardline generals and securocrats to ZANU-PF today.\textsuperscript{48}

Negotiations between the two primary liberation movements (ZANU and ZAPU) and the Rhodesian government led to the Lancaster House Agreement in 1979. Although this agreement gave birth to the independent state of Zimbabwe, it was imperfect in several ways. The agreement institutionalized historic inequities and bred several structural problems that continue to affect the nation today. At independence, “the entire national economy was designed to support the maintenance and enrichment of a small white minority.”\textsuperscript{49} Within this context, 6,000 white farmers owned 15.5 million hectares of the most fertile land, while 8,500 black farmers toiled on only 1.4 million hectares, and several thousand more blacks had restricted access to acquiring any land at all. The program formed at Lancaster House to address these inequalities was through a ‘willing buyer, willing seller’ model. With a sunset clause set for 1990, the land reform program acted to protect the interests of white commercial farmers for at least the first decade of independence. Sachikonye argues that such a program was narrowly defined as it inadequately addressed the multitude of pressures demanding reform, including “the black bourgeoisie’s aspirations to own land…and the imperative to link land reform to a broad development strategy.”\textsuperscript{50} Nonetheless, the UK promised assistance for land reform to help create a more equitable farming sector.

The Lancaster House also failed to empower the black population. The settlement was representative of an elite pact where leaders exploited the agreement to vie for power in the new state. The white elite maintained control of businesses and farmland and benefited from a mandate that allocated a disproportionately high number of parliament seats to whites for the first seven years following independence.\textsuperscript{51} Besides whites, “the only beneficiaries of political power after independence were the black elite.”\textsuperscript{52} The emerging black bourgeoisie and ZANU-PF elite prioritized regime security and state control over economic development and establishing democratic freedoms. Moreover, the

\textsuperscript{46} Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Dynamics of the Zimbabwe Crisis in the 21st Century, 102.
\textsuperscript{47} Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Do ‘Zimbabweans’ exist?: trajectories of nationalism, national identity formation and crisis in a postcolonial state, 190.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid. 306.
\textsuperscript{49} Nicole C. Lee, Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Africa, May 7, 2009.
\textsuperscript{50} Lloyd Sachikonye, The Land is the Economy: revisiting the land question, 32.
\textsuperscript{51} Mahmood Mamdani, Lessons of Zimbabwe, London Review of Books.
\textsuperscript{52} Wilfred Mhanda, Relations among Liberation Movements: SA and Zimbabwe, SA Yearbook of International Affairs, 2002/03, 152.
negotiations did not properly address the rift in national unity, both in regards to race relations between blacks and whites, as well as ethnic relations principally between Shona and Ndebele. Therefore, Qobo states, “It is in the poorly-conceived and badly-constructed transitional mechanism created by the Lancaster House Agreement that the seeds of Zimbabwe’s collapse were sown.”

Although ZANU-PF worked alongside ZAPU at the negotiation table, this demonstration of allegiance quickly dissipated. After ZANU-PF won the country’s first post-independence election, the party’s central aim turned to securing political power and taking control of the national project. To ensure this power, in 1982 the military initiated a campaign of terror in Matebeleland and the Midlands, the regions with the largest Ndebele populations and the stronghold for ZAPU supporters. The Matebeleland massacres, which lasted until 1987, represented ZANU-PF’s first series of grotesque intolerance for opposition movements and the use of violence for political means. The Matebeleland massacres and the formation of a one party state relates to Fanon’s prediction of repetition without difference, as ZANU-PF replicated the violent and authoritarian rule of the former Rhodesian state.

Within this climate of authoritarianism and violence, democratic practices struggled to take root. Over the 1990s, international institutions such as the IMF pressured Zimbabwe into adopting neo-liberal policies to address economic decline. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs), as they were called, “were intended to stimulate economic growth, cut the budget deficit, encourage private sector investment, embark on trade liberalization and attract foreign direct investment.” However, these ambitious goals never materialized. Instead, the program led to a spike in consumer prices, social service cutbacks, and drastic increases in unemployment. Furthermore, local markets and industries deteriorated due to an influx of imports and increased foreign competition in local markets. Excessive government spending, corruption and inconsistencies in policy implementation added to the deterioration. The decline can be partly captured by GDP growth. In 1996, GDP growth was at 7.3 percent per annum. By 2000, GDP growth had plummeted to roughly -10 percent.

The late 1990s created in Zimbabwe what Moyo and Yeros have coined a ‘radicalised state.’ The multi-fronted economic, social and political crisis was compounded by Zimbabwe’s military involvement in the DRC. Mugabe deployed over 10,000 troops to support President Kabila’s regime in the DRC. The cost of Zimbabwe’s multiple year commitment further drained the economy of financial resources. Moreover, the motives for engagement must be questioned, as it is believed that several top leaders in ZANU-PF and the military benefited greatly from exploiting the DRC’s natural resources.

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53 Mzukisi Qobo, Zimbabwe’s Intra-State Conflict in the Making, and the Implications for Regional Relations, SA Yearbook of International Affairs 2006/07, 264.
54 Dr. Siphamandla Zondi, Interview at the Institute for Global Dialogue, 6/21/10.
55 Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, How Revolution Lost its Way, NewZimbabwe.com
56 Mzukisi Qobo, Zimbabwe’s Intra-State Conflict in the Making, and the Implications for Regional Relations, SA Yearbook of International Affairs 2006/07, 265.
59 Raymond W. Copson, Zimbabwe: Current Issues, Congressional Research Service, 10/17/01.
With these historical trends in mind, two primary events sparked the modern crisis that has gripped Zimbabwe for the past decade. First was the lost constitutional referendum of 2000. The referendum, which was put forward by Mugabe and ZANU-PF, proposed to strengthen executive power and “empower the government to seize land from white farmers without compensation.” The newly formed MDC opposition group, under the leadership of Morgan Tsvangirai, campaigned for a “no-vote” on the referendum. The failed referendum represented ZANU-PF’s first major political defeat and marked the emergence of the MDC as a viable threat to power.

The second key event was the institution of the fast track land reform program. The first twenty years of independence passed without an adequate or effective transfer of land to the black population. During the late 1990s, it was estimated that “4,500 white-owned commercial farms were occupying about 70% of the country’s most fertile land.” A Land Reform and Resettlement Conference in 1998, involving key donor states, international institutions, and domestic stakeholders, agreed upon a set of principles to guide future land reform. However, Mugabe soon abandoned these principles to instead follow a more radical course for redistribution.

Several factors lead to ZANU-PF’s installation of the fast track land reform program. First, the government attributed the inadequacies of the Lancaster House Agreement to the continued failure of land reform. Second, the program was a reaction to the Blair government reneging on the UK’s agreement to provide funding for land reform. In 1997, Clare Short, then Britain’s Minister for International Development, stated:

I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish and, as you know, we were colonized, not colonizers.

The change in relations with the UK crystallized the ‘willing buyer, willing seller’ model as defunct and necessitated, in the government’s eyes, a more drastic system to address the issue of land. Third, the threat to ZANU-PF’s political dominance compelled the party to appease key constituencies. In particular, Mugabe looked to satisfy the disgruntled War Veterans Association. Mugabe first acted in this way in 1997 when the government announced that it would provide all war veterans with a substantial lump sum payment and subsequent monthly installments. These payments provide further evidence to ZANU-PF’s poor economic planning, as the cost was not accounted for in the government’s budget and created an additional burden on Zimbabwe’s weakening currency. The war veterans continued to capitalize on the stressed political climate by demanding Mugabe to bring previous calls for compulsory land acquisition to fruition. This evolved into ZANU-PF’s complicity and support for the war veterans’ violent seizures of commercial farms. At the same time, the fast track land reform aimed to

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61 Raymond W. Copson, Zimbabwe: Current Issues, Congressional Research Service, 10/17/01.
63 Ibid.
weaken the opposition. The Commercial Farmers Union and white farmers, often the targets of farm invasions, are key supporters of the MDC. Although several forceful land seizures had occurred before the 2000 referendum, the policy was intensified after ZANU-PF’s defeat. Lloyd Sachikonye concisely recounts the implementation of the fast track land reform program:

The program entailed a comprehensive redistribution of land that was accomplished with considerable chaos, disorder and violence. As about 11 million hectares changing hands within a three-year period, it was the largest property transfer ever to occur in the region in peacetime… Nearly 4,000 white farmers’ land had been transferred by the state to 7,200 black commercial farmers and 127,000 black recipients of farms by October 2003.

Since the lost referendum and the initiation of fast track land reform, Zimbabwe has been caught in a frightful chapter of deterioration and violence. The ruling party has used the same strategy first seen in the 1980s to clamp down on the MDC. ZANU-PF has shut down much of the free media, imprisoned and tortured human rights activists and political opponents, and used electoral violence to maintain its grip on power. One of ZANU-PF’s most vehement examples of brutality came in the form of Operation Murambatsvina in 2005. This operation, which literally translates to ‘getting rid of filth,’ aimed to forcefully displace large pockets of the urban poor, a population generally supportive of the MDC. Security forces executed the operation by demolishing informal housing and informal sector settlements, thus destroying peoples’ homes and livelihoods. Due to mismanagement and poor policies through the decade, the economy progressively collapsed, leaving a significant portion of the population in poverty and despair.

From this historical account, we can draw two central causes to the current crisis in Zimbabwe- ZANU-PF acting within a long-standing one party system and the lasting impact of the colonial legacy. The first cause posits that Mugabe himself is not the problem, but rather a symptom of a structurally implanted authoritarian hierarchical system. While ZANU-PF’s actions have become radicalized, this is not reason to contend that Mugabe’s rule at the turn of the century was arbitrary or without precedent. Instead, these radical actions and policies spawned out of a historically implanted culture of authoritarian rule and intolerance for dissent. The second cause recognizes the land question as only one of several unresolved issues stemming from the colonial period and transition. It also recognizes that the recurrent use of elite pacts, first seen at Lancaster House, have been unsatisfactory in meeting the needs of the general population. Finally, both of these main causes have inculcated a culture of violence in Zimbabwe. David Coltart, a representative of MDC-M, compellingly expresses this by stating:

“Zimbabwe is afflicted with a disease akin to alcoholism, namely endemic violence. For well over 150 years leaders of this beautiful country, bounded by the Zambezi and

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65 Ibid.
66 Lloyd Sachikonye, The Land is the Economy: revisiting the land question, African Security review, 32.
68 Dr. Siphamandla Zondi, Interview at the Institute for Global Dialogue, 6/21/10.
Limpopo, have used violence to achieve their political objectives. Violence was used by Lobengula to suppress the Shona. Violence was used to colonize and the threat of violence was used to maintain white minority rule. Violence was used to overthrow the white minority. And since independence violence has been used to crush legitimate political opposition...As a result, the use of violence is now deeply imbedded in our national psyche. Political violence is accepted as the norm.”

As this report moves on to assess and understand South Africa’s and the U.S. government’s policies towards Zimbabwe, it important to keep this account of the causing factors of the crisis in mind. Key actors, both domestic and international, have skewed this narrative and based policy decisions on partial interpretations of the crisis. A full understanding of the immediate and structurally embedded causes leading to the current crisis in Zimbabwe and a proper interpretation of these factors would serve to best guide the international community in forming effective policy responses that are to the benefit of the Zimbabwean population.

Section III. The Dichotomy of Land and Governance: Partial Interpretations of the Crisis in Zimbabwe

A deep rift exists in Zimbabwean politics over what has actually caused the modern crisis. Mugabe and ZANU-PF have elevated the land question above all other pertinent issues. Over the past decade, Mugabe has strategically narrated the liberation struggle to represent land as the sole goal of liberation and to indebt citizens’ patriotism to achieving this end. The primacy of the land question was captured by ZANU-PF’s 2000 election slogan ‘The Land is the economy and the economy is land.’ Through a discourse of land, Mugabe’s rhetoric became increasingly anti-western and exclusionary. Incorporated into the land question, Mugabe blamed ‘illegal’ sanctions and the western world for catapulting Zimbabwe into crisis. The MDC and their supporters were targeted as an extension of this imperialist hand and the Zimbabwean population was increasingly characterized as either ‘patriots’ or ‘traitors’ along this divide. ZANU-PF supporters have attempted to sabotage Tsvangirai’s ability to govern by popularizing “liberation war credentials” as a necessary “qualification for the highest political office in Zimbabwe.”

Tsvangirai and the MDC, while not ignoring the need for land reform, have pointed to Mugabe’s disastrous job at the helm and ZANU-PF’s endemic cronyism as the main reasons for the crisis. Moreover, Tsvangirai has blamed Mugabe’s mismanagement as a central reason for the lack of land redistribution. Testifying before the House subcommittee on Africa Tsvangirai stated, “The land issue has become a pretext to unleash political violence by criminals posing as war veterans and paid by government. Since 1990, government has had the unlimited power to redistribute land – it has failed to do so.” Instead, the MDC has called to create a new Zimbabwe, transformed from Mugabe’s defunct nationalism and founded on “human-centered, equitable development

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72 Morgan Tsvangirai, Testimony before the US House Sub-Committee on Africa, June 13, 2000.
policies” and guided by principles of “participatory democracy and accountable and transparent governance.”

Similar to the differences in the explanations provided by ZANU-PF and the MDC, South Africa and the United States have also interpreted the causes of the crisis in Zimbabwe in different and partial ways. Thabo Mbeki narrated the crisis in Zimbabwe through a paradigm of anti-colonialism. That is, a crisis stemming from unsettled colonial injustices encapsulated by the failure to resolve the land question. Mbeki, in an ANC Today article titled ‘We will resist the upside-down view of Africa,’ vehemently traces colonial rule to the modern day crisis:

The land question was at the core of the crisis in Zimbabwe...[yet] the land question has disappeared from the global discourse about Zimbabwe, except when it is mentioned to highlight the plight of the former white landowners, and to attribute food shortages in Zimbabwe to the land redistribution program. The current Zimbabwe crisis started in 1965 when the then British Labor Government...refused to suppress the rebellion against the British Crown led by Ian Smith. This was because the British Government felt that it could not act against its white “kith and kin”, in favor of the African majority...The large sums of money promised by both the British and US governments to enable the new government to buy land for African settlement never materialized...the British government could not find a mere 9 million to buy 118 farms...With everything having failed to restore the land to its original owners in a peaceful manner, a forcible process of land redistribution perhaps became inevitable.

In the same article, Mbeki charges the U.S. and other opponents of Mugabe as treating “human rights as a tool for overthrowing the government of Zimbabwe and rebuilding Zimbabwe as they wish.” Elsewhere, Mbeki stated, “the economic crisis currently affecting Zimbabwe did not originate from the desperate actions of a reckless political leadership, or from corruption.” In this way, Mbeki’s statements and actions protected Mugabe from western criticism and instead turned the attention to the alleged neo-colonial influence aimed at protecting their white ‘kith and kin.’ In 2002, Mbeki reflected back on a previous meeting with President Mugabe and Prime Minister Blair by stating, “This land question in Zimbabwe is going to explode unless you people [the British] handle it properly...You can’t allow a continuation of this colonial legacy.”

Mbeki’s statements above all point to the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe resulting from the failure of the British to adequately respond to the legacy of land inequality and the glaring need for redistribution in the face of this failure. Such an interpretation creates a framework where all other factors, such as Mugabe’s faulty economic policies, ZANU-PF’s support for violent farm seizures, increasingly

74 Thabo Mbeki, We will resist the upside-down view of Africa, ANC Today, 16 September, 2004.
75 Ibid.
77 Interview of President Thabo Mbeki with Mathatha Tsedu and Ranjeni Munusamy of the Sunday Times, 8 October 2002.
authoritarian rule, disregard for democratic practices, and human rights abuses, are considered subsidiary to the land question.

It is important to note the effectiveness of Mugabe’s own rhetoric in influencing Mbeki and other regional leaders’ interpretation of the crisis. Mugabe has utilized an anti-colonial dialogue in regional and global forums to persuade regional leaders to stand in solidarity behind his actions. This type of rhetoric appeals to neighboring populations faced with similar problems and inequities. Moreover, Mugabe’s credence as a first-generation liberation hero adds legitimacy to his rhetoric and makes his calls for solidarity even more persuasive.

It is also important to note that South Africa has not outright condoned the fast track land reform program. A DIRCO official stated, “South Africa agrees with the imperative for land reform, but disagrees with the methodology used.” Over time, DIRCO officials have attributed other reasons to Zimbabwe’s crisis, including issues of governance, the rule of law, and the implementation of economic policies. However, these later portrayals of the crisis and its origins do not change Mbeki’s primary narrative of the crisis during the early parts of the past decade.

The United States, on the other hand, has interpreted a different set of factors as being primarily responsible for the crisis. The U.S. approach has stressed the break down in the rule of law, government corruption and misrule, and a disregard for human rights and democratic freedoms. On July 15th, 2008, before the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer, former Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of African Affairs, recounted the causes of the crisis in Zimbabwe. In doing so, she referenced the massacres in Matebeleland, widespread corruption amongst the political elite, and state led violence. In capturing the essence of the crisis, Ms. Frazer stated:

Simply put, Zimbabwe has been and is collapsing. What is unusual, however, about the Zimbabwean case, is that there is no outside factor that has caused it – no natural disaster, no war, no international economic or financial phenomenon that we can point to elsewhere in the world. Zimbabwe’s collapse is entirely self-inflicted by the government’s misrule over the course of many years.

What is important about Ms. Frazer’s comments is not just her narrative of the crisis in Zimbabwe, but what is omitted from the picture. Nowhere in her testimony does Ms. Frazer incorporate the failures of Lancaster House and the “willing seller, willing buyer” model to adequately redistribute land to the black population or the urgent need for this type of reform to occur. What Ms. Frazer’s explanation represents is an incomplete narrative of the causing factors of the Zimbabwean crisis.

Speaking before the Senate subcommittee on African Affairs at an earlier time, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter H. Kansteiner portrayed a similarly partial interpretation of the causing factors of the crisis. To this end, Mr. Kansteiner stated, “The current crisis in Zimbabwe has its roots in many areas. Broadly speaking, poor fiscal policies and rampant government spending, including the cost of

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78 Chief Director of Southern African Affairs, Interview at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 6/15/10.
79 Prepared Statement of Hon. Jendayi Frazer, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs, Department of State, Testimony for the Senate subcommittee on African Affairs. 7/15/2008.
Zimbabwe’s military involvement in the Congo, set the stage for the present economic meltdown.” During the same testimony, Mr. Kansteiner declared, “The blame for the political and economic crisis now confronting Zimbabwe must be squarely laid at the feet of ZANU-PF and the President Mugabe.”80 Although these statements are factual, they are incomplete considering a historical analysis of the underlying factors that have influenced the crisis in Zimbabwe.

Certain members of Congress, specifically Congressman Payne, Congressman Meeks, Congresswoman Lee, and other members of the Black Congressional Caucus, have made public statements acknowledging the need for land reform and the difficulties caused by the lack of redistribution. In a 2000 hearing before the House subcommittee on Africa, Congressman Payne stated, “the whole Lancaster question…is certainly part of the problem that we find today because of what was not done at the time when those agreements were made.”81 During the same hearing, Congresswoman Lee’s testimony stated, “The issue of land distribution holds the key to Zimbabwe’s history, from the colonial past to the present, it remains the biggest single problem this country has yet to resolve,” and that this issue “lies at the core of the crisis in that country.”82

However, these concerns regarding Zimbabwe’s historic injustices and the recognition of the need for land reform have not made it to the forefront of U.S. policy towards Zimbabwe. A primary reason for this reality is that the land question has been overshadowed and viewed in terms of poor governance and authoritarian rule. Despite acknowledging the inadequacies of Lancaster House, Congressman Payne also cited that Mugabe, “has used a legitimate issue, the need for more equitable distribution of land, as a political tool to occupy farms, incite racial tensions, intimidate rural voters and brutalize real and perceived opponents of ZANU-PF.”83 Chester Crocker echoed this sentiment when stating, “So the issue today in Zimbabwe…is not a shortage of land for distribution; it is absence of a governmental program that has any credibility or transparency for distributing the land that is available for distribution.”84

Thus, the U.S. and South Africa have understood the land issue in Zimbabwe in different and contrasting ways. Whereas Mbeki saw human rights abuses and poor governance in Zimbabwe through a lens of lasting colonial inequities and the need for land reform, the U.S. has viewed the land question through a lens of human rights, democratic governance, and the rule of law. Interviews with both current and former U.S. government officials also indicate that the land issue is not of central importance to U.S. policy. Other justifications for this is because the United States does not carry a colonial burden to the people of Zimbabwe and that the issue of land redistribution does not carry the same type of widespread resonance or urgency in American society as it does in African societies.

What is important to take away from this assessment is that during the time that South African and U.S. government officials were deliberating over policy responses to the crisis in Zimbabwe, they were reacting to different situations. Since South Africa and

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the U.S. emphasized different causes and elements of the crisis, their policies would stem from these different interpretations. The significance of this point will be revisited in section VI when it is further analyzed why South Africa and the U.S. adopted and maintained different policy stances.

Section IV. Quiet Diplomacy: Explaining the Policy and Understanding the Debate

From the scholarly literature on South Africa’s foreign policy towards Zimbabwe, several schools of thought have emerged in attempts to justify the government’s quiet diplomacy approach. I will first survey seven of the dominant explanations for quiet diplomacy. I will then turn to the heated debate surrounding the government’s decision while weighing the different criticisms and offered alternatives. As this set of literature primarily focuses on South Africa’s approach without drawing equal attention to the western policy response, I will consider whether a single justification or set of justifications compellingly answers this report’s guiding research question of why the U.S. and South Africa adopted and maintained different policy stances towards Zimbabwe.

The first school of thought seeks to evaluate quiet diplomacy through analyzing South Africa’s greater foreign policy framework. South Africa’s foreign policy can be surmised as being founded on five guiding principles. The first is the promotion of Africa on the world stage and the strengthening of regional and continental institutions. Second, South Africa is committed to multilateralism and reforming inequities in global institutions to better represent the developing world. Mbeki articulated this principle before the UN general assembly in 2007:

Because the nations of the world are defined by the dominant and the dominated, the dominant have also become the decision makers in the important global forums, including at this seat of global governance. Accordingly, the skewed distribution of power in the world...replicates itself in multilateral institutions, much to the disadvantage of the majority of the poor people of the world.85

Third, South Africa is committed to peaceful and diplomatic conflict resolution. This principle is grounded in South Africa’s own experience transitioning from apartheid and Pretoria has attempted to export this model as a means of resolving other African conflict situations. Fourth, South Africa’s foreign policy is principally based on African solidarity and resistance to neo-colonialism. Last, South Africa is committed to principles of human rights, democracy and good governance. Nelson Mandela strongly communicated this message when he proclaimed, “human rights will be the light that guides our foreign policy.”86

In James Barber’s article The new South Africa’s foreign policy: principles and practice, he outlines the gap between principles and practice in South Africa’s foreign policy. Despite this incongruity, Laurie Nathan argues that South Africa’s foreign policy is “entirely coherent.” Moreover, Nathan analyzes Mbeki’s foreign policy through the basis of three paradigms: the democratic; the Africanist; and the anti-imperialist. Nathan

describes the later two as having their roots in the ANC’s Marxist-Leninist and liberation history. In the case of Zimbabwe, quiet diplomacy was “situated squarely within the Africanist and anti-imperialist paradigms, which proved incompatible with...support for democracy.”

In explaining this contradiction, Nathan argues that South Africa’s case is not an anomaly, but rather foreign policy principles often clash. Instead, it must be understood that there is a “hierarchy of paradigms” and South Africa’s quiet diplomacy is the result of the democracy paradigm being overruled by the more fundamental Africanist and anti-imperialist paradigms.

Nathan’s principled analysis is one way of understanding quiet diplomacy. A second explanation emphasizes Mugabe’s credence as a freedom fighter and the historic ties between the ANC and ZANU-PF as liberation movements fighting against white minority rule. As Mugabe still retains high popularity through the region as a liberation hero, it is argued that former national liberation leaders cannot turn on a fellow comrade. For example, Mugabe continues to receive thunderous applause at regional conferences.

Moreover, the ANC continues to represent itself as a liberation movement possessing the mandate to lead the national project of post-apartheid transformation. By denouncing Mugabe and ZANU-PF, the ANC risks delegitimating the liberation ideology that remains fundamental to the party. Furthermore, ANC leaders have made statements stressing the historic relations between the ANC and ZANU-PF. Tony Yengeni, as chief whip of the ANC, stated, “the ANC has historic links with ZANU-PF – they fought the same liberation struggle against colonialism and racism.” Mavivi Myokayaka-Manzini, former head of the ANC’s International Affairs division, stated, “these are our comrades we fought with in the struggle...Our relations have been sealed in blood.”

Several scholars have discredited the historic ties justification for quiet diplomacy. During the period of decolonization, ZANU provided the most support to the Pan-Africanist Congress, a movement that competed against the ANC for leading South Africa’s liberation struggle. Looking the other way, the ANC’s bond was far stronger with ZAPU, ZANU’s main liberation rival. Moreover, Zimbabwean and South African leaders have not always had great personal relationships. Specifically, after South Africa’s first non-racial democratic election, “relations soured” between Mandela and Mugabe as they “found themselves in a struggle for political dominance” in the region.

A third explanation perceives quiet diplomacy as a response to neo-colonialism and racism. Habib indicates that South Africa’s “anti-colonial agenda is reflected both in a desire for racial equality at the domestic level, and the goal of a more equitably structured and just global order.” Pretoria claims that western states are guilty of a neo-colonial agenda towards Zimbabwe because of their use of sanctions and public condemnation.

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87 Laurie Nathan, Consistency and inconsistencies in South African foreign policy, International Affairs.
88 Laurie Nathan, Interview at the University of Cape Town, 5/5/2010.
90 Martin Adelmann, Quiet Diplomacy: The Reasons behind Mbeki’s Zimbabwe Policy, Africa Spectrum, 253.
92 Martin Adelmann, Quiet Diplomacy: The Reasons behind Mbeki’s Zimbabwe Policy, Africa Spectrum, 257.
93 Adam Habib, South Africa’s foreign policy: hegemonic aspirations, neoliberal orientations and global transformation, South African Journal of International Affairs, 145.
Mbeki blocked these efforts on the basis that outsiders have no “divine right to dictate to the people of Zimbabwe what they should do about their country.”

Further, South Africa has supported ZANU-PF while treating the MDC as junior partners because actions to the contrary would be interpreted through the region as Pretoria siding with the neo-colonial forces.

Moreover, it is explained that quiet diplomacy is informed by the continued racism that the ANC government confronts. In an ANC Today Letter from the President, Mbeki describes the situation in Zimbabwe as if he were talking to a Martian visitor recently descended to earth. Mbeki contends, “The point that our visitor would have missed, never having been exposed to racism, is that both Zimbabwe and South Africa have black African governments. It is this that provokes fears among white South Africans.” Due to this racism, the white minority demands South Africa to denounce and sanction Zimbabwe to prove that the ANC will protect property rights, the rule of law, and that it will not act as a typical black government. Mbeki continues by stating, “Having come to understand our situation better, the visitor from Mars would begin to realize how much the negative white stereotype of black people informs the South African discourse about Zimbabwe.” Mbeki vehemently rejects this basis for a hard line approach and strongly resists a policy that appeases what he believes to be racist perspectives.

A fourth justification for quiet diplomacy is based on security interests. This type of explanation sees quiet diplomacy as a policy aimed at minimizing the regionally destabilizing factors of the Zimbabwean crisis. The central premise of this explanation is that any policy more hard line than quiet diplomacy will exacerbate these destabilizing factors to a greater degree than the status quo approach. Such an argument assumes that a complete collapse of the state is possible and would create worse consequences for neighboring countries. The fear of civil war or a military coup in Zimbabwe compels South Africa to tread quietly, for it is believed that denouncing ZANU-PF and/or supporting the MDC while affirming the need for free and fair elections would fuel the likelihood of these scenarios occurring. If the Zimbabwean crisis degenerated into a widespread armed conflict or a military government, the violence could easily spill over the borders and force the involvement of neighboring militaries. On the other hand, through quiet diplomacy it is argued that South Africa is better positioned for damage control and for facilitating a gradual and stable political transition in Zimbabwe.

The other major threat to South Africa is a flood of Zimbabwean refugees. The flow of Zimbabweans into South Africa has already created an increased burden on the state’s limited resources and threatens the job security of many low-skilled and unskilled South Africans. With the South African unemployment rate hitting 25% in 2010, the struggle for work has become even more fierce. South Africans have found themselves on the short end of the stick, as over-skilled Zimbabweans settle for menial jobs in South Africa. These adverse effects have flared xenophobic attacks against Zimbabweans across South Africa over the past few years. While the current refugee problem is serious, some

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96 Ibid.
scholars posit that it would get drastically worse and prompt the involvement of the South African military if Zimbabwe collapses. In light of these alternative scenarios, the current security issues appear manageable. In sum, security justifications for quiet diplomacy cite “the prime goal of South Africa’s Zimbabwe policy” as being the avoidance of “a further worsening of the situation.”  

A fifth explanation focuses on the ANC’s reaction to the MDC and its efforts to maintain government control. The MDC was born out of Zimbabwean trade unions. Before the formation of the MDC, Tsvangirai himself was the leader of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). The ANC need not look far to find the strength and influence of South Africa’s trade unions. When the Apartheid government unbanned political organizations in 1990, the ANC forged an agreement with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), creating the Tripartite Alliance. By joining, COSATU and the SACP agreed to not function as independent political parties. Within the Tripartite Alliance, opposition has mounted from the left against the ANC’s neo-liberal economic policies, Mbeki’s stance towards HIV/AIDS, and the government’s policy towards Zimbabwe. Scholars such as Roger Southall argue, “democracy will only begin to flourish in South Africa when the COSATU and the SACP…break away from the ANC to construct an opposition party of the left.”

One of the ANC’s greatest fears is this occurring and having a formidable opposition party emerge that can challenge their electoral dominance. Certain scholars forward that the success of the MDC emboldens COSATU and thus threatens the Tripartite Alliance. This is so because if the MDC is able to transform from a collection of trade unions into a political party and successfully unseat a liberation hero, it encourages COSATU, which has always been a stronger organization than ZCTU, to do the same. This argument seeks to explain Mbeki’s favoritism towards Mugabe and ZANU-PF through quiet diplomacy and his general disdain towards the MDC and the lack of confidence in their ability to govern. Therefore, in order to minimize the risk of COSATU’s succession, the ANC played down the MDC as junior partners and supported continued ZANU-PF leadership.

Other scholars have emphasized economic motivations behind South Africa’s policy towards Zimbabwe. The most vocal of these critics has been Dale McKinley, who contends that quiet diplomacy is driven by the “class interests of South Africa’s emergent black and traditional (white) bourgeoisie.” McKinley argues that explanations for South Africa’s policy have been too focused on narrow political accounts overly concerned with race and security. Instead, McKinley questions the motives behind South

100 Dr. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Interview at the South African Institute of International Affairs, 6/23/2010; Professor Robert Schrire, Interview at the University of Cape Town, 5/12/2010.
101 Laurie Nathan, Interview at the University of Cape Town, 5/5/2010; Interview. Professor Robert Schrire, Interview at the University of Cape Town, 5/12/2010.
102 Dale T. McKinley, South African Foreign Policy towards Zimbabwe under Mbeki, Review of African Political Economy.
Africa’s economic lifelines to Zimbabwe and concludes that such an approach was manipulatively aimed to benefit the interests of black South African elites.\textsuperscript{103}

Scholars such as Mills Soko and Neil Balchin have contested this explanation of quiet diplomacy. Contrary to McKinley, Soko and Balchin argue that quiet diplomacy has not been “principally shaped by economic objectives.”\textsuperscript{104} They further this argument on the basis that McKinley’s analysis rests on several faulty assumptions. In particular, Soko and Balchin point to “the underdeveloped nature of South Africa’s commercial diplomacy,” the disconnect between the South African government and big business, and the several economic advances into Zimbabwe directed by the corporate sector without the instruction of the state.\textsuperscript{105} Such refutation questions the merit of the economic-based argument for quiet diplomacy.

A final compelling justification for quiet diplomacy considers the regional constraints of South Africa’s leadership. Specifically, South Africa is constrained by regional politics and institutions, the norm of solidarity, and the fear of being perceived as a bully in regional affairs. South Africa’s power and influence stems from its economic and military might comparative to neighboring states. South Africa accounts for approximately 80\% of SADC’s GDP and she is a major contributor of foreign direct investment in Africa.\textsuperscript{106} This preponderance of power serves as the basis for South Africa’s regional hegemony, a concept that will be analyzed in section VI. The difficulty then, as expressed by several scholars, is to understand why South Africa has often shied away from this leadership role. The Zimbabwe case in particular has been used to argue the limits of South Africa’s hegemony.\textsuperscript{107}

South Africa’s drive to reform global governance structures and elevate Africa’s position in world affairs is predicated on the notion that by working together, African states can develop and prosper, but by acting apart, these goals will be compromised. Specifically, Mbeki explains that South Africa will only experience sustained peace and development if these objectives are experienced “in other sister African countries as well.”\textsuperscript{108} Several SADC member states, such as Namibia, Angola, the DRC, Tanzania, Malawi and Swaziland, have provided vocal support for Mugabe and ZANU-PF.\textsuperscript{109} Benjamin Mkapa, former President of Tanzania, expressed the solidarity behind Mugabe’s land redistribution efforts by stating, “Let SADC speak with one voice, and let the outside world understand, that to us Africans land is much more than a factor of production, we are spiritually anchored in the lands of our ancestors.”\textsuperscript{110} As the majority of Southern African states and SADC as an institution has offered support for ZANU-PF,
it is argued that solidarity commits South Africa to the same stance. Nathan indicates that for the ANC, “solidarity is not a tactic but an essential strategy.”

African unity and black empowerment are fundamental to the success of NEPAD and an African Renaissance. If Pretoria were to break ranks with the region on NEPAD, there likely be repercussions, possibly in the form of the region counterbalancing South Africa’s influence in Zimbabwe and by hampering Pretoria’s ability to achieve other foreign policy goals.

Another key constraint on South Africa’s foreign policy towards Zimbabwe is the fear of being perceived as a bully. Neighboring countries bitterly remember the history of apartheid South Africa dominating and destabilizing the region. Cognizant of this lasting resentment, the ANC government has been extremely sensitive to criticisms of behaving as a bully and instead has striven to be a “good regional citizen.” Nonetheless, many neighboring states fear South Africa’s economic clout and oppose instances in which South Africa demonstrates her power. To quell these fears, South Africa has been committed to multilateralism and solidarity for solving regional and continental problems.

South Africa’s philosophy is not only based in principle, but is also due to past experience. In 1995, Nelson Mandela took a hard line stance against the Abacha dictatorship in Nigeria and called for sanctions to be placed. Mandela anticipated that other African countries would follow suit. However, when African leaders rebuked Mandela’s policy and Western countries did not contribute to the bite of sanctions, South Africa was left isolated and embarrassed. An ANC international relations expert characterized the policy failure in this way:

There is no way in which South Africa can stand alone and outrageously condemn (Zimbabwe), knowing that their condemnation will not have an impact but will actually worsen the situation. We did that with Nigeria when Madiba took a position without consulting the Commonwealth, without consulting SADC, and without consulting the OAU; and what happened? Everybody stood aside and we were isolated because it was a terrible mistake we made ... we acted as this bully, and people resent being bullied.

In reflecting back on this policy choice, a senior DIRCO official expressed that South Africa “did not fully understand the game” at the time, and that the lesson learnt was that “future policies should have the support of the neighboring countries.” The backlash from this single experience continues to remind Pretoria that they “do not want to go through a similar experience again” and act “like a ‘Big Brother’ on the continent.”

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111 Laurie Nathan, Interview at the University of Cape Town, 5/5/2010.
112 J. E. Spence Obe, ‘Point Man’ on Zimbabwe: South Africa’s Role in the Crisis, The Round Table.
115 Chief Director of Southern African Affairs, Interview at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 6/15/10.
116 John Vilakazi, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Interview, 7/28/10.
The series of explanations for quiet diplomacy listed above are not all mutually exclusive and several of the justifications appear together in scholarly accounts. However, from the seven schools of thought – hierarchy of principles, historic ties, reaction to neo-colonialism and racism, security interests, reactions to the MDC and ANC regime security, economic benefit, and regional constraints – we cannot tell exactly why South Africa differed from the U.S. towards Zimbabwe. We can extract important insights from these explanations, such as the differences in historic linkages for the U.S. and South Africa with Zimbabwe, and the specific interests and constraints that inform Pretoria’s foreign relations. Yet knowing why South Africa decided on their specific policy, as contested as this is, is only one component of the necessary analytical framework. In addition, what is needed for the purpose of this thesis is further reasoning for why the U.S. and South Africa were unable to agree on the same policy choice and why they continue to differ.

Not only has the proper explanation for South Africa’s Zimbabwe policy been disputed, but the policy choice itself has been critically debated and opposed both in government and academia. The Democratic Alliance (DA), currently the largest opposition party in South Africa, has been very critical of the ANC’s approach towards Zimbabwe. The DA contends that the GPA has brought Zimbabwe no closer to a democratic solution and that for Zimbabwe to establish a functioning democracy, Mugabe must be first removed from power. Instead, the DA has proposed a roadmap outlining an alternative policy. The roadmap outlines four steps: the agreement to hold fresh elections, the formation of an interim government, the formation of a new constitution, and finally successfully holding free and fair elections. The DA has advocated an approach closely resembling the one taken by the U.S. and the west including support for the use of targeted sanctions. The DA attributes the cause of the crisis to Mugabe’s “need to cling to power” and bad governance employed by his party, and identifies the establishment of democracy as the core goal of its proposed policy. Lastly, the DA contends that African solidarity must not be “used as a scapegoat” to excuse the behavior of human rights abuses and state-driven violence. Within the ANC, COSATU has criticized the government’s Zimbabwe policy. In the face of Mbeki’s quiet diplomacy, COSATU has stood in solidarity with its Zimbabwean counterpart, ZCTU, in denouncing the human rights abuses and in offering support to holding protests.

In addition, scholars have forwarded three primary critiques of South Africa’s Zimbabwe policy. First, South Africa has failed to live up to its guiding principle of supporting democracy, good governance, and human rights. Foreign policy idealists argue that South Africa must carry the torch for promoting these values across the continent. Therefore, these scholars contend that quiet diplomacy is incongruent with South Africa’s moral agenda and this damages Pretoria’s credibility and capacity to promote these values elsewhere.

Second, quiet diplomacy has been criticized as a policy that dangles carrots but lacks a viable stick. Since the beginning of the decade, Mugabe and ZANU-PF officials have

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117 Democratic Alliance, A Roadmap to Democracy in Zimbabwe, October 2009.
thwarted South African mediation efforts and disregarded SADC agreements. This has carried on under the unity government as Mugabe continues to stall progress by not adhering to the entirety of the GPA and has used western sanctions as an excuse for not compromising. This has led some scholars to believe that Mugabe “does not fear” South Africa’s toothless diplomacy.\textsuperscript{120} Instead, it is argued that Pretoria possesses the power and influence to change the situation in Zimbabwe. Lipton argues that this pressure could have come from South Africa’s economic leverage and influence over Zimbabwe’s “transport routes, power supplies and access to financial facilities.”\textsuperscript{121} Others argue that South Africa possesses the leverage to publicly condemn Zimbabwe’s ruling regime and elicit the change in behavior that western diplomacy has failed to achieve. A realist critique contends that “South Africa does not use its hegemonic position to protect its interests by cleaning up its backyard.”\textsuperscript{122} What these arguments share in common is that it would be to the benefit of Zimbabwe and South Africa if Pretoria utilized its power and leverage.

Last, certain scholars argue that quiet diplomacy “has not in fact been quiet.”\textsuperscript{123} This is backed by the previous analysis that the ANC has mediated in favor of ZANU-PF to the detriment of the MDC. Therefore, South Africa’s policy has had little impact because it fails to live up to its fundamental premise of taking a non-partisan stance towards all parties involved. To improve the effectiveness of South Africa’s engagement, Pretoria must stick to its word and treat both ZANU-PF and the MDC equally.

Government officials and quiet diplomacy supporting scholars have responded to these different arguments. In regards to the first, DIRCO has replied by affirming that the respect of human rights is indeed a core principle of South Africa’s foreign relations. However, this value is not absolute and “foreign policy is not conducted in a vacuum.”\textsuperscript{124} This type of response echoes Nathan’s ‘three paradigm’ analysis.\textsuperscript{125} In addition, DIRCO refuted the human rights argument by questioning the actual extent of human rights abuses. Although DIRCO recognized that severe abuses occurred around the 2008 run-off election, an official claimed that the South African government did not have concrete evidence of widespread human rights abuses occurring during the crisis before this time.\textsuperscript{126} By denying the existence of flagrant abuses in Zimbabwe, Pretoria attempted to sidestep the charges of not following a fundamental foreign policy principle. Human rights activists and civil society organizations have vigorously challenged South Africa’s source of evidence, as it is likely that Pretoria uncritically accepted ZANU-PF’s statements of peace and calm at face value.

\textsuperscript{120} Lloyd M. Sachikonye, South Africa’s Quiet Diplomacy: The Case of Zimbabwe. in \textit{State of the Nation: South Africa 2004-2005},

\textsuperscript{121} Merle Lipton, Understanding South Africa’s foreign policy: the perplexing case of Zimbabwe, South African Journal of International Affairs, 338.

\textsuperscript{122} Martin Adelmann, Quiet Diplomacy: The Reasons behind Mbeki’s Zimbabwe Policy, Africa Spectrum, 264.

\textsuperscript{123} Laurie Nathan, Consistency and inconsistencies in South African foreign policy, International Affairs.

\textsuperscript{124} Chief Director of Southern African Affairs, Interview at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 6/15/10.

\textsuperscript{125} Nathan tells us that South Africa has a hierarchy of principles, and when principles clash, the human rights paradigm gives way to the Africanist and anti-Western paradigms.

\textsuperscript{126} Chief Director of Southern African Affairs, Interview at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 6/15/10.
Second, the government has attempted to refute calls for the need of a stronger policy approach towards Zimbabwe. Mbeki cleverly countered these calls by stating:

And when people say: Do something, we say to them: Do what? And nobody gives an answer, because they know that when they say: Do something, what they mean is march across the Limpopo and overthrow the government of President Mugabe, which we are not going to do.\(^{127}\)

Despite Mbeki’s dismissal, most informed persons know that there is no such dichotomy between quiet diplomacy and military invasion. In fact, his response misses the scale of potential options available to South Africa due to her influence and leverage. DIRCO has offered a more even-handed reply. One official contends that such an approach would be counter productive, because “all the other actors that have attempted to use the stick to influence the situation in Zimbabwe have found themselves cut off from some of the leadership of Zimbabwe, especially that of ZANU-PF, and have experienced difficulties when the need to interact with this leadership arises because of the hardened position that this leadership has adopted towards them.”\(^{128}\) By taking a stronger stance, it is argued that ZANU-PF would reject Pretoria’s mediation mandate, and thus South Africa would loose their influence over the situation.

Critics have responded to the government’s replies by arguing that South Africa has the leverage to quickly bring Mugabe to his knees, and that such a stance is necessary to end the suffering and downward spiral in Zimbabwe. However, scholars like Martin Adelmann have provided additional support to the government’s stance. Adelmann contends that even though South Africa has the power to break down Mugabe, the probability that such an action would manifest a quick solution is countered by the potential that it would “bring the smoldering conflict to an explosion.”\(^{129}\) In fact, the latter might be more likely, considering Mugabe’s radical behavior. Finally, the South African government has dismissed the criticism of favoring ZANU-PF. Despite the allegations of a one-sided approach, Pretoria argues that they have engaged all parties in a non-partisan way. Considering all of these government replies, perhaps former Foreign Minister Nkosozana Dlamini-Zuma offers the most vivid defense of quiet diplomacy. She states, “If your neighbor’s house is on fire, you don’t slap the child who started it. You help them to put out the fire.”\(^{130}\)

**Section V. A Man Made Disaster: Understanding and Debating the U.S. Zimbabwe Policy**

This report previously placed the U.S. policy towards Zimbabwe within the U.S. government’s broader aims of democracy promotion. However, the ability to explain why the U.S. decided on the specific tactics of targeted sanctions and conditionality towards Zimbabwe is complicated by the inconsistencies in U.S. democracy promotion efforts.

\(^{127}\) Thabo Mbeki, Interview with the Sunday Times, 10/9/2002.
\(^{128}\) John Vilakazi, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Interview, 7/28/10.
\(^{129}\) Martin Adelmann, Quiet Diplomacy: The Reasons behind Mbeki’s Zimbabwe Policy, Africa Spectrum, 271.
The inconsistency results from deducing why Mugabe has received such harsh attention while the U.S. has quietly engaged with other authoritarian regimes around the world. Congresswoman Lee crystallizes this tendency by stating, “We all know that we engage with some dictators we like, we don’t engage with some we don’t like.” Although this inconsistency should not be used to condone wrongdoings, it remains a problem of U.S. foreign policy making.

The U.S. government’s willingness to take an aggressive stance against Mugabe may be due to the America’s lack of vital interests in Zimbabwe. Unlike some of the United States dubious allies in the Middle East, Zimbabwe does not possess oil. Moreover, Southern Africa is not a hub of international terrorist networks, nor does Zimbabwe pose a security threat to the United States. With these components missing, the U.S. has been able to form a foreign policy based solely on the interests of democracy and human rights.

However, there are many tools a nation could use to promote democracy, and despite ten years of U.S. policy towards Zimbabwe under ZDERA, the U.S. has not had a monolithic view on how to best respond to the crisis. Before the enactment of ZDERA, two different perspectives guided the Congressional debate on how to engage Zimbabwe. The dominant perspective viewed the situation between the Limpopo and the Zambezi strictly in terms of a humanitarian crisis. The arguments in favor of this view called for a hard line stance where all reasonable means should be used to condemn Mugabe and shock him into changing course. A second grouping, largely represented by the Congressional Black Caucus, had a different basis for their perspective of Mugabe. While not denying the state of the crisis nor ZANU-PF’s culpability, this view held Mugabe in high esteem because of his prominence as a freedom fighter against colonialism. In substantiating this second viewpoint, a legislative assistant involved with the House subcommittee on Africa posed the question, “Why are we so obsessed with Mugabe?” The concern held by a minority of members in Congress was that Mugabe and Zimbabwe received a disproportionate amount of U.S. attention compared to other despots and humanitarian emergencies on the African continent. The link was made by certain members of Congress and African lobbyists that the heightened concern for Zimbabwe was at least partly due to the eviction of white farmers. In other terms, these actors were influenced by the lens of race, assuming that Zimbabwe would not receive nearly as much attention if the abuses were confined solely to the black population. Although this second viewpoint has not been expressed via official U.S. policy, it has been a factor in the decision making process.

In reaction to ZDERA, analysts and government officials have criticized the U.S. policy towards Zimbabwe as being ineffective. As early as 2005, Congressman Payne expressed this dissatisfaction when he stated, “I think our policy and the policy of international communities, which isolated the Government of Zimbabwe, as we can see has not worked.” Judy Smith-Hohn has outlined three primary objectives of targeted

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131 Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Africa, April, 21, 2005.
132 Congressman Donald M. Payne, Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Africa. April, 21, 2005.
133 Legislative Assistant in the House of Representatives, Interview, 7/27/10.
134 Legislative Assistant in the Senate, Interview, 7/26/10.
135 Ibid.
sanctions: to target the political elite without damaging the general population, to pressure the targeted actors to change their harmful behavior, and to support opposition forces and civil society. A fourth objective is to express symbolic support for the people of Zimbabwe and against an authoritarian regime.

In reality, targeted sanctions have created few negative ramifications for the civilian population. However, Mugabe has made the case that the sanctions are the reason for the economic downfall, using anti-western propaganda and the state-owned media to spread this message. The effect of his rhetoric is demonstrated through a recent poll, which indicates that 60% of Zimbabweans believe that targeted sanctions are in fact widespread and damaging the economy. This commonly held perception is reproduced throughout the region. Moreover, the U.S. sanctions policy has been ineffective in changing the behavior of the targeted leadership. This limited effect stems directly from the fact that only a small grouping of western nations have implemented targeted sanctions and that the policy has been rejected and denounced by the region. The sanctions have not significantly hurt the wealth of the targeted actors, as they continue to trade freely and maintain their finances with many countries around the world. Furthermore, many of the targeted individuals developed their riches through looting natural resources in Zimbabwe and the DRC. These tactics and the accumulated wealth remain largely intact. The travel ban has also had little impact. Mugabe and his cronies are able to attend international summits and can maintain a lavish lifestyle through shopping in places like Kuala Lumpur, Rome, and Paris.

While the U.S. policy may have provided support to the MDC while they were being harassed around election time, now that the MDC is joined in the unity government the same cannot be said. Tsvangirai himself stated, “Those who accept me have to accept Robert Mugabe.” Lastly, ZDERA has fulfilled the objective of providing symbolic support and continues to do so. However, ZDERA has seen little results in promoting democracy and the rule of law in Zimbabwe.

The establishment of the Zimbabwean government of national unity started a new page in the modern evolution of the country. One American scholar commented that the unity government “is not unlike a forced marriage between a violent criminal and a courageous spouse who is trying to restore order and sanity to a shattered household.” Nonetheless, several U.S. analysts have responded to this development with more vigorous calls for a change in the U.S. approach. Several scholars have argued in favor of engaging the unity government and revitalizing developmental aid, while at the same, maintaining targeted sanctions. Donald Steinberg contends that “hesitation risks thwarting the very changes the international community is seeking, both by weakening the hand of the MDC and moderates in Mugabe’s ZANU-PF party, and by undercutting

139 Mugabe and ZANU-PF officials have been able to travel to the latter two in order to attend international summits.
140 Morgan Tsvangirai, ‘Those who accept me have to accept Mugabe,’ New African, August/September 2009.
141 Todd Moss, Vice President of the Center for Global Development, Testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs. 9/30/09.
popular support for the reform process.” Knox Chitiyo bluntly casts his case, indicating that “without aid, Zimbabwe will die,” and continued policies that restrict aid to Zimbabwe will have a destructive effect. Greg Mills and Jeffrey Herbst forward that “Western governments and nongovernmental organizations should become more publicly enthusiastic about the unity government” and in order “to consolidate progress, donors should...begin to support Mr. Tsvangirai’s aims.” Todd Moss argues that the “wait-and-see approach is a sure recipe for failure.” Instead, he contends the U.S. must try new ways to support reformers while keeping pressure on hardliners.

The argument for reviving developmental aid has been echoed by key MDC officials. Finance Minister Tendai Biti contends that Zimbabwe risks becoming “a totally failed state” if the unity government collapses from a lack of resources, investment and assistance. Furthermore, Tsvangirai has indicated that the west’s wait-and-see approach is based on “a wrong premise because...this unity government is an irreversible process. It is a transition; to the democratic goal.” Tsvangirai explained that the current aid programs are insufficient and that Zimbabwe not only needs humanitarian support, but also “lines of credit to our businesses, an injection into the recovery budget so that the government is able to execute those priority programmes that directly benefit Zimbabwe.” Tsvangirai has appealed to the donor states to match and reward the progress made under the unity government on the basis that the unity government is a vehicle to forming a stable democracy.

Analysts have put forth other policy strategies and approaches for the U.S. engagement in Zimbabwe. John Prendergast contends that it is wrong to support a unity government and bolster a dictator who has no real intentions of sharing power. Instead, Prendergast argues it is “time to forcefully oust Mugabe” and the U.S. ought to expand and intensify targeted sanctions and build a wide coalition able to enforce them. Robert Rotberg advocates the appointment of a roaming ambassador to focus on the situation in Zimbabwe and to promise financial incentives to SADC countries that tighten their responses towards Zimbabwe. Michelle Gavin promotes a people-first policy that realigns the primary purpose of the U.S. policy with respecting the rights of the Zimbabwean people and improving their lives, rather than “overemphasizing the role of individual political elites.” Moreover, she encourages substantial assistance to reform-minded politicians and the need to correspond increases in aid with political and economic progress. Todd Moss and Stewart Patrick urge policy makers to focus.
instead on the day after Mugabe leaves office and form a strategy influenced by post-conflict experiences to employ whenever this time comes.\textsuperscript{152}

Richard Dowden argues that the western policy stances towards Zimbabwe and Africa are hampered by two faulty assumptions. The first is that donor states, through the power of aid conditionality, are able to strongly influence African leaders and their decisions. Dowden contends this is wrong because “all politics in Africa are local and personal.”\textsuperscript{153} Second, that there is a correlation between a country’s economic performance and the leader’s grip on power. It is assumed that “African politicians would never deliberately impoverish their own countries or their people,” partly because this would get them kicked out of office. However, Mugabe is case in point of a ruler who would destroy his nation’s economy rather than give up power.\textsuperscript{154} These assumptions relate to the U.S. Zimbabwe policy, as the U.S. hoped to change Mugabe’s behavior through sanctions and restricted aid, and have adopted an approach that waits for internal developments largely contingent on Zimbabweans reducing Mugabe’s grip on power.

Other scholars have argued in favor of suspending the targeted sanctions policy. Mills and McNamee contend that sanctions have “become more of a helpful tool for Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party than a hindrance.”\textsuperscript{155} Mugabe has used the sanctions issue as a scapegoat for the nation’s economic collapse and continues to use the sanctions issue as an excuse to not adhere to the GPA and implement reforms. Moreover, Mugabe has flipped the west’s rhetoric on its head, using it to rally regional support and solidarity. The U.S. may also be undermining its long-term interests in the region, as the sanctions policy leaves America “increasingly isolated within Africa” as other nations have made moves to increase their influence across the continent.\textsuperscript{156} Judy Smith-Hohn writes, “The international community faces a dilemma: on the one hand, not all conditions have been met to justify the lifting of all restrictive measures, yet on the other hand, the issue has become a key public justification for ZANU-PF to stall the GPA process.” She adds that although suspending sanctions may be perceived as giving in to ZANU-PF stalwarts, it should instead be conceived as a reward for the MDC and the progress occurring within the unity government.\textsuperscript{157}

This past year the calls for a review of U.S. policy towards Zimbabwe has also been taken up by Congress. In May of 2010, Senators Feingold, Isakson and Kerry introduced the Zimbabwe Transition to Democracy and Economic Recovery Act. Senator Feingold states, “This legislation aims to update U.S. policy and to provide the necessary direction and flexibility for the United States to proactively push for democracy and economic recovery in Zimbabwe.”\textsuperscript{158} A legislative assistant in Senator Feingold’s office indicated the three primary purposes of the newly introduced bill: to provide impetus for more strategic attention from the executive, to provide greater flexibility for engagement, and

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} Judy Smith-Hohn, Zimbabwe: are targeted sanctions smart enough?, Institute for Security Studies Situation Report, 7.
to send a message to key actors indicating the U.S. responsiveness to the changing circumstances.\textsuperscript{159} The most significant changes that the new legislation pursues from the current policy is to amend aid restrictions and to provide greater flexibility regarding aid to the areas of health, education and agricultural development, while allowing the U.S. to engage Zimbabwe through International Financial Institutions. Feingold justifies the proposed policy change with reasons reflective of certain scholarly arguments previously discussed. Specifically, Feingold states that the wait-and-see approach has allowed Mugabe to “marginalize reformers” and stall progress, whereas the new legislation seeks “to undercut Mugabe’s propaganda” and his ability to maintain support through anti-western rhetoric.\textsuperscript{160}

Even more recently, Congressman Payne and thirty-five other members in the House introduced the Zimbabwe Renewal Act of 2010. This new bill is more ambitious and goes farther than the Senate bill in a few key ways. In providing initiative for the executive and state department to increase its flexibility and engagement in assistance programs, the House bill would forgive the debt Zimbabwe owes to any U.S. government agency and authorize the U.S. to support such a motion in international institutions. Moreover, it would create programs aimed specifically at providing job opportunities for the Zimbabwean youth and would provide support for the training, monitoring, and evaluation of the security sector. Lastly, the bill calls for a reevaluation of the financial institutions currently sanctioned and calls for lifting the restrictions on institutions deemed necessary for forward progress.\textsuperscript{161}

These new initiatives in the House and Senate lead us to two important questions: what does this mean for U.S. policy towards Zimbabwe and why did it take so long for new policy options to be officially considered? Regarding the first question, it means nothing as of yet, as the government continues to operate under the parameters of ZDERA. However, the commonalities in the Senate and House bills offer insight on the changing perceptions of the crisis in Zimbabwe and the type of response deemed most appropriate. Both pieces of legislation stem from the recognition that although serious challenges remain in Zimbabwe, important progress has been made since the formation of the unity government. Senator Feingold spells this out when stating, “We must realize that the dynamics of that struggle have changed – not as much as we would like them to go, not even close – but there has been change.”\textsuperscript{162} Moreover, both bills recognize the need for a more flexible and dynamic approach, particularly in regards to aid programs. Lastly, both approaches call for the continuation of the targeted sanctions policy, specifically on hard-line politicians and elites. Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of African Affairs Johnnie Carson forwarded, “The reason we imposed targeted sanctions and continue them now is the failure of those individuals to act in the best interest of the people of Zimbabwe. Our measures will remain in place until genuine, sustained democratic opening has taken place.”\textsuperscript{163} Despite the ineffectiveness of sanctions to

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{159} Legislative Assistant in the Senate, Interview, 7/26/10.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{160} Senator Russ Feingold, Statement Upon Introducing New Legislation on Zimbabwe, 5/4/2010.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{161} Zimbabwe Renewal Act of 2010}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{162} Senator Russ Feingold, Statement Upon Introducing New Legislation on Zimbabwe, 5/4/2010.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{163} Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of African Affairs, Testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, 9/30/09.}
\end{footnotes}
produce a change in behavior of the ruling elite, they remain the only form of leverage the U.S. has over the situation.\footnote{164}

Confusingly, the House bill creates a contradiction when discussing sanctions and the GPA. The legislation states that it “supports the full implementation of the GPA,” while at the same time, affirms the continuation of the U.S. sanctions policy. An article of the GPA specifically calls for the removal of all sanctions, so the agreement will never be fully implemented nor can the U.S. fully support it while at the same time sanctioning ZANU-PF elite. Nonetheless, the Zimbabwe Renewal Act outlines new conditions for how individuals can be removed from the sanctions list. Specifically, a targeted individual must take “significant steps to help strengthen democracy, respect human rights, and the rule of law” while playing “a constructive role in the implementation of the GPA.”\footnote{165} Such specific conditions represent a positive development as it provides visible criteria for removal that has been lacking under ZDERA. More transparent conditionality may serve as an extra incentive for ZANU-PF politicians to become more reform-minded.

Regarding the second question, the U.S. has been hesitant to consider new policy options towards Zimbabwe because progress under the unity government has been “mixed and uneven,”\footnote{166} and the transition is so far “incomplete, and far from irreversible.”\footnote{167} Senator Feingold expresses that he would be sympathetic to the regional calls to lift sanctions “if there was real progress being made toward implementing the GPA.”\footnote{168} Therefore, the lifting of the targeted sanctions policy and a recalculation of the U.S. policy in general has not been contingent on the effectiveness of the current policy, but rather is based on domestic political and economic changes in Zimbabwe. Since the ineffectiveness of U.S. policy has not had negative ramifications for America, there has not been an impetus to change it without first seeing improvements on the ground.

Yet regarding this basis for policy change, there has been a gap between positive developments under the unity government and a recalibration of U.S. policy. Indeed, the U.S. stance has not officially changed and only now are new policies being considered. This time lag is representative of the nature of U.S. policy making. The Senate Subcommittee hearing on Zimbabwe on July 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2008, and the subsequent hearing on September 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2009 put into motion a one-year process of revisiting U.S. policy before new legislation was introduced in the Senate. Similarly, a legislative assistant involved in the House Subcommittee on Africa indicated that the Zimbabwe Renewal Act had been in development for quite some time.\footnote{169} Even if both the Senate and House bills are accepted in their respective chambers, it will take time for Congress to reconcile the differences in the two pieces of legislation. Therefore, the nature and pace of U.S. foreign policy making coupled with only marginal positive developments in Zimbabwe indicates why time continues to pass without an official change in policy.

\footnote{164}{John Cambell, Interview at the Council on Foreign Relations, 7/19/2010; Princeton Lyman, Interview at the Council on Foreign Relations, 7/26/2010.}
\footnote{165}{Zimbabwe Renewal Act of 2010}
\footnote{166}{Johnny Carson, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of African Affairs, Testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, 9/30/09.}
\footnote{167}{Senator Russ Feingold, Testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, 9/30/09.}
\footnote{168}{Ibid.}
\footnote{169}{Legislative Assistant in the House of Representatives, Interview, 7/27/10.}
Section VI. External Influence in a Comparative Perspective: the Case of South Africa’s and the U.S. Government’s Policies Towards Zimbabwe

So far this report has outlined the trajectory of the crisis in Zimbabwe and has analyzed the explanations for South Africa’s and the U.S. government’s policy responses to the situation as well as the debates surrounding these policy decisions. It has been seen that the crisis resulted from a complex blend of short-term catalysts and long-term factors. Moreover, it has been seen that there are difficulties in offering a compelling explanatory account for each of the distinct policies, particularly because of the contradictions presented by each policy and the lack of consensus on how to move forward. While scholars writing on South Africa’s policy importantly highlight the principles, interests and constraints that have shaped quiet diplomacy and while scholars writing on the U.S. government’s policy have vividly expressed America’s interest and concern in Zimbabwe, the assortment of explanations and alternatives previously reviewed provide only part of the comparative picture of why South Africa and the U.S. have differed in their engagements towards Zimbabwe. In light of this, four additional factors must be considered in order to gain a clearer and more complete understanding of why these two states have taken different approaches.

First, differences in geographic proximity to Zimbabwe represents an important factor for why the U.S. and South Africa have taken different stances. The Limpopo River is all that separates South Africa from Zimbabwe, whereas the Atlantic and then some divides the U.S. from Zimbabwe. This difference has extensive ramifications in terms of the level of risk the crisis poses to the United States and South Africa. Due to South Africa’s proximity, she faces the risk of a collapse in Zimbabwe in its entirety. The United States, on the other hand, is not threatened by a drastic influx of Zimbabwean refugees, is not at risk of a cholera epidemic spilling over its borders, nor jeopardized by economic decline or the risk of military involvement because of the crisis. The risk calculus as deciphered by South African policymakers called for a low cost policy, in terms of minimizing the threat of collapse in Zimbabwe. The low risk response has also been one of low reward. South Africa’s quiet diplomacy has kept her northern neighbor from turning into a failed state, but it took several violent years and botched elections before this approach influenced a negotiated settlement.

The U.S. is not constrained by its geographic location. Located far outside the radius of the crisis zone, the U.S. has been able to implement a policy that aspires to a greater reward, being the democratization of Zimbabwe. This policy, however, carries a greater risk since it would necessarily have to incorporate a policy stick. The risk is that in pursuit of influencing democratization, the U.S. policy could stir public backlash or cause a worsening of the situation. In reality, the U.S. policy has created few tangible benefits, while instead fueling anti-western resentment. Although this is troublesome to scholars and policy makers, this outcome has not created tangible harms for the United States. Therefore, the differences in proximity to Zimbabwe presents each state with a different level of risk, which alters the cost-benefit analysis that underpins their policy decision-making.

Second, the variation in hegemonic influence between the U.S. and South Africa signifies another crucial reason for why these states have differed towards Zimbabwe. Hegemony in international affairs is defined as a state “being able to dictate, or at least dominate, the rules and arrangements by which international relations, political and
economic, are conducted.”  Important factors used to determine hegemony include hard power, soft power and economic clout. For a state to be a global hegemon, it would have the capacity to exert this type of influence on the global level, whereas a regional hegemon would be able to do so in its immediate surroundings. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has been the global hegemon in a unipolar world. South Africa, on the other hand, is regarded as a regional hegemon in Southern Africa.

How do these different levels of hegemonic influence affect the U.S. government’s and South Africa’s conduct in foreign affairs? Do differences in the degree of power and hegemony predispose the U.S. and South Africa to different Zimbabwe policies? As a global hegemon, the U.S. has the potential to influence affairs occurring far from its borders. The U.S. is able to play an interventionist role, both in the name of international security against global terrorist networks, and in the name of democracy and human rights. Although U.S. government’s international aspirations may be checked by domestic pressures, it often has the flexibility to engage a foreign state in a number of ways, particularly if that state is small and weak. This does not guarantee a successful or effective policy, but demonstrates that the U.S. often has a legitimate choice in deciding how to engage a small and weak state, such as Zimbabwe.

A regional hegemon, without the preponderance of power of a global hegemon, faces increased difficulties in waging her influence within her radius of power. Factors that determine the extent of a regional hegemon’s power and influence include whether the regional environment is hospitable to such influence and whether surrounding states accept the leadership of the hegemon. For South Africa, her hegemony is restricted by a neighborhood of poor and weak states that reject Pretoria’s power and influence. Yet this is not reason to assume that South Africa is not a regional hegemon. Miriam Prys tells us that attempts to debunk South Africa’s leadership capabilities are “founded on a misguided understanding of regional hegemony.” She explains that the ‘regionality’ of being a regional hegemon indicates that such states must not be expected to act in the same ways as a global hegemon. Particularly, regional hegemons do not “have an extraordinary impact on the behavior of other states in their region.” Furthermore, regional hegemons do not need to provide extensive public goods in the way expected of the U.S. The implication of this analysis is that to be a regional hegemon, South Africa does not need to be a mini-America in Southern Africa and should not be judged on the lines of this analogy. This extends to mean that South Africa should not be expected to be as assertive or as flexible in her policies towards the region as the U.S. is to the international community. Regional hegemony demands different and lesser roles than global hegemony.

Regional hegemons also differ from global hegemons in that they are often pressured to pursue contradictory foreign policy goals dependent on whether they are acting in the

172 J. E. Spence Obe, ‘Point Man’ on Zimbabwe: South Africa’s Role in the Crisis, The Round Table. April 2006.
174 Ibid.
regional or international spheres. For South Africa, the aim of protecting her interests and shielding the region from western influence as seen through the ambitions embedded in NEPAD and an African Renaissance at times collides with her global aspirations, such as being an African representative in international affairs and in pursuit of a UN Security Council seat. In instances in which these roles conflict, South Africa is forced to balance her commitments and weigh whether she is better off siding with the region or the international community. Thus, as a regional hegemon South Africa is at times forced to assume an awkward straddling position between the regional and the international arenas.

In the case of Zimbabwe, South Africa found herself bound in a position where she could not wear both the international and regional hats. From Pretoria’s standpoint, it would be impossible to join the west in public criticism while maintaining solidarity with the region. The U.S. has recognized South Africa as a regional hegemon and has supported South Africa’s leadership role towards Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. The message sent from Washington to Pretoria via President Bush’s ‘point man’ statement was, we respect that you have the power to take care of your own backyard, so we expect you to promote democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe. Although the recognition of South Africa’s privileged status catered to Pretoria’s international ambitions, this pressure from the west did not lead to its intended effect. “Rather than enhancing the legitimacy of its leading position within Southern Africa,” South Africa was forced “into a defensive position with less room to maneuver.”

This is so because the SADC region interpreted the western position towards Zimbabwe as neo-colonial and rejected it on these grounds. If a hard line stance had not been initially associated with the neo-colonial powers, perhaps South Africa would have had more flexibility to apply pressure on ZANU-PF. But this has not been the case. Instead, the demands of the region contradicted and outweighed South Africa’s international expectations towards Zimbabwe. Thus, as a regional hegemon, South Africa must be assessed as a different type of beast than the United States. The United States, as a global hegemon, was capable of a range of responses towards Zimbabwe, whereas South Africa, as a regional hegemon, had far narrower options available.

Third, the nature of South Africa’s and the U.S. government’s partial interpretations of the crisis in Zimbabwe, as outlined in section III, are important to understanding why each country developed a different approach towards the crisis. Ndlovu-Gatsheni tells us that a lack of “consensus on the causes of the crisis” inevitably leads “to a lack of consensus on what is to be done.” This has been very much the case for South Africa and the United States. Even if two external states were to identify the same primary causes or problems leading to a crisis situation in a third state, it is conceivable that each of the external states would decide on a different course of action, due to different constraints and priorities. However, when there is disagreement over what constitutes the main problem in a crisis state, external actors are much more likely to disagree over the appropriate policy responses. In other terms, if external actor A is responding to a crisis of type X while external actor B is responding to a crisis of type Y, the factors influencing the policy decisions will almost always be different. Simply put, different types of problems require different types of responses and solutions.

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175 Ibid.
Applied to the case of Zimbabwe, since South Africa and the United States interpreted the primary problem in Zimbabwe differently, they invariably responded to different crises. As the U.S. conceived the problem as one of poor governance and human rights abuses with Mugabe as the main culprit, these were the set of circumstances the U.S. would invariably react to. Because these highlighted issues break international norms and democratic principles, it would logically flow that the U.S. would criticize the ruler perceived to be chiefly responsible for these problems and condemn his practices. South Africa responded to a different type of problem—one of a colonial legacy and the tensions and pressures created by unmet land reform. This creates a distinctly different type of situation that South Africa aimed to resolve. South Africa did not frame Mugabe as a violent despot, but more commonly interpreted Mugabe’s hand as being forced by the challenges facing Zimbabwe’s society and government. Based on this perception, it was most probable that Pretoria would try to work with and alongside Mugabe in order to help his government address the outstanding societal and historical issues. It would not make nearly as much sense to condemn Mugabe if his misrule was not viewed as the primary cause of the crisis. South Africa’s and the U.S. perceptions of the crisis have aligned more closely over the past few years. However, at the turn of the century, these two countries emphasized different aspects of the crisis, which created different demands for their policy responses. The strong influence these different interpretations had on the policy making at the time is reflected by the different stances adopted by the U.S. and South Africa.

The different goals prioritized by the U.S. and South Africa for their engagement in Zimbabwe serves as the final important factor considered for understanding why these two countries implemented different policies. As previously outlined, the U.S. has been more committed to promoting democracy in Zimbabwe, whereas South Africa has been more concerned with stability in her northern neighbor. Political stability and democratic governance are two entirely different endgames that do not necessarily accompany each other. Furthermore, the context that accommodates these political characteristics and the external actions that best influence their development may differ. A functioning democracy necessitates free and fair elections, the respect of the rule of law, a military subordinate to civilian control, and certain democratic freedoms that allow opposition voices to operate and civil society to function without harm. In 2000, Zimbabwe was an authoritarian one-party state where ZANU-PF restricted or repressed all of these factors from transpiring. For a democratic system to evolve in Zimbabwe, President Mugabe and his crony elites would have to be forced to drastically change their ways.

In order for the United States to influence these developments, they would not be able to coax the ruling regime into acting differently. This is so because the U.S. has never had a close enough relationship nor strong enough diplomatic leverage to appeal to a radicalized ZANU-PF through quiet conversation and half-heartedly expect the ruling regime to listen. If Washington used diplomacy to encourage Harare to change its ways and implement democratic reforms, Mugabe would have quickly dismissed the U.S. as neo-imperialists trying to take over Zimbabwe from afar. Instead, negative conditionality or a foreign policy stick approach would have the greatest potential for stimulating democracy in Zimbabwe. Democracy promotion is not often a successful enterprise. Yet the U.S. maintained this approach because it taps into Washington’s greatest leverage over the situation, limited as it may be.
At the turn of the century, Mbeki and his cabinet were far more concerned with stability in Zimbabwe than principles of democracy. Encouraging stability entails different methods and tactics than democracy promotion. Democracy promotion in Zimbabwe has often explicitly or implicitly called for a changing of the guard as a necessary step to achieving its ends. Political stability, on the other hand, requires no such thing and instead is more likely to be achieved through gradual changes by the ruling regime. A swift and sudden change in power in a fragile state, such as through elections, would increase the risk of violence and instability. With strong indications from the military and ZANU-PF that they would take severe steps to prevent such a change, the ANC government was well aware of the destabilizing threat an MDC victory would create. Moreover, the ANC minimized this threat by downplaying the need for free and fair elections and treating MDC officials as junior partners to ZANU-PF politicians.

Furthermore, open criticism and a hard line policy response would run counter to South Africa’s aims of creating a stable situation in Zimbabwe. If South Africa were to implement a strategy similar to and in conjunction with the U.S. and western states, the likely effect would be an alienated Mugabe and a strained ruling elite. When faced with threats to regime security, ZANU-PF has historically responded violently and brutally. The likelihood of a similar reaction to a stronger South African policy would run counter to a stable domestic situation while posing serious regional ramifications.

Quiet diplomacy has been far more aligned with Pretoria’s priority of establishing stability. As indicated above, quiet diplomacy did not share the same level of risk as the targeted sanctions policy. Moreover, by working closely with the ZANU-PF government, the ANC has incrementally led the ruling regime to loosen its grip on power. Although this approach has sacrificed principles of democracy and human rights, it has allowed Pretoria to keep the situation even keel by slowly stabilizing Zimbabwe while at the same time reducing South Africa’s own risk.

South Africa and the U.S. have fundamentally differed in ‘the chicken or the egg’ type of way. South Africa adamantly believes that democracy will develop in Zimbabwe once stability is achieved. The U.S. is resolute in the belief that only a functioning democracy will bring a country lasting stability. Recognizing and understanding this difference greatly determines why the U.S. and South Africa have not and continue to not engage Zimbabwe in similar ways. Moreover, the differences in proximity to Zimbabwe, hegemonic power and influence, and ways in which the crisis was initially conceived all contribute significantly to why South Africa and the U.S. have not been uniform in their responses to the crisis in Zimbabwe.

**Section VII. Conclusions and Prospects for the Future**

At best, international factors and the external influence of the U.S. and South Africa are of secondary importance to creating change in Zimbabwe. It is Zimbabweans themselves who will dictate the future course their country takes. Nonetheless, the foreign policy responses of South Africa and the U.S. remain important to study because of the potential they have to help remedy a humanitarian disaster and the power they have to aid and influence decision makers in Zimbabwe.

From this report and the insight it has provided on why South Africa and the U.S. have differed towards Zimbabwe, what will it take to create greater cooperation between South Africa and the U.S. on the issue and how must each nation change their foreign
policy, if at all, to better benefit the people of Zimbabwe? From the case of Zimbabwe, what can we learn about the capabilities of the United States, South Africa and SADC to effectively respond to crisis situations in Southern Africa? How do interpretations of democracy, stability, and state sovereignty influence and complicate these actions?

The single largest roadblock the United States has faced in engaging Zimbabwe over the past decade has been the shielding effect initiated by South Africa and the region. The U.S. Zimbabwe policy will never be fully effective until the U.S. is able to coordinate more closely with the South Africans. Increased cooperation would also be advantageous to South Africa, as it would provide Pretoria with better leverage and greater access to the donors’ purses, which would help initiate increases in developmental aid for Zimbabwe. The closing analysis will consider how the U.S. and South Africa can more closely coordinate their future Zimbabwe policies, and in turn, improve the effectiveness of their engagements.

This report has forwarded four key factors for understanding why South Africa and the U.S. have differed and continue to differ on Zimbabwe. Two of these are unchangeable – the U.S. will not be relocating its borders closer to Zimbabwe any time soon and there are little prospects for a drastic shift in America’s and South Africa’s comparative power relations. The two factors that can potentially change are how each state perceives the crisis and the goal each state prioritizes for engagement. If the U.S. and South Africa are able to recalibrate these two factors so they are more closely in concert, there is a greater likelihood that the two states can agree on a common policy stance.

Although the U.S. and South Africa initially viewed the central causes of the crisis in different ways, over the course of the past decade both states have gradually moved to a more unified interpretation of the situation. South Africa remains sensitive to the colonial legacy in her own country and the region, yet Pretoria has shifted to recognize that issues of “good governance, the rule of law and economic policies” have been key in generating the continuation of the crisis. The U.S. has also become cannier in formulating ways to support agricultural development and to provide technical assistance to this important sector. As a wide divide no longer separates the U.S. government’s and South Africa’s interpretations of the crisis, it would be constructive for Washington and Pretoria to jointly and publicly state what outstanding issues continue to block progress in Zimbabwe. A joint statement would send a strong signal to Zimbabwean leaders that the region and the west agree on what constitutes the central problems in their country while improving cohesiveness between the U.S. and South Africa. Moreover a unified message of this type would take the wind out of the sails of Mugabe’s anti-western rhetoric and demonstrate a sense of urgency for what needs to be fixed.

Agreement on what ought to be the primary goal for engagement will be a greater feat to achieve. However, recent changes indicate that closer cooperation on this aim is attainable. The consensus emerging out of the Congressional review of U.S. Zimbabwe policy is that greater flexibility and engagement is needed. Closer engagement with Harare will also improve Washington’s estranged relationship with Pretoria regarding

177 John Vilakazi, Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Interview, 7/28/10.
Zimbabwe. This is so because it will ease suspicions of neo-colonialism and will demonstrate a greater willingness from the west to help stabilize the situation. Moreover, several of the constraints on South Africa’s policy towards Zimbabwe stem from the risk of collapse. Progress under the unity government will continue to minimize this threat. If donors reengage with developmental assistance and increased aid in the near future, it will also help stabilize the situation. This, in turn, would provide South Africa with more room to respond and facilitate issues of democracy. There need not be a fundamental shift in ideology by either the U.S. or South Africa to secure greater agreement on what represents the goal of engagement. Instead, each nation must recognize that stability and democracy are closely intertwined and make joint efforts to encourage the development of both.

The next election will be an important indicator for the future of Zimbabwe and the degree to which the U.S. and South Africa can collaborate together on the issue. If South Africa takes greater measures to help establish appropriate pre-election conditions, the political playing field will be well suited for a transition. Importantly, if the U.S. and the west promise increased support to a reform-minded government, it will encourage both ZANU-PF and MDC officials to lead such a transition. In turn, a reformed Zimbabwean government would be more receptive to a South African position that promotes democratization. The progress under the Zimbabwean government of national unity creates a new chapter for external policies towards Zimbabwe and presents a new opportunity for the region and the west to ease prior divisions. If Pretoria and Washington recognize that close cooperation will yield the greatest benefit for the people of Zimbabwe, this would be an opportune time for the U.S. to reengage Zimbabwe and for the U.S. and South Africa to reengage each other on how they can act more in unison.

Outside of specific implications for the future of Zimbabwe, this comparative case study is also important for drawing lessons on the capability of key actors to influence and resolve future crisis situations in Southern Africa. South Africa, as the regional hegemon, and SADC, as the choice regional body, will always be intimately involved when these types of situations occur. However, the crisis in Zimbabwe does not provide a good track record for either the hegemon’s or the institution’s ability to effectively respond to issues of democracy and human rights. The suspect governance and human rights records in several of the member states of SADC compromises the institution’s capacity to respond when the most egregious instances occur. Mugabe has used this double standard to call out other leaders who have questioned his right to power. Moreover, the ANC is committed to multilateralism and South Africa will continue to act through the collective and refrain from flexing her hegemonic muscle for the foreseeable future. This does not shed a bright light on the types of governance systems that will continue to develop in this region. As most of the regional leaders remain more concerned with stability than democracy and continue to be highly protective of state sovereignty against foreign encroachment, democratic consolidation is unlikely to transpire smoothly.

The United States will continue to be a dominant force behind democracy across the globe and will continue to respond to the worst humanitarian situations, wherever they appear. The lesson Washington must learn from the experience in Zimbabwe is that the effectiveness of America’s influence in Southern Africa is severely hampered if it is not supported by several states in the region. The U.S. cannot criticize and condemn...
authoritarian leaders from afar and expect to see tangible improvements. Moreover, it indicates that the importance of soft power is not only the ability to name and shame, but also the ability to work alongside regional actors and to encourage their use of leverage. This factor will remain key for future involvements in Southern Africa and must be considered in future policy making.

Recognizing the prospects for the future of the Southern African region, Zimbabwe becomes all the more important. A peaceful transition to a stable democracy in Zimbabwe will not only be monumental for the people who have suffered for several years. It also has the ability to positively influence future trends throughout the neighborhood. The development of a new constitution and free and fair elections in Zimbabwe will also be paramount to the future of democracy in Southern Africa. If Zimbabwe can rise from the ashes, it will send a strong signal to neighboring populations demonstrating what is possible in their own countries while increasing pressure on regional leaders to reform their practices. Moreover, Pretoria’s ability to lead a stable transition in Zimbabwe will also impact the validation of South Africa as the regional leader. If South Africa is successful in her mediation efforts, it will increase her legitimacy and her ability to respond more freely in the region. Lastly, the opportunity exists for the U.S. and South Africa to come together on the Zimbabwean issue. If Washington is able to cooperate closely with Pretoria, not only will it have a beneficial effect for Zimbabwe, it will also strengthen America’s image and influence in the region. In turn, by strengthening its relationship with South Africa and the region, the U.S. will be better positioned to positively influence future crises in Southern Africa. A new dawn presents itself in Zimbabwe. Will it bring repetition or change?
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